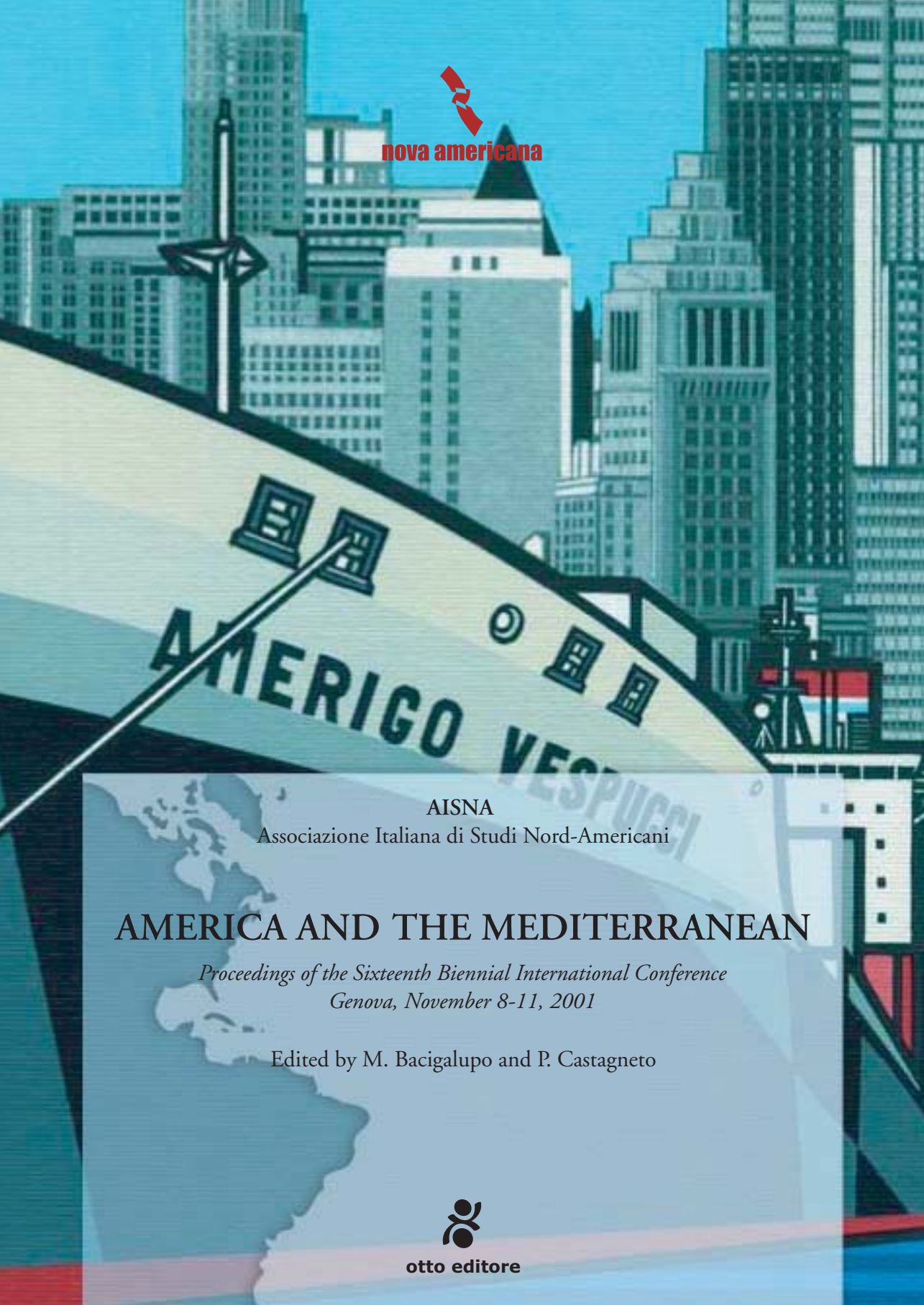

AISNA
Associazione Italiana di Studi Nord-Americani

AMERICA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN

Proceedings of the Sixteenth Biennial International Conference
Genova, November 8-11, 2001

Edited by M. Bacigalupo and P. Castagneto

otto editore

nova americana

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AMERICA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN

Edited by
Massimo Bacigalupo and Pierangelo Castagneto

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Massimo Bacigalupo, Pierangelo Castagneto

America and the Mediterranean

Collana **Nova Americana**

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD p. 1

LECTURES

Rosella Mamoli Zorzi, *Genoa Gate of the Mediterranean: Nineteenth Century American Writers and Genoa* p. 3

Ronald Steel, *America's Mediterranean Coast* p. 19

Christoph Irmscher, *Mediterranean Metamorphoses*: *"Enrico Longfello's" Contribution to Multilingual American Literature* p. 23

Fred Moramarco, *"Imagine All That History": American Views of the Mediterranean and Its People* p. 43

Robert Hahn, *Versions of the Mediterranean in American Poetry* p. 57

WORKSHOP ONE. American Poetry and the Mediterranean Heritage p. 65

Gianfranca Balestra, *"The glory that was Greece, and the grandeur that was Rome": Towards the Holy-Land of Poetry in Edgar Allan Poe* p. 67

Gregory Dowling, *"Rainbow o'er the Wreck": The Two Sides of Melville's* Clarel p. 75

Antonella Francini, *"The pale hems of the masters' gowns": Mediterranean Voices and Shadows in the Poetry of Charles Wright* p. 85

Nicola Gardini, *"I was myself": Lowell and Virgil* p. 93

Paola Loreto, *"Light on the Wharves of Charlotte Amalie/Light on the Sparkling Straits of Sicily": Derek Walcott's Aesthetic of (Irresistible) Light in* Tiepolo's Hound p. 103

Paola A. Nardi, *Marianne Moore and Egypt* p. 111

Giuseppe Nori, *The Problem of the Priest: The Confrontation with Mediterranean Art and Culture in Emerson's Poetry* p. 119

E. Martin Pedersen, *The Hellenic League Plays in the New World: Baseball Poetry Considered* p. 127

WORKSHOP TWO. The Mediterranean in Italian American Literature and Culture p. 137

Suzanne Branciforte, *Voyage to the Center of Mother Earth: On Italian American Identity* p. 139

Simone Cinotto, *The Taste of Place: Food in the Narratives of "America" and "Italy" by Italian Immigrants of New York, 1920-1940* p. 145

Daniela Daniele, *Mediterranean Clippings of Art and Desire: Mary Caponegro's* Five Doubts p. 157

Martino Marazzi, *L'umbarco: Il silenzio del Mediterraneo negli scritti d'emigrazione* p. 165

Elisabetta Marino, *The Mediterranean: Memory and Tradition in Two Italian American Writers* p. 173

Federico Siniscalco, *Video-Interviews: Italian American Study Abroad Students in Florence* p. 179
John Paul Russo, *Technology and the Mediterranean in DeLillo's* Underworld p. 187

WORKSHOP THREE. Mediterranean Religiosity in the United States: Migrating Religions and their Encounters with Other Religions and Cultures p. 199

Matteo Sanfilippo, *L'attenzione della Santa Sede all'emigrazione italiana negli Stati Uniti* p. 201
Elisabetta Vezzosi, *"Cultural ethnic brokers": Le Maestre Pie Filippini negli Stati Uniti* p. 215
Maria Susanna Garroni, *"Immigrant women religious: a splintered ethnic and spiritual identity" ovvero Le Pallottine: le molteplici identità di una istituzione religiosa femminile* p. 227
Cristina Mattiello, *Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco* p. 237
Stephen Perrin, *"I Got Every Sacrament Behind Me": Jim Carroll and the Inescapable History of American Catholicism* p. 247
Leonardo Buonomo, *The Indiscreet Charm of Popery: Catholicism in Nineteenth-Century American Writing* p. 259
Ellen Ginzburg Migliorino, *Italian Jews in the United States in the Early 1940s: Impressions and Lifestyle Changes* p. 267

WORKSHOP FOUR. The Vision of the Mediterranean in Contemporary U.S. Fiction: From the Cradle to the Zone p. 277

Umberto Rossi, *South of the Zone: Guerra, Economia e Reaganomics in* Catch-22 *di Joseph Heller* p. 279
Giuseppe Costigliola, *Mediterranean Histories in Thomas Pynchon's* V. p. 287
Paolo Prezzavento, *William Burroughs in Tangier* p. 293
Roberta Fornari, *William S. Burroughs'* The Western Lands p. 301
Laura Salvini, Naked Lunch*: The Movie* p. 309
Luca Briasco, *Alien Nation: Cyprus as the Last Zone in Bruce Sterling's "One Nation, Invisible" and* Zeitgeist p. 315

WORKSHOP FIVE. American Writers and the Mediterranean: A Comparison of Viewpoints p. 323

Sarah Wood, *An Alien's Act of Sedition: Structural Coherence and North African Attachments in Tyler's* The Algerine Captive p. 325
Barbara Nugnes, *Paradise Regained: Washington Irving's Mythological Spain* p. 333
Sirpa Salenius, *Nathaniel Hawthorne's Impressions of Florence* p. 343
Shirley Foster, *Nineteenth-Century American Views of Naples* p. 351
Daniela F. Virdis, *Wallace Stevens' "Reply to Papini"* p. 361
Marina Coslovi, *Pynchon in "Baedeker Land"* p. 369

WORKSHOP SIX. Genoa and the United States in the Nineteenthth and Twentieth Century p. 379

Pierangelo Castagneto, *"…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 Genoa* p. 381

Susanna Delfino, *Peace and Commerce with Every Nation: Thomas Jefferson and the Development of American Commercial Policy in the Mediterranean during the Nineteenth Century* p. 397

WORKSHOP SEVEN. "Sensitive as Any Woman": Nineteenth-Century American Women and Mediterranean Masculinities p. 405

Patricia Thompson Rizzo, *Emily Dickinson: Feminine Masculinity in Mediterranean Garb* p. 413

Anna Scacchi, *"Born beneath a Tropic Sun": Shades of Brown and Masculinity in* Uncle Tom's Cabin *and* Agnes of Sorrento p. 423

Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh, *Circuits of desire: Henry James's Italian Men as Examples of Sensuous Manliness* p. 435

Paula Rabinowitz, *Meeting on the Corner: Mediterranean Men and Urban American Women* p. 445

WORKSHOP EIGHT. The Mediterranean Education of American Artists p. 453

Maria Vittoria D'Amico, *"Wisdom and Ecstasy": Paul Bowles in the Maghrib* p. 455

Salvatore Marano, *"Reflections in Windows": The Colors of Amy Lowell's* Can Grande's Castle p. 465

Kurt Albert Mayer, *"Much as I sympathise with the Italians and wish them success": Henry Adams' First Sojourns in Italy, 1859-60* p. 475

WORKSHOP NINE. Mediterranean Mediations: Transatlantic Imaginary and Gender Identity p. 491

Liana Borghi, *Crittografie spaziali di Grace Greenwood, Marion Harland, Marietta Holley, Maud Elliott* p. 493

Algerina Neri, *Royall Tyler's* The Algerine Captive *and the Sympathetic Woman Reader* p. 501

Cristina Scatamacchia, *From the* Grand Tour *to the* Tour du Monde*: Nellie Bly and the Metamorphosis of Women's Travels at the End of the Nineteenth Century* p. 507

Alessandra Lorini, *Ruth Benedict e l'identità di genere tra apollineo e dionisiaco* p. 515

WORKSHOP TEN. The Sea and Revolution: The Mediterranean, the Early Republican Age, and U.S. Culture p. 523

Salvatore Proietti, *Sailing Across the Color Line: On Royall Tyler's* The Algerine Captive p. 525

Richard Samuelson, *John Quincy Adams' Lost History of the Russo-Turkish War: Greek Independence and the Sacred Cause of Liberty* p. 533

Cinzia Schiavini, *From the Edges of Revolution to the Shores of Modernity: Melville and the Mediterranean* p. 541

Marco Sioli, *Liberty and Nature: Joel Barlow's Mission to Algiers* p. 551

Igina Tattoni, *"There Was No Room for Hesitation": The Revolution of Time in Charles Brockden Brown's* Arthur Mervyn p. 559

WORKSHOP ELEVEN. U.S. Middle Eastern Policy in the Twentieth Century: Aspects and Problems p. 567

Antonio Donno, *U.S. Middle East Policy in the First Half of the Twentieth Century* p. 569

Daniele De Luca, *Strategic Values and Military Policy in the U.S. Intervention in the Middle East (1946-1967)* p. 575

Paola Olimpo, *Sharing Responsibility: Congress-Executive Relationship in the Making of American Middle Eastern Policy, 1945-1968* p. 581

Valentina Vantaggio, *Oil and American Foreign Policy in the Middle East 1928-1956* p. 591

Mario Del Pero, *Containing Containment: American Pressures and Italian Responses during the Early Cold War* p. 599

WORKSHOP TWELVE. "Wars They Have Seen": Americans in Mediterranean Conflicts p. 611

Luigi Bruti Liberati, The Stars and Stripes *e la campagna d'Italia dalla Sicilia a Roma 1943-1944* p. 613

Gabriella Ferruggia, *"That'll make a letter home": Dos Passos,* One Man's Initiation, *and World War I* p. 625

Augusta Molinari, *Una guerra vista da lontano. Storie di prigionieri di guerra Italiani negli Stati Uniti 1943-1946* p. 635

Massimo Rubboli, *"Friendly service to suffering people": American and British Friends' Relief Work in Italy 1943-45* p. 645

AFTERWORD

Massimo Bacigalupo, *Pavane for a Defunct Hotel* p. 655

AUTHOR INDEX p. 659

FOREWORD

The relation between the Mediterranean and America has been momentous over five centuries of historical and cultural upheavals and developments. Spain, France and Italy were prime movers in the exploration and settling of America, and later contributed massively to the continent's population.

Culturally, the classic world of Greece and Rome influenced both social thinking and the arts, while the Mediterranean Middle-East contributed an Orientalist strain and, indirectly, the prominent Jewish-American world. The American South has looked to France for its models (Faulkner, Chopin, Williams), while California and the South-West as portrayed by Cather and others are an idealized Spain.

In the other direction, American politicians, thinkers and artists have explored the Mediterranean world, seeking inspiration and examples of art and life with which to enrich and correct American values. See for example Hawthorne, James, Hemingway, and more recent authors like Mary McCarthy, Paul Bowles, Robert Lowell and James Merrill.

In the twentieth century, America fought two wars in the Mediterranean, and the area is among the most important for American policy since the early Republic. Not a few soldiers turned to writing. Many Americans decided that the Mediterranean was their old home and remained there. John Horne Burns's *The Gallery*, about life in Naples in 1945, is a classic. Ezra Pound's *Pisan Cantos*, written in the same year, is another record of the ravages of war and the soothing influence of Mediterranean landscape and culture on the embattled modern mind.

AISNA, the American Studies Association of Italy (a member of EAAS - European Association of American Studies) chose Genoa for this major Conference because of its many and deep historical ties to America, from Columbus to the millions of emigrants who passed through its port, one of the oldest and largest of the Mediterranean. American writers who stopped here include Cooper, Hawthorne, Melville, Howells, James, Mark Twain, and Hemingway. While looking into their reports we discovered that most nineteenth-century visitors had stayed in the same hotel, the Croce di Malta, now long gone. (Melville alone stayed elsewhere, though in his journal he noticed the Croce di Malta's old tower overlooking the harbor.) To mark our Conference, a tablet was placed on the building that housed the hotel with the names of some of its worthy guests, American and European (see Afterword).

November 2001 was a highly appropriate moment to reconsider the history, past and present, of America's Mediterranean connections. Conflicts between East and West were addressed in many papers, that went back to the Crusades and the crusading spirit - many of the original crusaders had in fact embarked from the harbor a few steps away

from Palazzo Ducale and Palazzo San Giorgio where our Conference was taking place. The realization that this thousand-year-old conflict was still with us did not escape participants. We realized how deeply set are certain cultural trends, and how America inherited in some ways the embattled role of Western Europe in relationship to the East - that complex of attitudes that Edward Said studied in his book *Orientalism*. Genoa, for one, pillaged the Middle East, and established colonies as far as the Black Sea. The influence of the East is very present in its dingy streets, its dialect and food. And now it is a city with a large immigrant population from North Africa and elsewhere, and students at the Faculty of Languages of the University of Genoa often take Arabic.

It is possible to see the Mediterranean not as a set of contrasts and incompatibilities but as a network of commerce and communication (the Genoese were great bankers). In the same way, as one speaker pointed out, Americans have often defined themselves in contrast to the Mediterranean. This conference showed that the origins of American culture are Mediterranean as much as Atlantic - Latin as well as Anglo-Saxon.

This is an important realization in a world where ignorant armies still clash by night. Genoa, the host in July 2001 of a troubled Group of Eight meeting, may have made a more thoughtful if less advertised contribution to international understanding in November of the same year with this Conference on "America and the Mediterranean".

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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GENOA GATE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN: NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICAN WRITERS AND GENOA

ROSELLA MAMOLI ZORZI

The country is a paradise; olives, figs,
pomegranates, oranges, lemons, almonds etc.
cover the whole face of the country.
John Singleton Copley 34

All Genoa & her forts before you. The height
& distances of these forts, their outlying loneliness.
The bleakness, the savageness of glens between,
seem to make Genoa rather the capital
and fortified camp of Satan: fortified against the Archangels.
Herman Melville 123

Genoa is the tightest topographic tangle in the world,
which even a second visit helps you little to straighten out.
In the wonderful crooked, twisting, climbing, soaring,
burrowing Genoese alleys the traveller is really up
to his neck in the old Italian sketchability.
Henry James, *Italy Revisited* 105

Trees full of fruits worthy of the Garden of Eden, perfumes and fragrances: one could approach the literary experience of Genoa, the city which was for many English and American writers the gate to the Mediterranean world, with the sense of sight and smell, like John Singleton Copley at the end of the 18th century or Washington Irving at the beginning of the 19th century ("A perfect forest of olives, oranges, citrons," "The hills covered with vines olives oranges pomegranates," Irving 104,106). The perfume of the orange groves reached travellers as they were approaching Genoa on their *feluccas* or steamers: American travellers had been preceded by the English, in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, and surely many of them were influenced, even in their sense of smell, by the descriptions of John Evelyn or Joseph Addison (Mamoli Zorzi, *Genova* 74). The perception of the landscape was probably pre-determined by their reading (Pfister 4), which however evidenced something that still happened, in the 19th century, when fragrances wafted out onto the tranquil sea, past no industrial plants.

What better image of Paradise could the American traveller perceive, provided the sea was calm and the weather good? Even now the sweet-perfumed, bright-yellow broom, the pungent rosemary, the delicious basil - fatal only to Keats's Isabella - the pizza-linked origano, the orange and lemon trees, the vineyards and olive groves, the fig trees and the almond trees characterize so many of the Mediterranean coasts, which share many types of fragrant vegetation.[1] There is in fact a Mediterranean *koiné* of perfumes.

Thus a fragrant and luscious landscape well represents one side of the American experience of Genoa and of the Mediterranean cultures: through the gate of Genoa, travellers entered the caressing southern world, Catholic Italy, pagan Greece, Moslem northern African countries. They entered a geography of enchantment and dangerous allurement, as is well-known,[2] where northern rigidity and protestant honesty were left behind for a while.

Genoa stands powerfully at the gate of the American experience of Italy and the other Mediterranean countries. It offered the charm of its gardens and groves as the voyagers approached it from the sea, the beauty of its frescoed palaces and marble churches as they landed in the city, the attractiveness of its women as travellers walked in the city's tangled streets.

But if Genoa is the promise of Paradise in the description of many American writers, it suddenly looms before us as a biblical city of destruction in Melville's words. Genoa is the gate *out* of the Mediterranean experience for Melville, arriving there after his 1856-57 voyage to Constantinople and Jerusalem, which generated his poem *Clarel.* To the great tragic imagination of Melville the city, seen from the "Lantern," the lighthouse in the harbor which he climbed on 12 April 1857, appeared as: "the capital and fortified camp of Satan: fortified against the Archangels" (Melville 123).

Melville's mere journal jottings, as powerful as the most elaborate prose, reverse suddenly all metaphors of Paradise; not only is Genoa the "camp of Satan" but it is doubly "fortified," with a repetition of the word, "against the Archangels."

The imagery of war is suddenly brought into view by Melville to remind us - also - that the Mediterranean is not only the world of fragrant vegetation: it is also the watery space where aircraft carriers now, warships and pirates-ships earlier, the Crusaders' galleys even earlier in time, brought war. Melville's is always an inclusive, grand and dramatic vision.

But who are these fiery Archangels - Archangels are always brandishing swords - that Melville views as possible attackers of Satan's camp? Would Melville allow us to identify them, for a moment only, restricting his powerful and vast vision, with our American travellers? Trying to attack what *appears* as Paradise but what is instead the camp of Satan? Genoa and the whole of the Italian experience?

Melville's imagery shows suddenly the underside of the lure of Italy, of paradise: under the appearance of attractiveness it shows the evil core of experience, of any experience, which, as we know from Melville's other works is, anyhow, always worth living, whatever the cost.

What can the American traveller who is also a writer make of this experience, of the experience of the enticing - and deeply corrupting - beauty of nature and art? Can he accept Melville's general view of experience, and live it through? Or should he refuse the lure of Italy as satanic corruption? Must he avoid it at all costs, can he fight against it?

In fact, there is only one way out for the American writer: it is indicated by Henry James, who in his description of the real and symbolic "impenetrable topographic tangle of Genoa," impossible to penetrate even on a second visit, declares that what really counts is its "old Italian sketchability." If things can be "sketched," in pigments or words, there is a way out of any tangle: the way out is *art*, the writer can take advantage of whatever "sketchability" is offered by what one sees and experiences. Only with his writing can the American traveller enter and conquer the camp of Satan, which is one with Eden, and survive, an Archangel armed not with a sword of fire but with a pen. He can only face the challenge of art and seduction in his writing, as it was for Hawthorne and James, not on his own body, in his own life.

Among early American travellers, the most significant - and representative - writer describing the Genoese experience as (earthly) paradisiacal is John Singleton Copley (1738-1815). Maybe because he was a painter and his eye was "hungry" for the experience of art, Copley was only enchanted by the city and found nothing amiss in his experience of Genoa. In 1774, in the city, as he was to do throughout Italy, Copley looked for paintings he already knew from the etchings and engravings he had seen in America, but whose colours and brushstrokes he ignored. But the art experience was not the only one he enjoyed.

Copley is in fact an example of how American travellers might allow themselves to be fascinated by the luxury - one might say the oriental luxury - of European refinement: Copley was enchanted by the paintings he saw, but he was also fascinated by the luscious silks and velvets which he bought in great quantities: the thirty-six-year old, not very rich painter, bought yards and yards of black velvet and scarlet silk, lace ruffles for *jabots*, silk stockings. Maybe he had read the English guidebook by Nugent, who advised travellers to buy silk and damask and velvet at Genoa. In his letters to his wife, Copley felt he had to justify his expenses to her: his purchases were real bargains, therefore he was not wasting the little money he had. For his silk and velvet he had spent about seven guineas, half the sum they would have cost him in London. He obviously felt some guilt in his luxurious shopping as he wrote to his wife: "I believe you will think I have become a 'beau', to dress in such a rich suit of clothes, and truly I am a little tinctured; but you must remember that you thought I was too careless about my dress" (35).

Behind Copley's descriptions one perceives something that goes beyond economic advantage: the young painter seems to revel in the sensuality of the sheen and softness of the velvets and the satins, he abandons himself to the pleasure of caressing the rich material, in a physical and sensual way that is indicative of what can happen to American travellers in Italy: Copley too, however, finally transformed his very love of silks and satins into the luscious folds of the clothes worn by the characters in his portraits, rendering in his art that very sheen and luxury which he fell in love with in the Genoa stores. The double portrait of the Izards, painted in Italy in 1775, is a good example of his ability to paint in the blue silk of the dress and the white muslin scarf of Mrs. Izard (*The Lure of Italy* 157).

What was happening to Copley and happened to other American travellers was that they were tempted to give themselves up to beauty, to art, to luxury, forgetting what John Adams in 1780 had called the "usefull arts," and opting for the *useless* "fine Arts" (*Book* 260). Copley indulged in the luxuries Abigail Adams feared her husband, the future president of the USA (1797-1801), would enjoy too much in fascinating Europe in 1780. John wrote to her from Paris, trying to reassure her:

> There is every Thing here that can inform the Understanding, or refine the Taste, and indeed one would think that could purify the Heart. Yet it must be remembered there is every thing here too, which can seduce, betray, deceive, deprave, corrupt and debauch it. (*Book* 256)

Similarly Thomas Jefferson, suspicious of Europe's moral corruption, writing from Paris in 1785 (October 15), had advised young men against travelling to Europe, because the young Americans would lose themselves in the refinements of a dangerous world, develop a "fondness for luxury and dissipation," would learn "drinking, horse-racing, boxing" (Rahv 636): this was the warning of a man who had the most splendid collections of paintings, statues, books, and etchings in his house at Monticello.

Thirty years after Copley, in 1804, young Washington Irving (1783-1859) was also enthusiastic about his Genoa experience. Irving wrote in his diary about the magnificence of the geographic location of the city, the splendor of its palaces and churches - in particular Sant'Ambrogio with its paintings by Rubens and Guido (Reni), San Lorenzo, the Annunziata and Santa Maria di Carignano with the works by Procaccino, the decaying "Palazzo del Principe," where Irving romantically evoked the figure of Andrea Doria,[3] as he made a romantic hero of the *bandito* Musso. But he dwelt more on his own pastimes and social life: he was enchanted, above all, by the refined and gay life of the upper-class Anglo-Genoese society he frequented as a happy and free young man, who had been sent to Europe for health reasons.

Irving's diary is therefore full of annotations regarding the parties and the theatres he attended. For instance, on 26 October he visited the gardens of the Villa Lomellini at Pegli (Villa Lomellini Rostan, with its famous garden designed by Andrea Tagliafichi in 1784, which was destroyed in 1950 to make room for a soccer field) (*Liguria* 224) and wrote about it:

> This garden is as I before said, laid out in the english[4] taste… It has a variety of fine walks, Groves, grottos rivulets, a hermitage, a rustic theatre, a temple &c &c &c and delightful glimpses are caught of the Mediterranean from different parts of the Garden. (*Journal* 118)

What transpires from the description of his visit in the diary is in fact the importance of the company he kept: it is evident that Irving's enjoyment was linked to the beauty of the place but even more to the presence of some young and charming English girls, whose harpsichord concert and singing was described, together with the dancing that went on until late at night. A glimpse of the young man's jolly life is also offered by

Irving's description of the rest of the night, as he also described a further "adventure." On the way back to the city, as it was raining, Irving and his friend Storm stopped off at a popular theatre ("a miserable little hole") at San Pier d'Arena, where Storm almost caused a fight with two French officers because: "in the course of the play when she [the actress] had fainted away and was reclining in a most pathetic situation in an arm-chair Storm pelted her with balls of paper" (*Journal* 119).

This "very pretty girl" was an "*an old acquaintance*" of Irving's friend. The evening should have finished at Lord and Lady Shaftesbury's, but by the time the two friends made it to Genoa it was far too late and the visit had to take place the next day.

Irving records in his diary how Lord and Lady Shaftesbury were in fact "war prisoners," because the French had occupied the city, but underlines the easiness of their situation that did not prevent Lady Shaftesbury from having parties, playing the piano, giving the best education to her daughter, "a very pretty girl of about fifteen extremely lively." Again, we perceive the young Irving enamored of life and youth, as he has more comments than this one about the young Lady Barbara.

Among Irving's annotations on his social life he recorded his visit to Madame Brignole (1765-1815, Anna Maria Gaspara Vincenza Pieri, Marchesa Brignole Sale) at Voltri, where he admired the amateur theatre in her villa ("the neoclassic theatre on the second floor" *Liguria* 232), where guests played billiard waiting for the performance of *Zaira* by Voltaire and the "elegant dinner furnished in a room that was decorated to represent a Grotto" (123) after the play.

Irving's descriptions of his life in Genoa are not limited to his social life, as we shall see, but these do represent a fair portion of his writing: Irving's enjoyment of that life is also testified to by his descriptions of social pastimes, such as games: charades with classical topics, the game of the ring, blindman's buff. His enjoyment of life is also marked by his observations on the food, in particular the "ravioli" which were served on St. Martin's day (127).

Irving's admiration was not reserved only for the upper-class society women he frequented, the English girls, the ladies dressed according to French fashion. His young and keen eye caught and described also the beauty of the local women, such as that of a peasant called Angelina, with "a blooming complexion, fine black eyes a beautiful set of teeth and when she smiled, two of the prettiest dimples imaginable" (125).

Irving was young and unattached during this trip to Europe and his life had no shadows as yet, and he could enjoy life in ways that were not to come back: after his return to the USA, in 1806, his life was to change forever with the death of his father and his sister, and above all with the death of his beloved Matilda Hoffmann, at seventeen. Irving was never to marry.

Irving's carefree attitude and his enjoyment of life are not all one finds in his journals: the young writer can be a keen discerner of poverty,[5] stupidity, misery, as he de-

scribes the beggars at the harbor, the slaves in chains, the destruction of churches and convents brought about by Napoleon, the poor condition of the nobility. But one can also see his Romantic imagination at work, in ways that announce many of his later works, where history mixes with imagination.

This is particularly noticeable in two episodes, the description of the hanging of the bandit Musso, which was mentioned above, and the description of his encounter with some pirates.

These two episodes are in a way part of the pre-determined view of Italy and the Mediterranean that Irving brought with him. These were places where you *expected* to see *banditti,* on land or on the sea, although the rational part of the traveller's mind knew that it was not always so. Irving in fact annotated in his diary that: "the stilleto is forbidden to be worn and Genoa that was once one of the worst places in Italy for assassinations no longer deserves the character" (117).

The expectation of any evil, symbolized by the word "stiletto," most popular in the traditional representation of danger,[6] is clear in what one could define the Freudian denial of this sentence. In this city, therefore, it is not so surprising that a visitor should see the execution of a bandit: but Irving presented the figure of Musso, called "The Great Devil of Genoa," in no realistic terms but as a romantic hero, someone who not only faced his destiny in a manly fashion, but also as someone who had been the victim of persecutions and wars, and who had become a bandit in order to "give to the poor what he took from the rich." In Irving's view Joseph Musso is none other than one of Salvator Rosa's bandits, both in the physical description, very close to Rosa's self-portrait, and in the general building of his character - that of a generous man, a "common labourer or peasant" of "obscure parentage" - driven to violence by his militance in the Austrian army and banned from an honest life ever after.

The pirates[7] Irving met after he left Genoa, off the coast of Leghorn, near Elba, are in fact called by the writer "the Banditti of the Ocean," and the description of their outward aspect is very similar, again, to the picturesque and romantic canons of Salvator Rosa's bandits: they have "dark complexions, rough beards and fierce black eyes under enormous bushy eye brows," they are armed with "rusty cutlasses & stilettos (a kind of dagger) stuck in their belts" (149). Irving turned the encounter with the "pirates" into a real tale, not devoid of comic relief in the rendering of a dialogue between sailors: there may have been some real experience at the basis of the episode, but it is clear that Irving's imagination caught and transformed the experience, exactly as he had done with the Musso episode.

It is in fact in the pages regarding the leaving of Genoa by ship that one finds one of the earliest and most explicit statements of poetics Irving ever made. On contemplating the calm sea all around him, the young writer wonders:

Had those happy days continued when the Deities made themselves visible to man and now and

then payed him a familiar visit… we might have been entertained by the *raree shew* of Neptune and Amphitrite, and all their gay train of Nerieds and Dolphins….
But those days of romance are over. The gods are tired of us heavy mortals and no longer admit us into their intimacy. In these dull *matter of fact* days our only consolation is to wander about their once frequented haunts and endeavor to make up by imagination the want of the reality. There is a poetic charm… that diffuses itself over our ideas in considering this part of the globe. We regard everything with an enthusiastic eye-throw a romantic medium that gives an illusive tinge to every object. (144)

Irving, even if he was a very young writer, showed he was amazingly conscious of his own poetics: he could throw a romantic veil over the bandit at Genoa and over the *banditti of the ocean*, but he was well aware of what he was doing. He knew that the writer looked "at this part of the globe" with an "enthusiastic eye," and that the "glow" that characterized the scenery was more in the eye of the beholder than in the scenery itself, as it depended "in great measure from the illusive veil with which it is oerspread" (145).

If the gods do not appear any more, as in the classic age, it is the writer's task to make them appear again, through his imagination and his pen. Irving is caught up in the charm of Genoa and Italy, and at the same time, in passages such as the one quoted above, he shows he is totally conscious of the function of the artist.

Like Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) showed an awareness of the expected when he explicitly mentioned that the guide he hired in Genoa "*said* his name was Salvator Rosa" (47); for him the veil of enchantment thrown over the churches and palaces of Genoa was never rent in his diary description of them, although his perception of the general layout and streets of the city was always most negative. The streets are described as "mere gullies," "chill as death," and later they are defined as "vault-like": the sense of death was enhanced by the persisting feeling of the bitter cold of January (1858).

Hawthorne's unbounded admiration of art is an almost astonishing reaction, if one considers how the writer often expressed weariness in his future appreciation of Italy, not to speak of his reactions to the art which the repressive codes of his Puritan culture made unsufferable, an example being his horrified reaction to the nakedness of Titian's *Venere d'Urbino* in the Florence Uffizi (Mamoli Zorzi, *Tiziano* 277-278).

The wealth of marbles, gold, and decorations of churches and palaces in Genoa were not felt as too luxurious, but on the contrary they were fully appreciated by Hawthorne, as when he wrote about Sant'Annunziata, which he found:

more magnificent than anything I had before seen or imagined; its whole interior being cased in polished marble, of various kind and colors, its cieling (sic) painted, and its chapels adorned with pictures. (47)

The wonderful church was however "dazzled out of sight" by the Cathedral of San Lorenzo, "with alternate slabs of black and white marble, which were brought, either in whole or in part, from Jerusalem" and by its interior where "there was an immense richness

of precious marble, and a pillar, if I mistake not, from Solomon's Temple, and a picture of the Virgin by Saint Luke, and others (rather more intrinsically valuable, I imagine) by old Masters, set in magnificent marble frames, within the arches of the Chapels" (47).

Not only did Hawthorne fully appreciate the riches of the Cathedral, but he also asked himself which might have been the splendor of English cathedrals before the destructions brought about by Cromwell, to resume later a sort of paean of the Genoese marble:

> I never imagined anything at all approaching what my eyes now beheld; this sheen of polished and variegated marble, covering every inch of the walls; this glow of brilliant frescoes all over the roof, and up within the domes; these beautiful pictures by the great masters, painted for the places they now occupied, and making an actual portion of the edifice; this wealth of silver, gold, gems, that adorned the shrines of the saints, before which wax candles burned, and were kept burning, I suppose, from years'end to years'end; in short, there is no imagining or remembering a hundredth part of this magnificence. (48)

Hawthorne used several times the verb *to dazzle*, in relation to the splendor of the Cathedral, the church of San Matteo, which "in its interior, absolutely shone with burnished gold, and glowed with pictures" (48), while its walls were "a quarry of precious stones, so valuable were the marbles out of which they were wrought" (48).

In order to succeed in describing the beauty and riches of San Matteo, Hawthorne employed the technique of miniaturization, imagining a precious and tiny jewel-box, which cannot but remind the Hawthorne reader of the perfect butterfly wrought by "The Artist of the Beautiful." This jewel-box or casket is: "all inlaid, in its inside, with precious stones, so that there shall not a hair's breadth be left un-precious-stoned."

But this tiny and precious representation is not destroyed, as happens in the story, but is brought back to its gigantic size by the narrator who asks his reader to imagine this casket:

> increased to the magnitude of a great church, without losing anything of the intense glory that was compressed into its original small compass, but all its pretty lustre made sublime and magnificent by the immensity. (48)

One wonders about Hawthorne's unconditioned admiration of art in Genoa, as one wonders also about his appreciation of the religion (Catholicism) that has produced these masterpieces (although one can think of the attraction of Catholicism in *The Marble Faun*). It is as if Hawthorne were not as yet oppressed by the weight of Italian art in the city that introduced him to it for the first time, even if also in his Genoese diary he did admit he had not appreciated the magnificent pictures of the Palazzo Reale, which he saw after the churches and the Palazzo Balbi, due to his own "limited" "receptive faculty" (49). When this is "full," he writes: "I become perfectly miserable, and the more so, the better worth seeing are the things I am forced to reject" (49). No comment by Sophia Peabody Hawthorne seems to have been recorded.

In their experiences of Genoa, the two great American writers who had "the power of blackness" in common, seem to stand at different ends of the spectrum. However, the "bold and barren, and brown" peaks observed by Hawthorne on his arrival in Genoa and the "vault-like" streets bring him closer to Melville's deathly view of the city, while Melville's appreciation of Genoese women, described with an appropriately watery metaphor as "Undines & Maids of the Mist. Simple & graceful," thanks to the "mezzero" (a sort of veil) in which they draped themselves, throws a softer light on Melville's experience of Genoa.

Many other American writers passed through Genoa, leaving comments on the approach to the city, descriptions of churches, palaces, paintings in their diaries and letters, at times writing about the political events.

If the approach by water could be paradisiacal - we mentioned the fragrance of orchards and gardens spreading out on to the sea, observed also by Christopher Pearse Cranch (1813-1892), a poet and painter who smelled "fragrance of clover and hay" (Cranch 102) floating 50 miles out of the coast near Marseilles, in 1846 - the crossing from Marseille or Nice could be rough and difficult, particularly if it took place in the winter, a season wrongly judged mild by Northern tourists in their illusion of finding an eternal spring in Italy . The sea trip was then almost as rough and difficult as the land trip (Pfister 63-77), although, by the nineteenth century, the taste for the picturesque of summits and ravines had added an aesthetic dimension to a landscape that was seen and felt previously as merely dangerous (such as R. Guilford's "grieuous Mount Senys" of 1506). Even young Irving had furious winds and waves on approaching Santo Stefano al Mare (*Journals* 106) and again on leaving Genoa (141).

Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) was perhaps one of the most unhappy American travellers by sea or at least she was the one that actually dismissed the telling of the trip, reducing it to few icastic sentences. Her trip from Marseilles to Genoa by steamer in 1847 took thirty hours instead of sixteen, due to the terrible weather.

> Of this transit, - Fuller wrote - he who has been on the Mediterranean in a stiff breeze well understands I can have nothing to say except 'I suffered'. It was all one dull, tormented dream to me, and I believe, to most of the ship's company. (*At Home* II, 217)

The "cutting wind" later prevented Fuller from appreciating the city:

> Seen by a cutting wind, the marble palaces, the gardens, the magnificent water-view of Genoa, failed to charm. "*I saw, not felt* how beautiful they were." (*At Home* 217*, Letters* IV 262)

The only comfort for Fuller's unhappy trip was her visit to Maria Mazzini, the mother of Giuseppe Mazzini, whom the author of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* and the future writer of letters to the New York *Tribune* from besieged Rome already saw as one of the saviours of Italy. As is well-known, after Fuller's Italian political adventure ended with the fall of the Roman Republic, her life was lost in the shipwreck of the steamer "Elisabeth" that was taking her back to the USA, with her little son Angelino, his

nanny Celeste, and the father of her son, Marquis Angelo Ossoli, all drowned in the fury of the ocean off Fire Island in 1850.

The trip by land was also often described in terrified terms, such as the ones used by journalist and writer N.P. Willis (1806-1867), who arrived in Genoa in 1852:

> We were on the road to Genoa with the first grey of the dawn - the surgeon, a French officer, and myself, three passengers of a courier barouche. We were climbing up mountains and sliding down with locked wheels for several hours by a road edging on precipices, and overhung by tremendous rocks….
> The road is cut into the sides of the precipices, often hundred of feet perpendicular above the surf, descending sometimes into the ravines formed by the numerous rivers that cut their way to the sea. It is a dizzy business from beginning to end. There is no parapet usually, and there are thousands of places where half a 'shie' by a timid horse would drop you at once some hundred fathoms upon rocks wet by the spray of every sea that breaks upon the shore. (43)

Another American, who signed his books as "An American," although he was Doctor Sloane from Baltimore, approached Genoa in 1821 coming instead from Italy, but with similar impressions:

> The descent was now very rapid, and seemed so dangerous in spite of the zigzags in which the path continually turned, that we several times dismounted, choosing to trust to our feet. At sunset we were among the broken hills and deep ravines where cottages, walls, vineyards, and olive trees were scattered among ledges of rocks and the dry beds of torrents, in a variety *highly picturesque.* Having crossed a valley a quarter of a mile wide, entirely covered with loose pebbles, we forded a swift stream which every year overflows the banks and makes a tremendous torrent…. (441, my emphasis)

Fortunately for Doctor Sloane he was sensitive to the beauty of the picturesque, which partly made up for the difficulties encountered in his approach to Genoa.

His account, however, is indicative of other dangers a traveller could meet, once he had passed the "inhospitable mountains": Sloane declared he was enormously relieved to have left the revolution, the tumults of the Austrians and the Neapolitans, behind the Apennines; but a few days later - this was the moment of the 1821 revolutions - he found them again in Genoa.

In addition to the perils of the trip and of revolutions, travellers could encounter other dangers or simple annoyances, due to bureaucracy or quarantines: Washington Irving had to wait in France for five weeks because of a lack of a valid passport; the Boston painter Amasa Hewins (1795-1855) found out he had to spend forty days isolated on board his ship when he arrived in Genoa in 1830, in conditions that he harshly criticized, as he believed that the locals must have been:

> grossly ignorant of the nature of contagion, or willfully perverse and stupid, to compel vessels in the midst of winter to perform a long quarantine, though coming from places where there is not the least suspicion of contagion, nor any sickness on board…. It is my belief that the quarantine

regulations of this place would be more likely to produce yellow fever, or plague in warm weather, than any other cause whatsoever. Here are 75 or 100 vessels moored so close together that a person may step from one to the other, all crowded into one corner of the harbor with a mole and high wall on one side to prevent the sea breeze from reaching them, and on the other, a high ridge of hills which nearly surrounds them; add to this that the surface of the water is covered with decaying vegetables, entrails of fowls and whatever else may be thrown from the vessels, the tide scarcely perceptible, the days long, and the sun very powerful. (29)

The travellers' approach to the gate of the Mediterranean with the blissful or terrible experience of the sea or land trip, is in itself indicative of the well-known contradictory character of the experience of Genoa and Italy. This duplicity was explicitly evoked in the rhetorical address to "Superb Genoa" by James Jackson Jarves (1818-1888), the traveller who after experiencing the Pacific eventually settled in Florence where he created one of the most important American collections of early Italian primitives, which nobody wanted to buy when he decided to sell it (fortunately Yale eventually bought it). Jarves addressed Genoa as the splendid gate to a "country blessed by God and cursed by tyrants" (9).

In this land where God had created a wonderful nature, man had created wonderful art, and tyrants did not allow democracy and freedom - and one of the tyrants, of course, was the Pope, with his temporal power which Fuller at the end of her life declared should be downright abolished - there was always a discrepancy between appearance and reality. As is well known, and as we mentioned, Italy was aesthetically alluring and morally dangerous. There were two characteristics of Genoa which allowed Americans to express their suspicion of art and of the past: the first one, symbolic of the duplicity of the Italian experience was the wonderful trompe-l'oeuil art of the painted facades of the Genoa palaces. This was often unbearable to the Americans (and English travellers before them), as soon as they discovered that the frescoes were painted to present *fake* architectures. The second element was the medieval structure of the city, on which almost every American traveller commented, in negative terms. As regards painted facades, Doctor Sloane, for instance, wrote:

the edifices themselves were usually painted with various colours and figures, so useless and tawdry as to disgust our eyes, with a display of barbarous taste in a new variety. (446)

The appearance of painting seems disgusting *because* it is only a make-believe, and probably because, to doctor Sloane, the gods and goddesses of the frescoes are too naked. Mark Twain also commented on the frescoes, exerting his irony, as usual, both on the thing observed and on its onlookers:

These houses,… are, in many cases, of a dull, pinkish color, outside, and from the pavement to eaves are pictured with Genoese battle-scenes, with monstrous Jupiters and Cupids and with familiar illustrations from Grecian mythology. Where the paint has yielded to age and exposure and is peeling off in flakes and patches, the effect is not happy. A noseless Cupid, or a Jupiter with an eye out, or a Venus with a fly-blister on her breast, are not attractive features in a picture…. Some of these painted walls reminded me somewhat of the tall van, plastered with fanciful bills and posters, that follows the band-wagon of a circus about a country village. (164-165)

Twain's realistic creed makes his narrator observe the frescoes without the veil of illusion that Irving threw over the Italian scene; the novelist uses irony in a comparison based on *bathos* (the *low* publicity posters on the van) to debunk any myth of *high* art. Moreover, these ruined frescoes are also what American (and European) passionate pilgrims are told to admire, and usually blindly admire, without exerting any intelligent faculty of observation.

As regards the second characteristic, that crooked topography that Genoa shares with so many Mediterranean cities, even young Irving had something to say on the streets, which

> hardly deserve the name of alleys some of them being but six seven & eight feet wide and I have been obliged to turn back or get into the door of a house to make way for an ass with a pannier on each side that was walking in the middle of the street. (*Journal* 112)

James Fenimore Cooper also wrote some comments in 1838: "the streets in general are Moorish in width, many of them positively not being more than eight or ten feet in breadth" (Cooper 57). Cooper's use of "Moorish" well indicates the sense of the (dangerously) exotic character of the city.

Melville (April 1857) judged the streets similar to those in Edinburgh, "only still more steep & crooked" (123); we already mentioned Hawthorne's definitions, while Twain described them as "crooked as a corkscrew" and as "gloomy cracks" (163).

It took the great Henry James to identify in the medieval "tangle" of the city, in later years (1878), as we already saw, the essence of the Italian picturesque, in one of the passages most often quoted as regards Genoa, and rightly so:

> Genoa is the tightest topographic tangle in the world, which even a second visit helps you little to straighten out. In the wonderful crooked, twisting, climbing, soaring, burrowing Genoese alleys the traveller is really up to his neck in the old Italian sketchability.
> Genoa… is the crookedest and most incoherent of cities; tossed about on the sides and crests of a dozen hills, it is seamed with gullies and ravines that bristle with those innumerable palaces for which we have heard from our earliest years that the place is celebrated. These great structures, with their mottled and faded complexions, lift their big ornamental cornices to a tremendous height in the air, where, in a certain indescribably forlorn and desolate fashion, overtopping each other, they seem to reflect the twinkle and glitter of the warm Mediterranean. Down about the basements, in the close crepuscular alleys, the people are for ever moving to and fro or standing in their cavernous doorways and their dusky, crowded shops, calling, chattering, laughing, lamenting, living their lives in the conversational Italian fashion. I had for a long time had no such vision of possible social pressure. I hadn't for a long time seen people elbowing each other so closely or swarming so thickly out of populous hives. (*Italy Revisited* 105-106)

Genoa comes to life in James's description almost as a *living creature*, even if old and decaying ("with mottled and faded complexion"), as cities often do in his writings. The description is based on oppositions, that well convey the duplicity of the Italian experience.

Where one finds decay and desolation, there is still majesty ("tremendous height") and beauty ("the twinkle and glitter" of the sea). If James hints at the pleasant "conversational Italian fashion" of a life lived physically close, body to body, his description is not to be taken at its face value: the use of the verb "swarming" - the verb Irving had used to describe beggars, and the verb James was to use later in his description of the Jewish population of the Lower East Side in *The American Scene*, - indicates swarms of people who cannot but be miserably poor, as is evident from the rest of the passage:

A traveller is often moved to ask himself whether it has been worth while to leave his home - whatever his home may have been - only to encounter new forms of human suffering, only to be reminded that toil and privation, hunger and sorrow and sordid effort, are the portion of the mass of mankind. (*Italy Revisited* 106)

In this passage James brings us back to the central question of travelling, and more generally, of life. Is it worth living new experiences, i.e. experiencing "new forms of human suffering"; is it worth opening up to life, or should one stay in his study, eyes tightly shut to the outside world?

James's reply is in the writer's capacity to come to terms with whatever experience he has to face. In spite of this bleak vision of poverty, James succumbs to the sensual enchantment of the Mediterranean city, observing "the sensuous optimism" of its people in its streets and at the harbour, where he notices the beauty of "mahogany coloured, bare-chested mariners with earrings and crimson girdles." But even this observation is related to the world of art, as these sailors "seem to people a southern seaport with the chorus of *Masaniello*." James's reference to *La muta dei portici* (1828, by Daniel Auber) transfers reality into art.

James is fascinated by the mixture of picturesque poverty and physical beauty of the people, and he responds to the duplicity of the Italian experience by writing it all out. Italy remains the land of dangerous attractiveness, also for one of James's best-known characters.

It is towards an attractive and illusory world, seen through the confident eyes of a young American woman, that Isabel Archer turns her gaze, when, in San Remo, she looks at the Mediterranean in the direction of Genoa:

The charm of the Mediterranean coast only deepened for our heroine on acquaintance, for it was the threshold of Italy, the gate of admirations. Italy, as yet imperfectly seen and felt, stretched before her as a land of promise, a land in which a love of the beautiful might be comforted by endless knowledge… she looked across the sea, with longing eyes, to where she knew that Genoa lay. (*Portrait* 193)

Genoa is the gate to the world of art, beauty and illusion, poverty and tyranny that the Italian and the Mediterranean world represents for the Americans: not all Americans conquered it, as Isabel Archer did; the conquest of the world of culture and freedom was

what some American writers achieved in the 20th century, either on the coasts of Liguria, as Ezra Pound, or on the coast of Northern Africa, as Paul Bowles. But all American writers did conquer the camp of Satan with their pens.

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NOTES

1. With some differences from place to place: palm-trees or prickly pear bushes do not grow everywhere (Braudel I, 172; Matvejevic 262).

2. See the bibliography for the well-known studies by P. Baker, N. Wright, Van Wyck Brooks, W.L. Vance, S. Foster, J. Pemble, M. Pfister and others.

3. While Irving commented on the figure of Andrea Doria, he only made a superficial observation on Christopher Columbus, in passing by the village indicated to him as the native place of Columbus. More than twenty years Irving was to write passionately on Columbus, doing research in the Spanish archives, see Mamoli Zorzi, "Genova porta di incanti e di perigli."

4. I have kept Irving's own spelling here and in other quotations below as reproduced in the printed edition of his *Journals*.

5. Irving complained, as most travellers did in Italy, of the "annoyance" of the "swarm of beggars" at the port and in the churches. "These miserable beings, he wrote, are seen wandering in every part of a church during mass presenting the most loathsome objects covered with rags and filth" (135). Obviously there was a limit to the appreciation of the picturesque, if he could also write: "Never have I seen such pictures of abject want and wretchedness as I have witnessed in this place" (135). "Abjection," surely moral, went together with poverty in the protestant ethics.

6. A similar perspective, the expectation of violence in the Italian social structure, is to be found in Amasa Hewins, who annotated in his diary the fact that no newspaper published the news of the execution of a man who had killed his young wife, the mother of his children, out of jealousy (35), a crime one could well expect in Italy.

7. Mark Twain also took up the subject of the Americans' fear of naval attacks, ironizing on it, in the episode where the riots on board the moored ship only depend on the excess of grog-drinking by the sailors (156).

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AMERICA'S MEDITERRANEAN COAST

RONALD STEEL

The notion that the United States has a Mediterranean coast seems bizarre and even nonsensical. But that is true only if one thinks simply in geographical terms. What is a problem for geographers can be a truism for historians. In terms of history, culture, politics and economics, America is intimately, indeed indissolubly, linked to the Mediterranean. Its very name, "America," is derived from that of an Italian explorer. The man often credited for its "discovery" hails from this very city, Genoa.

The Mediterranean is a powerful presence in the consciousness of Americans. One can see this in a variety of ways. On a cultural and demographic level it is manifest in the great number of Americans whose national origins are in Mediterranean countries. The countries bordering the Mediterranean are the ancestral homes, in one way or another, of the vast majority of Americans. Spain, Italy, France, Greece, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Egypt - these are the countries whose peoples have come to America and infused its culture with their own.

The Mediterranean is a critical part of the American cultural mosaic. American music, dance and the fine arts are enriched by the contributions of Mediterranean immigrants like Menotti, Villela and Stella. In the cinema one thinks immediately of Coppola, Banderas, Scorsese, and Kazan; in literature of Dos Passos and Ciardi; in urban politics of LaGuardia, Ferraro and Giuliani; and in cuisine of Gallo and pizza and tapas and giros.

Successive waves of immigration from the Mediterranean have continually changed American demography and the very definition of what it means to be an American. The most dramatic expression of this phenomenon can today be found in the recent huge influx into the United States of peoples from Central and South America. These peoples, speaking a Mediterranean language and practising a Mediterranean faith, are today dramatically transforming the face of the United States and the very definition of what it means to be an American.

Spanish is today America's second language. For millions of new Americans it is their only language. In a number of American cities, and before long in some states, people of Spanish, or Spanish-Indian, origins are becoming a majority. Their votes elect mayors and governors and senators, and one day no doubt American presidents as well. The Hispanicisation of the United States is proceeding at a remarkable pace.

America, in its culture and its politics, is far more a Mediterranean society than are any of the European states north of the Alps. These states are closer geographically to the Mediterranean, but the United States is infused in its very being with both the troubling and the rewarding complexities of the inland sea of European culture.

Because of its ties to the Mediterranean area the United States has, from the earliest days of the American republic, placed the area near the center of its concerns about security. It is widely assumed that these concerns began in earnest with the outbreak of the Cold War in the late l940s, when the United States based a powerful naval force in the Mediterranean. American policy makers considered the waters from Gibraltar to Suez as a highway critical to American commerce, American power and American influence - just as they considered the North Atlantic to be.

But the germs of this concern can be found in the very first decades of America's existence as an independent nation. In 1786, only ten years after the declaration of independence, the young United States signed a trade treaty with the kingdom of Morocco. At this time the free movement of trade was hampered by brigands, operating from the Barbary states with protection from the Bey of Algiers, who demanded heavy tribute for the free passage of merchant ships. Nations that refused to pay this tribute saw their cargo confiscated and their sailors imprisoned and sold into slavery.

At the first the United States, like most of the European nations, paid the tribute. But in 1794, enraged by the seizure of American ships and the capture of 119 American prisoners, Congress voted funds for the construction of six armed frigates to challenge the so-called "Barbary pirates." This was the beginning of the US Navy. And the Mediterranean was where it began.

The action was symbolically significant. Here was an instance of a weak, former European colony without much of an army or navy, reaching across the seas to protect its commercial rights. And it declared its right to do so not only against the North African brigands, but against any infringement of its neutral rights by the feuding great powers of the day: Britain, France and Spain.

One hundred years later, with territorial expansion across the continent, and the terrible war between the states beyond it, the United States made its bid to be treated as one of the world's great powers. This meant first of all declaring its dominion in its own inland sea: the Caribbean. And that meant dealing with the nearby remnants of the collapsing Spanish empire.

By the end of the 19th century Spain was no longer a great power capable of defending, or even insuring order in, its overseas territories. When rebels in Cuba rose in rebellion against Spanish authority, the United States intervened for the ostensible purpose of restoring order in its self-defined "back yard." As a result of the brief war, in which Spain was quickly defeated, Cuba and the Dominican Republic became American protectorates, although formally retaining their independence.

The war also spread far from the Caribbean. Halfway around the world American warships sunk the Spanish fleet in Manila harbor and the United States took possession of the Philippine islands. Thereby did it become a Pacific power - an event of enormous importance whose consequences few perceived at the time.

Theodore Roosevelt, on becoming president in 1901, moved to extend America's diplomatic as well as its naval power. Using the leverage of America's new economic and

naval power (fortified by his dispatch around the world of what he called the "Great White Fleet" of American warships), he presided over a conference held in Algeciras, Spain, to settle an imperial dispute between France and Germany over the political future of Morocco. Through this diplomatic initiative the United States became directly involved in the European power equation over a Mediterranean issue.

It was in the 1940s that the United States defined the Mediterranean as central to its security interests. During World War 2 the US began in the Mediterranean its campaign to liberate Europe from Nazi Germany. In 1942 American and British forces landed in Morocco and Algeria to depose the Nazi-controlled regimes in those French colonies, and to use them as bases for their later landings in Italy. Rather than launch a cross-Channel invasion against German forces, the Allies decided first to liberate Italy. This emphasis on the Mediterranean was a costly decision that postponed the assault through France for many months and resulted in many Allied casualties.

After the defeat of Germany in 1945, followed almost immediately by the battles of the Cold War, the Mediterranean became a focal point of American political and military action. American statesmen were particularly concerned by the political and economic situation in Italy, where they feared that postwar disarray might bring a Soviet-controlled communist government to power. In l945 the US commissioner in Italy warned Washington that the ground "is fertile for the rapid growth of the seeds of an anarchical movement fostered by Moscow to bring Italy within the sphere of Russian influence" (Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, Stanford University Press, 1992: 71).

To weaken the appeal of communist groups the US reduced the terms of the Italian armistice, pressed to keep Trieste in Italian hands, and sought Italy's early admission into the United Nations. The CIA offered weapons to the Italian armed forces, and bribes and propaganda instruments to anticommunist forces. It also authorized covert operations against Italian communist movements and, in the context of the 1948 elections, where the communists were expected to do well, prepared plans for a possible military intervention to prevent Italy from falling under Soviet influence.

Greece was an area of even greater concern. There a continuing civil war stoked fears that a communist-dominated left would take control of the government. Like neighboring Turkey, Greece was viewed by Washington as a barrier to Soviet power in the Mediterranean. "If the fall of the Greek government should result in the emergence of a communist Greece," the State Department was informed by a high officer in the field, "Soviet encirclement of Turkey will have been enhanced, and Soviet prospects for entering the eastern Mediterranean will have greatly increased" (ibid. 125-6). This was viewed as particularly grave because the Mediterranean, in the words of a high naval official, should be viewed as a "highway" for the projection of military power "deep into the heart of the land mass of Eurasia and Africa" (ibid. 144).

The theme was fortified by under secretary of state Dean Acheson in 1947 when he sought to persuade Congress to fund the Truman Doctrine for aid to Greece and Turkey by arguing that a Russian "breakthrough" in Greece or Turkey "might open three continents

to Soviet penetration" (ibid. 145). In his historic speech to Congress in March of that year, president Harry Truman, calling for emergency financial aid to Greece and Turkey, phrased the issue as an East-West struggle, declaring that nations "must choose between alternate ways of life."

A year earlier the Truman administration had dispatched an American battleship to the eastern Mediterranean to dramatize US interest in the region and to project a symbol of American power. Even this early, in the beginning phases of the Cold War, US concern that domestic social unrest in France, Germany and Italy might provide fertile ground for the spread of Soviet influence, had spread across the length of the Mediterranean.

A further factor of concern was, of course, the position of the Mediterranean as a "highway" to the oil fields of the Middle East. Later, as communist influence declined in Western Europe, that concern became dominant in American strategic thinking about the Mediterranean. In 1956 the US forced its two major European allies, France and Britain, along with a besieged Israel, to cease their invasion of Egypt to secure the Suez Canal.

This humiliating withdrawal ended the British presence in Suez, weakened the position of France in its Algerian colony, and persuaded the Israelis to fortify their links with Washington. After this incident the US replaced Britain as the dominant foreign military force in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. In 1958 the US intervened militarily in Lebanon, and again in 1982 during the Lebanese civil war.

The end of the Cold War has changed the focus of US concern about the Mediterranean, but not its central place in American strategic thinking. This was dramatized in the discussions during the 1990s about the return of France to the NATO's military command. The price that Paris put upon that return was the replacement of an American commander of the Sixth (Mediterranean-based) Fleet with a European (ideally French) naval officer. Washington refused to dilute its control by paying that price.

Indisputably the dominant global power, and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future, the United States projects its power across every ocean through naval, air and land bases. It is the dominant military power in the Mediterranean, as well as the Atlantic, north and south, the Pacific, and the Indian oceans.

Political and economic change will likely reduce this dominant role eventually - especially if the states of the European Union achieve their ambition of creating a major power from their joint efforts.

But culture is more significant and lasting than military force. Powerful links between the America and the Mediterranean will remain. This is because even more important than how the US projects its power is how it defines itself as a civilization. At the very core of this self-definition is - as it has always been - the Mediterranean.

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MEDITERRANEAN METAMORPHOSES: "ENRICO LONGFELLO'S" CONTRIBUTION TO MULTILINGUAL AMERICAN LITERATURE

CHRISTOPH IRMSCHER

for Hans Dietrich Irmscher

At the outset of his long article on the "History of the Italian Language and Dialects," published in October 1832 in the *North American Review*, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the Professor of Modern Languages at Bowdoin College, confidently identifies the "study of languages" as "one of the most important" tasks that "can occupy the human mind." We may safely assume that Longfellow, who had come back from his travels fluent in several foreign languages, knew what he was talking about. But it is not nearly enough to speak a language well, he tells us here; we need to know its history, too. Words are like the "armor and weapons of the Middle Ages," exhibiting "very clearly and forcibly not only the character of the times, but also the stature and physical strength of those who wore and wielded them." Like shiny artifacts in a museum, they remind us, "in a clear and vivid light," how the intellect of a nation has developed over time. And, adds Longfellow, no language can make such historical research more pleasant than Italian ("History" 283).

Using the example of Longfellow, this essay seeks to recover a forgotten chapter in the history of multilingual American literature. The old *Cambridge History of American Literature* of 1917-1921 still contained sections on "Non-English Writings," assuming that the language and literature of the United States "was a field not limited to English" (Sollors 5). But, as Werner Sollors has argued, this insight is hardly shared by most Americanists today, however theoretically advanced they claim to be. Ironically, Longfellow, once America's most beloved and now perhaps its least remembered writer, the first dead white male to be kicked out of the literary canon, can help us understand more clearly the move from "English only" to "English plus" advocated by Werner Sollors and his collaborators.

As a young man, Longfellow spent three years traveling through France, Spain, Italy and Germany, perfecting, through complete immersion in native habits and habitats, his knowledge of foreign languages and cultures. Such immersion was in itself a bold move for a traveler from the United States, a country in which, in Longfellow's own uncharitable words, "nobody …pretends to speak anything but English - and some might dispute them even that prerogative" (*Letters* 1: 323). It was Longfellow's encounter with the Italian language and culture that perhaps contributed most significantly to his later vision, now forgotten, of a multicultural and multilingual or, as he called it in a diary entry from 1847, "composite" American literature (*Life* 2: 73). The longest of his sojourns in any one foreign country was spent in Italy, from December 1827, when he arrived in

Genoa, to December 1828, when he left Venice for Dresden. Evidence, in subsequent years, of Longfellow's enduring fascination with the Mediterranean can be found in his scholarship, in his travel writing, in his preoccupation with Michelangelo and Dante (he was the first American to complete a translation of the *Divina Commedia*), in his generous inclusion of Italian material in *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, and, last but not least, in the several volumes he devoted to the Mediterranean in his mega-anthology, the 31-volume collection *Poems of Places* (1876-1879).

It was in the Mediterranean that the seeds were planted for Longfellow's decidedly anti-romantic notion of the writer as a re-distributor of common cultural goods. While Herman Melville was encouraging his fellow writers to condemn "all imitation, though it comes to us graceful and fragrant as the morning," arguing that no "American writer should write like … a Frenchman" (546), Longfellow embraced a poetics based on the abandonment of the concepts of literary originality and rejected the idea that, to paraphrase one of his characters in *Tales of Wayside Inn*, the literary sun rises in one's backyard only (*Works* 4: 276). As I have argued elsewhere, Longfellow believed, rather provocatively, that it is more worthwhile to see with someone else's eyes, even to use, on occasion, someone else's words, than one's own. His works were pervaded by borrowings, sometimes explicit, more often unacknowledged, from other writers, native as well as foreign, so much so that sometimes it even seemed to him they hadn't been written by anyone in particular. This was, his opponents claimed, plagiarism raised to the level of fine - or perhaps not so fine - art. Edgar Allan Poe, his critical nemesis, pointed out that in *Voices of the Night*, his first volume of poetry, Longfellow hadn't even shied away from plagiarizing Sir Philip Sidney's line that one should never plagiarize: "Look, then, into thine heart, and write!" (Poe 756, 764; Longfellow, *Works* 1: 17).

Such accusations notwithstanding, Longfellow's works had, at the height of his fame, been translated into Italian, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Swedish, Danish, Chinese, and Icelandic. But the multilingual cosmopolite Longfellow, in the popular consciousness, has never successfully replaced the more familiar image of the kindly provider of suitable padding for the middlebrow reader's literary comfort zone. With the advent of modernism, Longfellow's literary stock plummeted. No body of academic Longfellow criticism has ever developed (Gurstein 45). As Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury have put it succinctly: "Unless our conception of poetry changes significantly, he will never again be thought great" (Ruland 110). Even recent efforts to revive Longfellow - among them, a new edition of his poetry published by the Library of America and edited by poet J.D. McClatchy - have elicited only a faint response from the American literary establishment.

Taken seriously, though, Longfellow's eclectic textual universe still has much to say to our modern literary culture, which, even in its more revisionist guises, continues to insist on how vital it is to be new, creative, and true and thus has created its own profoundly imitative rituals. In the following pages, my case for Longfellow's multilingualism is built

not on a painstaking review of his long and profitable career as a public poet but on the reconstruction of one specific encounter that took place, more than 150 years ago, among him, a Venetian gondolier, and, in a sense, Lord Byron. To relive this encounter, we need to allow Longfellow to guide us back again to the Venice of September 1828, and there is no better way to let him do that than by returning to the essay mentioned at the beginning of this essay, Longfellow's "History of the Italian Language."

With its references to medieval weapons and knights in armor, "History of the Italian Language" contains much that confirms the now widespread picture of Longfellow the bore. Even then some readers of the *North American Review* thought it was "*dull and* LEARNED," as Longfellow himself reported (*Letters* 1: 406). There is, certainly, the same awkward ponderousness that marks and mars the other articles on foreign literatures and languages he had written during the same period - "Origin and Progress of the French Language," "Spanish Language and Literature," and "Spanish Devotional and Moral Poetry." Longfellow was a language teacher as well as a poet, and the former of his identities seems to have prevailed here. During his first year at Bowdoin College, he translated and adapted for American students a French grammar textbook, edited two Spanish tales written in the style of Irving, and compiled an anthology of dramatic sketches in French. Two years later, he added to this already impressive roster of textbooks an Italian grammar, written in French, and an anthology of Italian prose pieces, both intended to aid students in their quest for fluency in Italian.

Longfellow's frantic editorial and scholarly activity in the years between 1830 and 1833 was partly due to the sorry state of language instruction at American colleges. Privately, he doubted that even his colleagues at Bowdoin could speak the languages they were supposed to teach (*Letters* 1: 297). But his own academic credentials were far from impeccable either. In "History of the Italian Language," his authoritative tone seems intended to disguise the fact that much of the knowledge paraded here the young would-be scholar had gathered from dusty library shelves rather than through extensive fieldwork.

In the first part of his article, Longfellow reviews some theories about the origin of Italian and endorses the "most generally received opinion," namely that the language was created when the illiterate and uncultured Northern conquerors mixed their dialects with the fragments of the Latin language they had picked up from the people they had subdued. But, as Longfellow admits, quoting Saverio Bettinelli, "the origin of this, like the origin of most things else, is uncertain, confused, and undetermined; for all things spring from insensible beginnings, and we cannot say of any, *here* it commenced" ("History" 289).

In the pages that follow, Longfellow does offer a kind of potted history of Italian literature that takes such skepticism seriously. His overview stresses influence and dependency rather than innovation and originality. Even the three "gran maestri del bel parlar Toscano," Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio, in Longfellow's reading were not so much bold innovators as expert sculptors giving shape to the rude material from which the

Italian language had sprung: "They did not strike the first spade into the soil, but they drew the stone from the quarry, set the landmarks, polished the rough marble, and piled and cemented the mis-shapen blocks, till beneath their hands the noble structure rose, majestic, towering, beautiful" ("History" 295). When, for example, Dante's Francesca da Rimini speaks of the love that "on gentle heart doth swiftly seize" (to quote Longfellow's own, later translation), she identifies herself as a reader not just of the *Romance of Lancelot* but also of Guido Guinicelli's work, whose line "Amor, ch' al cor gentil ratto s'apprende" she copies for her own purposes ("History" 293; *Works* 9: 46).

In the bulk of his essay, though, Longfellow leaves literary history alone and focuses on the present state of the Italian language. He provides his readers with a bare bones list of dialects to be found in Italy, ranging from South to North, from the Sicilian to the Sardinian, from the Calabrian to the Corsican. In the sections devoted to individual dialects, brief comments on the most typical deviations from standard Italian are followed by examples from popular poetry, ranging from the "Soldier's Song" sung in Naples ("Who knocks, - who knocks at my door?") and the "Tarantella Trasteverina" ("Amorous youth of Rome's fair city / I have here a new-made ditty") to the more somber reflection on the sadness of love by a poet from Genoa, Gian Giacomo Cavalli ("To part from one's own life, / *Cara Bella*, oh what a death!").

Ironically, then, Longfellow's essay as a whole somewhat undermines the historical claims trumpeted at the outset of the piece. Just as the study of literary history does not inevitably take us on a triumphant march towards greater and greater originality, the study of a foreign language does not automatically provide us with a master key to a nation's history. Like pieces of armor in a museum, to use his own metaphor, Longfellow's linguistic exhibits, battered with frequent use, tell us not one but many stories. Instead of one national language we get multiple dialects, with significant differences between them. Often, these dialects are themselves subdivided, as the example of the "Lingua Sarda" shows, where the dialect spoken in the city differs so considerably from that spoken by the peasants in the country that the two versions of the Lord's Prayer reprinted by Longfellow don't even share the same word for God: "Pare" in the city, "Babbu" in the country ("History" 341).

Upon closer inspection, then, Longfellow's "History of the Italian Language" is more than just an example of a young man pretending to be a dry-as-dust, data-collecting professor. This becomes especially clear in the section on the Venetian dialect, "the most beautiful of all the Italian dialects." It is here that Longfellow the poet inconspicuously enters the essay and scholarship yields to autobiography. Longfellow begins by attributing the "soft" and "pleasant" pronunciation of Venetian to the city's geographical situation, nestled as it is "in the bosom of the Adriatic" ("History" 322). Lovingly, Longfellow describes how the dialect, fanned by the warm breezes of the Mediterranean, "grew up soft, flexible and melodious," and the reader is not surprised when, as if to complete the anthropomorphism, for the first time in the essay an actual writer makes his appearance.

However, this author is not Longfellow, at least not yet. As Longfellow writes, "The two following specimens of this dialect were written by Toni Toscan, a Venetian gondolier, formerly in the service of Lord Byron, and one of the few who can still sing a stanza from Tasso" ("History" 323). A couple of decades later, Mark Twain would make fun of the shrill "caterwauling" of the gondoliers, whom he described as "barefooted guttersnipe[s]" (Twain 161), but Longfellow's Toni Toscan still represents the Serenissima's glorious artistic past. This simple "barcariol"[1] appears, from the beginning, embedded in past and recent literary history, almost excessively so. A chanter of lines from *Gerusalemme liberata*, Toni's line of work also brought him in contact with the poet Byron, whose amorous escapades in Venice depended on the availability of efficient, discreet transportation. But Toni insists that he is also his own man: "we made numerous inquiries concerning the Noble Poet, all of which he answered somewhat in detail, and concluded by informing us, that, 'like master like man', he was himself a little given to rhyme." And so Longfellow finds himself studying not the literary remains of Lord Byron but the lines produced by Toni the very-much-alive gondolier. In true *improvvisatore* fashion, Toni's poem, "Ottava Al Nobil Signor - Merican," talks about nothing so much as the immediate reasons for its own existence. Born of the moment, it is written to commemorate the moment:

By chance one day at Venice,
  as I stood at the Ferry
  there asked for me a person
  who was American.
And I replied to him
  with ready service,
  I am Toni Toscan,
  to this famous stranger,
  who is exactly the American.
Forthwith he inquired of me
  concerning the noble Byron,
  who is my good Patron
  when he is in Venice.
At our own time and leisure,
  floating along the grand canal,
  he did again request me,
  and two stanzas of Tasso
  I forthwith sang to him.
Full of humility and respect
  I take off my hat
  and, from my heart, I bow my head
  to - -. ("History" 324)

Composed in Longfellow's presence, this poem - called an "octave," though it needs to be said that Toscan handles the form very loosely - is also dedicated to him, though, in sudden deference to the rules of objective research, Longfellow omits his name from the title as well as the text of the poem. The Italian rhymes are not reproduced in Longfellow's

translation, but if we didn't have the handwritten original, preserved in Longfellow's 1828 travel diary (ill. 1), the name of the dedicatee in its Italian pronunciation ("Longfello") still resonates in the printed text, as the rhyme word corresponding to "cappello." No doubt this was a private joke on Longfellow's part.

Ill. 1. Toni Toscan, "Ottova…"; page 61 from Longfellow's 1828 Journal (Houghton Library, Harvard University). All images reproduced by permission of the Houghton Library.

It is not clear from the essay if the encounter between the American and the Venetian was, as Longfellow states, an accident or if Longfellow had indeed, as Toscan implies, actively sought him out. In any case, Longfellow was sufficiently intrigued by this versifying gondolier to sketch his portrait. His drawing captures the gondolier's dark looks, his chiseled features and sharp nose, a profusion of curls spilling out under a cap pulled down to cover his hair.

Ill. 2. Longfellow Journal (Houghton Library).

A second poem by Toscan, "All' Destinto Merito del Signor Erico Longfello," inserted into the journal right after the page with Toni's portrait, fulsomely expresses the writer's gratitude for Longfellow's artistic efforts (ill. 3). ("Erico" is the Venetian form of "Enrico"; Boerio 254.)

Entirely personal in nature, the little text didn't make it into the pages of the *North American Review*. Though Toscan is conscious of the social gulf that separates him from the American tourist, this poem, with all its irregularities of grammar and spelling, nevertheless confidently establishes a bond between Toni the dialect-writing "poeta da canachiòn" (the "poet of base expression")[2] and Longfellow the "poeta de stima molto bon" (the "poet of great esteem"):

De cuor mi la Ringrazio ell' mio Paron
ch'a mi ancuo la m'a fatto ell' mio Ritratto
de Tallento le [=l'è] un omo assae Garbato
e un Poeta de stima molto bon
Conoso quanto è granda la Pasion
che ancha mi xa la Provo i nel mio stato
i me dise: Toscan se [=sete; siete] mezzo matto
e un poeta vu se [= sete] da canachion
Dunque addeso la ringrazio mio Signor
de quello ch'ancuo à mi sa [=s'a] degnà a far
memoria tegnarò del suo opparar
e un eviva ghe Fasso col mio cuor.

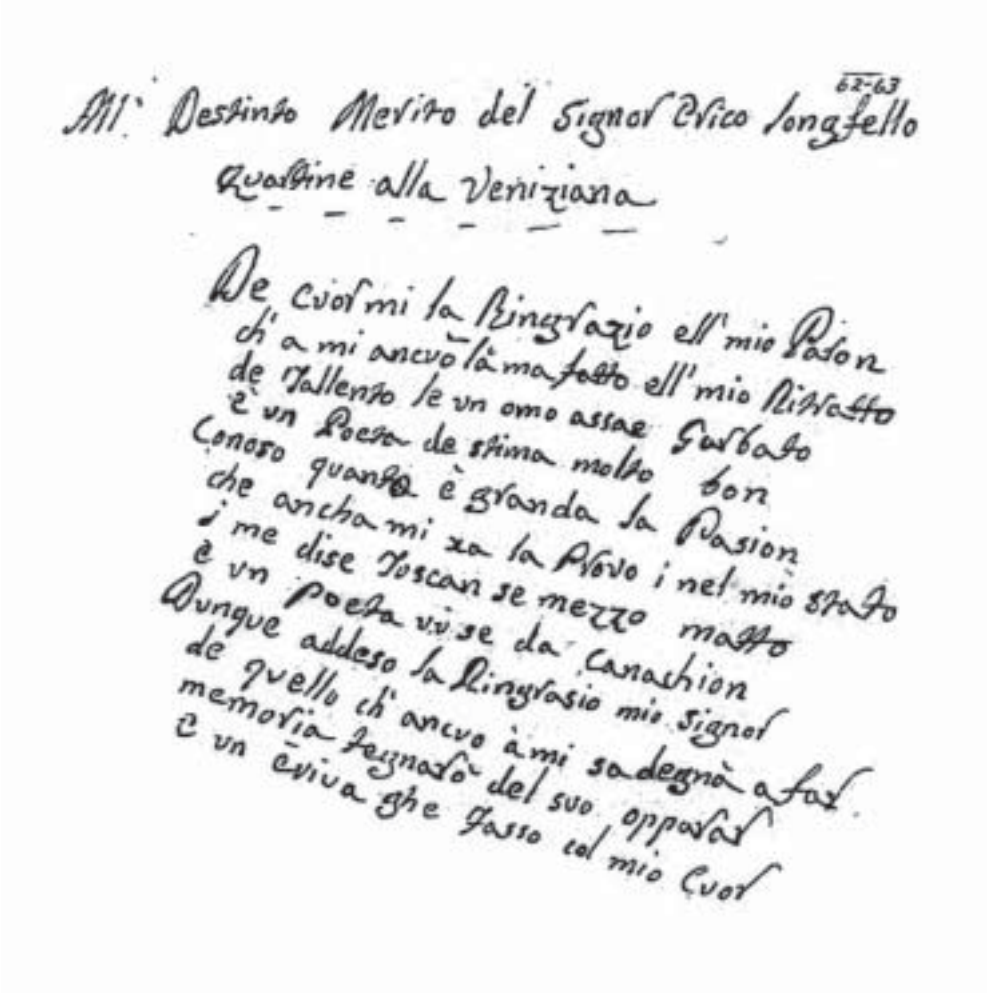
From the bottom of my heart I thank my patron, who has made a portrait of me. He has talent and is a well-mannered person and a poet of great esteem; I know well how great is his passion because I too already feel it in my low state. They tell me: Toscan, you are half mad and you are a poet of base expression. Therefore I thank now my Signor for what you deigned to do. I will remember what you have done and I cheer you with all my heart.[3]

In "History of the Italian Language," Longfellow offers his readers yet another sample of Toscan's art, a poem written in honor of the gondolier's former master Byron, "All' Destinto Merito del Nobil Signor Norde Biron" (Journal 1828, 64-65). Clearly, Longfellow had his own reasons for doing so. The excerpt from Toni's Byron poem first invokes the latter's greatness and fame. It ends with the speaker toasting Norde biron ("I take in my hand a glass of good wine, and *viva*, *viva* the great Lord Byron") and solemnly kissing his hand ("History" 325). The three poems - two written to praise Longfellow, one to praise Byron - are meant to be read in conjunction. In the cracked mirror of Toni's poetic effusions, the identities of his new "noble" and his old "noble" master merge. Under the modest cloak of anonymity, Longfellow, the young American poet who had yet to publish a significant book of his own, thus slips into the role of his illustrious English predecessor and literary hero Byron. With the blessing of Toni Toscan's final baptismal verses, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the twenty-one-year-old American tourist from Portland, Maine, can begin to think of himself as "Enrico" the "well-esteemed" poet. And this is how he signed his name, twice, next to a pencil sketch of himself in his Italian sketchbook (ill. 4).

Longfellow's Toni Toscan is not, as a historian of Venice sensibly suggested when I approached him for advice, a "romantic conceit." First, he has little in common with Wordsworth's speakers taken from "low and rustic life," their language "purified … from what appear to be its real defects" (Wordsworth 433-434). Moreover, he did in fact exist, a descendant of a line of poetic gondoliers.[4] His former employer, George Gordon, Lord Byron, had come to Venice in November 1816. Instantly at home in "the greenest island of my imagination" (Moore 2: 52), Byron hurled himself into frenetic activity, as if to celebrate his release from the social constraints placed on him in that other, "tighter" island of his birth. Relishing the wasted, wordly charms of a city that had survived Napoleon, Byron

engaged in furious lovemaking, wild horseback-riding on the Lido, late-night theatergoing and compulsive partying, all intermixed with bursts of extraordinary poetic creativity. Sex for Byron in those days seemed to acquire an almost gymnastic quality, and he depended on his gondolier to keep the appointments coming or even to provide, in his gondola, a place "where none can make out what you say or do" (*Beppo* XIX; Byron 626).

Ill. 3. Longfellow, 1828 Journal (Houghton Library), p. 2-63.


62-63

All' Destino Merito del Signor Enrico Longfello

Quartine alla Veniziana

De cuor mi la Ringrazio ell'mio Padron
ch'a mi ancvo à mandato ell'mio Ritratto
de Vallenzo le un omo assae Garbato
è un Poeta de stima molto bon
Conoso quanto è Granda la Pasion
che ancha mi xa la Provo i nel mio Stato
i me dise Toscan se mezzo matto
è un Poeta vive da Canachion
Dunque addeso la Ringrasio mio Signor
de quello ch'ancvo à mi sadegnà a far
memoria degnarà del suo apparir
è un eviva che fasso col mio Cuor

Ill. 4. Longfellow, Italian Sketch Book (Houghton Libray).

A review of the numerous notes from and to Byron's lovers, indeed, yields a reference to Toni, in a letter sent to her dear "Giorgio" by the Venetian opera singer Arpalice Taruscelli, whom the indefatigable Byron had added to his collection in May 1819 (Reiman 320). Some time during the summer, La Taruscelli wrote to inform Byron that she couldn't see him at the appointed hour. Like her other notes to "mio matto," as she affectionately called Byron, this one mixes practical considerations - when, where, and how to get together safely - with the promise of sexual gratification. La Taruscelli normally relied on the services of Byron's gondolier to communicate with him, but this time she apparently couldn't wait and sent her maid. "Instead of your sending me Toni, I am sending you Eleonora, to inform you that today, because of the great Heat, and the Bath I shall take in a little while, I find it impossible to come, deferring until this evening at the usual

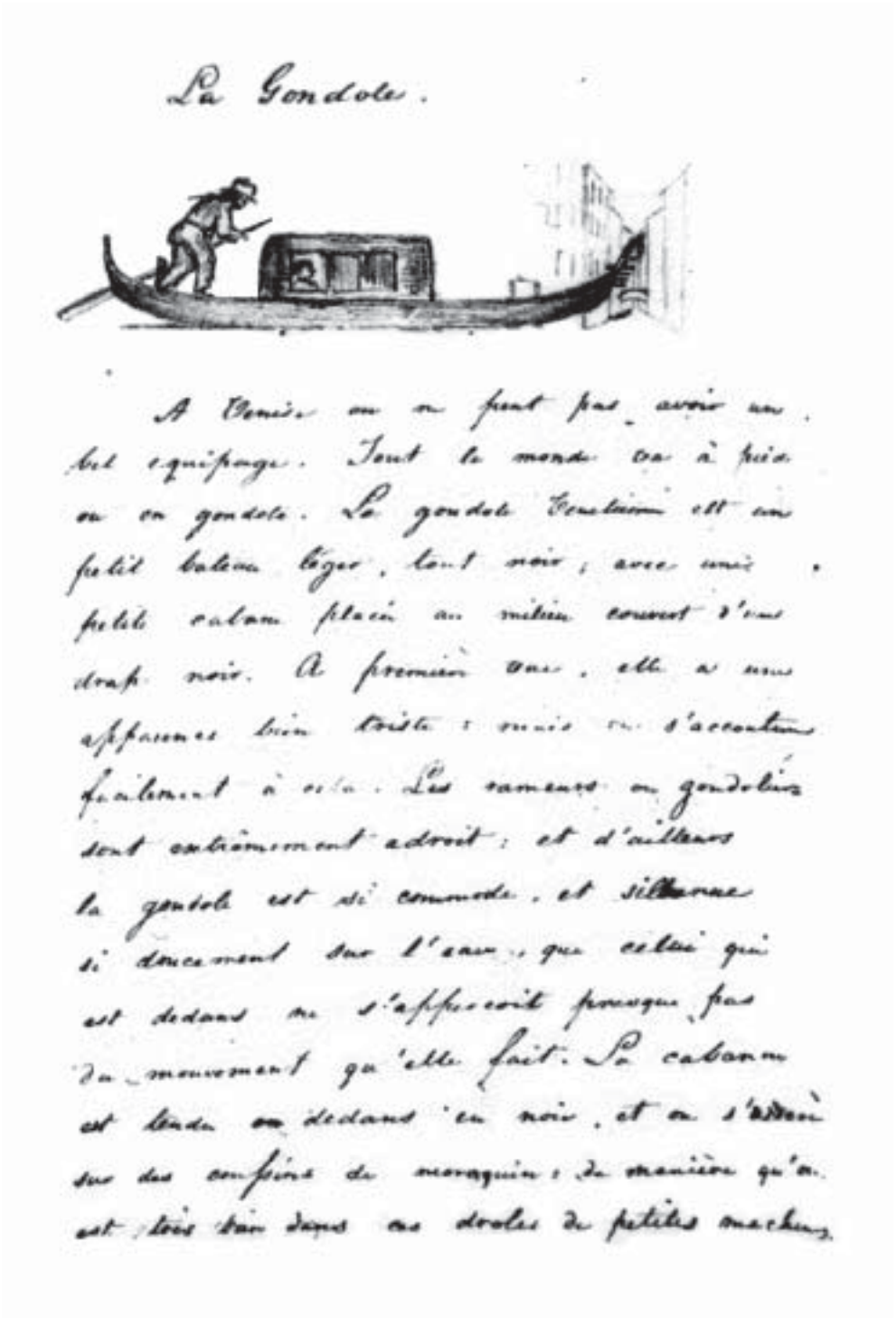
time, and thus the pleasure of seeing and kissing you will be redoubled." Even so, Toni was still present, if only as a reference, as Taruscelli pointed out in the postscript to her note: "P.S. With regard to Toni, here he is even in this note, as usual" (Reiman 320).[5]

In Longfellow's journal, written a decade later, the indispensable Toni speaks in his own voice and, perhaps for the first and only time in literary history, shows his face. Apart from the portrait and the two poems addressed to Longfellow, the journal also contains, in Longfellow's transcription, the poem written for Byron, preceded by Longfellow's own comments on Toni written in *French* ("Il n'avait pas une belle voix, mais pourtant il me faisait bien du plaisir"), into which is embedded an *Italian* quotation, the lines from *Gerusalemme liberata* Toni had sung when Longfellow first met him.

During his European travels, Byron's works had been Longfellow's constant companion. Even after Longfellow had accidentally left his tattered copy of *Childe Harold* in Rome, the memory of Byron's lines was still with him. He saw Venice first on a bright, moon-soaked night, when his boat entered the Grand Canal and thousands of lights flitted across the water, an unreal scene, recorded in French in Longfellow's diary. Everything was silent then, except for the ringing of an occasional bell, the soft splashing of the oars in the still water and the muffled voices of the gondoliers. A magician seemed to have pulled all these wonderful sights and sounds up from the bottom of the sea, said Longfellow, and he half expected it would all vanish again "dans le sein des eaux." Like Byron, he admired the sleek gondolas (ill. 5), praising the easy professionalism of the gondoliers as well as the comfortable leather upholstery inside, though he was a bit repelled by their funereal black color. And like Byron, who said he found it especially "pleasing in the mouth of a woman" (Moore 2: 53), Longfellow enjoyed the soft, sensual sounds of the Venetian dialect. But Longfellow's gondolier Toscan is definitely not, as his counterpart mentioned in *Childe Harold*, "songless" (Byron 227). And Longfellow's one close encounter with a Venetian working-class woman has little to do with sexual pleasure: as he is sketching the Bridge of Sighs, a chambermaid, from a window in an adjacent palazzo, empties a pitcher of cold water over his head and he almost tumbles into the canal (*Letters* 1: 289).

Longfellow's Venice, in short, is not Byron's "Sea-Sodom".[6] It is not the mecca of feverish sex, a place of limitless pleasure, where sluggish waves lap the crumbling foundations of stained palazzos and swift, phallic gondolas hurry into dark alleys, carrying their masked passengers to secret trysts, where women with burning eyes, "insatiate of love" (Moore 2: 153), give themselves freely to desirous men, often with the knowledge of their husbands, who have made their own extracurricular amatory arrangements, belonging, as Byron put it in a letter to Augusta Leigh, "to any body's wives - but their own" (Byron, *Letters* 146).

Ill. 5. Longfellow's 1828 Journal (Houghton Library).


La Gondole.

A Venise on ne peut pas avoir un bel equipage. Tout le monde va à pied ou en gondole. La gondole Venitienne est un petit batteau léger, tout noir; avec une petite cabane placée au milieu couvert d'une drap noir. A premiere vue, elle a une apparence bien triste; mais on s'accoutume facilement à cela. Les rameurs en gondoles sont extrêmement adroit; et d'ailleurs la gondole est si commode, et sillonne si doucement sur l'eau; que celui qui est dedans ne s'apperçoit presque pas du mouvement qu'elle fait. La cabanne est tendu en dedans en noir, et a s'asseoir sur des coussins de maroquin; de maniere qu'on est très bien dans ces drôles de petites machines

In fact, Longfellow's Venice is not inhabited by people so much as it is by texts - texts that have generated other texts, thereby mixing the languages as well as the identities of the authors. In a sense this was true also of the Venice section of *Childe Harold*, where Byron's speaker admits that "Otway, Radcliffe, Schiller, Shakspeare's art/ Had stamp'd her image in me" (Byron 229). But Longfellow's diary notes radicalize the notion of "intertextual" Venice, as Rosella Mamoli Zorzi has called it. Here, the authorial self does not use previous representations of Venice to assert its own view of the city. Instead, it appears immersed, to the point of unrecognizability, in other people's words. And these words are not only those of literary tradition but also local ones. Among the texts that reverberate in Longfellow's journal is, perhaps, also one he wrote himself, his earlier, cliché-ridden poem, "The Venetian Gondolier," written in 1825, long before he had ever set foot on Italian shores ("And list! - his tuneful viol strings/ The young Venetian Gondolier"; *Works* 1: 337). More predictably, Byron also flits across these pages. The reference to the magician's hand conjuring up Venice from the bottom of the sea, for example, is a direct echo of lines from *Childe Harold*: "I saw from out the wave her structures rise/ As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand" (Byron 227). Strolling through Venice and taking in the sights, Longfellow would have remembered not only the famous ironic juxtaposition of the Doge's Palace with the prisons on the other side of the Bridge of Sighs at the beginning of *Childe Harold* but perhaps also Byron's dark verse play *Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice*. But Venice now also speaks directly to Longfellow, and it speaks in tongues. He writes down what he sees or hears: the Latin inscription on a black curtain in the Palazzo dei Dogi meant to commemorate the fate of Marino Falieri ("Hic est locus Marini Falethri decapitati pro criminibus") or the Italian words scratched by a prisoner on the walls of his cell in the *Prigioni* - words that preach silence yet, by the very fact of being there, move beyond it: "Confide in no one - think and be silent, if thou wishes to escape the snares and treacheries of spies. Sorrow and repentance avail not here".[7] Most importantly, though, there are Toni Toscan's poems, inscribed in the diary in the poet's own hand, in clumsy letters, the lines slanting down the fraying page.

Ingrid Rowland has said that in Venice variety creates its own aesthetic color (14). Longfellow's Venetian notes seem written as if to prove this observation. It is here also that we see the first stirrings of what Newton Arvin has termed his "demotic" approach to writing. How fitting that not Byron himself, but a "raven-voiced" Venetian native with literary leanings, dialect-writing, a Byron-adoring, Tasso-quoting gondolier, should have been his mentor. Writing poems, for Longfellow, would soon come to mean not romantic self-expression, but participation in a public conversation conducted across cultures, classes, and languages. "Some people write," he complained in his diary on 27 September 1835, "as if they had thrust their goose-quills into their brains, and let all the strange fancies that dwell there, gush out through it in a steady stream upon paper." Lord Byron, writing from Venice to his publisher John Murray in June 1818, had emphatically defended his view that poetry was art, not a "profession" (Moore 2: 177), but this is

exactly how Longfellow, the future canny manipulator of copyrights and royalty payments, would come to see his work. How pleased he was when his daughter Annie, comparing his work to that of the fishermen of Nahant, commended her father for having chosen a trade that one can also "do … the winter" (Journal, 18 January 1861).

In *Outre-Mer*, the travel book based on these experiences, the multilingual exuberance of the Venetian diary pages is suitably transfigured and transformed. The French evocation of nighttime Venice has given way to the skeptical daylight of English prose. Two new quotations have been added, the first a description of wanton, wealthy, soft and sensual Venice lying in her water as in a "swan's nest" from *A Survay of the Signorie of Venice* (1651) by James Howell; the second an Italian proverb ("Venegia, Venegia/ Chi non ti vede non ti pregia"). But the chapter ends with a familiar presence, with rough words spoken not by Longfellow himself but his gondolier, Toni Toscan.

> Should you ever want a gondolier at Venice to sing you a passage from Tasso by moonlight, inquire for Toni Toscan. He has a voice like a raven. I sketched his portrait in my note-book; and he wrote beneath it this inscription:
> Poeta natural che Venizian,
> Ch' el so nome xe un tal Toni Toscan. (*Works* 7: 319)

Longfellow would not visit Venice again until May 1869, and then the sheer effort involved in traveling exhausted him: "I … long to be at home again" (*Letters* 5: 284). But even while he transformed himself, over the next decades, from a frustrated college professor into a national celebrity, even as he publicly evoked the pleasures of staying at home ("Stay, stay at home, my heart, and rest;/ Home-keeping hearts are happiest," *Works* 3: 125), travel remained a constant temptation for Longfellow, at least as an *idea* - a love-affair of the mind, as it were, with images of Italy floating up before him, usually at inconvenient moments, during dreary faculty meetings or in the classroom. Such sightings of Eden in "the great prairie of a teacher's life" remained welcome even as Longfellow became increasingly attuned to the pleasures of a sedentary existence (Journal, 21 June 1848). Longfellow kept an orange tree and a lemon tree on the windowsill in his study (*Letters* 4: 283), and he invented his own metaphor, "Birds of Passage," to indicate what he called the longing of his words to go south.

A more serious form of this vicarious traveling was *Poems of Places*, which Longfellow began editing in 1876, the most comprehensive evocation of the importance of place in American literature, with selections ranging from England and Wales to Africa and the Caribbean. To commemorate Venice, Longfellow contributed his own sonnet to the third volume on Italy, a text that begins with, and then elaborates on, James Howell's old image of Venice the "swan's nest":

> White swan of cities, slumbering in thy nest
> So wonderfully built among the reeds
> Of the lagoon, that fences thee and feeds,
> As sayeth thy old historian and thy guest! (*Poems of Places* 13: 207).

Needless to say that Longfellow, now in his late sixties, in the last line of the excerpt appears to refer less to Howell, whom he doesn't name, than to himself.

Longfellow's most consistent effort at transporting himself back in later years into the Mediterranean world was his ongoing translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. He had begun perusing "the gloomy pages" of Dante's *Inferno* in Rome in midsummer 1828, but it was only after the tragic death by fire of his wife Fanny in 1862 that he fully turned his attention to the task of translating the entire *Divina Commedia*, as if Dante's quest for his beloved Beatrice in Paradise now paralleled Longfellow's own longing for Fanny.

In the *Commedia* the poet Dante delivers himself into the hands of another writer, Virgil, whom he welcomes as "lo mio maestro e 'l mio autore." For Longfellow, his translating, which exerted a "great and strange fascination" on him, similarly was a deliberate exercise in literary self-abandonment: "It seizes people," wrote Longfellow, "with irresistible power, and whirls them away, till they are beside themselves" (*Letters* 6: 455). Characteristically, his translation of the *Commedia* was, to some extent, a collaborative effort. He welcomed the suggestions from members of the newly formed "Dante Club," which gathered on Wednesday nights at Craigie House to comment on the proof sheets of Longfellow's translation. But Longfellow's own manuscript drafts show the constant debate he carried on with himself while working on Dante's text. Poised between the past and the present, between different languages and cultures, his rendering of Dante is not simply an approximation, in another language, of a forever-elusive original. Nor does it move far enough away from Dante's text to establish itself as independent from it, as a re-creation in a seemingly new form. His predecessor at Harvard, George Ticknor, in a perceptive letter written on 1 June 1867, commented on the strange alliance of exactitude and freedom, the combination of "extraordinary strictness" with "grace and fluency" that he had noticed in Longfellow's translation. What especially intrigued Ticknor was Longfellow's attempt to follow Dante's original line for line, and almost word for word: "Whether you have not encumbered yourself with heavier and more embarrassing conditions than permit the free poetical movement which an absolutely English reader covets, is a question that must be settled by the popular voice, as separate from that of scholastic lovers of Dante. On that bench of judges I can never be competent to sit; I shall always read your translation with the original ringing in my ears" (*Life* 3: 90-91).

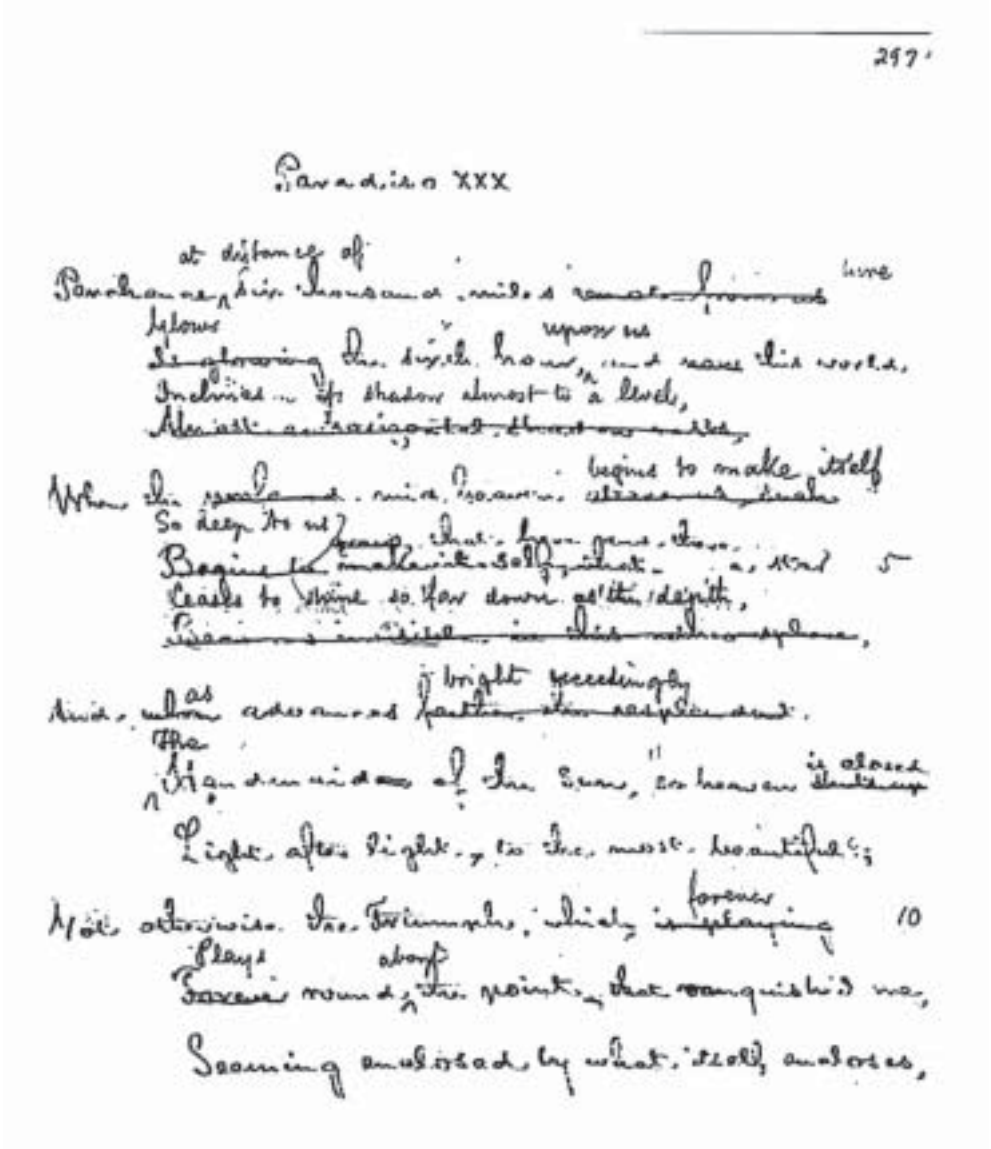
But this is perhaps what Longfellow really wanted - to expose the monolingual American reader to a text that is not "English only." Put differently, he had no interest in offering his readers what a contemporary reviewer of English Dante translations demanded: "a great English poem for the great Italian."[8] Longfellow believed, as he wrote in an unpublished note, that one of "the greatest of all fallacies in translation is to give, not what an author really said, but what you suppose he would have said, if he had been writing in your language" (Divina Commedia Notes, n.p.). Ideally, all poets should be read in their native language, he explained in one of his Harvard lectures: "It is almost a

mockery to translate them" (Dante Lecture 122). In fact, the Italian language remains present as a constant point of reference throughout Longfellow's work. For example, when Dante deplores the difficulty of expressing in a language that also includes affectionate names for "mother" and "father" all the terrible things that he has seen in the lowest circle of hell, Longfellow's translation reminds the reader what language this is: "For 't is no enterprise to take in jest, / To sketch the bottom of all the universe,/ Nor for a tongue that cries Mamma and Babbo" (*Inferno* XXXII; *Works* 9: 178). The manuscript reveals that Longfellow's choice of the original Italian words was a deliberate one; the line at first read: "Nor for a tongue that says 'Mama, Papa.'" Longfellow already realized what Walter Benjamin, following Friedrich Schleiermacher and Rudolf Pannwitz, described as a translator's basic error: a refusal to let his or her work be affected by the foreign language (Venuti 16).

Longfellow, to be sure, had more interest in Dante's poetry than in his allegory. For him, the *Commedia* was first and foremost a travelogue: "the beautiful description of the landscape," he said, "bears the freshness of that impression, which is made on the mind of a foot-traveller, who sits under the trees at noon, and leaves or enters towns when the morning or evening-bells ring" (Dante Lecture 53). Such freshness of sight and insight is, of course, especially evident in Dante's luminescent *Paradiso*. The spirits in paradise are "clothed in light," Longfellow marveled in 1838. "Pulsations of sound and brightness," they appear as "the flashing of the sun upon the sea" and upon "precious stones" (Dante Lecture 81). Longfellow felt a sense of admiration for the "steel-like polish" of Dante's language; later he would do his best to recreate it in English, or at least make his words gesture towards what they could have done had they only been Italian. Take, for example, the beginning of canto XXX, the description of Dante's ascent to the Empyrean (ill. 6).

The poet begins with an extended metaphor for morning breaking over Italy, while it is already noon - the "sixth hour" - in India. As Ticknor pointed out, Longfellow follows Dante's syntax closely; where he is forced to change the sequence of the words (as happens in l. 4), he tries to make sure that at least some of his enjambments occur where Dante wanted them to be. See ll. 5-6, where the line break "star/Ceases" exactly mirrors the Italian "stella/perde" (*Works* 11: 153). Many of Longfellow's corrections in the Houghton manuscript seem intended to make the correspondence even closer. See, for example, l. 3, where Longfellow replaces his original version, "Almost a horizontal shadow casts," with a line that matches the placement of the words in the Italian original: "Inclines its shadow almost to a level" and chooses a verb, "inclines," which resembles the Italian "china" also visually (Paradiso 297-298). Modern translator John Ciardi, intent on reproducing at least some of Dante's rhymes, introduces a new and confusing metaphor ("the bed") here which interferes with what Dante's passage is all about, namely the imminence of change, as Dante progresses towards the light that is God: "When, as may be, the sun's noon heat is shed/ six thousand miles away, while where we are,/ earth's shadow makes an almost level bed" (Ciardi 327).

Ill: 6. Manuscript page from Longfellow's translation of Paradiso (Houghton Library, Harvard University).


297

Paradiso XXX

at distance of
Parhelion and Sun two mirrors fair
live
Inflows upon us
Illustrating the third how, and make the world,
Inclines its shadow almost to a level,
When the zenith . . . begins to make itself
So deep its set
Begins to make itself . . . a, and
Ceases to shine so far down at the zenith,
bright proceedingly
And as advanced . . .
The
Of the Sun, in heaven is placed
Light after light, to the most beautiful;
forever
And otherwise the Triumphs, which ever
Plays about
Circle round the point, that vanquished me,
Seeming encircled by what it encircles,

In an unexpected way the rationale behind Longfellow's rendering of the *Divine Comedy* anticipates the motives cited by the most recent American translators of Dante, Robert and Jean Hollander, who claim that they have "tried to bring Dante into our English without being led into the temptation of making the translation sound better than the original allows. The result may be judged by all who know [Dante] in his own idiom" (Hollander xiii). Dante's "own idiom" retained its fascination for Longfellow even after his work on the *Divine Comedy* was finished. In 1875, reminiscing, "as I very often do," about Dante's Florence, Longfellow wrote a sonnet in which he imagined he was the Ponte Vecchio, planting its heavy

foot of stone upon the Arno river, just as Saint Michael had put his on the glistening scales of the dragon. Including the poem as well as his portrait, a "rather sad and wrinkled face," in a letter addressed to Arabella Duffy in Florence in January 1875, Longfellow admitted that the old bridge was a metaphor for age, specifically *his* old age. Like a geezer hungry for attention, the bridge boasts of its "victory over the turbulent river" and then recalls "some memories of the Past, as old men are full of doing." And what a past it is: the bridge remembers Michelangelo, the Medici and, even further back, the feud between the Ghibellines and the Guelphs that drove Dante into exile. A few days after writing down the English version, Longfellow translated his own poem into Italian, because this was, he told Duffy, how it took "shape in my mind." Self-translation was, he said, "one way of visiting Florence, and I fear the only one for me" (*Letters* 6: 12). Now almost 70, Longfellow had returned to Italy, writing not like Toni Toscan, his Venetian gondolier, but in the language of the Tuscan Dante. This was Longfellow's final Mediterranean metamorphosis:

Fiorenza i suoi giojelli m'ha prestati;
  E quando penso ch'Agnolo il divino
  Su me posava insuperbir mi sento.

Florence adorns me with her jewelry;
  And when I think that Michael Angelo
  Hath leaned on me, I glory in myself. (*Works* 3: 226-227)

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NOTES

1. "Barcariòl" is the Venetian word for "barcaiuolo" or "gondolier" (Boerio 64).

2. "Canachiòn" is a vulgar term for "culo" (bottom, ass); see Boerio 126.

3. Translated by the author, with the help of Rosella Mamoli Zorzi and Marino Zorzi, Venice. I have made some additions in the transcription, indicated by square brackets, where I felt they would clarify the meaning of the original. All quotations from Longfellow's papers (Houghton Library, Harvard University, MS Am 1340) are by permission of the Houghton Library.

4. Rosella Mamoli Zorzi, Venice, letter to the author, 19 November 2001. Toni Toscan was still writing poems as late as 1843; see his canzone celebrating the regatta of "gondolini," *In Ocasion dela Corsa e Gara de Gondolini a Do Remi, Fata nel Canal Grando dela Regia Cità di Venezia el zorno 5 Zugno 1843. Canzon ala Veneziana Composta da Toni Toscan Sarvitor da Barca* (collection of the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice).

5. "Mio Matto… Invece che tu mi mandi Toni, io ti mando Eleonora, per avvertirti che oggi, per il gran Caldo, e per il Bagno che farò frappoco, trovo impossibile che possi venire, riserbandomi a stassera all' ora solita, e sarà così raddoppiato il piacere di vederti, e di baciarti…. P.S. A proposito di Toni, eccolo anche in questo biglietto, secondo il solito" (Reiman 320).

6. Byron, *Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice* V, iii (Byron 452).

7. Longfellow's own translation; see *Letters* 1: 289.

8. See Longfellow, "Scraps and Notes."

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"IMAGINE ALL THAT HISTORY": AMERICAN VIEWS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN AND ITS PEOPLE

FRED MORAMARCO

How did we know each other?
Was it the sea enchantment in his eyes?
H.D. *Helen in Egypt*

In his novel, *Balthazar,* the British author Lawrence Durrell writes: "The Mediterranean is an absurdly small sea; the length and greatness of its history makes us dream it larger than it is." This dual view of the fabled "Inner Sea" is reflected in various ways in the many American conceptions of its shores and people that appear in American literature and culture. The Mediterranean is certainly the region of the world that has had the greatest impact in shaping that culture - from the Greco-Roman principles embodied in America's laws, architecture and art, to the immigrants from the eighteen countries that share its coast who have become American citizens, to the major global wars that have been fought along its shores. And yet, despite its enormous influence, by American measures, it is a relatively small portion of the planet's land and water.

Two of the most salient facts about America and its history are its sheer distance from the European continent and Africa on the one hand and from Asia and the islands of the Pacific on the other, as well as the vastness of its spaces compared to the relative smallness of the countries that make up Europe and the Mediterranean basin. European countries are constantly referred to as being the size of various American states, and of course Americans are always amazed when they travel in Europe at how quickly one can travel from one country to another. By contrast to the Atlantic and the Pacific, the oceans that embrace the North American continent, the Mediterranean seems a small pond.

But what a pond! The countries that border its shores have always regarded the region as the apex of the civilized world. Recently, in academic circles, there have been intense debates about "Eurocentric" vs. "Afrocentric" views of the world, but it should be noted that both of those continents embrace the Mediterranean, and if it were not such an unwieldy term, scholars might in fact talk about a "Mediterraneanocentric" view of the world. Certainly such a view was what Samuel Johnson had in mind when he wrote in the 18th century, "The grand object of traveling is to see the shores of the Mediterranean. On those shores were the four great Empires of the world: the Assyrian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. All our religion, almost all our law, almost all our arts, almost all that sets us above savages, has come to us from the shores of the Mediterranean" (Quoted in Theroux 2). And even though these sentiments seem both parochial and racist three centuries later, we can at least credit Dr. Johnson with recognizing the diversity of the region and its enormous contribution to many of the world's cultures.

American writers recognize this diversity as well, but they also recognize the problems and conflicts that this cultural multiplicity have created. The dualistic attitudes of American writers and artists toward the Mediterranean go much further than simply seeing it as both small and large at the same time. For many it has always seemed on the one hand a beloved and desirable place, the central source of our heritage, and on the other, an unruly, chaotic region, tortured by its inability to transcend or resolve its long term historical conflicts. For many Americans, the latter view tended to dominate in the 19th and first part of the 20th century. European immigrants sailed through the Straits of Gibraltar to put the conflicts and limitations of European life behind them and to find a "new beginning" in a country that paid little attention to long standing traditions and rigid ways of doing things.

Mark Twain set the tone for this attitude, intending to deflate what he regarded as the pretentions of the ancient civilizations of Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean with the straightforwardness of American plain talk. He created the image of the American traveling in the Mediterranean in his aptly titled, *Innocents Abroad or The New Pilgrim's Progress* first published in 1869. The book was the outgrowth of a series of letters Twain wrote for the *Daily Alta California* which recorded his "Excursion to the Holy Land, Egypt, the Crimea, Greece, and Intermediate Points of Interest" on the *Quaker City,* a steamer, which left New York on June 8, 1867. Although Twain's views matured and moderated as he grew older, his early book did more than its share to perpetuate and reinforce racist stereotypes, and in fact set a pattern for a kind of middle American xenophobia that has flourished ever since. If you want to know, for example, one of the sources that created and fueled American prejudices against Muslims, listen to Twain's account of his visit to Jerusalem:

> Rags, wretchedness, poverty and dirt, those signs and symbols that indicate the presence of Moslem rule more surely than the crescent-flag itself, abound. Lepers, cripples, the blind, and the idiotic, assail you on every hand, and they know but one word of but one language apparently-the eternal "bucksheesh." (559)

Nor do Italians and other Mediterranean cultures get off easily:

> If you want dwarfs - I mean just a few dwarfs for a curiosity - go to Genoa. If you wish to buy them by the gross, for retail, go to Milan….But if you want to see the very heart and home of cripples and human monsters, both, go straight to Constantinople. (*IA* xxxvi)

Of course it's important to note that many of Twain's observations are clearly tongue-in-cheek, and that the 19th century knew nothing at all about political correctness. These lines were written by a young man trying to make a reputation as a world-class humorist.

But a contrary view of the Mediterranean emerges in American writing during the 20th century. As more and more Americans traveled in the region, especially in the postwar period, the antiquity and historical lore of the Mediterranean past became an object of awe rather than disparagement. When the Jewish-American scholar Fidelman,

in Bernard Malamud's short story, "The Last Mohican," (a part of his novel, *Pictures of Fidelman*) arrives in Rome to prepare a critical study of Giotto, his reaction to the ancient ruins of the city is a kind of representative American awe for the sheer grandeur of the historical landscape. Coming from a country that is only 200 years old and visiting a country where some of the architecture and artifacts are over 2000 years old, he cannot help but be impressed. Listen to Malamud's description:

> Although he had been in not much of a mood when he had left the U.S.A., Fidelman picked up in Naples, and at the moment, as he stood in front of the Rome railroad station, after twenty minutes still absorbed in his first sight of the Eternal City, he was conscious of a certain exaltation that devolved on him after he had discovered that directly across the many-vehicled piazza stood the remains of the Baths of Diocletian. Fidelman remembered having read that Michelangelo had a hand in converting the baths into a church and convent, the later ultimately changed into the museum that presently was there. "Imagine," he muttered, "Imagine all that history." (*PF,* 4)

It is in the "imagining [of] all that history," that American views of the Mediterranean have been shaped. American novelists, poets, filmmakers, and artists of all sorts have found the Mediterranean fertile ground for the exercise of their creative imaginations. The "Sea in the Middle of the Earth" has found expression in the work of novelists from Washington Irving and Louisa May Alcott to Don De Lillo and Paul Bowles, of poets from Edgar Allan Poe to Rita Dove and Charles Wright, and that is only a sampling of a few of the writers who have given Americans a literary view of Mediterranean life. When we add the images of the Mediterranean that have been shaped by American films - from the many films about World Wars I and II to recent interpretations of Henry James and Paul Bowles, we get a fuller sense of how the Mediterranean and its various cultures are seen by the many ordinary American citizens who have never been here.

For example, the classic American film, *Casablanca* (1942), begins with a shot of a revolving globe that focuses in on the Mediterranean. The narrator solemnly intones these words as the graphic on the screen traces the route he describes: *"With the coming of the second World War, many eyes in imprisoned Europe turned hopefully or desperately toward the freedom of the Americas. Lisbon became the great embarkation point, but not everybody could get to Lisbon directly, and so a torturous roundabout refugee trail sprang up. From Paris to Marseilles… across the Mediterranean to Oran… then by train, or auto, or foot across the rim of Africa to Casablanca in French Morocco. Here the fortunate ones through money, or influence, or luck, might obtain exit visas and scurry to Lisbon… and from Lisbon to the New World. But the others wait in Casablanca…and wait… and wait… and wait."* One of the most popular American films of all time, *Casablanca* clearly helped shape American post war images of Europe as a prison, and the Mediterranean as the gateway for escapees. To move beyond the pillars of Hercules in the modern world, meant not moving into the unknown, as it did to the explorers of the 15th century, but moving from a highly regimented, largely unfree world (as Americans saw it) to a world of freedom and possibilities.

For many provincial Americans in the mid 20th century, the countries surrounding the

Mediterranean were usually seen as rather unfortunate places for people to have been born and to have to live. Their view was essentially a boorish and humorless extention of Mark Twain's intolerance of Mediterranean inconveniences. Everyone knew and believed that anyone living in the Old World would much prefer to be living in the New. And immigrants were expected to adapt to American life quickly and shed themselves as soon as possible of their ethnic identities. I was amused to read, in an early-twentieth century social work report quoted in Peter Jennings' recent book, *The Century,* the following comment about Italian immigrants: [They are] "not yet Americanized. Still eating Italian food" (p. 16).

In an early example of what we now call "racial profiling," Mediterranean types were usually described with the adjective "swarthy," a word that was infamously used to describe and identify both Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in the notorious murder trial of the 1920s that led to their executions. This sort of prejudice spread, in the postwar period (postwars I & II) to all Europeans, especially recent arrivals, who were often portrayed as taking advantage of American generosity, and lacking the ambition and ingenuity of Americans.

But an alternate view of the Mediterranean co-exists in the American imagination. In addition to a sense of awe about its antiquity, this view encompasses what Paul Theroux calls "the dream of the Mediterranean," a place with beautiful beaches, topless women, cabanas lined up on sparkling sand where the rich and famous go to play in the summer. This is the view popularized by F. Scott Fitzgerald who begins his novel, *Tender is the Night*, evoking the Mediterranean of the "beautiful people," who live a life of luxury and leisure along its shores.

> On the pleasant shores of the French Riviera, about half way between Marseilles and the Italian border, stands a large, proud, rose-colored hotel. Deferential palms cool its flushed façade, and before it stretches a short dazzling beach. Lately it has become a summer resort of notable and fashionable people; a decade ago it was almost deserted after its English clientele went north in April. (*TITN* 3)

This "dream" Mediterranean stretches from the Costa del Sol in Spain, through the French and Italian Rivieras, up along the Adriatic coast of Italy and into the islands and shores of Greece. This is what we might call (adopting an American phrase) the European *cintura del sole* where tourists flock in droves and where everyone in Europe seems to go in August. (My first trip to Italy was in the month of August, and the first Italian word I learned from wandering through the streets of Milan was "chiuso"). This is the Mediterranean of *La Dolce Vita*, of the Cannes film festival, of the gambling casinos of Monaco, though Americans usually regard it without the irony of Fellini, Fictional Americans have come here to become playboys, like the character Dickie Greenleaf in Patricia Highsmith's 1955 novel, *The Talented Mr. Ripley,* recently made into a film featuring gorgeous Mediterranean landscapes. And real Americans have come to be princesses - like the actress Grace Kelly, who gave up a thriving movie career to reign over the tiny principality of Monaco.

But even this glamorous Mediterranean aroused American suspicions. In Evan Connell's two novels about Middle American life in mid-century, *Mrs. Bridge* (1959) and *Mr. Bridge* (1969), his characters express a typical American Puritanism about what they regard as the indulgences of the Mediterranean life style. The Bridges take their first trip to Europe after living in Kansas City for most of their adult lives. They embody the American work ethic and the insular preconceptions of American Midwestern life. Restless in his hotel at Cannes, Mr. Bridge gets out of bed and makes these observations about European life:

> He got up and walked to the window where he stared at the Mediterranean and at people sauntering along the esplanade and loitering in the cafés. Some of them were tourists, so it did not matter what they did; but many of them were French, many of them had to get up for work in the morning, yet they were enjoying themselves as though nothing else mattered. He was mystified. He had observed very much the same thing in Paris, and to a lesser extent in London. Evidently these people managed to hang on to their jobs and conduct a certain amount of business while spending three hours at lunch and playing around half the night. In the United States that would be impossible. (*Mr. Bridge* 301-02)

Both the Bridges find it unbelievable that anyone would prefer to live in Europe rather than in the United States. Mrs. Bridge encounters a "peculiar Roman" near the Via Veneto who tells her it's unfortunate that she has to return to the U.S. so soon. She is puzzled by this remark and becomes even more so when the Italian tells her he has no interest in visiting America. "Don't let them fool you," said Mr. Bridge. "These people would sell their souls to get to the United States" (*Mrs. Bridge* 167).

Of course, not all American literary characters are so parochial. The American writer who has imagined life along the Mediterranean shores most fully is Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway gives us a whole cast of characters whose sophisticated world views reflect life in three countries and a continent bordering the Mediterranean basin: Spain, France, Italy and Africa. One could explore Mediterranean connections in *The Sun Also Rises, A Farewell to Arms, For Whom the Bell Tolls, Across the River and Into the Trees, Green Hills of Africa,* and especially in his posthumous work, *Garden of Eden* and *True at First Light.* In *Garden of Eden,* for example, the plot is driven by the geography of the region and embodies the American view of the distinctions between the "dream" Mediterranean of Europe's southern coast, and the "terrifying" Mediterranean of Africa's northern coast.

Beginning in the Camargue province of Southern France, *Garden of Eden* traces a geographical movement that mirrors the main characters' descent into their own "heart of darkness." When in France, at least initially, Catherine and David, just recently married, seem invincible in their union, both emotionally and sexually. However, after about a month of marriage, the relationship takes a dangerously erotic turn of some form of gender swapping. David becomes "Catherine" and Catherine becomes "Peter" in an escalating sexual experiment that moves beyond what Hemingway has the characters call "interesting" to something genuinely disturbing and ultimately destructive. (Though

unfinished, one possible ending in the manuscript form is a suicide pact between the two if Catherine does finally go insane.)

This psychological narrative line is deeply intertwined with the physical movement of Catherine and David along the Mediterranean. As they head into Spain on the way to travelling to Africa, they each get physically darker and darker through obsessive tanning, and Catherine is more and more frequently called "Devil" by David. And it is in Spain that the couple take up the ultimately destructive *menage a trois* with Marita, who is notably darker in skin and hair than Catherine. These details could seem benign enough, but Hemingway has the characters acknowledge - or, rather, think - that once they are on the coast of Spain they are already in Africa. As their "darkening," both physically and sexually, increases, Catherine says that white girls "bore" David, and that she is going to become really dark, as dark as walnut - ultimately transforming herself into his African girl.

Thus the movement from France, where Catherine notably attends mass (and in a skirt or female attire), through Spain (with its history of Moorish conquest), toward a fetishized Africa, repeats at least for the characters (though not necessarily for Hemingway, who is very possibly critiquing this kind of reduction), the "Western" and certainly "American" view of the Mediterranean as legitimately civilized and even legitimately seductive on its northern shores and as exotic, threatening, and powerfully disturbing on its southern (and eastern) sides.[1]

Of course it is not surprising that Americans have diverse and contradictory views of Mediterranean culture because the Mediterranean is not a place, but many places, and the currently fashionable phrase "multi-culturalism" could have been invented along its shores. We often visit these places vicariously in our novels and films, before seeing them in reality for the first time. One can profitably make a literary tour of the Mediterranean, as Paul Theroux does in his *Pillars of Hercules: A Grand Tour of the Mediterranean*, to verify the accuracy of various writers' description of exotic places. In Alexandria he asks a taxi driver to take him to the main railway station, and the driver tells him in all the years he has been driving he never took a tourist to the railway stations. Only the locals use it; the tourists travel by bus and plane. But the reason Theroux wants to go to the station is "so that I can verify something I had read: 'Alexandria Main Station… the noise of wheels cracking the slime slithering pavements. Yellow pools of phosphorous light, and corridors of darkness like tears in the dull brick façade of a stage set. Policemen in the shadows… the long pull of the train into the silver light… the giant sniffing of the engine blots out all sound… and a final lurch and the train pours away down a tunnel, as if turned to liquid'. That was [Lawrence Durrell's] *Justine*, and the nice image of the 'giant sniffing of the engine' had to mean a steam locomotive. That was the only difference" (354).

If we were take our own American literary/filmic tour of the Mediterranean coast, we might want to begin with Hemingway's evocations of Spain in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, amble along the French Riviera with Nicole and Dick Diver in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night*, travel through and around Italy getting the view from the gorilla cage

at Pisa where Ezra Pound was imprisoned, and from more hospitable landscapes as they appear in the novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James (or watch the truly splendid images of Venice that are displayed in the 1997 film version of *Wings of the Dove*), William Styron,[2] Joseph Brodkey, and many others, and, so our images are not totally romantic, even watch a few films that chronicle the recent history of the Balkans, such as the harrowing *Welcome to Sarajevo* (1997), a joint UK-USA production featuring Marisa Tomei and Woody Harrelson.

Moving further along the coast, what picture of Greece is more familiar to Americans than that presented in the 1964 film, *Zorba the Greek*, which won an academy award for Anthony Quinn, and created the role with which he was identified throughout his life? Given the ongoing popularity of the film, it's not surprising that the Greeks have made an industry of Zorba-related products, second only to the Shakespeare industry in England. The image of Zorba snapping his fingers above his head while he dances on a table top may be a more representative image of Greece to most contemporary Americans than the Parthenon.

From Greece we move across the Aegean, to Turkey, a country with an almost antithetical image in the American mind. If Greece, the cradle of democracy, represents freedom and sun-drenched island hideaways, Turkey is seen as a dark, authoritarian and dangerous place. For many contemporary Americans, that image was strongly reinforced by the 1978 film made from the non-fiction book by Billy Hayes, *Midnight Express,* based on his actual experiences in a Turkish prison. Hayes was caught attempting to smuggle drugs out of Turkey and the Turkish courts decided to make an example of him, sentencing him to more than 20 years in prison. The conditions of Turkish prison life depicted in the film, and his long struggle to get out, amplified traditional western fears and stereotypes about Turkey as the gateway to an inscrutable Eastern exoticism.

As we turn the bend in the Eastern Mediterranean, unfortunately the images lodged in the minds of Americans come less from fiction and films than from the steady diet of images on television of Palestinians throwing rocks, of busses turned to twisted metal, of world leaders moving across an ancient landscape ravaged by seemingly endless and insoluble strife. As Paul Theroux travels through this troubled edge of the Mediterranean, he becomes impatient with the inordinate amount of attention the world lavishes on this small patch of coastal land.

> These countries were so small! One of the more marvelous atrocities of our time was the way in which the self-created problems of these countries and their arrogant way of dealing with them, made them seem larger, like an angry child standing on its tiptoes. They were expensive to operate, too: they had vast armies; they indulged in loud and ridiculously long-winded denunciations of their neighbors. All this contributed to the illusion that they were massive. But, no, they were tiny, irritating, shameless and vindictive; and they occupied the world's attention way out of proportion to their size or their importance. (443)

This seems a politically naïve view, and it is instructive to compare it to a few of the

many Jewish American assessments of the region. It is difficult for any contemporary writer to write about this area without evoking political realities, and it is particularly impossible for Jewish-American and Arab-American writers to view the region neutrally. There are, of course, a great many more of the former than the latter, although an Arab-American literary perspective is beginning to take hold. But there is a long tradition of Jewish American writing, much of it giving substance to American images of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Just as Casablanca was a half-way house for refugees from Europe on their way to America during WWII, so the island of Cyprus was a stopping off place for Jewish refugees after the war, who dreamed of recreating the kingdom of Zion on the Mediterranean's eastern shores. Leon Uris chronicles this dream and its fruition in his novel, *Exodus*, a book that has never been out of print since its initial publication in 1958, and one which has sold millions of copies in many different languages worldwide. Early in the novel, Bruce Sutherland, an English Brigadier General who has testified at the Nuremberg trials gets this description of what's going on in Cyprus from his commanding officer: "Bruce, these Jews escaping from Europe have posed quite a problem. They are simply flooding Palestine. Frankly the Arabs are getting quite upset about the numbers getting into the mandate. We here have decided to set up detention camps on Cyprus to contain these people - at least as a temporary measure until Whitehall decides what we are going to do with the Palestine mandate" (31).

The novel goes on to tell the story of the creation of Israel, and may have done as much or more to shape American policies and attitudes toward that region as Golda Meir and Yitzhak Rabin. In a single novel, one critic tells us, "Uris dramatized palpable glimpses of the historic European anti-Semitism that stimulated [the creation of] Israel; he presented tangible, heroic *sabras,* (Israeli natives) to Jewish-American lay persons… and… played a crucial role in transforming, for countless American Jews, their nebulous affinity for the Jews in Israel… into concrete feelings… of connectedness and responsibility" (Furman 40).

Never a favorite of critics, *Exodus* continues to have an enormous following and readership. Unabashedly pro-Israeli, the novel gave Americans a romanticized view of Israeli Jews as well a stereotyped and distorted view of Arabic life and culture that has now been reasserted and underscored in light of the events of September 11th. While you may feel I am claiming too much for the impact of a single novel, I believe it is impossible for many Americans, because of *Exodus*, to see the Arab-Israeli conflict from any neutral perspective. This is where our image of the Eastern Mediterranean comes from, or certainly came from in the 1950's and 60's - and it is a vision that we are collectively being called upon to revision and truly see again in reality, without the preconceived biases of politics and/or the literary imagination.

Not all Jewish American writers have been so rabidly pro-Israeli. For example, in 1988, Allen Ginsberg attended a demonstration in Tel Aviv to protest against the treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories. I spoke with him personally soon afterward

(I had just written an essay on Ginsberg's poetry for the *American Poetry Review*) and he told me he had read a poem called "Jaweh and Allah Battle" to a massive crowd of over 60,000 people, and that they were so mesmerized as he read it that you could hear a pin drop. No wonder. Listen to a few lines from the poem:

Both Gods terrible! Awful Jaweh Allah!
Both hook-nosed gods, circumcized.
Jaweh Allah which unreal?

Which stronger illusion?
Which stronger army?
Which gives most frightening command? (Caveney 192)

The literary views of Arab Americans are more difficult to come by, but a recently published anthology both reminds us that one of America's best selling poets in the 20th century was an Arab American, and also that there is a significant and developing literary community of Americans with Arabic backgrounds. This new anthology, called *Post Gibran: Anthology of New Arab-American Writing* refers to Kahil Gibran (1883-1931) the Lebanon born Arab American poet who in 1923 wrote a book-length gauzily sentimental meditation on life, love, marriage, children, various life stages and death called *The Prophet*, which was hugely popular in America during the counterculture 60's and provided the text (and still does) for a great many couples' wedding ceremonies. The prophet arrives from the sea, and since Gibran was born in Lebanon, we can assume that sea was the Mediterranean, and though the prophet bears a striking similarity to Christ, the book is really not regionally specific.

On the other hand, the more recent examples of Arab American writing in *Post Gibran* are closely connected to Eastern Mediterranean landscapes. For example, Elmaz Abinader's "Sixty Minutes" and Kathryn Abdul-Baki's "Ghost Song" document the inner conflicts over divided identity in the Middle East. Both involve scenes in which characters find themselves detained, searched, and harassed by military personnel. In each case (the first in Saudi Arabia, the second in Israel), the Arab-American woman is able to extricate herself physically only by virtue of her U.S. passport, but not without momentarily experiencing what her Arab sisters (and brothers) frequently endure. Penny Johnson's "The Lessons of Leila," by contrast, is told from the perspective of an American teacher who finds herself inexorably pulled into a post-funeral demonstration in the West Bank by a twelve-year old.

It's easy to get literarily delayed in the Eastern Mediterranean. But resuming our journey around the Mediterranean, when we head back westward across the Northern coast of Africa, the first country we encounter is Egypt. Although depictions of Egypt and Egyptian life in American Literature are few and far between, two works stand out as psychological immersions into the world of the ancient Nile. The first of these is the poet H.D. (Hilda Dolittle's) *Helen in Egypt*, which is really not about Egypt, but rather about Helen, and offers us our first feminist view of Greco-Roman mythology. The Mediterranean surges

through the poem like a torrent. It becomes a metaphoric sea, linking the world of Greek and Egyptian mythology, and although myth and legend dominate the poem, its true subject is the inner world of a woman, who has undergone a "sea change." In the refrains that conclude the poem she differentiates herself from Paris, her mortal lover, who has an inland sensibility. "What could Paris have known of the sea," she asks again and again, "its beat and long reverberation, its booming and delicate echo/Its ripple that spells a charm/ on the sand, the rock-lichen/the sea-moss, the sand, /and again and again the sand;/what does Paris know of the hill and hollow/of billow, the sea road?/What could he know of the ships/from his Idaen home, /the crash and spray of the foam, /the wind, the shoal, the broken shale,/the infinite lonliness when one is never alone?" (*Helen in Egypt* 315).

The second work, less focused on the sea, but even more clearly intended as an attempt to replicate an Egyptian and therefore Mediterranean consciousness is the massive, largely unread (and, unfortunately, largely unreadable) Norman Mailer novel, *Ancient Evenings.* Mailer worked for over ten years on this book, a Herculean effort, that more than one critic has called misdirected, although the British novelist, Anthony Burgess, called it "one of the great works of contemporary mythopoesis." Parts of *Ancient Evenings* are very richly imagined - like the opening section of the novel, in which the narrator, a 21-year-old prince named Menenhetet II, slowly comes to the realization that he has died and then proceeds to recount the passage of his soul to Khert-Neter, the Land of the Dead. "Crude thoughts and fierce forces are my state," begins "The Book of One Man Dead," "I do not know who I am. Nor what I was. I cannot hear a sound. Pain is near that will be like no pain felt before." Regardless of what one ultimately thinks about this novel, no other American writer has imagined a 3,000 year-old psyche and world view more fully than Mailer has.

And no one has given us a more distinctive and continuous view of the North African coast than Paul Bowles, the American writer who lived from the end of World War II until his death in 1999 in Tangier, Morocco, where he composed music and sent out regular fictional dispatches - novels and stories that almost single-handedly created - along with Ernest Hemingway's World War I reportorial bylines - an American view of that region. Bowles is best known to many Americans as the author of *The Sheltering Sky,* his 1949 novel made into a striking and haunting film by Bernardo Bertolucci in 1990. *The Stories of Paul Bowles* has just been published in the United States, and I read a review of it in *The New York Times Book Review* just before I left the US. I was struck by the reviewer's singling out of a story I teach regularly in my American fiction classes, "A Distant Episode," which, to my mind is one of the most chilling and discomforting stories ever written. As the Times reviewer, John Sutherland points out, it is even more discomforting and unsettling after the events of September 11th, and I'm not sure I'll ever be able to teach it again.

The story was first published in 1947, and in it, an unnamed middle-aged French linguistics professor arrives in Morocco to undertake research on Arabic tribal dialects.

As in all of Bowles' fiction, the region is described sensuously, immersing the reader in a potpourri of extreme physical sensations-sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures: "orange blossoms, pepper, sun-baked excrement, burning olive oil, rotten fruit, barking dogs…" The professor is not only a researcher, but also, like many tourists, a collector of exotic goods from the regions he visits. He is particularly enamored of "little boxes made from camel udders." A shopkeeper takes him to the poor section of town, where he is assured he can buy such things, but instead he is robbed, beaten, savaged by dogs and abducted by tribal traders traveling into the desert by camel train. In one of the story's most shocking moments, one of the tribesmen squeezes his nose, forces him to open his mouth to breathe, then pulls out his tongue and slices it off. For the remainder of the story, he regresses further and further into a kind of pre-human condition, dressed by the tribesmen in a garment made of the bottoms of tin cans, strung together, and made to entertain them as he is sold by one tribe, then another.

As Sutherland points out, "One can allegorize this enigmatic story any number of ways: as a fable of mutual exploitation, mutual incomprehension or the casual sadisms engendered by decaying imperialism. The question that presses, however, is: does the professor know more about Muslim extremists when he is a mutilated clown than he did when he was an academic? Must one suffer - extremely - at the hands of one's opponents to understand their extremism?" This question, of course, is an agonizingly pertinent one in light of recent events.

As we find ourselves in Morocco, we have just about come full circle in our literary/filmic tour of the Mediterranean, but, of course, we have only skimmed over the surface as if taking the trip on a hovercraft. Dozens more novels, films, poems and nonfiction works enrich American literature with imagined accounts of life along the shores of this fabled sea. For many American writers, the siren call of the Mediterranean Sea is a call to come to terms with their heritage and roots. Books like Gay Talese's *Unto the Sons* (1992), Barbara Grizzuti Harrison's *Italian Days* (1995) and Elia Kazan's *America, America* tell the story of their immigrant parents' passage through the Mediterranean beyond the Straits of Gibraltar in the early part of the 20th century and into the United States. The French-American novelist, Claire Messud gives us a very recent novel in this tradition. The first sentence of her 1999 novel, *The Last Life* could serve as an opening line for almost any of these books: "I am American now, but this wasn't always so." Messud's narrator finds herself, like a great many other immigrants and their children and grandchildren, "wanting to translate the world inside, beginning with the home that was once mine, on France's southern coast, with the fragrances and echoes of my grandfather's Bellevue Hotel, perched above the vast Mediterranean in its shifting palette of greens and blues and greys…" (*The Last Life* 3).

For Americans with this kind of heritage, myself included, the Mediterranean pulses in our bloodstream, and we look into the faces of our European, Middle Eastern, and North African brothers and sisters and recognize "the sea enchantment in their eyes."

But we look also with a sense of sadness and regret. For in a better world than the one we live in, this remarkably influential and diverse region could be a model of the possibilities of multi-cultural coexistence. Unfortunately, instead, it exists as a range of dualities or polarities between different constituencies that have never quite achieved a truly a genuine sense of mutual admiration and neighborly respect. To move in that direction is one of the greatest challenges of the new century.

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NOTES

1. I am indebted to Prof. Jacqueline Vaught Brogan of Notre Dame University for this reading of *Garden of Eden*.

2. William Styron's much undervalued 1959 novel *Set this House on Fire* is set primarily in the fictional Southern Italian village of Sambuco. This is a small, hill-top Italian village somewhere between Salerno and Sorrento, located not far from Amalfi on the south-facing stretch of coast overlooking the Gulf of Salerno. Sambuco is so well drawn in the novel, with its towering cliffs, glorious views, narrow winding streets and tourist strewn main piazza, that many readers are quite disappointed to find that it doesn't actually exist.

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FILMS

L'America

Casablanca

Death in Venice

Midnight Express

The Sheltering Sky

The Talented Mr. Ripley

Welcome to Sarajevo

Wings of the Dove

Zorba the Greek

VERSIONS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN IN AMERICAN POETRY

ROBERT HAHN

James Merrill noted that it is useful for a poet "to have a body of water up his sleeve," and the water he used for his own poetic magic was the Mediterranean. Many American poets have been drawn to the same source. I want to look at the way some of them - Merrill, the contemporary Charles Wright, and others - developed an imaginative version of the Mediterranean which has informed their work, a process of particular interest for me, as an American poet who has lived in Greece and Italy and made use of Mediterranean motifs and materials in his work. By way of conclusion I will offer a recent poem which illustrates my own variation on the theme.

The poet's Mediterranean, as an imaginative source which can be conjured up as needed, is not only a seascape, but a sensibility. The sensibility can be evoked indirectly (by tone, atmosphere, imagery) or by direct reference (Proust, lamenting the advent of photography, argued that "the very word Venice" had more imaginative power than a hundred photographs). The poem can be in a setting as recognizable as a guidebook description or be "Mediterranean" only remotely and obliquely, mainly through its cultivation and exploitation of a sensibility.

The sensibility can be traced to a list of original elements which begins with Mediterranean light, and continues with the handmaids of light: weather and sun, sea and sky, landscape and figure. As this list suggests, an American version of the Mediterranean can be quite conventional, exploiting its esthetic properties and the tradition linking these properties to imaginative states such as revery or swoon. The poet's Mediterranean thus risks becoming an idealized, other-worldly landscape, though Wallace Stevens might argue that such unreality is just the point. Skirting the coasts of that risk may be inevitable, given what draws us to the Mediterranean: its light, its vistas, its landscapes; the idea of a certain kind of life in those landscapes; and the rhythm, style, and philosophy of that life. It is, ideally, a life which responds to the world sensuously while reflecting on the world philosophically.

An American poet's version of the Mediterranean includes its art, particularly painting, and its literature, particularly poetry. For a poet, Mediterranean light is not only the sun which brought Poussin to Rome, Corot to the Italian countryside, or Matisse to Southern France, but a light of intellect and spirit, transmitted by tradition and refracted through the sensibilities of poets from Horace and Dante to Leopardi and Montale. Significantly, Montale and other Italian poets have been translated by both of my principal examples, Merrill and Wright.

Though I argue that Stevens feels more Mediterranean than Pound, Stevens rather

famously never visited the Mediterranean - never visited much of anywhere, for that matter. He never traveled abroad and rarely left Connecticut, except for his winter trips to Florida. But when Stevens was on the beach in the Florida Keys, looking east, I think he could see the Mediterranean quite clearly. His lush landscapes, his luminous seas and skies, and the mannered, philosophical meditations he locates on his shores, seem close in spirit to an imagined (or transplanted) Mediterranean. The woman walking on the shore, singing, in "The Idea of Order at Key West," seems a Mediterranean figure, both in a poetic sense - the sense of atmosphere, mood, and tone - and an archetypal sense, fitting in easily with a cast of mythic chanters and rhapsodists.

I find a similar spirit in the work of James Schuyler, who was linked to New York as tightly as Stevens was to Hartford. While Stevens went to Florida, Schuyler cultivated a Mediterranean sensibility in the northern coasts and the islands of Maine, where along with some American painters he discovered a seascape and landscape composed of familiar elements: coast and island, light and sky, and a way of life in those settings which felt sensuous and civilized at once. And in that life, a culture (real or supposed), in which the lives of villagers - fisherman and carpenters - and the lives of artists could seem to share the same values and philosophy, the same rhythms, and the same style: simple but with a natural grace and gravity.

If poets can locate this sensibility in Florida and Maine, they can do the same on America's other coast, notably in San Francisco, America's most European city, and with its bay location, the most Mediterranean (as well as, in the North Beach area, the most Genoese). While it is the Beat poets many associate with the city, the Bay Area poets I want to mention are Robert Duncan, who wove Mediterranean culture and history into a Californian poetry, and the contemporary Robert Haas, who uses Californian coastal settings, the vistas, the light and air, and the sense of an expansive meditation in that landscape, to produce what seems to me another version of a transplanted Mediterranean. And looking south down the California coast we find David St. John, who has lived in the Mediterranean and used Italian figures and scenes in his work, and who also writes of his own local setting, the raffish Venice Beach, in a way that heightens its Mediterranean pace and pulse.

In a wider survey we could pause on that very Midwestern American poet, James Wright (his body of water was likely to be the Ohio River), whose late work had Italian settings, and whose model was Horace; or the contemporary John Koethe (Lake Michigan often serves as his body of water) who has written haunting poems set in Italy and Provence, suffused with a sense of Mediterranean atmosphere, sun-dazed or mistral-moody by turns.

Casting the net more broadly, we could turn up glimmering fish such as Robert Lowell's "Sailing from Rapallo" or Anne Lauterbach's agonistic encounter with Matisse in Nice. We could pull in A.R. Ammons' atypical Etruscans or Richard Howard's

Browningesque monologues for Mediterranean speakers - or Mediterranean answers to questions of travel posed by Elizabeth Bishop, or by poets of actual travel such as Amy Clampitt or mental adventuring such as Jorie Graham or radical departure such as Anne Carson (admitting holders of Canadian passports to the list). We could ask what resonance a passion-on-the-beach poem by Louise Glück acquires by being entitled "Marathon."

But I want to turn to my primary examples, beginning with Charles Wright, who among current American poets is the one with the strongest Mediterranean consciousness. Wright, who has lived in Italy, emulates Pound in his relation to Italian culture and honors Dante as the great model. He has translated Italian poets and written poems with Italian settings, characters, and motifs. Nevertheless, as Wright has developed his body of work, he has become inextricably associated with one part of America: the South, Appalachia, Virginia. More narrowly, Wright has come to focus on the changing seasons and weathers as seen from his own back porch, and the landscape and skies from his own lawn. By now, the view from Wright's Virginia house rivals the upstate New York haunt of A.R. Ammons, once called the most famous backyard in American poetry.

But Wright's home-grown, backyard vision is suffused with a Mediterranean sensibility, and the importance he attaches to this is made explicit through references. Recalling a Leopardi moon from his own porch or musing on Dante while describing the onset of winter in Virginia are cases in point. Another is the frequent, talismanic reference Wright makes to the Bolognese painter Morandi, whose plain objects placed in clear, strong Mediterranean light - a jar, a bowl, or a plate - evoke subjective states and invite us into reflections on their underlying nature. Wright has applied Morandi's method to the grass and trees, to the dogwoods and azaleas, to the drifting clouds and emerging stars of his own landscape, which may be one of the reasons that, although we always know we are in Virginia, Mediterranean scenes and moods are never far from mind. Thus in a Wright poem, when we see a flash of reflected light, from standing water in a ditch at the end of a gloomy day, a reader of Italian poetry may be reminded, with a pang, that we have seen similar lights in the coastal landscapes of Montale's Italy.

Finally, Merrill: Of all modern American poets, it was James Merrill who used the Mediterranean most explicitly and importantly. It is in his work that the presence of the Mediterranean is most clear and concrete, most fully formed, most formative. This comes as no surprise, since Merrill lived and wrote for many years, at the height of his productive powers, in Greece. His poetry provides a vivid sense of the air, the light, and the sea which wash over Greece and its islands, along with a faithful rendering of Mediterranean seacoast life, its slow pace and patterned decorousness, its intricate balance of open expression and courtly manners, its sensuousness, the grave gaiety of its social rituals and scenes.

But if Merrill's Mediterranean is literal, his is also an imaginative projection. For all the actualities of Merrill's version, it is also an abstraction, a sensibility. And like some kinds of wine and oil, this sensibility - once the taste for it has been acquired and internalized - is

easily transported. Thus we can easily feel that we are still in the Mediterranean when Merrill's poems have migrated to Key West, where he moved late in life (and added richly to the poetry of that strange world), to the Connecticut coast, where he owned a home, or the Long Island estate where he grew up (in the baronial estate of the senior Merrill, founder of Merrill-Lynch).

Merrill has absorbed a central idea of the Mediterranean, composed of history and culture, social ambiance, and philosophy of life - the idea of living fully and elegantly, in a manner both spontaneous and civilized. This was the idea which attracted Henry James as a concept, and took James, by way of London, to Venice and to Rome. Merrill's work also rests on an informed sense of Mediterranean classical cultures and literature, art and artifacts, where he finds the quality of "Hellenic brightness," a blending of esthetic response and philosophical stance. In his book-length poem *The Changing Light at Sandover*, Merrill created his own Mediterranean epic, an overarching time-and-space creation in which history and myth are blended, and historical figures, archetypes and gods chat back and forth, becoming as real as his Greek friends and neighbors. It is this masterpiece, I think, which answers the charge made against Merrill, that he is an unduly effete and elitist poet. *Sandover* shows that Merrill is a moral poet, whose morality is rooted in his consciously constructed, rather elaborate and even architectural version of the Mediterranean, in which centuries of history and thought are as important as its radiant seascapes and skies.

When Stevens looked east from Florida and saw Mediterranean seas and skies, his vision was essentially esthetic, that is to say, atmospheric, tonal, and visual. In Merrill's projected Mediterranean, we find the same features, though in his case derived from actual settings. But we also find in Merrill a sense of history, an awareness of contemporary social, political, and economic problems and their roots. We find an acknowledgement of the complexities - ethical as well as epistemological - which confront us when we excavate layers of Mediterranean history.

Merrill affirms that an American poet's version of the Mediterranean can be more than an esthetic idealization, and that no matter how distractingly lovely the vistas are, they can include a vision of history in their sweep. To gaze down these vistas with the eye of a poet-painter, and the reflectiveness of a poet-philosopher, need not exclude the inquiry of a poet-historian. But it entails an interruption of the reverie, and the reverence. It involves a modulation from brilliant Mediterranean light to darker tones of Mediterranean history.

This brings me to the poem of my own I want to offer as a conclusion, or a variation on a theme - a Mediterranean excursion in a different direction. My version of the Mediterranean can be traced to living in Greece for several years, and to traveling in southern France and particularly in Italy (Bologna, Verona, Siena, Genoa, Venice). It can be traced to a lifelong preoccupation with the light, scenes, and subjects in Bellini, Titian, Claude, Corot, and Matisse, and on an interpretive reading of other poets. Thus my version is

both actual and figurative, based on experience as well as art, all of which is heightened by the fact that I am at the moment a resident of Rome.

Rome adds wonderfully to my version, though what it adds is not only wonder. It adds snarling traffic, eye-watering pollution, ear-piercing noise, and garbage in sprawling piles. But it adds Roman light - bemusing, beguiling, sumptuous in the afternoons, and still heart-breaking after all these years. It adds enough art and architecture to distract a poet from his work for a lifetime. It adds stunning, dramatic open spaces where the glories of a great continuous culture are on permanent display, and narrow, quiet streets which wind back to rediscoveries, shadowy, elusive, and deeply layered.

Because (as these remarks reveal) I am as susceptible to Mediterranean rhapsody as anyone else, while remaining mindful of realities which blur and blot this radiant world, my version of the Mediterranean is dialectical. The conventionally esthetic version, notwithstanding its risk of sentiment and idealization, its Hubert Robert vine-covered-ruin temptation, is real and powerful and persistent. At the same time, it is not only the golden light and the preserved monuments in which they bask, but the enduring political and economic realities which link the Mediterranean past and present. The realities are hardly abstract. They are embodiments of the greed and savagery which have always underlain, and always bankrolled, our highest cultures and their most brilliant accomplishments.

A version based on these contradictions will include, along with picturesque scenes, the unsolved problems which litter the receding vistas of Mediterranean history and the streets of modern Mediterranean cities. My poem labors to reflect the light which still draws us here, the art which sprang from that light, and the sensibility which owes its richness to the Mediterranean. It also works to reflect the long decline and transfer of Mediterranean power, the brutal history of which we are heirs, and the rapacity and cruelty from which we have yet to emerge.

Locating the poem on the coast of Puerto Rico illustrates my point that an American poet finds the Mediterranean in far-flung places, and looking at Italian history from this virtually American shore adds another layer to the theme: the idea of empire. Today the topic of "empire" will trigger a discussion of the United States and its power, but a few centuries ago it was Mediterranean states who were the source, for good and for ill, of imperial power, of imperial expansion, and all of empire's products: the potential for oppression and exploitation, and the production of literature and art, of brilliance and beauty.

I discarded the title of an earlier version of this poem - "An Invention of Venice from A Shore of Puerto Rico" - on grounds that it was too cumbersome, accepting a reader's suggestion for a title which is simpler and which reminds us that a poetic sensibility is purchased at a high price - that Mediterranean light depends, for a full appreciation of its radiance, on contrasting darkness which can be impenetrably black and can mask a multitude of crimes. The poem is called "Chiaroscuro."

Palatial resorts under palm trees, yes, but the island is "plagued by crime."
It is a vine-covered and sun-kissed ruin, defaced with burnt-out hulks
From car-jackings, and liquor stores guarded by tall rusting grates.
Seen from above though, Puerto Rico can seem to rise from the sea

"Like a dream," as if invented. As Venice would need to be invented,
So that its massive palaces could rise from the shallow lagoon
And appear to float on the water, which mirrored their glitter,
So that Titian's radiant nude in Madrid, lolling under a shower of gold,

All the opulence of her flesh, her breathy undulation, could seem
To float up from nowhere, from a sea where clouded forms swarm and sink.
But we have always counted on thugs, on the heavily-laden galleys,
On sails which spilled gold on the wind, turning into the harbor,

To bankroll a painter, and his house and garden, on a bank by the Arsenale.
A ship could be built in a day there - at dawn a stark skeleton,
By nightfall, round-bellied and packed full with goods, ready to sail.
When the princes of Spain saw Titian's feverish nude, they could tell

The gold showering down on her loosening limbs was a refinement
Of their hard-won treasure, torn from the heart of the New World.
Here on the beach this morning, women reveal their perfect bodies
And begin a long day in the sun, hard at work, producing beauty.

Pump spray bottles release a gilding mist to glaze their flesh.
They are heirs of Raphael, whose pagan paradise on Chigi's ceiling,
Where gorgeous girls sprawling on clouds hear long-winded tales,
Was the finest art a banker's vast wealth could buy.

They are heirs of Giorgione, a brilliant career snuffed out too soon.
When his plague-defaced corpse was tossed on the barge, ferried away,
The day was left to Titian, who would go on working for fifty years,
Until he painted his tomb and knelt before it, praying to a angel

With the torch in his fist, for an intervention nothing could purchase,
Not then, not even the plunder in the holds of the Spanish ships.
They had found here a well-watered place, and gave it a name
Of their devising, / *Puerto Rico*: a fool's-gold name, a cut-rate paradise

For package tours of Germans and Swedes. It is so hot this morning,
When a drifting cloud breaks and showers on the sun-worshippers,
They stay where they are, sprawled on their beach chairs, in a trance
Like a half-naked Venus who sees herself floating up in a hand-mirror,

Until the cloud passes, and the rain is over. They dry without moving.
Late in the afternoon, billowing clouds pile up on the far horizon,

Like the Salute rising above the sea. Its gray stone domes
Seem to lift so easily above the water, as if their weight

Did not bear down on pine pilings driven into silt, did not weigh
On wealth and labor. Cloudy monuments drift toward shore
And dissolve, like hallucinations of towering city-states
Who furnished captains for ships to the west, and engineers

For a star-shaped fortress in the port of San Juan.
All in the service of Spanish princes, who had the good taste,
Who had the abundant means, to order sumptuous nudes from Titian,
And call them into being. It could not save him from ruin.

But it would make him rich and famous, for a time,
While galleys returning with gold mosaics and bronzed lions
Filled air with ore, burning and fading as you drift down the Grand Canal,
When lights come on at evening, and palaces rise like dreams from the sea.

Brookline, Massachusetts

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WORKSHOP ONE
AMERICAN POETRY AND THE MEDITERRANEAN HERITAGE

CHAIR: GIANFRANCA BALESTRA, PAOLA LORETO

This workshop stemmed from the desire to discuss American poetry in the context of its relationships with Mediterranean culture. Accordingly, it harbored papers exploring the impact of the cultural and artistic heritage of the Mediterranean area on American poetry. This includes the connection between American poetry and various Mediterranean civilizations; American poets' responses to Mediterranean landscapes, literatures and arts; relationships between poets (or between poets and artists); questions of poetry translation between linguistic or artistic codes.

The eight papers selected and here presented address a small but significant body of poetry in this comparative perspective. The question of influence, especially of classical culture, is a central focus in at least three essays, but seems to underlie most of the contributions. Gianfranca Balestra examines Edgar Allan Poe's appropriation of the landscapes and cultures of the Mediterranean area through books and imagination, focusing on his use of the classical world in three poems ("To Helen," "The Coliseum" and "To Zante") as part of his quest for ideal beauty as well as his personal version of romantic exoticism. Nicola Gardini explores the relevance of Virgil's *Aeneid* to the development of Robert Lowell's poetic work and *persona*, particularly to such crucial issues as the relation between power and creation, tradition and the individual talent. Antonella Francini's paper is a study of the network of European influences on the poetry of Charles Wright, ranging from Catullus through Dante, to Leopardi, with a particular emphasis on the figure of Orpheus.

The question of influence, in a sense, underlies also Earl Martin Pedersen's paper, which illustrates how the baseball poetry of American culture follows a pattern uniting literature and sport evolved by ancient Greek culture. From "the Hellenic league," as Pedersen facetiously calls this pattern, come the aesthetic impulse, the creative urge, the intentional reduction to essentials, and a coping mechanism for confronting fear and pain and escaping them at the same time, that one can find, for example, in the baseball poetry of Walt Whitman, Robert Frost, and Marianne Moore.

Gregory Dowling and Paola Nardi take us to the other side of the Mediterranean, towards Palestine and Egypt. The former analyzes Herman Melville's *Clarel,* which, with its grim desert setting, has sometimes been considered a kind of long-winded precursor to *The Waste Land*. By focusing on certain epiphanic moments which provide fleeting but important relief, Dowling attempts to demonstrate that the poem has far greater variety of mood and tone than it is often given credit for. Paola Nardi, instead, examines

Marianne Moore's allusions to ancient Egypt, particularly those referring to animals, as part of the poet's on-going concern with the relation between culture and nature.

In "'The Problem' of the Priest" Giuseppe Nori explores Ralph Waldo Emerson's problem of vocation. Recalling the re-orienting experience of Emerson's first trip to Europe (1832-33), Nori maintains that the impact of his first, direct confrontation with Mediterranean art and culture contributed to his decision to become a poet as much as it shaped his most characteristic strategies of cultural "equalization" which we can see at work in both his essays and his poems of the 1840's.

Finally, Paola Loreto describes Derek Walcott's aesthetic of light as it is elaborated in his last book-length poem, *Tiepolo's Hound*, and retraces its origins in the Thomistic sources of Dante Alighieri's world conception. The use of the all-pervasive metaphor of light, Loreto maintains, is also functional to Walcott's formulation of a Caribbean aesthetic that is based on the simultaneous claim to local geographical rooting and universal artistic validity.

Although it is impossible to reproduce here the lively discussion stimulated by each presentation and the overall topic, we are convinced that these essays, for the variety of texts examined and critical approaches adopted, constitute a significant contribution to the assessment of the importance of the Mediterranean heritage for American poetry.

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"THE GLORY THAT WAS GREECE, AND THE GRANDEUR THAT WAS ROME": TOWARDS THE HOLY-LAND OF POETRY IN EDGAR ALLAN POE

GIANFRANCA BALESTRA

Edgar Allan Poe never visited the Mediterranean. He was in Europe for five years (1815-1820) as a boy, but only in Great Britain, where he received his first formal education. He never swam across the Hellespont, but, in imitation of Byron's famous feat, he swam six miles in the James River in Virginia and spread rumors that he was going to join the Greeks in their struggle for independence. His knowledge of the landscapes and cultures of the Mediterranean area is through books and the imagination, his use of them in his work may be interpreted as part of his quest for ideal beauty as well as his personal version of romantic exoticism, which looks at distant lands for inspiration and tends to create vague atmospheres and imaginary landscapes. His poetry, in particular, is only vaguely suggestive of the world of experience which it tries to transcend in search of supernal beauty and cosmological significance. His most mature and original poetical production is characterized, among other things, by the evocation of visionary and symbolic places, apocalyptic dreamscapes "out of space and out of time."

The Mediterranean heritage, however, is present in many ways, and it includes references to its various ancient civilizations, not only Greece and Rome as emphasized in my title, but also Egyptian and Arabic cultures in general - "Al Aaraaf" and "Israfel" being two of the most significant examples of the relevance of the Islamic world in his poetry. Poe's work in general is interspersed with heterogeneous materials, erudite quotations, known and mysterious elements from different mythologies that may result in a cultural pastiche and/or in a statement of aesthetics. The presence of these different cultural layers, in particular the mixing of Western and Eastern traditions, are a distinctive character of the Mediterranean world and a recurring feature in Poe's work. According to Zolla, they have also become a distinctive character of American culture: its tendency to syncretism, which can be interpreted as a philosophic and poetic projection of the melting pot (3-4). From this point of view Poe, who has often been considered marginal to the American canon, should be recognized as peculiarly American. This is a promising line of enquiry that should be pursued, I think, by Poe scholars, but at this time I am going to concentrate on the presence of the classical world in his poetry, which is particularly evident in his early period, more influenced by romantic attitudes, including the Hellenistic revival.

Poe received some classical education, which entailed the study of Greek, Latin, French and some Italian, but most critics have questioned the level of his competence in these languages as well as his general knowledge of the related civilizations and literatures. Some of

Poe's classical allusions have been proven imprecise or wrong (Campbell, *The Mind* 6-11, Fletcher 76) and his inclination to use Latin and Greek quotations (as well as French, German and Italian) has been stigmatized by some critics as a show of erudition with no sound ground, while others have recognized in it a voluntary tendency to mystification. It is perhaps significant that the first of his poems to survive carries a Latin title - "Oh, Tempora! Oh, Mores!" - this time a correct one, taken from the first *Catilinarian Oration* of Cicero. I will mention here that Poe had no direct knowledge of Arabic or other oriental languages, but he was familiar with English translations of the Koran and the *Arabian Nights* and was influenced by the English romantic vogue for the exotic East.[1]

I am going to examine three poems that are representative of three different approaches to the classical world: "To Helen," as a perfect example of neoclassical text both in contents and language; "The Coliseum," as a typical Romantic celebration of classical times and ruins; and "To Zante," as a melancholy and vague evocation of a specific Mediterranean place. Let's start with "To Helen," first published in 1831 and revised over the years to achieve its final perfection. Often considered Poe's most remarkable poem, for its classical harmony it has been compared to a Greek column,[2] and it has been said that "with its low key, reasoned argument, controlled imagination, and classical restraint matching its classical allusion, [it] was instrumental in the rise of neo-classical poetry," anticipating the French Parnassians (Buranelli 100). Its most famous lines, "the glory that was Greece,/ And the grandeur that was Rome" have been regarded as "the best comment ever made in two lines on the ancient civilization upon which the culture of the West is founded."[3] There have been some discordant opinions,[4] but in general the poem has been appreciated and these lines have been evaluated as a great improvement over an earlier version which read "the beauty of fair Greece,/and the grandeur of old Rome."[5] The final version, besides eliminating the weak adjectives, accentuates the idea of time, so that the first person is brought home, as Halliburton points out, "not to a specific geographical site but to that blended legacy of a past both Roman and Greek" (154). This is an important issue for my paper, because the Mediterranean we are dealing with here is not so much a physical place as a cultural space; the earlier version could be read as an intimation of present-day beauty and grandeur, while the new version unequivocally refers to a past that is gone but remains important for its tradition and represents home for the poetic persona.

Daniel Hoffman has identified the journey as the archetypical plot of Poe's poems: "The highest common denominator among these poems is they are all poems of journeys, and the journeys are all quests" (54-5). This is true also in "To Helen," where the idea of journey is present in all three stanzas. First, in a similitude where Helen's beauty is compared to the ancient boats "that gently, o'er a perfumed sea,/ The weary, way-worn wanderer bore/ To his own native shore" (vv. 3-5). It is plausible, within the context of this poem, to interpret the "perfumed sea" as the Mediterranean, and the wanderer as Ulysses, the "weary, way-worn wanderer" par excellence. In fact, the attempts at identifying this mythical figure

have been numerous, including, besides Ulysses: Bacchus, Dionysus, Menelaus, Alexander the Great, Catullus.[6] The classical aura of the poem invites these exercises in erudition, but there is no need to identify the wanderer, who can be an archetypical figure or, better yet, as suggested by Gargano, a metaphor for the artist in quest of a poetic homeland.[7] This finds support in the second stanza, where the wanderer is explicitly substituted by the poetic persona, and the "perfumed sea" is transformed into "desperate seas," with clear metaphorical and autobiographical overtones. From his journey on desperate seas the poet is brought home to the beauty of the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome. His guide on the journey is Helen, whose most immediate association is with Helen of Troy, a symbol of beauty whose classical quality is underlined by the few elements in the description: hyacinth hair, a classic face, Naiad airs.[8] In the last stanza the physical form of the woman is transposed into an art object, a statue-like figure in a window-niche holding an agate lamp, and finally into another mythological figure: Psyche, a being coming from the Holy-Land. If Psyche, representing the soul, is still associated with the classical world, her origin from "the regions which/Are Holy-Land" introduces a new and apparently discordant element in the poem. Holy-Land immediately evokes Palestine and Christian mythology, adding other possible symbolic associations to the poem, in a final idealized fusion of Greek, Roman and Christian culture.[9] However, once again the Holy-Land is a metaphor, more than a specific place. We can follow Mabbott, who states that "Greece is the Holy Land of art, Richmond the Holy Land of the poet's heart" (171), but we can go even further away from real places and interpret the Holy Land as the spiritual and artistic harbor for the quest of the poet, led there by Psyche, who comes from there and illuminates the way with her agate lamp.[10] Or, as Halliburton suggests, the Holy-Land is one of Poe's variations on the theme of the imaginary landscape, loftier than his "Fairy-Land" and his "Dream-Land," able to contain Greece and Rome, and "to expand and elevate the timeless legacy of the human past" (157). Or, as Stovall suggests, bringing to the fore the Arabian otherworld of another poem, "The Holy Land of the last line is not Palestine, but Al Aaraaf, the home of beauty and the true native land of the artist, the lover of beauty" (211).

In "To Helen" Poe reached classical perfection in a form that reflects in its symmetry and harmony the evoked beauty of the classical world, but through its clusters of metaphors he also represented his own quest for art and supernal beauty. In other poems the attempt to embody the classical world appears more mannered and conventional, less revitalized by personal and aesthetic resonance. This is the case of "The Coliseum," a poem redolent of the typically romantic love of ruins, and a subject that invites comparisons with Byron's descriptions in *Manfred* and *Childe Harold*.[11] Poe was obviously acquainted with Byron's poems and his relation with Byron has often been commented upon as an influence he had to overcome in order to develop his own individual poetic voice.[12] Childe Harold saw in the ruins only the fall of Rome and her impotence, while Poe takes the position of Manfred, and sings the Coliseum as a memorial of our civilization and a source of inspiration.[13]

In "The Coliseum," as in "To Helen," the poetic persona is a wanderer, who comes on a "weary pilgrimage" to contemplate the relics of ancient Rome, his attitude is humble and he is ready to absorb in his soul "the grandeur, gloom, and glory" of the Coliseum. The three alliterating words obviously echo the lines of "To Helen," but they include in the middle a new word - "gloom" - that throws melancholy and darkness on the power of the past. This is the charm of the ruins, in that they evoke the glory of the past at the same time as they embody the desolation of the present. The whole third stanza, in fact, is built on the juxtaposition of past and present rotating on the rhetorical repetition of "here," in a rather conventional exposition of the devastating effects of the passing of time and of human glory. However, the questioning of the pilgrim over the crumbling frieze, shattered cornices and general wreck finds in the final stanza a more positive answer: this colossal architecture can transcend the ravages of time and communicate some of its past power, fame, magic, wonder, mysteries and memories.

In this poem Poe takes up all the motifs inspired by the contemplation of ruins in a redundant elevated diction made of apostrophes, invocations and rhetorical questions. Echoes of pre-romantic and romantic poetry are easily discernible without being worked out into an original vision,[14] in spite of some curious allusions to the spells of a Judaean King, the gardens of Gethsemane, the charms of the Chaldee and the melody from Memnon to the Sun. These allusions have been partially explained with reference to the Bible (e.g. Jesus, King Solomon), Babylonian astrology, Greek and Egyptian mythology and history,[15] and they confirm the tendency, on the part of the writer, to resort to different religious and cultural traditions in a sort of fashionable syncretism, evocative of distant lands and remote times. In spite of its failures, the poem remains interesting as evidence of Poe's meditations on classical antiquities.

I would like to end by looking at "To Zante," a rather neglected Shakespearean sonnet, first published in 1837, addressed to a specific place in the Mediterranean: an island in the Ionian sea which represents a small crossroad of civilizations since it was at different times dominated by Greece, Rome, the Byzantine empire, Venice, France and England (it went back to Greece only in 1863). As Goldoni points out, Poe manages to include in such short space, in direct and indirect ways, so much of Europe and of Zante's history (119). The island is also known by its Greek name Zacynthus, but Poe chose to use the Italian name Zante, as he had done in *Al Aaraaf,* which allows him the rhyme and the Italian words in the final couplet - "O hyacinthine isle! O purple Zante!/ Isola d'oro! Fior di Levante!"[16] The place resonates with classical and Romantic strains: as Zacynthus it is celebrated by Homer in the *Odyssey* and by Vergil in the *Aeneid*; it is also part of the Byron legend, since after his death in Missolonghi in 1824 his body was transported to Zante, where it remained for almost a month.[17] To the Italian reader it brings immediately to mind the famous sonnet by Foscolo "A Zacinto," beginning with "Né più mai toccherò le sacre sponde." Foscolo's poem laments his exile and the im-

possibility of returning to the sacred soil of Zacinto, the island where he was born, unlike Ulysses who could finally return to Ithaca. The poet can only celebrate his native land in verses redolent of nostalgia and resonant with classical allusions. Poe's poem, instead, can be seen as a variation on his favorite poetic theme: the loss of a beautiful woman who dwells no more on the verdant slopes of this fair island, transforming it into accursed ground. Mabbott rejects the suggestion that Poe might have been inspired by Foscolo's sonnet, which was published in 1803; in fact, there is no direct imprint, but a common romantic yearning, a pervasive death feeling enhanced by the "entombed hopes" in Poe and the "illacrimata sepoltura" in Foscolo. In the only extended comparative study of the two poems, Goldoni, without asserting any direct influence, provocatively develops all the possible analogies between the two poems.

A direct source, instead, can be found for the final couplet - "O hyacinthine isle! O purple Zante!/ Isola d'oro! Fior di Levante!" - inspired by a passage in Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*,[18] which also explains the derivation of the island's name from the flower called hyacinth by the Greeks: the name Zacynthus is derived from a hero killed accidentally by Apollo, whose blood was transformed by the god into a flower. This allows Poe to recur to one of his favorite epithets - hyacinthine - and to start the poem with the apostrophe "Fair isle, that from the fairest of all flowers,/ Thy gentlest of all gentle names dost take!." The choice of this island on the part of Poe is probably due to its name, with its "exotic-phonetic attraction" (Goldoni 17), as well as to its classical connections more than to its location and physical landscape, which is evoked only with its "verdant slopes" (v. 8) and "flower-enamelled shore" (v.12). The various strands that compose the complex fabric of this poem, examined in detail by Pollin - the Italian and classical past of the island, the life of Lord Byron, Chateaubriand's treatment, the influence of Keats - contribute to the richness of the poem, considered by the critic "an original masterpiece, evocative, nostalgic, and melancholy" (106).

By highlighting Poe's Mediterranean visions and classical heritage, however, we face the risk of encapsulating him in a damaging critical perspective that defines him as an imitative poet, imbued with European culture and incapable of celebrating the difference of America, a new nation in need of a singer. An estimator of Poe like Killis Campbell, in his attempt to defend him from the common accusation of indifference toward America, tried to find in his poems some references to the American landscape, and couldn't find any ("Relation" 292-301). This is not a useful perspective for reading Poe in the new millenium, but it may be interesting, in the context of a conference on America and the Mediterranean, to mention that there is one reference to America in the unfinished drama *Politian.* I would like to conclude with this quotation, since it brings together America and the Mediterranean via Genoa and Columbus:

Knowest thou the land
With which all tongues are busy - a land new found -

Miraculously found by one of Genoa -
Thousand leagues within the golden west?
A fairy land of flowers, and fruit, and sunshine,
And crystal lakes, and over-arching forests,
And mountains, around whose towering summits the winds
Of Heaven untrammelled flow - which air to breathe
Is Happiness now, and will be Freedom hereafter
In days that are to come?[19]

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NOTES

1. On this and other issues related to Poe's knowledge of Islamic culture, see Giorcelli's study of "Israfel," and its extensive critical apparatus.

2. This is an early comment by James Russell Lowell in a sketch of Poe published in 1845. See *The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Mabbott, 164. All reference to Poe's poems will be from this critical edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

3. Buranelli 100. See also Mabbott's comment to the poem, 163-4.

4. Douglas Bush, for instance, regards them as the worst lines in the lyric. It is interesting that in a study devoted to the use of mythology in romantic poetry, this critic appreciates "To Helen" for its rhythm rather than for what he considers "the meretricious, rococo images and diction" (485).

5. Campbell, *Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* 202-3. "To Helen" was first published in 1831 and it was constantly revised; the two lines as they stand now were introduced in 1843.

6. A systematic arrangement of the erudite interpretations that have tried to clarify the mythological allusions of the poem can be found in Snyder 159-69. Those "Nicéan barks of yore" are another object of the scholarly debate.

7. Snyder himself at the end of his excursus suggests that the wanderer may be any wanderer (168), while Gargano inaugurates a critical line of interpretation that looks at the meaning of the poem rather than concentrating on the sources.

8. The autobiographical inspiration for this figure, according to Poe himself, was Mrs. Jane Stanard, the mother of one of his schoolmates, and his first ideal love (Snyder 159). The word "hyacinth" (or "hyacinthine") to define hair is a Homeric epithet Poe evidently liked and used in the description of the Marchesa Aphrodite in "The Assignation" as well as in that of Ligeia.

9. One critic insists on the Greek-Roman-Christian-Oriental fusion and pursues it throughout the poem, suggesting Byzantium as the place where this fusion takes place (Alice Moser Claudel 33-7). If this is historically true and metaphorically used by Yeats ("And therefore I have sailed the seas and come/To the holy city of Byzantium"), there is no evidence of this specific connection in "To Helen."

10. Psyche is another ambiguous image in the poem, since in Apuleius's *Metaphorphoses* she held up the lamp to see her lover against the injunction of the Gods, was punished for it and then pardoned. Bettina Knapp points out that similarly, "the poet must experience abrasion and agony in his determination to know supernal spheres and contemplate ideal beauty" (72).

11. See Mabbott 226. This poem in blank verse was first published in 1833, and it was also included as a monologue in Poe's drama *Politian*, which is set in 16th century Rome.

12. See, among others, Killis Campbell, Introduction xliv-xlv.

13. See Mabbott 266. Another way of looking at the ruins can be found in the words uttered by the narrator of "MS. Found in a Bottle," a tale written at about the same time: "I have been all my life a dealer in antiquities, and have imbibed the shadows of fallen columns at Balbec, and Tadmor, and Persepolis, until my very soul has become a ruin." Here the observation of the ruins has a negative contagious effect rather than that of elevating the spirit of the beholder.

14. For the various sources and influences, see both Campbell's and Mabbott's footnotes to the text. Campbell sees also reminiscences of a sonnet by Quevedo on the same topic.

15. See footnotes in both Campbell and Mabbott.

16. From the problematic prosodic reading of the sonnet Pollin deduces Poe's mispronunciation of the Italian (99).

17. Pollin mentions several classical allusions to Zacynthos, including Homer, Vergil, Ovid and Pliny. He also explains at length the Byron connection and suggests another source in Keats (92 and 257, note 8).

18. Similar lines can be found in "Al Aaraaf" (I, 76-77): "And thy most lovely purple perfume, Zante!/ Isola d'oro! - Fior di Levante!" See Campbell 236 and Mabbott 310.

19. Poe, *Politian*, VII, 65-73, in *Poems* 274.

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"RAINBOW O'ER THE WRECK": THE TWO SIDES OF MELVILLE'S *CLAREL*

GREGORY DOWLING

Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land is the title of Melville's longest work after *Moby Dick* and *Mardi*. The suggestion that the poem itself is a pilgrimage is undoubtedly deliberate, and has possibly contributed to its reputation as a peculiarly unapproachable text. I do not make any claims for it as light holiday reading, but in an age when readers (academic readers, at least) do not balk at Pound's *Cantos* or Hill's *Mercian Hymns*, *a priori* rejection of a major work by one of America's greatest writers seems a little hard to justify.

If it is a pilgrimage, it is undoubtedly one of doubt rather than of faith. This, of course, connects it not only with other major poems of the Victorian age ("Dover Beach,"[1] *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*, *In Memoriam*), but could well make the work more attractive to our own sceptical age; however, it has also contributed to its reputation as a work characterized by unremitting bleakness. Even those who defend it, like Walter Bezanson, do so in negative terms: "It is an essential part of the poem that the verse form is constricting and bounded, that the basic movements are tight, hard, constrained. This is an unbannered verse, without processional possibilities" (568).

In general critics who favour the work (significant names are Robert Penn Warren, Helen Vendler and Lawrence Buell in America, and Ruggero Bianchi in Italy) have tended to stress the affinities with the temperament of the 20th century. With its numerous descriptions of Palestine's stony aridity it has become commonplace to draw parallels with *The Waste Land*.[2] However, I wish to draw attention to other, perhaps less obvious aspects of the work: in particular to occasional but important moments in which we find a respite from the prevailing atmosphere of desolate despair. My intention, naturally, is not to claim that *Clarel* is fuelled by a spirit of blithe optimism but to emphasise that it is as richly and variously textured as all of Melville's major works.

Much of this richness and variety comes from the multiplicity of viewpoints. The setting itself - the Holy Land - practically guarantees the range of perspectives. Lawrence Buell pays tribute to "the density, depth and cosmopolitanism with which Melville interweaves dozens of Protestant, Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Jewish, Islamic and secularist faiths, using Clarel's pilgrimage as the occasion but ultimately all of Euro-American history as his canvas" (142). The work is centred not only on the encounter between different kinds of faith and different kinds of doubt, but, I would claim, between excesses of faith and (paradoxical though it may seem) excesses of doubt.

Between such opposed excesses lies, clearly enough, the path of moderation. This

unexciting alternative is not one that we naturally associate with Melville. But it seems to me that in *Clarel* - and through one of its characters in particular - he attempts something rather novel, something even rather paradoxically daring: he weighs up the virtues of middle-of-the-road ordinariness.

Derwent is an English priest of a comfortable, self-satisfied temperament. He is not a totally new type in Melville's works - we can see forerunners in the Reverend Mr. Falsgrave in *Pierre* or the lawyer-narrator in "Bartleby"; what *is* new is the seriousness with which he is taken and the range of perspectives we are given on him.

This range - this multifaceted approach - is typical of the work as a whole. No character can be seen in isolation; they are always seen in relation to other characters - and they are seen through and by the other characters. And of course, equally importantly, they are shown in relation to the landscape; their reactions to the unrelenting stones and dust tell us much about them - and vice-versa perhaps, as I hope to show.[3]

Derwent is interesting as the character who engages directly in perhaps the greatest number of discussions, and who draws upon himself the most comments by other characters. In particular he is seen in strong opposition to the two most immediately striking figures of the narrative, Mortmain and Ungar. These two are magnificent creations - monomaniacs, misanthropes - are recognisable as belonging to a definite line of Melvillean Satanic/heroic figures (Jackson, Ahab, Claggart); what distinguishes them from their forerunners is that Melville gives both of them intriguingly personal backgrounds, far more detailed than anything we learn about Ahab or Claggart, thus collocating them historically and indeed politically.

Mortmain is a Swede who became involved in the 1848 revolutions of Europe; disillusioned and embittered against mankind, he is depicted in a series of magnificently defiant gestures, spending a night vigil on Quarantania (a clear echo of Matthew Arnold's Empedocles), and drinking the Dead Sea water. Ungar - "a wandering Ishmael from the west" (419) - is an ex-Confederate Officer, part-Native American and Anglo-Catholic (a provocatively improbable combination), who enlivens the second half of the poem with his tirades against American demagogy and materialism. (It is worth noting that *Clarel*, published in 1876, was not just a poetic transcription of Melville's 1856-7 tour, but was a keenly contemporary work).

Derwent, by contrast, is an interesting picture of the "average" man. The first description of him comes after a direct reference to *The Canterbury Tales* ("Not from brave Chaucer's Tabard Inn / They pictured wend…," 133), preparing us for a lightly ironic portrait along the lines of Chaucer's Monk or Friar. And that, indeed, is what we get:

Thought's last adopted style he showed;
Abreast kept with the age, the year,
And each bright optimistic mind, …
A cloth cape, light in air afloat,

And easy set of cleric coat,
Seemed emblems of that facile wit,
Which suits the age - a happy fit. (134)

The wit in those final lines is by no means facile: the sartorial image of the "fit" hints at Derwent's easy compatibility with the age while also suggesting that his wit is a mere passing fashion, with no more than surface meaning. Elsewhere, Clarel himself, in one of his rare moments of irony, reacts to Derwent's glibness with a related image: "Thought Clarel: Pray, and what wouldst prove? Thy faith an over-easy glove" (205).

This idea of superficiality to be found in another strain of imagery associated with Derwent: that of "skimming" as opposed to "diving":

How Vine sidelong regarded him
As 'twere in envy of his gift
For light disposings: so to skim! (200)

As Bezanson points out, it is difficult not to be reminded of Melville's ironic comment while discussing Emerson: "I love all men who *dive*" (*Correspondence* 121). The obvious contrast here is with Mortmain, who is continually associated with images of mysterious inner depths; the famous description of the "Interiors measurelessly strange" and "plunged Bastilles drear" (248) of the labyrinths of Piranesi, for example, comes immediately after Mortmain's re-appearance by the marge of the Dead Sea. It is thus easy to understand Mortmain's reaction to Derwent: "Brass, / A sounding brass and tinkling cymbal!" (143).

But Derwent is not only set against these striking figures. He is also judged by such mild characters as Rolfe (taken by some readers to be Melville's alter-ego), Vine (a portrait of Hawthorne, according to - usually - the same readers) and Clarel himself (so colourless a hero as to be described sufficiently by the adjective eponymous). At times these judgements are memorably contemptuous, as in Rolfe's comment:

"Things all diverse he would unite:
His idol's an hermaphrodite." (326)

In one of the longest discussion passages in the poem, in Part Three, Derwent engages with Rolfe and Clarel in an argument on his faith - or lack of faith. There are definite echoes of Browning's Bishop Blougram, who pushes back his chair and chats comfortably with Gigadibs, defending his tepid half-belief over a glass of wine. Except that Derwent reveals that he is not quite so comfortable. We get the suggestion that Derwent has needed to find a way of coping with the ebb of faith:

"Suppose an instituted creed
(Or truth or fable) should indeed
To ashes fall; the spirit exhales,
But reinfunds in active forms…

… How with the flamens of that day?
When brake the sun from morning's tents
And walked the hills, and gilded thence
The fane in porch; the priest in view
Bowed - hailed Apollo, as before,
Ere change set in; what else to do?
Or whither turn, or what adore?
What but to temporize for him,
Stranded upon an interim
Between the ebb and flood?" (344-5)

In just such a position - "stranded upon an interim" - Derwent claims to find himself, endeavouring to keep the last glow of ashes alight.

And we see here one of the most interesting uses of the word "tarry," which recurs throughout the poem, contributing to the general sense of frustrated progress:

"For lamp you yearn -
A lantern to benighted thought.
Obtain it - whither will you turn?
Still lost you'd be in blanks of snow.
My fellow-creature, do you know
That what most satisfies the head
Least solaces the heart? Less light
Than warmth needs earthly wight.
Christ built a hearth: the flame is dead
We'll say, extinct; but lingers yet,
Enlodged in stone, the hoarded heat. …
… But once o'er,
This tarrying glow, never to man,
Methinks, shall come the like again." (345-6)

Clarel and Rolfe, he argues, are looking for the wrong thing: the light of truth, of final, full illumination - all the concepts we associate with "enlightenment." In the end, he says, these are not what men need so much as "warmth"; what they require is not the lamp for thought, but the hearth-glow of spiritual comfort. The church here becomes the stone that keeps the heat of Christ's flame - one of the more positive associations of the word "stone" in the poem.

Most interestingly he takes on directly the accusation of superficiality, and rather than trying to deny it, undertakes a defence of surface-values:

"Alas, too deep you dive.
But hear me yet for little space:
This shaft you sink shall strike no bloom:
That surface, ah, heaven keeps *that* green;
Green, sunny: nature's active scene,
For man appointed, man's true home." (347)

Of course, here he lays himself open to the accusation of blindness. He is in a landscape that offers no such "blooms" and "sunny greenery." And indeed he is often accused of failing to acknowledge the reality around him. When he whistles cheerily near the Garden of Gethsemane, Mortmain complains: "Who he that with a tongue so nimble / Affects light heart in such a pass?" (143) And when Rolfe finds Derwent calmly reading by the side of the Dead Sea, he feels "quick revulsion":

"And read you here?
Scarce suits the ground with bookish cheer.
Escaped from forms, enlarged at last,
Pupils we be of wave and waste -
Not books; nay, nay!" (241)

But in fact, this magnificent, truly Melvillean statement of openness to the wild surroundings - and of a willingness to learn from them ("a whale-ship was my Yale and my Harvard") - is actually denied by the circumstances. The characters are anything but "enlarged," anything but "escaped." And when Rolfe instructs Derwent to "disenthrall / Thy heart" (241-2), it can only seem ironic. For the fact is that the characters feel all too much in thrall to their surroundings. Derwent offers a defence of reading: "Were it a paradox to confess / A book's a man? If this be so, / Books be but part of nature…" (242) - but more importantly he makes the simple, perhaps even obvious statement:

"Moreover, Siddim's not the world:
There's Naples. Why, yourself well know
What breadths of beauty lie unfurled
All round the bays where sailors go…" (242)

In other words, to recall the image that provides the title for one of the sketches of "The Encantadas," there are two sides to a tortoise: "The tortoise is both black and bright…" (*Billy Budd* 138).

But the most interesting - and most clearly positive - aspect of Derwent is not his ability to remember the existence of other landscapes amid the desert. It is in fact a gift of observation. For it is often he who first catches sight of certain natural phenomena - certain tricks of light, they might be called -, moments when the climatic conditions and the atmospheres produce transformative effects on the landscape:

In Jericho Derwent calls his companions' attention:

"Pardon, pray,"
Cried Derwent - "but 'twill quick away:
Yon moon in pearl-cloud: look, her face
Peers like a bride's from webs of lace." (185)

The rainbow image appears twice in the poem:

"Ah, look," cried Derwent; "ah, behold!"
From the blue battlements of air,

Over saline vapors hovering there,
A flag was flung out - curved in fold -
Fiery, rosy, violet, green -
And, lovelier growing, brighter, fairer,
Transfigured all that evil scene;
And Iris was the standard-bearer.
None spake. As in a world made new,
With upturned faces they review
That oriflamme, the which no man
Would look for in such clime of ban. (233-4)

Thus, amid a landscape that everywhere evokes defeat, the rainbow provides a sudden - if fleeting - sense of triumphant possibilities. For one moment it *is* a "bannered verse" (the oriflamme was, indeed, the sacred banner of St. Denis, carried into battle by French kings), with processional possibilities. No man "would look for" such a positive portent, but it does in fact manifest itself; and it is Derwent who first sees it.

There is no denying the transitoriness of such effects, of course, and the second time the rainbow appears, this ephemerality is stressed even more strongly, in the lines that bring Part Two and the Dead Sea episode to an end:

A thing of heaven, and yet how frail:
Up in thin mist above the sea
Humid is formed, and noiselessly,
The fog-bow: segment of an oval
Set in a colorless removal
Against a vertical shaft, or slight
Slim pencil of an aqueous light.
Suspended there, the segment hung
Like to the May-wreath that is swung
Against the pole. It showed half spent -
Hovered and trembled, paled away, and - went. (261)

All the emphasis is on the frailty of the phenomenon; even the "pencil" image suggests something easily expungeable, and the last word of the canto - with the added stress of the extra foot - indeed cancels it. However, for one brief moment it is there, suggesting a heavenly alternative to the hopelessness evoked by the desert landscape.

The rainbow is evoked elsewhere by Derwent explicitly as an image of hope - and this time in reference to such a figure of despair as Mortmain:

"There's none so far astray,
Detached, abandoned, as might seem,
As to exclude the hope, the dream
Of fair redemption. One fine day
I saw at sea, by bit of deck -
Weedy - adrift from far away
The dolphin in his gambol light

Through showery spray, arch into sight:
He flung a rainbow o'er that wreck." (150)

The word "wreck" takes on special connotations in this poem, being used most memorably to describe the city of Jerusalem itself. Derwent's hopes for Mortmain may prove ill-founded and over-optimistic, but none can deny the momentary uplifting effect, through the sheer beauty of the image; and quite probably these words, this image, expressed by the character who is most antagonistic to Mortmain, affect our overall judgement of the latter.

These images of transformative glory (another fine example comes in the Bethlehem canto, depicting the "splendor diaphanic" beheld by the shepherds, comparing it with the phenomenon of the "phosphoric ocean in Shekinah" [411] revealed to sailors in the Pacific) are some of the finest moments in the poem. They have something of a redemptive effect on the poem as a whole: touches of beauty from heaven that give momentary life and colour to the rocks and stones of the desert. An acknowledgement of such moments could be said to be the finest answer to the scientific materialism of such a character as Margoth, the geologist, whose line is "All's mere geology" (244), and who is incapable of experiencing the world other than through his hammer:

"The plain - the vale - Lot's sea -
It needs we scientists remand
Back from old theologic myth
To geologic hammers." (196)

This desire to strip away the myth to reveal the naked rocks of fact is commented on bitterly by Rolfe, who takes to task the German historian Nieburh, whose *History of Rome* had attempted just such a debunking exercise:

"All's now revised.
Zion, like Rome, is Niebuhrized.
Yes, doubt attends. Doubt's heavy hand
Is set against us;…
Ay, reaches towards Diana's moon,
Affirming it a clinkered blot,
Deriding pale Endymion." (108)

The image is a suggestive one - and recalls the central trope from Coleridge's "Dejection Ode";[4] in this poem, after a brilliant, almost magical description of the western sky with its "New moon winter bright," the poet announces dully: "I see them all so excellently fair, / I see, not feel, how beautiful they are" (106). He goes on to say:

And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
Ah, from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the Earth…. (107)

That is to say, we must be to the earth what the sun is to the moon, endowing it with light and wonder - a light and wonder that are not intrinsic to it, but issue forth from ourselves, from our own innermost spirit of Joy: "Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud / - We in ourselves rejoice!" (107). Otherwise the earth, like the moon, will be no more than a Nieburhized (or "Margothized") "clinkered blot," a mere heap of stones and dust.

Now I am not saying that Derwent is Melville's portrait of the spirit of Schillerian Joy, or, indeed, that the poem definitively comes down on the side of Derwentian optimism against the despair of the dark figures - or even the sombre doubts of such figures as Rolfe and Vine. The epiphanic moments can, of course, be interpreted in many ways, just like the mysterious "vapory fleece" that seems to transfigure Billy Budd at his moment of death, and which has been seen as a final piece of bitter, authorial irony. However, I am pointing out that a view of the poem that concentrates solely on the desert images - solely on the bleakest aspects - is a view of just one side of the tortoise.[5] And that Derwent does express an openness to influences from above or outside the earth (even if only from the upper atmosphere) that provide both uplift and beauty - and, not to be despised, relief and comfort.

They are epiphanic moments which an earlier - and undeniably greater - poet described in these terms:

…which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing. (Wordsworth 135)

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NOTES

1. The famous image of the retreating tide of the sea of faith echoes throughout *Clarel*.

2. Here too it is equally possible to see connections with contemporary works; critics have pointed to echoes of "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came," which also creates a mysterious landscape of stunted growth and blighted vegetation, amidst which a lone knight makes his hopeless way in quest of we know not what; connections can also be made with other Browning poems, such as "A Death in the Desert" and "The Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician" - poems in which religious fervour contrasts with the bleakness of setting. Walter Bezanson has also pointed out strong connections with Arnold's *Empedocles on Etna* ("Melville's Reading" 380-384).

3. A famous example of this multiplicity of points of view is the famous sequence of the palm-tree at the Monastery of Mar Saba, a lone tree protruding from rocks, which is viewed - and interpreted symbolically - by a number of characters, rather in the manner of the Doubloon chapter in *Moby-Dick*.

4. During the brief discussion after this paper was read, Massimo Bacigalupo pointed out that Derwent was the name of Coleridge's second son.

5. Another aspect of the poem that deserves attention is the depiction of a number of attractive, pleasure-loving characters, such as Glaucon and the Lyonese salesman; what distinguishes Derwent from these youthful hedonists is that he shows himself prepared to defend his superficiality, rather than simply take it for granted.

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"THE PALE HEMS OF THE MASTERS' GOWNS": MEDITERRANEAN VOICES AND SHADOWS IN THE POETRY OF CHARLES WRIGHT

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"Poetry," Charles Wright once told an interviewer, "so often rises out of previous poetry, rather like new vegetation out of old vegetation, enriched and informed by what's dead. So in that way, we are always in a constant communion, eucharistically, with the dead."[1] The "dead," in this case, are all those poets and artists of the past who crowd Wright's austere and beautifully polished lines, and who ultimately form his poetic genealogy, at the roots of which we find Ezra Pound and Eugenio Montale. The voices of these masters inhabit Wright's poems, which are otherwise generally unpopulated, devoid of interlocutors for the autobiographical, speaking poet who, calling himself a pilgrim, constructs from book to book a spiritual itinerary toward an unlikely, improbable contemplation of the divine. This terrestrial pilgrimage into the *metaphysics of the quotidian*, as Wright calls the central theme of his poetry, takes place along Italian and American landscapes the poet has elected as "sacred places" and which he perceives as imbued with a hidden meaning beyond their real appearances. "The textures of the world," Wright has stated,

> *are* an outline of the infinite, […] to love the visible things in the visible world is to love their apokatastatic outline in the invisible next. […] What we have, and all we will have, is here in the earthly paradise.[2]

Such pageantry is further enriched by the personification of the landscape - a perception, to use Wright's phrase, of what is *on the other side* - that is, the dead relatives and friends, his past identities and memories reassembled into abstractions. They have marked the places they have touched and continue, in Wright's vision, to send out messages, thus adding vibrations to his mystic *tableaux* - a sort of underworld scenario, but in the here and now. The task of the poet, then, is to attempt to capture this metaphysical component of the landscape with the only means he has - language. In this enterprise he is supported, assisted, and escorted by his lifelong poetic masters, who are, literally, his *viaticum* along the road. They are called back any time Wright's meditations on life and death coincide with instances of their own poetics, whenever his eyes rest on settings related to their works and lives, whenever their language appears more appropriate than his own to express a specific issue. They obsessively reemerge as necessary ghosts of a poet's mind, as depositaries of exemplary poetic systems that attempt to say the unsayable and catch glimpses of the "Ultimate Formal Organization," the secret of the universe to which poems are clues.[3] As creators of Forms, the poetic masters belong in Wright's underworld, which is the Empyrean toward which he strives to ascend. Transmuted or, to use Wright's religious diction, *transubstantiated* into formal poetic elements, they are the fixed stars under whose sign Wright's character moves on.

The quotation in the title of this paper is meant to indicate Wright's degree of relationship with the dead masters inhabiting his lines, which is one of communion and distance, affinity and exclusion. Their luminous tracks, in fact, resist the vision of the poet who, calling himself "calligrapher of the disembodied" in the cited poem,[4] can come only near enough to just see the silhouette of their garments, the *pale* outline of their bodies of work which are unquestioned models for his writing. This is the humility of a contemporary author who, nonetheless, writes with them *in his bones* - a contemporary version of Eliot's notion of a poet's historical sense.

The list of masters in Wright's poetry is rather short, after all. Besides Montale, Mediterranean figures include Pavese, Campana, Sappho, St. Augustine, Leopardi, Dante and Catullus, among others. This paper will base its examples of Wright's intertextual practice on the last three.

Leopardi first figures in Wright's poetry in 1984 as the subject of the 14-section poem (a sort of hypersonnet) entitled "To Giacomo Leopardi in the Sky."[5] An author's note explains that at least ten of the Italian's poems[6] were used somehow in the composition, which grew out of Wright's failure as translator of Leopardi:

> I had hoped to translate who I thought were the two best Italian poets since Dante. I had done Montale, so Leopardi was next. Unfortunately I wasn't up to it. I could read him somewhat in Italian and could see the lightning in his language. Unfortunately, all I got was the rain in my English.

But his English didn't go completely down the drain. Some of it moved into the Leopardi poem he wrote soon after the attempted translation:

> I read the poems right before I wrote my own poem. I first tried the translations, then wrote the poem rather soon afterwards, so his poems were very fresh in my mind […]. I only used a line or two from each poem I tried to translate. I changed the line a bit, I think, but the reference to Leopardi's poem is supposed to be obvious.[7]

In fact, the Leopardi material implanted in the new text is easily recognizable, and immediately flags the reader to the model. Also, the type of poem, an address, reflects the conversational quality of, say, "Alla luna" and "Canto notturno d'un pastore errante nell'Asia." In a colloquial tone, Wright talks to a silent interlocutor, the Italian poet in the sky, an imaginary astral confidant, a manifestation of the absolute, like the Leopardian moon:

> If you are become an eternal idea,
> Refusing investiture in our pink rags,
> wise beyond body and form,
> Or if you housel elsewhere a different sun
> In one of the other aethers,
> from down here
> Where our years are fanged and omnivorous,
> Listen to what these words say, from one who remembers you. […]

The poet at work here is both reader and writer. His memory is both commemorative

and creative: as he pays homage to Leopardi, listening to his lines and translating them into his own English, he also proclaims his own creative space and independence, recasting those words in a highly subjective mold. Ear and hand work almost simultaneously as Leopardi's language passes through a different poetic personality and is transmuted, or *transubstantiated,* in a new context. Wright's poem, not being ontologically autonomous, is then a "hypertext," in Gerard Genette's terms, grafted onto several "hypotexts" dismembered and reassembled differently in order to achieve a different function. The result is indeed a *palimpsest*, a double linguistic texture, because the overlapping of new and old is clearly transparent. The translated quotations, imitations, and allusions to Leopardi support the voice of the speaking "I," who gives the poem a narrative, style and objective. In the opening lines, quoted above, Wright's transformative imagination reworks the last stanza of "Alla sua donna," and Leopardi's words to an unattainable feminine illusion are redirected toward their author. In turn, Leopardi is "an eternal idea, / Refusing investiture in our pink rags," a guiding light in Wright's literary Empyrean, as well as, at another level, an untranslatable author: the American poet covertly admits his failure as translator since his original refuses, so to speak, to wear English garments. In any case, the manipulated Leopardian diction serves to create both affinity and distance between disciple and master, and to set the scene for Wright's speech, for the typical drama of his persona caught between his desire for knowledge and his human limits.[8]

In the stanzas that follow, Leopardi's words to the moon and stars, to Sylvia, to the solitary thrush, etc., continue to help Wright construct a reply to the Italian poet. The second stanza begins a diary narrative that reconstructs, in Wright's fashion, his first encounter with Leopardi's work. The memory of the poem "L'infinito" flows freely in his creative process, as Wright pins down the specific time (a July 17th in the early 1980s) and space (his house in California where he was then living):

July 17th, on the front deck
Looking out through the slats and palm leaves,
The ocean horizonless and sending out signals,
I start to unmarble
        interminable spaces beyond it,
Silences so immense they sound like a wind,
Like this wind that dismays me
With its calm
        as it pulls the sheet of the night
Over my head.
How sweet it is to drown in such sure water.

The alterations in Wright's text are striking. No hedges here to hide the farthest horizon, but an open view on the Pacific Ocean ("the ocean horizonless") and a landscape that, in Wright's fashion, sends out numinous messages and promises metaphysical epiphanies. Leopardi's original length is reduced to eight lines, a compressed interpretation against a nocturnal setting, which, in Wright's fashion, introduces the *memento mori* motif. Thesis

and praxis thus perfectly match as, in the rest of the poem, Wright simply states that Leopardi's poetry, once touched, becomes inextricable from one's own language and motifs. The invisible figure of the poet Wright imagines "drifting along [his] course" wherever he goes (in California or near Mt. Caribou, where his diary finally reports him to be a month later) tracks and trails across the sky like a guiding star that, once seen, cannot be erased. "You doom us who see your face," we read twice. And a disembodied Leopardi draws for him an "epistle in tatters" made of "flash points and solid geometry." From behind the stars, he points out "The Bear and the dark waters/ Each boat of flesh sets sail on" - that is, in Wrightian terms, the journey "along the river of blood" and "up the river of light."[9] Leopardi is an exemplary spiritual and artistic paradigm for such arduous paths. The final words of the poem ("you are part of my parts of speech/ Think of me now and then, I'll think of you") explicitly define the aesthetic communion the encounter has elicited, that transubstantiation of foreign voices into a new one.

Leopardi reappears thirteen years later in a poem titled "Meditation on Form and Measure," included in the Pulitzer Prize winning book *Black Zodiac* in 1997. The poem is a series of nocturnal tableaux where the poet, eyes toward the sky, watches the movements of moon and stars, the light that gives in to darkness at the end of sunset. The sight spurs a meditation on death, on the time "beyond our future." By the end we are reading one more representation of the infinite with which Wright yearns to be reconciled through a pantheistic process of extinction and regeneration of the self into the natural world that, ultimately, accounts for his perception of the visible as metaphysical. Leopardi's opening line of "Le ricordanze" is quoted here, first in Italian and then in English, as if evoked by Wright's cosmology:

O vaghe stelle dell'Orsa,
beautiful stars of the Bear,
I took one time from a book.
Tonight, I take it again, that I, like Leopardi, might
One day immerse myself in its cold, Lethean shine. (*Negative Blue* 25-27)

We find such an immersion three years later, in "North 5-American Bear," the last section of *Negative Blue,* Wright's collected work of the 1990's, which closes a 30-year poetic project, now re-arranged in three books he calls a *trilogy*. In the poem "Sky Diving," which ends this section, Wright's pilgrim, eyes again toward the sky, imagines his self dissolving into an immensity beyond the visible, which seems to be a free, perhaps unconscious, re-writing of Leopardi's "The Infinite." For instance, there is that movement of the mind beyond the visible and back to its human limits, on the threshold between life and death, word and silence:

Immensity fills us
Like moonrise across the night sky, the dark disappears,
Worlds snuff, nothing acquits us,
And still we stand outside and look up,

look up at the heavens and think,
Such sidebars, such extra-celestial drowning pools
To swallow us.
Let's lie down together. Let's open our mouths.

Dante was the major influence on Wright's mature poetry from the 1980s on. In this case too, an intensive and systematic reading of the *Commedia* in 1978 precedes Dante's entrance into Wright's poetry. The book he published soon after, *The Southern Cross* (1981), opens with an epigraph from *Inferno,* Canto XXI, where Statius hails Virgil and bows to embrace his feet "*trattando l'ombre come cosa salda*." The episode allows Wright to indicate his relationship to Dante. First, he is the ideal model of a poet, the great master to whom he genuflects. "His poetry is relevant to me," says Wright, "as I'd hope to aspire to the condition his poetry lays down for us: spiritual quest and spiritual attainment […]. Following [his] lead, I've tried to rise myself, from my own ground, into my own blue."[10] The architecture of the *Commedia* is, in fact, the structural model for his own trilogy. Secondly, as with Leopardi, Dante's work is a great reservoir of language, a universal dictionary from which he freely draws images and situations useful for his poetic discourse. Thus, the Statius episode perfectly fits the theme developed in *The Southern Cross*, as well as subsequent volumes: the absence-presence in the landscape of a transcendent reality which the poet strives to make emerge as "*cosa salda."*

Wright's mature poetry incorporates an impressive number of Dante's lines and images, yet they are always adapted to his needs. The context of the borrowed lines reverberate through the new ones, adding narrative space and meaning. For example, "Yard Journal," a 1984 meditation on five seductive landscapes, ends with a comment on himself as a poet of the *metaphysics of the quotidian*, whose journey equals a descent into hell on Geryon's shoulders. The words of Dante to Brunetto Latini - "*Siete voi qui, Ser Brunetto*" - resound, though significantly altered, at the close: "Bico, my man, are you here?" The unanswered question points to the poet's solitary voyage, perhaps to an imaginary landing in the underworld, yet it retains its original aura, inducing us to read it also as an invocation for a guiding master in his "nosing around" in the "unknown without a map," as Wright has defined his poetic goal.[11] In "Sky Diving," the last line of the *Commedia* - "*l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle*" - is used to synthesize the subject matter of his poetry: "I've talked about one thing for thirty years/ […] I mean the still, small point at the point where all things meet; / I mean the form that moves the sun and the other stars."[12] Replacing *love* with *form* is another instance of appropriating Dante's language, since *Form*, to Wright, is the ultimate secret of the universe.

As a character, Dante stands at the center of *A Journal of the Year of the Ox*, a long poetic diary of 1985, developed around a seasonal cycle of birth-death-regeneration and shaped as a pyramid, in 33 sections, with an evident allusion to *Purgatory*. On the slopes of his pyramid structure, Wright sets his imaginary meetings with American and Italian poets. Dante calls him "Brother" (as the souls in *Purgatorio* often address the Florentine) and urges the new pilgrim toward concentration, which should be a driving force in his journey:

Brother, remember the way it was
In my time: nothing has changed:
Penitents terrace the mountainside, the stars hang in their bright courses
And darkness is still the dark:
Concentrate, listen hard,
Look to the nature of things…

Significantly, the section that follows alludes to the sin of pride, freely drawing imagery from *Purgatorio*, Canto X, and thus reestablishing the distance between disciple and master which that "Brother" had momentarily shortened.[13]

Catullus first appears in Wright's poetry, not as a poet, but as the *genius loci* of Sirmione, where, in 1959, Wright discovered his poetic vocation reading Pound's "Blandula, Tenulla, Vagula" in front of the ruined Roman villa there. As a poet, Catullus can be found, for example, in *A Journal of the Year of the Ox*. If Dante is at the top of the pyramidal architecture of this poem, Catullus stands at its base, pointing, at a biographical level, to Wright's poetic debut. In fact, in Wright's poetry, Catullus is always justified biographically, or is associated to, or mediated by, Pound. In this poem, Wright remembers when, in Verona in 1959, he would sit near the Adige watching the Roman theater and imagine what it must have been like to be Catullus. To find out, he begins to re-write *Epithalamium 61*. But since the passage must be a March entry in his journal, he imbeds images from the Latin poet into his rebirth chant, making explicit the connection between wedding and spring. Catullus's images of the bride and Hymenaeus slip in and out of Wright's vision of a springtime landscape:

I remember a woman I saw there once,
in March,
The daylight starting to shake its hair out like torch flames
Across the river,
The season poised like a veiled bride,
White foot in its golden shoe
Beating the ground, full of desire, white foot at the white threshold.
She stared at the conched hillside
As though the season became her,
As though a threshold were opening
Somewhere inside her, no woman more beautiful than she was,
No song more insistent than the beat of that white foot,
As she stepped over,
full of desire,
Her golden shoe like a sun in the day's deep chamber,
I remember the way she looked as she stood there,
that look on her face.[14]

First it is the daylight that "shakes its air like torch flames," and the season turns out to be the "veiled bride," with "white foot and golden shoe/ beating the ground, full of desire." Then the woman reappears as a personification of spring ("the season became her"), and thus the borrowings serve a new context. Here, too, the landscape is a many-

layered canvas, contaminated by past poetry and by his own presence, real yet charged with hidden meanings of which the dead masters are the custodians. The highest the degree of contamination, the most perfect Wright's palimpsests are.

J.D. McClatchy has written that if there were a myth Wright's poetry enacts, it would be that of Euridyce. In fact, there is such a myth, but Wright looks at it the other way around: it is the myth of Orpheus, the poet who has failed, in spite of the magic of his music and poetry, to bring a shadow back to life. We find this figure more and more in Wright's recent poetry as one of the two terms in a simile: I, the speaking poet, am like, or would love to be like Orpheus - the Orpheus who has lost for ever his wife and looks at Charon, in the oldest of Wright's texts, "poling his empty boat/ Cross-current, over the dark water," indifferent to his grief and his music.[15] In a 1999 poem, the simile returns and displays more precisely Wright's usage of the myth: his Orpheus-like poet is anxious to re-enact the fatal moment of the look backward in order to be able to sing again his song of irreversible loss. But he hears "No heartbeat on [his] heels, no footfall." Behind him lies, not Euridyce, but his "vanished life" as "an ornament," which is read as an "ashen transcendence/ Buried and resurrected once, then time and again".[16] Out of metaphor, this passage simply alludes to the meaning of Wright's entire work, which should be regarded as a long poem about the doomed task of making the invisible visible. Poetry is its defeat and triumph. As Wright says in "Mondo Orfeo," a poem from his most recent book, his desire is to be Orpheus's bobbing head along the Hebrus, the singing tongue of the river, although his own song "resettles no rocks," "makes no trees move."[17]

In sum, at this stage of his career, with an impressive body of work behind him and the dead masters still fixed stars in his poetic cosmology as parts of his speech, the only model Wright feels capable to follow is that of a poet who has never existed, but who stands for poetry as an endless chant of defeat and triumph.

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NOTES

1. Interview with Matthew Cooperman in Wright, *Quarter Notes* 170.

2. Interview with J.D. McClatchy in Wright, *Quarter Notes* 120. In this passage, he backs up his vision, quoting a well-known adagium by Wallace Stevens and Theodore Roethke, two authors certainly to include in the poetic tradition Wright has constructed for himself: "Stevens said, or at least I seem to remember he said, the thing seen becomes the thing unseen. He also said that the reverse way is impossible. Roethke wrote that all finite things reveal infinitude."

3. Interview with Carol Ellis in Wright, *Halflife* 153-54.

4. "Black Zodiac," *Negative Blue* 124-27.

5. Included in his 1984 volume *The Other Side of the River,* now collected in *The World of the Ten Thousand Things* 108-112. All quotations of this poem come from this edition.

6. They are: "L'infinito," "La vita solitaria," "Alla sua donna," "Le ricordanze," "Il passero solitario," "Canto

notturno di un pastore errante dell'Asia," "A se stesso," "Sopra un basso rilievo antico sepolcrale," "Sopra il ritratto di una bella donna," "Il tramonto della luna." But also "La sera del dì di festa," and "A Silvia," are detectable. Wright was working with Jean-Pierre Barricelli's bilingual edition of Leopardi's poems. His borrowings come from this translation or are personal re-workings of them.

7. This and the previous quotation come from Wright's correspondence with me.

8. Wright's method of borrowing from other poets' texts usually proceeds by compression and substitution. To compress, in his case, means to retain only a few elements of an original, so that they stand out in bold relief. Of the first stanza of Leopardi's "Alla sua donna" (reduced from 11 to 6 lines) Wright retains the hypothetical structure ("Se dell'eterne idee…"; "o s'altra terra ne' superni giri/ fra mondi innumerevoli t'accoglie…"; "di qua dove son gli anni infausti e brevi,/ questo d'ignoto amante inno ricevi"), thus reproducing the original pace and posture in spite of the omissions. To substitute implies, instead, a mental process, a reshaping in his own terms of Leopardi's images and concepts. The Leopardian Platonism of "Se dell'eterne idee/ l'una sei tu, cui di sensibil forma/ sdegni l'eterno senno esser vestita" is transformed by Wright in a beautiful definition of what translation is. Likewise, the "anni infausti e brevi" turn out to be "fanged and omnivorous" - a twist of the original meaning toward Wright's vivid style and concept of time as an overruling force. The last line of the Italian poem, finally, is aptly adjusted to introduce, rather than to end, a tribute: "listen" replaces "ricevi" and the "ignoto amante" is here "one who remembers" the work of a master to whom he feels related by affinity as he proclaims in the third section ("you make me bitter for being so much like you"). All Italian quotations come from Leopardi, *Canti* 147.

9. Quoting Dante, Wright uses these expressions in his inteview with Cooperman 168.

10. See Hawkins and Jacoff 262.

11. Ibid. 260.

12. Wright, *Negative Blue* 201.

13. 9 July 1985 entry of this poem collected in *The World of the Ten Thousand Things* 150-90.

14. 27 March 1985 entry, 157-58.

15. November entry of "A Journal of English Days" in Wright, *The World of the Ten Thousand Things* 126.

16. "North American Bear," in Wright, *Negative Blue* 197.

17. Included in the section "Millennium Blues" in Wright, *A Short History of the Shadow* 23.

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"I WAS MYSELF": LOWELL AND VIRGIL

NICOLA GARDINI

Lowell's classicism is obvious. It is one of the main ingredients of his fixation with ancestry and genealogy, as typically expressed by his family poetry. He took his classicism from Pound, Eliot, and the New Critics - all of whom constituted for him another sort of familial pedigree. However, he hardly ever brought it to as tense a pitch of hybridizing bravura as the founders of modernism. All traces of Avant-garde are effaced from Lowell's imitative practice. His sense of the self - an experiential one - has always looked for downright correlatives. Weak as it may have become at times, it never became so weak as not to resort to the imitation of stronger models. Therefore, Lowell would never make them disintegrate in the diachronic impersonality of poetic language, as Pound and Eliot would, but borrowed their alleged integrity to survive synchronicity. Also in imitation, he kept faithful to the tenets of his original formalism and opposed deconstruction by asserting the necessity of shape. Then, he personified Catullus, Propertius, Horace, Juvenal, Ovid, and Virgil.

What did Lowell's Latin classicism feed on? In an interview with Frederick Seidel (1961), he said:

> a Roman poet is much less intellectual than the Englishman, much less abstract. He's nearer nature somehow […] And yet he's very sophisticated. […] Also, you take almost any really good Roman poet - Juvenal, or Vergil, or Propertius, Catullus - he's much more raw and direct than anything in English, and yet he has a block-like formality. The Roman frankness interests me. (*Collected Prose* 253)

Virgil was by far the most influential and modeling of all the ancient authors he quoted and felt close to. In fact, I claim that *Virgil helped Lowell shape the whole of his literary career and establish his poetic persona*. Lowell's interest in Virgil encapsulates his broader interest in the myth of Rome, voicing his lifelong obsession with such issues as the poet's moral mission and the state's historical responsibility.[1] References to Roman history appear throughout Lowell's oeuvre.[2] For Lowell, America itself was a sort of 'Roman' empire - "immense, crass, vital, crushingly powerful," needing poets to justify its corruption and shield its decay (McClatchy 137). Likewise, "Rome asked for poets. At her beck and call, / came Lucan, Tacitus and Juvenal …" These lines come from *Beyond the Alps*, a poem included both in *Life Studies* and in *For the Union Dead*. Interestingly enough, in the revised version of the later book, they are pronounced by Ovid, a world famous victim of imperial propaganda. In Eddins' words:

> speaking himself from the bitterness of political exile, Ovid underscores the irony of the poets' answer to the mother country's request that her culture be nourished by literature. They turn

savagely upon her corruption and hypocrisy with merciless satires and exposés, dramatizing not only by their revelations but by their very satirical posture the hopeless fragmentation of art, statesmanship, and military power in a society that would like to claim unity of being. The analogous relation between Lowell and the Washington of his day is obvious enough. (46)

T.S. Eliot's remarks on Virgil can serve as an apt comment on Lowell's Virgilian calling:

the consciousness of history. […] Virgil […] is at the centre of European civilization, in a position which no other poet can share or usurp. The Roman Empire and the Latin language were not any empire and any language, but an empire and a language with a unique destiny in relation to ourselves; and the poet in whom that Empire and that language came to consciousness and expression is a poet of unique destiny. (128-129)

Major critics, starting with Randall Jarrell, described Lowell's evolution as a progressive departure from constraint to liberty, from history to autobiography. Virgil characterized and set the seal on the main turning points of such an evolution, providing the modern poet with an ever growing consciousness of his own historical significance. Originally, when he was still imbued with bookish classicism, Lowell wanted to be Virgil. Then, as he progressed in the affirmation of his own originality, he wanted to get rid of Virgil. He ultimately succeeded in neither thing. He always regretted - I believe - not becoming an epic poet. What prevented him from fully accomplishing his programme? As J.D. McClatchy put it, "Lowell's sense of the epic is that it is self-contained, tragic, and dramatic. Now, those are decidedly *not* Lowell's own strengths, which tend toward the ironic, the melancholy, the provisional, the lyric. Stephen Yenser proposes that, throughout his career […], Lowell 'sought to fulfill an epic ambition with essentially lyric means'" (131).

The epic was one of Lowell's lifelong preoccupations - with its demands and capacities, with its cultural prestige, with the kind of status it bestowed on its author. He first wrote an essay on the epic, specifically on the *Iliad*, at age 18 - finally published in the St. Mark's school magazine in his senior year there. As a student, he had also worked on a long poem on the first Crusade. He told Seidel: "I'd gone to call on Frost with a huge epic on the First Crusade, all written out in clumsy longhand on lined paper. He read a page of that and said, 'You have no compression'" (255). At the time of his death, he was working on an essay titled *Epics*.

As a poet, Lowell starts dealing with Virgil as early as his first book, *Lord Weary's Castle*. The poem *The Death of the Sheriff* takes its epigraph from *Aeneid* II, 506 - a line introducing the tragic episode of Priam's massacre - and, in the second part, mentions Aeneas' subsequent encounter with Helen (*Aeneid* II, 566-587).

I try the barb upon a penciled line
Of Vergil. Nothing underneath the sun
Has bettered, Uncle, since the scaffolds flamed
On butchered Troy until Aeneas shamed
White Helen on her hams by Vesta's shrine.

Crucial references to Virgil are to be found in a later poem entitled *Falling Asleep over the Aeneid*, included in his second book, *The Mills of the Kavanaughs* (Ziolkowski 178-181).[3] I could not ascertain whether this is the "monologue that started as a translation of Vergil and then was completely rewritten" (254). In any case, the speaking voice, i.e. the poet, here identifies with Virgil's Aeneas. He falls asleep and dreams of dead Pallas:

His head
Is yawning like a person. The plumes blow;
The beard and eyebrows ruffle. Face of snow,
You are the flower that country girls have caught,
A wild bee-pillaged honey-suckle brought
To the returning bridegroom - the design
Has not yet left it, and the petals shine;
The earth, its mother, has, at last, no help:
it is itself.

This one passage conflates two Virgilian passages, while adding some pictorial details: the yawning head, the pillaging bees, the spousal context:

Ipse caput nivei fultum Pallantis et ora. (*Aeneid* XI, 39)
Hic iuvenem agresti sublimem stramine ponunt:
Qualem virgineo demessum pollice florem
Seu mollis violae seu languentis hyacinthi,
Cui neque fulgor adhuc nec dum sua forma recessit,
Non iam mater alit tellus virisque ministrat. (*Aeneid* XI, 67-71)

As is clear from this brief quotation, Lowell tends to expand Virgilian elements into full, pathetic descriptions: *nivei*, a simple adjective, becomes "face of snow." His reworking of the original aims at the poignant and decorative. Other central elements of Lowell's poem appear to derive from, and enhance emotionally, Virgilian details: the feathers - a recurrent element throughout the first part of the poem - are probably reminiscent of the *cristas* in line 8 and "the bird with Dido's sworded breast" is Pallas' own "levique patens in pectore volnus" in line 40.

The same is true of the rest of Lowell's poem:

But I take his pall,
Stiff with its gold and purple, and recall
How Dido hugged it to her, while she toiled,
Laughing - her golden threads, a serpent coiled
In cypress. Now I lay it like a sheet;
It clinks and settles down upon his feet,
The careless yellow hair that seemed to burn
Beforehand.

Compare this to

Tum geminas vestes auroque ostroque rigentis,
Extulit Aeneas, quas illi laeta laborum

Ipsa suis quondam manibus sidonia Dido
Fecerat et tenui telas discreverat auro.
Harum unam iuveni supremum maestus honorem
Induit arsurasque comas obnubit amictu. (*Aeneid* XI, 72-77)

It is such passages that most reveal, and correspond to, Lowell's sensibility, encapsulating his sense of the epic - passages in which the epic hero is not just a vehicle and source of historical memory, but proves to have his own memories. Aeneas' identity mixes universal history with remembrances of his private life. Throughout the poem Aeneas fulfills a double task: remembering and making himself worth remembering.

One more section of Lowell's poem appears to follow closely Virgil's poem:

my marshals fetch
His squire, Acoetes, white with age, to hitch
Aethon, the hero's charger, and its ears
Prick, and it steps and steps, and stately tears
Lather its teeth; and then the harlots bring
The hero's charms and baton - but the King,
Vain-glorious Turnus, carried off the rest.
"I was myself, but Ares thought it best
The way it happened." At the end of time,
He sets his spear, as my descendants climb
The knees of Father Time, his beard of scalps.
His scythe, the arc of steel that crowns the Alps.
The elephants of Carthage hold those snows,
Turms of Numidian horse unsling their bows,
The flaming turkey-feathered arrows swarm
Beyond the Alps "Pallas," I raise my arm
And shout, "Brother, eternal health. Farewell
Forever."

Virgil says:

Ducitur infelix aevo confectus Acoetes,
Pectora nunc foedans pugnis, nunc unguibus ora;
ternitur et toto proiectus corpore terrae.
Ducunt et Rutulo perfusos sanguine currus.
Post bellator ecus, positis insignibus, Aethon
It lacrimans guttisque umectat grandibus ora.
Hastam alii galeamque ferunt; nam cetera Turnus
Victor habet. Tum maesta phalanx Teucrique secuntur
Tyrrhenique omnes et versis Arcades armis.
Postquam omnis longe comitum processerat ordo,
Substitit Aeneas gemituque haec addidit alto:
Nos alias hinc ad lacrimas eadem horrida belli
Fata vocant: salve aeternum mihi, maxume Palla,
Aeternumque vale. (*Aeneid* XI, 85-98)

As is evident, Lowell rendered quite faithfully Virgil's text, but inserted some lines that make the English passage sound quite different from the Latin subtext. These lines predict the Punic wars and, by linking the present to the future, open up a perspective of further death and massive destruction. The statement "I was myself" eerily echoes "it is itself" referring to the earth further up in the poem. However subtly, this echo emphasizes the tragic core of Lowell's epic vision. Only nature keeps its own identity and cannot be changed by history - not even when its children are killed. On the contrary, the human individual, Aeneas, is at the mercy of historical change and is caused to regard his life as progressive self-betrayal. "I was myself" nostalgically looks back on obliterated origins, splicing the present with the past of deluded expectations.

The whole of Pallas' funeral creatively rewrites Virgil's text - which is typical of Lowell's translating method. This poem, up to a certain point, may well be considered a translation in its own right and be legitimately included in *Imitations*, Lowell's free versions of western poets, from antiquity to modern times. Interestingly enough, with all his admiration for Latin poets, Lowell did not include any of them in *Imitations*, while he distributed translations of Propertius, Horace, Virgil, Catullus, Juvenal, and others throughout his original work. On the other hand, one should notice that the first text of *Imitations* is an epic passage - an excerpt of the *Iliad*, the slaughter of Lykaon by Achilles, which is thematically akin to the episode of Pallas' death.

In the closing lines of *Falling Asleep*, the poet awakes and ceases to identify with the Trojan hero. Now he finds himself back in his childhood, witnessing another funeral: his uncle's.

It all comes back. My Uncle Charles appears, Blue-capped and bird-like.

Virgil shades off into literature. Yet, he projects the timelessness of his vicissitudes onto the account of the modern poet's own life.

Falling Asleep marks a highly significant passage from literature to life, from epic to autobiography, from heroes to relatives - a passage foreboding, actually enabling the revolution of Lowell's *Life Studies*. In the name of Virgil the public and the private, the objective and the subjective meet. Indeed, the private and the subjective prove public enough as to acquire a universal function - one that Seamus Heaney called "the role of the poet as conscience" (130). As is evident from *Falling Asleep*, Lowell's confessionalism is rooted in the sublime. His autobiography has claims to imperial status. In his essay *Art and Evil* (1955-56), Lowell, pinpointing the essence of the epic, also gave us a succinct definition of his own poetry. "Aeneas, in tearing himself away from Dido, comes to know the full torture of seeming to be, of all but believing himself to be cold, dead, calculating, serpentine. *The Aeneid* is perhaps like Proust's novel, the story of what one must give up to write a book." Lowell is clearly speaking for himself. The epic hero, i.e. the epic poet, converts life into writing - which is exactly what Lowell meant to accomplish in his *Life Studies*.

Interestingly enough, the title of *Life Studies*' first poem, *Beyond the Alps*, quotes *Falling Asleep*: "The elephants of Carthage hold those snows, / Turms of Numidian horse

unsling their bows, / The flaming turkey-feathered arrows swarm [my italics]." The poet established a strong textual link between the past and the present of his work. Only seemingly did he cease to dream of the epic and waken to reality. In fact, reality itself took a Virgilian resonance. The poem *Beyond the Alps* was to turn up - slightly modified - in one of Lowell's subsequent collections, *On the Union Dead*, stressing the centrality of the Virgilian theme and assuring continuity to the whole of Lowell's work in the name of epic.

Finally, what does this theme signify? To put it shortly, the evil of history. We have already seen the reference to wars in *Falling Asleep* and in *The Death of the Sheriff*. In *Beyond the Alps*, one finds a pithy summary of all major human tribulations: fascism and temporal power (Mussolini, in the first stanza), mass superstition and religious power (Mary's Assumption dogma and the pope, in the second stanza), civil wars, dictatorship, and exile (as expressed by Ovid's biography, in the third stanza), political murder ("killer kings on an Etruscan cup," in the closing couplet).

Through Virgil, Lowell voices a subtle critique of power and imperialism, while fashioning a catastrophic image of human history as onslaught and massacre - an image recurring also in his letters to the presidents of the U.S.. In 1943, he wrote to Roosevelt:

> In 1941 we undertook a patriotic war to preserve *our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor* against the lawless aggressions of a totalitarian league: in 1943 we are collaborating with the most unscrupulous and powerful of totalitarian dictators to destroy law, freedom, democracy, and above all, our continued national sovereignty.

He then went to jail as a conscientious objector. In 1965 he wrote to Lyndon Johnson:

> We are in danger of imperceptibly becoming an explosive and suddenly chauvinistic nation, and may even be drifting on our way to the last nuclear ruin. I know it is hard for the responsible man to act; it is also painful for the private and irresolute man to dare criticism (370-371).[4]

A disciple of Virgil, Lowell stated his need for criticism, while also taking a dramatic step away from Virgil's epic passiveness as embodied by Aeneas's compliance with the divine order to fight a deplorable war. It is exactly a lack of divine justification that prevents Lowell's epic world from achieving coherence. By both remaining loyal to his ideals of epic involvement in history and questioning Virgil's suggestions as to how this involvement should occur, Lowell expressed a deeply unsetting conflict, and the ultimate impossibility of compromise, between political obligations and poetic independence - an impossibility which the conclusion of *Falling Asleep* fixes in an image of reverberating ambiguity:

> the bust
> Of young Augustus weighs on Virgil's shelf:
> It scowls into my glasses at itself.

The final line, with imagistic preciseness, captures the poet's moral complexity and controversial role, while suggesting that he cannot but follow the power's pull. Obedience and rebellion cannot be told from one another. Augustus' eyes are reflected on the

poet's. They seem to be scowling at themselves. In fact, they don't see at all. They don't have a vision of their own, but see through the poet's vision. Those glasses are a successful metaphor for the ultimate correspondence and interchangeability of the poet's and the emperor's sights. Finally, there is only one who sees, the poet. But his sight is double – which means that he can see with his own eyes but his eyes can only see what the others, i.e. political power, makes or lets them see. Also, the intermediation of a mechanic tool (the glasses), while apparently permitting vision and reciprocity of vision, in reality means defective sight. Whoever sees here does not see well. All epic attempts are nipped in the bud by the impossibility of independent vision. No fruitful collaboration between poetry and politics is permitted. Indeed, poetry asserts itself against politics, leaving the poet with very little to hope for.

Lowell's epic regrets run as far in his work as his last book, *Day by Day*. The very incipit is literally reminiscent of Virgil's text: "*Myrmidons, Spartans, soldier of dire Ulysses…* / Why should I renew his infamous sorrow?" (*Ulysses and Circe*, I, 4-5). Line 4 is totally obscure if one does not recognize *Aeneid* II, 7:

Quis talia fando
Myrmidonum Dolopumve aut duri miles Ulixi
Temperet a lacrimis?

Aeneas is telling Dido that nobody, not even the cruelest person, could refrain from weeping if asked to tell his mishaps. This quotation subtly makes out a case for the modern poet's painful unease with autobiographical poetry, while conferring on him and on his poem, also on account of its position in both texts, a patently epic status. This is very much in the wake of Lowell's Virgilian calling. However, the imitative strategy - i.e. the abrupt interpolation of ancient texts - seems quite unusual in Lowell's imitative writing and rather reminds us of Pound's method in the *Cantos* or of Eliot's in *The Waste Land*. In fact, we may well regard such an unexpected device in *Day by Day* as a late tribute to the major promoters of American epic in modern times. Lowell's epic project, Virgilian as it appears, could not fail to define itself according and/or in opposition to that of other American poets: Walt Whitman, Hart Crane, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and William Carlos Williams. In fact, as J.D. McClatchy showed, evident differences notwithstanding, Lowell owed quite a lot to Pound's notion of the epic:

> he did share with Pound a purgatorial sense of human history - one that the modern epic must pass through. Like Pound, he perceived time as a stalled machine, a tone cluster of states of mind across the centuries, darkened by madness, lust, ambition, age, the arrogance and intoxication of power - as Lowell's own mind had been darkened in his time. (134)

Line 5 of *Ulysses and Circe* continues to quote Aeneas' address to queen Dido: *Infandum regina iubes renovare dolorem*. Lowell has put on Aeneas' mask once again - as in the old lines of *Falling Asleep over the Aeneid*. In his late essay on *Epics*, written at the same time as *Day by Day*, he considers Aeneas "subject to heartfelt depression." Nonetheless,

"he thinks little, thinks up little." Obviously, Lowell believes depression to be a prerequisite of creation. To be sure - Lowell is ready to admit - "Aeneas has a moment or two of imagination and clairvoyance." I.e.: he is a decent poet, especially in "his hallucinated and almost surrealist narrative of the fall of Troy in Book Two - dust, smoke, butchery, deceit, terror, the annihilation of his home and city. Some authentic murmur in Aeneas's voice makes us unwilling to believe this book was ghostwritten by Vergil" (220). Now we understand even better the meaning of that Virgilian quote right at the beginning of *Day by Day*. Lowell identifies with Aeneas but, at the same time, once more, he questions his exemplarity, striking him the same way he, as a young man, struck his father: "Aeneas is sometimes swollen and Rubensesque, as if painted for the peaceful triumphs of Marie de' Medici - I wish he were greater and had more charm." By comparing him to Eliot's Prufrock in the subsequent passage, he finally appears to set the seal both on Virgil's and on his own epic failure.

In close, the imitation of Virgil makes the poet's life, as represented by autobiographical memory, and historical evil, as represented by literary memory, one thing. The autobiographical subject turns out to be but a replica of a universal one endlessly striving for self-fulfillment and constantly failing to achieve his end. For Lowell, as McClatchy put it, the past is "a model at once diachronic in format and synchronic in theme." Lowell's epic writing "provides a compelling example of personal consciousness as a register of the common past, and stay against historical contingency" (McClatchy 129-130). Contingency finally got the upper hand on life itself.

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NOTES

1. See on the relation of Lowell's poetry and state issues Eddins 41-57.

2. *Dea Roma* in *Lord Weary's Castle* is one of Lowell's earliest and most programmatic Roman texts. Its ideological centrality is underlined by its being positioned between a poem titled *Crucifix* and a translation of Propertius, *The Ghost*. Another translation of Propertius is to be found in Lowell's very last book, *Day by Day*. Translations of Horace and Juvenal occur in *Near the Ocean*. Catullus' carmen L is loosely but clearly imitated in *Day by Day* (*Morning After Dining with a Friend*).

3. In particular: "Although the poem eschews all editorial comment, Lowell has chosen with great precision the passage that enables him, the conscientious objector in World War II (and the later antiwar protester during the 1960s), to examine his own ambivalent attitude toward war […] the designated passage from the *Aeneid* present[s] war in its full horror, embracing as it does both the death of the innocent young and the brutal slaughter of prisoners" (179).

4. On the different meaning of this second refusal see Heaney 129-147.

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"LIGHT ON THE WHARVES OF CHARLOTTE AMALIE/ LIGHT ON THE SPARKLING STRAITS OF SICILY": DEREK WALCOTT'S AESTHETIC OF (IRRESISTIBLE) LIGHT IN *TIEPOLO'S HOUND*

PAOLA LORETO

E perché 'l colpo è di valor più pieno
quant'alza più se stesso alla fucina,
sopra 'l mie questo al ciel n'è gito a volo.
Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Rime*

Derek Walcott's *Tiepolo's Hound* is saturated with light. Light is the most recurrent word in the poem, where it signifies according to all the four "senses" classified by Dante in his *Convivio* (II, I): the literal, the allegorical, the moral and the anagogical meanings. To follow the complex unfolding of the metaphor of light in the book to its end allows the reader to appreciate the last and apparently definitive formulation of Walcott's aesthetic of the "island artist." Light in *Tiepolo's Hound* proves the informing principle of a Creole aesthetic that rests on Walcott's conviction that "the more particular you get, the more universal you become" (Burnett 32). Reversing the statement, we could say that the freer the artist is in his choices, the more clearly he will express his sense of belonging to a particular geography. This is how the aesthetic of light elaborated in *Tiepolo's Hound* can claim to be original and local, in its Adamic ritual of naming a new world, while assimilating the features of a very old, European and white ancestor who believed that beauty is form.

To begin with the literal sense, light in *Tiepolo's Hound* stands for itself: for the physical phenomenon that in the Caribbean colors sunsets like so many "Tiepolo ceilings" (*Tiepolo*, *passim*), and every morning brings in the exhilarating feeling of its touch on the body (Walcott, interview 26). The book was born from its author's "customary" astonishment at sunrises in his native St. Lucia and from his discovery that his sense of awe was equally elicited by the light of the Mediterranean, either falling on the sparkling Straits of Sicily or on the inner thigh of a white hound in Paolo Veronese's *Feast in the House of Levi* (*Tiepolo* 7, 58) - not by the light of Paris, though, or Pontoise, which is "grey," "reticent" and "capricious"; "subtler, riper and ageing"; which has "no fury," and "no glare/ of exultation" (*Tiepolo* 33, 68). This is the realm of Camille Pissarro's epiphanies and painting.

The image of light begins to reveal its "other" or "allegorical sense," as Dante called figurative meaning. While the biographical narrative of Pissarro's life explores the effects of physical light on the quality of his painting by following him in his exile from the Virgin island of St. Thomas to the city of Paris, the autobiographical narrative of Walcott's life explores the nature of artistic inspiration representing it under the guise, or

"bella menzogna" (Dante, *Convivio*, II, I), of the exact stroke of light he once saw on the inner thigh of the white hound in Veronese's painting. Walcott's "brilliant lie" (*Tiepolo* 58) is that he was astonished by the masterly rightness of that stroke and is now hunting for the dog. But since he has afterwards been unable to retrace the painting, he now thinks he may even be wrong in attributing the dog to Veronese, and suspects he might have seen it, instead, in a Tiepolo painting.[1] The intense sensory and emotional impression his mind once received is now confined to his memory.

"Memory was my painter," says Walcott in *Tiepolo's Hound* (123). Memory, for Walcott, nurtures poetry. It presumes loss and promotes preservation. It works like a dream, by subtracting details of circumstance while exalting details of sensation. Like the amber light that in Walcott's poems glazes things and makes them radiant (*Tiepolo* 98, *Another Life*), memory operates in time, by gradually losing its contents and advocating the action of imagination. It is an urge to say, to render as vividly as possible those remnants of a powerful cognitive experience that have imprinted themselves on the mind, like the "passione impressa" which in Dante's *Paradise* is left on the mind after a dream and which is the source of the poetic impulse (*Paradiso*, XXXIII, 59). Imagination (fantasia), for Dante, is an organic faculty that translates perceptual memory into intellectual intelligibility (*Paradiso*, XXXIII,142).

On a larger, collective scale of reference, Walcott has also said, in "Antilles," that the making of poetry is the remaking of a fragmented memory (*Essays* 69). This means that the "moral" sense of the metaphor of light in *Tiepolo's Hound* is that the poet has a double task. First of all he must follow the light which is congenial to his inspiration, and choose the place where he can build his sense of belonging. The sign will be the occurring of epiphanies. It happens to Pissarro in Paris, when he first experiences "the wonder/ of forgotten snow," a "miracle" that stirs his soul and turns his physical surroundings, the city, into a primed canvas on which he can paint the world his vision has framed (40). It happens to Walcott in the "sun's unceasing glory" of the Caribbean, that "consumes the core of doubt by changelessness" with its vermilion and gold strokes of pouis and cocoa (69-70). Walcott's art needs a "monodic climate" and "its sublime indifference to seasonal modulations" (132), because "What should be true of the remembered life/ is a freshness of detail" (10).

Secondly, the artist must acquire that "astonishing mastery" of technique that will enable him to report his epiphany: those "details/ revealing themselves to rapturous examination" (14), "the texture of grass in light, its little shocks" (20). The ideal is that of clarity, symbolized by the single, divinatory, blessed stroke of light Walcott pursues not only in painting, but also in writing. "Mastery in any art," he said in May 2000 at the University of Milan, consists in the "economy of the stroke and the economy of the phrase," and he added that Dante's "single-stroke kind of writing" is the highest example, because the stroke "is by nature colloquial." It is no chance, I think, that Walcott has fulfilled Jorge Luis Borges' prediction that something really important would happen

in world literature if the telling of a tale and the reciting of a poem should come together again after the novel had exhausted itself as a literary form. With striking clairvoyance, Borges also foresaw that this would take place in the United States, because - he said - their people possessed a moral sense (Borges 55). Walcott's narrative voice in *Tiepolo's Hound* is made so clear and purified by the rhythm of its hexametrical couplets, that it equals its antecedent in the modern epical form: Dante's *Comedy*. As in the *Divine Comedy*, in *Tiepolo* one can hear a colloquial stroke evoke an entire age. Walcott has finally reached that clarity of diction that makes him a master of the "epiphanic detail" he pretends to pursue in the fictional narrative, "so exact in its lucency" that it "illuminates an entire epoch" (8).

But what is an epiphany? There is at least one text one cannot help recalling when thinking about epiphanies, and another one which immediately comes to mind because it shares with the first the aesthetic ideal of clarity. What is interesting is that they both subsume the most relevant cosmology in the history of Western thought - the same that is subsumed by the anagogical meaning of the metaphor of light in *Tiepolo's Hound*. It is by signifying this meaning that the light metaphor in the book becomes an allegory in our present terms.

Epiphany is what Stephen Dedalus calls *claritas*, and clarity is the third quality of beauty in Thomas Aquinas' aesthetic. As such, it also founds Dante's Scholastic cosmology in the *Divine Comedy*. Both in *Stephen Hero* and in the *Comedy* clarity implies the existence of an all-compassing Unity. As in Aquinas' conception, aesthetic experience is a cognitive apprehension of the ultimate cause of things. In Thomas' terms, goodness and beauty, being both based upon form, are fundamentally identical. So goodness may be praised as beauty, which relates to the cognitive faculty, because "beautiful things," says Thomas, "are those which please when seen" (pulchra sunt quae visa placent, *Summa* I, q. 5, art. 4). Beauty consists in due proportion, because the senses are satisfied in things duly proportioned, that is, proportioned by a broader Divine Order or Unity. Sight and hearing are the senses that best serve reason, but they enjoy *delectatio* (delight) only if the object of their apprehension shows the three attributes of beauty, that are *integritas, consonantia* and *claritas*.

In Stephen's words, *integritas* - or wholeness - is the apprehension of the aesthetic image as one whole, while *consonantia* is the following apprehension of its complex and harmonious structure. "Having first felt that [the object] is *one* thing," says Stephen, "you feel now that it is a *thing*." (230) His definition of *claritas*, though, has been the most debated point in his aesthetic, because it changes from *Stephen Hero* to th*e Portrait*. In the earlier, rejected version of the *Portrait*, *claritas* is still revealed in the experience of epiphanies, and epiphanies are still "sudden spiritual manifestation(s)" (*Stephen Hero* 211). In the *Portrait*, Stephen refuses the interpretation of *claritas* as "the artistic discovery and representation of the divine purpose in anything," and describes it as "the only synthesis which is logically and esthetically permissible. You see that [the object] is that

thing which it is and no other thing. The radiance of which [Aquinas] speaks is the scholastic *quidditas*, the *whatness* of a thing." (231) As W.K. Wimsatt pointed out long ago, Stephen is here confusing *quidditas*, which in Scholastic philosophy means "specific essence," with *haecoeitas*, or "individual thisness" (Beebe 165, 170).

Walcott's own concept of aesthetic perception filters Thomas' doctrine through Joyce and Dante. In July 2001, at a reading in Parma, Walcott confessed: "The most moving, the greatest achievement for me in verse is, I think, the XXXIII canto of *Paradiso*, which begins *Vergine madre, figlia del tuo figlio*, and it's all about light. It is the light that is not of the sun: it has no shadows. And the light of course is the light of love." In a 1990 interview he had already said that "the horrors through which Dante goes are finally sublimated in love, a radiant light that swirls back into a center… What remains unresolved is the *is*, the light, the *is*, the thing that is at the heart of being." (Baer 155) In *Paradiso* the light imagery unfolds in the representation of a thoroughly orthodox Thomistic world conception. God is the ultimate cause and the life principle which permeates and shines through all that is, under the appearance of light. Light is life and it is love. In the last canto, where Beatrix leads Dante to the vision of God in the *ultima salute*, light becomes *lumen gloriae*: a special virtue God infuses into the contemplating creature to intensify and potentiate his sight (*Paradiso* XXXIII, 109-114; Tommaso, *Contra gentiles* III, 54). After this, the task of the poet Dante is to report the ultimate ecstatic experience as precisely as he can, unfolding the thread of his memory as if he had just awoken from a vivid dream.

If the assimilation of Dante's features is responsible for Walcott's faithfulness to Thomistic orthodoxy, the anxiety of the island artist which is in him (as it was in Joyce) makes him yield to the temptation to express the *haecoeitas* of the Caribbean, the *here and now* that God's light has always invested, but which had never been named, or sung in verse. I believe that Walcott's epiphanies gloriously remain insights into spiritual essence - in his formulation "slow surrenderings" or "astonished groans" at "irresistible light" (117), where the word "irresistible" denotes the unquenchable desire of the creature for his or her creator. In its eschatological reference, Walcott's light has substance and casts no shadow (147, 149). It has a gentle power of definition (147-48) that shapes a square in Venice (116) and knits a woman's hair (9). It defines Pissarro's and Walcott's delight in the wharves of Charlotte Amalie, the capital of St. Thomas (28, 58). It is pure energy, unceasingly creative, and an eternal life principle. And Walcott the poet is also ready to "trace the thread that carries memory/ back to the original" (115), and to render his epiphany "with the details of a dream,/ as in a dream… as I remember them" (121).

With a powerful device in which he enacts his aesthetic in parts of the book, in section 1 of chapter 2 Walcott names his landscape again in a manifest attempt to be true to the "freshness of detail" of *his* "remembered life." The last couplet runs: "not for these things alone, and yet only/ for what they were, themselves, my joy comes back." (10-12) So I also believe that Walcott's epiphanies are "the shadowy ecstasy of a black mongrel" (153),

for whom "the ordinary is the miracle" (155), and whose impulse is to give back the light he perceives on familiar things in a way that also conveys his feeling of their individual essence or *whatness*. In another interview Walcott said that Joyce was convinced that the accretion of detail by infinite sequences of epiphanies would make any object radiate its "whatness" (Baer 36). Stephen Dedalus himself shows evident trouble giving up material beauty (205), and thinks that the image of beauty the artist expresses is pressed out again "from the gross earth… from sound and shape and colour" (224). Walcott thinks that "stroke or word or note presume their intent/ because of what they are: shape, sound, and stain,/ compelled to one direction": Paul Cézanne's "visible syntax," which Walcott opposes to Impressionism. Cézanne's "gross ecstasies" were realized by an undeniable instinct that knew "one empire only: light" (57-58), the same light, "itself," that "a writer has to have in his wrist to produce clarity," says Walcott talking about Hemingway (*Essays* 109), in an ideal line of apprenticeship which he believes links Hemingway to Gertrud Stein to Cézanne (Parma 2001).

Walcott is incapable of conceiving a language deprived of its physical reference. Thus, there is an absolute quality to the light an artist pursues, which makes him morally responsible for his vision. While painfully debating within himself the theme of voluntary exile, Walcott makes a feeble attempt to justify Pissarro by advocating a racial motivation for his choice and saying that his muse could never have been black (143). The doubt is crucial, and formulated in the terms of the universal island (!) artist:

is the hope of his exile betrayal?
… isn't his the old trial
of love faced with necessity, the same crisis
every island artist, despite the wide benediction
of light, must face…. (24)

In fact, he has already devoted himself to the same "light of redemption" that Paul Gauguin caught in Tropical landscapes. He calls Gauguin "our Creole painter of *anses, mornes,* and *savannes*" (16), and "Our martyr" (17). If it is true that his conception of the aesthetic experience can also be described in terms of *integritas*, *consonantia* and *claritas*, it is also true that the ambience in which he can envision that experience is "the light of islands" (59), "landscapes with no tenses, views that know/ that now, as always, light is all we have" (161) - "a climate where beauty is ordinary," as he writes elsewhere (*The Bounty* 71). Only light which is hard, overhead, and has no season, and only the presence of a horizon (*Omeros* 8-9) can produce a "concentrated gaze/ that [takes] in every detail at a glance" (43) - a very orthodox version of *integritas*, indeed. And even though *consonantia* can be found in "huge frescoes with ecstasies of precision,/ their delight in balance" (105), and *delectatio* is in "the flash of a hound's thigh in Veronese," which "can gladden the mind" (98), the subject of the aesthetic experience can only be an "eye whose health/ and clarity remain untainted" (80). An eye which needs "the wide benediction of light" that falls on "every island artist" (24), the light in which Walcott and his heroes are

happiest (*Omeros* 8-9). "What was his sin?," asks Walcott about Pissarro once again at the end of *Tiepolo*. "Where there's no trust there is no treachery" is his answer (162), and it is as rhetorical as his question. It implies that the sin is lack of faith, one whose absolution rests in the hands of God.

The epilogue of the book is as full of light as the last canto of the *Divine Comedy* Walcott admires so much. The image, symbol, metaphor and allegory of light have been working so fervently and in so many directions that few words can be pronounced without having their meanings reverberate through the text. A new world has also been posited, as it had been at the end of *Omeros*, so that names have acquired an ontological weight. A new perspective has been defined, so that words have new meanings. In an Escher-like, extraordinary effect of which Walcott is originator and master, two or more hermeneutic contexts can operate at the same time, thus allowing a double or triple vision. The following lines are a good example:

> The soul is indivisible as air.
> supposedly, all things become a dream,
> but we, as moving trees, must root somewhere,
> and there our separation shows its seam,
> in our attachment to the nurturing place
> of earth. (160)

The word "seam" in this frame works like the detail that in an Escher drawing is at the end of one visual perspective and at the beginning of another, which leads the eye to a new perception, co-existing with the first one. That detail is, in fact, what makes the viewer experience the simultaneous presence of another way of looking at the same set of signs and interpreting it according to a new visual *Gestalt*; it is relevant to the point to remember that *Tiepolo's Hound* is full of frames, ranging from window and canvas frames to the frame of memory. In this case the same sign, "seam," can be interpreted either as a laceration or a joint. A "seam" can be a scar or it can be a sewing, a stitching. In the Creole view from which Walcott speaks, it is always the emerging of a new, positive meaning, from the ironical awareness of the negative meaning words have always had in an imperial culture in which unity, homogeneity, and linear descent were the dominant values. These couplets make the reader aware that words can have opposite meanings if they are pronounced from the point of view of a divided self or from that of a self which is whole: if their origin is unity or separation.

Reconciliation is the tonality of the last chapter. The island artist stops doubting about the sufficiency of his achievement, and accepts or rather *believes,* that "what lies undone" will be redeemed by his own feeling of gratitude (158). A chant to the ordinary ("ordinary love and ordinary death,/ ordinary suffering, ordinary birth,/ … ordinary heaven, ordinary earth," 155) concludes "a search that will lead us,/ where we began: to islands" (157), where Walcott's peace lies, because "what lights the mind… is a remembered happiness" (162). The book closes with the sunset light igniting the islands and

catching the light of the stars. The poet raises his eyes and beholds "the studded collar of Tiepolo's hound" (164), probably the constellation of Canis Major, one of the two hunting dogs accompanying Orion. Orion, or the Hunter, can be seen in both hemispheres from October to March, but is best seen in January, the month in which Derek Walcott was born. Like Odysseus, it is here at home, after a lifelong apprenticeship, that the poet has found the most intimate correspondence - essential and sensual - between his inner creative impulse and the external objects that are created, on the ground of their origin in the same, coextensive light.

The choice of light as a metaphor is the closest Walcott could go to a sensual representation of poetic metaphor. Besides celebrating, in the image of light, the distinct, palpable light of his Caribbean, he must have thought, at a certain point, that light was the ultimate metaphor, or the metaphor for metaphor. In *Another Life*, his portrait of the artist as a young man, he was seeking "the paradoxical flash of an instant/ in which every facet was caught/ in a crystal of ambiguities" (200). In his portrait of the artist as a mature man, he has conquered the object of his quest by mastering an element that is able to suggest multiple, possibly infinite, meanings by the sheer metamorphosis of its substance. At the end of *Tiepolo* it is impossible to read the word "light" without apprehending, simultaneously, the ideas of sight, and life, and love - all monosyllables and all colored with the same sounds: adjacent forms of one, continuous substance. After all, the Bible says that God is the Word, that he is life, and that, as such, he is also light,[2] as Walcott remembers in "Antilles," hiding, metaphorically, the middle term of his analogy.

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NOTES

1. According to Bruce King, "Tiepolo imitated Veronese's dogs and also included them in the scenes he painted" (628).

2. John 1.1-4.

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MARIANNE MOORE AND EGYPT

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The Mediterranean is to be found in the poetry of Marianne Moore in the references she makes to the various peoples and civilizations that were born and developed on the shores of the Mediterranean sea: Egyptians, Hebrews, Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans. I have decided to analyse the references to Egyptian culture in Moore's oeuvre as Moore's interest in the East is almost always seen in terms of Far East. Several studies relate Moore to China and Japan in particular. However, for Moore East does not mean only China and Japan.

Focusing on the Egyptian elements in Marianne Moore allows us both to widen the idea of East in relation to her poetry and to underline the presence of the Mediterranean in her poems, this area being part of the cultural roots of European and indirectly American civilization.[1]

One of the issues often discussed by Moore in her poetry is the relation between culture and nature in its several nuances, things created by men and natural creatures, human perspectives on nature, human and animal behaviors, human and natural space. The goal of my paper is to show that several of Moore's poems containing references to ancient Egypt, and particularly those referring to animals, present a special way of dealing with this opposition.

The important role played by animals in both the world of Ancient Egypt and in Marianne Moore's poetry is one of the most evident links between them. There is an abundance of animals in Egyptian everyday life, art and religion.[2] Animals play different roles in Egyptian culture: as gods, magical beings, medicine, food, game or simply as pets. The numerous paintings and reliefs of the flora and fauna of Ancient Egypt show the artists' desire to be accurate and to portray every detail with great realism. Animals are central to Egyptian religion, too; almost all Egyptian gods and goddesses are represented by animals, which become sacred and are worshipped as supernatural creatures.

Animals are in Marianne Moore's poetry the most frequent concrete subject. She wrote about forty poems with animal topics from "A Jelly-Fish" in 1909 to "Tippoo's Tiger" in 1967 (Holley 130). Moore's animals are usually untypical and exotic, often discovered in books or studied by the poet while a biology student at Bryn Mawr. Being emblems, symbols or simply observed as they are, Moore's animals reject stereotypes and usually have positive connotations.[3]

Marianne Moore came into contact with the Egyptian world through her Oriental history teacher at Bryn Mawr, George A. Barton, a biblical historian and archaeologist. In 1909 Moore made a trip with her class to the archeological Museum at the University of Pennsylvania, where she saw several Egyptian articrafts and was so fascinated by them that

she wrote in a letter home: "I lost my head completely" (Leavell 138). Two years later during her European tour she visited the British Museum in London and again in another letter she testifies her appreciation for the Egyptians and a certain predilection for them.

Moore's interest in Ancient Egypt is in line with her general appreciation for art from outside the Western tradition and when she visited New York in 1915 and met avant-garde artists, she shared with them this appreciation for art from diverse cultural origins. More than ten years later as editor of *The Dial* her tastes have not changed, and defending the painters and writes supported by the journal she writes: "Our attachment is to the art of Egypt and the Primitives rather than to the later Renaissance and to Impressionism" (*Prose* 191).

Egyptian culture is at the centre of four poems of Marianne Moore dealing at the same time with animals and presenting each a particular aspect of the culture-nature relation. Spanning over almost 30 years, "To Statecraft Embalmed" (1915), "An Egyptian Pulled Glass Bottle in the Shape of a Fish" (1924), "The Jerboa" (1932), "He 'Digesteth Harde Yron'"(1941) testify Moore's lifelong attraction to Egyptian civilization.

"To Statecraft Embalmed" was published in 1915. In this poem, Moore resorts to Egyptian culture to make her point that justice is more important than "discreet behavior." However, the theoretical affirmation '"As if a death mask ever could replace / life's faulty excellence" adds to the central theme of the poem a general concern for aesthetics and for the relation between life and art, between flawed reality and artifice.

The poem is addressed to the ibis, an Egyptian sacred animal, associated with the cult of the God Thoth, usually represented as an ibis or in human form with an ibis's head. In the poem the ibis is not described physically very much. This makes it clear that in this animal poem Moore is not interested in the animal itself, but in what this bird stands for, namely the god Thoth. As a matter of fact, this lack of physical description is counterbalanced by a long list of details of the human, and superhuman, powers of this bird which mirrors exactly the powers attributed to Thoth.

Not only does Moore impose on the animal all the symbolism of Egyptian culture, but she absorbs its way of dealing with animals, too. As the Egyptians elevated sacred animals to the level of gods, depriving them of their animality, so Moore depicts the bird imposing on it human and artificial characteristics. In her attitude towards the ibis Moore does not differ much from Egyptians.

Moore's aesthetic affirmation of the supremacy of life over art, of flawed reality over artifice seems out of place in a poem that appears to move in the opposite direction. In its cyclical death-life-death movement there seems to be no place for life. The poem starts presenting a dead mummified ibis in a sarcophagus keeping a secret. The bird comes momentarily back to life, but it is a life full of silence, of "moribund talk," of difficult movements, almost a death-in-life. In the end death sets in again and probably definitely in the "suicidal dreams" of the animal leading to a complete self-destruction which not

even the long-preserved body will be able to survive. In spite of its open statement, the poem shows that "a death mask" does replace "life's faulty excellence" as it is the "death mask" that now confronts the reader.

The structure of the poem itself seems to contradict Moore's affirmation. In a poem that exalts the faultiness of life the poet values regularity and imposes on her work a rigid construction to achieve such a regularity. The rhyming scheme is precise and complex, the stanzaic form is carefully repeated and all stanzas end with a one-word line through which the initial sound "o" echoes throughout the entire poem. Such a refined and carefully constructed form is very distant from "life's faulty excellence" and instead it gives the poem an impression of high elegance, a well wrought object patiently crafted in the hands of the artist.

"An Egyptian Pulled Glass Bottle in the Shape of a Fish" appeared for the first time in 1924 in *Observations*, Moore's first major collection of poems. In this second poem the aesthetic concern moulds the entire work. In it, however, the art/nature relation is not one of opposition as in "To Statecraft Embalmed" but it is a much more complicated and contrasting one that shows nature in art as well as art in nature.

The two key elements of the poem, a bottle and a fish, are both already present in the title. Nature and art are unified in the bottle, as on the one hand, a bottle is an articraft, while on the other the person who manufactures the bottle takes inspiration from the natural world to give form to his or her product.

But art's domain is not limited to man-made objects, represented in this case by the bottle in the shape of a fish, and, according to the poetess, art can also be found in a natural element whose existence does not depend in any way on human abilities, namely the wave. If wave and bottle are in some way related through the three elements that they share (art, thirst, patience), Moore's emphasis on the perpendicularity of the wave marks also a deep difference between them. Perpendicularity is the essence of both the wave and the bottle, as without it a wave cannot exist and a bottle lose its function. However, in the artistic process the bottle has lost its perpendicularity as it has been crafted following the shape of a fish, which is not perpendicular but horizontal. The perpendicularity of the wave is ephemeral, for in the very moment of its greatest extension it dissolves in the crashing down of the wave. In its essence the wave is something unstable, transitory, and it contrasts with the bottle which becomes a symbol of eternity, as it is openly called "not brittle" and it has survived since the times of ancient Egypt.

The difference in the essence of the wave and the bottle could also imply a difference in the kind of art that they respectively represent. At the end of the first stanza Moore seems to affirm that despite being present in both nature and man-made objects, the art that can be found in nature can be only momentarily perceived, while objects can capture and witness art for centuries.

In the second stanza Moore associates the work of art discussed with another natural

element, the fish. If perpendicularity links but also divorces the object of art from the natural world implied in the wave, colors unify the natural and the artistic, making the bottle "intense" and the fish "spectacular." Moreover, art and nature are also made one by the process of objectification carried on by the poem. The common root "spect-" in the two words "spectrum" and "spectacular," referring respectively to bottle and fish, underlines the concept of visibility, emphasizing the role of image, of a show to be looked at of both nature and art.

"Polish" is another key word in the second stanza, and not only for being the closure of the entire poem. "Polish" gives a note of ambiguity to the poem, as it is related to the natural element of the fish through the rhyme and the word "scales," but it also evokes artificiality, recalling the human intervention to make surfaces shine and the colours used in the arts. The reader is consequently uncertain whether the object of the description is the animal fish or the Egyptian bottle. Through ambiguity that mixes bottle and fish in the picture, nature and art become identified with each other and are interchangeable so that the highest point of union between them is reached.

Moore again refers to Egyptian culture in "The Jerboa," one of her most famous and popular poem, published in 1932.

This poem has been widely studied by critics and it has often been considered a comparison between human and animal behavior, exemplified respectively by the sophisticated culture of ancient Egypt and the jerboa, with an exaltation of the desert rat for its perfect adaptation to its environment and for its simplicity, humility and lack of avidity which assure him a happy and free life with very few bonds. However, some critics have underlined that Moore's position tends to be ambiguous and that some elements in the poem work against a simple and unproblematic division that condemns culture as evil and praises nature as good.[4]

This kind of interpretation is also rather useful in the analysis of the treatment of space in "The Jerboa." The spatial element is a key point in the poem as the primary difference between the jerboa and Egyptian people lies in their opposite relation to natural space.

An analysis of space, both as a semiotic system of interpretation and as natural space, will show that any simple evaluation in terms of total positive and total negative is unacceptable even from this perspective and will reveal instead an intricate reality that evades the limits of a fixed and static system of oppositions.

Not only the space *in* the poem, but also the space *of* the poem does not lend itself to schematic and sharp divisions. The poem is made of two sections but the two sections, although already separated on the page and with two different titles, overlap in the description of the jerboa. This might be interpreted as a sign of Moore's indirect attempt to make the two worlds closer and to accept mediation.

A study of the spatial structures of the poem reveals that the stanzas dealing with

human civilization and those with the jerboa are opposed in terms of verticality/horizontality, and closure/openness. Such spatial relations not only convey information about a place, but have the capacity to develop indirect, symbolical and non-spatial connotations, so that the neutral topological oppositions of verticality/horizontality and closure/openness imply the ideological oppositions respectively of hierarchy/democracy and imprisonment/freedom.

Verticality is most evidently visible in the monuments erected by human beings, in trees, in articrafts such as "the royal totem" and "the king's cane," this second object being particularly interesting as it has been considered the symbol of the Pharaoh's despotic power and oppression of the poor (Miller 49).

Closure is linked to the idea of geographical specificity and is physically implied by a series of closed spaces referred to: monuments, gardens, pools. Pools are even defined as "square," which implies that they are artificial pools with very definite and visible borders. Other enclosed spaces are represented by the "toilet-boxes marked / with the contents" which show a willingness to contain, and the fact that they preserve products derived from animals testifies the Egyptians' desire to entrap and possess things that are instead free in the natural world.

Ultimately, it is the entire natural space of the first part which is someway limited; defining the Egyptian land as "a picture with a fine distance," Moore implicitly evokes the concept of frame and transforms this potentially infinite landscape into a scene completely surrounded by clearly set boundaries.

In the stanzas devoted to the jerboa, horizontality is first represented by the sand, the other main character of the jerboa's section. The jerboa is constantly on the move, proving the animal's horizontal possession of territory, further underlined by the straightness and rapidity of its movement. Horizontality is then implied in the negation of verticality: the absence of trees is explicitly referred to ("no palm-trees") and even the cactus of the desert habitat is "tiny," as if to deny any possible attempt to rise from the level of the earth.

The idea of opening in relation to the jerboa's surroundings is explicitly stated: its desert is "the boundless sand." The lack of possible limits is then reinforced by geographical unspecificity: the only proper noun of place is used strangely enough to describe the jerboa, '"the Sahara field- mouse," and not to specify place. Moreover, all the events of the second part take place in the desert, an open space. The jerboa's burrow is the only closed space cited, however it always remains empty while the animal roams through the desert "launching / as if on wings."

In terms of spatial structures and of their non-spatial connotations the desert of the jerboa is a positive space of democracy and freedom which is in contrast to the negative space of the Egyptians, characterized by a strong tendency to hierarchy and entrapment. However, this positive/negative relation reverses if we consider the kind of natural space described.

It has been argued that Egyptians cannot live in harmony with nature as their avidity leads them to abuse the natural world, but, in spite of all appearances, the Egyptians' world seems much more inviting than the jerboa's. Beauty and abundance transpire from gardens; the surroundings are full of water, the primary source of life; animals of all kinds live near one another; the Nile comes to rescue human beings and makes life possible for them. The Egyptian world is after all a place where natural life blossoms.

Conversely, the jerboa's world is completely without water, which undermines even the mere thought of life. The animal is an example of extreme adaptation, happiness and satisfaction with one's surroundings, however, the natural world is not present in all its power and richness in the second part of the poem. The rat is well at home in its environment, but he is a dangerous: "plunder its food store, / and you will be cursed." Perhaps one of the reasons for the perfect integration between the jerboa and nature lies in the fact that the jerboa is alone in its space and can control it without getting much in contact with other living creatures and without being forced too often to compromise.

Egypt is again a source of inspiration in "He Digesteth Harde Yron," a poem published in 1941. In it the culture/nature relation centres on the human/animal relation. For their superficiality, human beings cannot understand ostriches' different power: "The power of the visible / is the invisible." The source of man's brutal strength is avidity and its results are widely evident, while ostriches rely on an inner power, heroism that, even if exhausting, "contradicts […] greed" and has given them the possibility to survive despite human attacks.

Human beings and animals do not only differ in their kind of power and in its sources, but also in their vision of the world testified mainly by their different gender division. Among ostriches, it is the male bird that "watches his chicks with / maternal care" and mothers the eggs.

Through the help of Egyptian culture Moore gives animals a positive symbolism that helps to contrast preconceptions and a banal view of the animals themselves. Once freed of the stereotyped vision imposed on them by human beings, animals acquire the "invisible" power to destabilize man's set of values and to propose alternative perspectives.

Moreover, the advanced and sophisticated Egyptian culture is for Marianne Moore a good source to show how the culture/nature relation is one of complexity and ambiguity which requires a critical analysis and going beyond appearances. In her relation with Egypt Moore's subversive strength, often buried under an apparent cold and detached style, comes to full expression and demonstrates the actuality of her poetry.

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NOTES

Quotations of Moore's poems are all taken from *Complete Poems* 16-18, 35, 83, 99-100.

1. Other references to the relation between Moore and Egypt can be found in Costello, Joyce, Leavell. However, the only work entirely devoted to the presence of Egypt in Moore's poetry is Miller.

2. Information on the role of animals in ancient Egypt has been taken from Bresciani, Brewer, Osborne.

3. For detailed discussion of animals in Moore's poetry see Costello, Erickson, Garrigue, Hadas, Holley, Lakritz, Leavell, Schulman.

4. For such an interpretation see Costello, Hall, Holley, Rotella.

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THE PROBLEM OF THE PRIEST: THE CONFRONTATION WITH MEDITERRANEAN ART AND CULTURE IN EMERSON'S POETRY

GIUSEPPE NORI

Since their first appearance in *The Dial* in the early 1840's, Emerson's poems have generated the most lively and controversial reception. Such a reception, though, has been usually and somehow unfairly conditioned by the writer's established reputation as a radical and a philosopher - "a profound thinker," as Margaret Fuller put it, "a man of ideas" (235). In fact, some of the most notable public and private responses that came from Emerson's contemporaries and fellow-writers are, in this sense, emblematic: "hymns to the devil" (Orestes A. Brownson); "poems ... mostly philosophical, which is not the truest kind of poetry" (Fuller); works where to find "pleasure ... as thoughts - perhaps not as poems" (Caroline Sturgis); poems expressing a "grand View of the Universe" (Thomas Carlyle) (Allen 466-67). Though in the 1880's these early responses gave way to more systematic assessments of Emerson's works, the tide of reservations about the lyrical power of the philosopher-poet did not subside. Similarly, twentieth-century writers and academic critics have kept addressing Emerson, from a more or less authoritative point of view, "as a poetic philosopher or as a philosophical poet" (Frost 860) - a poet whose lyric work may harmlessly be taken, for better or for worse, as "a more brief and condensed form of the *Essays*" (Whicher 407; Porter 16-17).

Within such a general outlook, Emerson's lyrics have met with different definitions and classifications. They have been divided into "poems of character" on the one hand, and "poems of power" on the other, showing us a "transitional" and somehow limited singer, "holding to a discursive regular verse" in the first case, or "moving toward a free symbolic verse" in the second (Whicher 408, 411). They have been called "poems of coherence" (Duffey 42) whose '"religiocentric" vision tries to re-connect the "poetic inspiration" of an individual conscience in search of personal expression on one side, with a "communal understanding" that supposedly reinforces communal consensus on the other, thus making Emerson one of the major spokesmen of a specific "New England poetics" (Buell, *New England Literary Culture* 107-08). Emerson's is also a "poetry of ideas": conceptual, tightly argued, informed by polarities that grow out of concrete personal experiences (Strauch 353, 359). In this case, the process of transforming (read, transcending) experiences into ideas "results in a dynamic poetry" that is based on an "interplay of opposites," an interplay that in turn suggests "a dialectic of infinite implication" (Van Cromphout 81-84).

Quite typically, in the best mode of Emersonian scholarship, all these views rely on solid pieces of evidence, gathered not only from the poems themselves, but also from Emerson's essays and lectures and, of course, from his journals, notebooks, and letters.

While his most accomplished poetry reflects his thought (as more or less systematically expounded in his finished prose works), his thought drives us back to experience (as more or less sincerely recorded in his private writings and documents).

Drawing on these conventional bodies of evidence, in this presentation I will address "The Problem" (*Collected Poems* 10-12), a well-known Emersonian lyric where poetry, thought, and experience (namely literature, philosophy, and biography) may be said to come together under the one problem of 'vocation.' This is a problem that Emerson had first faced (seriously and deliberately faced, I mean) by taking the first extended 'vacation' of his life - his first trip to Europe, via the Mediterranean, from December 1832 through September 1833.

RE-ORIENTATION

Written in 1839 and first published in *The Dial* for July 1840, "The Problem" was collected in Emerson's first volume of verse - a "little white book," as he loved to call it, simply titled *Poems* (Allen 465) - in 1847. In its original version, the poem was yet more appropriately titled "The Priest" (Whicher 500). Its "germ," scholars agree, can be found in a suggestive journal entry for August 28, 1838:

> It is very grateful to my feelings to go into a Roman Cathedral, yet I look as my countrymen do at the Roman priesthood. It is very grateful to me to go into an English Church & hear the liturgy read. Yet nothing would induce me to be the English priest. I find *an unpleasant dilemma* in this, nearer home. I dislike to be a clergyman & refuse to be one. Yet how rich a music would be to me a holy clergyman in my town. It seems to me he cannot be a man, quite & whole. Yet how plain is the need of one, & how high, yes, highest, is the function. Here is Division of labor that I like not. A man must sacrifice his manhood for the social good. Something is wrong, I see not what. (*Journals* VII: 60; emphasis added)

As this passage as well as the original title of the poem suggest, the problem of vocation (whether or not to be, or continue to be, a priest; and what to settle on when no longer a priest) may be traced back to 1832, when, after several years of private calamities and physical exhaustion, professional uneasiness and spiritual doubts, Emerson resigned his position as junior pastor from the prestigious pulpit of Boston's Second Church, and left for Europe. Thus the "dilemma" of his life, as both reformulated in his journal entry for 1838 and dramatized in the composition of the poem in the following year, may be more comprehensively restated - somehow bridging the two titles - as 'The Problem of the Priest.' As such, whether "unpleasant" or not, it may be said to span the most intense, radical, and prolific twenty years of Emerson's career, from the time he decided to leave the Church (though he would continue delivering sermons as a guest preacher for at least seven more years, till January 1839), to the resolution to be a poet (in the broadest sense of the term, helped by the experience of his first trip to Europe), through the bitter-sweet literary harvest of the creative years that followed in the wake of his return from the Old World.

Emerson's first European trip is usually seen as a paradoxical turning point in his life. In fact, the young American realizes that he can fulfill his "Western destiny," as Joel Porte maintains, "only by resolutely facing east" (41). Facing east, easting, through the Mediterranean, means to search - as he says during his Atlantic crossing, in a journal entry for January 3, 1833 - for "the light that shines on Europe, Afric, & the Nile" (*Journals* IV: 104). Easting, searching for "the light" of the Orient, means to revitalize his spirit as well as improve his poor health. Easting is "eastering" (Porte 37-54): to rise again and re-orient his life.

Eastering or re-orientation, to be effective and therefore generative and regenerative, must go through what Emerson perceives as a typical confrontation with Mediterranean art and culture. To this effect, his journal entry for January 20, 1833, as his ship sails through the Straits of Gibraltar and enters the Mediterranean, is rather eloquent:

> 20 Jan. Straits of Gibraltar. Last evening they saw land from the mast-head & this morn[in]g broke over the bold & picturesque mountains of Africa behind Cape Spartel & Tangiers. On the left was Cape Trafalgar & Spain.... Shall not I be content to look at the near coast of Andalusia & Morocco? ... We could not quite open Tangier Bay enow to see that Mauritanian town, but the watch towers & the cultivated enclosures & the farm houses of the Spaniard are very discernible. *Not many weeks ago I should scarce have been convinced that I should so soon look on these objects, yet what is their poetry or what is it not? Is not a hut in America a point that concentrates as much life & sentiment as a hut in Europe or on the ragged side of Mount Atlas? Ah! it is all in the Anointed eye*. Yet will not I refine overmuch on the love of *the remote & the renowned*, nor affirm them both to be only a mixture of colors upon the retina of the eye, nor say of a man he is mammiferous & of beauty it is but gelatine & oxygen. (*Journals* IV: 113; emphasis added)

West through east, Emerson here reverses the direction as well as the symbolic meaning of the passage through the Pillars of Hercules. His experience of easting/eastering means venturing the self towards the unknown center of the known - towards and through the Mediterranean as the eastern cradle of western tradition and history, art and culture. It means staking his life, as a weary pilgrim through the wilderness of the Old World, on the not-yet-experienced, though culturally familiar, experience of the origin. As the ship is actually headed through the heart of the Mediterranean (Malta and Sicily), and Emerson then travels north, visiting the most important sites of the Italian peninsula, he is indeed bound to equalize the cultural values between the old and the new - between tradition itself ("the remote & the renowned," as he strikingly puts it in this passage) and the newness or the "bareness," as he often says in his journals, at his most desperate, of the New World (Poirier 11-12, 34-35, 71).

Cultural equalization is urged by a poetic sensibility that ultimately rests on an all-embracing *Lebensphilosophie* - "philosophy of life," a term that Emerson will employ, a few years later, in "The American Scholar" (openly affiliating himself with what may be called the romantic school of Swedenborg, Goethe, and Carlyle), then reformulating it in terms of an "Identity-philosophy" that will virtually pervade all the essays, addresses, and lectures

he was to write or deliver over the next decade (*Essays and Lectures* 68-69, 668). Thus on the one hand, the expectation of wonder that feeds upon the prospect of exotic and dazzling "objects" comes to be deflated by the universality of "poetry": "yet what is their poetry" - muses the traveller upon matching the Mediterranean "objects" of his 'cultural' imagination with the ones he views, even at a distance, for the first time in his journey - "or what is it not?" On the other, the philosophy of life that already informs his vision and thought leads him back to question "these objects," at bottom, in terms of "life & sentiment." And it is in terms of '"life & sentiment" that he cannot in fact discriminate between them - between "a hut in America," as he says in this passage, and "a hut in Europe," or, for that matter, any hut, or palace, or gallery in any part of the world. This equalization is the work of what he calls the "Anointed eye," already punning, even at this early stage of his career, on the equivalence of sight or vision ("eye") and selfhood ("I").

Emerson's "Anointed eye" will extensively view and boldly confront Mediterranean and European art and culture, while upon his return home, in the wake of the equalized experience of that art and culture, he will "dedicate" his future vision and renovated self, as well as his "time," "talents," and "hopes" - to recall a decision he had made almost ten years earlier upon taking what was to become the wrong path of Harvard Divinity School (*Journals* II: 237) - not so much to the Church as to literature.

In the midst of the large body of literature that Emerson managed to produce in the wake of *Nature* (1836), through his rather long life, his poetical works do not stand as landmarks in the culture. Yet Emerson always thought of himself as a poet. "I am born a poet, of a low class without doubt, yet a poet," he writes to his (second) wife-to-be, Lydia Jackson of Plymouth, Massachusetts, on February 1, 1835:

> That is *my nature and vocation*. My singing, be sure, is very "husky," and is for the most part in prose. Still am I a poet in the sense of a perceiver and dear lover of the harmonies that are in the soul and in matter, and specially of the correspondences between these and those. (Whicher 19; emphasis added)

Four years later, in "The Priest," then titled "The Problem," the writer gives us a public justification of his poetic "nature and vocation," dramatizing his refusal to be a clergyman. "The Problem," as Lawrence Buell has put it, is "the self-unfrocked Emerson's apologia" (*New England Literary Culture* 117). This apologia, I maintain, is based on the same strategies of cultural and philosophical equalization that were already deeply at work in Emerson's Mediterranean experience and that would constantly come back to the surface of his most powerful essays of the 1840's.

FOUNDATIONS OF WONDER

"I now require this of all pictures," Emerson says in his essay "Art" (1841), recalling and deflating his experiences of aesthetic rapture in the churches and galleries of Naples, Rome, and Milan, "that they domesticate me, not that they dazzle me." To "domesticate"

the self means to make him perceive and rediscover - through the complexities of "the remote & the renowned" or the objectification of the spirit in great works of art and the sublime expressions of the individual mind - what is "simple and true," "familiar and sincere." Thus what is supposed to be "a foreign wonder" abroad is ultimately made to correspond to what is already "perfect" to the self "at home" - "the plain *you and me*," as he also says in the same essay, "I knew so well, - had left at home in so many conversations" (*Essays and Lectures* 436).

In "The Problem" Emerson may be said to "domesticate" the self by bringing the values and the achievements of tradition to the same level as the values and "harmonies that are in the soul" (as he says in his letter to Lydia quoted above) as well as "in matter." While tradition, in the poem, is chiefly exemplified by Mediterranean art and culture (including religious and, specifically, Christian culture), the naked soul is chiefly exemplified by the individual conscience of a young American, set over against the burden of the past as well as the religiocentric conformity demanded by his community, yet obsessively in search of a national voice which could express and sing communal America and its specific "matter."

In the opening stanza of the poem (1-6), Emerson tells us right away about his refusal to be a "churchman," making his point through a paradox that at once conveys attraction and aversion, intensified desire ("I like," "I like," "I love") and firm resistance ("Yet not"):

I like a church; *I like* a cowl;
I love a prophet of the soul;
And on my heart monastic aisles
Fall like sweet strains, or pensive smiles;
Yet not for all his faith can see
Would I that cowled churchman be. (1-6; emphasis added)

Then in the next couplet - a single couplet forming the only one single stanza of the poem - Emerson posits the crucial question:

Why should the vest on him allure,
Which I could not on me endure? (7-8)

This is, apparently, *the* "problem" of his life. The rest of the poem - sixty-four more lines, grouped in three stanzas - tries to provide an answer to this personal question "by transcending the personal," and "addressing itself to issues of universal significance" (Van Cromphout 86). As he did in his European trip, and as he would reiterate not only in "Art," but also in "The Poet" (1844), among other essays, Emerson confronts and equalizes the sources of art and culture by drawing on the most emblematic Mediterranean and European examples: from the "awful Jove" of "young Phidias" to the "Delphic oracle," from the "burdens of the Bible old" to "Peter's dome" and Michelangelo's "Christian Rome," from "the Parthenon" and "the Pyramids" to "England's abbeys," from "the fiery Pentecost" to the "fathers wise" of the Church as well as to the forefathers of Protestant

Christianity, from John Chrysostom (Patriarch of Constantinople) and Augustine (Bishop of Hippo in Roman Africa) to Anglican Jeremy Taylor, "the Shakespeare of Divines" (9-29, 33-38, 51-69).

The example of Michelangelo (one of the early heroes celebrated in his lecture series on "Biography") may be here seen as representative of such a strategy:

The hand that rounded Peter's dome,
And groined the aisles of Christian Rome,
Wrought in sad sincerity;
Himself from God he could not free;
He builded better than he knew;
The conscious stone to beauty grew. (19-24)

Emerson is saying that all artistic expressions have their ultimate source in spirit (the artist's "hand" being inevitably guided as well as tied by God), while at the same time implying that all masterpieces are indeed organic forms, growing "like veritable works of nature" (Sealts 89-90). As they belong to "Nature," they are adopted "into her race":

For, out of Thought's interior sphere,
These *wonders* rose to upper air;
And *Nature* gladly gave them place,
Adopted them *into her race*,
And granted them an equal date
With Andes and with Ararat. (39-44; emphasis added)

If the foreign "wonders of Italian painting" bring the self home, as Emerson claims in "Art" (*Essays and Lectures* 436), then, conversely, the poetic self is to make those "wonders" familiar by relocating them in the natural world at large. The realm of objective spirit (art and culture, religion and history) is one and the same with the realm of nature. The two couplets that open the next stanza of the poem are rather eloquent. In themselves examples of the "arresting compressed statement" that characterizes transcendentalist poetry at large (Buell, "The Transcendentalist Poets" 101), they are focused on the interplay between creation/Creation (art and nature) on the one hand, and creator/Creator (the artist and his "hand," as well as God or "the vast soul") on the other:

These temples grew as grows the grass;
Art might obey, but not surpass.
The passive Master lent his hand
To the vast soul that o'er him planned. (45-48)

Not only does Emerson equalize the masterpieces of Mediterranean art and culture by reducing them to the same transcendental source, but he also intermittently domesticates them by bringing them nearer home, setting them next to the 'natural' activities and expressions of the spirit or "vast soul":

Know'st thou what wove yon woodbird's nest
Of leaves, and feathers from her breast?

Or how the fish outbuilt her shell,
Painting with morn each annual cell?
Or how the sacred pine-tree adds
To her old leaves new myriads? (25-30)

The woodbird's nest, leaves and feathers, the fish and her shell, the pine-tree and the grass. These elements would easily make up one of those striking catalogues of ordinary things so frequently met with in Emerson's prose. As such, they could be 'naturally' placed among those "incomparable materials" that the New World is daily offering to his potential bard. If rightly viewed by the "tyrannous eye" of genius, as Emerson maintains in a crucial paragraph of "The Poet" (provided we can stand one more reading of it), these "materials" could be seen as resting "on the same foundations of wonder" as the greatest monuments of Mediterranean antiquity:

I look in vain for *the poet* whom I describe… We have yet had no genius in America, with *tyrannous eye*, which knew *the value of our incomparable materials*… Banks and tariffs the newspaper and caucus, methodism and unitarianism, are flat and dull to dull people, but *rest on the same foundations of wonder as the town of Troy, and the temple of Delphos*, and are as swiftly passing away. Our logrolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our Negroes, and Indians, our boats, and our repudiations, the wrath of rogues, and the pusillanimity of honest men, the northern trade, the southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon, and Texas, are *yet unsung*. Yet America is a poem in our eyes; its ample geography dazzles the imagination, and it will not wait long for metres. (*Essays and Lectures* 465; emphasis added)

All these ordinary things - from the woodbird's nest to the leaves of the pine-tree, from banks and tariffs to Oregon and Texas - belong to the realm of the poet who remains at home (or re-domesticates himself after confronting "the remote & the renowned" with a levelling eye), thereby making poetry out of the apparent bareness of America. These things rest on "foundations of wonder" as much as the grandest achievements of tradition, such as "the town of Troy" or "the temple of Delphos," rest on nature and have their ultimate source in spirit. As such, they must be unconditionally celebrated by the representative self who, for that comprehensive purpose, refuses the "highest ... function" of the priest and acknowledges his poetic '"nature and vocation." However hoarse and prosaic his singing, however universal his claims - "I will stand here for humanity," says Emerson in "Self-Reliance" (*Essays and Lectures* 267) - that representative self makes the incessant call for a national "genius" one of his major tasks; the call for a national "genius" who could recognize at a glance the "value" of the "incomparable materials" of a land "yet unsung," while Emerson remains hopeful that he may not, after all, wait too long or in vain for the metres of the great, ideal poet he relentlessly describes and looks for in his husky prose-songs.

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THE HELLENIC LEAGUE PLAYS IN THE NEW WORLD: BASEBALL POETRY CONSIDERED

E. MARTIN PEDERSEN

Baseball has become a symbol of America in much the same way that the Olympic Games are associated with Greece:

> … As Jacques Barzun once said, "Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball." (Seymour vii)

Culture is described by Johan Huizinga in his seminal work, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (1938), as a threefold complex of interrelations between *language, myth, and play* (4). In this paper I will explore how the baseball poetry of American culture follows a pattern uniting literature and sport evolved by ancient Greek culture, a pattern I have facetiously called the Hellenic league.

For Huizinga play is "an activity which proceeds within certain limits of time and space, in a visible order, according to rules freely accepted" (119); "as a regularly recurring relaxation, however, it becomes the accompaniment, the complement, in fact an integral part of life in general" (9). The necessary emphasis on repeated actions and rules creates order. Play is ordered intercourse, which in time becomes tradition, as in games. Myths and legends, literature and histories give order to the past. Language orders thought, and order making is a primary function of art. In fact, society itself is based on order.[1]

Huizinga saw human existence as a creative struggle against chaos and the human world as a playground/battlefield. A few scholars have challenged his emphasis on the apartness of play,[2] but as he understood, "In giving expression to life man creates a second, poetic world alongside the world of nature" (4). That poetic world can be found inside the sports arena. Reality versus our imagination's perception; the thing versus the name we give it; poetry as language that plays with language; rituals, both sacred and profane, that give meaning to experience: all is very serious play. From hence comes the aesthetic impulse, the creative urge, the intentional reduction to essentials, a coping mechanism for confronting fear and pain and escaping them at the same time, in the same baseball poetry, for example.

The magic circle enclosing the baseball diamond (the basepath) expresses a duality in which what goes on inside is inevitably outside the "normal" world. On the inside "us-and-them" clans, composed of both players and spectators, act and dress differently and follow different standards and customs than they do otherwise, in the "real" world. This begins to make the ballpark sacred ground and the baseball game a spiritual ritual. Rituals, though, require litanies: from *The Star-Spangled Banner* (at the beginning of every game) to *Take Me*

Out to the Ballgame (near the end), poetry accompanies, comments, defines the game of baseball, the quintessential form of American play. And these poetic manifestations cannot be otherwise than wistfully romantic, as Donald Hall confirmed in his insightful book of essays about baseball and poetry, *Fathers Playing Catch With Sons*:

> Baseball is the generations, looping backward forever with a million apparitions of sticks and balls, cricket and rounders, and the games the Iroquois played in Connecticut before the English came. Baseball is fathers and sons playing catch, lazy and murderous, wild and controlled, the profound archaic song of birth, growth, age, and death. This diamond encloses what we are. (30)

As a ritual with ancient roots, a drama of good and evil, a hero myth of classical proportions, a mystic codification of time and space, baseball acquires the characteristics of poetry; it becomes, in a sense, poetry.

Some historians claim that baseball, although mentioned in poetry as early as 1744 and played in the U.S. during the Revolution,[3] began as a variant of cricket, as an invigorating open-air exercise for dull city clerks, with the rule revisions of the 1850s, during "the American Renaissance, a time when writers came to believe 'that there should be no split between art and the other functions of the community, that there should be an organic union between labor and culture'" (Orodenker xii). Others claim that baseball really began with the establishment of the professional leagues in the 1870s,[4] but the game shows similarities in form, context and function to Renaissance and Medieval festivals, and to Roman and Greek dramas and sporting contests, and even to the ball-and-stick ceremonies of the Ancient Egyptians.[5] The point is moot, but the roots go deep.

Baseball is a dramatic representation, performed in the theater of the diamond and in the theater of the mind - a play, that is, played out by players. Baseball is also a contest, a fierce, fair competition for a prize of honor, reflecting the agonistic values of Ancient Greece: balancing the aesthetic rule of order and the beauty of variation and chance. The crucial battle between pitcher and batter is clean and proportional. Victory or defeat is unequivocal; reward comes only for ability and effort. The precise limits create a code of conduct, resolving ends and means, anticipating morality. As baseball writer Roger Angell affirmed: "a handful of men, we discover, can police a great green country, forestalling unimaginable disasters" (Hall 123).

Baseball is the most mythical of American sports, excepting, perhaps, the hunt. Richard Orodenker, in his book *The Writer's Game*, lists five governing baseball myths: The Myth of Heroes, The Myth of the Best Game, The Myth of Timelessness, The Myth of Memory, and The Myth of America. Over time myths become formalized as literature and as religion, and baseball is often called America's secular religion.[6] Myths, however, can also be stories about ordinary people who behave in extraordinary ways, as heroes, that is. To quote from John Lauricella's book, *Home Games*: "Baseball serves as an acculturating device that translates the myths of, respectively, Osiris, Demeter, the Grail quest heroes, and Christ for a twentieth-century American audience …" (146).

Baseball is mythical because of its seasonality and timelessness. The summer game actually lasts over six months of the year, played almost every day from the end of frosty winter to the early chills of autumn. It follows a life cycle set by the sun, a cycle of warmth, growth, renewal, hope, fertility and the good harvest in a pastoral simulation of a natural setting (the luscious green grass of the ballpark being rolled up and laid down like carpet). Baseball's power also reaches into the past following a cycle of family life from generation to generation, father to son (or daughter), as baseball enthusiasm and knowledge are passed down. Contrary to other sports, the time of a baseball game is unlimited, open-ended, which makes the never-ending inning a metaphor for immortality. The geometry of the diamond and use of numbers[7] (at once mystical and business-like) add to a sense of archetypal perfection. Finally, the game's division in segments provides measure, expectancy, pause, balance, contrast, variation, tension, resolution and other narrative elements.

Baseball is also the most memorable sport, being the most carefully watched, the most intimately known. A game of perhaps three hours in which the ball is in play only a few minutes is a game that allows for time to tell its own story as it happens and long afterwards in barroom chatter and in sophisticated literature.[8] So baseball is spoken before it is written and read. Along the way the player roles (outfielder, infielder, pitcher, catcher, manager, umpire) become character stereotypes to fill fiction and poetry. In the end, baseball, however, is a game, an invention, an artifice; it has no intrinsic substance, but its qualities advocate and animate meaning. As Hall asserted, "baseball sets off the meaning of life precisely because it is pure of meaning. …the diamonds and rituals of baseball create an elegant, trivial, enchanted grid on which our suffering, shapeless, sinful day leans for the momentary grace of order" (51). All the figurative qualities built into baseball make it the most literary American sport. From literate early America through to the present, baseball has always been the "written-down" sport.

Intellectual, interpretive activity though it is, baseball also celebrates the active physical body. Virtually all Americans, male and female,[9] of every age and skill level, have played baseball or its variants: softball, stickball, whiffleball, kickball. Identification is favored by this hands-on knowledge/memory and by the fact that we can see our heroes face to face (unlike football or hockey) and they look like us (unlike basketball players or boxers), talk like us and act like we wish we could. Many Americans share the experience of Philip Roth, who said: "not until I got to college and was introduced to literature… did I find anything with a comparable emotional atmosphere and as strong an aesthetic appeal. …Baseball was the literature of my boyhood" (Messenger 318).

Baseball poetry is a sub-genre in rapid expansion. In the 19th century most baseball poetry was shoddy doggerel, although it should be remembered that "Casey At the Bat" (1888) was the best-known American poem for many decades,[10] memorized and recited by children and adults. The Moderns dabbled in baseball poetry at a time when the sport was in its own "golden age." The Beats organized pickup games and lauded baseball in

"jazz poetry".[11] But it is in the contemporary period that poets have completely exorcised every prejudice against a mere game as serious subject matter. As Don Johnson noted in his article, "Who the Hell Are You, Kid: The New Baseball Poem as a Vehicle for Identity":

> The contemporary baseball poem, found in literary magazines and individual collections rather than anthologies, continues to promote the grace and beauty inherent in the game, but today's open society, the media's insatiable appetite for scandal, and the candor of individual athletes have all but eliminated the popular baseball figure as hero. Consequently, the "new" baseball poem looks inward and backward rather than up and out. (Umphlett 107-108)

For confirmation of the importance of baseball poetry I looked to three great American poets. Marianne Moore,[12] who played ball at Bryn Mawr and the Carlisle Indian School, and was an avid fan of the Brooklyn Dodgers, wrote several fine baseball poems. One begins: "Fanaticism? No. Writing is exciting/and baseball is like writing. You can never tell with either/how it will go/or what you will do" (221). Robert Frost,[13] relief pitcher for the Breadloaf Writer's Colony team, whose lonely boy longed for the camaraderie of baseball in "Birches," is often quoted for saying: "some baseball is the fate of us all. … I am never more at home in America than at a baseball game" (Higgs 168). Relating poetry to baseball, he also said that, "Poets are like baseball pitchers. Both have their moments. The intervals are the tough things" (Bjarkman, *Life* ix). Even that "old-fashioned ballplayer" (as his brother called him) (Lauricella 23) Walt Whitman wrote articles describing early baseball games as a reporter for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Orodenker 27) and included baseball as prime source of joyous re-creation in "Song of Myself" (line 751). He called baseball, "the hurrah game!" and exclaimed, "Well - it's our game; that's the chief fact in connection with it: America's game; has the snap, go, fling, of the American atmosphere; it belongs as much to our institutions, fits into them as significantly, as our constitution's laws" (Lauricella 27). The Hellenic league joining baseball and poetry has existed for American poets since the game began.[14]

Baseball poems often examine the game's aesthetic potential and celebrate its heroes (Ruth, Gehrig, Robinson, etc.), but more often baseball materials are used by poets to approach more universal themes: identity and self-expression; freedom and its limitations; democracy and the victory of right; individualism, rebellion and alienation versus cooperation and community-building; initiation, maturation and mortality; childhood revisited.

Home is the objective (of both the plays and the poems), where the prodigal son yearns to be welcomed with open arms, a vision of love that keeps the Odyssean base runner desperately spinning counterclockwise, a weird twist on the American pilgrimage and on the saying: *Yankee Go Home*. If playing baseball means striving for success, then baseball poetry is mainly about failure, being stranded in exile, the decay of aging, dying without redemption, dreams that don't provide solace, that hide grimmer truths, as David Colbert put it, "the difference between what we believed and what we achieved" (9).[15]

But the circle is round and one has another turn at bat; there will always be another inning, game or season; rookie players (the sons) will fill the numbered uniforms of their pre-middle-aged retiree fathers. The statistical histories have been carefully preserved in consecrated texts, so salvation may someday come for the worthy (even Shoeless Joe Jackson who threw the 1919 World Series and was banned for life). "Baseball," as Orodenker avowed, "is one of the many doors out of the house of grief" (186).

The seedy side of baseball (narcissistic self-indulgence, competitive machismo, capitalistic greed (the names of baseball stadiums are now sold to the highest corporate bidder), racist exclusion, sexism, jingoism (the American championship is called the World Series), and so on) is not ignored by poets, on the contrary, but is not overwhelming enough to destroy America's cult of itself, in which baseball plays a key role.

In baseball metaphors abound. The oft-repeated slogans, "Baseball is Life" and "Baseball is America," are already poetic statements. Huizinga stated in general terms that, "civilization arises and unfolds in and as play" (i). James T. Farrell, who wrote several baseball novels, asked more specifically: "What is America? … a nation of frustrated baseball players" (Lauricella 83); while educator Jacques Barzun contended, "America itself is the ideal baseball hero" (Orodenker 93). To be an American involves believing in certain poetic myths, and American identity is inescapably entangled with the national sport.

Lesley Hazelton, an immigrant, observed, upon attending "Catfish Hunter Day" at Yankee Stadium in 1986, tangible proof that she had arrived in America: when Hunter closed his speech by saying, "Thank you, God, for giving me the strength, and making me a ballplayer," Hazelton recognized "the perfect American day, the perfect American place, the perfect American sentence." The mythic world of baseball was her first encounter with "a mythical place called America" (Orodenker 16).

In the United States of America, a nation of exiles, a people of refugees, race, roots, immigration, assimilation and acculturation are singularly important issues.[16] Persons from all nations are trying to get to America (someone said more than all other countries combined), to join the American team (or to play against it); natives long to return to an America of nostalgic childhood memory; everyone seeks to find an America for themselves or within themselves.[17] Baseball epitomizes the nomadism of Americans. Social mobility is possible within the game (rising or falling in the standings), just as professional players move constantly around the national geography to play (rarely is a player a "local boy"), or to work (rarely does a team have the same lineup all season), or to live (rarely do two players on the same team live in the same city in the off-season). No one moves as much as ball-players; they epitomize movement.

America is an idea related to the frontier, the new world, the heaven on earth across the sea or just over the next mountain. After the physical frontier disappeared the "diamond chain" (the "fields of dreams" that dot and connect every neighborhood lawn, schoolyard, vacant lot, minor and major league park in the United States and run through

the personal histories of it citizens) partly took its place as the collective dreamscape.[18] Creating a union, designing a map - a diamond-studded fantasyland sung about by bards wearing funny caps.

This poetry, this journey, this myth, this dream, is so thoroughly American that it is easy to fail to see how universal the paradigm is, how it reflects the same union of body and mind, of Apollo and Dionysus, of sport and poetry, that the Greeks so adamantly, so religiously, sustained some 2,500 years ago. As Huizinga observes:

During the whole span of their existence the Hellenic games remained closely allied with religion, even in later times when, on a superficial view, they might have the appearance of national sports pure and simple. Pindar's triumphal songs celebrating the great contests belong wholly to the rich harvest of religious poetry he produced … Pindar shows a victor in the Olympic games breathing new life into the nostrils of his aged grandfather. (73)

In the same spirit as the ancient Greeks, American poets have breathed new life into their grandfather's pastime and made it stand for an anxious nation temporarily safe on base but bursting with the desire to run for home.

NOTES

1. From Kant and Schiller in the eighteenth century down through Nietzsche and Heidegger, to Gadamer, Marcuse, Derrida, and Jameson in our time, concepts of play have been central and vital to the articulation of the individual subject's freedom as well as to that subject's ability to perceive beauty and to create it in language. Play has provided us with images, symbolic activity, joyful "purposeless" production, a safe harbor, a boundary space, a disguise, a vertigo, an existential errand, a structure, a freedom, a choice. Play is a powerful hermeneutic device in contemporary Western metaphysics and in musings on the death of that metaphysics. It is provocative when positioned between terms such as the sensual and the ethical, rite and myth, content and form, and the material and the spiritual where it then seeks to bring out the essence of each polarity while always reserving the power to dance away from capture by one pole or another (Messenger 3).

2. "Jacques Ehrmann and Eugen Fink concluded that play is not an Urphänomen distinct from reality. Rather, it is symbolic re-enactment of the world in which men can at once become the subjects and the objects of their activity. We can learn the meaning of existence for a particular society from its play" (Anchor 63-93, abstract). Other works expanding on Huizinga include: Berman, Caillois, Messenger.

3. Possibly the first record of an American baseball game is that found in the journal of George Ewing, a Revolutionary soldier, who tells of playing a game of "base," April 7, 1778, at Valley Forge (Seymour 5).

4. After the Civil War, organized teams became important, and baseball developed into a popular show business, enjoying a prestige enhanced by American pride in having a "national game." Its devotees found it increasingly difficult to swallow the idea that their favorite pastime was of foreign origin. Pride and patriotism required that the game be native, unsullied by English ancestry (Seymour 9).

5. "[B]aseball's ultimate origin is the ball-and-stick rituals performed annually in ancient Egypt. These rituals, part of the fertility rites overseen, by the priest-kings, involved a mock combat in which opposing sides would vie for possession of and eventually dismember an effigy of Osiris, then ceremoniously bury the pieces in a gesture intended to restore the vital spirit to the dormant land. The head of the effigy acquired special significance because it was believed to be the most powerful part of the human body and consequently became a symbol for the spirit of fertility generally associated with Osiris. The object of the ritual combat became to capture the head of the god and return it safely to his temple - to bring it 'home' " (Lauricella 146, see also Candelaria 8).

6. In the filmscript of Bull Durham, written by Ron Shelton, Annie Savoy (played by Susan Sarandon) says: "I believe in the Church of Baseball. I've tried all the major religions, and most of the minor ones. I've worshipped Buddha, Allah, Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, trees, mushrooms, and Isadora Duncan. I know things. For instance, there are 108 beads in a Catholic rosary and there are 108 stitches in a baseball. When I heard that, I gave Jesus a chance. But it just didn't work out between us. The Lord laid too much guilt on me. I prefer metaphysics to theology. You see, there's no guilt in baseball, and it's never boring. … I've tried 'em all, I really have, and the only church that truly feeds the soul, day in, day out, is the Church of Baseball" (Colbert 139).

7. There is, first off, perfection in the geographical and chronological measurements of the diamond and its actions - nine innings, nine players on a side, ninety feet between bases. There is also a profound symbolism in the use of the numbers three and four - three strikes and four balls, three outfield posts and four infield slots, four basic playing positions (infield, outfield, pitcher and catcher), three outs for the offense and four bases to protect for the defense. And the numbers three and four do not seem to arise by mere accident or inexplicable convention; they are instead a signal of baseball's deeply metaphysical foundations. As philosopher Roland Garrett tells us, baseball's temporal structure is captured with the number three-three strikes for an out, three outs to an inning, usually at least three appearances at bat for each player in a nine-inning contest (cf. Garrett 1976). And if three is the number associated with the offensive (and thus the temporal side of the contest), four is the digit which represents defense and thus spatial structure - fourbases and four basepaths (which form the square of the infield where most play occurs), the rectangular boxes which house catcher and batter, four balls for a walk, four bases to transverse for a score, etc. There is, indeed, something of pure cosmic magic to be found here (Bjarkman, *Ideas* 16-17).

8. The Big Four baseball novels are: Mark Harris' *The Southpaw*, Bernard Malamud's *The Natural*, Robert Coover's *The Universal Baseball Association, Inc.*, J. Henry Waugh, *Prop.*, and Philip Roth's *The Great American Novel*. But many modern novelists have included baseball in their works in some way: Mark Twain, Thomas Wolfe, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Frank Norris, Ring Lardner, John Updike, Sinclair Lewis, Stephen Crane, James T. Farrell, William Saroyan, Annie Dillard, John Steinbeck, James Thurber, Jack Kerouac, Don Delillo, Nelson Algren, Irwin Shaw, Garrison Keillor, Saul Bellow, Susan Sontag, Virginia Woolf, and so on. Hundreds of contemporary baseball novels exist of varying literary types and value.

9. Women played baseball almost from the beginning: "Just after the end of the Civil War, in 1866, Vassar College already fielded two women's baseball 'clubs'" (Sandoz 4), not to mention the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (1943-1954), made famous in the film, "A League of Their Own." And women poet-fans have written many poems about it with, as Umphlett said, an emphasis on, "the basic feminine concerns of nurture, family, growth … choosing rather to stress cooperation, participation, and self-actualization" (17).

10. How can one explain Casey's undying popularity? It is not great poetry. It was written carelessly. Parts of it are certainly doggerel. Yet it is almost impossible to read it several times without memorizing whole chunks, and there are lines so perfectly expressed, given the poem's intent, that one cannot imagine a word changed for the better. T.S. Eliot admired the ballad and even wrote a parody about a cat, *Growltiger's Last Stand*, in which many of Thayer's lines are echoed (Gardner 15).

11. On the web site of the Cosmic Baseball Association (www.cosmicbaseball.com), the Dharma Beats, a team in the fantasy Overleague, is composed of: Gregory Corso (FB), Levi Asher (SB), Lucien Carr (SS), Ray Bremser (TB), Jack Kerouac (LF), Charles Plymell (CF), Lawrence Ferlinghetti (RF), Herbert Huncke (C), William Burroughs, Neal Cassady, Michael McClure, Gary Snyder (P), Gerald Nicosia (coach), Allen Ginsberg (owner).

12. Perhaps baseball's most precious literary moment occurred in 1964 when Harper's, a longtime publisher of baseball prose, lent space to George Plimpton to recount his afternoon at the 1963 World Series with the poet Marianne Moore (and Robert Lowell, who tagged along). … This is not just the end of an era in baseball but the close of the modernist period in American literature. That notion is impressed upon the reader early on as Plimpton reflects that Moore's "talk was almost as anarchic as that of Casey Stengel" (about whom she had hoped to write a poem) and that her famous poem "Hometown Piece for Messrs. Alston and Reese" was once proposed for a monument at Ebbets Field. Moore can shift between "a short eulogy of

Willie Mays" and "an appraisal and criticism of the Beinecke Rare Book Library at Yale." The names of ballplayers (Koufax and Vinegar Bend Mizell) intrigue her, as though any poetry that could come out of a ballplayer 'was somehow locked up in the name itself." The language of the game enthralls her, even a simple phrase like, "He ran out of room." …Watching the game through a pair of quaint opera glasses, she assumes the point of view of a poet, not "watching directly," as the others do, but (though it may simply have been her age causing her concentration to wane "look[ing] away from the focal point and study[ing] what was peripheral": the distance between first base and home, the cruel … but necessary" double play, the injustice of player trades, "the vendors going by with their trays. … Baseball is poetry for the common man in the way that poetry could once be understood (as Moore knew it could) by people without a formal education. In addition, baseball is for Marianne Moore what it was for Whitman and Saroyan, "the hurrah game." It possesses "vim," as Moore expressed it … Dexterity, ferocity, abandon, fury, speed and accuracy fascinate her … Grace and beauty define the game for her (fielding appealed to her more than hitting), though not vulgarity (quite different from the rhythms of the vernacular she admired), petty squabbling, or commercialism. A player's injuries remind us of the fragility of our own lives; his public persona reminds us of the value of solitude. Roger Maris grows in her estimation when he admits "that the only privacy he could count on was when taking his place on the ball field" (Orodenker 132).

13. Robert Frost covered the 1956 All-Star game for Sports Illustrated; in "A Perfect Day-A Day of Prowess," he addresses … every "man-jack" like himself "so full of bodily memories of the experience" of having played the game. … he still observes the game with a poet's eye for "significances"- a player's coming up to hit swinging two bats, or the fans wincing "with fellow feeling when Berra got the foul tip on the ungloved fingers of his throwing hand"… As for the game in question, 'it has been a day of prowess. Prowess is the ability to perform with success in games, in the arts, or in battle. The Welsh poet Edward Thomas, who came "to look on a poem as a performance one had to win," personified prowess every bit as much as Ken Boyer at third making "two impossible catches." Thus, baseball and literature meet at a point "close to the soul of culture (Orodenker 90).

14. A list of poets who use baseball figures, narratives, jargon, references and symbology in their work would include: William Carlos Williams, Carl Sandburg, Ogden Nash, Randall Jarrell, Maxine Kumin, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Gregory Corso, Richard Eberhart, Robert Francis, Donald Hall, Richard Hugo, Lillian Morrison, James Tate, Robert Penn Warren, Delmore Schwartz, Lucille Clifton, May Swenson, Tom Clark, Kenneth Patchen, Rolfe Humphries, Charles Olson, Edward Dorn, William Stafford, Charles Bukowski, Ismael Reed, Richard Wilbur, Robert Duncan, Gail Mazur and scores of others.

15. Death lurks at the edges of many of these poems, probably because most sports poems are ultimately about loss: loss of face, loss of games, loss of youth and vitality, and death is the ultimate loss. But loss is what makes love meaningful, because it deprives us of those things that we most cherish, most want to retain. Love, on the other hand, is what makes death so difficult. If we did not love we would not be as reluctant to leave those we know or have them leave us. Ultimately, all these poems are attempts "to find the right words for our love," for our love of those first green fields we played in, the fathers and mothers and uncles who coached us, and the heroes who inspired us even while betraying us by growing old. Although the poems record more losses than victories, more disappointments than celebrations, they testify to the power of our expectations, the strength of our dreams. If we did not invest so much in our games, the chronicles of our losses could not be infused with enough vigor and poignancy to inspire the next generation of players (Johnson, Hummers xxvii).

16. Michael Novak, one of the world's leading religious scholars, found the myth of America in *The Joy of Sports* (1976). [He wrote]: Baseball, rather, perfects the design of law and society in terms of its "close liturgical enactment of the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant myth." Baseball is almost a textbook study of the great American experiment: it is "Lockean," "designed like the federal system of checks and balances," a game of "rural cunning," and "an antidote to the national passion for bigness." And because of, rather than in spite of its myth, baseball is accessible to all peoples. Non-WASPs play baseball and share in its riches. Baseball, hence, is a means of "Americanization." Its constant is individualism: a team is "an association of individuals," and teamwork resembles "public-spiritedness." All sports represent some vision of America, but only baseball gets close to it core of "equality" and "fairness" (Orodenker 164-165).

17. The nation's adopted pastime has provided a perfect reflection of New World dreams and an unmatched repository as well for unbounded American pride and self-assurance. This simple "boy's game played by grown men" was from the outset a perfect analogy for American independence, frontier individualism, and a New World spirit of fair play. The massive popular culture industry which today surrounds our national pastime (literature, fiction, music, Hollywood film, bubblegum cards, collectibles of all sorts) lends weighty support to Roger Angell's whimsical observation that baseball seems to have been invented solely for the purpose of explaining all other things in life (Bjarkman, *Life* X).

18. Historian Perry Miller has described the American experiment as an "errand into the wilderness." One of the imperatives of that errand was to render the wilderness tame, to subdue Nature, to explore, conquer, domesticate, and cultivate - to build what John Winthrop called "a city upon a hill" which all the world could observe. … Americans still thought of themselves as pioneers, but now, with the physical frontier gone, they needed to find symbolic ways of fulfilling their destiny. The rise of American sport in the nineteenth century may be seen as one such symbolic expression of the American pioneer spirit. … Baseball is the only game played in a park, a term which embodies the tension that baseball so carefully maintains, a tension between the competing claims of civilization and wilderness. The baseball field is carefully cultivated and bounded, but it opens up from a point produced by the convergence of two perpendicular lines to a potentially limitless expanse for which the outfield fence serves as only the most artificial and arbitrary of barriers, just as the elusive "frontier" served for the original pioneers (Healy in Bjarkman, *Ideas* 115).

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WORKSHOP TWO
"THE MEDITERRANEAN IN ITALIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE"

CHAIR: JOHN PAUL RUSSO

This panel had its origins in discussions held during the previous Italian American workshop at the Siracusa Conference in 1999. Turning on social constructs, those discussions brought out issues that would be of renewed interest two years later in Genoa. The thread of continuity is the enduring presence of Italy in Italian American culture.

Six Italian American women who have written on their relation to the *matria* are the subject of Suzanne Branciforte's paper which explores both their physical journey to Italy and their metaphysical contact through language. Writers struggle with "boundaries of cultural identity by talking about and coming to terms with their origins." Helen Barolini, who traces four generations of women in *Umbertina*, recalls her mother saying that "just before her death Gramma had called for a sip of the mountain spring water near her Calabrian village." Barolini would "speak" with her grandmother in her quest for wholeness. For all the writers, self-understanding rewards an often "long and tortuous" journey.

Simone Cinotto investigates the role of food among Italian immigrants in East Harlem in the 1920s and 1930s, which older residents recall as its golden age. Food - its taste, texture, color, names, recipes, restaurants, businesses - made up a major component of the immigrant world. Shops, smells, etc. demarcated one's own neighborhood from the one next door, be it mainstream American or that of another ethnic group. Food served to separate one generation from another. In the 1930s residents could point to a drop in the purchase of "authentic" imported Italian products in favor of locally produced "Italian foods." American food was "tasteless, colorless, and 'industrial," a symbol of modernity opposed to *la famiglia*. "The way immigrants came to think about the food they consumed as 'Italian food' is one of the most illuminating examples of the degree their 'Italian' identity was developed to a good extent on American soil."

For Daniela Daniele, the Italy of Mary Caponegro functions both as a source of art and as a "realm of beauty" where characters "perceive their bodies lushingly mixed and entangled with their artistic enterprise." In *Five Doubts* artist-narrators relate stories in which the Mediterranean "becomes a space of narrative possibilities" for versions of the self. Employing the tombola board, Caponegro recreates the life, humor, and mystery of a southern Italian village. The stories mix reverence and blasphemy, fear and transgression, play and seriousness, sex and gluttony over restraint, archaic icons and *Panorama* clippings: commedia dell'arte merges with postmodernism.

Martino Marazzi examines the "silence" or "absence" of the sea in immigrant writ-

ing from Eleuterio Felice Foresti, a carbonaro and republican, down to recent authors such as Joseph Tusiani and Plinio Martini. Between embarkation and disembarkation - *l'umbarco* is a local word for passage money - the "silence" signifies both the fearful, dangerous sea and also "that which separates" the Old World from the New, or the premodern from the modern. It is a passage so "dramatic that - quite literally - it does not succeed in finding adequate expressive form" (another token of "silence"). When in his memoir Leonard Covello first mentions water, it is the tap water that his mother draws in their tenement, a New World convenience.

Despite obvious differences, observes Elisabetta Marino, Theresa Maggio's *Mattanza* and Anthony Valerio's *The Mediterranean Runs through Brooklyn* have common themes: the Mediterranean, the feminine figure, food as a source of physical and spiritual life, the perception that Italian American values are succumbing to technological modernity. Not a personal memoir, Maggio's book overcomes "binary oppositions" (insider/outsider, dominating/dominated) and discloses the "universal ties which bind people beyond geographical, ethnic and religious differences." Valerio identifies the Mediterranean with "sacred matriachal figures," the "real pillars of the household." Food symbolism, traced with delicacy, extends to tablecloths passed from one generation to the next.

Federico Siniscalco studies a series of videotaped interviews with Italian Americans studying for a year in Tuscany. Far from being intrusive, video interviews do not appear to bother contemporary students who are totally at ease with the technological apparatus. The students show insight and sensitivity in coming to terms with the complexities of their Italian American identity, as the long sojourn in Italy (as opposed to a brief tour) provides them with a vantage high enough to see both sides. "I always say I am an Italian in America," comments one student, "but only when I come to Italy really am I finally an American."

Lastly, I attempt to plot an opposition between American technological culture and Mediterranean values in Don DeLillo's *Underworld* (1997). Little Italy stands up to technological society for its life, humanity, and the presence of the sacred. What became clear from all the papers and discussions was our inability to arrive at univocal meanings of the Mediterranean. In T.S. Eliot's words, "The sea has many voices,/ Many gods and many voices."

VOYAGE TO THE CENTER OF MOTHER EARTH: ON ITALIAN AMERICAN IDENTITY

SUZANNE BRANCIFORTE

For Italian Americans, the link to the land of our ancestors is complex. While the voyage of discovery that brings one to get to know "the old country" can be exhilarating and exciting, it can also force us to confront a hidden identity that has been denied, lost, regained, or is yet to be regained. The experience may be positive, it may be negative, but it is never of little consequence. What does Italy represent in the imagination of Italian Americans? Which Italy has been handed down by our immigrant mothers and fathers and comprises the common perception of Italy in our collective memory? And what is the impact of that first meeting, that first trip, the encounter with the motherland?

Recent works by Italian American women authors concern problematic relationships to the land of their forebears. Mary Jo Bona comments that "to discover a female maternal ancestry, Italian American women writers return - in memory and actuality - to the homeland, to the homes of their grandmothers and mothers" (197). To speak of a "fatherland" or *patria* to define origin may be misleading. It is the mother land, *la terra madre*, mother Earth, the *matria*, to which we return. The maternal figure is of primary importance in Italian culture, it goes without saying. This is a country that worships the Madonna, and privileges the position of *mamma*, a nurturing figure. Two very important, fundamental things are received from the mother in the first years of life: nutriment, food taken from the mother's breast, and language, the word received from the mother's lips. Language is acquired from our mothers, and therefore is called our mother tongue.

For many who come to discover their roots, an important point of entry to the culture is language. But not only. There can be a double point of entry, where physical contact comes in the form of a voyage and metaphysical contact comes through literature or language.

In *Italian Days*, Barbara Grizzuti Harrison's best-selling account of a physical voyage through Italy in which she uncovers aspects of her heritage and herself, she describes how bewilderingly unprepared she was for the impact:

> I did not know, when I went to Italy, the nature of my undertaking, nor did I anticipate the meaning of my journey. I lived every day as I found it. I know now - writing this book has taught me this - that it was a journey of reconciliation. I understood this more clearly as I traveled south, to the sun... And to my family. I discovered everything I feared and everything I loved. There was more to love than to fear; it was a lovely journey. (xi)

Grizzuti Harrison puts the different aspects of her trip on the scale, and the overall balance is positive.

Similarly, Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum discovers things about herself and her identity on her first journey to the homeland. Chiavola Birnbaum was 'radicalized' by her experience in Italy (her words), as she sought her roots and discovered Italian feminism. She states:

In search of my roots I went to Italy in 1969, where I found five million workers in the streets and a feminist movement whose banners declared *Non c'è rivoluzione senza liberazione della donna; non c'è liberazione della donna senza rivoluzione*. ... An independent scholar after 1969, I commenced a new life pattern of regular research stays in Italy. (*Black Madonnas* xix)

Contact with the *matria* nurtures Chiavola Birnbaum's development as a scholar, and leads her to produce the trilogy of *Liberazione della donna, Black Madonnas* and *Commari,* an important contribution to understanding the role of Italian women in society. The models she observed in Italy prompted an inquiry directed at better understanding her own feminism and relationship to her heritage. In *Black Madonnas*, Chiavola Birnbaum asks:

Why were Italian feminists so grounded, spiritually and politically? The question became a hundred questions when I discovered that the Sicilian birthplaces of my grandmothers, my grandfathers and my father were located near archaeological sites of the primordial goddess and sanctuaries of black madonnas... (xix-xx)
Black madonnas may be considered a metaphor for a memory of the time when the earth was believed to be the body of a woman and all creatures were equal... (3)

Her reflection leads to an understanding of the importance of the *matria*. In *Liberazione della donna* Chiavola Birnbaum had already noted the nexus between history, *la terra madre* and matriarchy:

Italians live amidst the ruins of civilizations that arose long before the christian era.... Traces of all these cultures remain, not only in museum artifacts but in the memories of Italians.
One memory is that of the earth mother. ...
Women deities evoke matriarchy - rather than patriarchy - a subject weighted with contemporary issues of power. (3-4)

Chiavola Birnbaum finds the power she needs in the model of female identity encountered in Italy. But the image of the *matria* is not always positive or empowering.

Grizzuti Harrison talks about her complex relationship with the homeland, tracing the boundaries of her heritage along patrilineal and matrilineal lines. The burden of her ancestry is apparent in a kind of hierarchy of negative responses to her parents' home regions.

...my mother's invasions, her tears, her heavy silences had not made me afraid of the Abruzzi, had inspired no dread of that ancestral land. I do not know why this is so. ...My mother's punishing silence would sorrow me forever. And yet is was Calabria I dreaded to see, my father's home. (458)

I had thought of Calabria as a place where bald mountains held you in a vise, a place of unyielding rock, of bent people who lived in dank caves... (455)

In *Were You Always An Italian?*, Maria Laurino examines her complicated relationship with Italy and her own identity, and like Grizzuti Harrison, seems to have been unprepared for the physical impact. In her description, Laurino answers one of the initial questions - what does Italy represent in the collective imagination of Italian Americans? In her case, she has no preconceived notions of Italian landscape, of a 'real' Italy. Rather, some clichéd and not entirely positive characteristics of Italian American identity are what she associates with Italy until the point of entry in the physical voyage.

I entered Italy dispossessed of any image of its landscape. I never took the time to dream about the gentle push of water that guides Venetian life, or the rows of olive groves and honey-colored Tuscan fields that elegantly surrender to vast mountain ranges. In my small provincial world, Italy meant fried dough and little ladies dressed in black. (69)

Laurino's initial reaction of surprise and positive affirmation of a heritage regained leads to liberation and the desire to reconquer a firmer link to the *matria*. It will be the physical contact with the *matria* that changes Laurino's perception of Italy and Italian identity.

...I allowed myself to open up to Rome...; and I truly felt at home. ...Joy replaced doubt and the possibility emerged of a return to the place I had never been: the birthplace of my grandparents.... Many children or grandchildren of immigrants have similar tales to tell, describing that moment of cultural epiphany, the reaffirmation of their link to the past. (70)

After an initial ambivalence, Laurino moves on to claim Italy as her own, drawing the positive strength necessary to her new-found identity from contact with the homeland. The initial point of entry was physical, in the voyage; the second point of entry is metaphysical, in the attempt to master the language of her forebears.

After that trip, Rome became addictive. I needed to travel there and to other parts of northern Italy each year to fortify myself... To hear a language that I had become determined to speak. ... For those few weeks each summer, I claimed as my own the narrow curved roads of Trastevere... (71)

From fried dough to Trastevere, Laurino's discovery changes her perception of herself.

I would learn the hard way that I was in love not with this Roman but with Rome, a city that changed my idea of what it meant to be Italian. (Laurino 68)

Like Grizzuti Harrison, Laurino responds differently to her maternal heritage than to her paternal heritage. It is the matrilinear bond that nurtures a positive link to the past, like an umbilical cord.

Before I had traveled south, I felt a stronger tie to Avellino than to Potenza, strangely connected to it. I had heard my mother speak of "provinch d'Aveline," using a dialect pronunciation. ... Without ever having seen the land, she confidently claimed the hazy space between possession and loss, the knowledge of a palpable yet irretrievable past.
I may have shared my mother's sense of belonging because I look more like her than like my father. I cannot forget a conversation with a man I met years ago in Rome's Piazza Navona, who, after talking to

me for a few minutes, knowing only that I was Italian-American, said, "You look like all the girls from Avellino." In the Eternal city I learned that my face had both a history and a future (13).

The critical role of mothers in handing down a cultural link to ancestry is beautifully described by Maria Mazziotti Gillan in the poem "My Grandmother's Hands." She also expresses frustration and a sense of inadequacy in the attempt to transmit heritage through the matrilinear line:

The skein of the past
stretches back from them to me to my mother,
the old country, the old language lost,
but in this new world, saved and cherished:
the tablecloth my grandmother made,
the dresser scarves she crocheted,
and the love she taught us to weave,
a thread of woven silk
to lead us home. (64-66)

The godmother of Italian American letters, Helen Barolini, also traces her ties to the *matria* in physical and metaphysical terms:

Responding to an internal directory, I had to find not only geographic Italy, the land of my immigrant grandparents, but also what the idea of Italy meant to my sense of identity, to my feelings of myself. ... From America, where I felt amorphous, alien, drifting... to Italy where I found the ballast of heritage, a rich language and culture, marriage and family, back to America as who I finally am, the constant thread has been the focus on literature and writing, on the continuing probing of all the lighted and shaded passages. (*Chiaroscuro*, forward)

In the autobiographical novel *Umbertina*, Barolini tells the story of southern Italian immigration to the United States, tracing four generations of women. More than a historical novel, it is a contemplation of cultural and ethnic identity. Barolini does not imagine or attempt to describe the crossing; she details better her own voyage of discovery when she returns to live in the land of her ancestors. The character Marguerite (Barolini's alter ego), like an E.M. Forster character, "...sailed for England harboring the certainty that her destination was surely Italy" (159).

One of the few descriptive passages of Italian landscape in the novel does not paint a pretty picture. The image directly contrasts with the idea of a nurturing *matria*:

Umbertina looked and considered as they journeyed; she saw why what they passed through was called the old country. The land was parched, thin, worn-out, dying. And she wondered if it had dried out because it was so aged; if so, how long before the New World would itself become old? (52)

While it is impossible that the immigrant herself would call Italy 'the old country' prior to immigration, this narrative blip is material for another discussion. It is the image of Italy as dry, parched and worn-out that contradicts the fertile, life-giving, maternal image. While Grizzuti Harrison, Laurino and Chiavola Birnbaum return to the bosom of their ancestry, Barolini's character flees an ungiving homeland.

Choosing between the two points of entry, the physical/voyage and the metaphysical/language, Barolini privileges communication and the link of language to ancestry and heritage. Thus it is no accident that in her collection *Chiaroscuro* the first essay is called "How I Learned to Speak Italian":

Learning Italian became something stronger than just pleasing the Italian student (sic). I began to recall things like my mother saying that just before her death Gramma had called for a sip of the mountain spring water near her Calabrian village. (*Chiaroscuro* 8)

Barolini comes full cycle with her marriage to an Italian, life in Italy, raising Italian daughters:

Now I am called Nonna. I never knew the word to address my own grandmother with when I was a child standing mute and embarrassed in front of her. Now, if it weren't too late, I would call her Nonna, too. We could speak to each other and I'd hear of the spring in Calabria. (*Chiaroscuro* 13)

Barolini is aware that the fullness of her heritage has been denied her, and her attempts to re-establish links to a lost identity are painstaking.

Recovering identity is almost never an easy or happy process; often embarrassment or shame are involved. For Sandra Gilbert, the complex relationship to a heritage denied intimately involves language and the hyphen. When she encounters a cosmopolitan Italian couple during a sailing trip, she is forced to confront the hybrid nature of her own identity and the difficulty of locating her *italianità*. The experience is emblematic:

I had professed familiarity with the ways of a culture that, from the perspective of 'real' Italians, is not my own. My Italian is dreadful, practically nonexistent... But I caught their meaning: She's just an American, what does she know about Italian cooking, about opera, about being Italian? And truly, after all, the answer is almost nothing. ... The culture of which and for which they spoke was fully, seamless, theirs in a way in which it can never be mine... Rather than supplying me with an engaging internationalism, my insistence that I was an Italian-American meant that I was more than an American but that I was less than an Italian (51-52).

Gilbert eloquently describes the problem of a slipping identity as she confronts what is Italian, what is Italian-American, and where she fits in the spectrum. She defines herself as

... an American-American who spent years denying being American, years inhabiting a country (or perhaps countries) of hyphenation - maybe even a hyphen-nation. In a confused and tentative fashion that Pietro and Lucia might never be able to understand, I eat hyphenated food, sleep and dream among hyphens, and in a sense am a walking, talking hyphen. But the Italian part of my hyphen-nation looms most grandly, tragically, glamorously, and persistently over the politics of my identity; and therefore it is to Italy as a country and a concept, as a lost land and a sometimes lost, sometimes found history, that I have turned again and again in poetry and more generally in that struggle toward self-discovery of which poetry is a crucial element for me. (52)

The "concept of Italy" Gilbert talks about, the "lost land" of her ancestry, is an idea all the authors examined here have struggled with. Gilbert concludes that she is "an outsider

who is also, in a vexed and vexing sense, an insider" (52). Where one positions oneself vis-a-vis cultural identity and birthright is a problem not easily resolved. The double point of entry, through a trip to the homeland and through language, is often determining.

In her final essay in *Claiming a Tradition: Italian American Women Writers* Mary Jo Bona investigates 'recent developments' in these writers' work, and finds that "Claiming an identity that is neither all Italian nor American, the writers remember and imagine a homeland that nourishes their creative talents" (196). She finds that "Increasingly, writers from the third and fourth generation explore the tensions between cultures and the sustaining nature of *italianità*..." (196). Whereas with earlier writers, "negotiating the memories of Italy meant a conscious effort to sustain cultural traditions, from learning the Italian language to teaching a non-Italian the recipe for dandelion salad... Writers of Italian American background in the 1980s and 1990s show little concern with 'transcending' ethnic identity" (196).

Maybe the dandelion salad is food for thought. The Italian American women writers considered here are struggling with the boundaries of cultural identity by talking about and trying to come to terms with their origins. For all of them, the voyage to the center of Mother Earth is a long and tortuous route.

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THE TASTE OF PLACE: FOOD IN THE NARRATIVES OF "AMERICA" AND "ITALY" BY ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS OF NEW YORK, 1920-1940

SIMONE CINOTTO

All human identities are shaped by the space in which people live and socialize. Migrant identities are bounded to the geographies of multiple places. Immigrants recreate in their memory the place where they came from and turn to it while understanding their new surroundings and redefining their identities. The tension between the perceptions of the native land and the new habitat significantly influences immigrant culture. This paper, which deals with Italian immigrants in New York in the interwar years, focuses on the role of food - as a cultural feature, non-verbal form of communication, and metaphor of self - in immigrants' "construction" of two places: one actual - the *neighborhood* - and the other one remembered and imagined - the *old country*.

In Italian neighborhoods of New York, food production, trade, and consumption had such an impact on social space that we can talk of distinct urban ethnic "foodscapes" and "smellscapes," which affected subjective and collective identities. As the case of the Italian community of East Harlem in Northern Manhattan shows, social interactions and rituals centered on food not only helped turning streets, buildings and other landmarks into shared and recognizable objects of affective relationships, but also contributed to draw boundaries (mental, cultural, political) between "Italians" and other neighboring groups.

Among Italian immigrants in New York, narratives on food embedded a sense of attachment to a distant place. As a product of the specific ecology of the land immigrants left behind them, the food of the "Italian" past was the recipient of peculiar feelings of fondness. Food and eating events were central features of the narratives of the past that immigrants developed among themselves or told to their American-born children. In immigrants' discourse, Italian food and foodways - even though, as we'll see, technically "unauthentic" - became symbols of continuity, by way of their ideal location within a natural and ordered "other place."

The few older Italian Americans who still live in East Harlem today regard the 1930s and 1940s as the golden age of their community. In those decades, first and second generation Italian Americans accounted for up to 80% of the population of the area. Of course, they remember the hardships of life in Depression and wartime. Some of them blame the eventual demise of "their" neighborhood on the influx of African American and Puerto Rican migrants, which began to take place at that time. But what they most vividly remember is the rich social life of a "self-sufficient" community. "The neigh-

borhood," according to a woman who lived there all her life, "was one big family. Doors were kept open, everybody socialized with each other, everybody borrowed from each other, everybody paid back what they borrowed" (Pascale). In Italian Harlem, ethnic homogeneity and intense social interaction nurtured a widely shared set of expectations and behaviors; an ethnic working-class subculture "geographically" bred by life in the "urban village."[1] As a consequence, many residents were attached to a place that for many other New Yorkers was just an unattractive, crime and poverty-ridden slum.

Geographer David Ley argued that in "urban villages" the identity of the community is made coherent through a widespread sharing of common symbols (158). This is certainly the case for food and foodways in Italian Harlem. In oral histories, food customs are among the most recurring and worshiped aspects of communal daily life. Furthermore, it is impossible to separate the meaning of food from the meaning of the places where it was purchased, prepared, and consumed. The emotional relationships that individuals uphold with tastes and smells of the past are intertwined with the sentiments for places. Food is also a powerful symbol in articulating the "history" of the place. To the interviewer who asked her if she used to return to the old neighborhood every now and then an immigrant woman explained: "I've got an house over there, but I don't wanna live over there." She went on suggesting who was to blame for the disappearance of her community. "There are Spanish people there now. They're nice people but… Before there were all Italian people, all Paisano in the house. I miss them, because I used to go over there, and smell the Italian cookin' in the hall. Now no more. I don't have nothing to do there" (Fischetti).

Indeed, a peculiar "foodscape" shaped the identity of Italian Harlem, fashioning the choreography and rhythm of its streets, in terms of smells, sounds, colors, names, signs. From the very beginnings of their settlement in Harlem, immigrants tried to shape around them a recognizable and familiar sensuous microuniverse. In the first nucleus of Italian Harlem, a handful of shanties on 113th Street and First Avenue which in the late 1880s sheltered the laborers working at the elevated railroad, Italian food stores immediately appeared ("Blocks"). In the 1920s and 1930s, there was a huge number of restaurants, markets, and stores selling what people in the neighborhood labeled as "Italian food." In 1935, a typical block between First and Second Avenues, 109th and 110th Streets, hosted two bakeries, two delicatessen shops, four butchers, five grocery stores, two candy stores, one pastry shop, one pasta shop, and one restaurant owned by Italian Americans plus a restaurant and a live poultry market run by Jewish Americans. Involvement in a neighborhood's daily life, even more than ethnic or regional affiliation, was a key resource for local food dealers. Businesses' survival largely depended on face-to-face relations between storekeepers and their customers, many of whom lived on the same block. The high degree of intimacy that existed between storekeepers and their closest residents is suggested by the fact that some Jewish and Greek grocers spoke Neapolitan, Sicilian, or Italian fairly well.

Food markets and stores were especially important in a gendered perspective. In a community which put several restrictions on women's use of public space, shopping for food (along with other activities related to food preparation) represented an acknowledged area of women's visibility and sociability. For immigrant women, newcomers in particular, shopping was not only a way to develop social relations, but it had an important function in the understanding of the urban space, its uses and meanings. A woman who immigrated to East Harlem from Sicily in 1924, for example, suffered intensely fromthe displacement, finding the new environment extremely hostile. "In the streets she was constantly afraid because there were too many automobiles that whizzed by very fast." But when she became acquainted with Italian neighbors who had lived in New York for some years,

> she thought less and less of the old country. She and the new friend would go out together during school hours, and do their shopping together, and this duty had become a very pleasant one. Little by little she learned the names of the food articles, and patronized the shops were other Italian women went. She was getting to like more and more her small apartment, and began to realize that hot and cold running water were indeed very useful, just like the peculiar black gas stove, which at first had put fear into her. (Vicesvinci)

If many "food places" functioned as landmarks to Italian Harlem residents, helping them to "bring into focus" a subjective image of the city, the open-air market situated on First Avenue between 110th and 116th Streets was the "node" of the area, what geographer of perception Kevin Lynch called a "thematic concentration," the "heart, focus, and symbol of a region." Apart from being a vital institution in Italian Harlem's socioeconomic life, the market was a central element of visual attraction that imbued the place with spirit and identity. Pushcart peddlers cried the virtues of their merchandise in "a half dozen Italian dialects: Sicilian, Calabrese, Neapolitan, Apulian, and so forth." They sold fruits and vegetables uncommon in the American city, like broccoli, cauliflower, zucchini, eggplant, artichoke, prickly pear, olives (Federal Writers' Project 6). Those who participated in the local subculture knew the complex topography and semantics of the market. A second generation Italian American remembered:

> Every morning my mother would take the shoppin' bag from 116th Street and walk all the way down to 111th to see what the story is. After 111th, she comes back and starts buyin', because she might have figured that at 116th it was more expensive than 114th or 111th. All the aristocrats would go at 115th and 116th. My mother had to go at 113th and 114th. Everything was cheaper there, but you had to know how to shop. It was a show - the Jewish merchant and Italian, it's a riot. […] Some of the Jews, they never wanted to lose their first customer. They would lose money, but if they lost their first customer, that day was gone. So everybody would go early to be the first customer. "Wait till he opens." "No, me first." (qtd. in Kisseloff 355-356)

City dwellers learn urban space through a multisensual experience of places. Sounds and smells influence the perception of the environment, affecting the subjective evaluation of spaces, the affective relations that people establish with places, and their feeling of

belonging. In the eyes of many middle-class observers, Italian Harlem was a monotonously ugly area. Two reporters noted that "the misfortune of Little Italy is peculiarly uniform." And when it came to odors, outsiders tended to perceive an homogeneous "stench of poverty." Journalists described the olfactory landscape of Italian Harlem recalling the indistinct stink that resulted from the '"urine-draft of air that move up the stairs," the exhalations rising up from "unforgettable toilets," and the ubiquitous sweet and sour smell of deep fried garlic. The open air market was scarcely mentioned for other than the smelly, putrid garbage that it left behind every night (Federal Writers' Project 3).

But those "initiated" into the life of the *slum* knew of a different "smellscape." They were able to perceive and make distinctions in the wide range of sweet, sour, pungent, spiced odors that blended in their streets. This olfactory sensitivity was important in conferring an identity to space, in making it familiar, in transforming it into something of their own. Food smells were the most emotionally significant. A recent immigrant remembered how pleased he was by the smells he encountered along the street where he lived. "There was the reassuring fragrance of warm bread, the heady aroma of roasting coffee, the musty smell of wooden barrels filled with wine, the pungent odors of ripe olives and anchovies in brine, of gorgonzola and provolone cheese and hanging salami" (Sermolino 25). Because of the residential segmentation of the population along lines of regional origins, each street had its peculiar smells. Foodways communicated the cultural differences attached to places. As a visible feature of sociability and rituality among different groups, food was a powerful symbol in the narrative of "self" and "the other." A man whose family had come to New York from Campania noted:

> I could enter the neighborhood at one end and sample the air quality of the gravy, and the odds were that it would be about the same at the other end of the neighborhood, with the exception of the Sicilians', who were strange in just about every other department, too. They were much more violent than the Neapolitans, and as far as their dialect went, we couldn't understand a word they were saying. They ate weird things; at least we Neapolitans thought so. They ate macaroni with pumpkin, and who the hell would do something like that? (Della Femina 23)

East Harlem residents instinctively mixed up the spatial boundaries, food boundaries, and cultural boundaries that were precisely drawn on the street grid of Northern Manhattan. The territory of "the other" was firstly experienced in terms of different foods, smells, and customs. A food geography replicated ethno-cultural divisions, created an apparent group coherence and unity, reinforced the sense of belonging of the people in the community. Sometimes, prejudices, distastes, and repulsions for the food of "the other" reproduced conflicts and imagined cultural hierarchies. Italian immigrants articulated these narrative strategies against their Puerto Rican neighbors, who around the 1930s had "taken control" of the area west of Park Avenue and, in their turn, completely transformed the urban landscape, introducing previously unknown voices, sounds, colors, and smells.

The symbolic connection between food, territory, and identity was a major dimension

of the most important ethno-cultural event of Italian Harlem, the annual feast of the Madonna of Mount Carmel. According to its historian Robert Orsi, the feast was a collective performance that featured different layers of meaning (Orsi, *Madonna*). The dimension of the mystic experience overlapped with territoriality and with the sensuous experience, in which the consumption of food was essential. In the 1930s, when the Feast drew into Italian Harlem streets several thousands people, vendors sold watermelon, Italian sausage and pepper, torrone and ice-cream from the stalls lined along the sidewalks; peddlers wormed their way into the crowd with pizzas, zeppole, lupini, chick-peas, cotton candy. The procession followed an established path, crossing the neighborhood streets from Second to Pleasant Avenue and from 111th to 116th Street. With the stride of the Madonna in the streets, and the symbolic language of the public performance, the music of the band, the waving flags, the illuminations, and the smells and tastes of the "ethnic" food, the community claimed the neighborhood streets as its own. To participants, the experience of the Feast meant a ritualized occasion during which emerged a close relation between food consumption, sense of place, and collective identity:

> We participated in the feast by buyin' a sausage frankfurter. In those days they had everything - a bottle of beer, soda, pizza. We liked the sausage. I don't know why it always tasted better there. No matter how your mother cooked 'em, that guy did it better. Even the frankfurter, no matter how you cook frankfurters at home, you can't beat the guy on the corner. (qtd. in Kisseloff 376)

The relationship that was built between the residents of the ethnic enclave and the "ethnic space" by means of the sensuous experiences of food, its tastes and smells, could also function to understand *other* places. Leonard Covello, a prominent scholar and public leader who was a lifelong resident of East Harlem, experienced this feeling during a visit to an Italian section of Greenwich Village. He was nervously walking toward the house of the violent father of one of his student, wondering about how to approach the man. Covello recalled: "As I entered the downstairs hall and caught the odor of garlic and tomato sauce, I felt right at home." He was thus reassured that he would be able to enter in a relationship of confidence with his counterpart, relying on the fact of sharing the same culture (Covello, *Heart* 132).

Food was equally important in the construction of both public and private places. The symbolic connections between food and places stemmed from the sphere of affective relations. The stronger the emotional involvement toward people, familiar tastes and smells, the spatial context, the more inseparable became these three dimensions. It was on the basis of emotional involvement that food and places became overlapping codes of communication between individuals, group, and community, conveying affection, membership, identity. In Italian Harlem existed a recurring narrative. People celebrated their own food cultures as different from the rest of the community. The women of the family were usually thought to be the keepers of a peculiar tradition. The characters of this "food narrative" - people, family, community - were set in actual places, which turned themselves into recipients of emotional attachments.

My mother was the greatest cook in the world. Everybody thought their mother was the best. I don't know why they think that, but my mother was the best. It was a fact. Her bread was the best-smelling bread in the whole world. When she made bread, the whole house smelled - three floors. Everybody knew that Antoinette was making bread. My sister lived on the first floor of our building. My grandmother was on the second floor, and we were on the third. When I come home from church, my sister would make meatballs, and I would steal a couple. My grandmother would make meatballs, and I would take from her, and by the time I got to my mother's I was full. My mother made good meatballs, but my grandmother had something different in hers. I think it was more garlic. Anyway, it was good. You came into that house, and you got such a good aroma. It was a wonderful feeling. There was a woman next door named Jenny. She was Neapolitan. Her meatballs were different. They were good, but they weren't as good as my mother's or my sister's or my grandmother's. (qtd. in Kisseloff 353-354)

The symbolic significance of home food rituals was enhanced by the integration of food sharing and family gathering in the physical space of the home. The ritual Sunday dinner, which took place in one of the households of *la famiglia*, established over time an holistic relationship between familiar faces, voices, places, tastes, and smells.

We didn't go out to eat. We ate either at our house, or Cousin Ronnie's, or Uncle Dom's, or wherever. My grandmother would start making her meat sauce at seven in the morning on Sunday and within five or six hours that smell would be all through the house, covering everything - clothing, furniture, appliances - and then it would go out the front door and into the streets, to mix with the aroma of neighboring meat sauces. (Della Femina 22-23)

Among immigrants, however, food derived much of its power in establishing affective relationship with concrete places from being a reminder of *another*, intangible place. Tastes, smells, and other "food signs" helped transforming an unfamiliar space into a system of recognizable and meaningful places and symbols also because these signs told immigrants of an alternative, idealized place: "Italy."

For immigrants, the consumption of foodstuffs coming from their village in Italy, be they olive oil, wine, cheeses, salamis, dried figs, or prickly pears, was a cherished means to ideally reconnect them with the place they left behind. In the neighborhood, small importers benefited from the affective ties between immigrant consumers and these foodstuffs. Discussions about the old *paese* often revolved around food, and immigrants from a single village loved to share "food memories" among them (Park and Miller 120). In the early decades of the twentieth century, food import from Italy to New York was big business indeed, thanks to the dimensions of the immigrant community and its faithful devotion to imported products. Immigrants preferred them over domestic replicas even when the latter were significantly cheaper.[2] Only the combination of the spurring effects of World War I and the protectionist U.S. tariff policy on the domestic industry of "Italian" foods, the emergence of second- and third-generation consumers, and the Depression, reversed the trend in favor of American-made Italian-style food in the 1930s (Camera di Commercio 66).

In fact, the houses and streets of East Harlem were no heaven for immigrants. Harlem was the distant and strange place where they had been drawn from their *paesi*. They came there looking for economic gratification in exchange of their labor, or following the path of other family and kin members. Disappointment and frustration were not foreign feelings to them. In New York many experienced, at some point of their lives, exploitation, unemployment, family crises, violence, disease, and death. For some of them, the sensuous encounter with "America" (that is, the often limited portion of the land that they happened to experience) was disconcerting. They had arrived with great expectations, built upon the tales of those relatives, friends, and acquaintances that had preceded them. Most of them had left a rural small town environment for a "cramped quarter" of the world's largest modern metropolis. They perceived and depicted that place in one color, gray.

> You, the chemists, the doctors, the engineers, of America, you have made this country gray [wrote Emanuel Carnevali in his autobiography]. Why do you handle gray things only, why does everything turn grey in your hands? Why do you want to take the joy out of oranges and peaches - kill fruits? This is the complaint of a million Italians [...]; "America, donne senza colore e cibo senza sapore" - America: women without color and food without taste. (161)

The immigrants' common complaint that in "America" food was tasteless, colorless, and "industrial" was not just meaningful per se. In their perception, it revealed the presence of an ideal connection between environmental conditions and a supposed immorality of American life. American life conditions were perceived as especially corruptive of what immigrants felt was most ideologically dear and socially important to them: *la famiglia*. Nothing caused more grief among the immigrant community, during the 1920s and 1930s, than the generational conflicts that arose from the increasing individualization of the American-born generations from their parents' control. Immigrants blame this conflict on the "Americanization" that caused the "departure from the tradition" of their children. In immigrants' narratives, food was often part of the picture.

> It is difficult to bring up children in this country [Covello was told by a mother of seven, six of whom were born in New York]. In the old country children somehow knew, without being taught, that they should help the family… In America all children are much younger; they have neither the understanding or the physical strength that children in Italy have. Here a family has to wait a long time till the children get sense and make up their minds that there is nothing finer in the world than to take interest in the affairs of the family. Maybe it's the weather, maybe is the bad food. (qtd. in Covello, Social Background 304)

Food memories were recurring features of the narratives of the Italian past told by the immigrants of Italian Harlem. Immigrants indulged in representations of "Italy" among them and in front of their children, who had not any clue of what "the other side" was like. Robert Orsi wrote a revealing essay on the process of remembering the past among immigrants in Italian Harlem and its impact on generational relations between them and their American-born children. Memories of "Italy" were not neutral recollec-

tions of facts, people, and places "buried" or "frozen" in the past, but narratives ideologically enacted to respond to immigrants' concerns and needs in their *present* social world. Especially when told to their New York-born children, the "stories" of "Italy" had moral lessons attached (Orsi, *Fault of Memory*). The openly symbolic and mythical contents of these "memories" is suggested by the fact that many Italian Harlem youths believed that Italy was "just one farm house after another" and that Italian villages were dwelled by spirits, dwarfs, giants, witches, and magicians (Thrasher 204).[3]

In immigrants' narratives, "Italy" was the land of *la miseria*, which they fled to achieve better material conditions. Over there, though, hunger instilled in people a sense of discipline and morality that was hard to find in affluent America. "In Italy, we did not waste anything," an immigrant woman claimed. "If a crumb fell on the floor, we bent down, picked it up and kissed it, thanking God that we had it" ("Thrift"). On another tone, the "old country" was the beautiful, "in color," land where now adult or old immigrants set a distant and idealized past, a "state of nature" where they nostalgically remember themselves growing up. Finally, "Italy" was the setting where they located the narrative of an ordered family life, as opposed to a disappointing reality. In their memories, immigrants constructed "Italy" as a multifaceted (but non changing, not evolving) place. "Italy" was a *non-place*, a narrative geographical tradition that drew much of its value from being conceptually opposed to History, that is, to the socioeconomic circumstances that made most of immigrants' culture, customs, and values obsolete and useless.

Food, as a symbol of *tradition*, was enacted in representations that were inherently *modern*, in that immigrants narrated traditional life in an elegiac natural place as a positive alternative to American life. Sensual memories of foods, tastes, smells were uncertain and ambiguous, both in terms of contents and meanings. However, they often articulated the terms of a conflict between "here, now" and "there, back then." In an interview with Covello, a man told him:

> When I'm in Italy I want to be in America. When I'm there I always dream of home. I remember these dirty, ugly streets; these squalid houses, the smell of baccala (dried cod fish). I thought of the time I slept in my native vineyard, how the larks or the crowing roosters woke me up. I saw the sea and the clouds. Oh, I tell you it is a difficult thing to forget this country (Italy). ("Nausea")

When immigrants described to their children the place of their birth, the taste of "Italy" existed in dialectical opposition to the taste of "America." As Jerre Mangione writes:

> From the way my relatives usually talked about it, Sicily sounded like a beautiful park, with farmland around that produced figs, oranges, pomegranates, and many other kinds of fruit that refused to grow in Rochester. The air was perfect in Sicily, neither cold nor damp as it was in Rochester most of the time. The wine tasted better, and you could pick almonds and olives off the trees. In the summer the men strummed guitars and sang in rich tenor voices, and the women went on picnics in the country. Everyone was much happier there. (18-19)

The flexibility of food as a symbol of identity enhanced its importance in the creation of public and private spaces in Italian Harlem. Immigrants in New York ate much differently than in Italy. They labeled as "Italian" much of the food they consumed, even though they became familiar with much of it in America and many foodstuffs were American-made or grown, and their ways of consumption were for a large part a result of the American experience. In New York, their diet was affected by the market conditions. In Italy, food supplies were strongly dependent on local ecologies, different ways of production, and seasonal cycles. In New York fruits, vegetables, and other foodstuffs were available on the market the whole year round. While in Italy the consumption per capita of meat and sugar was among the lowest in Europe, the United States' was the world's highest. It was only in America that the daily consumption of pasta, white bread, coffee and olive oil became widespread among Italians. These foodstuffs, which in Italy were consumed on a regular basis only by the upper classes, in the United States were frequently accessible even to the poorer families. However, as the shaping of ethnic cuisine amid immigrant communities stemmed by the effort to realize food ideals that were unfeasible in Italy, the radical changes that occurred in the diets of immigrants were somehow perceived as a "persistence of the tradition." The way immigrants came to think about the food they consumed as "Italian food" is one of the most illuminating examples of the degree their "Italian" identity developed to a good extent on American soil.

A similar process was at work as far as the construction of the private space of "home" was concerned. In New York, most immigrants lived in physical environments that were completely new to them. Italian American domesticity was mostly the result of the efforts to cultivate the realization of old, often unfulfilled, values in new ways and in different spaces. The recurring convivial events involving the extended family emerged as a new, central "ethnic tradition." But the novelty was covered with the appearance of continuity. The representations of Italian life often linked a place "closer to nature" to the unity of families around tables and the sharing of food as symbols of family communion. Immigrants were most touched when they recalled themselves being served dinner by mother in the stone house in the little village. The most vivid of their sensuous recollections were those of good food: fruit trees, vines, freshly pressed oil, the smell of homemade bread. In Molfetta, as one of them recalled,

> The relations between the various households of our whole family were in the main most cordial. Ours was a social existence as truly spontaneous and beautiful as it was *natural* (emphasis added). All the long line of relatives, uncles, aunts, and cousins of every degree lived in Molfetta. This gave an opportunity for much social intercourse. We had a custom of frequently getting together in the evenings for social good times. [...] Usually "eats" and drinks were served by the entertaining households; almonds, walnuts, raisins and stuffed dates or figs, with home-made cakes and candy. The best of the year's wine and "rosolio" - a delicate liquor - were served. [...] In the summer we used to go the country, especially at vintage time. I had an aunt who owned a large farm, and I was always invited there at grape-gathering time. It was the happiest season of all the year. I found my

stomach limitless in its capacity of expansion. But best of all was watching the whole process of wine-making. (Panunzio 19-20)

Through food, tastes, and smells, immigrants in Italian Harlem tried (and to a certain extent succeeded) to humanize, bend to their needs, and carve according to their nostalgia, a place that presented itself to them as hostile and disturbing. To make this, they needed to recreate in memory a *non-place* which was both the repository of the neediness they successfully escaped and what they considered the real humanity. Food was a central key to reconnect themselves to this imagined place - where food was good, natural, and tasty indeed - a place that functioned at the same time as a model, an alternative, a reversal, and a denial of the place where they lived and toiled.

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NOTES

1. For the sociologist Herbert Gans, who in the late-Fifties studied a community of second generation Italian Americans in a low-rent district of Boston, a urban village is an area "in which European immigrants - and more recently Negro and Puerto Rican ones - try to adapt their nonurban institutions and cultures to the urban milieu" (4).

2. This attitude was well known by social workers and nutritionists working among Italian immigrants. "During the last few years, when Italian cheese was $1.50 a pound, [the Italians] preferred to use less rather than to substitute American cheese at 50 cents," noted one of them. "They could not see that $1.50 spent for American cheese would buy three times as much nourishment" (Gillett 17).

3. The same boys and girls being interviewed were equally convinced that "The people who have color in their cheeks drink a lot of wine" and that "The people who season their food with red hot peppers will eventually become very strong."

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MEDITERRANEAN CLIPPINGS OF ART AND DESIRE: MARY CAPONEGRO'S *FIVE DOUBTS*

DANIELA DANIELE

1. "IL LIBRO DELL'ARTE"

Mary Caponegro is too sophisticated a writer to be reduced within the boundaries of a hyphenated identity. Born in Brooklyn, N.Y. in 1956, to a medical doctor father of Calabrian descent and a German-American mother, she is a third generation Italian American, hardly connected with her Italian heritage that apparently even her father did his best to suppress. At some point she felt that her surname sounded too Italian for an experimentalist with "antitraditional fictive proclivities."[1] Questioned on the subject, in a private letter Caponegro wrote that defining herself an Italian American writer "would be like cheating" and that her relation with Italy was invariably distorted by her imagination. In her stories, she never deals with Italian American themes such as the striving of Dago ditch diggers and the inescapable Mafia connection and, though she devoted a recent volume to the oppressive intricacy of family bonds (see *The Complexities of Intimacy)*, she never represents the clichés of the suburban Italian-American family, with its noisy WOP parties, the tawdry baptisms, weddings and confirmations, typical of a community which traditionally gives sacraments a priority over other social rituals. If the Irish-Italian Gilbert Sorrentino escapes the restraints of his background through education (see Russo), the distance that Caponegro keeps from it is aesthetic. As a Postmodernist, she creates fictions that cannot be mistaken with reality because, as Gardaphé puts it, "if there is no sincere way of returning to one's roots, then the only alternative is to distance oneself as much as possible from them" ("Sebastian").

In her prismatic vision of subjectivity, Caponegro seems to inhabit more than one character at once; and when she portrays the neurotic descent of immigrants she does her best to disguise their background. Her autobiographical narrators are often non-WASP artists, developing their estranged visions of America through the distorting mirror of art and fiction. One example is British Sebastian, whose "sebastardness" alludes to the country's inability to deal with "foreign" or fluctuating identities. He feels more at ease with his writing than in society, in a *künstler*-tale that stresses his "alien" and critical vision as an artist. Caponegro's neurotic characters seem to locate themselves in a migrant rather than an immigrant position, remapping America as a world of multiplicity where they strive to gain a border position. In this respect, they are like DeLillo's Angelo Cavallo in "Take the 'A' Train" or Pynchon's Benny Profane in *V.*, who live in a state of perpetual motion and safe anonymity to escape consensus but also a safe refuge in their ethnic community. They are urbanized, restless figures ready to enter that peculiar process of intercultural hybridism that

is typical of minorities in America. In their stories, the gap between their past and present displacement lies in the dilemma of their hyphenated condition.

The book Caponegro devotes to the riddle of her Mediterranean origins is significantly entitled *Five Doubts*, and is a collection of tales, "each inspiring doubts" (McLaughlin 187) which explores her Italian heritage in the puzzling mode that, as the writer suggests in the opening epigraph, her mentor John Hawkes taught her. The book came out of a rewarding year that Caponegro spent in Italy at the American Academy in Rome, as the winner of the Rome Prize in 1994: "I feel my own upbringing so much different than those of my 'WASP' friends but the last place I ever thought my fiction would take me was to my 'roots', but so it did, albeit obliquely." As a formalist writer more interested in reshaping than in chronicling reality, Caponegro turns her "Italian" book into a fascinating sequence of art tales, in a text whose nature is experimental rather than experiential. In this shape, Italy is never perceived as a lost homeland to long for, but as a precious source of art and potential narratives addressing the fictive nature of memory and identity. As artists, her autobiographical narrators recapture their roots through a visual legacy rather than through a personal account or family history,[2] so that the book intentionally becomes a "libro dell'arte," a collection of art and artworks that partially mediates Caponegro's awkward relationship with her Italian background. Every tale in the book is inspired and preceded by an illustration reproducing a work of Italian art selected from a variety of masterpieces ranging from Roman and Etruscan times to the present. Like a notebook where texts are interspersed with images, Caponegro fictionalizes each one of these visual icons in an instinctive detour from a mimetic approach which makes her use her ethnic memory as a visual heritage ready to be reshaped.

Within this studied visual/verbal structure, the Mediterranean becomes a space of narrative possibilities making new versions of the self possible. Caponegro's autobiographical narrators are entangled in a wide network of voices and bodies whose complex intimacy and fragility she carefully explores beyond ethnicity, because the Italy that she feels more at home in is a land of art seeking a perfection that reality hardly attains. Pursuing the complex representation of consciousness started by Modernists, the author weaves a complex texture of multiple voices,[3] which makes her narrative a peculiar study in character to be apprehended through their art and bodies. Because of its profound, introspective nature, unlike other self-reflexive Postmodern writings, Caponegro's work is a subtle study in perception, able to detect the slightest emotional turns and changes of her fibrillating characters.[4] Although the theme of Italy and of cultural difference underscores the collection, in this realm of beauty characters perceive their bodies lushingly mixed and entangled with their artistic enterprise. In their refined and abstract vision, no boundaries are easy to draw between the body and the creative mind so that the fictional world of the hyphenated artist becomes a dense narrative field whose ultimate marks of distinction are creativity and sensuality.

Moreover, if DeLillo envisions an Italian American who tries to attain a universal

"third person consciousness" in America,[5] Caponegro's self speaks in the first persona and is firmly located in a woman's body.[6] In this complex interplay of art and gender, in "Il libro dell'arte" the autobiographical narrator impersonates a remote Italian ancestor, Giovanna, the talented and passionate lover of Cennino's apprentice: one of those female artists never mentioned in Italian art histories that Caponegro brings back to life. This form of gendered travesty has the strong visual impact of a performance, so that the magnificent Renaissance interiors that she inhabits become a setting where the Italian American writer emerges *en travesti*, capturing a pervasive sense of recursive past. Writing and looking from this skilled and sensual perspective, the masquerade of the narrator has the same theatrical quality of the artworks of Mary Antin, Cindy Sherman, and Nikki Lee: all Postmodern women performers who equally enact and inhabit other skins, times and places in the present time. In this shape, the Italian iconography recalled by Caponegro becomes a stage, an installation dominated by a strong sense of formal control, where the cultural heritage is revived and reinvented as a form of body art.

Like Caponegro, whose narrative art is exquisite in its delicacy and complexity, Giovanna proves a dedicated mannerist, very absorbed in her laborious act of gliding and chiseling. When she enters the spectacular interiors of the Italian Renaissance like a sensual and talented Artemisia, she finds her intimate way through it and loves her maestro with the same passion that she paints with. She competes both as a painter and a mistress with maestro Leonardo, who happens to long for the same young apprentice that she is enamored of. Therefore, in *Five Doubts* art and intimate matters, talent and desire are closely intertwined, making Caponegro's narrative something more than an algid and skillful Postmodern fiction because, as McLaughlin points out, it conveys "a profound sense of art's ability to speak to human conditions" (188).

2. "TOMBOLA"

Beside the elaborate frescoes of the painters from the Italian Renaissance, the visual legacy that Caponegro revives in *Five Doubts* also expresses the exhuberance of Southern vernacular art. According to a Postmodern vision that dismantles the boundaries between high and low genres, Caponegro sketches a sequence of very short narratives from the "Tombola" boards, recreating a whole Sicilian village whose lost rituals she evokes and reinvents through art. The "Tombola" that Caponegro turns into fiction consists of brightly colored houses where the fates convene: its parodic characters express a profane Catholic imagination, where the devil, the boss, the whore, "the man who speaks from death," the woman across the street, "the death that speaks" playfully interact, depicting an Italian South whose warmth and humane nature Caponegro is very fascinated by. In this tale drawn from the popular Italian game she makes all characters frantically gesticulate, fight and pine away as if on the painted stage of a revisited commedia dell'arte, where according to Rikki Ducornet, gamblers, robbers and charlatans attempt "to cheat

fate by stealing instants of hope... to overcome the impositions and limitations the fates impose, to alter the world's dark discourse, to indulge, if all too briefly, irrational thoughts of escape" (29).

On this ideal stage, the "Tombola" stock figures are carefully stylized in a grotesque dance that takes on their significance as each number is called and reshuffled in new narrative combinations which give the tale its peculiar fragmentary shape.[7] In this lurid scenario, the devil meets the hunchback, the young Mafioso meets the bosses, the woman at the balcony seduces the young Mafioso, the good and a bad woman get romantically involved with their landlord, in lively sketches that also capture the whispers and gossips of street people commenting upon the hunchback, the Virgin Mary, and the child receiving a spanking. Caponegro celebrates the kitsch exuberance of this vernacular world by recalling Mediterranean symbols of irrepressible passions and passionate repression and fictionalizes those "Tombola" numbers which are associated with sexually charged and ludicrous objects such as the cannon, the chamberpot, the bird that sings, "the one that looks always at the earth," in a language that mimicks and preserves the sensual impact of these profane creations of the popular mind, including the blood which, in the blasphemous popular version, flows from both the sacrament and the vagina.

As Caponegro moves from the aura of the Renaissance artists to the Mediterranean landscape portayed in "Tombola," a different form of sensuality and body language seems to prevail. The colorful and slightly obscene characters of the famous Neapolitan bingo go well beyond grotesque typologies and regional stereotypes, and seem to adopt a different idiom of intimacy, based upon a semi-pagan faith constantly negotiated with the interdictions of a pervasive Catholic faith. By telling their stories of sin and desire, Caponegro shows how the gross material of popular culture can also be reshaped and amplified to utter its sanguine Mediterranean spirit, with its transgressions and sexual fears, in a tale which reads like a miraculous synthesis of colorful and parodic elements. Very amused and fascinated with the sensuality of Catholic icons, the writer shows how their exhuberant and dramatic postures paradoxically resist the bigotry and moral prescriptions of the Church. In their grotesque, torturing postures they speak, once again, a body language made of non-verbal signs that the writer brings to the verge of parody.

Caponegro's emphatic and hyperbolic vision turns the sensuous nature of these symbols into farcical narratives of repressed emotions which convey the ancestral, earthly dimension of a rural, Southern culture where sex and gluttony finally prevail over the restraints of the Southern community, whose excruciating stories of sin, guilt and fierce revenge are finally brought to their ultimate, cathartic effects.

The writer, who is intrigued by these icons of pagan pleasure, celebrates them in the sunny spirit of a Latin comedy, making all symbols and embodiments of Southern passions circulate, interact and interfere, in a climactic parade that recalls all the "Tombola" characters on stage, linking past and present generations in a redefinition of separate spheres[8] and

of a persistent family unconscious,[9] in which religion is closely associated with the devotion to Mafia godfathers,[10] and the alleged fantasies of incest and fertility strangely survive in a country where the population rate is dramatically dropping.[11] In this playful way, the Tombola characters seem to exorcize its implicit moral interdictions and the cuttings from modern accounts of Italian customs finally confirm how their sensual exhuberance resists across generations. In a fragmentary narrative where seduction and sexual fears always overlap, even the more realistic accounts of modern Italian life resonate as parody. The story actually incorporates visions of contemporary Italy reported by Italian magazines like *Panorama* and *L'Espresso* and, as each "Tombola" story alternates with these clippings, the writer seems to draw a line and maybe a continuity between ancient and current values. These microfictions of art and desire rearticulate Italian folklore, mixing fact and fiction, caricatures and referential discourse, devotion and transgression, producing a modern counterpoint in which the objective reports from the magazines are interspersed and finally disrupted by the comic scenario evoked by the popular game.

The picture of Italy that comes out of her *Five Doubts* is formally composite but coherent in its playful juxtaposition of sacred and profane icons, finally proving an anthropological resistance of archaic signs and customs merging in metropolitan culture with surreal effects. By mimicking the vernacular, the identity of the educated Italian-American daughter lies in the gap between her grandfathers' prescriptions (and set of belief) and the sexual exuberance expressed by their icons.[12] Because art produces its own distortions, doubtful Caponegro interrogates her clippings from the magazines, but deforms their accounts in the way she cuts, translates and juxtaposes them to the vernacular, whose body language comes out amplified.

Here, linguistic manipulations are also involved, as other markers of the idiosyncratic presence of the diplaced Postmodern writer fully aware that translating cultures means rewriting what she still finds so compelling to reshape and (re)write. Caponegro's Italian is a language meant for hyphenated ears, that the author conceives as a reinvention and as a "part of the perplexing Postmodern questions," in an artful text that keeps distorting while appropriating the Italian art and language. The amused authoress reproduces a macaronic idiom which incorporates elliptic sentences and misspelt Italian words added in italics in her very studied and beautiful English. One example is the elliptical sentence that Caponegro reports in translation from the one of the magazines that she quotes: "cent'anni fa: cinque figli e 35 anni di vita media. Oggi: un figlio e quasi 80 anni."[13]

Another example is the borrowing of the macaronic word "grotto," that seems to move from the archaic dialect straight into Caponegro's English, in a hybrid, intercultural version somehow descriptive of the transition from a system of values into another, that is, from the vernacular to the Italy viewed and perhaps desired from a very amused and fascinated American perspective, finally producing that peculiar optical effect that lies at the basis of the writer's Postmodern conceptualism.

In this idiosyncratic portrait of a distant country, the author seems to ask: What is Italy for a third generation Italian writer if not a dream, a grotesque skit, a blurred syncretic, Postmodern memory? Caponegro lets the colorful icons of her ancestral community answer, enacting a farcical pantomime that finally turns into an exquisite dance macabre, into an arabesque of profane desires based upon a poetics of doubt.

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NOTES

1. This is Mary Caponegro's self-definition in "Impressions of a Paranoid Optimist" 154.

2. Cf. the British writer Sebastian in the homonymous tale and the son-musician in *The Complexities of Intimacy*.

3. A good example of the introspective power of her narratives is the recent short story "Ashes Ashes We All Fall Down."

4. Her compositions capture different levels of sensorial perception in the uncertain accounts of unreliable narrators who, in Caponegro's words, try "to be at every moment true to a self in the making" and "via instinct and fate finds her own elliptical path" ("Amazing Grace" 77).

5. "A third person consciousness, (is) the man we all want to be" (DeLillo, *Americana* 270).

6. In Caponegro's words, she is "a female writing experimental fiction into the millennium, along with late Angela Carter, late Marguerite Young, Rikki Ducornet, Lydia Davis, Joanna Scott, Carole Maso, Patricia Eakins, Diane Williams, Jaime Gordon." Unpublished letter to Wendy Steiner in response to Steiner's article "Look Who's Modern Now," *New York Times Review of Books*, Oct. 10, 1999, 18-19.

7. From the structural point of view, "Tombola" probably is a late development of the art of fragments that she started experimenting with in 1988, in the sequence of three short fictions or collage stories using materials from the *New York Times*. Cf. Caponegro, "Eighteen Patterns of Daily Practice."

8. "In this manner, inside the security acquired in this circular journey, the Italian woman seems to have finally both desire and capacity to look inward, to gather together in one long embrace mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers, to pay them the debt in her state of full consciousness" ("Tombola," *Five Doubts* 69).

9. "There is a fantasy of family that precedes and accompanies the real family. There is an unconscious family, a 'family of right' attached to the daytime family, that each one lives in reality; this unconscious family often enters into conflict with the real, to the point that, if we do not learn to recognize it, can create terrible conflicts" (ibid. 70).

10. "What is the point of the 33 years of Christ, when a knife could just as easily be used on a cat or the rooster?" (ibid.).

11. "A father of children without a bride is like Italy without the tomato" (ibid. 72).

12. In a private letter, Caponegro explains: "I really wanted to capture the poignancy of what I perceived as 'old-world' values and a certain 'simplicity' of life with 'modern' complications and contradictions. The stereotypes were openings for a deeper look and hopefully deeper understanding, with an attempt to capture, affectionately and appreciatively, the immense warmth of the Italian culture." "Tombola" stresses "the wonderful playfulness and humanness that went along with the sense of constraints and rules. I saw that there was as much a tradition of blasphemy (in a mild sense) as tradition; indeed, the religious attitudes were more flexible in many ways. The Tombola game and board, and even the way I saw it played that New Year's Eve in Circeo was fascinating to me because of how easily the humor and the reverence and the irreverence coexisted."

13. As I raised the problem of her elliptical translations, Caponegro graciously offered to provide the originals of the "found" material excerpted from *Panorama* and *L'Espresso*: "I found them just now in my attic, the original magazines, and wonder if I should check your sections against those originals, or if it is more appropriate to have your translation of my translations?!? These are the perplexing postmodern questions, aren't they? - with texts that appropriate, distort, etc."

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L'UMBARCO: IL SILENZIO DEL MEDITERRANEO NEGLI SCRITTI D'EMIGRAZIONE

MARTINO MARAZZI

Da Eleuterio Foresti a Tony Ardizzone, da metà Ottocento alla fine del ventesimo secolo, una serie ininterrotta di esuli, immigrati, scrittori, hanno parlato, espressamente o attraverso un silenzio carico di segnali e significato, di quel momento e luogo liminare che occorre attraversare per passare dal Vecchio Mondo italiano al Nuovo Mondo americano. L'articolo segue e illustra gli snodi, i temi e le voci più memorabili di quel trauma che Leonard Covello indicò con l'aspro vocabolo lucano di *umbarco*, rimarcando, ove necessario, l'assenza del Mediterraneo, piuttosto che la sua presenza, all'interno della cultura dell'emigrazione.

Partiamo da molto lontano. E precisamente da Trieste, ancora saldamente territorio austriaco; da qui, dopo diciassette anni di catene nello Spielberg, salpa per un esilio che finirà per essergli carissimo il carbonaro e repubblicano Eleuterio Felice Foresti (o, come recita la firma in calce ai suoi scritti statunitensi, E. Felix Foresti):

I think it was on the 3d of August, 1836, that we sailed. Our voyage lasted three months about. We slept in hammocks amid the crowd of soldiers and sailors. We had the same dinner as was served to the officers, who treated us with much courtesy. […]
We were in the last of October, 1836, when we came in sight of this magnificent Bay of New-York, so much the more beautiful to us, as it seemed the terminus of our cruel and long sufferings. We thanked God for it, and sang the *Hymn of Liberty*. Once on the Battery, we could exclaim with truth: *Now are we indeed free; we fear no longer our enemies and the despotic power of Europe*.

La vicenda di Foresti, che concluderà i suoi giorni nel 1858 a Genova come rappresentante consolare (un posto conquistato dopo anni di acerrime controversie con il Regno di Sardegna), si consuma tutta prima - nello Spielberg - o dopo quell'arrivo. Ma già in questa pagina del *New-York Daily Times* del 1854 troviamo, non per la prima volta del resto, il "campo lungo" sulla baia di New York, segnacolo di libertà (con la "L" maiuscola) prima ancora che venga eretta la Statua. Il Mediterraneo non c'è: è per così dire bruciato nello slancio verso una nuova vita.

Quindici anni dopo, nel 1869, l'Italia non produce più perseguitati politici. Nel classico *Volere è potere*, manuale del "self-helpismo" italiano, Michele Lessona intende illustrare, attraverso un giro della penisola che parte da Palermo e in quattordici capitoli giunge sino a Torino, "quanto possa in pro degli altri e di sè chi è dotato di volere perseverante e tenace, e come con questo si vince ogni dura prova; e ciò si vuol provare con alcuni esempi scelti in Italia, dove non è poco il bisogno" (51). Si tenga presente, per inciso, che un libro come quello di Lessona entrerà facilmente, pochi decenni dopo, a far parte dei titoli raccomandati dai

bibliotecari statunitensi come adatti all'educazione ed edificazione delle masse immigrate.[1] I principali porti di partenza della futura Grande Emigrazione hanno tutti l'onore di un capitolo a parte: Palermo, Napoli, Genova. Ma nel 1869 l'esodo è di là da venire: agli occhi di Lessona, le capitali del Sud pongono problemi di adattamento sociale e diremmo caratteriale: "Sì, certo, Napoli è bella d'ineffabile bellezza! Ma una città non può, come certe donne, contentarsi di sentirsi chiamar bella, continuamente bella, null'altro che bella!," tanto più che essa appare abitata da una "Popolazione irrequieta e indisciplinata, si diceva, che mai non seppe né sopportar tirannia, né mostrarsi degna di libertà" (76). Siamo in pieno, insomma, all'interno del *topos* del "paradiso abitato da diavoli," che, come Croce mostrò ottant'anni or sono in pagine magistrali, ha segnato profondamente e per secoli la percezione del Meridione nel resto d'Italia e in Europa.

Questo il Sud, ancora rinchiuso in se stesso. A ridosso della breccia di Porta Pia, l'emigrazione tocca invece altre zone: il Canton Ticino, la Liguria: "Centomila Liguri campano in America, preparando là alla madre patria, se questa ne saprà trarre profitto, una ricchissima sorgente di ricchezza e di forza" (382). È il Mediterraneo di una "gente […] operosa" che ritroviamo a decenni di distanza ben trapiantata al di là dell'Atlantico, dove ha riprodotto in modalità persino pittoresca il suo attaccamento alla vita di mare. Lo Sloppy Louie di Recco ritratto sul *New Yorker* da Joseph Mitchell ancora nel 1952 cerca di riprodurre a modo suo lavoro, casa e famiglia, tra il ristorante di pesce del Fulton Fish Market e la casetta con giardino a Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, ridando vita agli "originali" lasciati nel 1905 nel golfo del Tigullio. Una delle prime *fiction* della narrativa italiana in Nord America s'intitola non a caso *Il Piccolo Genovese* (1869: lo stesso anno del libro di Lessona).

Immaginiamo ora una pausa, non necessariamente lunga, ma avvolta da un profondo, quasi cupo silenzio. Il silenzio, assai spesso, è ciò che separa, come uno schermo nero al posto di una dissolvenza, la partenza dal Bel Paese dall'arrivo nella terra dove le strade sono lastricate d'oro. Ed è il più delle volte proprio intorno a questo silenzio che occorre interrogarsi per valutare la mediterraneità o no della Grande Emigrazione, andando a guardare tra le pagine dei romanzi, delle poesie, delle autobiografie e dei documenti privati. Silenzio significa che tante volte il Mediterraneo e i suoi tre porti di partenza risultano proprio assenti, inesistenti o quasi. Nulla di nuovo o di sorprendente: con giudizi alquanto differenti, da Prezzolini a Robert Viscusi si è fatto notare che l'*Italian America* è abitata da un popolo per il quale la traversata ha rappresentato il passaggio da una condizione, per semplificare, feudal-medievale, o comunque premoderna (e pre-unitaria), a - tutt'a un tratto - la modernità meccanica di fine millennio. Questo passaggio è talmente drammatico che - letteralmente - non riesce a venire espresso in forma adeguata. Inoltre, e più immediatamente, va ricordato che non parliamo più dell'"operosa" gente di mare ligure, ma di un popolo contadino e montano per il quale Genova e Napoli rappresentano solo una tappa di passaggio; luoghi sconosciuti, lontani, carichi di incognite e di potenziali pericoli con i quali si è deciso già preliminarmente di non fare i conti per riservarsi a un'incognita ancora maggiore.

Da Nord (Lombardia, Piemonte, Emilia Romagna, Friuli) partono, ognuno con le sue storie, aspirazioni, travagli, Rosa Cassettari, Dino Poletti,[2] Aldino Felicani, Antonio De Piero. Le loro memorie, quasi mai volutamente letterarie, non sono avare nell'illustrazione delle condizioni di vita che determinarono l'espatrio; di Mediterraneo, tuttavia, neanche l'ombra, o il rumore di fondo. A volte per necessità contingenti, poiché sia Cassettari sia De Piero partono da Le Havre o da altri porti del Nord Europa; ma in generale perché la frattura, o la fuga, è assolutamente radicale. L'emigrazione, che è un fatto di cultura e non di natura, *facit saltus*, eccome. E spesso, come ci insegnano gli studi storici, ne fa più d'uno. Esistono ricordi del passaggio oceanico, e ne menzionerò alcuni; ma, persino nelle scritture autobiografiche, non è infrequente lo strappo repentino tra il prima e il dopo, che non lascia spazio alcuno per ciò che sta nel mezzo.

Così, per dire, l'anarchico Felicani, preciso sino alla minuzia nel suo racconto orale: un giorno è a Bologna, a scrivere e stampare "Rompete le File!"; poi la situazione si compromette, qualche compagno gli trova un posto su una nave per New York; e dal 1914, d'un colpo, eccolo militante e tipografo sulla East Coast. L'orizzonte culturale di questi emigrati è prevalentemente legato alla terra, non al mare; ricordiamo il fulmineo *explicit* che sigilla a mo' di epigrafe il diario di Antonio De Piero:

> Io pure ho compiuto / i doveri carateristici dell'uomo / i filosofi ne contano quatro: / I fabricare una casa / II scrivere un libro / III e fare un figlio / IV impiantare un albero. (72)

Casa, libro, figlio, albero: ecco la vita per un uomo. Il Mediterraneo, insomma, come assenza. Se mai, accenni o brevi considerazioni sull'imbarco e la traversata. Certo, nell'opera di due poeti come Arturo Giovannitti ed Efrem Bartoletti, reboanti ed inclini alla grandiloquenza, agli stereotipi, all'imitazione e all'immagine icastica, prevale il primo momento: il ripiego nostalgico, eroico e quasi folclorico verso le radici italiane viene indirizzato verso uno spazio e un tempo chiusi, lontani: la nenia sannita, i duchi e i castelli dell'Umbria antica. Nella narrativa in inglese delle seconde e delle successive generazioni, invece, troveremo comprensibilmente un'attenzione al secondo momento - pensiamo, in *No Bright Banner* di Michael De Capite, a Carlo Barone, ragazzino abruzzese di quindici anni per il quale tutta la famiglia raccoglie i risparmi pur di farlo arrivare a Genova e vederlo partire per il Midwest; e molto più di recente, ai travagli di Papa Santuzzu e famiglia, ricostruiti con respiro epico-popolaresco da Tony Ardizzone.

Si noterà che i prodotti più decisamente letterari e italiani presentano, anche nei casi di maggiore adesione e compartecipazione, un punto di vista da osservatori esterni che drammatizza ed espande il distacco: da De Amicis a Sciascia, passando attraverso il gesuitico *Emigrante italiano* (1892) e il denso e tragico *Verso l'ignoto* di Achille Salzano (1903), portati all'attenzione rispettivamente da Emilio Franzina e Sebastiano Martelli. Qui le traversate si estendono nello spazio e nel tempo (come nell'imbroglio raccontato da Sciascia, dove lo scorrere dei giorni prende il posto, in maniera truffaldina, del tragitto da coprire); le soste a Genova o a Napoli sono cariche di incognite e pericoli; e in alto mare

si rischia, o addirittura si subisce, il naufragio. Al posto del silenzio troviamo allora la rappresentazione, ampia e a forti tinte, di un mondo ignoto e ostile. Ma questa emigrazione come tragedia è anche un'emigrazione riflessa, raccontata attraverso le lenti della letteratura che ha bisogno di catastrofi e di catarsi. In parte questa visione, in virtù della sua efficacia testuale, filtra nella narrativa popolare di Little Italy dove, per fare due esempi, *I Drammi dell'Emigrazione* di Bernardino Ciambelli (senza data, ma presumibilmente del 1893 o 1897) si soffermano in apertura sul "triste bivacco della miseria" nel porto di Genova (11); mentre *Sull'Oceano* di Italo Stanco (a puntate sulla *Follia di New York* nel 1917-1918) si propone sin dal titolo deamicisiano come la storia di donne e uomini "sospesi fra due abissi" (23 dicembre 1917).

Una disposizione assai diversa, e direi più autenticamente autoctona, si può ricavare attraverso le righe di una singolare iniziativa dantesca promossa nel 1911 sempre dalla *Follia di New York*, in piena campagna di Libia. Da un lato il poeta Riccardo Cordiferro (sotto vari pseudonimi) presenta in terza rima una serie di componimenti intitolati *Dante a New York*, illustrati con tratto rapido e fumettistico da Bayard; dall'altro Pin (pseudonimo, penso, del solito Ciambelli) scrive in prima pagina alcuni editoriali scherzosi che seguono Dante nel suo tragitto dall'Italia giolittiana e in armi al piccolo mondo della colonia immigrata, messo alla berlina. Il viaggio per mare diventa un'avventura degna d'essere parodiata, poiché solo la satira può render conto della decadenza dei tempi. Ecco le sette terzine d'apertura del *Soggiorno nella dogana*:

Ormai già da i coloni è risaputo
che il fiero Dante, il ghibellin sdegnoso,
da due mesi in America è venuto.
L'Oceano attraversò vasto e pauroso,
sballottato così sul bastimento,
che mai tregua trovò, né mai riposo.
L'ira sfidando de l'infido vento,
del procelloso mar l'ira sfidando,
ei tremò di paura ogni momento.
Ma come alfin qui giunse il miserando,
disse tra sé: - Non soffrirò più mai.
È inutil che più a Dio mi raccomando.
I tristi giorni che sul mar passai,
siccome un brutto sogno a poco a poco
io scorderò, e i miei triboli, e i miei guai.
È questo, è questo il benedetto loco,
dove io presto sarò monumentato,
e arderan tutti del mio stesso foco.
Il bastimento, intanto, era arrivato
ma Dante nella cassa ancor rinchiuso,
gridava: - "Ma che?… M'ànno carcerato?"

E, su una simile lunghezza d'onda, la conclusione della prosa *Dante in acqua!*, apparsa solo un mese prima a firma di Pin:

Questa traversata non finisce più - mi grida - se mi fossi imbarcato nella barca del mio amico Caronte sarei già arrivato. Gli rispondo che l'Oceano non è lo Stige e questo lo calma. Mi chiede notizie di New York ed io rispondo che sia tranquillo perché il Cav. Uffi, Uffi, Carlino ha detto in modo solenne che degli alloggi per lui ce ne ha quattro. Troppa grazia Sant'Antonio! Vuol vedere che mi metteranno a pezzi!

Ma torniamo a voci e testimonianze più strettamente legate al mondo meridionale. Sono frequenti, anche se vengono pronunciate con accenti diversi, le espressioni di lontananza e stupore, proprie degli abitanti dell'interno, nei confronti di tutto ciò che si situa al di fuori del piccolo paese; oppure si ripresenta il momento, a volte reso esplicito e persino augurato, della frattura, dello stacco. Seguiamo, nel giro di un quindicennio, l'emigrazione di Leonard Covello, Carlo Tresca, Pascal D'Angelo.

Covello, emigrato a nove anni nel 1896: "My mother had never been further from Avigliano than the chapel just a few kilometers outside the town, where we went on the feast days of *La Madonna del Carmine*" (19). E l'acqua che conta non è quella del mare, ma quella che a East Harlem giunge nelle case, liberando le donne dall'obbligo di andarla a prendere lontano: "Water and a few other conveniences were the compensations the New World had to offer" (21).

Inconfondibile il piglio battagliero di Tresca, da Sulmona a New York nel 1904 passando per Milano, la Svizzera e la Francia:

My journey across the ocean was without any special interest. I was among strangers, alone without contacts, all by myself, with my thoughts and my visions. I had books to read, but my mind was afire […] It was then that I saw, right in front of my eyes, society as it is today, divided into classes, and I said to myself as a promising vision, "There will be no more classes in America after the Revolution!" (88)

E in D'Angelo, giunto nel 1910, si avverte un'urgenza, una tensione emotiva che trasforma l'estraneità al Mediterraneo in occasione altamente espressiva:

Finally I saw a thrilling sight. We had just come out of a tunnel and were speeding at a high, rare altitude toward the plains of Campania. Sparkling and flashing in the distance and spreading right across the world was something all in motion. At first I was frightened. Then I thought, "The sea! That must be what they call the sea"! (56)

Un'altra emigrazione degna di *Fontamara* è quella che nel 1907 porta a Ellis Island la famiglia Corsi, proveniente dalle stesse montagne. L'arrivo nel Nuovo Mondo e l'abbandono per motivi politici ed economici di quello natìo è ben descritto in apertura di *In the Shadow of Liberty* di Edward Corsi (1935), personalità politica e intellettuale di spicco della colonia italiana.

Nello stesso anno del viaggio del giovane Pasquale D'Angelo, il Sud veniva esplorato da Booker T. Washington e Robert Park, alla ricerca del "man farthest down" e, esplicitamente, delle condizioni di vita che avevano determinato e determinavano l'emigrazione

di massa. Quarant'anni dopo Lessona, un altro giro d'Italia (d'Europa stavolta, per la precisione): ma quanto diverso! Concentrato non sulle vittorie individuali della volontà, ma sui destini di miseria da sconfiggere; anche se in entrambi i testi la via di fuga rappresenta, sia essa più o meno necessaria, l'inizio di una nuova vita e di un percorso migliore:

> In the midst of these conditions the Sicilian women, who are looked upon by the men as inferior creatures and guarded by them as a species of property, live like prisoners in their own villages. […] For this reason, the journey to America is for the woman of Sicily a real emancipation. In fact, I do not know of any more important work that is going on for the emancipation of women anywhere than that which is being done, directly and indirectly, through the emigration from Sicily and Italy to the United States, in bringing liberty of thought to the women of Southern Italy. (164)

L'antinomia è quella, già classica, tra prigionia e libertà: e di fronte a questa netta dicotomia non c'è, ancora una volta, spazio, in Sicilia e altrove nel Sud d'Italia, per l'elaborazione di un qualsiasi lutto mediterraneo.

Se mai, una volta consolidata la colonia, c'è spazio per iniziative e sentimenti assai meno segnati dal trauma dell'abbandono e da quello dell'inserimento o adattamento. Per dire: l'affascinante parabola produttiva e commerciale della Dora Films di Elvira e Nicola Notari, con le decine e decine di titoli che bene mettono in evidenza la voglia di Sud (e di un Sud anche oleografico, Vesuvio Marechiaro e Piedigrotta) da parte di un pubblico che "costruisce" la propria identità meridionale e alimenta un sentire nostalgico; discorso che potrebbe essere allargato a tanta parte dello spettacolo italoamericano dagli inizi del secolo sino alla soglia degli anni Cinquanta, vista l'interessantissima fortuna di un circuito "transatlantico" di *entertainment*. Il Mediterraneo, insomma, come *commodity*, *testimonial*, o quasi: vicino a quello che poi sbancherà a Hollywood e verrà propinato dalla pubblicità.

O ancora, la resistenza della poesia in dialetto; la scelta linguistica è già di per sé dichiarazione di identità, anche se il carattere fortemente letterario di questa fedeltà (che si richiama all'esempio dei Di Giacomo e dei Russo) suggerisce di interpretarla più alla stregua di un ritorno volontaristico che di un'espressione originaria di popolarità meridionale (e mi sembra possibile individuare in questo senso una sorta di parabola involutiva, da Cordiferro, o Postiglione, a un autore che peraltro ritengo di grande interesse come il napoletano Federico Mennella).[3]

E il Mediterraneo, peraltro, non è che scompaia. Continua, rimane. E per certi versi acquista nuova coscienza nel secondo dopoguerra, in tempi di rinnovata emigrazione: si veda il commovente e umanissimo tragitto delle "parole" di Joseph Tusiani: parole che hanno il difetto, in un certo senso, d'essere troppo belle, troppo partecipate, e di sfuggire così alle maglie soffocanti delle esercitazioni storico-accademiche. Come si apre il primo volume dell'*Autobiografia di un italo-americano*? Precisamente con un naturale movimento a ritroso: dal 1947 dell'arrivo in America del narratore-protagonista alle complesse pratiche per l'espatrio subite nel 1923 dal padre Michele, come in una corsa ad ostacoli che occorre portare a termine prima che tutte le porte vengano chiuse.

Gli anni del dopoguerra, del resto, rientrano ancora pienamente all'interno del lungo arco temporale dell'emigrazione, che prevede partenze e ritorni, distacchi e ricongiungimenti: gli anni dal 1929 al 1946 segnano, ad esempio, l'espatrio americano del ticinese Gori Valdi, nel grande romanzo di Plinio Martini *Il fondo del sacco*. Qui, l'arrivo dalla California sulla costa est in previsione della traversata verso l'Europa pone in evidenza la coscienza della frattura operata dalla giovanile decisione di andarsene. È proprio l'esperienza dei *piers* newyorkesi ad accendere la consapevolezza di una cesura irreparabile: "Quando nel quarantasei arrivai a New York a vedere il mare grigio che si perdeva all'orizzonte, pensai che quell'acqua dall'altra parte batteva il molo di Genova, a poche ore da casa nostra, e mi sentii stringere il cuore" (139).

Con Tusiani e Martini, in ogni caso, siamo di fronte a due rievocazioni dichiaratamente letterarie dell'abbandono della terra natale. Forse invece un testo come quello di Covello, più corrente e quasi "spontaneo" (per quanto lo possa essere il frutto di una collaborazione tra due scrittori)[4] può chiarire meglio una certa dura refrattarietà che caratterizza l'incontro tra l'emigrazione e, genericamente, tutto ciò che ha a che fare con il Mediterraneo: "*l'umbarco*," lo chiamava la gente di Avigliano; ed è vocabolo che a orecchi italiani suona pieno di mare; ma per Covello e per i suoi significava, più precisamente, "passage money" (17). Dietro i soldi, il "working hard" in cui si riassume la differenza essenziale tra il restare lì, "with no hope of my future," e l'attraversare la grande Pozza, "to reach out into that world and one day become part of it" (39).

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NOTE

1. Viene consigliato, ad esempio, nelle liste approntate da J.F. Carr.

2. Si tratta del padre di Charles, futuro governatore dello Stato di New York, nonché, durante l'occupazione alleata, della Sicilia, Napoli, Roma e Milano. Emigrò da Pogno nel novarese nell'ultimo decennio dell'Ottocento; le carte del figlio conservano un numero significativo di sue lettere indirizzate alla famiglia in Italia.

3. Ma sulla poesia mi permetto di rimandare, più ampiamente, al capitolo apposito del mio *Misteri di Little Italy*.

4. Covello si fece aiutare, nella stesura dell'autobiografia, dal romanziere italoamericano Guido D'Agostino.

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THE MEDITERRANEAN: MEMORY AND TRADITION IN TWO ITALIAN AMERICAN WRITERS

ELISABETTA MARINO

Going through the pages of Italian American writers, such as Maria Mazziotti Gillan, Phyllis Capello and Rachel Guido deVries, a reader may easily find nostalgic references to the Mediterranean Sea, the calm, "familiar" sea from which their land of origin emerges, embraced by warm waters.[1] Sometimes it is mentally and emotionally opposed to the alien Atlantic Ocean, which the first immigrants had to cross in order to try their adventure in America, and whose roughness and dangers seemed to anticipate the difficulties in integrating and becoming part of the "American dream," since theirs was a "different shade of white" in comparison to the WASP's. Two autobiographical novels tightly link the personal experience of the two Italian American writers to the Mediterranean: Theresa Maggio's *Mattanza: Love and Death in the Sea of Sicily* (2000), and Anthony Valerio's *The Mediterranean Runs through Brooklyn* (1982). Even though the stories and the approaches adopted by Maggio and Valerio are thoroughly different, what binds the books together is the association between the Mediterranean Sea, the feminine figure, and food as primary sources of physical and spiritual life, as holders of ancestral values both authors need to recall and rely on to piece together their identity. Moreover, both writers seem to express a deep concern for the loss of such values, scattered either by the modern pressures of money-making and fast production (as in the case of Maggio's story), or by a thorough Americanization on the part of the Italian American immigrant, which implies the sacrifice, the annihilation of his/her cultural roots.

Asked what the Mediterranean Sea represented to her, Theresa Maggio answered:

> The Mediterranean is like a medicine to me; I must have a receptor on my skin cells for Mediterranean blue. The color seeps in like nicotine from a patch and makes me glow from the inside. Maybe the Mediterranean is hard-wired into my genes.[2]

As the title suggests, *Mattanza* is entirely focused on the ancient ritual of bluefin tuna fishing, carried out in many Mediterranean countries and, in Italy, especially in the Sicilian island of Favignana, where every year, around May or June, the tuna fish gather in order to spawn. While swimming, many tuna end up in the long net cage set up by the fishermen which, at the very end, has the "Chamber of Death." There, the "mattanza," the "slaughter" (from the Spanish "matare," "to kill"), is eventually performed, accompanied by ceremonies and songs, whose tunes were "never meant for a mortal audience" (28), as Maggio remarks.

The ancestral values conveyed and transmitted through this ritual are unveiled from the first pages of the book when, after quoting Joseph Campbell's *The Power of Myth* and

"the magical, wonderful accord (…) between the hunter and the hunted, as if they were locked in a mystical, timeless cycle of death, burial and resurrection," Maggio concludes by saying "I found such a myth still alive on a small island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea" (xvi): Favignana. Similar passages can be found in many pages of the book. For instance, Maggio writes that "the wheel of life, death, and rebirth still spins every spring on that tiny island" adding, immediately afterwards, "for a few years I arrived with the tuna in the spring" (12). She thus establishes a deep connection between the fish and herself, both crossing the Atlantic and coming back to their roots to love, die and be born again. In her dreams, Maggio becomes a tuna, swimming with the giant fish in the "cottony silence" (218) of the Chamber of Death, then rising "slowly and unwillingly" (218) towards the mystical chants of the fishermen, towards the daylight, towards her destiny of death and resurrection.

What strikes the reader, however, is that Maggio neither lingers on her family history, nor on the description of her actual town of origin: Santa Margherita Belice, the village where her father came from, mentioned briefly in the first and fourth chapters of the book. Her efforts seem to be entirely concentrated on the recovery of roots which go back even beyond her own, beyond the history of many first generation Italian Americans, torn between their longing for a distant motherland and the urge to be assimilated into the "melting pot." She comes back to plunge deeply into the very core of mankind, into pre-history, through a rite "essentially unchanged since the Stone Age" (12), thus overcoming all the binary oppositions such as insider vs. outsider, assimilated vs. misfit, domineering vs. dominated produced by Western history and uncovering, instead, universal ties which bind people beyond geographical, ethnic and religious differences.

The Mediterranean Sea, therefore, becomes a sort of amniotic fluid, a "briny vessel of primordial juices" where "sex, death, and begetting mingle" (11). Maggio visits the caves on the shores of Levanzo, an island three miles off the north coast of Favignana and, in this "womb" of the earth, she stares at "four-thousand-year-old sepia-ink cave paintings of humans and animals: dancing man and limbless, violin-shaped women; equines, bovines, two boars, six fish, and, at the very bottom, the unmistakable diamond shape of a giant bluefin tuna" (9). Actually, as we read in another passage, the name for Canaan "the promised land" that the first Pilgrims crossing the Atlantic were trying to reproduce on the American soil, "derives from the Hebrew word for tuna" (210). Therefore, following Maggio's hints, *Canaan* is not a *land*, a place to be "located" precisely on a map; on the contrary it seems to be connected to the idea of "mobility" of "coming back" and, for an immigrant, to feeling comfortable with "multiple roots" in the name of the common origin of all mankind, generated from the same, liquid womb.

Throughout the book, the Mediterranean Sea seems to turn into a woman, into a mother figure. Just to quote some of the most striking examples, "Mondello Bay is curled in the arms of beach and mountains" (4); one of the fishermen touches with the back of his hand "the smooth water and caress(es) it like a woman's cheek" (25); the boat rocks

the writer "like a cradle" (147) and, in other passages of the book, she is "rocked on the breast of the sea" (215), "lull(ed) into unconsciousness" (229) waiting for the performance of the death-rebirth cathartic ritual which is the "mattanza."

The connection between the bluefin tuna for ancient Mediterranean people and the buffalo for American plain Indians, both as "a giant animal they revered" and as "a reliable source of protein" (10), offers the writer the possibility to reflect on what the destiny of the "mattanza" might be in future. By killing buffaloes with repeating rifles, the cowboys transformed "the Indian's sacrament into a white man's sacrilege" (11). In the same way, modern fishing technology, aimed at maximizing the results and minimizing the expenses, together with the pressure of tourism industry are turning the "mattanza" into a sad show, whose final act seems to be the disappearance of this millenary tradition. This concern is recurrent throughout the volume. In chapter 14, "The Prey," Maggio seems to invite a reader to establish a comparison between past and present. A paragraph in which she quotes Ernest Hemingway's enthusiastic words on the Spanish "mattanza," on how, through this ritual, one feels "purified and (…) able to enter unabashed into the presence of the very elder gods and they will make you welcome" (140), is immediately followed by a list of technical innovations, such as radar used to locate the schools of fish, factory ships, and huge nets similar to monsters, which could "swallow twelve jumbo jets in a single gulp" (140). The concept of modernity as sacrilege and deformity is restated towards the end of the book, when an international television troupe, after paying each member of the crew to stage a "fake mattanza" to be filmed and broadcast on television, interferes when the real ceremony is being performed:

> At the first verse (of the ritual song) four helicopters appeared. Like apocalyptic beasts, first they hovered, then they circled the Chamber of Death. Cameramen leaned out the doors of two of them. The noise was deafening, that hateful whumping; the propellers were drowning out the song. The woman next to me joined me in giving them the Sicilian version of the finger: the Arm. Everyone on the vascello yelled and waved until the helicopters peeled off. (229-230)

Attilio Bolzoni reported (in *La Repubblica*, June 3, 2001), that this year the "mattanza" was cancelled: too many tourists, too large a business, too little tuna. But Maggio is not abandoning her "mission" as a writer. Recently she wrote: "I am leaving for Sicily and Naples tomorrow, and will be there for three months. My second book, *The Stone Boudoir, Travels through the Hidden Villages of Sicily* will be published in March 2002."[3]

The Mediterranean Runs through Brooklyn is a series of portraits of Italian Americans emerging from the memory of the writer, while he outlines important episodes of his life from childhood to maturity. Through the writer's remembrance, the geographical distance separating Italy from the US is annihilated and the two lands of Valerio's life seem to overlap, so that the Mediterranean can run through Brooklyn, in the same way blood runs through his veins, molding his identity as an Italian American. His "Mediterranean" is made of mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts with large breasts, sacred matriarchal

figures who are the real pillars of the household. They support unbalanced husbands, sons, brothers, uncles looking for an identity, struggling between stereotypes (as a boy, Valerio's father "punched a classmate who made fun of his real name, Nunzio" - 21), and the burning desire to be completely accepted, embodied, for instance, by "Lucy," the blond American woman from Halifax that Valerio's father would have married if little Anthony had not been conceived with another "dark, stained" (13) Italian American.

In Valerio's book, the figure of "the mother" becomes an icon: the writer's uncles live "within five blocks of their mother. Each day they make a pilgrimage to her" (39). It is not by chance that the first chapter of the book is devoted to the author's mother, described as a "dutiful woman" (11), as "the first to awaken" (12) every day, as somebody completely absorbed into her "role" (her personal name is never revealed), as her "motto" seems to imply: "our individual life and differences matter little when compared to our duties" (11). After her husband's falling on his head and his subsequent retaining only a small portion of his consciousness, "she breathes life into him, creates a semblance of a life for him. She points him to where he must go; after breakfast she directs him to his office in the basement; at twelve o'clock she signals him to come up for lunch by giving him three buzzes, at one o'clock she directs him downstairs again" (22), thus giving him a new life, thus performing again her generative role as a woman. Valerio's mother can cook, "she would make pizza for the whole world" (47) for the sake of her husband, and she herself *becomes* ritual food, when her daughter is born:

> I stopped crying when my sister was born long enough to watch my mother breast-feed her. The feeding was ceremonious; the bedroom was quiet as a church; neither my father nor I spoke. My mother sat in a chair at the entrance to her bedroom and gazed down the hallway, through the kitchen and into the parlor. (…) My mother's breasts were free. (29)

Later on in the same chapter devoted to Valerio's sister, the reader gathers that, growing up, the girl "inherit[s] [her] mother's breasts" (29) and that, when her own child is born (not by chance another *female*, a daughter), when she herself turns into the icon of a mother, she is begged by Valerio to breast-feed the baby, thus performing again and again the same ritual. The writer seems to push the discourse even further by unveiling a possible connection between the stream of milk flowing from his sister's generous breasts, the same blood running through their veins and his desire to take their mother back from the dead, to keep the family together, by sexually joining to his sister, who has replaced their mother in her matriarchal role: "I would like [my sister] to touch me now for I need her, the same blood runs through our veins, we must share the same view of the world. When her daughter was born, I begged her to breast-feed the child. Then I begged her to be the child's godfather" (30).

The perception of the Mediterranean as identified with feminine figures, especially with the mother, seems to be confirmed by the double mention of the actual Mediterranean Sea *only* in the very chapter dedicated to Valerio's mother. At first the writer informs

the reader that his mother "travels in order to gather all the tablecloths of the world" (13), and by so writing he strengthens the link between femininity and food (in another passage of the book, Valerio points out that the tablecloths had been inherited by his sister, after the matriarch's death). Then, while her husband swims in the blue, clear Mediterranean, "she goes off in search of distant relatives, who may have an old ring, an ashtray, anything" (13). For her, the Mediterranean is not the pleasure of bathing in beautiful waters but the "duty" of a quest for her and her family's roots, for traditional values she wants to preserve and transmit, for ancestral ties she does not want to sever. The second mention of the Mediterranean Sea underlines the clash between the American way of life, the tall buildings, the traffic, the chaos of New York City and a possible life in Italy, which both the mother and the writer seem to desire:

> When my mother and I speak over the phone and a train passes, I ask, "Is a train passing?" We long for silence, for the elegance of a villa overlooking the Mediterranean. I think my mother enjoys her traveling. She has a refinement that is not obvious to the family, and this causes her pain. I'd stand on my toes at her kitchen window and look down at the reflections of the buildings on the wet street. (18)

As in Maggio's *Mattanza*, in Valerio's book one has the feeling that times are changing and that, one day, the Mediterranean will stop its flow through Brooklyn, thus signifying the fracture between Italian Americans and their land of origin, expressed through the death of the matriarch and the extinction of her creative, generative power often manifested through food. Towards the end of the memoir, we read that Nana Angelina has cancer and she is doomed to die: the writer's question then is "After she dies, who will make the caponata?" (89). On one of the last Christmas Eves, when Valerio's family is gathered around the table, set as usual, we notice that the table is divided according to the generation: "whoever ate fish was first generation. The second generation on down ate turkey. And then some of our cousins are marrying Irish and these also ate turkey. Soon, we will all be eating turkey" (81). In Valerio's narrative, however, the power of memory proves to be stronger and the story ends with the writer's will to remember his mother, his father, his roots, through other Italian American families that he will meet in his life, through the friends of his family's and the friends of his family's friends, all different from one another but, at the same time, all similar, like the waves of the Mediterranean Sea.

Università degli Studi di Roma "Tor Vergata"

NOTES

1. Compare, for instance, with "Mediterranean," a poem by Maria Maziotti Gillan (unpublished).

2. Personal correspondence (November 6, 2001).

3. Personal correspondence (November 8, 2001).

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VIDEO-INTERVIEWS: ITALIAN AMERICAN STUDY ABROAD STUDENTS IN FLORENCE

FEDERICO SINISCALCO

In many ways the study abroad experience for American university students represents the modern day version of the Grand Tour. Certainly less elitist, immensely more affordable and structured, a semester or academic year sojourn in Italy offers opportunities of study and contact with a foreign culture that are similar to those experienced by the travelers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[1] Participants in these programs usually undertake numerous excursions, follow a variety of courses covering the language, the history and the art of the host country, and have continuous daily-living situations that allow for interaction with Italian people. Most of all, like their Grand Tour predecessors, study abroad students have the precious commodity of a significant amount of time in which to experience Italy. For those participants who are of Italian American origin, study abroad is an important opportunity to be exposed to the culture of their forebears. This specific experience is the focal point of this paper.

The first phase of the investigation entailed the selection of a sample of Italian American students residing in Italy. They were selected in the city of Florence, chosen for its importance in the study abroad tradition (as well as that of the Grand Tour), and from Syracuse University, for its role as one of the oldest and most established American university study abroad programs. The fact that the home campus of this university is located in up-state New York, historically a major center of Italian immigration to the United States, guaranteed a pool of Italian American candidates to choose from. To attract volunteers, University of Syracuse students were invited to an introductory meeting where I explained my research and screened my 1997 short documentary, *Experiencing a Different Culture*, on the study abroad experience of a group of University of Rochester students in Arezzo. Seeing the video helped the students understand what the final product would be, and also made them reflect on the significance of their own study abroad experiences. Six students attended the meeting and gave me their availability. Subsequently, six hour-long meetings were scheduled to conduct individual video-interviews. Due to technical problems, one of the interviews was discarded.

The decision to use video-interviews, as opposed to audio or written ones, was made in virtue of the latest digital technology applied to video recording and editing. This has enabled a much more extensive utilization of the medium, even in traditionally technology-shy areas such as the humanities. It is now possible to record high quality images, to edit them much in the manner in which one edits an essay with a word processor, and to produce viewable documents that can be easily circulated. However, the major motiva-

tion in using video lies in my assumption that this form of interviewing is particularly suited to the group in question: twenty year-old students who have been exposed extensively to the audio-visual media and who feel confident in the possibility of using it to communicate their feelings and beliefs. Furthermore, the presence of a video camera during the interview has, in my opinion, contributed to generate a greater degree of involvement in the project, as if the participants were conscious of their potential viewers, perhaps other Italian American students who could identify with them by listening to their stories.

Every attempt was made to put the students at their ease during the interviewing. The equipment used was minimal and unobtrusive: a compact digital video camera, a radio microphone, a tripod and earphones to monitor the sound. I positioned myself behind the camera, slightly above the lens axis to maintain eye contact with the interviewee while inducing him or her to look towards the lens. In this way, viewers of the final video are given the impression that they are being addressed directly. After deciding to opt for the "in camera" approach, the questions, of a general nature to inspire wide-ranging answers, were edited out of the script. Consequently, I omitted asking details and absolutely avoided interrupting the students during their answers.[2]

Generally, after a few minutes in front of the camera the students were relaxed and responded broadly on a variety of topics such as their family backgrounds, both in the United States and in Italy, their education, their perception of Italy before coming here, their identification with their ethnic background, and their knowledge of the Italian language. In almost every instance they expanded considerably on their family stories and on their personal experiences in Italy. Before reviewing some of their answers, and the way in which they articulated their experiences in Florence, I would like to discuss in brief the objectivity of the interviews themselves and their legitimacy as a source of documentation of the Italian American experience.

Albert Maysles, a keynote figure in the American documentary film style known as "Direct Cinema," has indicated how interviews in documentaries may be conceived to induce certain answers that conform to the interviewer/author's point of view.[3] According to his filmmaking approach, a better choice would be to catch certain situations in their making without the use of interviews or off screen narration. In our specific case, the alternative would have been to videotape the Italian American students as they interacted with Italian society. Paolo Vari and Antonio Bocola, two Italian documentary filmmakers, have recently attempted a similar approach in *I love Italy*, which documents a group of Italian American tourists traveling through Italy. Though this method is rewarding, and certainly visually engaging, it reduces the opportunities of capturing autobiographical recollections, which are instead an integral part of the more traditional interview approach.[4]

Nonetheless Maysles's objection - the risk of conditioning the outcome of the interviews - is well taken. Awareness of the interviewer's influential role is paramount, also

because such influence may be exercised unintentionally. This fact, however, should not invalidate this approach altogether. Other texts, such as memoirs, autobiographical narratives, diaries, and the like, are also exposed to external influences. The editorial policies of a given publishing house, for example, may determine the way in which a memoir is written. Thus it may be argued that since rhetorical strategies are at the base of any text, interviews should not be singled out as untrustworthy.

The significance of the video-interviews produced for this project stems not so much from their objectivity, as much as from the elements of performance and vitality contained in each one. Inspired by the presence of the video camera and solicited by the questions, the students entered fully into their role of Italian Americans in search of their ethnic origins. Their stories constitute, in my view, a legitimate corpus which is quite suitable for the study of the way in which Italian Americans represent and interact with the country of their ancestors and consequently with their "roots."

To offer a sample of some of the issues and themes that came forth during this work, I will make extensive reference to Crystal Maganzini's interview, which is one of the most representative. Crystal is a third-generation Italian American whose family lives in a small town near Boston, Massachusetts. Her grandfather went to America in 1940 from Pinzolo, a small mountain town in the province of Trento. The United States government considered Crystal's grandfather to be single, though he had left a wife and two children in Italy. Shortly after immigrating to North America, he was drafted into the U.S. army and sent to fight on the Italian front during World War II. Crystal comments on his confusion regarding his identity:

As I understand it was extremely hard for him; he was kind of like the enemy, and he didn't know what was going on. At the time he had already had two children and he didn't know how my grandmother was, or his kids. They were there living with my grandmother's family, and only the women were around; it was a very tough time!

In the video Crystal's facial expressions communicate a profound empathy for the hardships experienced by her grandfather and by his entire native village. Given the limited knowledge of European history that frequently characterizes American undergraduates (here I speak from my twenty-year-long experience in teaching American college students) this quote underlines the value that ethnic recollections may have in broadening a student's awareness of different national histories.

Crystal continues by describing how, at the end of the war, her grandfather finally joined his wife and children again, and how, a few years later, he returned to the United States with them. The family settled in Boston, where four more children were born (including Crystal's father) and where her grandfather took up his original trade as a knife-grinder. Crystal appears fascinated by the connection between old world artisanship and its business potential in the United States:

I guess that trade came from the village in Italy. The statue in the center of town is a big "*Moleta*"

- which is a knife-sharpener - and so in America they started the business of sharpening knives, which had kind of like the pushcarts going through the streets of Boston. That's what my father did once, that's what my uncles do, and we kind of say in America if there is someone who is a knife-sharpener, they are related to us. Now my father is still doing that, but it's kind of expanded to more restaurant equipment. But it's still the same old tradition.

An interest for traditions characterizes Crystal's approach to Italy in general. As a child she was exposed to the dialect of the Val Rendena, both through frequent visits to the region and through old family stories. Her wanting to understand what the grown-ups were saying during family gatherings triggered her interest in the Italian language.

The knowledge of Italian, of course, plays an important role in the process of familiarization with one's cultural past. The primary motivation in coming to study in Italy for this group of students was to improve their skills in the Italian language (often non-Italian American students are motivated by their interests in art and art history). Having studied Italian as a child, in high school, and in college, Crystal displayed a good knowledge of the language, though she expressed the desire to conduct her interview in English. Nonetheless, from the video it becomes clear that, as a third generation Italian American, she feels no difficulty in relating to the two languages: English is her mother-tongue, the language spoken at home, her daily idiom; Italian is the language of a romantic past, of a culture which fascinates her and to which she has absolutely no uneasiness connecting:

I am proud, even more of being Italian, to have a very strong heritage that I know about. I am proud that I know my family's history, and that I have… I feel like I have culture. I don't want to say culture… my origins. I am very proud of all that. I am very interested; I don't want to forget about it. I always want to learn more, I think that by learning more it takes away the ignorance that a lot of people feel when they just don't know where they come from, or where anybody else comes from.

Crystal doesn't feel that her ethnic background has ever exposed her to displays of discrimination. According to her Italy is held in such high esteem in the United States today that when she says she is traveling to Italy "everybody wants to go there. … Everyone knows the great things about Italy, you know, Florence, Rome, the great art." Interestingly, her encounter with the prejudice that can accompany immigration occurs in the small Italian village where her family originates:

This past summer, when I was in Trentino, there were a lot of Albanians coming in, and all everyone could do was complain. I know that some of them have been causing trouble, but at the same time there are a lot of hard workers, and I just said to my dad, "What's the difference between them here now, and when my grandparents came to America?" It's the same thing, just a different country; and I couldn't imagine that the Americans were looking at my grandfather and saying: "Oh, here comes another Italian moving into our village, our town." Well, because he just wanted to make a better life for himself, to work hard. So in that way, it astonishes me when everyone, when a lot of Italians, don't want to give people a chance, because their brothers and sisters were doing the same thing 50 years ago.

This passage further underlines the extent to which Crystal does not connect her ethnicity with episodes of discrimination experienced in the States: the thought that her grandparents might have suffered a discriminatory attitude during their early years in Boston does not cross her mind. Nor does she seem to be well-informed of the history of Italian immigration to the United States where racism and discrimination were not uncommon.[5] Similarly to the other students interviewed, Crystal perceives the immigrant experience as an essentially positive one, where the rich Italian cultural background of her ancestors was able to thrive through the opportunities offered by North American society.

Crystal's identification with an Italian ethnicity, however, becomes a more complex issue when she finds herself in Italy. In the video one may see her perplexed expression when commenting on this point:

I always say I am an Italian in America, but only when I come to Italy really am I finally an American. Because you walk through the streets [in the USA] and people will just say to you: "What are you? Where are your origins from?" "I'm Italian," I would say.

Though clearly proud of her American identity, she is disappointed and confused by the fact that her Italian identity goes completely unnoticed here, and that most Italian people simply view her as just another tourist.

The sensation of not being acknowledged as an Italian once in the land of their grandparents is perhaps one of the most significant aspects that emerged from the interviews. In different ways, it was experienced by every one of the students. Geoff Delizzio, a nineteen-year-old student from Springfild, Pennsylvania, whose grandparents immigrated to the United States in 1907, phrases it clearly: "…in the United States I am an Italian, you know, people will go, 'Oh, Delizzio, what's up?' and over here I am an American, and it's interesting to see that contrast." Jaine Marie Ross, a twenty-one-year-old student from Granville, NY, whose paternal grandfather, Giuseppe Carusone, went to the United Staes in 1912, saw her efforts in feeling Italian during her stay frustrated by her limited command of the language:

Lots of times I feel like an Italian more than an American. But I know that there still is a big difference, mostly because I get frustrated when I say: "no capito" (…) because they are using phrases, or maybe a dialect, and I have no idea, and I get frustrated, and I say, "Oh yea, you are an American, get real, wake up!"

Among the interviewed students, Adriana D'Eremo, a third generation Italian American, with paternal grandparents who immigrated to Boston in the early Fifties, seems the most determined to appear and feel Italian. Her assertiveness, clearly visible in her facial expressions and in her body movements, also transpires from her words:

In Italy I try to feel less American; I don't want to feel American here. Of course, there still is part of me that does, just because I am, you know, but it's funny, because being here I feel like I am at home. I mean, I've lived my life in America, and I have only been here for about two months this

trip, and then one month last trip … but I feel so much more at home. I mean I miss my family, but I don't miss America at all. And I really don't feel as American as I thought. I thought that I would come … and feel very American and really stand out - I've got the light blue eyes, and the light hair, and I know that's not typically Italian color, so I thought I would stand out like a sore thumb. But it's different, everyone looks different, and I blend in more than I thought I would. And I feel more Italian than I thought I would. I feel very comfortable. I feel like I am at home.

It is difficult to say what the chances are for Adriana to reverse her ancestors' migration and decide to make Italy her new home. Probably her assertions are the result of a youthful infatuation with the Italians and their country; nonetheless her becoming an "American Italian" is a possibility that should not be ruled out.

Anna Chiumenti, another Bostonian with paternal grandparents who emigrated in the Fifties, has taken a concrete step in this direction: she acquired official Italian citizenship. This gives her a great degree of self-assurance. In fact, her perception of Italy is that of a full-fledged citizen, who might come here one day, and simply be an "Italian": "I am thinking of coming back not as a student, but as an adult, working, and doing whatever adults do." This simple assertion suggests the full-circle to which the Italian immigration to the United States has come. Descendents of the old immigrants are experiencing Italy as a place worth moving to - even if just in their fantasies. The selected locations - Liguria, Tuscany, Umbria - may differ from the poverty-stricken areas that their forefathers left behind, yet the urge to repossess the abandoned land is there, and the video-interviews with the Syracuse students attest as much.[6]

Università degli Studi di Siena

NOTES

1. For an updated overview of the Grand Tour and of American travel in Italy see Brilli's volumes *Il viaggiatore immaginario* and *Quando viaggiare era un'arte*. For a classification of the different types of travelers see Clifford.

2. Important theoretical considerations and practical advice on video-interviews may be found in Barbash and Taylor 341-57 and in Rosenthal 143-53.

3. For Maysles' considerations regarding interviews see *L'arte del documentario secondo Albert Maysles*. On "Direct Cinema" see Mamber; Barnouw 235-244. On Albert Maysles and "Direct Cinema" see Barsam 329-337; Siniscalco.

4. On the relevance of autobiographical recollections among Italian Americans see Gardaphé; Boelhower.

5. For a history of the Italian American immigration in the USA see Mangione and Morreale; Gambino. On ethnic prejudices see Tricarico.

6. A 13 minute edited video version of the interviews is currently available, and a longer version is being prepared. Copies may be requested from the Università di Siena, Dipartimento di Letterature Moderne e Scienze dei Linguaggi, Corso Italia 177, 52100 Arezzo.

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TECHNOLOGY AND THE MEDITERRANEAN IN DELILLO'S *UNDERWORLD*

JOHN PAUL RUSSO

In 1997, at 61, Don DeLillo published *Underworld*, his longest and most ambitious novel, which explores the enormous expansion of technological society in the second half of the twentieth century. Not that the theme of technology was new to his work. It had figured in nearly all his fiction, whether he treated cinema (*Americana*), sports (*End Zone*), celebrity (*Great Jones Street*), artificial intelligence (*Ratner's Star*), surveillance (*Running Dog*), toxic disaster (*White Noise*), or mass events (*Mao II*). Yet the difference between these novels and *Underworld*, with its chronological sweep, global journeys, and multiple intersecting plotlines, is still very great. The novel depicts a technological environment which has become so intrinsic and normative that, to cite Ellul, it "shapes the total way of life" (171). The many forms of waste containment in *Underworld*, from landfills and nuclear dumps to computer banks and cyberspace, figure as the end-result of consumerist materialism, massification, the decline of community, and the loss of diversity and historical memory. Far more than a reprise, *Underworld* is a summa of DeLillo's thought on technology.

In an entirely new way, however, this novel also marks a departure in DeLillo's career. It is the first of his eleven novels with an Italian American protagonist and narrator; his first directly to treat ethnic themes; and his first with scenes - central to plot and symbolic structure - set in a Little Italy with its innumerable Mediterranean ties. These scenes take place in the post-World War II period and again around 1990, that is, from Little Italy's late heyday to its fragile survival amid urban decay. DeLillo contrasts technological society with one of New York's ethnic neighborhoods, the Belmont section of the Bronx, where he, his protagonist, and other leading characters grew up. The oppositions between the technological milieu and the ethnic neighborhood include such features as speed and efficiency vs. natural rhythms and ritual; over-consumption vs. scarcity; suburban solitude vs. community; silence vs. sound; surface and screen values vs. a plenum of sensation; and an obsession for security and physical health vs. danger and violence. Not all the plotlines in *Underworld* cross through Little Italy, but with his Mediterranean theme as a running thread DeLillo examines the loss of individuality, spirituality, and communal values amid the technologization and flattening of global culture.

In his earlier novels with their non-linear, open forms, DeLillo had contextualized his point of view so that the author became "part of the event itself," embedded within an "all-encompassing system of mutually interacting systems" - scientific, political, social, cultural (Civello 123). The protagonists of these novels are typically "caught up in

the mesh of activity of overlapping systems" (Nadeau 178). But in *Underworld* DeLillo moves beyond the so-called "systems novel" (LeClair 181)[1] to what may be termed the "system novel," because there is only one main system to which all others are subordinate: a universalist technological monism whose varied elements are united to one another and recombine easily since they do not vary in their essentials.[2] "We have created a closed system" (73), comments Richard Stivers on technological hegemony.[3] Formally and structurally, *Underworld* is only superficially "open."

Yet DeLillo's point of view in this novel is not absorbed by the system. By the 1990s he has so fully studied the technological environment that he stands apart from it. Strong awareness is a kind of liberation; his religious training, his weapons of satire, and his cultural and ethnic past all contribute to his act of resistance.[4] In *Underworld* DeLillo is both more involved and more detached than he was in his earlier novels: more involved, because he endows his protagonist with some his own biographical and ethnic "facts," as if to pursue parallel mysteries, so much so that DeLillo allows to this protagonist alone the privilege of acting as narrator for his sections of the novel;[5] more detached, because DeLillo's grasp of the totalizing aspects of the technological system enable him, as author, to achieve moments of epiphanic clarity. He decontextualizes himself as far as possible from his work, approaching an epic impersonality, a distance finally not of rejection but of inclusiveness.[6] Like Dante, he is both pilgrim and narrator of his journey into the underworld. Where Dante's pilgrim and narrator are ultimately saved in unison, however, DeLillo's pilgrim has only the dimmest hope in a limbo of indifference and despair, while DeLillo as narrator triumphs through his art and spirituality.

Underworld tells the life story of Nick Shay, son of James Nicholas Costanza, who at the close of the novel is a man in his 60s, a retired managing director of a waste containment company living in one of the sprawling suburbs of Phoenix, Arizona. Because his mother had given him at birth her maiden name of Shay instead of her estranged husband's name of Costanza,[7] Nick can conceal his ethnic background - essential in the waste management business with its supposed connections to the Mob. When a co-worker finds out that Nick is half Italian, he asks "When did this happen?" (165) as if it were a traffic accident. Chronologically, the novel moves (mostly) backward in time, from the mid-1990s to Nick's reckless youth in the 40s and 50s. Born in New York in 1936 (like DeLillo), young Nick participates in the life of the Bronx Little Italy, even then entering its twilight as urban dwellers began to stream out to the suburbs. Though he entertained the idea of teaching Latin, he turned to "behavioral research" on education in "ghettos and marginal parts of town" (619), then to corporate speech-writing and public relations (282), before moving into waste management and working his way up the ladder. In late middle age, Nick's perspective is janus-faced: he can look back fondly on the immigrant grandparent generation among whom he was raised, and he can ponder the fate of his thoroughly assimilated grandchildren to whom he can impart nothing.

DeLillo's method of contrasting the worlds of corporate, technologized America

and Little Italy derives from his religious training. Having attended Jesuit-run Fordham University, he gives Nick a similar education; as a narrator, Nick can draw upon an incarnationist mode and the Aquinian tradition and vocabulary, with an Italian Catholic emphasis on immanence rather than transcendence. "The Jesuits," as Nick says, "taught me to examine things for second meanings and deeper connections" (88); "everything is connected" (131, 289, 408,776, 825, 826): his family calls him "the Jesuit" (450). Though the technological system denies the grounds of the incarnationist mode, the reverse is not the case. The Christian universe contains the technological system, so that one may analogize every form of man-made apparatus. Naming, for example, is one means of linking the disparate worlds of the novel. After reform school, where Nick is sent for committing an accidental homicide, he attends the Jesuits' experimental "Voyageur College" in Minnesota, named for those French Jesuit missionaries like Father Marquette who explored the interior of the continent and introduced Christianity. But, in a novel in which the satellite Sputnik figures, Voyageur may also recall the two unmanned spacecrafts named "Voyager," triumphs of Cold War technology, which explored the outer planets of the solar system. Similarly, two characters from opposing worlds share a name with Edgar Allan Poe. Both Sister Edgar, the grammar school teacher, and J. Edgar Hoover thrive on fear and secrecy, and both suffer from a germ phobia; she strikes terror in her pupils by reading Poe's "The Raven"; he "parleyed a pathological fear of invasion into a public policy" (Osteen 221). Though Sister Edgar and Hoover die in the novel, they are "hyperlinked at last" (826) in an afterlife of cyperspace, awaiting their joint summons by a keystroke. There is even a website "devoted" to miracles (806): http://blk.www/dd.com/miraculum (810).

Beyond naming, if "everything is connected," one world or underworld informs upon another. "Underworld" refers to Nick's mainstream position as a "waste analyst" and international consultant. But, on the ethnic side, the underworld is the malavita of Nick's father in Little Italy; he disappeared under mysterious circumstances when Nick was eleven; Nick himself flirted with the mafia in his teens. The Mob may be responsible for the father's disappearance into that other underworld, the classical land of the dead, through which Nick searches for him, like Aeneas for Anchises, though Nick's search is in vain. On a business trip to Milan Nick finds himself on the Via della Spiga, in the fashionable Montenapoleone district, the kind of place where a well-heeled American might stop over. Suddenly an Italian seen from the back - that is, faceless, mysterious for the absence of the chief mark of identity - recalls the person he accidentally killed when he was sixteen: "half a second in Milan … reminded me of a thousand things at once, long ago" (88). Via is the way, and spiga or ear of corn is sacred to Ceres, goddess of the natural cycle of life, death, and rebirth: Ceres' way. The dead man returns "alive" from the underworld to Nick's guilt-ridden consciousness. Thoughts of his vanished youth keep breaking into consciousness, often in the form of repeated phrases, the novel's leitmotifs. Finally, underworld is Nick's present-day death-in-life existence in the "unspeakable

hanging heat" (86) and self-imposed "silence" ("the judgment on your crimes" [345]) of suburban Arizona, DeLillo's version of hell. Linking these underworlds is the theme of loss, waste, and death.

Connectedness is most fully realized in the technological environment, from waste containment and recycling, down to the tightest meshes of electronic communication: "fax machines," "voice mail" and "e-mail" (806), "the web, the net" (825). Light imagery and the false sublimity of the language convey the aura of the magical: "oceanic logic stored in computers (89); "billion distant net nodes" with their "lustrous rushing force" (825); "contact points that shimmer in the air somewhere" (806). In Nick's office the "caress of linked grids" "lap around you" (89, 806), imparting a sense of "order," "command," pseudo-intimacy, but also enclosure or entrapment; this contrasts with the spontaneity and joy associated with the chalk "painted grids" (234) of the children's street game. The "cell" (806) in cellphone links on one side to the vitally organic, and on the other to the inorganic communications system, with its fantasy of human connectedness celebrated in American advertising: "everybody is everywhere at once" (805). Nick, like DeLillo, had written advertising copy.

The bonds of connectedness at their furthest join spirit to matter-especially in its crudest form, waste matter. Nick labels himself and his colleagues the "Church Fathers of waste in all its transmutations" (102), because hazardous waste, buried with a sense of dread, is a "religious thing" (880) with a "whisper of mystical contemplation" (282): fear of death, loss of transcendence, the transubstantian of matter. Priest-like master of this realm where sacred and profane change poles, Nick chose a career in waste management as a "faith to embrace" (282), as if to save the world from decay. "Waste has a solemn aura now, an aspect of untouchability … People look at their garbage differently now, seeing every bottle and crushed carton in a planetary context" (88), a sign of technological universalism. His company builds "pyramids of waste above and below the earth" (106), the sacred tomb monuments of consumer society and its staggering displays of waste that DeLillo associates with death. *Underworld* amply confirms the point of another analogical thinker, Rene Girard, that the sacred is everywhere around us, so that it would potentially be present in waste and in technology, so seemingly removed from it.

One does not proceed far into *Underworld* without realizing that connectedness as achieved by technology is associated with increasing disconnectedness on the human level. Nick suspects his wife of having an affair (she is, and he is too). He communicates poorly with his mother, whom he insists on dislodging from her crumbling neighborhood to live virtually a prisoner in the back room of his house in Arizona. Nor can he fathom the reason for his father's abandonment ("he did the unthinkable Italian crime. He walked out on his family. They don't even have a name for this" [204]). Nick is uncomfortable in his old Bronx neighborhood, which he visits only rarely. But he is furthest from the "distant mystery" (810) of himself (Knight 298).

Distance is perhaps the key word. Nick tells his wife that what best characterizes

him is "an Italian word, or a Latin word… *lontananza*" (275), which in him is a detachment from the self that is not objectivity but affectlessness. He is "a country of one" with "a certain distance in my make-up, a measured separation like my old man's" (275). His wife, from whom he withholds his innermost thoughts, calls him "laconic Nick" (86); the language of feeling fails. Towards his work he maintains a "shifting distance" (103), a self-alienation for which he cannot find a cure. Business corporations "shape you in nearly nothing flat, twist and swivel you… they do it with smiles and nods, a collective inflection of the voice. You stand at the head of a corridor and by the time you walk to the far end you have adopted the comprehensive philosophy of the firm" (282). Nick has become thoroughly technicized and absorbed by consumerism and the corporate life, to the almost total loss of his inner identity. He can barely tell truth from pretense: "it's not that you're pretending to be someone else. You're pretending to be exactly who you are" (103). Nick's quasi-disembodied narration with its depressed, mechanical tone betrays disconnectedness, a drab parataxis: "I live a quiet life in an unassuming house in a suburb of Phoenix. Pause. Like someone in the Witness Protection Program" (66, 80, 209). The self-effacing "pause" indicates that he is "seeing himself live" at one remove, a form of paralysis (as in Pirandello); the "quiet life" on the surface seethes with hidden contradiction. His past is publicly wiped out, as if for his own protection, but he has imposed this "protection" upon himself. And he needs most what he protects himself from, his "animating entity" (804), so he is ironically left defenceless. In his eyes, gangsters possess a "hard-edged," "fine-grained," and "perfected distance" (275), where perfected has the Latin sense of '"completed," like the divine,[8] but also like waste, with its "aspect of untouchability" (88). He even does an "imitation gangster" (804) in a "scraped-raw voice" (104) for his colleagues; but it, too, is mere play-acting.

Underworld also protests the general loss of social memory, the relentlessly aggressive ahistoricism or antihistoricism that reduces the continuities of the past to disconnected bits of information in a society dominated by presentism. The most immediate representative of Western memory, and DeLillo's strongest contrast to corporate, technologized America is an ethnic neighborhood in its prime. Its ideal representative and sympathetic oral historian is Albert Bronzini, Nick's teacher and mentor who, unlike Nick, never left the neighborhood. A science teacher with a love of empirical detail, he makes a trustworthy guide to his "compact neighborhood," with its "complex deposits" (661), its "little histories hidden in a gesture or word" (673). Also unlike Nick who drives a Lexus and jogs with a walkman, Bronzini refuses to own a car, preferring always to walk ("stop walking and you die" [232]) and to take in the external scene slowly: "the voices fall and the aromas deploy in ways that varied, but not too much, from day to day" (661).

In DeLillo's prose Little Italy comes alive as the plenum of sensation. One hears those "men with sledgehammers," "Sicilians busting up a sidewalk" (670), "voices from Italian radio drifting faintly out the open door" (674). One tastes the "autumnal pink Parma ham, sliced transparently thin" (672) and the "almond biscotti" (670). One smells

the "rolled beef, meatballs, basil" (699) in the hallways. One sees, as in a quiet cameo, "a waiter having a smoke during a lull, one of those fast-aging men who are tired all the time" (661). Bronzini chats with members of his social club (DeLillo has an ear for their voices): "loud, crude, funny, often powerfully opinionated, all speechmakers these men, actors, declaimers, masters of insult" (766) - genuine Mediterranean types. The men speak "mostly English"; dialect came into play "when an idea needed a push or shove into a more familiar place." These earthy voices take Bronzini back to childhood: "English was the sound of the present and Italian took him backwards, the merest intonation, a language marked inexhaustibly by the past" (767-68). Such linguistic endowment, "inexhaustibly" rich in implication, lies at the furthest remove from Nick's mechanical tone. Unlike Nick's office, where the managers imitate one another, the locals seem both individual and uniquely at one with their work, and are so named George the Waiter, Joe the Butcher. …With his "burly grace" the butcher "belongs to the cutting block …his aptitude and ease, the sense that he was born to the task restored a certain meaning to these eviscerated beasts"; his "own heart and lungs ought to hang outside his body, stationed like a saint's, to demonstrate his intimate link to the suffering world" (668).

All ages are represented in Little Italy, from children playing in the streets to the old men in Mussolini park, nicknamed for its being a meeting place of Italians. Divorced, with a daughter, Bronzini enjoys watching the children playing in the streets, one of the novel's life symbols: the games have Italian or Italian-sounding names: ringolievio, salugo (possibly from *saluto*). Observing the increased traffic since the war, he worries about the "status hunger" for "cars, more cars" and predicts that the children will be driven from the streets, a "dying practice" (662) in 1951 that completely disappears by the 1990s. He sympathizes with them in their plenitude ("fullness of the moment" [668]). They invent games with found objects, using brick walls, lampposts, curbstones, stoops, manhole covers, fire hydrants, testifying to the imaginative ingenuity of a childhood that has not yet succumbed to the consumer technology of play. "We turned junk into games," recalls Bronzini, "gouging cork out of bottle caps… cork, rubber bands, tin cans, half a skate, old linoleum that we used in carpet guns" (663). The children redeem waste by their imaginative play, just as DeLillo's novel would redeem the world of waste into the work of art.

When Bronzini introduces a new Fordham professor of philosophy, Father Paulus, to the local community, Paulus responds with pleasure to the "European texture of the street, things done in the old slow faithful way, things carried over, suffused with rules of usage" (672). Perhaps the key word is "slow" as opposed to the pressure of modern time; but the entire passage on the unwritten traditional lore is rich with implication: European, texture, street (outdoors), faithful, suffused, rules of usage. Bronzini gives a brief history of the "almond biscotti" (670), linking food, pleasure, fertility, and the sacred: "direct descendents of honey and almond cakes that were baked in leaves and eaten at Roman fertility rites" (672).

Not immune from the larger history, as the reference to Mussolini implies, and with

its poverty, random violence, and broken families, the old community is not presented as a Golden Age. Buying a pignoli cookie, Bronzini asks after the shopowner's son, an artilleryman in Korea. The day before the novel opens, the Russians have exploded a nuclear test bomb (3 Oct. 1951). It is in a newspaper headline which a boy holds up as he wraps a fish in the open market. As an example of the redemption of waste, DeLillo emplots the core idea of his novel in waste newspaper "recycled" to wrap fish, symbolic of Christ. "Bronzino" is a kind of fish (white sea bass), a sign of Bronzini's own redemption.

Even after Little Italy declines into a stark, ravaged scene dotted with empty lots surrounded with barbed wire, a saving grace surrounds its elderly survivors: "The Italians. They sat on the stoop with paper fans and orangeades. They made their world. They said, 'Who's better than me?'" (207, 700) Nearing eighty and walking with a cane, Bronzini still makes the rounds of his neighborhood to cut a friend's hair, to play cards, to visit Nick's aged mother Rosemary. The doorway of his tenement is disfigured by graffitti and waste: "specimens of urban spoor - spray paint, piss, saliva, dapples of dark stuff that was probably blood" (211). Nick's brother peers through the peephole into Bronzini's apartment, contrasting his own safe home in a "computer suburb," one of the "huddled enclaves off a turnpike that discourages entry," "so completely unconnected to root reality" (212). By contrast, Bronzini watches "the ruin build round him on the actual planet where he was born" (212). When Nick wants his mother to leave Little Italy for Arizona, Bronzini argues on behalf of the community in a series of life metaphors: "We want nothing to do with this business of mourning the old streets. We've made our choice. We complain but we don't mourn… I don't want to adjust. I'm an old Roman stoic" (214). These people show what Wordsworth called a "vital anxiousness"[9] asserting their independence and humanity. Rosemary Shay should remain because she has "her church," "her stores," "all the familiar things, "the friends that are still alive" (197): "she lives a free life…. The neighborhood's still a living thing" (202). Portraying their world with harshest realism, DeLillo admires these holdouts, as if to say, the old neighborhood is dying, yet it is still a "living" thing that is dying.

Mark Osteen claims that the "squalor" of the decimated Little Italy ca. 1990 is a "different form of the same disease that plagues Nick Shay" (225). This is to mistake DeLillo's intentions. For him, the opposite of life is not death, which is a part of life; the real opposite of life is death-in-life. The externalization of Nick's condition is not his dying old neighborhood but his wealthy, antiseptic life in Phoenix. Instead of the crowded, noisy Bronx streets, Phoenix has a "downtown hush" and "open space" (85) between office buildings. Instead of the "varied" plenum, "disorder" (819), and "tabloid atrocity" though with a "matching redemption" (86), there is a rigid, "self-replicating" order (85) with which Nick identifies. Instead of the "complex deposits" and "little histories" that Bronzini as oral historian carries within him, history in Arizona "did not run loose"; "they caged history, funded and bronzed it, they enshrined it carefully in museums and memorial parks" (86). The pun on Bronzini ("bronzed") reinforces the antithesis between the living and the dead. Protesting too much,

Nick says "I told myself how much I liked this place" (85); he would not need to keep reminding himself if his life were truly satisfying. Though the name of the city is Phoenix- and the temperature is "maybe a hundred and eight degrees out on the street" (85) - the firebird will not rise from its ashes.

Nick works in a "shimmering bronze tower" within a "fairy ring of hills" (85), as unreal as the imprisoned princess in a Grimm tale or a Disney cartoon. Like "bronzed" history, references to the bronze tower (85, 86, 87, 119, 803) recall Bronzini in his fifth-story walk-up, its moral antithesis. Nick prides himself on feeling "assured and well defended, safe my office box… connected to the things that made me stronger" (119). Not himself, "the things" are stronger from having sapped his strength. "Bemoan technology all you want," he pleads, as if to disarm criticism, "it expands your self-esteem and connects you in your well-pressed suit to the things that slip through the world otherwise unperceived" (89; cf. 803). The stiff "well-pressed" suit of the "organization man," like the illusionary "shimmering" bronze tower, exhibits surface values. Secure in corporate command, Nick literally "towers" over an the endless stretch of "squat box structures" (85), product stores for hearing aid repairs and pool supplies come to mind, two items of interest to retirement communities: health care and leisure. He gazes at the "umber hills and ridges that defined the northeast view" (85), i.e. towards New York and home.

Without a spiritual center, Nick focusses obsessively on ways to control his body which he treats like a robot and which exerts its control over him. Paranoid and hypochondriac, he does not eat the food with the "old deep tomato taste," archetypal of his southern Italian roots (198); "I drank soy milk" (86), not even regular milk. Everything is quantified in the technological environment: the "absolute maximum" of sunblock protection, "fifteen to thirty to sixty" (84, 120); the heat of Arizona, "a hundred and ten, a hundred and twelve" (808); jogging the "metric mile," not the old-fashioned American mile; a device on the waistband of his running trunks, "only three and a half ounces," with its readout showing distance traveled, calories burned, and length of stride. He has become the parodic sum of his "needs" which seem endless and so can never be satisfied: "I carried my house keys in an ankle wallet that fastened with a velcro closure. I didn't like to run with house keys jiggling in my pocket. The ankle wallet answered a need. … It made me feel there were people out there in the world of product development and merchandising and gift cataloguing who understood the nature of my little nagging needs" (86). He buys Turkish prayer rugs and listens to Sufi voices over his walkman, a sign of dabbling in Eastern mysticism. Ethnicity (East or West) has become a commodity. Nick's daughter Lainie and her husband Dex "made ethnic jewelery and sold it over a shopping channel, bracelets, chains, the works" (90). The last vestige of ethnicity is a trinket for sale on cable television. Names like Lainie and Dex have no clear referent to an ethnic past, only to the vaguely homogenized America.

Of these dangers Nick had been apprised, years before, at Voyageur by Father Paulus in a "confession" (539) of his own weakness to his pupil: "Too much irony, too much

vanity, too little what - I don't know, a lot of things. And no rage." Paulus has not lived up to his name; but he hopes in Nick to have found a student whose anger (or angry pride, Achillean mynis), if controlled, might lead to something of value. Without essential desire directed toward a worthy object, warns Paulus, there is no "fullness" of being: "rage and violence can be elements of productive tension in a soul" and "can serve the fullness of one's identity. One way a man untrivializes himself is to punch another man in the mouth" (538).[10] Not justifying Nick's accidental homicide, Paulus defends the passionately lived life. Velleity, with its "nice Thomistic ring" (539), is volition at its lowest ebb; "if you're low-willed, you see, you end up living in the shallowest turns and bends of your own preoccupation" (539). He cites Aquinas to the effect that "only intense actions will strengthen a habit. Not mere repetition. Intensity makes for moral accomplishment. An intense and persevering will" (539).

Sage counsel, given to him at twenty, failed to take hold in Nick Shay. Instead, he identifies with that which is apart from any "animating" (804) principle in himself: reform school rules, Jesuit discipline without its spirituality, the corporate world, the technological system. And why not? Has he not been rewarded in conventionally societal terms? It is ironic that Nick works with hazardous waste because his life risks nothing. Or almost nothing. At climactic moments in the Epilogue ("with the years blowing by" [803]), Nick wins moments of clarity and an enlarged sense of humanity. When his mother died, he says, he "felt expanded, slowly, durably over time": "I felt suffused with her truth, spread through, as with water, color or light. I thought she'd entered the deepest place I could provide, the animating entity, the thing, if anything, that will survive my own last breath, and she makes me larger, she amplifies my sense of what it is to be human" (804). This expansion of soul, rendered in images of utmost simplicity (water, color, light), opposes the analogically correspondent depletion of his soulless life amid corporate trappings, consumer amenities, and the technological environment which, he said earlier, "expands your self-esteem" (89) and makes him "feel a quiet kind of power" akin to the "microtonal hum of the systems" (803).

In these final pages Nick also recalls his youth in Little Italy, where his life and world had been continuous in their energy, passion, danger, and authenticity, and when life was all in potential and, to that extent, free. "I long for the days of disorder. I want them back, the days when I was alive on the earth, rippling in the quick of my skin, heedless and real" (810). Since Nick writes, from the perspective of the present, of a time "when I was alive," he implies that he is now "dead" or suffering death-in-life. Then, "I was dumb-muscled and angry and real. This is what I long for, the breach of peace, the days of disarray when I walked the streets and did things slap-bang and felt angry and ready all the time, a danger to others and a distant mystery to myself" (810).[11] Now, by contrast and despite his protests, he is "unreal" (82); his rage went for naught; a world ordered by the technology replaced the "days of disarray" which, ironically, contained a human scale of values.

Nick moves his mother from the Bronx to Phoenix where, alone most of the time, she watches TV reruns to while away the hours. "Sometimes" he accompanies her to mass, regretting that it is conducted no longer in Latin but in English: "what a stark thing it was, without murmur or reverberation" (196). For him, English robs the mass of some of its sacral quality and tradition; its Englishness is a synecdochic condensation of a technological, not a religious, universalism. "We may teach Latin as a spoken language" (675) at Voyageur, Father Paulus had told Bronzini in 1951, when it was as yet unthinkable that a Church Council in little more than a decade would entirely alter Latin's nearly two-thousand-year role in church services. Young Nick had even said, "I want to teach Latin" (619). The lingua franca of the Mediterranean world has yielded to the lingua franca of technological society. "*Nostra aetate,* as the popes like to say. In our time" (805). Yet attending mass with his mother is the "best part of my week" (106), answering his need for spirituality and linking him to his past.

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NOTES

1. Systems theory, writes LeClair, "creates a 'Reenchantment of the World', restoring to living systems their complexity and mystery lost since medieval times and replacing humanity within its natural environment" (6). I take systems theory, as some scientists once viewed the principle of complementarity: as a necessary half-way house between a fading and an emerging monism.

2. As far back as 1981, Nadeau wrote that "in his most recent fiction DeLillo seems quite intent upon demonstrating that systems are not isolated phenomena that compete with one another in separate regions of thought or experience, but overlapping and interpenetrating modes of constructing reality which may finally become one indistinguishable force" (177).

3. Although Ellul speaks of the technological system as potentially open, it is so only in its applications, not in its radical premises and operating principles (22).

4. One recalls Jacques Ellul's recourse to a theological imperative capable of resisting technologism.

5. Readers familiar with Genette's narratological theory will recognize DeLillo's "zero focalization" (as an omniscient narrator) and "internal focalization" (seeing matters through the eyes of one of the characters).

6. To paraphrase Trilling on Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*.

7. Costanza, playing against his name, - "did the unthinkable Italian crime. He walked out on his family. They don't even have a name for this" (204). Nick is "olive-skinned, dark as my old man" (120).

8. "Once youre a made man, you don't need the constant living influence of sources outside yourself. You're all there. You're made. You're handmade You're a sturdy Roman wall" (275).

9. Wordsworth, "The Old Cumberland Beggar."

10. "Only violence, preferably as random and brutal as possible, can crack the slick surfaces of fetishized commodificaion and restore the connection and immediacy that embodiment entails" (Hayles 411). But this statement, written of *White Noise,* would not reflect the moral attitude towards violence in Underworld.

11. Edmondson, who has described the deliberate thinness of DeLillo's characters as "Not flat, not round, not there" (107), comments that he is "in many ways nostalgic for the kind of strong self-identity whose demise he's busy chronicling" (122).

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WORKSHOP THREE
MEDITERRANEAN RELIGIOSITY IN THE UNITED STATES: MIGRATING RELIGIONS AND THEIR ENCOUNTERS WITH OTHER RELIGIONS AND CULTURES

CHAIR: MARIA SUSANNA GARRONI, ELISABETTA VEZZOSI

Il tema al centro del workshop - che potrebbe riassumersi nel titolo "le trasmigrazioni delle religiosità e gli effetti sulle società di arrivo" - ha un carattere estremamente sfaccettato ed è per questo soggetto a molteplici approcci e possibilità di risposte. Si tratta quindi di un argomento ideale per verificare come letteratura e storia possano cooperare per giungere a una migliore e non settoriale comprensione di un fenomeno tanto sfuggente quanto determinante nella definizione della cultura sociale degli Stati Uniti e, in senso lato, degli atteggiamenti politici del paese.

I saggi che qui si presentano - che abbracciano il protestantesimo, il cattolicesimo (anche nella sua versione etnica), l'ebraismo e le vestigia della religiosità nell'esperienza creativa dell'*underground*, hanno aperto molteplici elementi di riflessione. Se gli interventi hanno avuto un taglio prevalentemente storico, il contributo dei letterati ha permesso di allargare l'orizzonte ad aspetti altrimenti non sondabili, come le sedimentazioni emotive, le riflessioni psicologiche, le reazioni viscerali. Le metodologie, dalla storia orale alla ricerca nell'ambito di archivi pubblici e privati, all'analisi puntuale dei testi, hanno consentito anche una riflessione sulle possibilità della comunicazione fra discipline.

Il testo di Matteo Sanfilippo ha fornito l'intelaiatura del workshop. È infatti sullo sfondo delle politiche ecclesiastiche, sulle preoccupazioni che ne hanno innervato le attività, che immigrati da un lato, intellettuali e cittadini dall'altro hanno elaborato strategie di accoglienza o di rifiuto delle rispettive culture "altre." È come se i vari saggi andassero letti in controluce, con la coscienza di fondo di quanto fosse presente, consapevole e organizzata la Chiesa di Roma e di quanto la sua attività nei confronti dell'immigrazione degli Stati Uniti - non solo di quella italiana - fosse parte di progetti volti a garantirsi una presenza forte nell'ambito della società nordamericana. Se messe in relazione con il quadro tracciato da Sanfilippo, sia la storia degli ordini femminili studiati da Vezzosi, Mattiello e Garroni, che la riflessione di Buonomo sull'atteggiamento della cultura protestante acquistano infatti una importante dimensione prospettica.

La maggioranza degli interventi, concentrata sulla storia degli ordini religiosi femminili, ha offerto un quadro assai variegato dei diversi tipi di religiosità femminile, sottolineando i ritardi dell'indagine storiografica sul significato di etnicità all'interno della cultura delle congregazioni religiose, sia maschili che femminili, e la utilità di un approccio che si serva della categoria di "genere" come grimaldello euristico.

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L'ATTENZIONE DELLA SANTA SEDE ALL'EMIGRAZIONE ITALIANA NEGLI STATI UNITI

MATTEO SANFILIPPO

L'attenzione della Santa Sede ai problemi migratori ha una lunghissima genesi e soprattutto non riguarda specificamente l'emigrazione italiana. Già ai primi del Seicento la lotta contro la diffusione del protestantesimo spinge i dicasteri romani, in particolare la Congregazione di Propaganda Fide fondata nel 1622, a considerare i fenomeni migratori intra ed extraeuropei. Nonostante le indicazioni di Clemente VIII contro l'emigrazione (1596), gli ufficiali della Congregazione si rendono infatti conto che la mobilità umana non può essere irreggimentata e tentano quindi di assistere in qualche modo i cattolici spostatisi in territori protestanti. Inoltre si pongono il problema dell'assistenza a quelli emigrati nei domini di potenze cattoliche di lingua diversa dalla loro. Per evitare che rimangano senza assistenza, si cerca di fornire loro sacerdoti che parlino il medesimo idioma o che, ancora meglio, abbiano la stessa origine. Nel caso specifico degli italiani stabilitisi nei paesi europei o nelle colonie americane, i funzionari romani escogitano sinergie volte ad aiutare gli emigranti senza dispendio da parte della Chiesa. In particolare sfruttano il fatto che gli ordini missionari, in primo luogo i gesuiti, annoverano nelle loro file sacerdoti nati in Italia o che hanno comunque studiato nella Penisola (Pizzorusso e Sanfilippo, *La Santa Sede* 607-632).

Nel corso dell'Ottocento i fenomeni migratori assumono dimensioni inusitate e rendono progressivamente impossibile continuare con i vecchi escamotage. Dopo il 1815 l'ampiezza dei flussi spaventa i burocrati romani: ora i cattolici partono in grandissimo numero e si recano in territori protestanti e lontani, come gli Stati Uniti e le colonie britanniche nel Canada. La Santa Sede paventa di perdere quelle anime, come d'altronde teme la diffusione dell'anticlericalismo e del nazionalismo nello stesso ecumene cattolico. Tra il 1830 e il 1870 la Francia e l'America Latina ospitano, per esempio, un gran numero di esuli italiani che, secondo il clero cattolico, infettano gli animi degli altri emigranti e sono in questo coadiuvati dagli anticlericali locali.[1] Allo stesso tempo l'arrivo di cattolici di varie nazionalità e soprattutto di diversi idiomi obbliga la chiesa a ristrutturare la propria organizzazione in Europa e nelle Americhe. I nuovi arrivati non possono essere accolti nelle parrocchie territoriali, dove si parla soltanto la lingua del luogo, a meno che non si voglia assistere all'esplosione di veementi proteste (Sanfilippo, *Fonti ecclesiastiche*).

Negli anni 1840 la nunziatura apostolica in Brasile affronta contemporaneamente i due problemi. Da un lato, cerca di controllare la propaganda antipontificia degli esuli che proprio il papa ha mandato là.[2] Dall'altro, l'internunzio Gaetano Bedini segnala ai superiori nel 1846 la necessità di assicurare sacerdoti di lingua germanica alla comuni-

tà tedesca di Petropoli. Questa vicenda coinvolge la Segreteria di Stato, Propaganda Fide, la gerarchia ecclesiastica brasiliana, le locali missioni di cappuccini e persino la nunziatura a Vienna, dove Bedini è stato uditore e alla quale si rivolge per trovare aiuto.[3] Di conseguenza ha una discreta risonanza negli ambienti ecclesiastici romani ed europei (Sanfilippo, *Monsignor Gaetano Bedini*). Un lunghissimo rapporto alla Segreteria di Stato, di poco posteriore, sottolinea come il Brasile sia meta di una continua immigrazione di lavoro e politica; suggerisce quindi che vi si rechino prelati in grado di parlare più lingue.[4] Nello stesso torno di tempo alcune associazioni di lingua tedesca (la Ludwigsverein di Monaco di Baviera e la Leopoldine Stiftung di Vienna) iniziano a occuparsi dei connazionali d'oltreoceano, intessendo un fitto scambio epistolare con Roma e le diocesi americane.

Nel 1853-1854 Bedini, nuovamente diretto in Brasile, si ferma negli Stati Uniti e nel Canada e redige numerosi rapporti sugli europei che hanno varcato l'Atlantico, la loro integrazione oltreoceano e la necessità di assisterli. In tale occasione rileva come il pericolo non sia più la propaganda protestante, ma quella dei movimenti nativistici e degli esuli quarantottardi, tanto più che i due fronti si sono saldati per contestare il viaggio del nunzio e per condannare il papa che ha contribuito alla sconfitta dei moti del 1848-1849 (Sanfilippo, *Tra antipapismo e cattolicesimo*). A questo punto la difesa della presenza cattolica nelle Americhe e della fede degli emigrati si lega, almeno secondo Bedini, a quella dei diritti del pontefice e soprattutto del potere temporale. A suo parere, il futuro di Roma si gioca su tanti fronti e uno di questi è quello americano, dove un aspetto importante della lotta è la disputa per il controllo degli immigrati. Gli spunti delle lettere sono poi ripresi dal nunzio in due rapporti conclusivi per il cardinale segretario di stato e il cardinal prefetto di Propaganda.[5]. Le due relazioni sono meditate dalla burocrazia romana per decenni, anche perché Bedini ascende ai vertici della gerarchia cattolica: diviene influentissimo segretario di Propaganda Fide e muore nel 1864 cardinale arcivescovo di Viterbo.

Nei tre decenni che vedono fervere attività e progetti di Bedini, gli ordini missionari si occupano sul campo degli emigranti, italiani e non. Barnabiti, cappuccini, domenicani, francescani, gesuiti, redentoristi e serviti annoverano religiosi in grado di badare a fedeli di più nazionalità e quindi si fanno carico dell'assistenza di questi ultimi, come era già successo nel Sei-Settecento. Sennonché il loro intervento non basta e inoltre essi non vogliono dedicarsi alla cura degli immigrati, se non per il tempo strettamente necessario. In particolare i religiosi italiani vedono con un certo fastidio questa incombenza, mentre i loro confratelli tedeschi o polacchi sembrano più pronti a servire i propri connazionali (De Concilio; McNicholas; Bacigalupo; Pizzorusso, *La "Nuova Serie"*; Sanfilippo, *Insieme oltre le frontiere* 687).[6] D'altronde molti regolari italiani non si erano recati oltreoceano per seguire i propri connazionali: è il caso dei gesuiti, tradizionalmente impegnati tra le popolazioni amerindiane, o dei serviti, che avevano soprattutto sperato di rimpolpare le proprie fila (D'Agostino, *When Friars* e *Italian Ethnicity*).

Attorno alla metà del secolo devono dunque intervenire nuovi attori, in particolare alcuni istituti di recente fondazione. Nel 1844 Vincenzo Pallotti affida gli italiani di Londra a Raffaele Melia che fonda la parrocchia di S. Pietro, perché ritiene che i connazionali abbiano bisogno di un proprio tempio. Nei decenni seguenti i pallottini aumentano lo sforzo, sbarcando infine oltre Atlantico: nel 1884 sono a Brooklyn e New York, nel 1886 nel Rio Grande do Sul (Garroni). La seconda metà dell'Ottocento registra un'esplosione di nuovi istituti di vita consacrata che sopperiscono alle difficoltà del clero diocesano. Alcuni di essi non sono nati per occuparsi dell'emigrazione, ma si trovano rapidamente nella necessità di farlo. È quanto accade ai salesiani di Giovanni Bosco che, su richiesta di Pio IX, deve intervenire fra gli italiani di Buenos Aires al fine di arginare la propaganda anticlericale e socialista.[7] Agli inizi del Novecento i salesiani assistono i compatrioti in America Latina, negli Stati Uniti, in Svizzera e in Germania, in Tunisia, a Costantinopoli e nel Medio Oriente.[8]

Il crescente impegno degli istituti di vita consacrata fondati nell'Ottocento corrisponde al nuovo, lacerante mutamento della realtà cattolica. La perdita dello stato temporale chiude definitivamente il periodo apertosi con la Controriforma. Dal Concilio di Trento alla Breccia di Porta Pia la chiesa ha cercato di mantenere il proprio peso sullo scacchiere mondiale. La caduta di Roma nel 1870 sancisce definitivamente la scomparsa dello stato temporale e la necessità per la chiesa cattolica di spostarsi su un altro piano. Proprio questa catastrofe spiega la nuova valutazione della questione migratoria. Essa infatti decuplica il timore della propaganda antipontificia (protestante e non) tra i migranti. Inoltre la curia realizza che mantenere questi ultimi sotto il proprio controllo ha una valenza anche offensiva. Dopo il 1870 il Vaticano conduce infatti virulente campagne internazionali per rintuzzare e condizionare le scelte dell'Italia e, in questo quadro, gli emigrati divengono un'apprezzabile massa di manovra (Tramontin; Sanfilippo, *Le fonti dell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano* e *"Masse briache di livore anticlericale"*). Servono, per esempio, a premere sui governi del Canada e degli Stati Uniti e la loro utilità è tale che la Santa Sede sogna la possibilità che l'emigrazione faciliti la cattolicizzazione del Nord America. Gli emigranti tuttavia non accettano di trasformarsi in meri pedoni dello scacchiere internazionale e vogliono in cambio un aiuto effettivo. Di qui gli scismi dei cattolici polacchi, russi, ucraini e ungheresi emigrati in America, oppure la minaccia degli italiani di abbandonare la chiesa, se questa non li assiste secondo i loro termini (Pizzorusso e Sanfilippo, *Inventario delle fonti*).

Mentre la situazione diviene incandescente, Propaganda Fide accumula materiali sui flussi migratori e vaglia le possibilità di seguirli. L'11 aprile 1887 autorizza le parrocchie nazionali, chiamate anche personali o linguistiche, negli Stati Uniti. Queste devono integrarsi nel tessuto diocesano, ma hanno giurisdizione su una comunità immigrata e non su un quartiere. La raccolta di documenti, che precede tale decisione, mette i funzionari di Propaganda in contatto con la realtà nordamericana e con analoghe esperienze europee, per esempio la già citata parrocchia italiana di Londra. Inoltre permette loro di

stringere rapporti con le associazioni che assistono l'emigrazione germanica, in particolare la Raphaelsverein, nata nel 1871 come società di patronato degli emigranti tedeschi.

I funzionari di Propaganda realizzano che per gli italiani non esiste niente di simile e che ciò si riflette nell'incapacità di avere edifici di culto e luoghi d'incontro. Inoltre scarseggiano i sacerdoti provenienti dalla Penisola o, se vi sono, hanno seguito percorsi non sempre approvati dalla Santa Sede. Gli analisti della Congregazione rimarcano quanto il caso italiano brilli negativamente (Francesconi).[9] Per ovviare a questa situazione si decide, sempre nel 1887, di affidare a Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, vescovo di Piacenza, la fondazione di un istituto di religiosi che assista gli italiani negli Stati Uniti e nel Brasile e al contempo gestisca un collegio per formare i missionari addetti a tale compito.[10] Leone XIII approva la decisione di Propaganda con breve del 25 novembre 1887 e quindi presenta il progetto ai vescovi d'oltreoceano (*Quam aerumnosa*, 10 dicembre 1888). Inizialmente si prevede un esperimento quinquennale ma in quel lustro il pontefice e la curia si rendono conto dell'ineluttabile necessità di seguire attentamente le migrazioni, come risalta dalla *Rerum Novarum* (15 maggio 1891).

In effetti la produzione di documenti ufficiali sugli emigranti aumenta con il procedere del pontificato leoniano e sprona all'azione i vescovi e il clero dei due lati dell'oceano. La lettera apostolica del 25 ottobre 1884 sull'erezione del Collegio romano per i sacerdoti statunitensi sottolinea la presenza "ex diversis orbis partibus illuc immigrantes" (Tassello e Favero). La lettera a Scalabrini del 1887 e l'epistola ai vescovi americani del 1888 trattano ovviamente degli italiani. Propaganda Fide si rivolge il 15 maggio 1892 ai vescovi statunitensi, perché si ricordino degli emigranti "ex variis Europae nationis," e ai vescovi italiani il 2 maggio 1898, perché non conferiscano indiscriminatamente gli ordini sacri a chi vuole poi recarsi negli Stati Uniti. Infine la Segreteria di Stato scrive ai vescovi italiani (19 giugno 1900) di badare ai fedeli che emigrano temporaneamente in Europa, mentre Propaganda Fide (4 aprile 1900 e 1 marzo 1902) e la Congregazione dei Riti (10 maggio 1901) si preoccupano di come somministrare i sacramenti durante i viaggi transoceanici.

L'ultimo decennio del pontificato di Leone XIII vede montare l'interesse per la mobilità umana e di ciò beneficia il progetto scalabriniano. Il vescovo di Piacenza ritiene in un primissimo tempo che il nuovo istituto debba essere un'appendice di Propaganda. Nel 1889 decide, però, di affiancargli una Società di patronato degli emigranti sulla falsariga della Raphaelsverein: la nuova iniziativa funziona solo dove qualche sacerdote s'impegna personalmente, come Pietro Maldotti a Genova, tuttavia porta alla nascita delle varie S. Raffaele italiane, nonché di due succursali statunitensi a New York e Boston. Inoltre Scalabrini opera affinché il governo irreggimenti la propaganda degli agenti di emigrazione: crede infatti al diritto e alla necessità in molti casi di emigrare, ma teme che le agenzie provochino lo spopolamento di alcune aree e soprattutto paventa la disperazione degli emigranti ai quali sia stato promesso un lavoro inesistente (Perotti, *La società italiana*).

Scalabrini ottiene i risultati migliori nei luoghi d'arrivo, grazie all'impegno dei suoi

missionari e al fondamentale aiuto delle congregazioni femminili. È questo un capitolo storico ancora tutto da esplorare. Le prime analisi evidenziano l'importanza del lavoro di Francesca Saverio Cabrini, fondatrice delle Apostole del S. Cuore (Rosoli in Maffioletti e Sanfilippo) Cabrini sbarca a New York nel 1889 e nei successivi 28 anni vi fonda una scuola fiorente e il Columbus Hospital; inoltre invia le sue consorelle da New Orleans a Chicago e Seattle (Sullivan) Parimenti importanti sono le Missionarie zelatrici del S. Cuore di Gesù di Clelia Merloni, arrivate in Brasile nel 1900 e quindi diffusesi nelle due Americhe, e naturalmente le scalabriniane, inizialmente Ancelle degli orfani e dei derelitti all'estero, che fondano e gestiscono scuole e ospedali prima in Brasile e poi negli Stati Uniti (Rosoli, *Chiesa e comunità* e *Santa Sede*). Sono infine da ricordare, per la loro azione nel territorio statunitense, le Apostole del S. Cuore, le Salesiane, le Maestre Pie Filippini, le Battistine, le Pallottine, le Suore di S. Dorotea, le Figlie di Santa Maria della Provvidenza, le francescane di Gemona e le suore Venerini (Garroni et al.; Vezzosi, *Cittadine e mediatrici etniche*).

Tutti questi istituti prodigano le proprie forze in scuole ed ospedali e sono queste attività a garantire la maggiore efficacia e a rispondere meglio al progetto di evangelizzazione degli emigranti di Scalabrini. La presenza delle suore e degli scalabriniani sostiene, anzi crea, l'identità di gruppo degli emigranti. Le chiese, le scuole, gli orfanotrofi e gli ospedali, dove si parla italiano e non dialetto, contribuiscono infatti alla formazione di comunità nazionali, che raggruppano precedenti nuclei in genere suddivisi, anche topograficamente, sulla base delle origini regionali. Il vescovo di Piacenza prosegue nel frattempo a muoversi in Italia, dove collabora alla formulazione della legge sull'emigrazione del 1901. Gli sembra questa volta di aver meglio tutelato l'emigrante prima e durante la partenza e di poter pensare più liberamente a quanto si sta costruendo negli Stati Uniti, dove si reca nel 1901 (Rosoli, *Scalabrini*).

Questo viaggio e quello del 1904 nel Brasile rafforzano il successo della sua iniziativa: alla morte (1 giugno 1905) Scalabrini lascia quaranta case nelle Americhe, con annesse chiese e scuole. La riuscita non è stata, però, esente da polemiche con altre congregazioni e persino con la curia. Da oltre dieci anni Propaganda non sostiene il vescovo piacentino, inoltre la Segreteria di Stato, sulla scia delle rimostranze di alcuni salesiani, sospetta a più riprese che gli scalabriniani siano troppo acquiescenti nei riguardi del Regno d'Italia (Francesconi, *Giovanni Battista Scalabrini*). Il fondatore è infatti sempre stato conciliante verso il governo italiano e, fatto forse ancora più grave, i suoi missionari contribuiscono alla costruzione dell'identità italiana degli emigranti. Lo stesso Scalabrini comprende la difficoltà di bilanciare appartenenza nazionale e appartenenza religiosa ed è inoltre spaventato dall'aumento delle contrapposizioni tra le diverse comunità emigrate (Rosoli, *I movimenti di migrazione e i cattolici*). Prima di morire nel 1905, propone quindi alla Santa Sede di istituire un dicastero, o eventualmente una commissione, *pro Emigratis Catholicis*. Ritiene infatti che si è cominciato a fare qualcosa per ogni gruppo, ma che bisogna ora coordinare gli sforzi e non disperdere le energie.

Nel Novecento l'attenzione cattolica alle questioni migratorie non decresce, anzi si aprono nuovi fronti. L'istituto scalabriniano, affidato da Propaganda a Fide a Domenico Vicentini dopo la morte del fondatore, è sempre concentrato sulle Americhe: lo stesso Vicentini visita gli Stati Uniti nel 1906. Del Vecchio Mondo si occupa invece Geremia Bonomelli, vescovo di Cremona, che nel 1900 fonda l'Opera di assistenza agli operai italiani emigrati in Europa e nel Levante (Bellò; Marcora). In questo contesto Pietro Pisani, docente al seminario di Vercelli, inizia a visitare le missioni europee e nordamericane. Ogni viaggio si traduce in conferenze e pubblicazioni, inoltre Pisani collabora fattivamente all'Opera bonomelliana. Egli contribuisce inoltre con questa sua esperienza alla fondazione dell'Italica Gens (1909), la federazione di congregazioni religiose e associazioni laiche che si interessano degli emigrati italiani in America (Rosoli, *L' "Italica Gens"*; Tomasi, *Fede e patria*). Ad essa aderiscono scalabriniani, salesiani, gesuiti, francescani, cappuccini, serviti, conventuali, passionisti, francescani e i rispettivi rami femminili, nonché i maggiori nomi del volontariato cattolico.

Immediatamente prima della guerra la questione dell'assistenza è rilevantissima, soprattutto oltreoceano. Negli Stati Uniti 223 regolari e 487 secolari si occupano infatti di 590 chiese e parrocchie italiane, alle quali sono legate scuole, ospedali, enti di assistenza e associazioni locali. L'espansione oltre Atlantico non è eguagliata in Europa. Comunque il Vaticano opta anche qui per un maggiore coordinamento. Il pontificato di Pio X è infatti contraddistinto da un massiccio riordinamento ecclesiale, che nel 1908 coinvolge la stessa curia. In particolare antiche terre di missione, come il Canada e gli Stati Uniti, sono promosse a chiese nazionali, tolte alla supervisione di Propaganda Fide e passate alla Concistoriale, nonché seguite con maggiore attenzione dalla Segreteria di Stato. Proprio quest'ultima raccoglie dal 1908 dati sui flussi migratori e la loro assistenza;[11] mentre nel 1911 ricorda ai vescovi che devono proteggere i fedeli in partenza.[12] La Concistoriale a sua volta prevede domande sugli immigrati nei questionari riempiti dei vescovi in occasione della *visita ad limina*, cioè del viaggio che devono compiere ogni cinque anni per omaggiare il pontefice e rendere conto della propria amministrazione (Sanfilippo, *"Socialismus radicem fixit in dioecesi"*). Inoltre insiste per la costituzione in ogni diocesi di un patronato per gli emigranti, che dovrebbe tutelare questi ultimi e fornire informazioni alla Santa Sede. Per coordinarne la futura rete Pio X istituisce nel 1912 il primo ufficio della curia romana per l'emigrazione, una sezione speciale della Concistoriale, cui è chiamato Pisani con il compito di studiare un piano serio ed efficace di assistenza.[13] Tale ufficio ha competenza sull'orbe cattolico e risponde al suggerimento di Scalabrini di badare a tutti i migranti, smussando conflitti tra loro e con le diocesi di accoglienza (Francesconi, *Un progetto di mons. Scalabrini*).

Le inchieste della Concistoriale e della Segreteria di Stato evidenziano, però, che bisogna soprattutto seguire gli italiani, visto che essi costituiscono il più importante gruppo emigrante. Nel 1914 è decisa la fondazione a Roma del Pontificio Collegio per l'emigrazione italiana, che dovrebbe formare il clero diocesano atto a curare gli italiani sparsi in

tutto il mondo: l'apertura effettiva avviene, però, solo nel 1920 (Perotti, *Il Pontificio Collegio*). Nel frattempo i dicasteri romani stringono più stretti rapporti con l'Opera Bonomelli, in precedenza avversata per il transigentismo del suo fondatore, ma proprio quest'ultima entra in crisi per le difficoltà belliche. Nell'immediato dopoguerra è necessario un contributo economico del Vaticano per riavviarne l'attività, inoltre Ferdinando Rodolfi, il responsabile ecclesiastico dei missionari bonomelliani, chiede di potersi dedicare soltanto alla propria diocesi di Vicenza. Le dimissioni sono accettate e si decide di designare un vescovo, senza compiti territoriali, che si occupi dell'emigrazione in tutto il mondo. Nell'ottobre del 1920 Michele Cerrati diventa quindi il primo Prelato per l'emigrazione italiana e a lui è sottoposto anche il succitato Pontificio Collegio (Tomasi, *L'assistenza religiosa*).[14]

Nel primo dopoguerra le strutture volute da Pio X e l'impegno dei religiosi e delle religiose italiane all'estero garantiscono una buona rete di assistenza, ma la situazione è mutata rispetto all'anteguerra. Lo sforzo prima del conflitto era mirato alle Americhe, ma queste chiudono le porte agli emigranti, che ripiegano sull'Europa (Borruso). Alcuni istituti (i salesiani, per esempio) hanno già personale sul posto, ma lo devono aumentare; altri devono rientrare dal Nuovo al Vecchio Mondo, senza tuttavia abbandonare il primo. L'Opera bonomelliana cerca di pilotare questo cambio di direzione, ma è chiusa nel 1928 dalle autorità fasciste (Cannistraro e Rosoli). La Concistoriale crea allora una direzione dei missionari per gli emigrati in Europa e l'affida a Costantino Babini, che opera fuori d'Italia e cerca di mantenersi defilato rispetto al governo fascista (Rosoli, *Santa Sede*). Durante il ventennio, il Prelato per l'emigrazione funziona a scartamento ridotto: dal 1929 al 1931 l'ufficio è addirittura vacante. Nel frattempo sorgono molti problemi con e per le missioni oltreoceano, alle quali non sono inviati rinforzi negli anni Trenta. Le missioni si trovano quindi a corto di personale, inoltre i sacerdoti sono profondamente divisi: una parte favorisce la fascistizzazione delle comunità italiane, l'altra si oppone. Per evitare le tensioni alcune congregazioni, in prima fila i salesiani, diminuiscono gli impegni, nonostante i richiami delle autorità consolari.[15] I sacerdoti perdono la leadership comunitaria a favore dei consoli e in molti casi si trovano anche invischiati in scandali e malversazioni finanziarie (D'Agostino, *The Scalabrini Fathers* e *The Triad of Roman*). Queste ultime invero non sono mai mancate. I sacerdoti italiani hanno dovuto imparare a mantenere da soli le proprie parrocchie, senza aiuto dal vescovo, e molti hanno fallito. Inoltre le Americhe sono spesso state rifugio per quei sacerdoti che Diomede Falconio, nunzio a Washington, definisce nel 1908 "rifiuti delle diocesi d'Italia" venuti "in America per essere causa di scandali e compromettere il buon nome e l'onore del clero italiano."[16] In questa situazione l'assistenza agli emigrati ricade sulle chiese locali, così degli italiani negli Stati Uniti si occupa alla fine la National Catholic Welfare Conference, che riprende pure le funzioni già della S. Raffaele.

L'assistenza agli italiani negli Stati Uniti è resa più difficile dalle traversie interne degli ordini cointeressati a tal compito. Alcuni (i serviti, in primo luogo, ma anche gli

agostiniani, i mercedari, i pallottini, i cappuccini, i minori francescani e i missionari del Preziosissimo Sangue) si separano subito dopo la guerra dalla provincia locale e tornano sotto il diretto controllo delle province italiane, ma questo porta, negli anni Trenta, a una crescente conflittualità tra i missionari attivi in America e i superiori romani, che conoscono soltanto la realtà italiana. Inoltre tale separazione e la dipendenza dall'Italia non facilitano i rapporti con le autorità (religiose e civili) statunitensi, né con quelle consolari italiane, che si sentono autorizzate a intervenire nelle faccende interne della comunità immigrata e degli ordini religiosi (D'Agostino, *Italian Ethnicity*).

La vicenda degli scalabriniani è ancora più complicata. Essi sono divenuti sotto il già ricordato Vicentini una "pia società" e non un vero e proprio ordine religioso. Tensioni interne e congiuntura generale hanno allo stesso temo provocato la diminuzione dei membri e dissesti finanziari. Dopo la guerra il nuovo superiore generale, Pacifico Chenuil, ritiene necessaria un'aggressiva campagna di reclutamento: sono così scelti e preparati frettolosamente i nuovi missionari per gli Stati Uniti e il Brasile. I nuovi membri sono, però, più desiderosi di recarsi oltreoceano che di seguire i connazionali emigrati. Nel 1923 la Santa Sede decide che è necessaria un'indagine sulla società: la visita alle case scalabriniane e la corrispondenza con i vescovi americani porta a un rapporto negativo. Di conseguenza Pio XI pone l'istituto sotto il diretto controllo della Concistoriale, che deve eventualmente scioglierlo. In realtà i funzionari del dicastero vaticano cercano di salvaguardarlo e di rifondarlo. Nel 1930 diviene segretario della Concistoriale il cardinal Raffaele Carlo Rossi, che termina la ricostituzione dell'istituto e che nel 1934 lo trasforma finalmente nella congregazione religiosa sperata da Scalabrini. Gli scalabriniani riprendono allora ad occuparsi attivamente delle missioni oltreoceano, che sono visitate da un rappresentante di Rossi per l'inaugurazione del Seminary of the Sacred Heart (Melrose Park): il nuovo seminario è istituito per i figli degli emigrati e prevede che gli studi siano completati al noviziato di Piacenza (Francesconi, *Storia della Congregazione Scalabriniana*).

Le vicende belliche sottopongono l'assistenza pontificia agli emigranti ad un nuovo arresto. La situazione a fine guerra è disperata. Nel 1944 Pio XII istituisce la Pontificia Commissione Assistenza Profughi (in seguito solo Pontificia Commissione Assistenza e infine Pontificia Opera Assistenza) e la affida a monsignor Fernando Baldelli. Questi ha già collaborato con l'Opera bonomelliana e nel 1920 è stato incaricato dall'Italica Gens delle pratiche di espatrio verso le Americhe. Si è poi occupato di migrazioni interne, promuovendo il Comitato romano pro emigranti (1922) e il Comitato romano di assistenza religiosa agli operai (1926) sotto il patrocinio della Concistoriale. Baldelli si preoccupa negli anni tra il 1945 e il 1948 di soccorrere quasi mezzo milione di profughi italiani e stranieri stabilitisi in vari centri della penisola e ne organizza la partenza verso altri paesi europei o transoceanici. È l'avvio dei flussi migratori del secondo dopoguerra e permette la riorganizzazione della rete di assistenza cattolica, grazie anche all'impegno della succitata National Catholic Welfare Conference (Giovagnoli).

Subito dopo la guerra la Pontificia Commissione e i principali dicasteri vaticani (la

stessa Segreteria di Stato crea un ufficio apposito nel 1947) si occupano del movimento di migranti e rifugiati di tutto il mondo. Lentamente, però, i funzionari della Santa Sede tornano a guardare soprattutto ai propri connazionali. Nel 1949 il Pontificio Collegio per l'emigrazione è riaperto e affidato agli scalabriniani, che dal 1948 hanno nuovamente un proprio superiore generale e non dipendono più dal segretario della Concistoriale, pur mantenendo strettissimi rapporti con quest'ultima. Nel 1951 è fondata a Roma la Giunta Cattolica per l'emigrazione, che dovrebbe sensibilizzare l'Italia e coordinare gli interventi assistenziali all'estero. Per seguire i flussi mondiali è invece fondata a Ginevra, sempre nello stesso anno, la Commissione Cattolica Internazionale per le Migrazioni. Nel 1952 la Costituzione apostolica *Exsul Familia* stabilisce le nuove norme relative all'assistenza spirituale degli emigranti e conferma che questa compete alla Concistoriale. Sul piano degli strumenti pastorali, il documento pontificio ribadisce l'opportunità delle parrocchie nazionali e personali, con competenza sui fedeli di una determinata nazionalità e affidate ai sacerdoti dello stesso gruppo. Sottolinea quindi il diritto naturale ad emigrare, suggerisce lo scambio tra clero delle diverse parti del mondo per venire incontro ai migranti e dichiara che la chiesa tutta è responsabile del soccorso a questi ultimi. Infine ricorda come l'emigrante non sia obbligato a integrarsi immediatamente nella società d'accoglienza, ma abbia diritto alla propria autonomia culturale.

Sul finire della guerra Pio XII ha già accennato a quest'ultimo tema, con toni prossimi a quelli utilizzati da Scalabrini per proteggere l'italianità dei suoi emigranti. Ora il discorso riguarda tutti coloro che sono partiti, ma risponde in effetti a preoccupazioni analoghe a quelle di fine Ottocento, quando la paura della propaganda socialista aveva iniziato a scalzare il timore di quella protestante. Negli anni Cinquanta siamo in piena guerra fredda e l'impegno anticomunista tra i migranti è fondamentale: si pensi al "resettlement" in Occidente dei profughi d'oltrecortina, oppure al caso estremo dell'inserimento oltreoceano di criminali di guerra o comunque di ex-repubblichini, ex-ustasha ed ex-nazisti (Sanfilippo, *Los papeles de Hudal*). In ogni caso l'anticomunismo non è l'unica molla che spinge la Santa Sede a proteggere gli emigranti. Il mondo cattolico sta infatti riscoprendo l'impegno nel sociale e i missionari usciti dal Pontificio Collegio, divenuto di completa responsabilità scalabriniana, si muovono in sintonia con le nuove esperienze e non sempre accettano i dettami geopolitici più retrivi . Non di rado si creano nuove spaccature tra i missionari, perché una parte ritiene che l'anticomunismo viscerale impedisca di soccorrere gli emigrati e vuole collaborare con movimenti e sindacati di sinistra (Tassello).

La trasformazione è avvertibile soprattutto negli anni 1960, grazie anche al clima del Concilio Vaticano II, ed è ratificata da Paolo VI.[17] Questi approfondisce le problematiche migratorie, pur se esse riguardano sempre meno la popolazione italiana, tanto che nel 1973 è chiuso il Pontificio Collegio. Il motu proprio Pastoralis Migratorum Cura (1969) analizza la nuova mobilità e i processi d'integrazione, insistendo sui diritti della persona umana. L'emigrazione è vista come un fenomeno complesso, nel quale al

diritto di emigrare deve corrispondere il dovere di collaborare allo sviluppo del paese di insediamento (Tomasi, *Pastoral and Canonical*; Seghetto). Nel frattempo le stesse strutture curiali si evolvono. La Concistoriale diviene nel 1967 la Congregazione dei Vescovi; nel 1970 è creata al suo interno la Pontificia commissione per la cura spirituale dei migranti e degli itineranti, il cui segretario è uno scalabriniano, e questo ufficio diviene un segretariato autonomo nel 1988. Si conclude così un percorso secolare che ha visto progressivamente aumentare la preoccupazione vaticana per l'emigrazione.

Nel frattempo è a poco a poco calata l'attenzione per gli emigrati italiani negli Stati Uniti. In un primo tempo questi sono stati affidati ad organizzazioni americane. Nel 1952 viene creato l'American Committee on Italian Migration (ACIM), membro del National Catholic Resettlement Council che a sua volta appartiene alla National Catholic Welfare Conference. L'ACIM, diretta in genere da uno scalabriniano, non si interessa solo dell'assistenza agli immigrati già nel territorio americano, ma opera assieme ad altre agenzie per l'approvazione del Refugee Relief Act del 1953: quest'ultimo interessa gli italiani per la possibilità di aiutare i profughi provenienti dai territori passati alla Jugoslavia e contemporaneamente di svuotare i campi profughi ancora funzionanti nella Penisola. In seguito, però, l'ACIM non abbandona questo terreno e continua a occuparsi di rifugiati e nuove immigrazioni, oltre che degli italiani.[18] Nel contempo gli scalabriniani negli Stati Uniti espandono la loro azione parrocchiale, corredandola con nuove iniziative assistenziali (scuole, ospedali, case per anziani, centri culturali come la Casa Italiana aperta a Los Angeles nel 1972) e talvolta accompagnandola con missioni itineranti (Francesconi, *Storia della Congregazione Scalabriniana*; Battistella, *Itinerant Missions*).

Con il passare dei decenni la presenza italiana negli Stati Uniti cala, però, drasticamente, provocando la lenta diminuzione delle missioni italiane nel territorio americano (Battistella, *Italian Americans in the '80s*). Nel 1995 queste ultime sono ormai solo 95 e dovrebbero accudire non più di 220.000 italiani, per i quali il legame con la parrocchia nazionale è spesso sentito soltanto in occasione di particolari occasioni, quali le festività e le processioni della Vergine o del santo patrono (Orsi; Brown; Varacalli et al.). I sacerdoti di origine italiana o in grado di parlare la lingua sono allora soltanto 130: tra di essi 95 sono regolari, in buona parte scalabriniani. Non si hanno invece cifre per le religiose (Petris). Nel 1999 il numero delle missioni e dei missionari rimane invariato, mentre i fedeli scendono a 198.950.[19] Sono cifre risibili rispetto a quelle degli anni attorno alla la guerra del 1914-1918. Di conseguenza le missioni italiane di fine millennio hanno un ruolo assai distante da quello rivestito nei decenni successivi alla decisione di Propaganda Fide a favore delle parrocchie nazionali (Tomasi, *Piety and Power*; De Dominicis). In compenso molte sono state utilizzate per assistere nuove ondate d'immigrazione. Dopo il 1960 gli scalabriniani hanno curato ispanici e portoghesi, in seguito gli immigrati caraibici, in particolare gli haitiani. Infine numerose missioni si sono specializzate nell'aiuto ai soli chicanos (Zizzamia) mentre gli scalabriniani hanno cercato di far fronte a tutta la gamma delle nuove migrazioni, seguendo le indicazioni romane (Tomasi, *The Pastoral Challenges*).

Quest'ultima evoluzione ricompone il cerchio dell'attenzione della Chiesa agli emigranti: ancora una volta infatti l'attività cattolica si sviluppa a tutto campo, superando le barriere tra gruppi di origine diversa. D'altronde, già al momento delle prime iniziative, gli scalabriniani si erano occupati dei polacchi di Boston, così come i salesiani avevano assistito i cinesi di New York e San Francisco e i portoghesi di Oakland in California (Tomasi, *Piety and Power*; Cei). Di fatto gli italiani hanno potuto godere di un trattamento preferenziale rispetto ad altri emigranti (ma non rispetto ai tedeschi e agli irlandesi), tuttavia la Santa Sede ha sempre privilegiato un approccio globale alle migrazioni e ha considerato quanto avveniva oltreoceano come una delle tante azioni in progresso sullo scacchiere mondiale.

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NOTE

1. Per l'emigrazione politica in Francia, cfr. Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), Segreteria di Stato (SS), Spogli di Pio IX, fasc. 541. Per quella in America Latina, vedi oltre.

2. ASV, SS, 1837-1841, busta 453, fasc. 1, e 1847, rubr. 7, fasc. 1; ASV, SS, Nunziatura di Brasile, fasc. 110.

3. ASV, SS, 1846 e 1847, rubr. 7; ASV, SS, Spogli dei cardinali, Bedini, busta 4, fasc. H.; Nunziatura di Brasile, fasc. 97; Archivio particolare di Pio IX, fasc. 24.

4. ASV, SS, Spogli dei cardinali, Bedini, busta 3, fasc. E.

5. ASV, SS, 1854, rubr. 251, fascc. 1-2.

6. "Fr. Basil Pacciarini." Woodstock Letters, XIII (1884): 409-412.

7. Memorie autobiografiche di san Giovanni Bosco 385.

8. "L'Opera di Don Bosco all'estero" 257-263.

9. Archivio Storico di Propaganda Fide (APF), Acta, vol. 257 (1887), ff. 507-517: Rapporto sull'emigrazione italiana con Sommario.

10. APF, Congressi, Collegi Vari, vol. 43, fasc. 5.

11. Il materiale confluisce in un ampio dossier del 1914: ASV, SS, 1914, rubr. 18, fascc. 3-11.

12. Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 1911: 513-515.

13. Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 1912: 526-527.

14. L'archivio del Prelato è conservato a Roma nell'Archivio Generale Scalabriniano.

15. Archivio Salesiano Centrale (Roma), F 731, fascicolo su Toronto, camicia relativa al 1933-1934.

16. ASV, SS, rubr. 251, fasc. 1, f. 113.

17. 33a Settimana Sociale dei Cattolici, Le migrazioni interne ed internazionali nel mondo contemporaneo, Roma, Edizioni Settimane Sociali, 1961. Si veda inoltre il nuovo impegno scalabriniano per l'approfondimento culturale, testimoniato dalla fondazione dei Centri Studi Emigrazione di Roma e New York e delle interrelate riviste Studi Emigrazione ed International Migration Review.

18. L'archivio dell'ACIM fa parte di quello del Center for Migration Studies di New York.

19. http://www.chiesacattolica.it/cci/cei/uffici /migrantes/voce2/unpim/ladiaspora/MISSION

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"CULTURAL ETHNIC BROKERS": LE MAESTRE PIE FILIPPINI NEGLI STATI UNITI*

ELISABETTA VEZZOSI

Negli Stati Uniti la storiografia è divisa tra la storia religiosa, che è nata e si è sviluppata nei dipartimenti universitari di studi religiosi e nelle scuole teologiche, e la storia delle donne e di genere, che alberga nei dipartimenti di storia e nei programmi di *women's studies*. A tutt'oggi raramente sono stati gettati ponti tra questi due settori (Griffith) e ciò ha fatto sì che ancora scarsa - anche se certo cresciuta negli ultimi dieci anni (Weinberg) - risulti la produzione sulla storia delle suore immigrate.

Più in generale, sebbene la storiografia abbia documentato come i pastori che operavano in parrocchie nazionali siano stati spesso dei veri e propri leaders etnici e abbiano esercitato un formidabile potere nell'ambito delle comunità locali (D'Agostino), e come le stesse suore abbiano svolto un ruolo di "cultural ethnic brokers" (mediatrici culturali etniche) attraverso la loro attività di mediazione tra immigrati e società ospitante (Edwards), poco è stata indagato il significato di etnicità all'interno della cultura delle congregazioni religiose, sia maschili che femminili. Ancor oggi - come rilevava Rosoli all'inizio degli anni Novanta - la storia dell'emigrazione religiosa femminile è trascurata nonostante la rilevante presenza delle suore "non soltanto sotto il profilo quantitativo, tanto sono state numerose le loro iniziative, ma soprattutto dal punto di vista qualitativo per i nuovi ambiti di intervento (quali scuole femminili, orfanotrofi, ospedali)" (301). Non sono stati quindi pienamente affrontati i temi relativi ad atteggiamenti di resistenza o adattamento all'assimilazione: come le suore cioè siano state al tempo stesso oggetti e soggetti di quei processi di americanizzazione che hanno contribuito a mediare, da un lato sostenendo il valore e il significato delle culture di provenienza, dall'altro attivando e influenzando processi di integrazione culturale.

Secondo i dati riportati da Rosoli, nel 1900 esistevano 3811 scuole parrocchiali sostenute dalle varie parrocchie etniche, per la maggior parte gestite da suore. Ben 91 delle 119 comunità di suore che si trovarono in America nell'800 avevano origini europee e l'ostilità che esse incontrarono da parte delle forze anticattoliche presenti nella società americana fu fortissima. Nel corso delle varie ondate anticattoliche degli anni Venti, Cinquanta e Novanta dell'800 le suore furono le prime ad essere attaccate, spesso da parte della gerarchia cattolica stessa. I vescovi e i parroci cattolici - etnici o non - furono nei confronti delle suore talvolta fortemente ingerenti nella selezione e nei loro affari interni, talaltra paternalisti (Quinn), sempre nell'ambito di una struttura fortemente patriarcale. In alcuni casi - come in quello delle Maestre Pie Filippini - fu proprio nella figura del Vescovo della Diocesi che esse trovarono il maggior sostegno alla loro

attività (Ewens). Lo scontro con i superiori fu piuttosto dovuto a questioni legate all'adattamento dei costumi europei ai bisogni della chiesa cattolica statunitense, cioè a problemi di americanizzazione.

Mentre alcuni studiosi hanno teso ad evidenziare la disponibilità delle suore immigrate ad abbracciare in modo acritico i valori della società americana, in sintonia con la Chiesa Cattolica ufficiale, e a legittimare la presenza cattolica nelle comunità etniche italiane, altri hanno evidenziato le potenzialità emancipatorie del loro lavoro di istruzione per le ragazze italiane dei ceti meno abbienti, divenendo in tal modo veri e propri agenti di cambiamento quando riuscirono ad entrare in sintonia con le trasformazioni della società statunitense. Svincolandosi dalle strette e spesso anguste maglie dei poteri delle gerarchie ecclesiastiche statunitensi e vaticane, esse riuscirono spesso a ritagliarsi spazi di iniziativa autonoma.

Il lavoro di istruzione, e soprattutto l'ampiezza della rete educativa costruita da molte congregazioni religiose femminili, così come la preparazione delle suore insegnanti indicano (Conheady) che i membri di tali congregazioni possedevano un livello di professionalità manageriale e di abilità di pianificazione delle risorse che erano particolarmente significative per delle donne. Questa loro autonomia nella gestione delle risorse fa sì che, sebbene esse non si siano mai associate a gruppi organizzati di donne per i diritti civili (infatti non c'è alcuna menzione di loro nei movimenti per la temperanza, abolizionisti o antischiavisti), stessero acquisendo nei fatti molti dei diritti per i quali le donne si battevano. Attraverso questo lavoro esse ottennero diritti per loro stesse e per altre donne e assunsero ruoli decisionali sia nell'ambito della Chiesa Cattolica che della società: "La percezione che si aveva e ancora si ha di esse è quella di detenere un ruolo di *leadership* nell'ambito della Chiesa" (Conheady 27).

Viene spontaneo chiedersi se le Pie Madri Filippini siano state in qualche modo facilitate nell'emigrazione americana e nelle successive fasi di lavoro essendo dotate, così come le Venerini, - scrive Caffiero richiamandosi alle loro origini - "di una notevole libertà di movimento e di spostamenti, in campagna come in città." La loro fuoriuscita dagli spazi chiusi rompeva infatti "con i divieti sociali relativi alla mobilità spaziale - e sociale - di donne sole" superando "l'idea e il modello post-tridentini, a lungo dominanti, anche se spesso disattesi nella pratica, che insistevano su una religiosità femminile quasi esclusivamente claustrale o paramonastica, comunque separata dalla società e lontana da forme attive di servizio" (Caffiero 100). Fu dunque negli Stati Uniti, "territorio di frontiera," che esse poterono sperimentare e potenziare le forme di autonomia che erano proprie della congregazione divenendo abili nella raccolta di denaro e nella pianificazione delle risorse.

Nel 1960, in occasione del 50° anniversario della fondazione americana delle Maestre Pie Filippini, il Presidente Eisenhower avrebbe dichiarato: "Nel corso degli anni questo istituto ha svolto per molti un'intensa attività di servizio. La nostra società ha un grande debito verso coloro che hanno dedicato la loro vita a favorire lo sviluppo morale e intellet-

tuale dei giovani" (Marchione, *Pictorial History* 21). Questo breve ringraziamento ci parla del ruolo "civile" e patriottico che nel corso di mezzo secolo sarebbe stato attribuito all'Istituto delle Maestre, giunte negli Stati Uniti, non senza difficoltà, nel 1910.

La partenza delle Maestre Pie per gli Stati Uniti non era stata volontaria. La Madre Superiora della Casa Generalizia romana, Suor Rosa Leoni, si era anzi opposta alla richiesta del parroco della parrocchia di San Gioacchino, a Trenton, che cercava suore italiane per insegnare nella sua scuola parrocchiale. Fondata da Luigi Pozzi nel 1901 la parrocchia di San Gioacchino non aveva avuto vita facile. La comunità italiana ivi residente era povera e dopo un anno di campagna per la raccolta di fondi per costruire la chiesa e la scuola il parroco era riuscito a mettere insieme soltanto 1500 dollari. La scuola fu completata nel maggio del 1910 con l'aiuto finanziario del Vescovo di Trenton, James McFaul, le cui simpatie per gli italiani non erano comunque particolarmente spiccate (Turtora 5-10). La pervicacia di Monsignor Pozzi - che come altri parroci immigrati ebbe una importante funzione propulsiva per la crescita della Chiesa Cattolica in mezzo alle comunità immigrate (Schelbitzki Pickle) - lo condusse, grazie all'intervento dell'Elemosiniere Segreto del Papa, l'Arcivescovo Augusto Silj, a rivolgere le sue richieste direttamente al Papa. Pio X ordinò quindi alle Maestre Pie di recarsi negli Stati Uniti. Obiettivi del Vaticano erano la preservazione della fede cattolica tra gli italiani, la creazione di una forte barriera al dilagare del protestantesimo, l'americanizzazione delle seconde generazioni. Scriveva l'*Osservatore Romano*:

> Il bimbo di genitori italiani nato in America si orienta in genere verso l'America, ne è cittadino, ne accetta l'intero patrimonio spirituale politico, sociale, ha insomma quel che si dice lo spirito americano; nessun'altra nazionalità si americanizza tanto facilmente... Ecco quindi la opportunità di avere un maestro che, pur ammaestrando gli scolari secondo i programmi vigenti non dimentichi i sistemi educativi che meglio si conformano col carattere italiano. In altre parole, avere la maestra italiana per gli scolari italo-americani. In questo modo si ottiene il miglior sistema di americanizzazione graduale e non eccessiva. (De Glauco 69)

La partenza delle suore fu frettolosa: il 4 agosto 1910 lasciavano Napoli alla volta degli Stati Uniti. Erano in cinque: Suor Concetta Loreti, superiora e direttrice del Noviziato e Probandato, Suor Maria Figliamonti, prima assistente e segretaria, Suor Ninetta Jonata, seconda assistente, maestra delle educande e guardarobiera; Suor Florinda Martella, infermiera e sagrestana, Suor Maria de Renzi, incaricata del lavoro domestico. Erano impaurite, non conoscevano l'inglese. Avrebbero dovuto impararlo in fretta dal momento che il principale obiettivo di Pozzi sembrava quello di formare "cittadini migliori per l'America di razza italiana" (De Glauco 59). Proprio a questo fine le suore sarebbero state sottoposte a lezioni incalzanti di inglese. Scrivevano da Trenton nell'agosto del 1913 alla Madre Generale a Roma: "Studiamo l'inglese mattina e sera, poiché il Parroco non brama altro."[1] Arrivate a Trenton il 17 agosto 1910, il 5 settembre aprirono le porte della scuola di San Gioacchino, ma gli inizi furono scoraggianti dal momento che ad iscriversi furono soltanto 13 alunni. Nonostante la calda accoglienza iniziale (un corteo di oltre

1000 parrocchiani), la diffidenza e lo scetticismo della comunità italiana erano forti (Vecoli) e solo con l'apertura dell'asilo gli alunni sarebbero aumentati a 110. L'asilo, come pure la scuola elementare, erano misti, così come lo erano stati in Italia fin dalle origini dell'Istituto delle Maestre Pie,[2] che furono tra le prime a seguire questo modello.

Secondo il censimento del 1910 Trenton possedeva 96.815 abitanti, di cui gli italiani costituivano il 17,5%, secondi solo ai tedeschi tra i vari gruppi etnici. Una comunità italiana, dunque, piuttosto numerosa, divisa al suo interno su basi regionali. La parrocchia di San Gioacchino, ad esempio, vedeva una marcata ostilità tra umbri e campani, tanto che i primi impedirono ai loro figli di frequentare la scuola parrocchiale insieme ai napoletani, fin quando non si furono convinti che anche questi ultimi erano in grado di parlare un corretto italiano. Le suore non dovevano soltanto mediare questi conflitti nel tentativo di mantenere compatta la comunità italiana e indebolire progressivamente le diffidenze nei loro confronti, ma anche provvedere materialmente alla propria sopravvivenza con lavori di cucito e tessitura, a differenza di quanto avveniva in Italia, ma non molto diversamente invece da ciò che facevano le donne italiane immigrate. I problemi più gravi, comunque, sembravano derivare dalla ostilità della gerarchia cattolica statunitense. Nel 1912, infatti, a Monsignor Pozzi ammalato, succedeva un parroco americano, il reverendo Griffin, che fin dall'inizio manifestò l'intento di sostituire alle italiane suore americane, un atteggiamento del resto non nuovo da parte sia di parroci e vescovi americani, che di alcuni sacerdoti di origine immigrata nei confronti di congregazioni femminili immigrate. La comunità italiana di Trenton si ribellò violentemente al tentativo di espulsione delle suore: le donne italiane minacciarono direttamente Griffin irrompendo nell'auditorium della chiesa durante un suo sermone, i media furono usati a piene mani soprattutto attraverso la denuncia sulla stampa italo-americana, varie forme di mobilitazione furono organizzate da un "comitato di difesa" composto da tre napoletani (un notaio, un calzolaio e un operaio). Questi sforzi ebbero risultati molto tardivi e sofferti dal momento che anche il vescovo di Trenton avallava la posizione di Griffin (Marchione).

Così un tal Di Marco, in uno scritto del 1921, descriveva quei giorni mostrando una violenza fisica e verbale che non solo indicava l'attaccamento degli immigrati italiani alle suore, ma le forme che poteva assumere la resistenza alle istanze americanizzatrici sostenute dalla gerarchia cattolica:

> No corpo di mille sacerdoti pagani. Giurammo che prima di vedere le nostre monache fuori dalla loro casa, doveva sprofondarsi il cielo. Guai! Gli italiani avrebbero dato una scarica di legnate anche ai santi se ardivano mettere fuori le nostre monache. Comprendemmo subito che mastro Grifone (Sic!) non solo voleva americanizzare la scuola ma anche la Chiesa, e allora addio il decoro della Colonia… addio patriottismo della nostra gioventù che sarebbe ricaduta nelle condizioni di prima della venuta delle nostre monache, odiando i genitori, il nome italiano e la patria... il Comitato eletto in quella riunione per la difesa delle nostre monache e della dignità della colonia era continuamente assediato dagli italiani nelle vie, nella fabbrica, in casa, e spesse volte minacciato, del ché durava fatica a calmarli, a non venire ad eccessi deplorevoli e di attendere.[3]

Un ulteriore, forte ostruzionismo nei confronti delle suore fu infine messo in atto dalle amministrazioni scolastiche locali e dal Dipartimento Statale per l'Istruzione, che non ritenevano le suore immigrate capaci di formare buoni cittadini americani: esse erano in qualche modo accusate di essere *unamerican,* antiamericane. Il sovrintendente scolastico dello stato di New York, Skinner, avrebbe dichiarato in quegli anni che il modo di vita condotto dalle suore era così lontano da quello del cittadino comune americano che esse non erano qualificate a preparare persone alla vita (Conheady 26). Del resto, se è vero che le suore aiutarono a preservare le tradizioni e le usanze della comunità italiana, incoraggiarono la partecipazione alle feste tradizionali della parrocchia e si associarono agli immigrati nell'onorare i santi patroni, il loro lavoro di assimilazione nei confronti dei figli degli immigrati sarebbe comunque proseguito.

Il peso delle difficoltà e del durissimo clima in cui le Maestre erano costrette a vivere non tardò a farsi sentire. Tutte erano scoraggiate, alcune cominciarono ad avere disturbi di salute: Suor Concetta Loreti, ammalata, desiderava tornare in Italia, così come un'altra suora - di cui si ignora l'identità - che soffriva di disturbi nervosi legati allo sradicamento. Nel luglio 1913 la Loreti, accompagnata da suor Maria Figliamonti, ripartiva per l'Italia. In settembre si sarebbero avuti quattro nuovi arrivi tra cui la nuova Madre Superiora, Suor Maria Manni che, essendo spesso sofferente e non riuscendo ad adattarsi all'ambiente americano, lasciava gli Stati Uniti soltanto sette mesi più tardi, accompagnata da Suor Ninetta Jonata. Certo sull'abbandono della Manni non deve essere esistito consenso tra le Maestre se, nella lettera precedentemente citata, esse scrivevano: "Di ciò che riguarda l'imminente risoluzione della partenza della Superiora e di Suor Maria, non stiamo qui a parlare, anzi facciamo come se non fosse avvenuta."[4]

In occasione del viaggio in Italia Ninetta Jonata - stimolata anche da Monsignor Silj - avrebbe rivisto il suo paese d'origine, Guglionesi, tra le montagne d'Abruzzo, dove era nata e cresciuta fino a 19 anni e dove "visse la normale vita del popolo di quella regione" (*Religious Teachers*). Il ritorno in Italia e l'incontro con la famiglia sembrarono darle nuovo vigore, far riemerge in lei quel perduto senso della leadership che da bambina la vedeva spesso a capo di un gruppo (*Five Decades* 1). Scriveva di Lei Scilla De Glauco in un libro apologetico sulle Maestre Pie scritto durante il fascismo e con intonazioni proprie del periodo: "La Jonata è maschia nell'azione e nei propositi" (77). E in un articolo di giornale a firma Peter O'Connor, del 27 luglio 1957, a proposito della Jonata si leggeva: "…una religiosa di grande talento, pronta ad andare avanti, pronta ad essere perfettamente obbediente e, al tempo stesso, come Superiora, a seguire personalmente la via del coraggio e, nel farlo, ad ispirare le giovani donne americane...."[5] Sul forte carattere della Jonata si sarebbe espresso anche Giuseppe Prezzolini, che conobbe le Maestre Pie per averne avute allieve alcune alla Columbia University di New York: "Per me Madre Ninetta è una grande figura dell'emigrazione italiana. Dopo Santa Francesca Cabrini non saprei indicarne una uguale" (158-59).

Fu dunque Ninetta Jonata, Superiora di San Gioacchino dal 1916, ad avviare una

nuova fase della storia dell'Istituto negli Stati Uniti. Con la sua energia e forza di carattere, e al tempo stesso con inconsueta flessibilità, la Jonata incoraggiava le sue suore ad impegnarsi nel lavoro sociale tra gli immigrati (*Five Decades* 2-3), in particolar modo con i vecchi, gli orfani, i malati (soprattutto in occasione dell'epidemia di febbre spagnola che si abbatté sulla comunità tra il 1917 e il 1918). Fu ancora Ninetta a tentare un maggior radicamento nella comunità italiana anche attraverso il potenziamento della partecipazione delle suore alle feste religiose popolari, spesso malviste dalla gerarchia cattolica americana come tendenzialmente pagane. Si può ipotizzare che sia stato il riconoscimento del lavoro svolto dalle suore da parte dei parrocchiani ad attribuire loro potere, a toglierle dalla marginalizzazione a cui erano tendenzialmente condannate da parte della gerarchia cattolica, a creare un diverso stile di leadership - caratterizzato da rapporti personali con i parrocchiani, da un atteggiamento più collaborativo, meno gerarchico e più inclusivo -, ad attivare un processo di *empowerment* possibile in questa forma solo attraverso il processo emigratorio (Wallace).

Nonostante le molteplici difficoltà, i dati forniti dai rapporti del sovrintendente della parrocchia di Trenton parlavano di un buon incremento di alunni a San Gioacchino: 555 per il 1915 (253 maschi e 302 femmine), 580 per il 1916 (286 maschi e 294 femmine), 512 per il 1917 (221 maschi e 290 femmine), 621 per il 1918 (303 maschi e 318 femmine). Rimaneva invece invariato il numero delle insegnanti, sette, ivi compresa una signorina laica che insegnava lingua inglese.[6] La vita delle Maestre continuò comunque ad essere faticosa: allontanate dalla parrocchia di St. James per motivi sconosciuti, furono sostituite dalle suore del Sacro Cuore, mentre da Roma non ricevevano alcun tipo di incoraggiamento, ma piuttosto l'invito a tornare abbandonando l'impresa.

Fu dunque centrale in questa fase la figura di Monsignor Thomas Walsh, dal maggio 1918 vescovo di Trenton, e destinato a divenire la loro guida, il loro leader, e soprattutto il loro direttore spirituale (Furlong 3). Il Vescovo, che aveva studiato per alcuni anni in Italia, fin dal suo ritorno a Buffalo, New York, nei primi anni Dieci - come cancelliere e segretario del Vescovo - si era fortemente interessato ai problemi degli immigrati cattolici e al tempo stesso posto con forza il tema dell'americanizzazione[7] (in quegli anni nella Diocesi di Buffalo c'erano 125.000 immigrati, soprattutto italiani e polacchi, che Walsh aveva cercato di aiutare e sostenere in più occasioni): "Walsh sognava di dare anche ai piccoli italiani il mezzo di potersi evolvere e divenire degni e fattivi cittadini degli Stati Uniti" ("Tu es sacerdos" 6). Fu questa sua preoccupazione a fargli identificare nelle Maestre Pie l'Istituto più adatto all'insegnamento agli immigrati (le Maestre Pie continueranno ad insegnare l'italiano nelle loro scuole fino alla II Guerra Mondiale), tanto che le sostenne sempre finanziariamente e moralmente, non solo impedendo il loro ritorno in Italia, quando furono richiamate a Roma, grazie ad un telegramma dal testo sibillino- "Governo impedisce partenza"-, ma cercando di operare per un loro elevamento culturale perché fossero in grado di lavorare sullo stesso piano delle congregazioni americane. Certo ebbe fondamentale importanza il suo incontro con la Jonata, di cui lo colpì l'intra-

prendenza e la decisione e fu forse da quel momento che nella sua mente si fece sempre più chiara l'idea che la comunità americana delle Maestre Pie Filippini avrebbe dovuto essere allargata e americanizzata anche attraverso il reclutamento di suore americane e italo-americane. Informatosi sulle condizioni di vita delle suore lasciò a Ninetta un assegno di $ 100 affinché potesse comprare almeno delle sedie.

Sebbene nel 1921 fosse arrivato da Roma un gruppo di ben 20 suore, le vocazioni continuavano ad essere insufficienti, e anche la lettera che il Vescovo inviò ad alcune centinaia di sacerdoti italiani o che avevano cura degli italiani - compresa la Diocesi di Trenton[8] - sollecitando l'invio di ragazze italiane o italo-americane che avessero la vocazione a Villa Victoria, rimase senza risposta. Per le nuove arrivate del 1921 Walsh organizzò un programma intensivo di studio dell'inglese, di storia americana, di educazione civica e pedagogia e insistette perché acquistassero la cittadinanza americana, tanto che nel 1922 già 34 ne avevano fatto richiesta (Brady 25). Scriveva Miles Muredach nel 1923 a proposito delle Maestre Pie Filippini che tutte le suore della comunità avrebbero dovuto divenire cittadine americane prima possibile; solo così ai bambini italo-americani che avrebbero gremito le loro scuole sarebbero stati inculcati vera fede e vero americanismo: "Così sarebbe stato risolto un grande problema dell'americanizzazione" (Zarrilli 23, 26).

Nonostante lo scarso afflusso di vocazioni americane, grazie all'intervento di Walsh l'Istituto progredì e si sviluppò. Nel settembre del 1920 il Vescovo si era incontrato con un ricco finanziere newyorkese, James Cox Brady - un protestante che soltanto più tardi si sarebbe convertito al cattolicesimo - che avrebbe concesso un dono di 50.000 dollari per l'acquisto di una proprietà che divenisse per le Maestre Pie Filippini Casa Madre, Noviziato, Probandato e Scuola. Era stata dunque comprata una proprietà vicino a Trenton, sul fiume Delaware, che nel maggio 1921 era divenuta Villa Victoria, in memoria della moglie di Brady, Victoria Mary Perry. La generosità di Brady, che oltretutto non apparteneva alla stessa religione, non deve del resto meravigliare: le donazioni da parte di imprenditori, finanzieri, amministrazioni cittadine, e l'alleanza tra elite politica protestante e gerarchia cattolica erano infatti piuttosto diffuse e avevano spesso la funzione di facilitare l'integrazione degli immigrati nella società americana e di controllare politicamente la comunità etnica come baluardo contro il radicalismo immigrato.

Il Vescovo aveva del resto idee ben chiare sui programmi di americanizzazione di cui la Chiesa Cattolica avrebbe dovuto farsi promotrice. La sua carriera ecclesiastica fu intrecciata sempre con un forte impegno patriottico. Walsh sostenne attivamente la campagna del Presidente Wilson per l'ingresso degli Stati Uniti nella Prima Guerra Mondiale, fu membro della Commissione Esecutiva della Croce Rossa durante la guerra e nel 1911 aveva fondato la Mount Carmel Guild - un'associazione di volontarie cattoliche che fornivano servizi che andavano dal Day Nursery alle classi di americanizzazione -. Inoltre, come Pastore di St. Joseph, egli organizzò probabilmente la prima novena pubblica negli Stati Uniti per il successo delle forze armate americane nel dicembre del 1917; nel giorno della decorazione, nel 1919, celebrò una messa in memoria degli uomini di

Camp Dix che avevano dato la vita per combattere per "make the world safe for democracy" (Brady 21) e nel 1942 si sarebbe impegnato nelle attività legate al "A Day of Prayer for Our Nation" proclamato dal Presidente Roosevelt. Nei primi anni Cinquanta Don Giuseppe De Luca avrebbe scritto che nel momento in cui fosse stata scritta la storia del passaggio del cattolicesimo negli Stati Uniti da una condizione minore ad una forza di grandi dimensioni, essa sarebbe stata dominata dell'Arcivescovo Walsh.[9]

La Fondazione americana delle Maestre Pie Filippini, in piena espansione fin dall'inizio degli anni Venti, fu eretta a Vicariato nel marzo 1922, e Suor Teresa Saccucci ne fu eletta Madre Vicaria; nel febbraio del 1928 divenne Provincia - la "Provincia di Santa Lucia" - con Madre Saccucci come Madre Provinciale. Quando, nel 1928, il Vescovo Walsh si trasferì da Trenton a Newark, volle trasferire la Casa Madre presso la sua diocesi. Il 16 febbraio 1930 fu dunque inaugurata Villa Lucia, a Morristown, che divenne il centro di tutte le attività, mentre Villa Victoria continuò ad essere il centro di formazione per le giovani donne che aspiravano alla vita ecclesiastica. Il 27 gennaio 1940 Villa Lucia divenne Villa Walsh. Alla morte del Vescovo, il 6 giugno 1952, il giornale diocesano di Newark, *The Advocate,* lo riconobbe come "il fondatore americano" dell'Ordine.

Dal I gennaio 1934 la comunità si accollava per intero le spese del proprio mantenimento, grazie a un lascito mensile di Brady di 1.000 dollari e ai guadagni delle suore che erano rimasti intatti per 15 anni. Delle 210 Maestre Pie Filippini che nel 1935 facevano parte della comunità americana, 64 erano italiane e 146 italo-americane e molte di loro avevano una istruzione superiore. La Fondazione americana avrebbe continuato ad allargarsi nei decenni successivi per raggiungere poi un consolidamento negli anni Sessanta.

Nonostante il fondamentale sostegno del vescovo americano, indispensabile per le Maestre Pie così come per molti altri Ordini religiosi femminili immigrati almeno in alcune fasi della loro storia negli Stati Uniti - anche se il rapporto con la gerarchia cattolica americana fu solitamente, come abbiamo visto, piuttosto ambivalente -, saranno le suore stesse a ridefinire ruoli, comportamenti, a rimodellare la loro identità religiosa, individuale e collettiva, generalmente non appiattendosi rispetto al contesto americano, ma attivando o potenziando alcune doti che in Italia sarebbero probabilmente rimaste sommerse: l'atteggiamento con cui le Filippini e altri gruppi sono state in grado di gestire le loro case e scuole ne sono un esempio, così come il riconoscimento di una forte leadership interna al gruppo, la conduzione graduale di programmi di americanizzazione che favorisse i processi di assimilazione senza sollevare resistenze all'interno della comunità attraverso la conservazione di valori e usanze propriamente italiani, senza mai fare discriminazione di razza (in questo incoraggiate anche dal Vescovo Walsh che sostenne sempre la necessità di classi anche per i bambini neri), religione o estrazione sociale e partecipando alla vita quotidiana della comunità etnica.

È certo innegabile che per molti aspetti della loro vita nell'America a cavallo tra 800 e 900 le suore abbiano goduto di opportunità aperte a poche altre donne in quel tempo,

soprattutto esse si batterono spesso per affermare la propria auto-identità nell'ambito della particolare esperienza della religione organizzata (Swatos): coinvolgimento in lavori significativi, accesso a posizioni amministrative e gestionali di rilievo, possibilità di vivere in comunità fondate su sorellanza e amicizia egalitaria, libertà dalle responsabilità legate al matrimonio e alla maternità. Fu forse proprio questa libertà dai ruoli limitativi generalmente riservati alle donne, a renderle capaci di esercitare un'influenza così potente sulla Chiesa Americana (Ewens 107).

Se allo stato attuale della ricerca risulta complesso valutare l'impatto che le Maestre Pie Filippini ebbero sulla società statunitense della prima metà del secolo (circa 50.000 bambini italo-americani frequentarono le scuole gestite dalle Maestre), è invece evidente il loro ruolo di mediatrici culturali tra comunità etnica, gerarchia cattolica americana e società americana in senso più vasto, secondo programmi non lontani da quelli condotti dagli assistenti sociali laici. La loro storia dimostra la necessità, più volte richiamata, di abbandonare la logica dicotomica e polarizzata di categorie ormai statiche e antiquate - "oppresse" o "detentrici di potere," "subordinate" o "uguali," "rispettose delle tradizionali gerarchie di genere" o "libere" - per abbracciare una visione più fluida in cui la storia delle donne laiche e delle religiose non appaia più così divisa.

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NOTE

* Il saggio è una rielaborazione dell'articolo "Mediatrici etniche e cittadine: Le Maestre Pie Filippini negli Stati Uniti," in Emma Fattorini, a cura di, *Santi, Culti, Simboli nell'età della secolarizzazione (1815-1915),* Torino, Rosenberg & Sellier, 1997: 495-514.

1. Lettera alla Madre Superiora, a firma "le Maestre d'America," Trenton, 15 agosto 1913, Archivio Maestre Pie Filippini, Roma.

2. G. Rocca 128, 180, in cui si rileva come gli asili delle Maestre Pie fossero misti a partire dal 1828 e le scuole dopo il 1870.

3. *Ricordo alla Rev.ma Madre Generale delle Maestre Pie Filippini, Suor Rosa Leoni. Note e appunti della colonia italiana di Trenton, N.J. e l'opera grandiosa delle Suore Filippini*. Trenton, 22 giugno 1921, manoscritto a firma Di Marco, Archivio Maestre Pie Filippini, Roma.

4. Lettera alla Madre Generale a firma "le Maestre d'America," cit.

5. O'Connor, Ritaglio di giornale non identificato in data 27 luglio 1957, Archivio Maestre Pie Filippini, Morristown, N.J.

6. *Fourth annual Report* (1915); *Fifth Annual Repor*t, (1916); *Sixth Annual Report* (1917); *Seventh Annual* (1918).

7. Sulla formazione e l'attività del vescovo Walsh, con particolari riferimenti al lavoro compiuto con le Maestre Pie Filippini vedi Brady.

8. Traduzione dall'inglese in italiano della predica pronunciata da sua Eccellenza Reverendissima Tommaso Giuseppe Walsh, l'attuale vescovo di Newark - già dall'anno 1918 all'anno 1928 vescovo di Trenton - alla Messa Pontificale celebrata nella Cappella di Villa Lucia, Morristown, N.J., Casa Madre americana delle

Maestre Pie Filippini, lunedì 30 dicembre 1935, nella celebrazione del giubileo d'argento, venticinquesimo anniversario della fondazione dell'Istituto delle Maestre Pie Filippini in America a Trenton, N.J., Archivio Pie Madri Filippini, Morristown, N.J., p. 3.

9. *L'Osservatore Romano,* 4 luglio 1952.

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"IMMIGRANT WOMEN RELIGIOUS: A SPLINTERED ETHNIC AND SPIRITUAL IDENTITY" OVVERO LE PALLOTTINE: LE MOLTEPLICI IDENTITÀ DI UNA ISTITUZIONE RELIGIOSA FEMMINILE

MARIA SUSANNA GARRONI

Vi sono luoghi, momenti storici, condizioni socioeconomiche che per i motivi più vari fanno conflagrare certezze acquisite, creano un corto circuito fra progetti di vita e impostazioni culturali che li sottendono, fra aspettative e pratiche per conseguirle. Persone, culture, istituzioni e paesi che sanno tenersi in equilibrio durante la conflagrazione, ne sanno sopportare la tensione e sanno osservarla salvando selezionati pezzi del passato e costruendo col nuovo un futuro, non solo si salvano, ma si arricchiscono e contribuiscono all'evolversi della società di cui fanno parte. Ho la sensazione che l'ordine delle Pallottine, che chiamo così per brevità ma che è conosciuto ufficialmente come Congregazione delle Suore dell'Apostolato Cattolico abbia attraversato un simile momento tra il 1889, anno in cui cinque sue affiliate sbarcarono a New York, e il rafforzarsi e consolidarsi della Congregazione negli anni Venti del secolo scorso. In questo periodo esse furono capaci di trasformare la cultura di genere e la divisione del lavoro di cui erano figlie utilizzando tanto gli strumenti spirituali che quelli di classe di cui si erano appropriate nel corso della loro storia italiana e aprirono tanto l'Ordine in Italia che il mondo femminile dell'immigrazione italiana negli Stati Uniti al confronto con un diverso modello femminile, con una più ampia cultura di genere.

Nell'operare in questa direzione furono costrette a riformulare i rapporti di potere all'interno della Congregazione Pallottiana, individuando spazi di sofferta autonomia rispetto ai sacerdoti della loro stessa Congregazione e rivendicando per il loro ordine femminile un'indipendenza in origine insperata. Per raggiungere questo scopo utilizzarono nei modi che trovarono più opportuni i grimaldelli che l'organizzazione della gerarchia ecclesiastica offriva loro, appellandosi ora all'arcivescovo locale, ora al loro tutore romano - inizialmente il Cardinal Sebastiani - ora alla loro promessa d'obbedienza alla Madre Superiora. Certo non fu un processo indolore, né probabilmente del tutto cosciente o privo di ombre, di compromessi. Ma fu un processo storicamente operante di cui è necessario tener conto per comprendere non solo il processo di formazione di un ordine femminile ma anche a) di quali contenuti si è venuta sostanziando nel tempo l'identità italoamericana, b) la storia dell'Ordine dei Pallottini - che senz'altro con questa intrusione femminile dovette fare i conti, c) la storia della Chiesa nel suo complesso e della Chiesa cattolica americana.

L'ordine aveva già una consolidata tradizione di attività nel sociale e di presenza nelle scelte vocazionali nella Roma di Pio IX e di Leone XIII. Una Roma che aveva visto

l'insulto a Pio VI, l'esilio di Pio VII, l'emergere e l'infiltrarsi di Massoneria e Carboneria nelle pieghe della società papalina sin tra le fila dell'esercito pontificio, le rivolte del 1848, la fine del potere temporale dei Papi, la difficile ricollocazione dei fedeli cattolici fra uno stato nuovo, sconosciuto e temuto, e una Chiesa fragile, indecisa, alla ricerca di un nuovo ruolo spirituale e nuovi spazi politici.

È in questo contesto di sfaldamento spirituale e istituzionale che va collocata l'iniziativa evangelica di Vincenzo Pallotti, un sacerdote di profonda spiritualità e carità, e ben conosciuto nei circoli clerico-aristocratico-borghesi di Roma. Il 4 ottobre 1835 egli presentava al Cardinal Vicario Odescalchi la richiesta dell'approvazione della Società dell'Apostolato Cattolico. La Società, aperta all'attiva partecipazione dei laici e al loro contributo finanziario, secondo Pallotti, avrebbe dovuto essere una "molteplice Istituzione,"come la definì egli stesso, che operasse su tre livelli, per altro interagenti: 1) propagare la fede e la religione di Gesù Cristo presso gli infedeli e i non cattolici; 2) ravvivare, conservare, accrescere la fede fra i cattolici; 3) mettere in pratica la carità universale attraverso l'esercizio delle opere di misericordia spirituale e corporale (Nori 5-10). Questa attività di fede della Società doveva inverarsi in progetti concreti: scuole serali e gratuite per giovani indigenti, case di ospitalità e istruzione per "eliminare corruzione e scandalo fra le ragazze povere," ospedali per i soldati dell'esercito pontificio, missioni popolari in vari centri e campagne dello stato pontificio, strutture di assistenza per gli italiani emigrati a Londra (D'Imperio 8-9).

Sin dai primi tempi Vincenzo Pallotti pensò che a questa Società, che prevedeva lo sviluppo di un ordine sacerdotale, andasse affiancata anche "una comunità femminile," "una comunità di donne santamente diretta" che unisse due aspetti delle attività di misericordia, quello missionario e quello caritativo-sociale, specie per le ragazze povere e abbandonate. Nel 1836 fu presa in affitto una casa per raccogliere queste ragazze con l'impegno materiale, attivo di alcune signore romane, mogli, sorelle, o "donne zelanti" nubili o vedove, legate in qualche modo ai collaboratori della Società. Ma non si può ancora parlare di un'organizzazione femminile della società.

Poi Roma fu stravolta dal colera. Quando l'epidemia terminò, le condizioni sociali per le ragazze orfane e povere erano diventate ancor più difficili. Pallotti pensò dunque di istituire nel 1838 una Pia Casa di Carità per le povere fanciulle abbandonate, dove "vengono educate nella pietà cristiana e sono provvedute di arte nelle mani e di pietà nel cuore onde essere utili alla società ove sono collocate nel miglior modo possibile" (Parole di Pallotti riportate da Nori 15). Per la formazione, l'istruzione, l'educazione religiosa e civile delle ragazze, Pallotti previde la nascita di un Istituto di suore che venissero educate ai valori spirituali e pratici della Società da lui elaborata e organizzata. Queste suore sarebbero state le Maestre delle ospiti della Casa, la cui amministrazione, invece, sarebbe ricaduta su un "governo esterno." La preparazione a tale compito fra le cooperatrici da lui scelte iniziò alla fine del 1838. Le richieste da parte del fondatore erano "lo spirito di sacrificio e la prontezza nel voler accettare appieno, come regola fondamentale, la vita e la

dottrina di Gesù Cristo" (Nori 17). La prima "superiora" fu Elisabetta Cozzoli, "madre matura di famiglia" (Nori 19). Nella Casa, le ragazze oltre ai lavori domestici di vario genere, venivano educate alla tessitura, alla confezione di coperte imbottite, a stirare il greccio e a lavorare a maglia, mentre "cooperatori" della Società espressamente indicati dal Pallotti procuravano il materiale per il lavoro, facilitavano la collocazione dei prodotti, cercavano lavoro alle ragazze alla fine del loro periodo di permanenza nella Casa e si adoperavano per provvedere ai bisogni della comunità (Nori 24-25).

Vi furono negli anni a seguire alterne vicende tanto della Società che della Pia Casa. Ma nel 1843 ritroviamo l'istituzione in buona salute e arricchita di una nuova iniziativa: l'apertura di una scuola pubblica del tutto gratuita per le ragazze povere del rione Monti. Perché le ragazze si trovassero in assoluta condizione di uguaglianza, era proibito loro di far doni di qualsiasi genere, neppure una candela o olio per le lampade, per evitare "abusi o parzialità." Nella loro scuola, alle ragazze veramente povere veniva insegnato a leggere e scrivere, a fare di conto, a cucire e ad eseguire altri lavori muliebri. Inoltre si insegnava a pregare e ad approfondire le verità di fede con un'ora di catechismo al giorno e la partecipazione quotidiana alla Santa Messa in parrocchia.

Nel 1848 si era ormai giunti a una più precisa definizione della istituzione e degli scopi delle "Sorelle - e non più Maestre - della Congregazione dell'Apostolato Cattolico" (Nori 64). L'ingresso nella Congregazione prevedeva la consacrazione pubblica attraverso l'assunzione di "promesse" e non di "voti": Vincenzo Pallotti voleva la consacrazione della persona non in virtù di una legge, di un impegno già preso, "ma in forza di un amore vivo, presente, palpitante,"in nome di una scelta consapevole quotidianamente operante: obbedienza, ma nella libertà (D'Imperio 84, 109-110). Le modalità di accesso alla Congregazione erano uguali sia per le suore che per i sacerdoti, ma a questi ultimi venivano demandate le opere di "santo ministero" mentre alle sorelle quelle di "carità e di zelo": ai sacerdoti i più alti compiti spirituali e di dirigenza intellettuale, alle sorelle la trasmissione e l'applicazione pratica di tanta fede nella quotidianità del sociale. Esse si impegnavano verso l'Istituto a "vivere in perpetuo in povertà, castità, ubbidienza; nella pratica della vita comune perfetta e nell'esercizio di qualunque opera di carità e di zelo gratuitamente" (D'Imperio 109). E don Vincenzo insistette molto con i suoi scritti sulla "letizia spirituale,"sul calore umano che doveva accompagnare la suora pallottina nelle sue attività, sul suo ruolo femminile di generatrice di vita e di luce: nella vita materiale e spirituale la suora era chiamata ad essere "madre" e in questa dimensione ad avere l'umiltà dell'abnegazione e l'obbedienza come quelle del Figlio al Padre e la docilità femminile disposta a ricevere il seme. Amore, carità, umiltà, obbedienza, letizia: questi i punti cardinali della bussola che indicava la via alle suore dell'Apostolato. E vita attiva, nel mondo, nella comunità per fare opera di Apostolato vero. In questi anni le suore del Pallotti lavoravano secondo Battistina Nori (51), in un campo trascurato dalle altre; si rivolgevano infatti alla "classe indigente."

Nel 1886 l'Ordine ebbe finalmente l'approvazione da parte della Chiesa delle sue

Costituzioni: in quell'anno vi erano tre case: due a Roma e una a Velletri. Le rappresentanti di queste case, riunitesi nel I° Capitolo Generale nel dicembre di quello stesso anno, nominarono Madre Raffaella Castellani come superiora e quattro sue consigliere. Venne poi creata una casa di Noviziato.

L'impresa Pallottiana era stata ora varata al meglio. Sotto la tutela spirituale e la responsabilità del cardinal Sebastiani, sostenute economicamente dai contributi dei laici della Società, queste suore in Italia sembravano avere un chiaro percorso da seguire, privo di significativi ostacoli se non quelli creati dalle difficoltà dei caratteri, o dalle solite, inevitabili, beghe interne. I loro rapporti con i confratelli Pallottini dovevano essere sufficientemente laschi da non suscitare particolari tensioni. Il serbatoio delle vocazioni era costituito dalla visibilità che l'Ordine era venuto acquistando e da quelle stesse ragazze che erano accolte nei ricoveri: di estrazione semplice, trovavano finalmente nell'Ordine, oltre che un sicuro porto spirituale, una sicurezza materiale, una rete di rapporti di comunità, uno scopo, una finalità che le collocava oltre le mura domestiche, nel mondo, ma ormai prive della loro identificabile identità d'origine e circondate da prestigio, autorevolezza sociale.

Questa situazione quasi "ovattata" terminò bruscamente per alcune di loro quando da New York giunse la richiesta del parroco della chiesa del Monte Carmelo, il pallottino inglese padre Micheal Carmody, di avere la collaborazione di suore italiane per prendersi cura degli italiani della zona, sempre più numerosi. La richiesta impiegò del tempo ad essere esaudita. Dal convento della Pia Casa di Carità nel 1886 venne una sollecitazione ad "accellerare la partenza per lontani lidi" di queste suore che erano pronte ad assolvere la loro missione.[1] Due anni dopo l'arcivescovo di New York - Michael Augustine Corrigan - e il padre Carmody, che aveva difficoltà con i fedeli italiani, stavano ancora aspettando.[2] Finalmente nel 1889 partirono cinque suore. Al loro arrivo furono accolte con entusiasmo dai padri della parrocchia e più ancora dai parrocchiani italiani. Maria Pia Borzi, la Superiora del piccolo drappello, scrisse al Padre Generale Pallottino in termini entusiastici:

> Noi qui ci troviamo contentissime, e questi nostri padri si prendono molta cura di noi… non può credere quanto siano stati contenti gli Italiani della nostra venuta. Essi volevano venirci ad incontrare alla stazione col concerto, ma il Superiore non volle… Tuttavia sono molto cortesi con noi, sia Italiani che Americani …il venerdì, giorno dell'Addolorata, si tenne la prima messa nella nostra cappella. Grande festa per noi, piena zeppa di gente, fra cui gente distinta….[3]

E continuava raccontando che oltre 120 bambini si erano già iscritti alla scuola, che altri volevano iscriversi, cominciando la scuola dopo Pasqua, che alcuni avevano già cominciato a studiare l'inglese.

Ma ad agosto la situazione si era già deteriorata. Padre Carmody si era accorto che le suore, con il loro catechismo e la loro scuola in italiano, non "americanizzavano" i fedeli come lui auspicava, la mancata conoscenza della lingua inglese da parte delle suore non le rendeva quel ponte verso la nuova patria di cui lui vedeva la necessità per questi riottosi

immigrati. Inoltre l'influenza delle suore nel corso del primo anno doveva aver preso una certa consistenza perché la scuola, secondo suor Marazzi che all'epoca aveva 21 anni ed era fra le cinque pioniere, aveva raggiunto i 300 alunni, fra ragazzi e ragazze. Non è escluso che questa attività, questa presenza, stesse rafforzando la comunità italiana disturbando in qualche modo la comunità irlandese e il suo parroco Carmody.

Sta di fatto che Carmody prima tentò di rimandarle in Italia e in seguito spinse la casa sacerdotale di Roma a proporre di accogliere fra le cinque Pallottine una religiosa, non del loro ordine, già in avanti con gli anni, che desiderava prendere il loro abito e che conosceva bene l'inglese (Marazzi 2-3). Con molta circospezione e molto tatto Maria Pia Borzi cercò di spiegare al Padre Generale dei Pallottini che sarebbe stato meglio demandare la questione alla loro Madre Generale e che se avevano bisogno di altre suore, "quando vi sarà necessario …allora approfitteremo della sua premura e della bontà dei nostri superiori."[4]

I sacerdoti, tuttavia, sia a Roma che a New York, pensarono di poter imporre alle cinque sorelle i loro progetti. Non sapevano a quali problemi sarebbero andati incontro.

Quando giunse, la nuova religiosa Suor Maria Fidelis fu accolta dal parroco e introdotta alle sorelle. Durante i sei mesi di quello che doveva essere il suo postulato, le sorelle manifestarono le loro perplessità sia alla Castellani a Roma che a Carmody. Ciononostante come Maria Fidelis prese l'abito, Carmody la nominò superiora, soppiantando la Borzi e sperando così di allentare il legame fra le suore della sua parrocchia e la casa madre di Roma. Suor Fidelis, che veramente aveva in mente di creare un nuovo ordine di cui essere la guida, come sostiene Marazzi e come dimostrano le successive vicende della religiosa (Marazzi 2; Nori 78-80), tentò presto di rimandare le due più anziane a Roma e di tenere presso di sé le giovani per i lavori manuali di basso livello (non è un caso che come prima iniziativa da superiora proibì loro l'uso dell'ingresso principale e le costrinse a usare quello del piano interrato "which was the servant's and the delivery men's entrance, such as the baker, milkman and butcher" (Marazzi 3). Nonostante le pressioni dello stesso Carmody, le suore italiane, salvo una, si rifiutarono di partire reclamando un ordine dal loro superiore Cardinal Sebastiani.

Cominciò un periodo di calvario. Furono messe a fare lavori pesanti, fu razionato loro il cibo, assegnate classi troppo numerose con turni sia la mattina che la sera (Marazzi 4). Ma uno dei sacerdoti Pallottini, l'italiano Porrazzo - che poi fu in qualche modo perseguitato dal vendicativo Carmody - fece giungere notizia di tutto ciò al vescovo di New York, Michael Augustine Corrigan. In un incontro con le suore, sentite le ragioni espresse con veemenza dalla Marazzi e notate personalmente le condizioni disagiate delle suore, il vescovo stesso sollevò dall'incarico la Fidelis, che si vide dalla sera alla mattina privata del suo diritto all'obbedienza delle ormai quattro suore italiane.

Nel marzo del 1891 Carmody e la Fidelis in pratica "cacciarono" le suore italiane dalla casa della parrocchia e le sistemarono in una casa vicina, per la quale il parroco pagava l'affitto. Due mesi dopo Carmody di nuovo dette loro l'ordine di partire per l'Italia soste-

nendo che l'arcivescovo l'aveva richiesto. Ormai smaliziate due di loro andarono subito dall'arcivescovo per scoprire che quest'ordine non era mai stato dato e suscitando la sincera ira di Corrigan nei confronti di Carmody. Furono rispedite alla parrocchia con l'ordine di rimanerci. Il problema era comunque ancora irrisolto. Benché Fidelis non fosse più la loro superiora, era lei ad amministrare la scuola e a gestire il denaro che Carmody passava per loro. Così le religiose italiane nel tempo libero arricchivano la dieta raccogliendo cicoria. Si erano ridotte a chiedere parte della merenda dei bambini adducendo che era per i poveri, per supplire al poco cibo che veniva loro elargito da suor Fidelis. Porrazzo ogni tanto le rifocillava. A luglio, a scuola finita, dovettero andare a vivere nelle aule della scuola per far risparmiare l'affitto. Le condizioni di vita in quella situazione si fecero ancora più disagiate. Poi furono spedite dalle suore di madre Cabrini per due settimane. Al loro ritorno si trovarono sbattute fuori dalla casa della parrocchia e dalla scuola. Senza sapere dove andare si rivolsero nuovamente al vescovo. In settembre il vescovo ottenne che Carmody affittasse per loro una piccola residenza, che risultò essere ancora più disagiata della precedente. Col sopraggiungere del freddo le suore saltavano alla corda per riscaldarsi. Aprirono un piccolo giardino d'infanzia per 12 bambini, perché non avevano il posto per ospitarne un numero maggiore. Se ne occupava suor Caterina, per 5 ¢ al giorno. Suor Serafina faceva dei lavori di ricamo per alcuni negozi della zona, suor Matilde faceva la sarta e suor Maria Pia si occupava della cucina. Le capacità apprese in Italia, la loro umile estrazione, che permetteva loro di sapersi inserire nella comunità etnica, e adattarsi ai disagi, i loro buoni rapporti con la stessa comunità, consentì loro di sopravvivere per un anno, di non cedere alle pressioni per farle desistere dalla loro missione.

Finalmente Carmody fu esonerato dal vescovo Corrigan, che gli impedì di rimettere piede nella sua arcidiocesi. Al suo posto giunse nel settembre del 1892 Luigi Monsell, di origine francese, il quale, tuttavia, non per questo guardò con maggior simpatia alle quattro suore. Ciononostante le riprese nella casa parrocchiale e le rimise ad insegnare. Ma intanto madre Matilde si era presa la tubercolosi. Fu curata, guarì quasi miracolosamente. Mansell tentò di rispedirla a Roma. Marazzi interpellò la sua superiora Castellani, che scrisse dicendole di non averla mai richiamata. Anzi, su invito del Cardinal Sebastiani, partirono da Roma altre tre sorelle. Le Pallottine ora erano sette. Disperato, Mansell si appellò all'arcivescovo, sostenendo di non poterle mantenere. Currigan gli impose di tenersele pur consentendo di non aumentare il budget ad esse dedicato. Di nuovo le condizioni di vita divennero intollerabili. Col permesso dell'arcivescovo, le sette suore si separarono dai loro confratelli Pallottini. "Finalmente libere,"scrive la Marazzi (19). In realtà solo parzialmente libere, perché comunque dovevano rispondere negli Stati Uniti alla guida spirituale e materiale del Rev. Ferrante, consigliere del Currigan per gli italiani (Brown 126).[5]

Questa figura di "tutore,"benché meno invadente dei parroci pallottiniani e più distante della madre generale e del referente dell'Ordine nella Curia di Roma, deteneva comunque un potere con il quale sarebbe stato necessario contrattare spazi decisionali,

soprattutto per quel che concerneva materie economiche e progetti di largo respiro. Non tanto con Ferrante, quanto con il suo successore, rev. Arcese, la superiora del momento, Matilde Marazzi, nel 1928 ebbe un notevole scontro, che coinvolse l'arcivescovato e divise la Congregazione americana. Fu probabilmente anche uno scontro generazionale, che vide contrapposta la vecchia guardia rappresentata dalla combattiva madre Marazzi, che non pochi grattacapi dette alle sue consorelle nel corso della sua esistenza, e le più giovani suore, già più ricettive alla cultura americana, come Giacinta Napolitano, che prese le difese del tutore. Tutto ciò tuttavia prenderà forma in tempi successivi.[6] Nel giugno del 1894 l'allora superiora Matilde Marazzi, che aveva 28 anni, e le sue tre colleghe aprirono un loro asilo, una scuola per l'insegnamento di materie elementari, di musica e di cucito e ricamo nella casa che avevano affittato a 40 dollari al mese. A copertura della cifra, le suore a turno giravano per la questua.

A settembre il parroco della chiesa di San Filippo a Newark, il rev. Lopomo, chiese la loro collaborazione per aprire una scuola. Vi andarono in tre, mentre le altre rimasero a New York. Dopo qualche mese le sorelle di Newark, ormai coscienti delle proprie capacità e desiderose di indipendenza, "strettamente di loro iniziativa,"aprirono una loro scuola a Orange.

Per il gruppo rimasto a New York il peso della casa divenne eccessivo. Si ritirarono in una più piccola e si risolsero a chiedere l'elemosina, sistematicamente, due volte a settimana. Ottennero per questo, come era per legge canonica, il permesso del vescovo (Marazzi 20). Andavano in coppia - e sembra che fosse suor Maria Pia Borzi, la più anziana e quella che era stata la prima superiora nel 1889 a uscire più frequentemente per elemosinare - e si accompagnavano con uno dei bambini della scuola - pratica che fu poi loro interdetta dal loro responsabile spirituale, rev. Arcese, negli anni Venti e Trenta.[7] Questo gruppo di tre donne in New Jersey e quattro a New York avevano un progetto in comune, perseguito con determinazione: radicare la loro autonomia nell'acquisto di proprietà, che anche in termini concreti le svincolasse dall'abbraccio soffocante delle parrocchie dei Pallottini, offrisse loro fonti di risorse economiche, permettesse l'assunzione in proprio di programmi a lunga scadenza.

Attraverso grandi capacità di risparmio e di gestione le prime a poter acquistare la prima proprietà della Congregazione in America, furono le tre sorelle del New Jersey. Successivamente, le Pallottine di New York riuscirono nel loro intento nel 1900, attraverso un loro fondo di $ 4.000 e il sostegno di Ferrante che garantì prestiti e mutui. Da quell'anno in poi le attività delle suore si moltiplicarono. Nel 1901 furono chiamate ad aprire un orfanotrofio, nel 1904 - chiamate dalla Società per gli Emigranti Italiani San Raffaele - aprirono una casa per gli emigranti (Burton 1-7). Sostenute inizialmente dai padri Scalabriniani, con le morte dello Scalabrini questi smisero di contribuire alla San Raphaele e il suo peso finanziario ricadde sulle spalle delle suore Pallottine (Brown 103). Insieme all'impegno rivolto ai bambini, le suore visitavano le famiglie degli immigrati italiani nei dintorni delle loro residenze, raccoglievano dati, facevano catechesi. Comin-

ciarono ad avere un seguito, alcune ragazze chiedevano di far parte della loro famiglia. Fra postulanti e suore venute dall'Italia si raccoglievano oramai intorno alla Congregazione una cinquantina di donne più o meno mature (O'Brien). Nel 1909 ottennero l'approvazione per aprire il noviziato, che ebbe sede a Kearny, nel New Jersey. Senza entrare ora nei dettagli cronologici, si può dire che da quel momento le suore Pallottine negli Stati Uniti videro un periodo di crescita notevole del loro ordine.

Questa esperienza americana dovette avere anche importanti riflessi sull'ordine più in generale. Nel 1905 venne riscritta la Costituzione e in quell'occasione dalle semplici promesse venne introdotto per le suore l'obbligo di assumere i voti (D'Imperio 115). Sembrò un passo necessario per stringere in modo più impegnativo le maglie di un ordine le cui diramazioni correvano il rischio di assumere anche un'autonomia spirituale che tanto da Roma che dalle gerarchie statunitensi veniva vista con una certa preoccupazione. Ma a prescindere da questo dato, un altro salta agli occhi. Dal 1911, quando la prima superiora generale Suor Castellani lasciò il suo posto, vennero elette a questa carica fino a tutto il periodo del secondo dopoguerra, suore che erano state negli Stati Uniti. È interessante infatti vedere quale curriculum ebbero le religiose che succedettero alla Castellani, che terminò il suo mandato di superiora generale nel 1911 (morì poi nel 1913). La prima religiosa a sostituire la Castellani fu Margarita Tarozzi. Era arrivata negli Stati Uniti nel 1889, fra le prime 5 pioniere. Rimase madre generale dal 1911 al 1925 (per morte) e fu venerata dall'Ordine come uno dei suoi più solidi pilastri. Dopo di lei fu chiamata a ricoprire questa carica Matilde Marazzi, che era arrivata anche lei fra le pioniere, era rimasta negli Stati Uniti per 22 anni e tra il 1921 e il 1924 era stata madre superiora regionale degli S.U.[8] Nel 1931 quando non venne rieletta (muore nel 1943), fu su Giacinta Napolitano che cadde la scelta. Giacinta era giunta negli Stati Uniti tra il 1894 e il 1895; rimase madre generale fino al 1937 (O'Brien).[9] Dal 1937 al 1946, periodo tremendo sia per l'Italia che per l'ordine, la madre superiora generale fu Madre Eugenia Rausse. Nata il 16 giugno 1880 a Schio, emigrata da bambina con i genitori in America (dal santino funebre, Archivio Pallottini), nel 1910 entrò come novizia nella Casa di Kearny, N.J., per poi passare nel 1913 all'Immacolata Concezione, dove fece professione nel 1914 (da lista O'Brien). Divenne superiora della Holy Rosary Villa in Union City, "una delle case più importanti d'America." Le suore Capitolari nel 1937 la scelsero come superiora generale.[10]

Per i due anni successivi le suore non riuscirono (o non vollero? Questo è un tema da approfondire) a nominarle una succeditrice. Finalmente nel 1948 il ruolo verrà coperto da suor Marta Mazziotte, prima madre generale "italoamericana," ovvero "nata in America" (*Centennial of the Immacolate Conception Province* 16). Fino a tutti gli anni Settanta, periodo fin'ora controllato, sembra che questa carica sia stata ricoperta da religiose che in un modo o nell'altro avevano esperienza d'America. Uno studio più approfondito dovrebbe porsi il problema di come mai le suore raccolte nel Capitolo elettorale operarono queste scelte.

Inoltre appare da molti resoconti che l'Ordine dall'Italia contribuì, anche se in misura più simbolica che effettiva, al sostentamento economico iniziale del piccolo drappello di suore italiane negli Stati Uniti. Quest'ultimo, tuttavia, ormai rinvigorito da numerose vocazioni e dall'attivo sostegno economico delle istituzioni vescovili statunitensi, dagli anni Venti in poi sostenne le iniziative delle consorelle in Italia. Non appare un caso che il primo acquisto di un terreno in proprio dell'ordine in Italia, sul quale costruire per la prima volta la propria, autonoma Casa Generalizia, sia avvenuto nel 1923 (Nori 86), quando era madre superiora generale quella madre Margherita Tarozzi che, andata negli Stati Uniti nel 1889, vi era poi rimasta fino al 1911, contribuendo a creare le varie sedi statunitensi. I collegamenti, con molta probabilità anche economici, fra il ramo italiano e quello statunitense rimasero sempre molto stretti e si rafforzarono negli anni trenta e nel dopoguerra. Dalla collaborazione dei due rami dell'Ordine, nacquero le diramazioni in Brasile prima e in Argentina poi, costruite con la presenza di Pallottine che vennero in egual misura dall'Italia e dagli Stati Uniti (Nori 87-89). Durante la guerra, tra il 1943 e il 1945, le suore in Italia dovettero sfollare da varie delle loro sedi e rifugiarsi in alcuni casi in montagna, altre volte in cittadine vicine; alcuni dei loro collegi furono bombardati, altri utilizzati dai tedeschi, altri abbandonati. Fu necessaria una grande opera di ricostruzione. Negli anni '50 rifiorirono, ampliando le loro iniziative in varie regioni d'Italia (Nori 95-108). E tutto ciò sempre sotto la direzione di Madri Superiori "americane,"per così dire. Questo nesso è ancora tutto da indagare, ma appare di indubbia rilevanza.

In definitiva l'emigrazione italiana da un lato e la presenza dei Padri Pallottini dall'altro fecero da volano all'irradiarsi dell'Ordine, ma ciò venne ad incrociarsi con esigenze di politica estera ecclesiastica e nazionale, tanto italiane che americane.

E vorrei concludere con un'ultima osservazione: queste suore aprirono un percorso "di genere" privilegiato per le donne di classi umili sia italiane che italoamericane, all'interno del quale queste ultime non dovevano competere e confrontarsi con altre etnie. L'Ordine rimase nei decenni prevalentemente italoamericano. Le sue dirigenti, le madri superiori e generali sono prevalentemente italiane - o di origine italiana a tutt'oggi. Questa situazione apre una serie di domande. Si posero mai il problema della multietnicità queste suore e in che termini? Quanto contribuirono alla insularità italoamericana? Quanto, invece, offrendo una sponda istituzionale e una possibilità di impegno alle italoamericane all'interno di un ordine religioso prestigioso o anche spazi di lavoro con l'attività nei loro centri alle laiche, non contribuirono da un lato ad aprire un percorso di emancipazione alle italoamericane e dall'altro a formare una coscienza etnica, a infondervi dignità e a permetterne la collocazione e la legittimazione nel contesto statunitense? Vi sono state simili opportunità per gli uomini della comunità italoamericana?

Inoltre le iniziative in Latino America dimostrano che le suore Pallottine continuarono a camminare a fianco del loro corrispettivo maschile, i sacerdoti Pallottini, non più in posizione subalterna come ci si aspettava da loro a inizio secolo, ma da una posizione almeno all'apparenza di maggior parità, acquistando forse un ruolo di interlocutrici, piut-

tosto che di semplici esecutrici. E mentre questo aspetto della storia di questo ordine femminile aspetta di essere documentato in modo più approfondito, sarebbe anche molto interessante valutare quanta di questa loro autonomia conquistata sul campo dell'esperienza migratoria si trasfuse nell'Ordine italiano e nei suoi rapporti con i Pallottini in Italia.

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NOTE

1. Lettera dalla Pia Casa Carità al Rev. Padre Generale dei Pallottini, 4 Nov.?, 1886, Archivio Pallottini - Roma.

2. Lettera Currigan 28.5.1888, Cartella "Pallottine Romane,"Archivio Pallottini - Roma.

3. Lettera al Padre Generale dei Pallottini , firmata da 5 suore, 14 aprile 1889, Archivio Pallottini-Roma.

4. Lettera di Maria Pia Borzi al Padre Generale dei Pallottini, data indecifrabile, Archivio Pallottini-Roma.

5. Corrispondenza rev. Ferrante con l'arcivescovo di New York, Michael Augustine Corrigan e con il suo successore, Patrick Hayes, 1900-1921, Archives of the Archidiocese of New York at Yonkers.

6. Corrispondenza rev. Arcese, Marazzi, Napolitano con l'Arcivescovado di New York, 1928, Archives of the Archidiocese of New York at Yonkers.

7. Rev. Arcese al Cardinal Patrick Hayes, resoconto visita canonica, 28 dic. 1932, Archives of the Archidiocese of New York at Yonkers.

8. *La Follia di New York, 14-3-1939*, p. 7: ritaglio Cartella "Pallottine Romane,"Archivio Pallottini-Roma.

9. Cartella "Pallottine Romane,"Archivio Pallottini-Roma.

10. Cfr. *Il Crociato. Giornale settimanale di vita cattolica,* 31 agosto 1949: 2; in cartella 7, Archivio Pallottini-Roma.

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SALESIAN SISTERS OF DON BOSCO

CRISTINA MATTIELLO

1. EDUCAZIONE E PROGETTO MISSIONARIO

La centralità dell'opera di apostolato nel programma religioso della Società dei Salesiani di Don Bosco, fondata a Torino nel 1859 ("Progetto educativo" passim; "Circolare" 311-312), implicava in modo naturale l'esito missionario. Essendo infatti l'educazione dell'infanzia e dei giovani "materialmente e spiritualmente bisognosi" l'attività principale dell'Ordine, ben presto si giunse ad un ampliamento del campo di ricerca dei destinatari alle terre d'Oltremare, dove il disagio e le necessità sembravano manifestarsi ad un livello molto elevato (Maraldi, *Bibliografia generale* 19-21).

Lo stesso Don Bosco sostenne con forza le ragioni di questa apertura e diede il massimo impulso a tale ambito di impegno, rispondendo con decisione alle perplessità di chi temeva che in tal modo "si sguarnissero" eccessivamente le fila degli operatori in Italia. La stessa iconografia agiografica del personaggio include tra le immagini più evocative ed utilizzate quelle che rappresentano i quattro "sogni missionari" (uno del 1883, due del 1885 e l'ultimo del 1886) che, nella sua testimonianza, furono centrali nella conferma che quella era la via: il santo che sorvola territori lontani su un misterioso velivolo, una pastorella che gli indica i monti, i mari, le pianure dell'Africa, dell'America Latina, dell'Asia dove opereranno i suoi missionari. Un lavoro pensato fin dal primo momento come di lunga prospettiva: si trattava, secondo Don Bosco, di gettare i primi semi per raccogliere in seguito - anche "da qui a 150, 200 anni" - frutti copiosi (22).

La fusione tra la spinta dovuta a forti ideali e la lucidità organizzativa e programmatica garantì il successo pratico delle missioni salesiane che, come aveva sperato il fondatore, accrebbero il prestigio dell'Ordine e ne divennero anzi un elemento di attrattiva: in quegli anni molte delle numerose vocazioni in Italia, anche nell'ambito di ceti sociali medio-alti, risultarono stimolate proprio da questo aspetto della vita salesiana e ad esso mirate. Fu dunque l'alto livello di motivazione delle operatrici e degli operatori sul campo e l'aspetto di scelta elettiva, e non di accettazione di un'imposizione dall'alto, a caratterizzare in genere il loro lavoro (Maraldi, *La famiglia salesiana* 1-53).

Alla prima partenza - l'11 novembre 1875 - ne seguirono, fino alla morte di Don Bosco, altre undici, quasi una l'anno: 150 uomini più 50 suore Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice, uno sforzo enorme, ripagato in genere dal consenso ottenuto sul posto. Nella prima fase la meta è l'America Latina: l'Argentina viene raggiunta nel 1875, l'Uruguay l'anno dopo, il Brasile nel 1883, il Cile nel 1887 e l'Ecuador nel 1888. Anche se ben presto vengono avviate quattro missioni di evangelizzazione delle popolazioni indigene - nella Patagonia, nella Terra del Fuoco, nel Rio Negro e nelle Ande - il lavoro resta prevalentemente rivolto agli emigrati italiani e sempre caratterizzato da un doppio versante, religioso e socio-educativo.

Preceduto spesso dall'invio di "Cooperatori" che preparano il terreno curando in particolare i contatti con la comunità locale al fine di creare e animare relazioni di gruppo, l'arrivo delle missioni è subito caratterizzato da un grande attivismo. La tendenza ad espandersi diversificando gli impegni e i campi di intervento è netta e si manifesta anche con la costruzione, dove possibile, di nuovi spazi di aggregazione. Sulle popolazioni indigene il tentativo deciso di assimilazione alla religione e, globalmente, al modello bianco non esclude un marcato interesse etnografico che ha anche prodotto preziosi contributi scritti (Maraldi, *Bibliografia generale* 29-21; Maraldi, *La famiglia salesiana* 1-53).

L'apprezzamento ufficiale della Chiesa romana si accompagna alla concessione di una larga autonomia: in Argentina il papa Leone XIII, su pressione di Don Bosco, separa i campi d'azione dei salesiani nel nord e nel sud del paese dalla giurisdizione della diocesi di Buenos Aires, ponendoli sotto la diretta responsabilità dell'Ordine, che nel 1893 acquisisce, in Brasile, un suo vescovo con giurisdizione "su tutti gli indios" del paese, Don Lasagna: una spinta ad allargare al massimo i margini di indipendenza nelle scelte operative che, controbilanciata dal rapporto stretto con Roma e dalla centralità della figura del papa come figura di riferimento nel quadro teologico, resterà, fino ad oggi, una costante.

Sul campo, ai religiosi coinvolti si chiedeva esplicitamente di "rinunciare alle comodità" ed essere pronti a vivere dall'interno il contesto in cui operavano: una condizione che lo stesso Don Bosco aveva subito individuato come necessaria per il successo delle missioni. La scelta privilegiata era quella dei ceti marginali ed è stata sempre stata mantenuta, fino alla più recente formulazione del *Progetto educativo* (1995), che vede al primo punto "la preferenza per i giovani degli ambienti popolari" (*Progetto educativo* 16). In questo contesto di difficile penetrazione l'elemento femminile, più adatto ad instaurare proficui contatti con i nuclei familiari, risultava un'integrazione necessaria al completamento del programma d'intervento. Si delinea così, fin dall'inizio, uno schema che si riproporrà con gli anni: prima arrivano i missionari dell'Ordine maschile e dopo qualche tempo, quasi sempre da loro sollecitate, le suore.

2. LA SPECIFICITÀ DEL RAMO FEMMINILE DELL'ORDINE

Il ramo salesiano femminile, le Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice, nasce a Mornese (Alessandria) nel 1872 dalla trasformazione di un gruppo preesistente, le Figlie dell'Immacolata, su iniziativa di Don Bosco incoraggiata dallo stesso Pio IX. Pur essendo l'Istituto formalmente "sotto l'alta e immediata dipendenza del Rettore Maggiore dei Salesiani" e quindi con lo statuto di Istituto "aggregato," la forte personalità della prima Superiora generale, Maria Mazzarello, diede alle attività un impulso e un impianto organizzativo tali da produrre una fisionomia molto connotata, che la seconda Superiora, Caterina Daghero, continuamente rieletta dal 1881 alla sua morte (1924), mantenne e rafforzò. Del resto, la fusione di un grado elevato di spiritualità di tipo prettamente mariano, indicata anche dal nome ricevuto dal fondatore, e di forti spinte all'impegno attivo, da esercitare principalmente nell'apostolato,

creava le premesse di un'identità marcata nel panorama degli Ordini femminili. Nelle comunità femminili salesiane l'attenzione al dato personale ed emotivo, rispetto al quale si pretende una ferma disciplina interiore, si accompagna sempre all'incoraggiamento ad esprimere anche all'esterno le proprie potenzialità educative e lo studio, anche se a livelli diversi, secondo le inclinazioni personali, resta un punto fermo per tutte. La decisione e l'attivismo che le caratterizzano ha fatto si che esse vengano viste a volte come suore con tratti maschili. Il passaggio all'autonomia, nel 1907, anche se dettato da questioni formali di legislazione ecclesiastica, sancì quindi una tendenza già evidente nei fatti (Pelliccia 1609-10; *F.M.A.* Capetti, *Istituto* 207-08, 239-240; Capetti, *Il cammino* 17, 49-52; Bruno, *La suora* Cap.1). Anche oggi le suore salesiane hanno dato più volte prova di indipendenza intellettuale, sia attraverso la creazione di diversi centri educativi di livello universitario, sia attraverso una elaborazione teorica che le ha poste in una posizione di punta nel processo di trasformazione del mondo delle religiose in Italia. In particolare alcune loro esponenti di spicco sono state protagoniste dell'apertura del dialogo con la ricerca delle donne laiche, sia nell'ambito femminista che in quello della storia delle donne.

La dimensione internazionale ereditata dalla prima fase delle missioni resta un cardine della loro organizzazione, che si dirama in un'ampia rete capillarmente strutturata al cui interno si integrano le numerosissime attività, diversificate ma tutte finalizzate agli stessi obiettivi formativi dettagliatamente definiti a livello centrale. Le suore condividono l'attenzione tecnica alla formulazione del progetto educativo che caratterizza da sempre l'approccio salesiano all'insegnamento: in esso, infatti, un orientamento pedagogico molto connotato trova un efficace sostegno nell'uso consapevole di metodologie didattiche aggiornate. Anche la ricerca di un contatto reale con il contesto è un'eredità ancora viva del periodo delle origini: tutte le ex-allieve, coordinate in una Confederazione mondiale, vengono seguite e sostenute nel loro inserimento sociale e professionale, oltre che nell'opera di apostolato che sono sempre incoraggiate, a loro volta, ad avviare. Il risultato è una rete ben organizzata di scuole, che si configura come un vero e proprio "sistema educativo" operante su un territorio esteso con una compattezza che non trova riscontro in altri ambiti cattolici (Miraglia 71-79; *FMA negli Stati Uniti* 14-16).

L'impegno missionario si rivelò subito molto congeniale all'intraprendenza delle suore salesiane. Cinque anni dopo la fondazione, le troviamo già presenti in una spedizione diretta in Uruguay, che era la terza organizzata dall'Ordine. Fu Don Bosco stesso a prendere la decisione di aggregare alcune suore, ma volle che l'adesione fosse volontaria. La richiesta, inattesa anche se preceduta qualche mese prima da un generico invito a studiare un po' di spagnolo, fu accolta molto positivamente. Lo dimostra il rilevante numero di domande presentate, dal quale vennero scelti solo 6 nominativi: tutte ragazze giovanissime, tre erano addirittura minorenni e le altre non superavano i 24 anni.

Nel momento della partenza dal porto di Genova, preceduta dalla benedizione papale a Roma, Don Bosco delineò in prospettiva due fasi del loro inserimento e del loro apostolato: la prima "in mezzo ai già fedeli" per consolidare la fede o ravvivarla se fosse

stata dimenticata, la seconda "tra i selvaggi della Pampa e della Patagonia." L'atmosfera era carica emotivamente e non priva di toni eroici accentuati dalla presenza sul molo della figura carismatica di Don Bosco. Forte l'uso dei simboli legati all'Ordine, segno di un'identità cui non si voleva rinunciare partendo: in particolare due immagini sacre legate al momento della fondazione e particolarmente venerate, consegnate loro sulla nave dai responsabili dell'Ordine maschile verranno portate nel nuovo continente quasi come un talismano (Capetti, *Istituto F.M.A.* 239-240; 257; 276-277; 288-291). La prima partenza suggellò anche per le suore il nuovo abito - approvato nel maggio del 1876 e rimasto poi in vigore fino al 1968 - che era, rispetto a quello originario, reso meno scuro da un piccolo soggolo bianco e risultava più sciolto per una diversa e più comoda foggia del velo: un abito adatto al lavoro, volutamente più funzionale ad attività in contesti anche logisticamente difficili. L'ideazione era stata condotta autonomamente all'interno della comunità femminile e, fino all'approvazione formale di Don Bosco, era stata vissuta con qualche ansia per il sapore trasgressivo che comportava (Capetti, *Istituto F.M.A.* 135-137; 215; 253-255; Capetti, *Il cammino dell'Istituto F.M.A.* 46-47).

L'apostolato cominciò sulla nave attraverso un'assistenza materiale e psicologica oltre che religiosa e da questa prima esperienza nacque in seguito l'idea di aprire nei porti degli emigranti una casa di assistenza, che si rivelò spesso un ausilio importante durante le lunghe attese, soprattutto per chi non riusciva alla fine ad ottenere il permesso di imbarco.

Nel 1911 venne inaugurato nel porto di Napoli l'Ospizio e Segretariato "Italica Gens," affidato alle FMA dalle autorità civili in seguito all'apprezzamento del lavoro svolto dalle suore all'estero. Come lo stesso nome indica, il sostegno agli emigranti era strettamente legato all'idea di porre le basi perché il legame con la madrepatria restasse saldo, un obiettivo, questo, che lo stesso Don Bosco aveva esplicitato tra gli altri delle missioni e che influenzò non poco le modalità della presenza degli operatori salesiani sul posto. La stessa ricerca costante di rapporti formali con le autorità consolari italiane, che trovavano spesso espressione in feste celebrate con tutta la comunità, manifesta un orientamento che è più conservativo nei confronti dell'identità d'origine che volto all'integrazione. Nella fase della preparazione alla partenza, le suore si mettevano a disposizione per scrivere o leggere lettere e sbrigare pratiche amministrative, davano indirizzi dei vari Segretariati o delle comunità salesiane nelle località di destinazione e soprattutto fornivano assistenza psicologica sia a chi partiva che a chi restava. In particolare, già presentavano le loro missioni come spazi idonei alla mediazione rispetto ad un contesto sconosciuto ma nei quali si potevano rintracciare elementi fondamentali e rassicuranti della cultura d'origine, in primo luogo la lingua, e inducevano così la ricerca di un contatto (Miraglia 62-64; Capetti, *Istituto F.M.A.* 52-53; Capetti, *Il cammino dell'Istituto F.M.A.* 46-48).

Le partenze per gli altri paesi dell'America Latina seguirono in genere di pochi anni l'arrivo in quei paesi dei missionari dell'Ordine (Argentina 1879, Cile 1888, Paraguay 1900). Le buone capacità di adattamento dimostrate sul campo incoraggiarono il tentativo di inserimento in zone difficilissime: le salesiane furono le prime religiose ad entrare

in Patagonia (1880), nelle Terre magellaniche e nella Terra del Fuoco (1888), dove vennero a contatto con diversi popoli indios (i Patagones, gli Aruacanos, i Tehuelches, oltre che i Bororos Coroados del Mato Grosso e più tardi gli Shuar in Ecuador). È in questi ambiti che il forte spirito di resistenza degli indigeni all'evangelizzazione fece registrare, oltre ad un incidente ferroviario in cui, con il vescovo Lasagna, persero la vita quattro suore, anche alcuni gravi insuccessi, che comportarono l'abbandono della missione.

L'esperienza americana ampliò il campo tradizionale d'azione: la situazione infatti imponeva spesso di lavorare in modo diretto sul versante sanitario. Le suore seppero accettare la sfida, riuscendo anche a gestire diversi lebbrosari. L'accettazione, a seconda delle necessità contingenti, di situazioni particolarmente delicate è un'altra caratteristica costante del risvolto sociale dell'attività di queste religiose. Ad esempio, fu affidata a loro la cura dei figli degli operai impegnati all'inizio del secolo scorso nella costruzione del traforo del Sempione come, durante la II Guerra mondiale, l'assistenza ai figli di deportarti in alcuni campi di concentramento europei e asiatici (Pelliccia 1611-12; Maraldi, *Missioni Don Bosco* 20-22).

3. PATERSON, NJ, 1908

Negli Stati Uniti, invece, le FMA arrivarono con maggiore ritardo rispetto all'Ordine maschile, che era presente già alla fine dell'Ottocento a New York e San Francisco, in quartieri a forte concentrazione di immigrati italiani, a conferma di una tendenza generale a lavorare inizialmente su linee etniche. Le suore vennero espressamente chiamate a Paterson, N.Y., dal parroco della parrocchia italiana di S. Michele, don Felice Cianci, preoccupato delle condizioni spirituali dei giovani della sua area che sempre più spesso si trovano a frequentare le scuole protestanti. La sua è una scelta precisa - ispirata da un'intuizione avuta durante una preghiera - ed aveva un chiaro obiettivo: affidare alle salesiane tutta la gestione dell'assistenza religiosa ed educativa delle fasce giovanili, vale a dire in particolare i catechismi e le scuole parrocchiali. Queste ultime, organizzate secondo un modello in larga parte nuovo, elaborato proprio per gli Stati Uniti, costituirono un punto di forza per l'intervento delle suore e dei salesiani in genere, che possono mettere a frutto insieme le loro competenze sul piano dell'educazione e della formazione professionale e la loro preparazione nel campo dell'apostolato. Questo duplice aspetto, agganciando i giovani sul tema del loro inserimento sociale, consente di fronteggiare il rischio avvertito come maggiore, che non è quello di un distacco generico dalla religione ma quello di una perdita dell'identità cattolica specifica per uno scivolamento verso posizioni o addirittura ambiti protestanti.

Le quattro suore prescelte per Paterson partirono da Genova il 24 giugno e sbarcarono a New York il 10 luglio 1908: suor Angiolina Adorno, direttrice della spedizione, suor Antonietta Agliardi, suor Francesca Delfino e suor Veneranda Zammit, tutte intorno ai 25 anni. Dopo un viaggio ricordato come durissimo, all'arrivo furono ricevute dal parroco e

dal direttore salesiano preposto dal 1898 all'assistenza degli emigranti. Rimasero a New York qualche giorno, facendo riferimento alla parrocchia della Madonna del Carmine, finché il 16 luglio, con una festa bilingue, vennero presentate ai parrocchiani del sobborgo Totowa di Paterson, nel New Jersey.

Le condizioni iniziali di vita furono molto disagiate: la casa, composta di tre piccole stanze, era tanto malandata che ci pioveva dentro. Le suore condividevano con la comunità italiana un quadro di autentica indigenza e le testimonianze raccontano dei lavori di cucito e ricamo eseguiti fino a notte fonda. Ma, come in genere accade in ambito salesiano, erano state scelte con cura. Tutte ressero l'impatto, le loro personalità si integrarono efficacemente, le motivazioni e gli obiettivi erano chiari e a luglio già venivano aperti un laboratorio in cui venivano impartiti i rudimenti del lavoro manuale, soprattutto femminile, i catechismi e una scuola estiva. L'inserimento iniziale di queste "pioniere," come vengono definite nella storiografia prodotta all'interno dell'Ordine, risulta confermato dalle esperienze successive che le vedono restare tutte stabilmente negli Stati Uniti (una di loro, Veneranda Zammit, morirà a Paterson, e un'altra, Antonietta Agliardi, nella vicina casa di North Haledon, N.J.), anche in posizioni di responsabilità: la direzione delle case e - nel caso di Veneranda Zammit - nel ruolo di Economa nell'Ispettoria generale. Il passaggio da una casa all'altra in diversi punti del paese permette alle suore di utilizzare al meglio le loro competenze e l'esperienza acquisita e pare segnare per tutte una maturazione progressiva. Esse sembrano complessivamente confermate nella loro immagine di sé dall'esperienza missionaria, che affrontano con decisione e consapevolezza. Non mancano, come è ovvio, momenti di crisi e nostalgia, risolti in genere dalla vicinanza della comunità o di singole consorelle. I forti legami interpersonali, curati con un' attenzione sostenuta da un approccio teorico consapevole, sono uno dei punti di forza delle comunità femminili salesiane nei confronti delle difficoltà individuali e con l'esterno. La centralità dell'approccio pedagogico nel modo di vivere la scelta religiosa si esplica innanzi tutto all'interno del piccolo gruppo di consorelle.

Del resto, il radicamento in un nuovo contesto comincia sempre con il quotidiano giro delle visite alle famiglie: un momento irrinunciabile, che prepara il terreno all'accoglienza nelle scuole e che resta centrale anche quando l'inserimento è ormai consolidato e la Casa offre al territorio attività differenziate. A Paterson aprire un canale di comunicazione risulta particolarmente difficile e la maggior parte delle energie nei primi tempi sono dedicate a questo lavoro capillare. Le suore trovano un contesto sociale di per sé già povero, che in quella fase soffre anche le conseguenze della forte ondata di scioperi che resterà un momento cruciale nella storia del movimento operaio statunitense. Forniscono quindi, per quanto possibile, un'assistenza di base per lamentandosi di avere così poco da offrire in termini materiali e concentrano i loro sforzi sull'educazione. I ragazzi, secondo il loro punto di vista, erano molto difficili e ponevano gravi problemi di disciplina. Come i familiari, si erano quasi completamente staccati dalla religione, avvicinandosi più o meno esplicitamente al protestantesimo. Più immediato fu il successo degli asili d'infanzia, che offrivano un sostegno comunque prezioso ai genitori impegnati nelle fabbriche.

Un grave problema è la barriera linguistica: le suore avevano una conoscenza quasi nulla dell'inglese e mostrarono una certa difficoltà nell'apprendimento. La scarsa dimestichezza con la lingua inglese permase per molte nel tempo e appare singolare in un Ordine che pure pone lo studio come elemento costitutivo dell'impegno religioso. Essenziale fu, nella prima fase, la mediazione di suor Beatrice Curtis, chiamata dall'Inghilterra, ma fu comunque necessario molto impegno per sbloccare la situazione. È da notare che, quando cominciarono a funzionare le scuole, sono i parrocchiani a chiedere con decisione che sia inserito l'insegnamento della lingua inglese: nella dialettica relativa al mantenimento dell'identità originale vs il processo di americanizzazione, le suore salesiane sembrerebbero quindi porsi decisamente in modo da rafforzare il primo dei due termini (*Facciamo memoria 1930* 320-325, 330; *Facciamo memoria 1934* 308-311; Secco 11-17; "Tra gli emigrati" 1909, 28-29; "Tra gli emigrati" 1912, 252; "Paterson (New York). Inaugurazione" 90; "F.M.A." 68-70).

L'espansione e la ramificazione delle attività caratterizzano tutte le missioni salesiane. L'obiettivo, sul posto, è rendere la parrocchia fulcro sia delle attività didattiche e di formazione professionale di base, sia di quelle più specificamente legate all'Oratorio, sia, in molti casi, di vere e proprie opere d'assistenza materiale. La stabilità dei vari nuclei costituisce una garanzia per l'apertura di nuove Case - oggi le FMA ne hanno negli Stati Uniti più di 40, tutte strettamente collegate tra loro, sia attraverso le visite periodiche delle Ispettrici, sia grazie allo scambio continuo di esperienze che viene assicurato dal trasferimento relativamente frequente delle suore dall'una all'altra casa: una rete capillare che rende la presenza salesiana femminile una presenza strutturata, con una marcata identità ("50 anni delle FMA" 140-142; "Le FMA negli Stati Uniti" 14-16), in bilico fra il forte impulso all'evangelizzazione e l'autentica spinta all'emancipazione culturale e professionale, ma comunque sempre pronta a confrontarsi con situazioni "di frontiera."

Università degli Studi di Roma

OPERE CITATE

Poiché l'Ordine salesiano è improntato all'educazione, anche superiore, numerose sono le pubblicazioni monografiche di carattere storico prodotte al suo interno. Via via che ci si avvicina ai nostri giorni, aumenta la consapevolezza metodologica e si attenua, senza mai però scomparire del tutto, il tono agiografico. La connotazione fortemente intellettuale dell'Ordine e la tendenza alla strutturazione del materiale in funzione didattico-divulgativa rende forse questi testi mediamente più "utilizzabili" dei corrispettivi di altri Ordini cattolici non orientati all'educazione. Alle figure femminili più significative, e in particolare alle prime carismatiche figure di Superiore generali, sono dedicate molte opere specifiche. Numerose anche le pubblicazioni periodiche, che costituiscono nel complesso un archivio ben documentato: il Bollettino Salesiano iniziò le pubblicazioni nel 1877 e presto ne fu fatta una versione in spagnolo, poi in inglese; sono poi meticolosamente raccolti, e commentati, tutti gli atti ufficiali che riguardano la vita interna, a cominciare dalle circolari di Don Bosco. Gli Annali della Società salesiana completano il quadro. Tutta questa bibliografia è stata accuratamente schedata: la scansione è sia tematica che cronologica e le biblioteche degli Istituti universitari di Roma (l'Ateneo salesiano e l'Auxilium) offrono una facile consultazione. L'Archivio centrale salesiano, infi-

ne, raccoglie tutta la documentazione originale inedita: qui il problema è quello dell'accesso, meno difficile per quanto riguarda l'Ordine maschile che per le salesiane. Alla tradizionale reticenza della suore ad aprire le loro raccolte private di testi, si unisce, a mio parere, in queste suore l'intenzione di rielaborare loro stesse queste fonti, in quanto sul piano della ricerca storica possono ormai vantare specialiste di alto livello.

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"I GOT EVERY SACRAMENT BEHIND ME": JIM CARROLL AND THE INESCAPABLE HISTORY OF AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

STEPHEN PERRIN

Undoubtedly the most baffling factor to confront any reader of the poet, diarist and occasional rock performer Jim Carroll is the writer's consistent and repeated emphasis of his identity as a Roman Catholic.[1] The common reader, it would seem, does not expect former prostitutes and intravenous drug addicts to pledge allegiance to the Church of Rome, unless such allegiance is couched within a repudiation of past sins - something which Carroll has never done - or as part of a declaration of rebirth - and Carroll's stated contempt for the American Born Again movement knows few bounds (Kuennen). Carroll's comment to Jeff Borden in 1981 that "A poet is always a religious person, but non-denominational" might suggest that, as Paul Giles said of James Joyce, his work "clearly follows the modernist line of exploiting the cultural power of religious myths without literally believing in them" but Carroll's is not such a simple case (Kuennen 91; Giles 11). Though superficially it may appear so, he cannot be said to be merely exploiting the Catholic tradition in which he was raised.

Part of the problem with commenting upon Carroll's Catholicism stems from the fact that his own statements on the subject are inconsistent but it is such an all pervasive aspect of his work that it must be a primary task of the Carroll scholar to attempt to make some sense of it. What is certain is that Carroll uses his Catholicism as a badge of identity, a way to individual and group definition but one must ask upon what such definition is based. Various attempts have been made to define religion and its use to the masses. The obvious place to start, away from the church's own internal hierarchy, is with Marx's concept of religion as false consciousness, as summarised in his comment that: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people" (38). Accepting the validity of this concept, Clifford Geertz takes the next logical step, outlining the control system which feeds off such false consciousness:

> ...a religion is: (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. (4)

Unsurprisingly, this was also the aspect of religion which interested Michel Foucault, who, in *Resumé des cours*, discussed Christian techniques of "unconditional obedience, interminable examination, and exhaustive confession" (Miller 325). As Foucault's terminology suggests, these features are particularly relevant to any discussion of Ca-

tholicism, especially when comparisons are made with Protestantism, which has always stressed the direct internal relationship of the individual with God over any externally imposed hierarchical structure. Such comparisons tend to stress the centrality of the Catholic rite of confession, the power of the priest to grant absolution and the infallibility of the Pope, all of which imply the individual's abandonment of the autonomy of the self to become part of a greater order.

As Antonio Gramsci suggested, however, there have always been two Catholicisms; the Catholicism, to use Gramsci's terminology, of the "intellectuals" and the Catholicism of the "simple"; the former scholarly and philosophical, the latter superstitious and polytheistic (Hore and Smith 331-2).[2] As I shall discuss, Carroll's religious position aligns him with the latter group, being a variant of what, in its American manifestation, James Terence Fisher has chosen to call "ghetto Catholicism" (xiv). As the descendant of Irish immigrants, Carroll's work shows the typical peasant Catholic belief in direct links between this world and the next as manifested through saints and angels and as reinforced by the magic power of ritual. Also, to state the blatantly obvious, the one essential thing that the Catholic, or any religious believer for that matter, needs is faith and this is a major factor in making Carroll's writing atypical of its historical period. Faith in anything, even in artistic forms, is the one thing that a postmodernist is not supposed to have (Blasing 11). It is worth noting the lack of irony in Carroll's verse and his, extremely old-fashioned, belief that poetry can change things, both of which made him a strange choice for inclusion in Paul Hoover's anthology, *Postmodern American Poetry* (Norton, 1994).

That Carroll should find himself at odds with his surroundings is not, however, particularly unusual. Another important point to consider is that Carroll is a Catholic in the USA and that being Catholic will always, somehow, make the individual un-American.[3] Louis Althusser has described religion as a part of what he termed ISA (Ideological State Apparatus) but this cannot be said to be true of Catholicism in North America (136). To be a Catholic in the USA, in fact, is always to be part of a counterculture.[4] Marsden has referred to the relationship between Protestants and Catholics in the US as a long-standing "cold war" and stated that: "The central theme of Catholicism in America remained that of establishing their [sic] own identity in relation to the host culture" (135). Much of this stems from initially being an immigrant, peasant community attempting to come to terms with what is, as Max Weber pointed out, essentially a middle class culture.

Although, as I have stated, Carroll's poetry, in particular, seems oddly not of its time, Carroll cannot avoid being part of this process and, thus, in many ways, can be seen as a product of his own history and of the history of Catholicism in the USA. In fact, some form of historicisation seems essential to any examination of Carroll's work as his most famous writing is juvenilia in the form of diaries which, while classed by Foucault as a form fundamentally concerned with the creation of a Christian self, cannot help but offer a revealing insight into the period in which they were written (247). Carroll's

awareness of the nature of ghetto Catholicism is revealed in his description of Andy Warhol's assistant, Paul Morrissey, in his second diary collection *Forced Entries* (1987). Carroll depicts his coreligionist as a perfect product of the lower class Irish Catholic neighborhood, as characterized by "political and moral ultraconservatism, firm yet unaligned bigotry, and a pitiable sexual fear" and some of the reasons behind the development of such characteristics can be found by looking at the period in which Morrissey and Carroll grew up.[5] *Forced Entries* opens with the claim that the Russians carried out their first nuclear tests on 15th August 1950, the day that Carroll was born, "and the radiation, fear, and the fire's desperate heat have been there ever since" (FE1). In fact, the tests took place the previous year but, to be fair to Carroll, he was born the year that the Korean War broke out which goes some way towards explaining what he calls his "war baby blues" and the bomb paranoia which haunts his adolescent chronicle *The Basketball Diaries* (1978).[6] That book is also pervaded by an almost hysterical anticommunism on the part of the adults with whom Carroll comes into contact - the episode in which an old lady on a bus accuses the youth of being a "Commie" for wearing a red t-shirt, despite the fact that it has "Good Shepherd Falcons" written on the front of it, is one of many examples (BD 46). This attitude would, of course, have been fairly typical of the Cold War period in America but particularly so in the Irish Catholic neighbourhoods in which Carroll was raised. The initial motivation for this was that Pope Pius XII declared the general excommunication of all communists in 1949 (Giles 210). Following this, however, the mood was enhanced by the activities of one of America's first Catholic political celebrities, Senator Joseph McCarthy. The strong Irish Catholic presence in the police force would also have been likely to reinforce the mood of conservatism among coreligionists, a fact which would seem to be confirmed by J. Edgar Hoover's targeting of Catholic college graduates for recruitment to the FBI (Fisher 154). Within this atmosphere John F. Kennedy's inauguration in 1960 was seen as both a great triumph for American Catholics and a further tightening of the anticommunist mood.

It is also likely that Carroll's Catholic schooling during this period would have encouraged a somewhat parochial outlook. It has been well documented that in the post World War II period America experienced a religious revival.[7] In this Catholics were no different to the rest of American society, showing a particularly high level of observance - in 1963, for example, 71% of Catholics were regular church attenders and 37% regularly took confession - but the tendency was always, through the preservation of neighbourhoods and distinct practices, such as eating fish instead of meat on Fridays, to stress their separatism from the Protestant mainstream (Marsden 139). And this separatism worked both ways. In 1949 the Episcopal church passed a strong resolution against its members marrying Catholics while, two years later, President Truman's attempt to appoint an ambassador to the Vatican was abandoned after vociferous protests from Protestant leaders (Marsden 247, 224-5).

Nothing revealed this separatism more, however, than the polytheistic tendency revealed through the growing cult of the Virgin Mary among American Catholics. Devotion to the Virgin was particularly intense among Catholics of all classes during the Cold War period. The Assumption of the Virgin was proclaimed as an article of faith by Pius XII in 1950, largely due to grass roots pressure, and between 1948 and 1957 ten thousand Marian titles were published in the States (Warner 82; Marsden 225). Along with this came the foundation of highly popular and influential American Catholic organizations such as the Blue Army of Fatima, "a group devoted to promoting the vision of the Blessed Mother claimed by three Portuguese children in 1917" (Fisher 157). The army was blue, of course, because blue is the Virgin's colour and, growing up with this cultural background, it does not seem strange that blue should feature so frequently in Carroll's verse - it is the most heavily recurring word, with the exception of prepositions and personal pronouns, in both the *Fear of Dreaming* and *Void of Course* collections, with thirty-three and ten repetitions respectively - or that "Blue Poles" the opening piece in his first major collection, *Living at the Movies* (1973), should include the lines:

in an instant and lovely Mary kneeling along the quick tide
to be anxious with thoughts of bare oceans
that move as the thighs of an eventual sunlight
like bathers moving closer to their season
when again gulls perch in their lovely confusion
"alone," as now the sand sifting through
your fingers like another's darkness. It's true,
you are always too near and I am everything
that comes moaning free and wet
through the lips of our lovely grind.[8]

The reference to Mary, the repetition of the word "lovely," emphasising her position as a love goddess, and the quotation marks around "alone," suggesting that it is directly lifted from Caelius Sedulius' "Paschalis Carminis" ("[...] alone of all her sex/ She pleased the Lord") all imply heavy Catholic cultural baggage (Warner xvii). One would be hard pressed, however, to classify this as a piece of devotional poetry.

In fact, a case might be made that Carroll is merely a local colorist and that the Catholic references which recur in his writing are simply cultural window dressing. Certainly there are a number of instances in the work of religious references being used without any religious signification. References to heaven and hell in "Falling Down Laughing" and "Hairshirt Fracture," for example, seem to relate more to mental than to metaphysical states; though "angel" is an oft recurring word in Carroll's work it is as likely to refer to a human object of desire as it is to any divine being, and quite often the work seems to slip over into religious parody as in "Poem" - "Saints follow Christ and tears/ I followed/ A woman up 8th Ave. today" - or "Zeno's Law of High-Heel Shoes" in which the poet speaks of getting down on his knees to worship "women and the quiescent shape of numbers" as opposed to any higher powers.[9] This along with his comment to John Milward that his first

sighting of his wife-to-be was "my vision of the Virgin, or at least a top-of-the-line saint" and his statement in *Forced Entries* that a poker game reminds him of "the mysteries of the Eucharist" (FE 64) suggest that Carroll might merely share the "fascination with the trappings of religion" which his near contemporary and (unknown) neighbour on the Lower East Side, Martin Scorsese, cited as the cause of his own youthful enrolment in the seminary (Milward 141, 174; Thompson and Christie 12).

To accept such a cultural, as opposed to religious, reading of Carroll's Catholicism would, in fact, be quite convenient, allowing us to place him as part of the slightly sleazy, crucifix-flaunting downtown Manhattan Catholic scene which finds its most obvious proponent in early Madonna. One can even find support for such a cultural, rather than devotional, blending of literature and religion in the higher echelons of literary criticism; Northrop Frye stating in *Anatomy of Criticism* that "the loftiest religion, no less than the grossest superstition, comes to the poet, qua poet, only as the spirits came to Yeats, to give him metaphors for poetry" (125).

Unfortunately, however, things are not so simple. The ambivalent nature of Carroll's religious belief is highlighted by the fact that *The Book of Nods* (1986) includes pieces dedicated both to the great blasphemer, Jean-Arthur Rimbaud, and to the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. In fact, those looking to make a case for Carroll as believer or apostate can find evidence either way. In *The Basketball Diaries* we are told that religious doubts set in at the age of eight when he invited God to his home to watch the World Series on TV and was disappointed by His non manifestation (BD 5). In the same book he also claims not to have been confirmed nor to understand the mechanics of confession (BD 21-2). The nightmare described in *Forced Entries* in which he is chased by a priest with a wooden stake and a sledgehammer evokes a staple scene from cheap horror movies which, no doubt, has its psychological basis in the old American fear of European (Catholic) influence (FE 20-1). The negative Catholic imagery of the latter book, however, is far outweighed by Carroll's gradual return to the rites of the church; first using the buildings as a place of rest and contemplation, then making offerings to the saints, and finally "taking in Mass and, more importantly, not feeling a hypocrite for it" (FE 12, 55, 99-101, 111-3, 119,121, 149). In more recent times his comments on the power of poetry have verged on the evangelical, telling Jason Knowles in 1996: "I want to make images just obscure enough so that people can make them their own, relate them to their own life and change them in a spiritual sense. I don't write many political poems because [...] Everything's so screwed up that some kind of spiritual renaissance has to happen. Politics can't solve what it's fucked up for so long."[10]

Obviously, the above evidence has not been particularly helpful in developing a clear picture of Carroll's attitude towards his Catholicism. All we have come to discover is that the writer's position is, at best, fluid and, at worst, blatantly inconsistent. Perhaps a return to historicisation might be helpful here. Though, as stated, Carroll's predominant cultural background is that of the Catholic neighbourhood of 1950s and 60s

Manhattan, it is worth looking at the dominant intellectual philosophy of the Cold War period, existentialism, which might also be said to colour his work in some ways.

Like fervent anticommunism and demonstrative Mariolatry, the Sartreian strain of existentialism began to permeate the States in the immediate post war years. Sartre, himself, first visited the US as a journalist in January 1945 while Camus and de Beauvoir gave American lecture tours in 1946 and 1947 and the major works of the movement began to appear in translation from 1946 onwards (Hayman 220, 240; Lottman 379).[11] Evidence of the speed with which the concept was assimilated can be gauged by the fact that the word "existentialism" was being loosely applied to Nelson Algren's writing in a *New York Times* book review as early as 1947 (Drew 174). Undoubtedly, however, the main source of the popularity of existentialist ideas in America during this period was Norman Mailer, largely through his early columns in *The Village Voice* which he had helped found, not too far from Carroll's neighbourhood of Manhattan, in 1955. Mailer has always cited Heidegger, rather than Sartre, as the source of his own existentialism though, in reality, it is difficult to get a handle on exactly what Mailer's American take on the philosophy is. In fact, Mailer's comment to J. Michael Lennon that his reason for classifying Sartre as a "square" was that the Frenchman was "programmatic," seems to imply that he, himself, has the freedom to be inconsistent when discussing existentialism, and his later attempt to define "existential logic" sounds dangerously close to a Nike advertisement: "let the act finally be authentic. If you're going to do it, do it" (Lennon 41-4). Be that as it may, Mailer's comments from his 16th column for the *Village Voice,* entitled "The Hip and the Square," are useful to us:

> Hip is an American existentialism, profoundly different from French existentialism because Hip is based on a mysticism of the flesh, and its origins can be traced back into all the undercurrents and underworlds of American life, back into the instinctive apprehension and appreciation of existence which one finds in the Negro and the soldier, in the criminal psychopath and the dope addict and jazz musician, in the prostitute, in the actor, in the - if one can visualize such a possibility - in the marriage of the call-girl and the psychoanalyst. (280)

Carroll, as a teenage junkie prostitute with sidelines in mugging and car theft who also happened to play for black basketball teams in Harlem would be fulfilling most of the relevant criteria only a few years after Mailer wrote these words, thus seemingly making him the perfect secular product of his historical period: a rebel without a cause.

Still, however, I would argue that Carroll is more Catholic boy than existential hipster. From what we have seen so far, the writer's work could easily fall into what Marina Warner has called "secular mysticism" or "agnostic ritual" (xx). Once again, though, it is important to focus on Carroll's background. As stated above, one of the most important aspects of the polytheistic peasant strain of Catholicism from which Carroll derives is its openness to the supernatural and it is the problems of the modern world in accepting a supernatural dimension to which writers on the "intellectual" wing of the Catholic faith

have constantly been forced to return. In his essay "Religion and Literature," from 1936, T.S. Eliot stated that: "We must remember that the greater part of our current reading matter is written for us by people who have no real belief in a supernatural order, though some of it may be written by people with individual notions of a supernatural order which are not ours" (*Essays Ancient* 110). Flannery O'Connor supports this point, writing in 1963 that: "The supernatural is an embarrassment today even to many of the churches" (163). This is particularly the case, as Weber pointed out, in a predominantly middle class, rationalistic society like the USA (97).

Carroll, however, has never suffered from this embarrassment. His claim to Cassie Carter that the Holy Ghost descended at his first reading may have been meant as a joke but, as with most jokes, the terminology is revealing (Carter). In fact, in my assessment of Carroll's work I would echo Henry Miller's assessment of Rimbaud. His main aim is that "he is seeking grace" and his main problem is in finding out how to achieve it.[12] Despite the extremes of some of his behaviour, where Carroll diverges from what Mailer describes as "the nihilism of Hip" is in his stated desire to be "pure" (316). When this desire is first expressed, in *The Basketball Diaries* (115, 170), it is clouded in desperation and confusion, it is what the writer wants but he has no idea how to get it. As Carroll's work progresses, however, a sense develops of a way to purity via ritual, a sense which, again, can be traced to his background. As he told Legs McNeil in 1996:

> I was this Catholic kid and I never really lost that. I mean, I love the rituals of Catholicism. I hate the fucking politics, and the pope and shit, but the rituals are magic. I mean the mass is a magic ritual for God's sake, it's transubstantiation... (294)

In fact, an interesting analogy exists between Carroll's work and that of his former roommate, Robert Mapplethorpe, who explained that a Catholic education had fundamentally influenced his own artistic method:

> A church has a certain magic and mystery for a child [...] It still shows in how I arrange things. It's always little altars. It's always been this way - whenever I put something together I'd notice it was symmetrical. (Morrisroe 17-8)

It is worthy of note that not only has Carroll praised this aspect of Mapplethorpe's art, pointing to his "intuitive understanding of counterpoint," but that he has used the same terminology in describing his own work; the words "I build this altar to you" occurring in the fifth section of "New York City Variations" (FOD 177; Morrisroe 83).

Once more, however, a by now familiar problem recurs. Carroll's stated attraction to the rituals, but not the power structure, of Catholicism seems, on the face of it, to place him in the position of local colorist. Yet again, though, the simple answer is not available. As Althusser puts it, what is ritual but "the material existence of an ideological apparatus?" (158) As the mother of another great American Catholic artist, Frank Sinatra, reportedly told his father when discussing love and marriage, it is difficult, if not impos-

sible, to have one without the other; unless, that is, one usurps the power of the priest. The suggestion that such an action might be fundamental to the process of creation for the Catholic artist can be found in the writings of another of Carroll's coreligionists. William Everson (Brother Antonius) stated:

> Man ritualizes, always, in order to step out of the tyranny of the temporal, which is death, and make life new. Whenever he pauses in order to abolish time, he enacts the original gesture of creation, enters the order of sacrality, which is life... In his act of creation, he ritualizes the character of chaos, makes time 'real' by holding it at bay. It is in this that he is a priest.
>
> But it is through time that the poet compels reality into the substance of his form. His words, material elements, have all the character of chaos until his act ordains them to permanence (Labrie 14).

This idea is confirmed by Frye who has termed literature as a form of ritual but when applying it to Carroll's work an important contrast must be made between the prose and the verse (104-5). Unlike the firmly historically rooted prose of the diaries, Carroll's verse represents a Shakespearean attempt to take his (non) rhyme beyond time: or, at least, that is the poet's aim. This is a distinction which he has been keen to make throughout his writing career. As he told Christina Schmitt when discussing his initial reluctance to publish *The Basketball Diaries*:

> I didn't want to establish myself as a street writer, which that book is. My poems are a lot more erudite in certain ways. The prose in the diaries were just recording my life. I didn't want that with poetry. It took me out of my daily life. I wanted to escape from that and get to some different spiritual place and hopefully have the reader get there too, with poems, I was much more serious about that.

In support of this point, it is worth noting that while most of Carroll's prose is studded with drug references, very little of the poetry is, a fact which, in the early part of his career, would have provided a highly significant escape from the realities of his daily life.[13]

Try as he might, however, Carroll cannot escape from his own history. His poetry can never be seen as the "escape from personality" that Eliot recommended in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (*Selected Essays* 21). What is interesting, though, is to look at the way that Carroll recasts his autobiography in the verse in a more spiritual light. The twenty-two section poem "New York City Variations," from *The Book of Nods*, is useful for this as it deals with Carroll's own history, framed, as ever, within the city in which he was raised, but with an added spiritual dimension which is absent from much of the prose. Starting, as did *Forced Entries,* with his birth and the Russian nuclear tests, seemingly transferred to Easter, a time of Christian rebirth, the poem moves through reconciliation with his father, the youth's nemesis in *The Basketball Diaries*, revealingly through an acceptance of the reality of a supernatural, and specifically Catholic, vision once experienced by his progenitor:

> When he was young in Harlem my father
> watched the shadow of St. Anne, the mother
> of Our Virgin, walking with shadowed gown

round a church rotunda, white as chalk and swept
with decals of starry blue why should I not believe him?
I cannot return. Never go back. Yet my father's word
has weight in its edges [...]

What is also revealing is that this reconciliation with the father comes only after the poet has made a plea to his Heavenly Father to be granted the gift of grace:

[...] I need
A competent God to praise,
to raise me above
new cities, whose climate
is grace.[14]

And though the poem draws to a close in the same way that it began, with reference to the bomb, there is the sense that the mature Carroll has abandoned his fear of personal annihilation for a philosophical acceptance that the nuclear menace cannot stop the "circle" of existence; the image of the cradle inevitably invoking the persona of the Christ child, again suggesting rebirth:

And I look to my generation
and dream in blasts of hydrogen,
where the residue of all my nights
is changed to stars.
The process is a circle, is brilliant and works,
as the final collapse of dying suns cradles new ones to life. (FOD 173-194)

Acceptance seems to have been achieved, then, of a power greater than the individual self but this is not the same thing as a complete abandonment of the self. Giles described the art of Carroll's former employer, Andy Warhol, as representing " the Catholic rejection of romanticism at its most extreme" as that artist's aim was to remove his own personality from the work as completely as possible (Giles 281). While the stated aim of Carroll's verse may also be to do this it is something which he never fully achieves. As has been shown, Carroll's is a very American take on Catholicism and his continuing vulnerability to historical pressure is nowhere clearer than in the closing poem of his most recent collection, *Void of Course* (1998). Simply entitled "Poem," it opens with the lines: "Nobody is going to ruin me/ If I have to I will ruin myself" and goes on to depict artistic creation as the only way to salvation through images of sexual satiation and truth:

There will always be a poem
I will climb on top of it
And come
n and out of time
Cocking my head to the side slightly
As I finish shaking, melting then
Into its body, its soft skin
It is not a lie. (VOC 112)

Here we are confronted with a central paradox of Carroll's Catholicism as manifested within his work. Though the cultural trappings of his verse and the stated desire for the gift of grace are undoubtedly Catholic, the concept of the individual working out his own salvation, through poetry or otherwise, is fundamentally opposed to the mechanics of Catholic hierarchy. At best it is a Protestant concept, at worst that of a Catholic apostate, neither of which option suggests that Carroll has achieved his stated aim of becoming a non-denominational poet, except in a negative sense.

In the end, it would seem, Carroll can agree with no one. Rejecting the concept of religion as false consciousness of the left wing critic, the nihilism of the existential hipster and the order and control of the priest, he remains a believer whose individualistic, Protestant-influenced contempt for middle managers cannot overcome the weight of the polytheistic belief in the supernatural and attachment to ritual which is the inescapable legacy of his ghetto Catholic background. Even in the expression of this tension, however, Carroll's work continues to offer important insights into the history of Catholicism in America. As a "war baby," raised before the liberalising moves of the Second Vatican Council, Carroll's work shows both a nostalgia for the shared ritual of the past and a sense of individual responsibility which might well be interpreted as an inevitable development in a society which, in both the religious and secular spheres, has in recent years increasingly shifted away from any concept of collective responsibility. Just as he cannot escape being a product of his own past, Carroll is equally a product of the realities of the American present. As such, though his presentation may be unusual, he remains in many ways the typical American Catholic of his generation.

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NOTES

1. Multiple examples of this exist but Carroll's recent comments in his interview with Darling are a recent instance (3).

2. In a later entry Gramsci described "the simple" more specifically as "the peasantry, the infirm, the elderly and women" (Boothman 44).

3. In this Carroll's work forms part of an important trend in American Catholic art which tends to reveal its ties to an older tradition. Note, among other examples, the influence of Strindberg, Ibsen and Nietzsche upon Eugene O'Neill, Martin Scorsese's debt to European art cinema and Jack Kerouac's frequent invocation of his Breton ancestors.

4. As an example to prove this point, Morey's book assumes Protestantism as a given and deals with no texts by Catholic writers.

5. Carroll, *Forced Entries* 44. All further references to this work will appear in the main body of the text with the indication FE.

6. Carroll, *The Basketball Diaries* 93, 104, 111-3, 124-5, 131, 167. All further references to this work will appear in the main body of the text with the indication BD.

7. A convincing contemporary account of this can be found in Herberg 59-84.

8. Carroll, *Fear of Dreaming* 3. All further references to this work will appear within the main body of the text with the indication FOD. A later example of Carroll playing with imagery related to this subject can be found in the poem "Music Television," which opens with the lines: "The cable rises/ up the midtown/ Building's facade like vines/ ascending virgin trees above the fills of Fatima..." (Ibid. 237).

9. Jim Carroll, *Pools of Mercury*, Mercury Records (314 538 113-2) 1998, tracks 2, 10; Ibid. *Void of Course* 11, 17. All further references to the latter work will appear in the main body of the text with the indication VOC.

10. Knowles, Interview with Jim Carroll for *BG 24 News* (20 Feb 1996), http://JimCarroll.forbin.com.

11. Camus' *The Stranger* first appeared in the States in 1946, followed by Sartre's *The Age of Reason* (1947), *The Reprieve* (1947), *Existentialism and Humanism* (1948), *Nausea* (1949).

12. Miller 136. The centrality of Miller's study of Rimbaud to Carroll's thinking about his own work cannot be over emphasised. Not only has he made direct statements to this effect (Flippo 35) but, knowingly or otherwise, he has mined the book for images to use in his own work. Thus the "trained monkey" image from Miller (13) becomes the title and subject matter of a prose poem in *The Book of Nods* (FOD 107) and Miller's use of lodestone imagery (120) is adapted in *Forced Entries* (107-8).

13. This fact makes Paul Hoover's choice of material for inclusion in the Norton Anthology - "Withdrawal Letter," "Maybe I'm Amazed" and "Paregoric Babies" (575-8) all of which have drug related themes - oddly eccentric and unrepresentative.

14. This initiation of the theme of grace in Section 5 is carried through Sections 8, 9 and 12.

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THE INDISCREET CHARM OF POPERY: CATHOLICISM IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN WRITING

LEONARDO BUONOMO

The anti-Catholic literature that flourished in the United States from the 1830s to the 1850s was a reaction against the great influx of Catholic immigrants (mostly from Ireland and Germany) and the concurrent appearance on American soil of a growing number of convents and institutions variously affiliated to the Church of Rome. In the same years in which the United States was engaged in a major effort to affirm its cultural independence, the religious identity of the republic was seen by many as being under attack. Since the Protestant heritage was widely believed to coincide with the very origins of America and to have contained the seeds of its subsequent achievement of self-rule, a threat to Protestant supremacy could be construed as a threat to the country's national sovereignty and democratic institutions.

The emergence and fortune, however temporary, of nativist groups in the 1830s and 1840s, and the Know-Nothing movement in the 1850s, are only the best-known, and most visible, forms of anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic sentiment in antebellum America. The climate of suspicion, hostility and hatred that found ultimate expression in the destruction, by a mob, of the Ursuline Convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts, on 11 August 1834, affected American society at various levels. Not surprisingly, in the most violent anti-Catholic publications of the period, such as *The Protestant Vindicator* or *The Downfall of Babylon*, the concern at the infiltration and growing influence of the "Romish" clergy soon degenerated into wild conspiracy theories and downright hysteria (one might call it "the scarlet scare"). In the opinion of the Reverend Lyman Beecher, whose fiery anti-Catholic rhetoric is believed to have inspired the assault on the Ursuline convent, the unholy alliance between the despotic regimes of Europe (Austria, in particular) and the Pope aimed at overturning the democratic government of the United States. According to Beecher, those "dark powers" could count on a massive and loyal army formed by the Catholic immigrants who were pouring into the country, an army all the more dangerous because most Americans were not aware that it was an army:

> if, upon examination, it should appear that three-fourths of the foreign emigrants whose accumulating tide is rolling in upon us, are, through the medium of their religion and priesthood, as entirely accessible to the control of the potentates of Europe as if they were an army of soldiers, enlisted and officered, and spreading over the land; then, indeed, should we have just occasion to apprehend danger to our liberties. It would be the union of church and state in the midst of us. … another nation within the nation - the Greek in the midst of Troy. (57, 59)

In the same vein Samuel F.B. Morse, in *Imminent Dangers to the Free Institutions of*

the United States Through Foreign Immigration (1835), labeled Catholic immigrants as "hundreds of thousands of human priest-controlled machines" (IV), and warned his compatriots to beware, in particular, of the subversive activities of the Jesuits. Traces of this anti-Catholic sentiment, of the fear that the Church of Rome might gain ascendancy in the United States, can also be found in the pages of genteel literary magazines and the private and public writings of well-known authors of the period. For example, the strong feeling of distrust with which the members of the Society of Jesus were regarded at the time caught the attention of Herman Melville. In Chapter 18 of *The Confidence Man* (1857), the mysterious identity and behavior of the herb-doctor is explained as being the clever disguise of "one of those Jesuit emissaries prowling all over our country" (92).

An analytic comparison of the writing of respected nineteenth-century American writers with the most virulent and sensational pieces of anti-Catholic propaganda, reveals a common insistence on the alienness of Catholicism and, at the same time, on its capacity to adapt itself to, and take root in, the United States. In his "Letter on Catholicism," published in June 1836 in the *Western Messenger*, William Ellery Channing marveled at the versatile, protean nature of the Church of Rome in words that anticipate Kenion's observations in Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1860). One of the great strengths of Catholicism, in his view, was "its wonderful flexibleness." Noting the "*infinite variety* of machinery which [it] has brought to bear on the human mind … [and] the sagacity with which it has adapted itself to the various tastes and propensities of human nature," Channing called Catholicism "a wonderful monument of skill" (6: 208 [emphasis added]). One cannot help hearing an echo of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* in the expression "infinite variety," which might suggest a reference to the seductive quality of Catholicism (which was often a genteel way of evoking the figure of the scarlet whore of Babylon, the Protestant metaphor for the Church of Rome).

Inevitably, even the most vocal denouncers of "popery" drew attention to, and warned against, the strong appeal of that worship, and the power it was believed to exercise on weak and impressionable minds. Not less troubling than the mass arrival of poor Catholic immigrants and, commonly enough, their presence in the household as domestics, was the noticeable success of Catholic schools for young ladies which catered mainly for an upper middle-class Protestant clientele. A series of articles published in *American Ladies' Magazine* after the burning of the Ursuline convent, while strongly deploring an act of violence against "a community of helpless women" ("Ursuline" 418), offered proposals on how to prevent the increase of convents. The only effective way in which Protestants could counteract this troubling phenomenon was to challenge the Catholics in the market, by founding and endowing Protestant seminaries which: "shall possess greater advantages than convents can offer for the education of young ladies - or which shall afford the same *advantages at a cheaper rate*" ("How to Prevent" 520). Young women, it was felt, were particularly susceptible to the insidious charm of popery; they were the

weak link in the chain of American Protestant society. In a period in which American women were expected to perform the roles of angels of the house and custodians of piety, the possibility that they could be influenced by, or might even embrace, the Church of Rome, was viewed with great anxiety.

As Susan Griffin has pointed out, the numerous shocking reports of convent life and testimonies of runaway nuns that were so popular in antebellum America were meant, at least in part, as cautionary tales for Protestant girls and their parents. With varying degrees of sensationalism, these narratives confirmed the view of the monastic system as, in the words of a nativist pamphlet, "one of the most depraved and anti-republican departments among all the machinations of popery" (*Young Sam* 107). What I wish to draw attention to, however, is not so much the graphic depiction of the "iniquities" of Catholicism, which certainly owes a great deal to the tradition of the Gothic novel and the Indian captivity narrative, as the emphasis on the allure of the Church of Rome. Over and over in these texts one finds references either to the pageantry of the Catholic liturgy, the dazzling combination of gestures, colors and sounds that literally puts a spell on the congregation, or, at other times, the deep silence, the majestic aura of peace and calm that seems to envelop Catholic buildings, and convents in particular. This is the enticing and treacherous façade that, according to much anti-Catholic literature, hid a world of debauchery, abuse, and sometimes even murder. Exemplary in this sense is the language in which Rachel MacCrindell, in the preface to her popular 1846 exposé *The Protestant Girl in a French Nunnery*, warns her readers of the "many … evils attendant on the too-common practice of sending young persons to Romish schools" (v). Drawing on the metaphor of the spider, MacCrindell emphasizes the insidious nature of a religion which preys on the senses of vulnerable people with a beguiling and almost hypnotic power:

> She has seen the snares spread for the inexperienced, the spells thrown over the warm imagination, the fascinations entwined round the youthful heart, by that most dangerous system of false religion, which, appealing with almost irresistible power to the senses, through them prostrates the reasoning faculties, and thus silently, but surely, weaves its fatal net around the unsuspecting victim. (v)

These words are echoed a little later in the narrative, when two young Protestant women who intend to enter a Catholic school are warned by an elderly friend that popery is "a religion which appeals most powerfully to the senses" and advised to beware of "the seductive nature of its tenets" (16). In a similar vein, the preface to Rebecca Reed's best-selling *Six Months in a Convent* (1835) describes the author as "an artless female" who "became the dupe of her own feelings, and of designing persons around her" (iii). Far less lurid and titillating than other convent narratives, such as Maria Monk's notorious *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery* (known as the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of the Know-Nothings for its astonishing success), *Six Months in a Convent* calls to mind, at times, the old controversy concerning romances and their pernicious effects on women. When associated with Catholicism, the word "romance" is, of course, primarily used to

indicate the "emotional attraction or aura" supposedly belonging to that worship (another book on Convents, published in 1836, was significantly entitled *The American Nun; or, The Effects of Romance*). Yet Reed and other authors repeatedly make the point that what renders Catholicism particularly insidious is the fact that it is a marvelous fiction. At the outset of her narrative Rebecca Reed, like Arabella in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*, is attracted to a world where women appear to live in harmony and solidarity and are freed from the demeaning obligation of being mere society ornaments. The sight of a group of nuns in a street in Charlestown, and the words of a Catholic schoolmate, touch Reed's imagination to the point where she resolves to abandon the religion of her parents to convert to Catholicism and enter the convent as a novice:

> This conversation, with the solemn appearance of the nuns, *affected me very sensibly*, owing probably to *the peculiar state of my feelings*. The impressions thus made remained on my mind several months; and at the age of thirteen years and four months, I asked my parents if they were willing I should become an inmate of the convent. This proposition my parents were inclined to treat as *visionary*; but they soon discovered themselves to be in an error. (1 [emphasis added])

Even after experiencing what she regarded as the mindless strictness, the petty cruelties and the numbing oppression of convent life, Reed tells of how she hesitated before making the decision to flee, fearing that "many would believe me a person *romantic and visionary*, and inexperienced in the ways of the world" (20 [emphasis added]). As may easily be guessed, the main body of the narrative is meant to demonstrate that if Rebecca's parents were mistaken as to the strength of her determination, their misgivings about the institution she wanted to join were well founded. What Rebecca learns in the course of her six-month residence in the convent is that, like the building they inhabit and the worship they profess, the nuns of Charlestown are not what they seem to be. The nuns' religious garb, which is misleading in that it confers an appearance of austerity and purity to individuals whose behavior is all too often morally repugnant, is in this and other anti-Catholic texts a synecdoche for the whole structure and philosophy of the Church of Rome.

The same sharp contrast between early impressions and the actual experience of life within a Catholic establishment is to be found in Josephine Bunkley's *The Testimony of an Escaped Novice* (1855), in which the author, using the medium of a third-person narrative, recounts her experiences in, and escape from, the mother-house of the Sisters of Charity at Emmettsburg, Maryland. As in the case of Reed's book and other convent stories, the text is preceded by a male-authored preface which, in a manner reminiscent of Increase Mather's introductions to women's captivity narratives, serves to validate and justify the author's testimony. Because the women who told these stories ascribed their initial attraction to the Catholic Church, at least in part, to their own naiveté and credulity, their accounts needed to be sanctioned by a male voice who conferred authority upon the text and reassured the reader that in coming before the public the writer was rendering a valuable service to the country. In the short preface to Miss Bunkley's book we read, for example, that she decided to "give an exhibition of convent life .. for the

information and warning of her American countrymen" and that in coming to this decision "she did not act on her own judgment only, but availed herself of the advice of judicious friends, who believed that it was a sacred duty to the American community and the best interests of society to do so" (ix). As if this were not enough, we are later informed that the author also engaged the services of a gentleman "to revise [the narrative] and superintend the printing of her book" (xi). Like MacCrindell and Reed, but with much greater emphasis and richness of detail, Bunkley describes her early impressions of Catholic rituals as an overwhelming, intoxicating sensorial experience:

> While yet absorbed with the novelty of her position, and admiringly alive to the wonders that presented themselves to her view, the deep tones of the organ swelled forth in a melody of such surpassing sweetness that she clasped her hands in an ecstasy of delight; and turning to her nurse, her innocent face radiant with pleasure, she whispered, "How sweet! How beautiful!" The music ceased, but left that young susceptible heart entranced, bewildered, captivated. With wondering delight she continued to gaze upon the scene before her: the altar with its rich decorations, the burning tapers, the ascending cloud of incense, the paintings, the gorgeous vestments of the priests, the successive acts and postures that contribute to the dramatic effect of the Roman Catholic ritual - all this she beheld for the first time in rapt and mute astonishment. It was as if some heavenly vision were opened to her inspection, and emotions newly awakened and indefinable fluttered in her bosom. The pleasing variety of sounds, the sweet perfume of aromatic exhalations, the unwonted, the imposing solemnities before her, the sentiment of reverential awe that breathed in all around - all contributed to enhance the impression of the senses, and caused her heart to throb with pleasurable excitement; and when, the service over, she rose and took the hand of her nurse to return homeward, the child sighed deeply, even as one aroused from happy dreams to the dull realities of common life. (14)

This is, essentially, a seduction scene, the entrance into an exotic world of fantasy and romance, compared to which, Bunkley acknowledges, "the severe simplicity of the Protestant worship" (17) appears to partake of the drabness of reality. What, however, is even more harmful than this sumptuous, fairy-tale quality of Catholic rituals, is the influence which that Church is able to exercise upon its followers through the practice of auricular confession ("the key-stone" without which "the gorgeous structure, and the whole edifice, with all its architectural strength and magnificence, will crumble into ruins" [Bunkley 25]). Indeed, Bunkley argues that while "the theatrical display and sensual appeal of " Catholicism are the "agencies that first *attract*," it is the "revealments of the confessional that *retain*"; while the former are "the bands of flowers thrown around the youthful victim to draw her to the altar," the "ordinance of confession is the sharp hook of steel that grapples her till the sacrifice be accomplished" (25). Ostensibly denounced as an instrument of psychological coercion and bondage, in Bunkley's narrative and other convent stories confession is also singled out and exploited for its potential indecency, as the practice by which young women are forced to lay bare their innermost feelings to a man.

The fact that the Catholic Church seemed to appeal especially to young women did

not escape the attention of Ralph Waldo Emerson who, on more than one occasion, commented on this phenomenon in his journals. In an entry for June-July 1842 Emerson poked fun at the consternation with which a young girl's decision to convert to Catholicism had been received by their mutual Unitarian friends. "I hear with pleasure," Emerson wrote, "that a young girl in the midst of rich decorous Unitarian friends in Boston is well nigh persuaded to join the Roman Catholic Church. Her friends who are also my friends, lamented to me the growth of this inclination. But I told them she is to be greatly congratulated on the event" (286). Clearly Emerson was of the opinion that his friends' concern was exaggerated and that the young girl, whose life had been sadly uneventful and untouched by love and beauty, could perhaps find in Catholicism what she needed. The only danger inherent in Catholicism was common to other forms of worship, including Unitarianism, that is to say the danger of experiencing religion merely at the level of form, as, in Emerson's words, "an icehouse… of externals" (286). The warm encouragement that Emerson gave to the young Catholic convert seems to suggest that, in his view, it was not so much the name or nature of a particular worship that mattered, as what one made of it: "I charged her to pay no regard to dissenters but to suck that orange thoroughly" (286). Seven years later Emerson sounds a different note in a very succinct entry in which he calls New England Catholics "disgusting" and the "spread of popery futile." It seems to me, however, that what arouses his contempt is not Catholicism itself, but rather the idea that some of his fellow New Englanders would choose a religion so far removed from their culture, and that they would embrace a new worship as one would the latest fashion. Significantly enough, in the same entry Emerson leaves us in no doubt as to his opinion on the demonization of the Church of Rome: "As to fearing the Pope, we in America should as soon think of fearing a muskmelon" (401). It is in an entry written between March and May 1857 that Emerson returns to the phenomenon of Protestant girls converting to Catholicism:

> I find no more flagrant proof of skepticism than the toleration of slavery. Another is, this running of the girls into popery. They know nothing of religions, & the grounds of the sects; they know that they do like music, & Mozart's masses; & Bach, & run into the Catholic Church, where these are. (475)

Even though, as one would expect, there is no trace in Emerson's writing of the sensationalism of convent stories, the placing of this topic immediately after the reference to slavery is highly significant. As Emerson saw it, the growing number of conversions to Catholicism was due more to the girls' ignorance and superficiality than to the "snares" laid by that Church, but what he seems to suggest here is that the end result was nonetheless a form of thralldom.

The idea that the Catholic Church kept its followers in a state of mental subjugation and that its principles were at odds with those of a democratic society also appears in Lydia Maria Child's *Letters from New-York* (1843), originally published in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* (19 August 1841-4 May 1843). What sets Child's observations

apart from those of most of her contemporaries is the calm lucidity and sobriety with which she examined a religion which, however objectionable in her eyes, interested her greatly from a cultural and aesthetic point of view. Even when she introduces the common theme of the romantic lure of Catholicism, Child ascribes a much higher value to the beauty of its rites than most Protestant writers do, and avoids any reference to gender with regards to its power of attraction:

> The Catholic Church is a bad foundation for liberty, civil or religious. I deprecate its obvious and undeniable tendency to enslave the human mind; but I marvel not that the imaginations of men are chained and led captive by this vision of the Past; for it is encircled all around with poetry, as with a halo; and within its fantastic pageantry there is much that makes it *sacred* poetry. (149)

Child's understanding of the cultural and artistic heritage preserved within the Catholic liturgy anticipates Margaret Fuller's exhortation to American readers, in the winter of 1847, with regard to the forms and rituals of Catholicism as "growths of the human spirit" (*These Sad* 169). As is well known, Fuller was, by then, a resident of Rome and correspondent for the *New-York Tribune*. Two years before leaving for Europe, when she was living in New York, Fuller had written three columns on "The Irish character" for the same publication. In those pieces she had decried, like Child, the obscurantism of the Church of Rome. The "all but omnipotent sway of the Catholic religion" (168) over Irish immigrants was, according to Fuller, the principal obstacle to their integration into American society. She was convinced, however, that the experience of America's democratic institutions would gradually transform the immigrants, and indeed Catholicism itself, and make them part of the fabric of American life:

> as the Irishman or any other foreigner becomes Americanized, he will demand a new form of religion to suit his new wants. The priest too, will have to learn the duties of an American citizen; he will live less and less for the Church and more for the People, till, at last, if there be Catholicism still, it will be under Protestant influences, as begins to be the case in Germany. It will be, not Roman, but American Catholicism. (*Journalism* 170)

In the following years, when Irish emigration to the United States assumed the character of an exodus, due to the devastating effects of the famine, a growing number of Americans began to ask themselves who would be influencing who in matters of religion and national allegiance. And if the Catholic Church was seen as antagonistic to the principles and interests of the United States, the disquieting certainty was that, with the sway it could exercise over household help and, perhaps, on the future wives and mothers of America, the "enemy" was already within the gates.

Università degli Studi di Trieste

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ITALIAN JEWS IN THE UNITED STATES IN THE EARLY 1940s: IMPRESSIONS AND LIFESTYLE CHANGES

ELLEN GINZBURG MIGLIORINO

The approval in the fall of 1938 of the well-known anti-Semitic legislation in Italy caused many Italian Jews to leave their country. A large number departed for the United States, others tried to remain in Europe, still others went to South American countries. For all these refugees, departure meant changes in lifestyles and adapting to different cultures. The extent to which this occurred depended on how strictly they followed certain Jewish traditions before their departure, the differences they encountered in the country of immigration, and finally their willingness to accept new ways of life.

Up to the end of the Thirties, the majority of Italians who went to the U.S. were largely poor, uncultivated people who left Italy hoping to attain an occupational advance in the new country. The first generation encountered the usual problems of social adjustment; the majority had to adapt to meager wages and was isolated from the economic, social and political life of the host nation. Gradually, long-term immigrants strove to establish their own communities which were intended to reproduce local or regional aspects of life in their homelands. These "Little Italies" had their own restaurants, churches, clubs, mutual aid societies, schools etc. with customs typical of southern Italian regions and villages. First generation immigrants were quite often temporary sojourners who often settled permanently in the U.S. They generally did not know English, were not familiar with the changes they would have to conform to, nor to the laws to which they would have to abide. Gradually, their children, who attended schools, started becoming acquainted with the new environment, and acquired an awareness of how much their own families differed from other ethnic groups who had gradually assimilated many aspects of American life. Inevitably clashes occurred between the first and second generation on the extent to which Americanization was to take place.

It is likely that as Italian Jews began arriving in the U.S., they gradually became aware of the fact that they felt uncomfortable within existing Italian communities where there were no synagogues, and where the majority did not contemplate the existence of Jews from Italy. Furthermore, they felt equally out of place in Jewish communities where most Jews were from Eastern Europe where customs differed greatly from those they were familiar with in Italy. In New York, for example, according to a survey conducted by workers of the Federal Writers' Project, there were no synagogues for Italian Jews residing in the city at the time of publication in 1938. The study stated that most Italians professed the Roman Catholic faith, and mention is made of a few members of Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Lutheran, Baptist and Waldensian churches present in the

City (*Italians of New York* 75-92). No specific reference is made to the presence of Italian Jews. This inevitably implied that they would have difficulty adapting to either of the two ethnic communities closer to their own backgrounds. Italian-Americans considered them Jews, yet they quite understandly felt out of place in Jewish communities where people generally came from Eastern Europe where customs differed greatly from the Italian environments they were familiar with.

For these reasons, Italian Jewish refugees gradually began feeling like outsiders with those ethnic groups which would have seemed closer to the traditions and lifestyles they were acquainted with. Many were highly assimilated to such an extent that they considered themselves primarily Italian, and secondly Jewish. In fact, for some the idea of being Jewish had only been brutally awakened in the face of the anti-Semitic legislation approved by the Mussolini government. Some were bewildered that they were being cut off from Italian society as they considered themselves highly integrated into the national life, and even had relatives who had played a role in Italian political movements since before the time of the Italian Risorgimento. During World War I many had relations who had fought for the Italian cause. Indeed the Mussolini legislation for many came as a real shock. When they were forced to leave Italy because of their religion, and not for economic reasons, they felt in a rather odd situation compared to most immigrants of the so-called new immigration, or of their descendants. Moreover, geographically speaking, those Italian Jews who escaped Italy at the end of the Thirties were mostly from Central, or Northern Italy.

In this paper, I have tried to focus on the difficulties they encountered which they considered peculiar compared to the customs they were familiar with. Their correspondence with friends and relatives in Italy, or with other refugees who settled elsewhere in the U.S., contains frequent references to these subjects. Their observations offer first-hand evidence on the changes they had to adapt to in everyday life, which struck them as being particularly strange or unusual. The letters also offer enthusiastic descriptions of novelties they observed and wanted to share with friends and relatives. The correspondence is carried on by people who belonged to the middle and upper middle classes.

Letters from Italy minimize hardships encountered in the course of the war, while those from the U.S. avoid mentioning changes in lifestyles they had to adapt to. However, it should be kept in mind that after Italy entered the war in 1940, correspondence was censored in both countries. Apparently writers on both sides of the Atlantic were aware of this intrusion in their privacy, and were careful not to reveal opinions which might be considered inappropriate by government authorities. There are in fact instances in which certain parts of the letters have been deliberately cut out. A useful indication of the writers' awareness that their correspondence was being censored is the fact that some chose to number their letters.

The family which is the subject of this paper consisted in three people: Nicola Ginzburg, his wife, Luisa Artom, and their little boy, Vittorio. Nicola was born in Odessa

(now the Ukraine, the time Russia) on May 10, 1899 and immigrated to Italy in 1919. He and his parents (Fyodor Ginzburg and Vera Griliches), sister Maria (Marussia), and brother, Leone decided to settle in Turin, where Nicola attended the Royal Politechnic and graduated in 1925. As a student, he worked in the Patent Attorney Office, "*Ufficio Brevetti Gaetano Capuccio"* until he was hired by the "*Assicurazioni Generali*," and began working in Trieste on September 1, 1926. During the first three years he was the Company appraisar for fire damages, and dealt especially with appraisal of flour, saw and paper mills. Subsequently, he inspected industrial plants insured by the Company. For this reason, he travelled in European countries where the Company had business, and dealt with the fire rating and reinsurance of industrial plants. In March 1929, he became an Italian citizen, and starting November 1, 1938 as a result of the anti-Semitic laws, he could no longer hold his job.[1]

Departure from Italy was no easy matter. The family had settled in Trieste. Nicola and Luisa had met in the Italian Alps in 1935, and in September of the following year married in Rome, where Luisa and her family lived. In the fall of 1937, their son Vittorio was born. Correspondence between Nicola and his mother, Vera Griliches, who lived in Turin, by early 1938 already revealed Nicola's anxiety concerning the contemporary political scene. He tried to minimize issues, and used other words to avoid direct references to people or events in order not to alarm his mother, and fearing censorship. On August 31, 1938 he wrote to her, saying among other things: "At the office everything has become so complicated."[2] After having lost his position as a result of the new legislation, he noted sadly in a subsequent letter to her dated December 3, 1938: "(…) mi sembra così strano stare a Trieste e non andare in ufficio." Since he was at this point unemployed, his wife and child went to Rome where Luisa's family lived, and a few days later Nicola joined them. Before leaving Trieste, he wrote to his cousin, Abraham Cahan, asking him for an affidavit to immigrate to the United States.[3] Nicola's brother, Leone, urged them to depart, as by that time, he was already a well-known anti-Fascist, and was concerned about their safety. Nicola was quite worried about leaving his mother, brother and sister: "Mi sto preparando piano piano e capisco come è complicato e spaventoso il pensiero di lasciarvi qui."[4]

At the end of September 1939, the family left from Naples on the Vulcania, and arrived in New York at the beginning of October with an affidavit from Cahan, Nicola's cousin, who had founded *The Jewish Daily Forward*. Luisa had also informed her cousins, Camillo Artom and Bianca Ara, who had left Italy in February after he had lost his position as professor of physiology at the University of Palermo. They were living in North Carolina where he was teaching at Wake Forest College. Luisa spent a few days in New York, but found it hard to remain in such a large city in an inconvenient hotel with a small child. Overwhelmed by the fact that she had to immediately adapt to a much lower standard of living in a foreign country (Vittorio had even caught lice), she decided to accept Camillo and Bianca's invitation to stay at their home until Nicola found employment. Shortly thereafter, Nicola realized that finding work in New York was no easy

matter. He wrote his mother saying: "Comunque sistemarsi qui non è cosa facile. Ci sono moltissimi immigrati disoccupati."[5]

While in New York, he devoted all his time to learning English, and looking for work:

Ieri sera sono stato ad un cinematografo per neri. È il miglior modo d'imparare la lingua. Dopo sono andato ad ascoltare la predica. Oggi sono stato in sinagoga come siamo stati con te (...) dai riformatori. Ho ascoltato la predica. Qui ci sono tante cose strane: faccio colazione in farmacia e in compenso lì compro anche i francobolli. Tanti negozi sono aperti tutta la notte. La gente mangia un sacco e ci sono milioni di negozi. (...) Vado a colazione con Alter. È molto gentile con me e esige che prima di tutto impari l'inglese perché secondo lui è la cosa più importante e mi ha pagato la scuola al College of the City of New York. Sono corsi speciali per stranieri laureati. Mi sono procurato una radio e tutto il tempo libero, che è molto, lo dedico ad ascoltare e capire la lingua americana[6].

Finally, on February 21, 1940 Giuseppe Foa wrote him saying that the Bellanca Aircraft Corporation, located in New Castle, Delaware would hire him as a laborer in an assembly shop. Starting wages would be low (30 cents an hour, initially), but Foa assured him that gradually things would improve.[7] Nicola, exasperated at having spent three months in New York contacting as many people and places as possible in order to find employment, accepted the offer. His correspondence with Luisa while she was in Wake Forest indicated how concerned he was about his English, and about the difficulty of finding a job. She tried to encourage him:

non ti devi scoraggiare se non guadagni ancora. Non puoi far miracoli benedetto ti ricordi che abbiamo calcolato che ti ci vorranno mesi per trovare lavoro, e del resto nessuno lì ha trovato subito. Cercati qualche ragazzo inglese, americano, che stia un paio d'ore al giorno con te e ti parli inglese, ti faccia leggere a alta voce[8].

As soon as Nicola accepted the job offer, Luisa and Vittorio joined him in Wilmington where they found an Italo-American family that rented them a room with kitchen facilities. Nicola wrote his mother that he was getting up at six in the morning, and his landlord was giving him a ride to New Castle. The work day ended at 5 P.M., but he sometimes did overtime until 6, or even 10 P.M. As soon as his letter arrived, Leone answered right away congratulating him on having found employment:

Sono fiero di te e ultimamente ogni tua lettera conferma che hai fatto bene ad andare negli Stati Uniti (…) Come ti sei affermato e come vivi e come ti sei sistemato temporaneamente, tutto questo approvo anche se auguro a tua moglie di tutto il cuore di avere il proprio angolo[9].

Before leaving Italy, Nicola and Luisa had decided to have their furniture and practically all their belongings sent to the U.S. In a letter dated December 30, 1939, Luisa's mother, Ada Treves, wrote saying that everything would sail from Livorno, and would arrive in New York in about two weeks. However, a snowstorm delayed departure. Since finding a satisfactory place to stay in New Castle, or Wilmington was quite difficult, Nicola and his wife decided to place everything temporarily in storage in New York,

until they could find an apartment. Once they found a small one in the Italian section of town, they were able to have their furniture sent. In a letter to her mother, Luisa mentioned the job she and her husband had painting the floor of the apartment. Undoubtedly, for Luisa, especially, that kind of work was certainly quite a change from the lifestyle she had been accustomed to in Italy. Nicola once told me of an argument she had with the cook just before her departure from Trieste on whether or not the water on the stove was boiling. After the approval of the anti-Semitic laws, she realized that she would have many things to learn in order to keep house.[10]

Once settled in their apartment in Wilmington, Luisa received a letter from her cousin, Costanza Sullam, who sadly recalled helping her pack the trunks for America, while Luisa's brother, Vittorio Artom, typed a list of the contents:

Cara Lula mia quanto tempo è passato da quando facevamo i bauli e Vittorio ricopiava le liste a macchina, mi pare al tempo stesso ieri perché mi ricordo di ogni particolare (...). Chissà come ci troveremo cambiate. Ma mentre per te le esperienze sono state varie per me non è successo proprio niente. Forse tutte e due abbiamo qualcosa da invidiare all'altra! Se trovi il tempo di scrivermi dovresti raccontarmi della scultura e dei successi in quel campo. E Nicola cosa fa oltre al suo lavoro? E Pupi? L'hai messo in un asilo tipo quello dove vanno i bambini di Silvia? Spero tanto di si per amore della tua non-stanchezza che ne deriverebbe, ma non prenderla come un consiglio perché in questo momento riepilogo quanto mi fanno soffrire molte delle lettere che ricevo e che sono piene di consigli inattuabili che molto mi offendono e basta. Raccontami dei vestiti anche come ti vanno ancora, se ti servono ecc. E se ti sei comperata ancora roba fatta per tanto poco come quest'estate. Io ieri ho ricevuto un regalo per purim e conto di spenderlo domani stesso in blusa o golfino per il tailleur sperando che con blusa nuova paia nuovo (ma sarà un'illusione temo). (…)
Non pensare che sono del tutto senza cervello se ti parlo di golf e simili in questo momento ma credi che siamo tutti un pò mal messi di mente e che di qualche cosa bisogna occuparsi voglia o non voglia (…).[11]

Letters from Luisa's mother reflect her anxiety at receiving news from her daughter, and her desire to help her, at least spiritually, get settled in the new environment. For this reason, she was very upset when she learned she could no longer send packages without obtaining special permission:

(…) Sono desolata di non poterti mandare nulla né per te, né per Pupi caro, perché non si può più spedire nulla a meno di chiedere il permesso al ministero. Non puoi credere quanto sono avvilita di questa nuova disposizione (…) Che bravo il Pupi che mangia le bistecchine! Gli dai carne tutti i giorni? Trovi uova fresche? Avete verdure come qui? Come va il tuo inglese?[12]

Letters from Luisa's mother depict what she considered quandaries which her daughter no doubt smiled at as compared to those she had to adapt to. The former referred several times to the difficulties Angelo, Luisa's brother, and his wife, Giorgetta Bompiani, had in finding a nurse for their daughter, Priscilla, born in September 1940.[13] This was, of course, a result of the anti-Semitic legislation which prohibited Jews from having help. One notices frequent references to baptisms in the letters. This point should not to be

overlooked as it was an attempt made by Italian Jews to camouflage their origin, hoping to avoid persecution. Shortly before approval of the anti-Semitic legislation and especially afterward, many tried to find priests willing to help them convert to Catholicism. In Trieste, for example, there was a large Jewish community: in 1938 there were 5,400 Jews, while the total population of the city numbered 250, 243 people. By the middle of 1939, members of the synagogue had dwindled to 2,908. Between 1930 and 1936, only 42 people converted to Catholicism, while in 1938, alone, there were 795, in 1939, 339, and in 1940, 162.[14] Converting or not converting was the tragic dilemma of many. Those who did not convert no doubt made a courageous choice, though conversion was by no means an easy decision for others, nor, as we know, did it in later years solve the problem of being persecuted.

Elderly people had difficulty accepting the changes which the legislation imposed on them. In a letter to his wife, Nicola spoke of a letter he received from Leone's father-in-law, Giuseppe Levi,[15] who was living, at the time, in Belgium. Nicola wrote:

(…) Ho avuto oggi una lettera di Levi Pom. Poveretto è molto giù, dice di aver ricevuto una lunga lettera di Camillo che gli pare in complesso soddisfatto della sua sistemazione. Trova che suoi colleghi che hanno lasciato l'Europa l'hanno indovinato più di lui. Ma che lui è troppo vecchio per adattarsi all'America. Che ciò non ha importanza. Ma quello che è importante è l'avvenire dei suoi figli e in particolare quello di Leone: che gli sembra dalle lettere di sua moglie che si faccino delle inutili illusioni su mutamenti nelle direttive del regime in materia razzista. Che lui non ci crede e mi chiede se credo che Leone avrebbe possibilità di trovare lavoro qui. Che in altri paesi d'Europa ciò è impossibile. Povero vecchio! Non so cosa rispondergli.[16]

Nicola noted his mother's sadness after his departure and Leone's marriage. Her state of mind was indeed understandable considering that she had left Russia in 1919, and in 1930 her husband had passed away in Berlin, where he was working. Between 1938 and 1939, her two sons had married, and one had even left the country. Nicola pointed out: "La mamma, come si vede da queste lettere, ha perso qualsiasi desiderio e non vive che di ricordi. È stata come stroncata dopo le nozze di Leone e la nostra partenza. (…)" Hoping to encourage her, Nicola wrote: "Non devi, mamma, essere così triste e non devi perdere la voglia di fare le piccole cose quotidiane. Era proprio quello che ti dava la forza di vivere, anche se sono oltreoceano, ci vedremo presto, ne sono convinto."[17]

In June 1940, after Italy declared war, Leone was sent to enforced residence in a town called Pizzoli in the Abruzzi. Two months later, Marussia was confined to Orsogna, a village located in the same region, while Natalia, Leone's wife, and children joined him in August of the same year. Marussia went with her mother who explained the situation to Nicola as mildly as she could, in order not to alarm him, yet so he could understand that they hadn't received news since June 17th. The letter is dated 1 Oct. 1940:

scrivo chiaramente con la speranza che questa lettera prima o poi finirà nelle tue mani e ti porterà le nostre notizie che siamo tutti sani e salvi e pensiamo a voi tanto, tanto. Come state, siete tutti

quanti insieme o ognuno separatamente? Come sta crescendo mio nipote maggiore? (…) Marussia ed io siamo in buona salute. Hanno mandato Marussia in questo villaggio e io ho voluto stare con lei (…) Lei non scrive perché le sue lettere devono passare per la censura mentre io (…) posso scrivere liberamente. Qui l'aria è buona, sono 400 metri sul livello del mare e la gente è simpatica e molto ospitale.

Nicola's job lasted a little over a year. On May 5, 1941 he was again unemployed since he could not have a defense job, as he was not a U.S. citizen. Eight days later, he applied for unemployment compensation.[18] Extremely worried that he would not be able to find work, he wrote to Cahan, who encouraged him: "(…) You are an active and energetic person, and will be able to find some other job, other than the defense ones."[19]

At the beginning of August, fortunately, he found work in Wilmington at the Pusey and Jones Shipyards, as a marine ventilation design engineer. In a letter to his mother, he told her how happy he was to be able to finally work as an engineer, and explained that he was studying in the evening to become more familiar with the specific subject. He was working 52 hours a week: he finished work at 8 P.M., twice a week, while the other days, including Saturdays, at 4,30 P.M. His wages were $1.15 an hour.[20] It was hard work, as he explained in a letter to Leone in which he apologized for not writing more frequently. His correspondence, he admitted, was practically non-existent: "direi è quasi ridotta a zero, un pò perché sono molto stanco di sera e preferisco non stancarmi la vista, affaticata dal disegno, tornando due volte alla settimana alle 21 o quasi dopo dodici ore e mezza di lavoro e l'intervallo di mezz'ora per pranzo e finalmente un pò per pigrizia." He was extremely concerned about his English: "il mio inglese, e tu ti meraviglierai, va molto male, non riesco a 'sentirlo' come ho fatto per le altre lingue. Luisa invece lo parla benissimo e la capiscono sempre, cosa che non succede sempre con me, forse per i verbi sbagliati, che facevano inorridire Marussia a Cortina."[21]

In autumn 1941, the family moved to Claymont, on the outskirts of Wilmington, where they found a single house. Since Nicola and Luisa had avoided giving a detailed description of the apartment they had lived in, which was small and practically in the slums, Nicola's mother was surprised at their decision to move. She wrote Luisa saying:

spero che questa mia vi porterà i miei auguri per la vostra nuova casa e per la tua festa. Grazie del telegramma: mi perdo nel desiderio di sapere come è avvenuta questa decisione di cambiare casa. Sono sicura che il tuo buon senso e l'energia di Nicola renderanno la vostra vita ancora più comoda e gradevole e troverai un momento per informarci come state nella casa nuova (...).[22]

By the spring of the same year, Luisa was quite busy, compared to the leisurely life she had had in Italy. With no outside help and a small child, she took up her work as a sculptress. In a short time she did three heads, and participated in an exhibit held in Wilmington. The local newspaper published an article about her with a picture of her, surrounded by some of her work.

Her aunt in Trieste, Emilia Treves, was very proud of her: "So che sei diventata di

una bravura eccezionale e che oltre il ménage e al bambino ti occupi anche di scultura e sono in ammirazione della tua energia e capacità."[23]

By the end of 1941, receiving news had become very difficult. Some letters never arrived, or took a very long time. Both families were extremely concerned. On February 16,1942, Leone sent a message to Nicola through the International Red Cross which did not reach destination until July 27, 1942. On February 11, 1943, Nicola sent his mother a message through the American Red Cross. Her answer through the International Red Cross did not reach Nicola until October 29, 1943. Marussia wrote a letter dated April 6, 1943,[24] but there is no visible indication of when it arrived. In it she reported the birth of Alessandra, Natalia and Leone's daughter. Through a friend (Maria Ferreira David) who was living in Lisbon, Marussia and her mother received news that Nicola and his family were alright. Nicola's mother and sister had not heard from him since the end of July 1942. Marussia's reply to Mrs. David is dated June 9, 1943.[25] Evidently Nicola wrote Mrs. David in the fall of 1943 hoping to have news from his family. Her letter is in answer to his, and is dated October 21. She says she is sorry to inform him that her correspondence to Italy was returned to the sender.[26]

In a letter dated September 3, 1944, Nicola tells his mother how he found out that Leone had been killed on February 5, 1944. This letter shows how difficult it was for people living in the United States to have any idea of what had occurred in Italy.[27]

Università degli Studi di Trieste

NOTES

1. *Il Corriere della Sera*, 11 November 1938.

2. Nicola Ginzburg to Vera Griliches, 31 August 1938. This letter and the ones that follow are part of a private collection.

3. Nicola Ginzburg to Vera Griliches, 3 December 1938.

4. Nicola Ginzburg to Vera Griliches, 7 April 1938.

5. Nicola Ginzburg to Vera Griliches, October 14 1939.

6. Alter was Abraham Cahan's nickname. Nicola Ginzburg to Vera Griliches, 15 October 1939 and 21 October 1939.

7. For the list of Jewish professors dismissed from Italian universities in 1938, see Roberto Finzi, *L'università italiana e le leggi antiebraiche*, Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1997: 109-114. Giuseppe Foa was a well-known aeronautical engineer, and the Italian trade-unionist, Vittorio Foa's brother. Giuseppe Foa to Nicola Ginzburg, 21 February 1940.

8. Luisa Artom to Nicola Ginzburg, 21 February 1940.

9. Nicola Ginzburg to Vera Griliches, 26 March 1940; Leone Ginzburg to Natalia Ginzburg, 10 April 1940.

10. Ada Treves to Luisa Artom, 8 December 1939.

11. Costanza Sullam to Luisa Artom, 14 March 1941. The letter was written in Venice. The previous one

written to Luisa was dated 2 Feb. 1941, and it was the fifth letter that Costanza wrote Luisa. The former was the daughter of Angelo Sullam, one of the first Zionists in Italy. She later married Giulio Muggia, a well-known anti-Fascist whose dossier was known to the police by 1935. See Giovanni De Luna, "Una cospirazione alla luce del sole. Giustizia e libertà a Torino negli anni Trenta" in Ed. Tranfaglia, Nicola, *L'itinerario di Leone Ginzburg*, Torino: Einaudi, 1996, 12-13. Pupi was Vittorio Ginzburg's nickname.

12. Ada Treves to Luisa Artom, 5 June 1940.

13. Treves A. to Artom L. 6 Oct. 1940, 8 December 1940.

14. Archivio Unione Comunità Ebraiche (AUCEI), Busta 34, Relazione della comunità israelitica di Trieste per l'anno 1939; Archivio della Curia Vescovile di Trieste (ACVT), Posizione V, 1938; Posizione V, 1939; Posizione V, 1940.

15. Giuseppe Levi to Nicola Ginzburg, 6 January 1940.

16. Ada Treves to Luisa Artom, 6 October 1940; 8 December 1940.

17. Nicola Ginzburg to Vera Griliches, 21 October 1939.

18. Unemployment Compensation Commission of Delaware, 13 May 1941.

19. Abraham Cahan to Nicola Ginzburg, 11 May 1941.

20. Nicola Ginzburg to Vera Griliches, 14 August 1941.

21. Nicola Ginzburg to Leone Ginzburg, 7 October 1941.

22. Vera Griliches to Luisa Artom, 13 November 1941.

23. See *Wilmington Morning News*, 17 May 1941; Emilia Treves lived in Trieste, and was the mother of Gillo and Giorgio Dorfles. Emilia Treves to Luisa Artom, 30 Oct. 1941.

24. Marussia Ginzburg to Nicola Ginzburg, 6 April 1943.

25. Marussia Ginzburg to Maria Ferreira David, 9 Lune 1943.

26. Marussia Ginzburg to Nicola Ginzburg, 6 April 1943; Marussia Ginzburg to Maria Ferreira David, 9 June 1943; Maria Ferreira David to Marussia Ginzburg, 12 October 1943.

27. The letter was published in Ed. Avalle, M. Clara, *Da Odessa a Torino*, Torino: Meynier, 1989, 77.

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WORKSHOP FOUR
THE VISION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN IN CONTEMPORARY U.S. FICTION: FROM THE CRADLE TO THE ZONE

CHAIR: LUCA BRIASCO

The workshop's main purpose was tracking and following some of the itineraries in the U.S. contemporary novel that have been progressively redefining the role of the Mediterranean in the American fiction writer's agenda and sensibility. These itineraries, in such seminal works as William Gaddis's *The Recognitions*, Joseph Heller's *Catch 22* and Thomas Pynchon's *V* (analyzed by Mattia Carratello, Umberto Rossi and Giuseppe Costigliola), gradually lead the reader away from the escapist perspective that prevailed in the Modernist expatriates' experience, towards a complex geopolitical vision of the Mediterranean as the laboratory of a possible, non-American century. Our workshop concentrated more specifically on William Burroughs's fiction and on his vision of the Mediterranean as a zone much more than a cradle (Paolo Prezzavento, Laura Salvini, Roberta Fornari), analyzing its political, mythical and imaginative impact on contemporary genre writers such as cyberpunk leader Bruce Sterling.

Università degli Studi di Roma

SOUTH OF THE ZONE: GUERRA, ECONOMIA E REAGANOMICS IN *CATCH-22* DI JOSEPH HELLER

UMBERTO ROSSI

For the past fifty years the Allied war [WWII] has been sanitized and romanticized almost beyond recognition by the sentimental, the loony patriotic, the ignorant, and the bloodthirsty.
Paul Fussell

When I look up, I see people cashing in. I don't see heaven or saints or angels. I see people cashing in on every decent impulse and every human tragedy.
Yossarian

Come leggere un classico contemporaneo? In un'epoca sincretica come la nostra sembra che lo standard critico sia ormai una forma di più o meno spudorato eclettismo che può portare, in nome di una de-canonizzazione e de-gerarchizzazione del corpus dei testi sul quale il critico dovrebbe esercitare la propria attività, a un abbattimento di tradizionali delimitazioni territoriali, e a leggere con la massima disinvoltura qualsiasi testo indipendentemente dalla sua maggiore o minore letterarietà.

Forse la situazione della critica è però tutto sommato analoga a quella delle pratiche narrative attualmente più significative nel panorama letterario americano. A un eclettismo critico corrisponde forse un eclettismo narrativo, che è un modo tutto sommato accettabile di descrivere quella condizione postmoderna che sembra aver segnato la narrativa statunitense a partire dalla fine della seconda guerra mondiale. È difficile affrontare la narrativa postmoderna nella sua evasività, nella sua indecidibilità, nella sua multiformità, sia nella ben nota versione del primo postmodernismo (quello che potremmo ormai definire *high postmodernism*, per come è incarnato nelle esperienze degli anni '60, nelle opere inaugurali di Pynchon, Barth, Vonnegut, Dick, e ovviamente Joseph Heller), sia nella sua successiva deriva Avant-Pop (e qui i nomi sarebbero altri, come Erickson, Lansdale, Vollmann, Wright, ma in parte coinciderebbero, perché si potrebbe ben parlare di un Pynchon Avant-Pop come di un Dick Avant-Pop).

Ma forse, quando ci si trova, com'è il mio caso, ad affrontare un testo postmoderno che si è tutto sommato affermato sia come classico narrativo postmoderno che come testo provvisto di un vero e proprio valore paradigmatico rispetto alle esperienze narrative immediatamente successive, può darsi che la tradizionale discussione sulle caratteristiche generali del postmodernismo letterario, che ruota incessantemente attorno alle aporie della narrativa e della critica (realtà vs. iperrealtà, referenza al reale vs. autoreferenzialità, storicità vs. post-storicità, linearità vs. labirinticità, ecc.), non sia ormai il metodo più produttivo per leggere un testo postmoderno. Ripercorrere di nuovo la faglia che dividerebbe il postmoderno dal modernismo, se non dall'intera precedente tradizione letteraria; tuffarsi nella *querelle* sulla fine della storia e quindi della narrativa; arrovellarsi sull'impossibilità di raccontare una storia che non sia un riflesso dell'atto stesso di narrare, o

sulla necessità di abbandonare le narrazioni forti (patriarcali, occidentali, bianche, maschili, ecc.) per adottare qualsiasi modello altro (che però all'occhio attento del critico si rivela contaminato già da sempre da ciò che si dovrebbe contestare); tutte queste geremiadi della critica postmoderna applicata al testo postmoderno potrebbero ben essere forme di un interminabile preambolo che ha legittimato i testi postmoderni al costo però di non riuscire più a leggerli e a farli parlare per come potrebbero e dovrebbero.

Ci si chiede allora se il modo migliore per accostarsi a questi testi non sia quello, estremamente coraggioso, e forse dimenticato, che Walter Benjamin aveva adottato in un testo pubblicato postumo nel 1955, ovvero i "Commenti ad alcune poesie di Brecht." E la miglior presentazione di questo metodo è quella che ne fa Benjamin stesso:

> È noto che un commento è una cosa diversa da un apprezzamento valutativo, che mira a distribuire le luci e le ombre. Il commento parte dal presupposto della classicità dei suoi testi e quindi, in qualche modo, da un pregiudizio. (…) Ed è una situazione proprio profondamente dialettica quella in cui viene a trovarsi questa forma arcaica, il commento, che è insieme una forma autoritaria, quando si pone al servizio di una poesia che, non soltanto non ha in sé nulla di arcaico, ma anche si oppone a ciò cui oggi viene riconosciuta autorità. (…) Non si potrebbe forse (…) legge[re] interamente questo testo quasi che si trattasse di un testo già variamente collaudato, appesantito da un contenuto di pensiero - in breve: di un testo classico. (139)

Commentare il testo moderno (nel caso di Benjamin le poesie liriche di Brecht), che "non ha in sé nulla di arcaico," e "si oppone a ciò cui oggi viene riconosciuta autorità," come se fosse un classico. Commentarlo accumulando le difficoltà, commentarlo senza far precedere la lettura da preamboli teorici. Un simile programma, per quanto rischioso, risulta però attraente a chi sente una certa stanchezza nei confronti dei preamboli di cui sopra e sente di avere a che fare proprio con un testo che non ha in sé nulla di arcaico e che si oppone a ciò cui oggi viene riconosciuta autorità. Nel mio caso, il testo contemporaneo cui accordare lo status di classico proprio per accumularne dialetticamente le difficoltà d'interpretazione, e cercare in qualche modo di lasciarlo raccontare, senza ricadere nelle geremiadi infinite sopra elencate, è *Catch-22* di Joseph Heller (1961). Al romanzo di Heller è forse possibile applicare la "forma arcaica" del commento, che Benjamin ha utilizzato in modo così produttivo per la lirica moderna di Brecht.

Il commento deve necessariamente partire da un passo, ancorarsi al testo. Il passo, apparentemente marginale, a partire dal quale si percorrerà il romanzo di Heller è il seguente:

> Milo was away, too, in Smyrna for the fig harvest. The mess hall ran smoothly in Milo's absence. (...) There was shish-kabob for lunch, huge, savory hunks of spitted meat sizzling like the devil over charcoal after marinating seventy-two hours in a secret mixture Milo had stolen from a crooked trader in the Levant, served with Iranian rice and asparagus tips Parmesan, followed by cherries jubilee for dessert and then steaming cups of fresh coffee with Benedictine and brandy. (21)

Fondamentalmente, senza dover ricorrere ad apparati di critica testuale, è evidente

che qui Heller sembra concentrarsi sulla fascinazione dei nomi di prodotti esotici: *figs*, *shish-kabob*, *Iranian rice*, *asparagus tips*; esotismo che dovrebbe essere suggerito anche dal toponimo *Smyrna*. Ma sotto la superficie apparentemente tradizionale del testo, ottocentesca nella sua levigatezza, sono all'opera ben altre dinamiche intertestuali. Il "crooked trader in the Levant" infatti a ben vedere altri non è che "Mr Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant / Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants. / C.i.f. London: documents at sight." Per cui in effetti il passaggio del romanzo di Heller altro non è che un collegamento iper/intertestuale al celebre poemetto modernista eliotiano. Ma non è l'unico riferimento al grande poeta modernista e teorico del modernismo. Yossarian infatti si definisce "Sweeney in the Nightingales among trees" (20).

Come interpretare questi collegamenti intertestuali al classico per eccellenza del modernismo anglo-americano proprio all'interno di un testo seminale del postmodernismo? Sberleffo? Citazione simulacrale che svuota di senso proprio ciò che viene citato? O riconoscimento di un debito metodologico, in quanto l'intertestualità esasperata del postmodernismo è già all'opera nella roccaforte (o torre d'avorio) del modernismo, per cui in effetti il romanziere postmoderno potrebbe ben considerarsi erede dell'autore della *Waste Land*, fedele prosecutore di un metodo di lavoro e di una concezione del testo, più che riproduttore delle soluzioni elaborate dagli *high modernists*?

Del resto è ben vero che anche Heller espone chiaramente la sua poetica: lo fa *en passant*, ma in modo tale da far capire che nel passaggio in questione viene enucleato il progetto operativo del suo romanzo. Lo fa parlando del *catch-22*, del cavillo (più che del *comma*, come è stato reso dal traduttore italiano) che inchioda Yossarian e gli altri aviatori americani al loro posto di combattimento e in ultima analisi alla morte.

> Yossarian saw it clearly in all its spinning reasonableness. There was an elliptical precision about its perfect pairs of parts that was graceful and shocking, *like good modern art*, and at times Yorssarian wasn't quite sure that he saw it all, just the way he was never quite sure about good modern art (47, corsivo mio)

Ma *Catch-22*, oltre ad essere il nome del cavillo che obbliga chi non vuole combattere a restare al suo posto perché sano di mente, è anche, indubbiamente, il titolo dello stesso romanzo di Heller. Quindi non è affatto escluso che ciò che si applica al *catch-22* (il circolo vizioso) debba applicarsi anche a *Catch-22* (il romanzo). Che è "good modern art," con la sua "elliptical precision" e la sua "spinning reasonableness": tutti termini che non sarebbe affatto difficile applicare alla letteratura modernista, *in primis* ai componimenti del suo teorico T.S. Eliot.

Approfondire le continuità tra il modernismo secondo Eliot e il postmodernismo di Heller potrebbe anche essere interessante, dopo trent'anni di incessante predicazione del radicale distacco che separerebbe le due fasi della storia letteraria nordamericana; ma certo una tale trattazione eccederebbe i limiti dimensionali del presente contributo. E' bene concentrarsi invece sulla questione dell'interstestualità dalla quale siamo partiti, ovvero la ricomparsa di Mr Eugenides nelle pagine di *Catch-22*.

Il modernismo anglo-americano, infatti, è riappropriazione talvolta rapace della storia e della cultura e dell'arte europea,[1] e ciò è particolarmente vero per i suoi esponenti statunitensi (Pound ed Eliot *first and foremost*). A questa riappropriazione transatlantica corrisponde simmetricamente il momento di massimo intervento nelle questioni europee da parte della potenza americana, dal 1917 al 1989; periodo il cui fulcro è proprio quell'intervento nella seconda guerra mondiale, che costituisce al tempo stesso la causa scatenante, lo sfondo storico e la morale di *Catch-22* (ma anche di altri romanzi postmoderni o proto-postmoderni quali *Slaughterhouse 5* di Vonnegut, *Gravity's Rainbow* di Pynchon, *The Cannibal* di Hawkes).[2]

Ed ecco che la critica letteraria deve farsi anche geopolitica: una forma deviante, mutante di geopolitica. Ed ecco che i frammenti *shored against TSE's ruins* trovano una resurrezione nel testo di Heller: le citazioni, le lapidi collezionisticamente raccolte da Eliot (in questo erede del Conte Valerio di "The Last of the Valerii" [1874] di Henry James, tombarolo frazerianamente affascinato dall'antichità pagana che poco ha di italiano e molto di puritano *new Englander* tentato da cattolico-pagane sensualità, di WASP perturbato nel suo *grand tour* da inconfessabili perversioni) vengono trasfigurate nel romanzo helleriano nelle merci che l'erede del Connecticut Yankee (e/o del *Confidence Man* di Melville), Milo Minderbinder,[3] razzia e fa circolare nell'area mediterranea, compiendo folli voli con ali non previste dall'Alighieri, quelle dei North American B-25 Mitchell pilotati da Yossarian e dal suo creatore Joseph Heller, trasformati in aerei da carico dall'esemplare imprenditorialità di Milo.

Questi aerei trasportano, all'inizio dell'impresa import/export di Milo, prevalentemente prelibatezze:

"I've got some live Maine lobsters hidden away that I can serve you tonight with an excellent Roquefort salad and two frozen éclairs that were smuggled out of Paris only yesterday together with an important member of the French underground (...)" The next day for lunch there was terrapin Maryland with a whole quart of Dom Pérignon 1937 (…). (103)

E va detto che cibo ed etnicità, ovvero quella tipicità dei luoghi che attirava un tempo l'intellettuale americano nel suo tour artistico-culturale nell'area mediterranea, da Melville a James, sono strettamente connessi dallo stesso Heller in un passaggio solo apparente marginale in cui si descrive il vecchio che ferisce il Maggiore - de Coverley a Roma, probabilmente per un eccesso di entusiasmo: "(…) kissed him mockingly on each cheek with a mouth reeking with sour fumes of wine, cheese and garlic (…)" (138). Ecco dunque lo stereotipo del *dago* con formaggio e vino e aglio, cui manca solo il mandolino; ma a pensarci bene ciò che costituisce l'italiano in quanto (pittoresco) uomo del Mediterraneo è lo stesso cibo contrabbandato e commerciato dall'americanissimo Milo.

Una prova? Il traffico di pomodori, questo prodotto archetipo della cucina e dell'immaginario italiano a casa e all'estero:

The colonel did not like plum tomatoes, not even when they were his own, and these were not

even his own. These had been purchased in different market places all over Pianosa by Colonel Korn under various identities, moved up to the colonel's farmhouse in the hills in the dead of the night, and transported down to Group Headquarters the next morning for sale to Milo, who paid Colonel Cathcart and Colonel Korn premium prices for them. (215)

Da un lato il pomodoro caratterizza una certa "italianità" da cartolina, dall'altro fa parte dell'attività instancabile del *syndicate* di Milo. E vale la pena di soffermarsi un attimo proprio su questa fantomatica organizzazione della quale *everybody has a share*. Il termine "syndicate" infatti indica, stando all'*American Heritage Dictionary,* "an association of people or firms formed to engage in an enterprise or promote a common interest" ma anche "a loose affiliation of gangsters in control of organized criminal activities" - e ogni volta che Milo entra in scena non si è mai del tutto certi se il termine vada preso nella prima o nella seconda accezione. Si ripete tutto sommato il paradosso del pomodoro: la mafia (che in fondo è una "loose affiliation of gangsters") è tratto costitutivo di una certa italianità e italo-americanità stereotipa (Francis Ford Coppola docet), ma è anche modello organizzativo dell'impresa dell'imprenditore Milo.

Siamo partiti dunque dall'appropriazione testuale eliotiana della tradizione europea. Arriviamo con Heller all'appropriazione politica dell'Europa. Stiamo parlando di letteratura o di storia? Del postmoderno o della NATO? Stiamo probabilmente camminando su una stretta linea di confine tra i due ambiti, quella dell'immaginario. Oppure, per metterla in termini meno impegnativi, ci occupiamo di una reduplicazione nella letteratura di dinamiche storiche. Basti pensare all'episodio dell'elezione a sindaco di Milo. Milo e Yossarian volano a Palermo per un'altra operazione commerciale, partite d'indivia in cambio di funghi, inutile dilungarsi sulla faccenda. Ed ecco che "Milo had been elected mayor of Palermo - and of nearby Carini, Monreale, Bagheria, Termini Imerese, Cefali [sic!], Mistretta and Nicosia as well - because he had brought Scotch to Sicily" (241). Business e politica: un'accoppiata eminentemente italiana. Ed eminentemente americana.

Perché Milo è neoliberista in politica fin dove gli conviene, ma quando non gli conviene ritiene che sia dovere dello stato intervenire. Ecco la sua argomentazione, non più contorta di quelle con cui il liberista Bush Jr. potrebbe giustificare il suo recente dazio protezionistico sull'acciaio prodotto all'estero:

The government has no business in business, and I would be the last person in the world to ever try to involve the government in a business of mine. But the business of government is business. (...) Calvin Coolidge said that, and Calvin Coolidge was a President, so it must be true. And the government does have the responsibility of buying all the Egyptian cotton I've got that no one else wants so that I can make a profit, doesn't it? (272)

Quindi politica e affari, mi si perdoni l'ovvietà, vanno a braccetto, e se l'imprenditore Milo Minderbinder compra cotone egiziano che non ha mercato, è lo zio Sam che in qualche modo deve togliergli le castagne dal fuoco.

E quando Milo noleggia i bombardieri del suo squadrone alla Luftwaffe per bom-

bardare l'aeroporto stesso,[4] lo fa in nome della libertà d'impresa, e non ritiene di dover risarcire il governo americano; proprio perché governo del popolo:

In a democracy, the government is the people (...). We're the people, aren't we? So we might just as well keep the money and eliminate the middleman. Frankly, I'd like to see the government get out of war altogether and leave the whole field to private industry. If we pay the government everything we owe it, we'll only be encouraging government control and discouraging other individuals from bombing their own men and planes. We'll be taking away their incentive. (266)

In altri termini: l'apparato militare americano che copre e controlla coi suoi aerei il Mediterraneo, apparato ritratto in tutta la sua farraginosa burocraticità e insensatezza nella satira helleriana, si duplica nelle pagine di *Catch-22* in una rete commerciale sempre più ramificata e diversificata, in un nodo di interessi politico-economici nel quale viene catturato proprio il tipico per eccellenza dell'area mediterranea, i suoi prodotti agro-alimentari.

E non solo quelli. Alla fine, quando Milo viene spinto dai suoi sensi di colpa a chiedere di essere assegnato a un equipaggio per combattere come tutti gli altri aviatori, invece di gestire la mensa e il *syndicate*, l'elencazione dei suoi traffici e delle sue attività assume un tono enciclopedico. Milo tratta infatti (381-82):

- una *dieta iposodica* per il generale Peckem
- una *dieta povera di grassi* per il generale Dreedle
- *cedri* dal Libano da inviare alla segheria di Oslo per essere trasformati in assi per l'impresa di costruzioni di Cape Cod
- *piselli* in alto mare da Atlanta all'Olanda per pagare i
- *tulipani* spediti da Ginevra per pagare le
- *forme di formaggio* che devono raggiungere Vienna *Money In Front*
- *zinco galvanizzato* nel magazzino a Flint per i fonditori di Damasco
- *canapa* da inviare a Belgrado per pagare i
- *datteri semi-disossati* da Khartoum
- *acciughe* portoghesi da vendere a Lisbona per pagare il
- *cotone* egiziano da Mamaroneck
- *arance* da comprare in Spagna
- un *uomo di Piltdown* per lo Smithsonian Institute
- *prezzemolo* per la Francia
- *legno di balsa* peruviano già ordinato
- *pelli* da Buenos Aires da conciare nel Newfoundland e spedire a Helsinki *No Money In Front*
- *sughero* da mandare a New York
- *scarpe* per Tolosa

- *prosciutto* per il Siam
- *chiodi* dal Galles
- *mandarini* per Orleans
- *carbone* a Newcastle

A questo vorticare globale di merci da un capo all'altro del pianeta e di scambi di ogni genere, incluse le attenzioni per gli ufficiali da compiacere, la reazione tra il sopraffatto e l'ammirato del colonnello Cathcart è: "Milo, stop! (…) It's no use. You're just like I am - *indispensable*! (…) Milo, you can't fly sixty-four more missions. You can't even fly one more mission. The whole system would fall apart if anything happened to you" (382). Ed è un sistema che, come la Zona in *Gravity's Rainbow* di Pynchon (che ha senza dubbio studiato approfonditamente la lezione di Heller), non fa differenze tra amici e nemici, tra buoni e cattivi, perché scopriamo che "[Milo] had flown fearlessly into danger and criticism by selling petroleum and ball bearings to Germany at good prices in order to make a good profit and help maintain a balance of power between the contending forces" (377).

Perché, in effetti, la guerra è bene che duri a lungo, più a lungo che si può; finché c'è guerra si fanno affari, finché si vola per sganciare bombe senza curarsi più di tanto di chi si colpisce, si possono anche far circolare quelle merci che contano veramente, perché può proseguire quell'appropriazione (letteraria e "reale") del Mediterraneo e dei suoi beni che ripercorre l'appropriazione "colta" tra ironico e antiquario dei modernisti (ancora una volta, Eliot primo tra tutti, seguito dal Pound dei *Cantos*).

E questo intreccio perverso di affari, politica, e guerra aerea non è, ormai dovrebbe essere chiaro a tutti, specifico della seconda guerra mondiale, tutt'altro. Si articola a partire dalla guerra mediterranea degli americani, cui prese parte in prima persona Joseph Heller, ma resta una costante della storia americana e in particolare dei rapporti tra Stati Uniti e Mediterraneo fino ai nostri giorni, fino alla guerra del Golfo e oltre. E di questo si era reso conto per primo Heller, che nel 1994 ha sentito il bisogno di pubblicare un seguito a *Catch-22*, ovvero *Closing Time*, un romanzo newyorchese nel quale tornano tutti i personaggi del precedente romanzo, Yossarian in testa, e si muovono nell'America post-reaganiana. Esperienza letteraria non del tutto soddisfacente, priva dello smalto del suo capolavoro, *Closing Time* va forse letto più in chiave politica che meramente letteraria; perché è così che quest'opera non del tutto riuscita aggiunge un elemento fondamentale a *Catch-22*.

Nel romanzo infatti torna anche Milo, ormai ricco, potente e influente, alla guida di una potente *corporation* che opera anche nel settore militare. Una corporation che sta per presentare un nuovo bombardiere da fornire all'USAF per proseguire la guerra fredda dopo la sparizione dell'Impero del Male. Siamo ben oltre il B-25 su cui volavano Yossarian e Heller nel 1943; il nuovo bombardiere della M&M E&A è così avanzato e sofisticato che "[y]ou can't hear it and you can't see it. It will go faster than sound and slower than sound" (66). Come gli *stealth* impiegati sulla Serbia e poi in Afghanistan, l'M&M E&A è un "Sub-Supersonic Invisible and Noiseless Defensive Second-Strike Offensive Attack Bomber."

Molto tempo è passato dai B-25 coi loro motori a pistoni, il puntatore ottico Norden e le bombe a caduta libera. Ma l'area delle operazioni (o, come direbbe Ballard, l'area del disastro) è sempre il buon vecchio Mediterraneo e i suoi dintorni. E la politica americana continua a essere fatta di bombardamenti, affari tutt'altro che limpidi e una miopia politica che fa risaltare, per contrasto, la visione nitida e tagliente di Joseph Heller.

Pomezia

NOTE

1. In effetti il presente contributo è complementare a quello di Mattia Carratello su *The Recognitions* di William Gaddis, presentato nello stesso workshop.

2. Proprio il romanzo di Hawkes costituisce lo snodo fondamentale tra il modernismo di Eliot e (in particolar modo) di Joyce e quello che forse resta il massimo esempio del postmodernismo americano, il romanzo di Pynchon.

3. Proprio nel 24° capitolo, quello che s'intitola "Milo," appare un'altra significativa citazione eliotiana (e parzialmente whitmaniana): "April had been the best month of all for Milo. Lilacs bloomed in April and fruit ripened on the vines" (257). Se l'aprile di Eliot era il più crudele dei mesi, a causa del contrasto tra vitalità della vegetazione e morte spirituale dell'uomo moderno, esso torna ad esser lieto per gli affari di Milo, un nuovo tipo d'uomo nel quale la dimensione spirituale è totalmente e radicalmente elisa. Ciò fa di Milo una creatura meno che umana (di qui il suo lato caricaturale, quasi da cartone animato), ma che nel contrasto con le angosce umane, troppo umane dell'ansioso Yossarian guadagna una sua assoluta verosimiglianza e vitalità.

4. "Milo, of course, had been the big feather in [Colonel Cathcart's] cap, although having his group bombed by Milo's planes had probably been a terrible black eye for him, even though Milo had ultimately stilled all protest by disclosing the huge net profit the syndicate had realized on the deal with the enemy and convincing everyone that bombing his own men and planes had therefore really been a commendable and very lucrative blow on the side of private enterprise" (218-9).

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MEDITERRANEAN HISTORIES IN THOMAS PYNCHON'S *V.*

GIUSEPPE COSTIGLIOLA

In Thomas Pynchon's first novel, *V.*, the Mediterranean is the metaphorical and geographical setting where a series of critical moments in the history of European imperialism take place. This setting does not depict the retreat into a dream landscape or the end of history, as is the case in a number of modernist and postmodernist novels. On the contrary, it shows the irruption of history and its horrors into modern experience. As many recent novels of the postcolonial age, *V.* explores and documents the cultural dynamics of new imperialism through its radical questioning of power, politics, historical events and philosophy of history. In this perspective, *V.* is not only a parody of books by Kipling, Haggard and others which present white men kicking third-world people around and which contributed to the construction of the "manichean" racial difference that JanMohamed locates at the heart of the colonialist literary genre. More than that, in dealing with certain aspects of racial difference and in examining a series of critical moments in the history of European imperialism, the novel "explores the aporias of epistemology at a series of specific and critical junctures in modern Western history, documenting the breakdown of white imperialist hegemony" (Holton 324). But what is completely new is the complex model Pynchon has elaborated to develop a new American vision of the Mediterranean with its radical critique of old modes of perception and representation of reality, in the effort to renew the meaning of the past by interpreting cultural history in relation to contemporary social conditions. The aim of this article is to track this model.

References to the Phoenician goddess Astarte begin and end the epilogue of *V.* Venus, the Roman goddess of love, was adapted from the Greek goddess Aphrodite, who in turn was adapted from the Phoenician Astarte: the same god-figure has presided over the Mediterranean and its cultures throughout the centuries. Actually, the goddess Astarte was known by many names in the ancient Mediterranean world, and it has been noted that her Phoenician incarnation is the original for Pynchon's fictional V (Kupsch).

V. wears an ivory comb, which was also traditionally worn by Venus, and appears under various names and guises throughout the 20th century at historical moments of destruction and decay. As the century seems to get more cruel and inhuman, so does V. in her various incarnations. In the end she has become a Bad Priest, perverting the Word and spirit of religion, and she is dismantled like an object. Following V.'s transitions through the historical episodes[1] is then important in determining what kind of a goddess she has become, that is, in following a fundamental metamorphosis in the history of Western culture, from the ancient mythology to the ongoing progress of science and the secularization of human societies.

The Phoenicians were the Western world's first great explorers and colonizers who are believed to have extended their influence as far as the British Isles, and the island of Malta. Moreover, according to the legend the apostole Paul was shipwrecked in A.D. 60 on Malta, where he converted the inhabitants to Christianity: the last stage of the cult of Astarte is the Virgin Mary.

The connection among the Phoenicians, the Greeks and the Romans, who ruled in turn on the Mediterranean area, has a relevance in a novel whose topic are the historical processes whereby a motive force in one culture metamorphoses into a new motive force in another culture, and how this phenomenon corresponds with the rise of each culture's hegemony in the Western world.

How fitting, then, to set part of the novel on the island of Malta, to use the late nineteenth-century world of the British Empire into which Victoria Wren, one of the incarnations of V., was born, as a returning effect of that colonizing process thousands years later. And, of course, with the resonances of the last great empire, the USA.

Malta, the matriarchal island, is in the middle of the Mediterranean, the middle of the middle of the world, a point where Europe, Africa and Asia intersect. It is referred to as "a cradle of life" (382), and its people are characterized as a "motley of races" (310). Fittingly, Malta is the site of a number of key episodes in the novel, the metaphorical focus through which Pynchon defines his complex model.

In his classic study of an archetype, *The Great Mother*, Erich Neumann refers to the archetypal situation in Malta, concentrating on the spiritual aspect of the feminine transformative character which leads through suffering and death, sacrifice and annihilation, to renewal and rebirth, and immortality. "But such transformation is possible only when what is to be transformed enters wholly into the Feminine principle […] as in Malta long before the days of healing in the Greeks shrines of Asclepius, the sick man undergoes a slumber of 'incubation', in the course of which he encounters the healing godhead" (292).

Within the framework of allusion to Eliot's *Waste Land*, in which Pynchon appears to be working, Malta may be the "red rock" in the first section of the poem (Slade 1990). Seen in mythical terms, Malta may be "the world-navel," the center of the universe, a place of constant renewal of energy, but this is only one of the hints the novel alludes to. A close reading of *V.* will show that, according to Pynchon, myths no longer serve significantly to frame our world. At one point in contemporary New York, Profane and some of his friends are talking about their work in the sewer, killing alligators:

> Together on the stoop they hammered together a myth. Because it wasn't born from fear of thunder, dreams, astonishment at how the crops kept dying after harvest and coming up again every spring, or anything else very permanent, only a temporary interest, a spur-of-the-moment tumescence, it was a myth rickety and transient as the bandstands and the sausage-pepper booths of Mulberry Street. (140)

The corollary of this passage is that, in Tony Tanner's words, "the privileged hierarchies of significance and interpretation of the past must be abandoned, and we must

look to the overlooked areas of the contemporary world for new sources of meaning." No myth can do justice to "the energizing experience of sustaining uncertanity" (55) which is the peculiar note of Pynchon's world, yet Pynchon makes use of a congeries of mythical elements and literary allusions which have more than a parodic function. If it is right what George Levine writes, that "Pynchon denies resolution into myth by wandering among all available myths" (60), it is also true that in his work history has a materiality which overwhelms any literary or cultural suggestion. Myth in modern theory works in two different ways: by providing 'plot' structures and, at the same time, by becoming a mode of perception, even of vision, thus transmitting the idea of a world order that trascends individuality. In this sense myth is a device for including the other within the self. On the contrary, Pynchon is willing to show how white imperialism has deliberately denied the realities of Third World experience attempting to eradicate some of its cultures entirely. Through the ironic juxtaposition of myth and science, history and legend, Pynchon portrayts the encroachment of the inanimate on twentieth century life, a conversion of the Garden to the Machine, suggesting that there no longer exists a place to retreat to, safely restoring a golden age of mankind. Violence is the rule of the twentieth century, and randomness, not pattern, hovers above all of us.

Together with some of his contemporary postmodern writers, Pynchon endorses a skeptical use of fiction, and, above all, rejects the notion that myth can be used to order the chaos of contemporary experience. In the Epilogue, in metaliterary fashion, Pynchon warns against these escapist solutions through the look of Stencil the elder approaching Malta, the other dreamer who has lived in the past and has experienced and soccumbed to historical changes:

> Winter. The green xebec whose figurehead was Astarte, goddess of sexual love, tacked slowly into the Grand Harbour. Yellow bastions, Moorish-looking city, rainy sky. What more on first glance? (429)

On first glance, indeed! This mythological, deeply literary vision of Malta and of the Mediterranean clashes with the realistic and at times sordid pictures of their former representation. It is not a coincidence that it is linked to the elder Stencil who has a romantic and outmoded vision of reality and of history - methonimically, it is no longer possible to entertain this approach, the risk being a distorted vision, or "deteriorate [reality] to mere spectacle," and fix it in a "textual stillness" (446). History, reality, is something else: "the nameless Horror" (431) of war, and the old, idealized visions are suspect and deceptive.[2] The risk is thus to become like Stencil, who "was ready to succumb to the feathery tentacles of a nostalgia which urged him gently back toward childhood; a childhood of gingerbread, witches, enchanted parks, fantasy country" (447). The metacultural question is: "where have we seen it before?" (447).

Stencil's "boy-romanticism" (450) is metonimically the escapist romanticism of his father and of those American writers who consolidate an idealized approach to the Mediterranean and its cultures, "a Mediterranean whose teeming history and full depth he

[Stencil's father] could not feel" (426). As the two Stencils themselves, this approach is an "obsolete nautical fixture" (463) incapable of navigating in the new Mediterranean - that is, of telling the true history of contemporary world and unveiling the real politics of the ruling powers. In *V.* Malta and the Mediterranean signify destruction and decay, not an idillic place of pastoral flight: "Who knew how many female monsters this Med harbored?" (316). "There are no epiphanies on Malta this season, no moments of truth" (407). The Mediterranean has always carried "death's flotilla" (436) and it is unfathomable, like the abysses of history. There exists a strong connection between the sea and history, and a progressive slipping from the mythical element into the historical element.

The "daftness for overthrow" (452) that comes from the exploited cultures is no longer representable with the old modes - indeed, it is the real "shock of the new" in a postcolonial and multicultural reality.

In this perspective, art is not a means to communicate with either angels or the unconscious, nor an escapist resolution to the evil of the world, but a communication "with the guts, genitals and five portals of sense" (318), as Fausto Majistral says. On Malta, even children "knew what was happening: knew that bombs killed" (320). In their basic understanding of reality there is much more common sense than in adults:

> But what's a human after all? No different from a church, obelisk, statue. Only one thing that matters: it is the bomb that wins. Their [children's] view of death was nonhuman. One wonders if our grown-up attitudes, hopelessly tangled as they were with love, social forms and metaphisics, worked any better. Certainly there was more common sense about the children's way. (320)

Children reject any notion that death is part of some heroic struggle. They know simply that bombs kill and destroy, and that this is a fact not to be mythologized:

> They [children] seemed to be the only ones conscious at the time that history had not been suspended after all. (316)

Yet Pynchon's style provides also another mode of meaning, culturally alien to Western metaphysics, the reality of non-synchronous experience: it is the *presence* of the past that signifies, not a simple chronology of events. The presence of an absolute, incommensurable past which may transcend the crude materiality of everyday life: "No time in Valletta. No history, all history at once" (456).

It is in this coalescence of archaic and postmodern sensibility, in this accumulation of mutually alien perspectives that Pynchon's writing proposes a radical and decentered rereading of Western history. The contradictory strands that constitute *V.* are not mutually exclusive, and the reader is forced to adapt to a dynamic that resists uniformity of vision and forces a continual rearrangement of perspective. In this way Pynchon undermines the rational tradition of Western metaphysics, the methods through which Western culture approaches understanding, in particular the colonial mania to determine absolute hierarchies and to assign concepts to rigid compartments. The need of modern

being is to revitalize our lives through new methods, but at the same time avoiding to withdraw into an escapist vision of myth, into the repetitive confines of a single sphere of vision. On Malta, "where all history seemed simultaneously present" (452), one can project whatever metaphors and visions one wishes, but history and its horrors are endlessly knocking at our conscience's doors. Fittingly, the novel ends as English troops prepare for another neo-colonial showdown - Suez, attempting to connect history and the novel itself to the present, "to historicize contemporary politics in a radical context" (Holton 342): the Mediterranean, "cradle of civilization, may be its grave" says Stencil Jr. Never have these words been so alarming.

Roma

NOTES

1. V. appears under various names and guises throughout the 20th century at times of strife and riot: in Egypt during the Fashoda crises, in Florence during an insurrection, in Malta during the First World War, in Fiume during the brief seizure by the Italian forces led by Gabriele D'Annunzio, in 1922 in South Africa during Germany's ruthless colonization of that country, and again in Malta during WW II.

2. As far as the historical details of the siege of Malta are concerned, A. Cassola has shown that Pynchon has taken the trouble to investigate everything to the last detail: his "historical" narrative about Malta is based on documentary evidence ("Pynchon, V., and the Malta Connection," *Journal of World Literature* 12.2 (July 1985: 311).

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WILLIAM BURROUGHS IN TANGIER

PAOLO PREZZAVENTO

In the contemporary critical and historical debate, the Mediterranean has been conceived both as a cradle of Western and Near Eastern cultures and civilizations, and, on the other hand, as a threatening un-Western, un-American Zone, where a cultural exchange between the two shores seems almost impossible. We know the importance the concept of Zone has for westerners, a crucial importance indeed: the Zone is a kind of territory where no possible mixture is allowed, divided from another piece of land, inhabited by other, different people. This seems to be a feature of Western civilization: the need to define, as in the enclosure movement in sixteenth-century England, to subdivide and measure what is essentially unmeasurable, such as the Mediterranean sea. The division might be due to differences in race, ideology, religion, culture. We could remember, apart from the four parts of Tangier, American, Spanish, English, French, the four sectors of Berlin after the Second World War, the division of the city of Beirut in Lebanon, between the Christian and the Muslim sector, the ethnic subdivision of Bosnia Erzegovina, the project by the Israeli Government to build a great wall to separate Israel from the Palestinian territory, and even the Red Zone built for the G8 conference in Genoa in 2001, a forbidden Zone which the no-global demonstrators tried to violate.

In order to understand the consequences of this policy of "zoning," of exclusion and separation of the Arab populations from the rich and powerful countries of the West, a separation which the terrorist strikes of September 11 have proved impossible, it might be useful to analyze the life and works of those American writers like Paul Bowles and William Burroughs, who deliberately chose to live in the Zone, or Interzone, that is to say, the International zone of Tangier. To this effect, I will also use Bowles's and Burroughs' texts as a pretext for some geopolitical considerations.

The international city of Tangier has always represented for Burroughs the possibility of unlimited freedom, the reign of what he called "uninterference," where one could feel exempt from everything. In Tangier "nothing is true, everything is permitted," to quote one of the heroes of *Naked Lunch*, the alleged inventor of the cut-up method, the twelfth-century Ishmaelite proto-terrorist Hassan al Sabbah, or Hassan i Sabbah, who terrorized the Persian regions sending from the inaccessible fortress of Alamut, in north-western Iran, the ancestors of the suicidal terrorists of today, the so-called Hashishins or assassins.

To paraphrase Melville, the Burroughsian hero could say, giving an Arab overtone to this epic narration of the West: "Call me Ishmail. The real founder of Islam. I am the hidden Imam." Whether this little man will be able to kill the great whale, is another question.

When Burroughs escaped from Mexico and went to Tangier, in the fifties, he realized

that he could use and find all kinds of drugs in that city, that he could be a homosexual - and homosexuality is the best all-around cover story an agent can use in the Zone (*Naked Lunch* 170-71) - and live his life without being disturbed by the police or local authorities. At last he had found a place where he didn't have to demonstrate anything, neither his solvency nor respectability or even nationality; this city, and some of its characteristic places, like the Socco Chico (Little Market), were international crossways of all kinds of bums, lamsters, losers, and criminals, robbers, pushers, expatriates or *apatrides*, Jewish refugees, Nazi criminals, the international waste of the Second World War….

The image of Tangier is thus reinterpreted in *Naked Lunch* as a possible model of a new civilization, possibly un-American, an international civilization where Arabs and Americans are connected by an overall criminal network known as Islam Incorporated, a term that would make a wonderful nickname for a similar terrorist organization that today threatens to destroy Western civilization: Al-Qaeda. Living in Tangier, Burroughs sensed that hate and resentment towards the West could take the form of mind-invasion and control, induced by fear and anxiety, by modern psychiatry and new synthetic drugs, backed by a criminal-terrorist organization which is the ancestor of some of today's organizations and multinational companies that fight for supremacy in the global world and in the global market. There is also in *Naked Lunch* a brief reference to suicidal Arab terrorists exploding during a meeting of Islam Incorporated:

> At the meeting of Islam Incorporated Nationalist martyrs with grenades up the ass mingle with the assembled conferents and suddenly explode, occasioning heavy casualties. (120)

In the real world, this scene could be reinterpreted as a terrorist strike at an Arab League meeting, an organization that supported nationalist Arab movements, especially the Palestinians and the National Liberation Front in Algeria. The scene demonstrates the sensibility of Burroughs to the rise of nationalism in the countries of Maghreb, to the progressive radicalization of these movements, and to the powerful undercurrent of hate against some "moderate" nationalist leaders, such as Arafat and Ben Bella, and against Westerners and Americans among the arab population.

Burroughs knew that the great majority of the Arabs living in Tangier hated the international élite of the town, and so he did nothing to integrate himself in Arab culture and civilization: the only thing he always respected was the international unwritten code of behavior of those who are high on drugs and of homosexuals.

Wherever else in the world could Burroughs spend whole days doing nothing and completely concentrated on himself and his work? In a sense, even the physical contact with the Arab boys was a selfish act on his part: just a way to relax from the unbearable presence of his genius. A completely different attitude from that of Paul Bowles, who describes the sexual encounter between Kit Moresby and Belqassin in *The Sheltering Sky* (1949) as a totally involving experience, a foundering into a completely different, irrational and barbarian civilization. The "little fortress" (128) of rationality that Kit had erected against

all possible invasions from an alien culture, is conquered by the charming primitivism of the Tuareg, and this suddenly relieves Kit from the burden of Western civilization.

As we know, in the fifties the Arab countries of Africa started a movement of independence from Western colonialism which has brought a long period of stability to the Near East and the Mediterranean, but has also given rise to a terrible conflict between those governments and the Islamic fundamentalists, leading to today's instability and terrorist strikes in some Arab countries. Leaders such as Gamal Abdul Nasser and Muhammar Kadafy in the sixties tried to find a "third way" between the model of Western democracies and the model represented by the Soviet Union, trying to fit this ideal into the structure of an Islamic country, while the fundamentalists, such as the *Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*, the Muslim Brothers of Egypt, founded by another Hassan, Hassan al-Banna, have been trying since 1928 to get the whole country back to the *shaaria*, the Koran law. Today, the leader of the Muslim Brothers, also number two in the hierarchy of Al-Qaeda, the Benway-like sadist surgeon Ayman al-Zawahiri, has launched together with Usama bin Laden the holy war against the United States and the Jews.

At the end of the seventies, the Iranian Revolution, which maybe will be considered retrospectively the second most important revolution of the twentieth century, and maybe the beginning of the end f-or Western civilization, established a new form of government: the Islamic Republic, that was revolutionary and traditionalist at the same time. So why shouldn't we consider Imam Khomeini as another embodiment of the figure of Hassan ibn al-Sabbah, the Old Man of the Mountain, a Persian Shiite who was probably born in the holy city of Qom like him? In this case, the last words of al-Sabbah would have to be rewritten as "Nothing is true except Allah, and everything is permitted in His name."

Furthermore, we shouldn't forget some modern embodiments of the Ishmaelite sect such as the Egyptian terrorist group *Tanzim al Jihad*, or, "Organization of the Jihad," that planned and executed the first terrorist strike against the Twin Towers of New York in 1993, guided by a Burroughsian character such as the blind sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman. We know that this terrorist leader used to live as an exile in New York, apparently protected or at least tolerated by the CIA. As a consequence of the 1993 attack, he is now imprisoned in the Manhattan Correction Center. So again we have to face the paradox of a Western civilization that produces and hosts, in a perfect Burroughsian loop, the viruses that are trying to destroy it. And these viruses and bacteria come from an American strain, as investigators have found analyzing the spores of anthrax that have terrorized America after 9-11. The vision of Manhattan in ruins, which concludes *Cities of the Red Night* (1981), a book dedicated also to "Hassan i Sabbah, Master of Assassins," is almost a prophecy of the terrorist strike of September 11, 2001:

> The entire cast is standing in a desert landscape looking at the sunset spread across the western sky like a vast painting: the red walls of Tamaghis, the Ba'dan riots, the smoldering ruins of Yass-Waddah and Manhattan, Waghdas glimmers in the distance. (285)

While in the fiction of Paul Bowles the Manhattanese goes into the desert and is fascinated and frightened by it, in Burroughs's fiction the desert, in the widest possible meaning of the term, has finally reached the West and Manhattan; the casbah of Tangier-Tamaghis melts at high temperature with the skyscrapers. Friedrich Nietzsche had already foreseen this spreading of the desert when he made his prophet of the Overman Zarathustra pronounce the famous formula "Die Wüste Wächst," "the desert expands," which Heidegger took as a description of the decline of Western civilization and used as a pretext for his philosophical speculations in his essay "Who is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?" But this nihilistic conclusion was still enclosed into a history of Western philosophy and civilization and thus was still too reassuring.

This is not the literary end Nietzsche or T.S. Eliot had imagined, an end which could also be a new beginning. This is not an indefinite waste or *wüste* : this is the *Saharawüste* that *wächst*, the Sahara Desert that expands, and that probably will expand in the future to include most of the countries facing the Mediterranean, because of the damage done by the *Techne*, and so by Western civilization, to the ozone layer. This is not America, this is not our West, it is something radically alien to our categories of thought, of space and time. This is not the encounter and assimilation of civilizations that we had hoped for, nor is it legitimate to simplify and describe this encounter as a clash of civilizations, to quote from the famous work by Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996).

But would William Burroughs underwrite the assertion that Arab and Western civilizations are two worlds apart? In Burroughs' opinion Arab culture oscillates between being a totally un-American culture, as typical of aliens coming from another planet, with a completely different time and space structure, and at the same time as embodying the deepest essence of American civilization, which is more Eastern, Levantine and ancient than we might believe, because it is essentially based on evil, an evil which was there even before the Indians, waiting for the settlement of Western civilization:

> America is not a young land: it is old and dirty and evil before the settlers, before the Indians. The evil is there waiting. (*Naked Lunch* 27)

This is a new version of the loss of innocence experienced by Americans immediately after they set foot on American ground. This evil land was waiting for Leif Erikson and Thorfinn Karlsefni to discover it, as in Thomas Pynchon's last masterpiece to date, *Mason and Dixon* (1997). Burroughs himself is at the same time both profoundly American, coming from one of the noblest WASP families in the United States, concerned with a possible contagion of his country by an alien virus, and profoundly un-American in his satyrical, almost Swiftian vision of a police state ruled by mad surgeons and psychiatrists like Doctor Benway, where the average American is completely taken into the grip of Drugs and Control. But we shouldn't forget that the same Benway is working for Islam Incorporated. So here East meets West in a criminal association.

There's another important aspect of Arab civilization which also suggested to

Burroughs the basic structure of *Naked Lunch*. I'm talking about Arab music, with its characteristic routines, repetitions and seriality. In fact, the structure of Arab music, with its continous murmuring and muttering, its loose structure without an end, its lack of a sense of time, was an explicit model for Burroughs in the composition of *Naked Lunch*. In 1954, while he was in Tangier, Burroughs wrote an article titled "International Zone," which was included in the original manuscript of *Interzone* (1953-1958), the working title of the book that, in a somewhat different form, was to become *Naked Lunch*. This work, excised with other materials from the final version of the novel, was discovered in 1984 among Allen Ginsberg's papers at Butler Library, Columbia University. In it we can find some revealing allusions to Arab music:

> Arab music has neither beginning nor end. It is timeless. Heard for the first time, it may appear meaningless to a Westerner, because he is listening to a time structure that isn't there. (…) The Arabs have no sense of time. ("International Zone" 58)

The endless repetition of some key words and sentences, such as "Have you seen Pantopon Rose?," the obsessive refrain of the junky, gives the novel the structure of Arab prayer and music, where there is an apparent repetition of basically the same structure. That's why, in both setting and composition *Naked Lunch* couldn't have been conceived in a different place than Tangier, which is also a no-place, a Zone. There is no time in Arab music, there is no time in Tangier: a mass of wretched people are waiting for the opportunity of their lives, the moment in life when you finally realize you made it, while in the meantime you are fighting in an endless struggle for life. The Arabs have no sense of time, says Burroughs, there's only an endless series of days which are always the same, where nothing ever really takes place. The stage where this drama is represented is the Socco Chico of Tangier:

> The Socco Chico is the meeting place, the nerve center, the switchboard of Tangier. Practically everyone in town shows there once a day at least. Many residents of Tangier spend most of their waking hours in the Socco. On all sides you see men washed up here in hopeless, dead-end situations, waiting for job offers, acceptance checks, visas, permits that will never come. All their lives they have drifted with an unlucky current, always taking the wrong turn. Here they are. This is it. Last stop: the Socco Chico of Tangier. ("International Zone" 49)

The essential Nature of America, and thus of the West, is space, the unlimited space of the ocean or of the great western prairies, as in Melville's *Moby-Dick* according to Charles Olson's interpretation in *Call Me Ishmael* (1947), but here in the Mediterranean, here in the Socco Chico, Western civilization comes at a dead end, is caught in the no-time of Arab culture. Here nothing is true, everything is permitted.

Tangier is neither East nor West, "*la sharq la gharb*," to quote the famous slogan of the Iranian Revolution. It used to be an International Zone, but lost its international status after Morocco gained its independence in 1956, and is now part of the overall region of Maghreb. But Maghrib, again, in Arabic, means Western Land, and *The West-*

ern Lands (1987) is the title of the last book of the trilogy Burroughs started with *Cities of the Red Night* (1981), and continued with *The Place of Dead Roads* (1984), which is the parody of a Western novel. So the "Western trilogy" begins in an indefinite eastern region (more or less identifiable with the Gobi desert), where we find the Cities of the Red Night, continues in the American West in *Dead Roads*, and then in the last book goes back to the western lands of the spirit, with what could be considered a modern rewriting of the *Bardo Thodol*, the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. In this movement back and forth from the East to the West, renouncing any science-fiction attempt to transfer all human aspirations and nightmares into another planet, we can glimpse an image of the life of the Old Man of St. Louis.

Needless to say, one of the protagonists of *Western Lands* is Hassan i Sabbah (also identified with Burroughs' friend and *real* inventor of the cut-up method, Brion Gysin), the only man in the history of Mankind who had understood that in order to get to absolute knowledge and absolute power you had to confront death face to face, as his assassins in the twelfth-century Middle East did, as the pistoleros in the American West did, as Burroughs himself did when he began his immersion in the destructive element of total drug addiction.

From this point of view, the Western Lands alluded to by Burroughs are more a condition of the spirit than a real place; but we shouldn't forget that the Maghreb was the West of Arab civilization, the land where the expansion of this civilization was arrested by the ocean and also by the Spanish Reconquista. At the same time, European historians have always written that the Arab populations of North-Africa refused to see the opportunity of facing the Mediterranean sea, a sea that divided but could also unite different people, which could have been a vector of cross- fertilization and dialogue between cultures. In fact, for centuries the Mediterranean has been for the Arabs the *Bahr al-Rum* , the sea of the Romans, and only in the 19th century did they start to call the Mediterranean the *Bahr-al-Abyad-al-Mutawassit*, that is, the intermediate white sea, a formula which I freely translate as "the white sea of the Interzone." And it would be interesting to explore the relationship between this image of the Mediterranean and the fantastic Red Sea imagined by Burroughs in *Cities of the Red Night* (1981).

So, the Arabs turned their backs on the Mediterranean; but also the U.S. made a big mistake when it refused to establish a dialogue and cooperation with these countries, and tried to impose its model of Western civilization, treating the Arabs as radically other, as aliens, as a possible contagion. This initial mistake led to America's decision of basing its Mediterranean policy almost exclusively on the strenuous defense of its best sentinel in the area, the State of Israel. And what about the killing of Enrico Mattei in an airplane "accident" in 1962, a death that blocked any possibility of cultural and economic cross-fertilization between the countries facing the Mediterranean? To use Burroughs' words on Tangier: "Here East meets West in a final debacle of misunderstanding …" (*Interzone* 66).

And you might be sure that if Europe and the U.S. will abandon any attempt at elaborating a complex and refined Mediterranean policy this misunderstanding will continue, as we can see every day on the news. The political agenda for the next years will inevitably concentrate on turning again the Mediterranean from the Red Sea of assassination and murder, of genocide and terrorism, into a Western Sea, a White Sea of the Interzone.

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WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS' *THE WESTERN LANDS*

ROBERTA FORNARI

William Seward Burroughs published *The Western Lands* in 1987, as the conclusion to his second trilogy, which began with *Cities of the Red Night* (1981) and *The Place of Dead Roads* (1983).

The western lands of the title are the Egyptian paradise, a mythical place reached by the body of the deceased person accompanied by his soul, after a long journey through the Land of the Dead, the Egyptian hell. Burroughs first encountered the concept of the Egyptian souls from Norman Mailer's *Ancient Evenings*, and saw that "It corresponded precisely with my own mythology, developed over a period of many years, since birth in fact" (5).

He uses it in order to create a "heterocosmica" in which the beliefs of ancient Egypt in afterlife offer a point of reflection on human history and illusions and a particular view of his existential situation as a human being. His fictional universe is built up as a movie set of nightmares and adventures through time and space, with particular attention given to popular language and grotesque sketches. Despite the fragmentary narrative sequence of the novel, we can single out two main elements: the description of a particular setting (an oneiric city with Mediterranean influence) and the concept of immortality as swindle and consequently the parallelism of drugs or "junk" and immortality as the "ultimate Merchandise," an idea that we first encounter in *Naked Lunch*.[1]

In Ancient Egypt, death was a special event and the tomb owner would need his body to be as well preserved as possible, as it was a constituent part of the deceased being and the dwelling place of the *ba*, a sort of soul. But the Egyptian concept of death also allowed several souls of which the most important was the KA, defined as "a dynamic and impersonal life force. When depicted in tomb or temple scenes it is shown as the double of an individual, sometimes in miniature, frequently with the KA sign on the head. Rather than the KA actually having been seen as a separate double of an individual, it's likely that it was so depicted as it was inside a person and therefore looked like that person." (O'Brien, *Death* 4)

The Egyptian concept of life-death cycle and the possibility to reach immortality through a cyclical return is also expressed in the myth of Osiris slain and torn to pieces and reborn with a sexual act by Isis. From this point of view Burroughs deals with a mythical as well as anthropological issue, which passes from Egypt to Ancient Greece (see Campbell). But in his novel he uses these elements in a different way: on the one hand they are transformed in a sort of carousel of characters and situations to convey a bitter irony on human destiny; on the other hand, they are archetypes of the everlasting illusion of every single human being that neither Christianity nor Islam can fulfill. From

this standpoint, we should not expect a philological interpretation of Egyptian mythology. Burroughs uses it only as a source of inspiration to construct a (meta)fictional world, a feature common to all his works, in which the characters change identity and accomplish or try to accomplish missions of different types, recording, through the pages of the book we read, their own experience as doubles and "losers" in a world dominated by evil and lies. The act of reading Burroughs' novels is in a certain way the act of reconstructing the lines and routes of a "Möbius strip."[2]

As some critics pointed out (in particular, Skerl and Lydenberg), Burroughs' last novels, almost ignored by Italian critics, are more involved with the problem of the storyteller and with the linguistic paradox of fiction as "possible" or even "impossible world" analysed by Lubomir Doleûel in *Heterocosmica. Fiction and Possible Worlds.* From a logical point of view the tricks and paradoxes of a non linear narrative would define his novels as "illogical" or "self-voiding texts" - a problem also discussed by Umberto Eco in a recent essay (*Limiti*).

Anyway, in order to analyse the texture of *The Western Lands* we have to look back to the writer's previous experience.

Cities of the Red Night, the first novel of the trilogy, presents three intersecting plots: a detective story, an eighteenth century adventure in a utopian community and a time travel interweave in the attempt of the heroes to rewrite and re-imagine history.

In the second book of the trilogy, *The Place of Dead Roads*, Kim Carsons, an anarchist antihero shootist, moves back and forth in time and space in a western scenario and his mission is to "shoot his way out by blasting a hole in reality" before the story returns to the violent death of his creator, William Seward Hall, who writes western tales under the pseudonym Kim Carsons. Subverting the shoot out moment of the western genre with a touch of comedy:

> Kim's hand flicks down to his holster and up, hand empty, pointing his index finger at Mike. - BANG! YOU'RE DEAD! (268)

The author resolves the mystery of Hall's death only in the last novel of the trilogy where he returns together with his double Kim-Neferti.

In *The Western Lands*, the solution of a time travel that corrects in a retroactive way certain fatal errors at crucial turning points in human history, as Burroughs wrote in an article of 1984, is considered not as a narrative event but only as a fictional possibility, even contradictory in terms of narrative coherence. Sometimes the fictional world exploits all possible developments of events and situations, unveiling their incoherence and resulting in a metafiction, as explained by Doleûel. It is well known that Burroughs explored new possibilities of language using other media like photomontage and tape recorders and studying Mayan and Egyptian hieroglyphics. The different techniques he used allowed him to return to straight narrative after a period of experiments with cut ups, fold ins, montage and photomontage, which were leading him toward narrative stasis:

one arrives at a point where, cutting a page, you can cut cut cut cut and cut to infinity; but as one goes along, the results become less and less convincing. (Harris 253)
I've done writing that I thought was interesting experimentally, but simply not readable. (Odier, 56)

His last trilogy, and *The Western Lands* in particular, contains all the possible developments of situations encountered before. The characters, thanks to the metafictional paradox, can change identity and place in order to accomplish an illusory mission into a fantastic world. Here Burroughs seems to be more bitter and melancholic than ever before. Constructed as a satire in the style of the picaresque tradition of Petronius' *Satyricon* and Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*, in which a character encounters adventures and misadventures of every sort, horrific, comic, sexual, *The Western Lands* is characterized by a special setting, by a sort of impossible world in terms of logic structure, where everything is possible in terms of linguistic acts (see Searle).

The book opens with William Seward Hall, "the old writer" who lives alone in a boxcar by the river on a piece of land that had once been a dump heap. Hall has "a disgust for his words accumulated until it choked him" and "he could no longer bear to look at his words on a piece of paper." Despite his existential condition, he tries to write his way out of death and, in the attempt, we are presented with a series of scenes as in a movie in which the Egyptian seven souls, American presidents, TV technicians, German and Russian colonels and many others act as players in a world without history and time sequence, as a sort of movie set dominated by synchronicity and by the dread of atomic catastrophe:

The Egyptians recognized many degrees of immortality. The Ren and the Sekem and the Khu are relatively immortal, but still subject to injury. […] Can any soul survive the searing fireball of all atomic blast? If human and animal souls are seen as electromagnetic force fields, such fields could be totally disrupted by a nuclear explosion. […] (7)

Ancient myths and personal fears mix together. The dread of the end of humanity is counterbalanced by bitterness toward all human illusions and myths of immortality. The struggle of people to preserve their bodies by any means, from embalming in ancient Egypt, to plastic surgery in our age, is the target of Burroughs' satire, which moves back and forth in a sort of market or fair. Different stories intersect in strange cities inspired by the atmosphere of Mediterranean and North African *medinas* with dreamlike and mythical influences:

A word about conditions in the Land of the Dead: quarters are precarious and difficult to find one's way back to, and privacy is fleeting. Doors are flimsy, often absent, leaving your quarters open to corridors, passageways, streets, and there are always other means of access, so one is subject to find anybody or anything in one's digs, if one is lucky enough to have digs. Bathroom facilities are filthy and inadequate. One shaves in a toilet with a shard of broken mirror. (213)

Kim Carsons from *The Place of Dead Roads* is transformed into a scribe, Neferti, and Joe the Dead, the killer in the previous novel, is a dedicated ecologist whose basic aim is "to sabotage the proposed highway through the Amazon basin. Coca-Cola, Mc-Donald's and Hiltons waiting off-stage" (*TWL* 37).

Hassan I Sabbah, the Chief of the Assassins, the ancient group of fanatics living in the north of Iran during the 13th century in the fortress of Alamout, is a constant character in Burroughs' writings and usually depicted as a symbol of controversial power over human beings. In this novel he becomes the writer's alter ego, a subversive thief who tries to bring back the knowledge of the western lands into the contemporary world. But his attempts, imagined in the story as if they were real events, are bound to fail when Hassan I Sabbah reaches Egypt travelling forth in time and is defeated by fear and death.

In the previous novels Burroughs had proposed to us an exit from the impasse of human existence, the possibility to readjust reality through the mission of characters who "correct certain fatal errors at crucial turning points in human history. The sort of biological errors that tend to block man's path to his biological and spiritual destiny in space."

The theme of biological mutation as prerequisite for space travel had been a constant element in Burroughs' narrative since the appearance of the first trilogy and the first draft of *The Wild Boys*, started in Morocco in 1957. On the contrary, in *The Western Lands*, the science fiction elements are not dominant and a sequence of events which prefers synchronic rather than diachronic narration results in a performative text, a set of pictures animated as if they were modern hieroglyphics:

Space travel involves time travel, seeing the dimension of time from outside time, as a landscape spread out before the observer, where a number of things are going on simultaneously - as in the Djema al fnaa in Marrakech: Gnaoua drummers, snake charmers, trick bicycle riders. (Skerl 266)

The image of the market, the *suk* as it is called in North Africa, is recurrent both in this novel and in *Naked Lunch* and the literary space becomes a vast and timeless zone characterized by the presence of swindlers, guides, fixers, travel agents who cruise the market like sharks. Dealers of every sort of merchandise try to sell immortality to the pilgrims of every nation and age joining the caravan to reach the western lands. They are all victims of a swindle but nonetheless innocent. The greed for immortality is everywhere. Burroughs' bitter irony subverts the myth into pantomime with comic scenes showing the attempts of humanity (from the Egyptians to the American middle class) to reach the mythical place.

Don't wait. Leave now. How?
There are electromagnetic booths that guarantee immediate exteriorisation from the body. Be careful: Are you really getting out, or is it one of those fake trips like Mission Impossible where someone thinks he is home in Russia and he is actually in a CIA Ops room? (126).

In another passage, the pilgrimage to the western lands is described as a huge economic business, with hotels and centres with equipments and provisions and fashion styles, which change faster and faster. But all this fades away in a few hours "leaving the traveller with his hunger, his thirst, his carnal needs, his awkward, bungling body, abrasive, dreary, dead-end surfaces where everything is exactly what it seems to be."

The bitterness of this discovery reveals the essence of our real world, where market-driven desires seem to substitute human aspirations. In this sort of hell Burroughs' memory of the urban landscape of his native St. Louis melts into the images of Tangiers's *medina* in an oneiric description in which the adolescent Kim-Neferti is walking by like a picaro and as the alter-ego of the author. The Interzone of *Naked Lunch*, which was Tangier, the International Zone, divided into areas and controlled by the diplomacies of six different countries in the first decades of the 20th century, becomes the space of a quest for immortality. We are reading a novel written by a real writer, William Burroughs, who is writing of William Seward Hall who is writing of Kim Carsons shot by Joe the Dead, a sort of cyborg who had been rescued by Kim after a terrible accident in *The Place of Dead Roads*.

If Kim is the romantic and nostalgic alter-ego of the writer, then Joe is the painful and grotesque point of intersection between the human and the artificial and symbolizes the other side of the world, dominated by technology and entropic disorder. Kim is solar, regenerative and is a sort of Osiris, whilst on the contrary Joe the Dead is dark, unpredictable, and murderous as, in Egyptian mythology, Sekh, who had killed Osiris. Part machine and part human, Joe is the counterpart of Kim in a world divided into the romantic illusion of life and sorrow for a reality with no exit except death. Having been brought back to life by Kim with an injection of morphine, Joe has also been brought back from the Land of the Dead; this causes him a terrible pain and this pain is a sanction imposed by nature "whose laws he flouts by remaining alive."

In another passage Burroughs describes Joe as a sort of *natural outlaw* in a universe dominated by the monumental fraud of cause and effect, to be replaced by the concept of synchronicity. And synchronicity is one of the keys to the reading of all Burroughs' novels together with the attempt to present reality on a double level.

The different events are performative acts that break through in the conventional space of the story and project themselves in the dimension of a parallel reality that is legitimated by language and literary construction. We should read Burroughs' novels and *The Western Lands* in particular, as examples of a *double sight*. Reality is not translated into a metaphor or a symbol as many critics thought, but is presented exactly as we read it because the writer *has seen* it just the way it is, as a carnival arcade or an illusory and oneiric city of the mind. It is, after all, a nightmare. The result of the *double sight* is well described in *Naked Lunch*:

> [Talking of some sections of Capital Punishment] As always the lunch is naked. If civilized countries want to return to Druid Hanging Rites in the Sacred Grove or to Drink blood with the Aztecs and feed their Gods with blood of human sacrifice, let them see what they actually eat and drink. Let them see what is on the end of that long newspaper spoon. (12)

Many years passed since this angry revelation of reality. The style of *The Western Lands* seems to mitigate the tone and a bitter irony closes the book. The novel ends with the image of Joe the Dead making tea. Kim-Neferti the adolescent has disappeared, Joe

becomes the writer's alter-ego who feels pain for his existence and the KA, the double, is unable to escape after all the other souls have left the body alone.

The novel's last image is of complete loneliness. Fantastic and mythical elements have been replaced by the vivid memory of two real places. Gibraltar and Tangier are at the end of the western shore of the Mediterranean Sea and their presence is a point of intersection between memory and writing.

The old writer couldn't write anymore because he had reached the end of words, the end of what can be done with words. And then? "British we are, British we stay." How long can one hang on in Gibraltar, with the tapestries where mustached riders with scimitars hunt tigers, the ivory balls one inside the other, bare seams showing, the long tearoom with mirrors on both sides and the tired fuchsia and rubber plants, the shops selling English marmalade and Fortnum & Mason's tea… clinging to their Rock like the rock apes, clinging always to less and less. In Tangier the Parade Bar is closed. Shadows are falling on the Mountain.
"Hurry up, please. It's time." (258)

Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza"

NOTES

1. "Junk is the ideal product … the ultimate merchandise. No sales talk are necessary. The client will crawl through a sewer and beg to buy. … The junk merchant does not sell his product to the consumer, he sells the consumer to his product. He does not improve and simplify his merchandise. He degrades and simplifies the client. He pays his staff in junk." *Naked Lunch* 8.

2. The Möbius strip subverts the normal, i.e. Euclidean way of spatial (and temporal) representation, seemingly having two sides, but in fact having only one. Used by Lacan as a model to conceptualise the "return of the repressed," the Möbius strip is very useful (although synthetically used) to define the narrative sequence or structures of postmodern novels and in particular Burroughs' technique. This image is used to interpret the narrative lines of Lynch's movies but is also useful to explain Burroughs' use of time and spatial sequences. See Herzogenrath.

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NAKED LUNCH: THE MOVIE[1]

LAURA SALVINI

"Nothing is true; everything is permitted."[2]

In Chris Rodley's *Cronenberg on Cronenberg*, the Canadian director admits:

I aspired to write very early. I was interested in underground novels - William Burroughs, Henry Miller and some of the people that T.S. Eliot introduced to North America - I always wrote. I can't remember not writing. I can't remember not expressing myself (4)

making clear that his formative influence stems mainly from reading and writing, and less from being "a film enthousiast or a cinephile" (11).

Particularly, Cronenberg has always considered himself somehow connected with William Burroughs to the extent of having trouble, as Rodley puts it, "to locate his own voice" (157) at the time of his first writing attempts.

It is undeniable that a kinship of images between the two men can be traced long before *Naked Lunch*. The parasites of *Shivers*, the motif of telepathy and control in *Scanners*, and the similarity, as Mitch Tuchman notices, between the "morphologically neutral" skin of *Rabid* and Burroughs' "undifferentiated tissue" (57) seem all to originate in the same disturbing locus. Interestingly enough, Burroughs and Cronenberg also shared a controversial reception of their works, collecting sundry accusations of sickness, perversion, misogyny.

Definitely, to write and direct a cinematic adaptation of *Naked Lunch* has been for Cronenberg a sort of artistic credo. Something he had to deal with sooner or later.

Previously, other artists dreamed or tried to materialise a film version of *Naked Lunch*. Among them it's worth mentioning Antony Balch and Brion Gysin who unsuccessfully worked on a script for a low-budget production, starring Mick Jagger. Many years later, interviewed by Regina Weinreich, Burroughs commented on that attempt: "Now that the people involved are both dead, I can speak. I was not pleased with the film script" (Hibbard 204). According to John Richardson, only the idea of a musical stirred Burroughs' enthusiasm once: "a hipster joke pursued (naturally) by Frank Zappa" (Richardson 37).

In preparing for what was going to become the result of, in Cronenberg's words, "Burroughs and myself fus[ed] in the telepod of *The Fly*" (Rodley 162), Burroughs saw some of Cronenberg's movies and Cronenberg went to visit him a few times to talk about his vision of *Naked Lunch*, then, as the director recalls, he got his "blessing from the Pope" (162) and wrote the script.

For his task of, as many say, "film[ing] the unfilmable" (Rodley 159), Cronenberg opted to create a nucleus around which he drew fragments out of the novel, *Naked*

Lunch, but also out of other Burroughs writings as well as incidents of Burroughs' life. As Cronenberg himself told Rodley:

> There are two main problems. One is the scope of it. It really is quite epic. It's the mother of all epics. It would cost $ 400-500 million if you were to film it literally, and of course it would be banned in every country in the world. (161)

Cronenberg aimed to dig out of the novel the idea that writing and creating something could be dangerous. He also wanted his script to unveil the process of writing. Writing *per se* does not have any cinematic interest, let alone the framing of somebody sitting at a desk in front of a typewriter, so the only way to film writing has been, in the director's words, "to turn it inside out and make it physical and exterior" (165).

What Cronenberg did not want to end up doing, on the other hand, was a film about drugs: "[because of] the say-no-to-drugs campaign, I didn't want people to think of Nancy Reagan when they saw the movie" (*Naked Making Lunch*) he said laughing during Rodley's filmed interview. So, he decided to invent his own drug in order to create "internal metaphorical connections" (164), instead of "external social ones" (164). A drug which could work without further implications as a means in the protagonist's quest.

One more aspect occurs in Cronenberg's vision: the ignition of the writing act:, that, in Burroughs' case, is superimposed on the most tragic event in the writer's life: his shooting of his wife in 1951.[3] As Burroughs himself said:

> I'm forced to the appaling conclusion that I would never have become a writer but for Joan's death, and to a realization of the extent to which this event has motivated and formulated my writing. I live with the constant threat of possession, and a constant need to escape from possession, from control. So the death of Joan brought me in contact with the invader, the ugly spirit, and maneuvered me into a lifelong struggle in which I have had no choice except to write my way out. (Morgan 199)

Let's now sketch which main character looms out of the screenplay: his name, to allow a sort of fictional distance and privilege interpretation over biographical aspects, is William Lee - Burroughs' own pen name when he first published *Junky*. He works as an exterminator, a job Burroughs did for a while, but also the title of one of his short stories. While the yellow bug powder he uses against roaches is the "invented" drug, a drug that, as Bill's wife Joan says in the movie, "is a very literary high... it's a Kafka high..." The process of writing and the shooting of Joan are at the core of Cronenberg's adaptation of *Naked Lunch*, and the space where these two elements interact is called "Interzone."

Burroughs went to Tangiers at the end of 1953 and, as Ted Morgan writes, "caught at once the special character of the city, its quality of exemption" (238). Unlike the rest of Morocco that was under French rule, Tangiers was a free port, where everybody could find a way of surviving and living, without being asked anything more than a valid passport. According to Morgan, Tangiers fitted Burroughs' needs in a lot of different

ways: drugs were available in plenty and tolerated by local authorities, women had an evident "subservient role" (Morgan 238), homosexuality was regarded with indifference.

Shortly, Burroughs understood "that Tangiers could serve as a model for the setting of his novel, which he called 'Interzone'" (253). In this respect Tangiers became "as much an imaginative construct as a geographical location, a metaphor for limbo, for a dead-end place, a place where everyone could act out his most extreme fantasies" (253).

In 1985 Burroughs, Cronenberg and English producer Jeremy Thomas went to Tangiers together to see the real locations where some parts of the novel take place. Many pictures were taken, and Cronenberg was very excited at the idea of shooting the exterior work in Morocco. Then, on his flight to London, where he was expected for a cameo in *Nightbreed*, Cronenberg finally began to write his first draft of *Naked Lunch*.

But his excitement was cooled off by something unexpected: the Gulf crisis, that changed all production plans just before the shooting began and forced Cronenberg to a quick rewriting of the screenplay:

> ... it became impossible to secure insurance for the film to go to North Africa. ...
> Tangiers would have to be brought to Toronto, with the aid of production designer Carol Spier and her expert team, as part of a massive and last-minute rethinking of the film and its look. (Rodley 167-168)

The initial disappointment that Cronenberg experienced, though, turned soon into the conviction that the movie was only going to benefit from this sudden twist of fate.

> Even in the very first draft of the script, it was obvious that Interzone was meant to be a state of mind, and that's where its significance was. He [Bill] really never left New York, he probably never left his apartment, this was an interior voyage. (Baldassare)

In the cinematic adaptation of a novel, the work of a set designer consists also in giving physical appearance to what is not specifically described or mentioned in the text. That is, to convey the writer's imaginative landscape and the many mental worlds drawn by readers, into a single and real universe, where all the different elements have to be consistent and believable in the audience's eye.

Now, the evident bizarre traits that characterise the Interzone, like its surreal quality for instance, require an extreme rigorous cohesiveness in its set designing in order to enhance the ambivalent attitude of the protagonist towards reality.

Elaborating on her reconstruction of Tangiers, production designer Carol Spier[4] - who won with *Naked Lunch* the Gene Award for "Best Achievement in Art Direction" - told me in a recent interview:

> The space between New York and Tangiers changes only in the drug induced mind of Bill Lee. Bill travels to Tangiers in his mind only as he is writing.
> If you watch closely you will see that the New York locations that Bill is familiar with are trans-

formed into the Tangiers locations. The interior of Cohen's Exterminator transformed into the interior of Han's Drug Factory where giant centipedes are ground into a black powder. This was done by changing the decor and adding a few Moroccan architectural elements.
The Frost's Tangiers apartment was similarly transformed into the Moroccan Restaurant where Cloutier buys Bill breakfast. Outside the windows of the apartment you see a backdrop of Tangiers and outside the windows of the restaurant you see a backdrop of a snowy Central Park. The NY greasy spoon with Moorish grills on the windows and camels outside the door becomes the Cafe Central in Tangiers.
The NY market is transformed into the market in Tangiers and later into the Mugwump Barn where Mugwumps are being milked at the end of the film.
The NY bar is built on the Interzone street and NY mail boxes can be found on the Interzone street. When Cloutier and Bill are driving down a road outside Tangiers they drive past a NY subway entrance. Bill never really leaves NY in a physical way, only in his own imagination. (Salvini)

Visually, the absence of travelling supports, together with the overlapping and double use of most studio locations in the film, conveys the idea of a continuos shifting from internal to external life and back that Bill experiences. Giving to Tangiers those metaphorical qualities that Burroughs perceived when he decided to use the city as a model for his Interzone. As Spier comments:

... in the long run it was better that the Interzone/Casbah streets were done in the studio and not on location as it gave the film more of an intimate and slightly surreal feel. The story became more internal as it should considering that it really takes place in the head of an, as you said, "often stoned visionary writer." (Salvini)

Two more elements are worth mentioning as fundamental in the rendering particularly of the Interzone: lighting and music.

Spier said that "film Noir and old photographs by Wee Gee were also used for inspiration for the look of *Naked Lunch*" (Salvini). By lighting the set with diagonal rays of light through the "variety of foreground pieces and grill works" (Salvini), with which Spier bound all the interior spaces, cinematographer Peter Suschitzky[5] - who also was awarded a Gene for this movie[6] - gives the perfect finishing touch to this Fifties atmosphere. Spier said of him:

He seems to paint all of my sets with light as a painter would a painting.(Salvini)

In addition, by his use of light and shade, Suschitzky also enables us to experience Bill's subjective blurred vision, giving us an insight of the protagonist's drug-induced reality.

Meanwhile, Howard Shore[7] composed a beautiful contrapuntal score enriched by Ornette Coleman's saxophone solos that, instead, "underline the hallucinatory elements of Burroughs' story" (Carlsson 13).

The movie ends with the repetition of Joan's shooting as Bill is asked by the frontier police of Annexia to show them how he uses his pen to write, giving, according to many

film critics, a circularity to the narration. I think that Cronenberg's movie has more of a conical structure, towards an ending point where all the fragments of the narration condense into the equation between Bill's pen and Joan's shooting. Writing and the act that kindle it. Every time the two elements get together the zone shapes up and Bill Lee sets off to the exotic maze of his mental Mediterranean town.

Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza"

NOTES

1. *Naked Lunch* (1991). Production companies: Recorded Picture Company, Telefilm Canada, Ontario Film Development Corporation. Producer: Jeremy Thomas Co-producer: Gabriella Martinelli Director: David Cronenberg Script: David Cronenberg, based on the novel *Naked Lunch* by William S. Burroughs Cinematography: Peter Suschitzky. Production design: Carol Spier. Costume design: Denise Cronenberg. Music: Howard Shore. Editor: Ronald Sanders. Mugwumps and other creatures designed by Chris Walas Inc. Cast: Peter Weller (*Bill Lee*), Judy Davis (*Joan Lee/Joan Frost*), Ian Holm (*Tom Frost*), Roy Scheider (*Dr Benway*), Michael Zelniker (*Martin*), Nicholas Campbell (*Hank*), Monique Mercure (*Fadela*) and others.

2. Cronenberg opens his movie with this motto attributed to Hassan i Sabbah, a fictional character of Burroughs' *Naked Lunch.* The sentence though works as a refrain throughout Burroughs' body of work. See also: *Cities of the Red Night.*

3. On this tragic event, see Morgan.

4. Carol Spier designed eleven of Cronenberg's pictures. Her other credits include *Mimic* (1997) and *Dracula 2000* (2000). Spier won two Canadian Genie Awards for best Achievement in Art Direction for her work on *Dead Ringers* (1988) and *Naked Lunch* (1992).

5. Peter Suschitzky worked with Cronenberg on five films. His other credits include *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), *The Empire Strikes Back* (1982), *Mars Attacks!* (1996) and *Man in the Iron Mask (1998).* Suschintzky won Canadian Genie Awards for Best Cinematography on *Dead Ringers* (1988), *Naked Lunch* (1992) and *Crash* (1996).

6. The movie won eight Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television Genie Awards: Best Motion Picture 1992, Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role: Monique Mercure, Best Achievement in Art Direction: Carol Spier, Best Achievement in Cinematography: Peter Suschitzky, Best Achievement in Direction: David Cronenberg, Best Adapted Screenplay: David Cronenberg, Best Achievement in Overall Sound: Bryan Day, Peter Maxwell, David Appleby, Donald White, Best Sound Editing: David Evans, Wayne Griffin, Jane Tattersal, Tony Currie, Andy Malcolm, Rick Cadger.

7. Besides his frequent collaboration with Cronenberg, Canadian composer Howard Shore wrote many appreciated soundtracks. Among the most recent ones: *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *Philadelphia* (1993), *Seven* (1995), *The Cell* (2000), *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001). Shore won the Oscar for Best Original Score right for his work on *The Lord of the Rings.*

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ALIEN NATION: CYPRUS AS THE LAST ZONE IN BRUCE STERLING'S "ONE NATION, INVISIBLE" AND *ZEITGEIST*

LUCA BRIASCO

> Bruce Sterling is certainly a favorite - he produces more ideas per page than anyone else around. (McCaffery, 279)

Questa dichiarazione, resa a Larry McCaffery da William Gibson, autore, con *Neuromancer*, del romanzo che ha definitivamente lanciato in orbita il movimento *cyberpunk*, colloca il suo compagno di cordata Bruce Sterling nella posizione, idealmente complementare, che egli ha effettivamente occupato sulla scena della nuova fantascienza degli anni ottanta. Se infatti Gibson rappresenta la penna più raffinata e letterariamente consapevole del movimento, capace di un approccio fortemente innovativo e sperimentale in termini di stile e di strutture narrative, Sterling è sempre rimasto uno scrittore di idee, capace di svariare senza soluzioni di continuità dal romanzo al saggio e di catalizzare l'attenzione di quegli appassionati di *science fiction* che da sempre privilegiano il contributo di spunti e di riflessioni che la narrativa di anticipazione ha prodotto e continua a produrre. Scrittore di idee e al tempo stesso grande organizzatore: a Sterling va l'indiscusso merito di aver radunato nell'antologia *Mirrorshades* un'esplosiva comunità di nuovi autori, scegliendone i testi più innovativi e paradigmatici, e di aver redatto una prefazione che ha avuto il valore e l'impatto di un vero e proprio manifesto. La tesi centrale da cui muove il progetto di Sterling e dei *cyberpunk* viene enunciata fin dalla primissima pagina della postfazione: la narrativa cyberpunk coglie e rappresenta:

> A new kind of integration. The overlapping of worlds that were formerly separate: the realm of high tech and the modern pop underground. […] This integration has become our decade's crucial source of cultural energy. The work of the cyberpunks is paralleled through the Eighties pop culture: in rock video; in the hacker underground; in the jarring street tech of hip-hop and scratch music; in the synthesizer rock of London and Tokyo. This phenomenon, this dynamic, has a global range; cyberpunk is its literary incarnation… (Sterling, *Mirrorshades* IX)

Con toni profetici che affondano le loro radici nella tradizione del millenarismo americano, Sterling si spinge fino a ipotizzare una "nuova alleanza," "an unholy alliance of the technical world and the world of organized dissent - the underground world of pop, visionary fluidity, and street-level anarchy" (*Mirrorshades*. IX). La premessa di tale alleanza, e la sua condizione irrinunciabile, risiede nelle profonde trasformazioni che la tecnologia stessa ha subito. Al contrario delle meraviglie tecnologiche del passato, contraddistinte tutte, dalle colossali dighe del New Deal ai grattacieli o alle centrali nucleari, da un gigantismo ancora sostanzialmente meccanico:

> Eighties tech sticks to the skin, responds to the touch: the personal computer, the Sony Walkman, the portable telephone, the soft contact lens.

Certain central themes spring up repeatedly in cyberpunk. The theme of body invasion: prosthetic limbs, implanted circuitry, cosmetic surgery, genetic alteration. The even more powerful theme of mind invasion: brain-computer interfaces, artificial intelligence, neurochemistry - techniques radically redefining the nature of humanity, the nature of self. (*Mirrorshades* X)

Questa ridefinizione dell'umanità e dell'io, che sembra passare attraverso l'accettazione dell'invasione tecnologica e di un'interfaccia permanente tra uomo e macchina si traduce in un nuovo globalismo, nell'incontenibile fascinazione per il movimento e per l'esplorazione di realtà non più discontinue ma strettamente connesse dalla rete, dalla sua pervasività e straordinaria velocità. L'apologia del virtuale si traduce allora in una nuova geografia dell'immaginario, di cui lo stesso Sterling registra la presenza e le prime articolazioni negli autori di punta della sua antologia:

The 1980s are an era of reassessment, of integration, of hybridized influences, of old notions shaken loose and reinterpreted with a new sophistication, a broader perspective. The cyberpunks aim for a wide-ranging, global point of view.
William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, surely the quintessential cyberpunk novel, is set in Tokyo, Istanbul, Paris. Lewis Shiner's *Frontera* features scenes in Russia and Mexico - as well as the surface of Mars. John Shirley's *Eclipse* describes Western Europe in turmoil. Greg Bear's *Blood Music* is global, even cosmic in scope. (*Mirrorshades* X)

La doppia ricorrenza del termine *global* e l'entusiasmo con cui Sterling passa in rassegna i mille, sparsi luoghi di una nuova e immaginifica geografia illustrano con chiarezza il sostanziale ottimismo dal quale il movimento *cyberpunk* ha preso le mosse e sul quale si sono concentrate le non benevole attenzioni di diversi critici, quasi tutti di ispirazione sostanzialmente marxista. George Slusser, nel suo saggio "Literary MTV," si è limitato a evidenziare come il *cyberpunk*, chiudendo le porte a qualunque nozione evoluzionistica della società e dell'uomo, abbia sancito un'effettiva "musealizzazione" della fantascienza, trasformandone lo slancio originario verso una trasformazione illimitata della realtà in una "carefully controlled dance of forms," in un gioco di metamorfosi che si consumano in se stesse. Istvan Csicsery-Romay si è invece spinto oltre, accusando i narratori cyberpunk di malafede vera e propria, visto il loro calcolato rifiuto di esaminare la possibilità e l'utilità di un qualsivoglia controllo politico sull'inesorabile avanzare della tecnologia:

Cyberpunk is fundamentally ambivalent about the breakdown of the distinctions between human and machine, between personal consciousness and machine consciousness. In almost every significant cyberpunk work, the breakdown is initiated from outside, usually by the pressures exerted by multinational capitalism's desire for something better than the fallible human being. The villains come from the human corporate world and use their great technical resources to create beings that program out the glitches of the human. […] And yet, out of the antihuman evil that has created conditions intolerable for normal human life comes some new situation. This new situation is, then, either the promise of an apocalyptic entrance into a new evolutionary synthesis of the human and the machine, or an all-encompassing hallucination in which true motives, and true affects, cannot be known. (274)

Ridurre la produzione narrativa e giornalistica di Sterling a un moto oscillatorio tra una visione paranoica e un'esaltazione ottimistica della nuova, auspicata sintesi tra uomo e macchina risulta certamente riduttivo, non tuttavia sviante o scorretto. Fin dal suo primo romanzo di riconosciuta importanza per la scena *cyberpunk*, *Schismatrix*, Sterling dimostra, come sottolineato da Veronica Hollinger, "a familiarly post-structuralist sensibility, in its recognition both of the potential anxiety *and* of the potential play inherent in a universe where 'futility and freedom are absolute'" (37). Ansia e gioco altro non sono che due ulteriori, possibili definizioni di un'oscillazione tra catastrofismo e millenarismo che percorre effettivamente tutto il romanzo, quasi a commento del confronto tra le due razze post-umane degli "Shapers" e dei "Mechanists," che ne costituisce il tema principale.

La ricerca di Sterling non si è però interrotta con *Schismatrix* ed è andata sempre più arricchendosi di contenuti esplicitamente politici, alimentati da un'attività giornalistica che è andata facendosi sempre più intensa e che ha spesso costituito l'ambito ideale di incubazione per i romanzi successivi. Come è stato efficacemente osservato da Daniele Brolli nella sua prefazione all'edizione italiana di *Islands in the Net* (forse, a tutt'oggi l'opera narrativa più nota e importante di Sterling).

> La preoccupazione che emerge in tutte le opere di Sterling è proprio quella di verificare quali spazi esistano per una scelta dell'individuo all'interno dei meccanismi planetari delle nuove tecnologie. Se l'è chiesto anche come giornalista in vari articoli, arrivando a documentare i rapporti tra poteri istituzionali e libero accesso alle banche dati telematiche, nel libro-saggio *Giro di vite contro gli hacker*. Ma soprattutto in alcuni suoi romanzi, come *Isole nella rete*, ha evidenziato le spinte corporativistiche che motivano le attività dei diversi poteri economici e politici che usufruiscono dei sistemi di comunicazione elettronica. (IV)

Sterling rilegge la tendenza al globalismo non più e non solo come un dato positivo e una prospettiva entusiasmante, ma anche come punto di massima criticità, nel quale le tendenze corporativistiche di certo capitalismo avanzato trovano una valvola di sfogo ideale sfruttando il progressivo degrado dei sistemi politici e della loro capacità di controllo e indirizzo. Egli finisce allora per teorizzare e preconizzare l'avvento di una rete le cui maglie possono e devono ospitare *enclaves* e aree indipendenti, dedite alla pirateria dei dati e alla edificazione di sistemi autonomi. Una prospettiva il cui sostanziale anarchismo collega le opere di Sterling degli anni novanta a quello che Carlo Formenti ha definito anarco-populismo, e che ha negli Stati Uniti il suo più originale esponente in Hakim Bey e nel suo concetto di *Temporary Autonomous Zone*, o *T.A.Z.* Secondo Bey - e Sterling - all'espansione globale del capitale, facilitata e resa ancor più pervasiva dalla velocità e simultaneità della comunicazione informatica, si può rispondere solo mediante una tattica mordi-e-fuggi, un'occupazione clandestina e rigorosamente provvisoria di una serie di aree che sfuggono al dominio di un potere troppo impegnato nella propria stessa simulazione per riuscire a mantenere un controllo totale sul principio di realtà. Non siamo lontani, allora, dal concetto burroughsiano di interzona, con il quale le *T.A.Z.* condividono la fluidità e la riduzione al minimo delle regole sociali, tanto quanto la Rete

acquista molte delle caratteristiche della Zona di Pynchon - e, in particolare, di *Gravity's Rainbow* - nella sua compresenza di spinte corporativistiche e di punti nei quali la maglia della rete si slabbra, creando isole dove è ancora possibile elaborare e produrre senso in modo relativamente autonomo.

Non deve allora stupire che, a partire da *Islands in the Net* e per tutta la seconda metà degli anni novanta, Sterling si sia dedicato a percorrere il mondo globalizzato da un angolo all'altro, non senza subire il fascino del globalismo in quanto categoria astratta ma tentando al contempo di correggerlo mediante una calcolata predilezione per le esperienze e le realtà che si articolano al limite della legalità, in una nuova versione di quella "unholy alliance" tra mondo della tecnica e dissenso organizzato che la prefazione di *Mirrorshades* aveva vaticinato.

Questo nuovo moto oscillatorio, stavolta tra globalismo e illegalità organizzata, offre a Sterling nell'esame di realtà socio-politiche in turbolenta trasformazione, una chiave di lettura efficace, anche se a tratti eccessivamente semplificatoria. Non si può negare, a mero titolo di esempio, la potenza descrittiva di quest'immagine di una Russia in piena transizione dal socialismo reale a un capitalismo selvaggio e incontrollabile, colta nel dicembre del 1993 e consegnata alla rivista *Wired*:

(…) the nation - whatever its name is - has been in an official state of "crisis" and "transition" since 1986. The restructuring, the openness, is out of hand and will not stop. To watch the structure of daily life writhe and mutate in Moscow, under the incredible dual impact of Western technology and Western pop culture, is intensely fascinating. It is one of the great postmodern spectacles, magical and comical and seamy, like watching Rip Van Winkle slapped awake, dusted off, doused in cologne and given a PC, a VCR and a safe-sex blow job. Almost any society imaginable would crack under this terrific level of future shock and stress, but the Russians are already so far gone that they simply haven't any choice left. Most Russians today only want Russia to be a "normal country," but this is the end of millennium, and there isn't any normality left for anybody, least of all Russians. (Sterling, "Compost of Empire")

Per descrivere la Russia del 1993 viene ancora una volta evocato - stavolta, in una luce molto meno incondizionatamente positiva - il sacro binomio tra tecnologia e cultura pop che sta alla radice dello spettacolo postmoderno (e dello stesso *cyberpunk* nella sua versione originaria) e il suo impatto devastante su una società condannata a una condizione di transitorietà permanente. La crisi e la transizione sembrano essersi trasformate in un dato esistenziale, e non è un caso che, nella versione della zona disegnata dalla *T.A.Z.* di Hakim Bey, la temporaneità è talmente costitutiva da inscriversi direttamente nel nome come nell'acronimo.

Nell'agosto del 1999, a pochi mesi di distanza dalla fine del millennio, il giornalismo di viaggio di Sterling si chiude, sempre su *Wired*, con l'articolo "One Nation, Invisible," dedicato alla parte settentrionale di Cipro, controllata da un governo di stretta obbedienza turca, mai riconosciuto dalla comunità internazionale, e separata dal resto dell'isola, di "osservanza greca," dalla cosiddetta "Linea verde," presidiata tuttora da truppe delle Nazioni

Unite. Spostandosi dal regime di transizione permanente dei paesi dell'Europa orientale (oltre alla Russia, anche la Repubblica Ceca) alla realtà di un'isola collocata nel cuore del Mediterraneo e trasformatasi in punto di contatto e scontro tra cristianesimo e islamismo, ma anche tra la "vecchia" Grecia e la "nuova Turchia," lo sguardo di Sterling si confronta con un cumulo di dati e immagini di impressionante complessità, trasponendolo in quello che rimane, con ogni probabilità, il suo articolo più importante e utilizzandolo al tempo stesso come materiale grezzo sul quale costruire *Zeitgeist*, il suo ultimo romanzo a tutt'oggi, pubblicato in anteprima mondiale proprio in Italia, nel settembre del 2000.

"One Nation, Invisible" si apre con una ricostruzione degli eventi che, nel 1974, hanno portato alla divisione di Cipro in due zone. A Sterling non serve certo forzare la mano per fare della piccola isola mediterranea un vero e proprio laboratorio del futuro, il luogo nel quale, in piena Guerra Fredda e venticinque anni prima della guerra del Kossovo, è stato messo in scena, a mo' di anteprima, quello stesso, brutale connubio di pulizia etnica e propaganda nazionalistica che avrebbe trovato nei Balcani la sua forma più estrema e compiuta. Come noto, il conflitto tra greci e turchi non ha mai trovato una vera e propria soluzione, ma dietro l'andirivieni continuo delle truppe delle Nazioni Unite permane una situazione di stallo e di tregua sufficientemente continua da sembrare quasi durevole e definitiva. Ne consegue che:

> Turkish Cyprus has peace and borders; it just doesn't officially exist. Which makes it of inherent political interest - even though it's small, weak, backward, poor, mostly offline, and almost totally forgotten by the world's great powers.
> Kosovo will look like Turkish Cyprus someday, if it's lucky. "Kosovo," or whatever people call it in 2024, will be small, balkanized, and politically, legally, and economically screwed up. It will be semi-sort-of independent, scarred with bullet holes, land mines, and old hate. Maybe it will also be picturesque, an off-the-beaten-track tourist draw, an overgrown rather than an active graveyard. (Sterling, "One Nation")

La Cipro turca ha dunque molte delle caratteristiche di una zona temporaneamente autonoma. Il fatto di essere condannata alla non-esistenza le consente di coltivare un suo strano processo di crescita, nel quale l'illegalità e la corruzione sono garantite dalla condanna stessa, dall'invisibilità, dalla conseguente assenza di un qualsivoglia controllo statale o doganale, che consente alla mafia turca di utilizzare l'isola come sede di riciclaggio di denaro sporco e come centrale per il traffico di eroina. Del resto, osserva Sterling, i ciprioti turchi non hanno molto da guadagnare nell'essere onesti: esclusi dal Nuovo Ordine Mondiale, non sono neanche tenuti a rispettarne le regole: "You can't cut diplomatic relations with Turkish Cyprus - it doesn't have any. Economic embargo? It's got one already, thanks." Unico elemento che consente loro di preservare un minimo di stabilità è il senso dell'identità nazionale, in larga parte costruito propagandisticamente, ma anche disseminato in luoghi che appaiono cosparsi di storia, passata come recente. Dalle fortificazioni risalenti al medioevo, alla Linea Verde nata dopo il 1974, l'isola è attraversata dal segno della divisione e dello scontro al punto di portarlo inscritto nella sua geografia, fisica e psicologica:

Now that Berlin is full of new skyscrapers and German media yuppies, the broken Cypriot city of Lefkosa/Nicosia is the last divided capital of Europe. The Green Line, which runs right through the heart of town, is the legendary cease-fire zone of armed apartheid that cuts the island of Cyprus across its midsection. It's a hostile, mostly uninhabited wilderness, 110 miles long and up to 5 miles wide.
(…) Like every other place in the Mideast and the Balkans, Cyprus boasts any ancient, blood-stained stone fortifications. The Green Line is the 1960s version of a Cypriot medieval wall. But this barrier is built, quite properly and aptly, out of cheap consumer goods. In downtown Lefkosa, the Green Line is made mostly of big, rusting oil barrels shoveled full of dirt; as you walk along, these yield to bulldozered bunkers with thick green overgrowth. ("One Nation")

Come lo stesso Sterling procede a dimostrare, questa versione postmoderna degli antichi fortilizi ha soprattutto un significato simbolico per i Turchi, che scelgono una "bizarre enforced blindness" al mero scopo di rendere ancor più invisibili i greci che vivono al di là della Linea Verde.

E tuttavia, Cipro continua a portare inscritta nel suo paesaggio umano la complessità delle sue origini. È quanto accade a Famagosta/Gazimagusa, un tempo capitale per i Lusignan, avventurieri francesi "who supposed themselves to be Christian Kings of Jerusalem during the Crusades" ma, sconfitti e scacciati dai Musulmani, dovettero ritirarsi a Cipro, dove si dedicarono al commercio delle spezie e costruirono cattedrali e monasteri.

Their noblest cathedral there has become the local mosque. To hear a muezzin wailing out of a Notre Dame-style Gothic tower is a strangely liberating and refreshing experience. (Sterling, "One Nation")

Le barriere, pur inscrivendosi nel paesaggio stesso, non impediscono che lo scorrere del tempo e lo stratificarsi della storia impongano la propria legge di fusione e contaminazione. Il sovrapporsi di tante, diverse fortezze che hanno lo scopo di allontanare l'altro dal proprio sguardo è, se non negato, quanto meno controbilanciato dalla vitalità disperata, a tratti barbarica di una cultura dell'illegalità che vive di traffici e legami inconfessabili quanto di una carnalità che il mondo occidentale, corporativo e globalizzante, sembra aver dimenticato.

In *Zeitgeist*, il paesaggio umano della Cipro Turca si anima e si popola di uno stupefacente campionario di reietti e di nuovi potenti che non intendono rinunciare a cavalcare la storia. Russi reduci dalla sporca guerra in Cecenia; piccoli trafficanti ed ex Lupi Grigi imparentati con ministri del Governo turco; fotografi inglesi, agenti musicali americani, ex agenti della CIA e splendide dive televisive, tassisti annoiati e principesse decadute: nel romanzo di Sterling c'è letteralmente di tutto, e tutto converge in una piccola porzione di isola cosparsa di Casino. Ed è in questo paesaggio, in questa *T.A.Z.* che ricorda da vicino la Tangeri di Burroughs, che si gioca la battaglia tra il protagonista, Leggy Starlitz, americano, inventore di un gruppo musicale modellato sulle inglesi *Spice Girls*, e l'antagonista Mehmet Ozbey, già Lupo Grigio, trafficante di eroina, uomo di Governo, agente segreto anticurdo e quant'altro, che del gruppo stesso vuole prendere

possesso per pilotarlo in una tournée nelle repubbliche islamiche ex-sovietiche e trasformarlo in strumento di consenso e propaganda filo-occidentale e anti-talebana (nel romanzo, pubblicato con un anno esatto di anticipo sull'attentato alle Twin Towers, viene nominato anche Osama bin Laden).

Si tratta di una battaglia simbolica, dalla quale uscirà vincitore Starlitz, rappresentante del Nuovo Ordine Mondiale dal quale la Cipro turca è stata esclusa e al tempo stesso incarnazione estrema dell'operatore culturale postmoderno, per il quale non esiste realtà oggettiva al di fuori del linguaggio e per dominare sulla scena pop è necessario che un gruppo musicale sia composto da interpreti assolutamente incapaci di cantare o ballare. Il gruppo di Starlitz si chiama infatti *G7*, in quanto composto da sette ragazze, una per ognuno dei paesi membri dell'omologa organizzazione. Non è possibile includere nel progetto i russi, perché "they still think that a rock group has to sell music." Invece, come Starlitz dice chiaramente a Ozbey, "G7 is about marketing, it's absolutely not about mattering. You want to matter with a pop group, you're talking a different reality." Ma forse è proprio questa realtà diversa ed esclusa dal regime della simulazione che Ozbey non può e non vuole rinunciare a tenere in vita. Una realtà segnata dalla violenza e dalla contraddizione, ma anche dal bisogno di significare, dalla ricerca di parole e azioni che abbiano un senso al di fuori dell'usuale messa in scena. Affidate alle mani di Ozbey, le *G7 girls* cominciano a morire, una dopo l'altra, condannate dalla brutalità di un regime illegale ma al tempo stesso restituite a una dimensione che trascende quella di meri simulacri. Nella sua ultima incarnazione in quanto Zona, il Mediterraneo è spazio di terrore e morte, di confusione, balcanizzazione, odio; ma è al tempo stesso uno spazio in cui la storia continua ostinatamente a scriversi e il tempo reclama i suoi diritti al di fuori e al di là dello spettacolo postmoderno; una culla, forse, e l'incunabolo di un tragico e affascinante Nuovo Disordine Mondiale.

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WORKSHOP FIVE
AMERICAN WRITERS AND THE MEDITERRANEAN: A COMPARISON OF VIEWPOINTS

CHAIR: MARINA COSLOVI

The Mediterranean has always attracted American writers, many of whom wrote about it after traveling around it or staying for long periods on its shores. Nonetheless, as the papers presented in this workshop show, writing about the Mediterranean has never been simple: precisely because of its prominence as a theme, discourses about it early involved elements that had more to do with the writers' home culture - and their attitude to it - than with the Mediterranean itself.

By telling the story of his *Algerine Captive*, for instance, Royall Tyler found himself dealing not only with a remarkable Mediterranean experience, but also with some hot political issues. Publishing his book at a time (1797) when anti-Algerian propaganda was kept alive by accounts of Barbary captivities, Tyler could not avoid making his protagonist's repeatedly professed attachment to American values a prominent feature of his work. And yet, as Sarah Wood points out in her paper, this patriotism was only one of the discourses informing the book: the protagonist's gradual discovery of the Islamic world, and his fascination with the people of a region open to trans-cultural dialogue, were equally important - although too untimely to be foregrounded.

In these years another powerful discourse was gaining momentum: the picturesque, which ultimately made it even more problematic for individual perceptions of the Mediterranean to emerge. For the cultured writer imbued with the aesthetic of the picturesque, the Mediterranean became not so much a region to experience anew as a country where one could project one's idealized visions nurtured by art and literature.

It was as a devotee of the picturesque that Washington Irving responded to southern Spain, which became for him a mythical land assuaging his Romantic imagination. As Barbara Nugnes explains, the discourse of the picturesque left little room for Irving's more direct feelings, which surfaced only at some emotionally charged moments.

The picturesque continued to condition representations of the Mediterranean and its people throughout the nineteenth century. Some writers, James Fenimore Cooper among them, felt no need to escape its frame of reference and let it mediate their response; yet others (as Shirley Foster shows) started to deconstruct picturesque conventions in an attempt to foreground their authentic, if not original, perceptions. What rendered these writers' need to distinguish their 'unmediated' experience of the Mediterranean even more urgent was the fact that towards the middle of the century the picturesque manner of viewing ceased to be a sign of cultural refinement and began to be associated with a new phenomenon: tourism.

In the hands of the institutions enabling modern tourism - Murray's and Baedeker's publishing firms among them - the picturesque became the cornerstone of a set of formulaic responses to the countries and people of the Mediterranean with which tourists were provided at the outset of their journey. It was by setting themselves against the prevailing discourse of tourism that writers such as Mark Twain and Henry James tried to find the 'real meaning' of their Mediterranean experience. But there were also writers who were content to play the conventional American tourist: like Nathaniel Hawthorne who, as Sirpa Selenius points out, felt no need to engage with Italy or Italians on a more intimate level. Paradoxically, the pre-constituted discourse of tourism rendered the actual act of travelling to the Mediterranean region virtually superfluous - and the gap between tourists and visited countries wider.

As a conclusion to the workshop we come to a postmodern writer like Thomas Pynchon, in whose *V.* the tourist approach to the Mediterranean becomes a metaphor for the imperialist, homogenizing disposition of western culture as a whole. As I show in my paper, by drawing attention to the voice of the 'others' - the natives reduced to silence by the discourse of the picturesque and tourism - Pynchon not only alerts to the unsatisfactoriness of the tourist/colonizer reading of the Mediterranean, but he also opens up his writing to different discourses about it. Among these newly recovered discourses, that of the Mediterranean as a meeting point - and possibly a melting pot - of different civilizations will hopefully be the most fruitful.

Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia

AN ALIEN'S ACT OF SEDITION: STRUCTURAL COHERENCE AND NORTH AFRICAN ATTACHMENTS IN TYLER'S *THE ALGERINE CAPTIVE*

SARAH WOOD

The Algerine Captive; or, The Life and Adventures of Doctor Updike Underhill, was published in 1797, a popular year for accounts of Barbary captivities. This was just two years after the Treaty of Algiers had put an end to Algerian hostilities, and the same year that saw a boatload of American citizens return from captivity in the Barbary State.

Today, Royall Tyler's *Algerine Captive* is best known for its patriotic preface, calling for a national literature that is manufactured by American authors and exhibits the "homespun habits" of American manners. The first volume of Tyler's two part narrative fulfils precisely such criteria, following the fortunes of pseudonymous author, Updike Underhill, through a childhood spent on a New England farm, an adolescent devotion to classical literature, and a disastrous first job as a teacher. Re-training as a doctor, Updike remains unhappy and remains unable to make a living, so he takes up the post of surgeon upon a slaving ship bound for West Africa. Part One ends with Updike being cast ashore on the Barbary Coast, and taken captive by Algerian pirates. Along with several chapters devoted to Algerian "habits" and history, Volume Two charts the narrator's experiences as a slave in Algiers, his travels through the continent, and his ultimate return to US soil, wrapping things up quite neatly, with a call for national unity at the end.

While the homespun American scenes of Volume One have been fondly remembered by critics from the nineteenth century onwards, Volume Two has been persistently criticised for its lack of both structural unity and original material. In this paper, I want to contend that *The Algerine Captiv*e possesses far greater structural coherence than has previously been supposed, and that its narrative structure belies both the patriotism of the preface and the isolationism of the narrative's final paragraphs. I'd like to read *The Algerine Captive* as the story of a disaffected American, whose Barbary narrative reveals a subtle indictment of the US republic and an untimely attachment to North African ways.

As early as 1810, a "Retrospective Review" in the *Monthly Anthology and Boston Review* described *The Algerine Captive*'s second volume as "much inferiour to the first," "a collection of common-place remarks upon the Barbary powers" (*Review* 344-46). More recently, Cathy Davidson has described Updike's Algerian account as a "conventional" "travelogue," "plagiarized" from "popular" "narratives of the day" (Davidson 207). Ironically, though, given their eagerness to emphasize the derivative nature of Updike's Algerian account, critics have failed to spot the extent to which Volume Two borrows from Updike's own Volume One, replaying the protagonist's American adventures, only this time on foreign soil and with a different set of results.

In both volumes, Updike's adult adventures move through three distinctive phases, broadly definable as close confinement, medical practice, and foreign travel. Updike's initial stint in the Algerian stone quarry mirrors "the slavery and contempt" he first sustains as a pedagogue in New England; his subsequent role as a medical surgeon allows him to move more freely through the Barbary state and recalls his former ramblings across the United States as an itinerant doctor (I.76). Toward the end of both volumes Updike suffers serious financial losses, takes the post of ship-doctor, and voyages into an unknown world. Engineering a series of sustained narrative parallels, Tyler encourages his readers to make repeated comparisons between the two volumes Updike writes and the two continents he inhabits. For there is no escaping the fact that the same narrative trajectory yields opposite results on each side of the Atlantic: while Volume One charts the disintegration of Updike's professional prospects and personal attachments on American soil, Volume Two sees him achieve professional prominence, social acceptance, and financial independence in North Africa.

In 1810, the *Monthly Anthology* had also praised *The Algerine Captive* for venturing into what it called the American "interiour," for delving deep into the US continent and the Yankee psyche, yet Underhill's experiences with American interiors are hardly affirmative. The schoolhouse, the church, the tavern, the drawing room: Updike ventures into all these American interiors with optimism, only to be repulsed - disgusted as well as rejected - by those he finds within.

Delighted with the prospect of "entering upon [his] school," and keenly anticipating the "pleasures and profits of a pedagogue," Updike imagines his students, "seated in awful silence" around his "arm chair and birchen sceptre of authority" (I.43-44). Once inside, however, he is surrounded by a "ragged, ill bred, ignorant set" of students, whose repeated rebellions shake his tenuous "government to the centre" (I.45-47). Updike enters the tavern in the hope that *here* he will make new friends, but mixing with the local men, the bookish pedagogue is disappointed once again, forced to confess that "their conversation I could not relish; mine they could not comprehend." Attending a church-service-cum-horse-race somewhere "southward of Philadelphia," he is once more the misfit, an "awkward and uneasy" witness to the minister's cruel whipping of his "negro boy," and a foreigner to the brutal ways and impious words of the South. As well as being entirely unfamiliar with "the language of the turf," Tyler's Yankee protagonist doesn't "swear profanely" and even refuses to reproduce what he calls "the imprecations of others," in his own, New-Hampshire published, book (I.135, I.140). A shared American language seems impossible, with Updike and his peers a world apart.

The highlight of Updike's American adventures comes in Chapter 23, when Benjamin Franklin makes a cameo appearance. Tyler's ambitious young narrator is extremely interested to see "one who, from small beginnings, by the sole exertion of native genius and indefatigable industry, had raised himself to the pinnacle of politics and letters; a man who, from a humble printer's boy, had elevated himself to be the desirable companion

of the great ones of the earth" (I.129-30). But Benjamin Franklin, America's most celebrated self-made man, is most pointedly all that Updike tries and fails to be, while Updike's own American experience belies the nationalistic rhetoric of Franklin's *Information to those who would Remove to America* (1784), a pamphlet encouraging hardworking Europeans to come and make something of themselves in America. Referring in particular to "the professions of divinity, law, and physic," Franklin's pamphlet assures an English readership that strangers "are by no means excluded from exercising those professions; and the quick increase of inhabitants every where gives them a chance of employ, which they have in common with the natives" (Franklin 6). According to this proselytizing pamphlet, everybody is welcome in America "because there is room enough for them all" (10).

But while Franklin's *Autobiography* bears out such sanguinity with its author's own success story, Updike's autobiography disproves and discredits Franklin's I*nformation*. Despite his "own acquirements and the celebrity of [his] preceptor," Tyler's newly qualified doctor encounters an overcrowded, inhospitable America, where medical jobs are few and far between. One New England township already boasts "a learned, a cheap, a safe, and a musical Doctor" (I.107), and in sea-ports up and down the coast, "the business was engrossed by men of established practice and eminence." Nor does "the interior country" present a more likely proposition, for Updike writes that here, the people "could not distinguish or encourage merit. The gains were small, and tardily collected" (I.141). In short, while the self-made Franklin writes pamphlets encouraging removal to America, Tyler's financially undone doctor is forced to remove from America, squeezed out of the USA by a dearth of opportunity and a growing sense of personal failure. So instead of being a point of arrival, a desirable destination for hard-working emigrants, a refuge for the oppressed, a magnet for spies, dissenters, and disruptive radicals - all ways in which Americans figured their nation during the 1790s - Updike's America is a point of departure, a place which people leave. Not everyone wanted to get inside the new republic - no matter what the Federalists might have thought - and those who left were not always in a hurry to return.

If Updike's foray into the geographical and psychological "interiour" of America leads only to blasted expectations, then the pattern is reversed in Algiers, as the captive encounters a series of unpromising exteriors that reveal unexpected qualities within. The "Sacred College of the Musselman Priest," for example, is described as "a large gloomy building, on the outside," but, within the walls, it is "an earthly paradise" (II.39), the "dark" and "gloomy" "outward appearance" of Ben Benjamin's house conceals the splendid furnishings and liberal hospitality to be found inside (II.178), while a glimpse through the window of a mosque reveals the "dignified elocution" of the priest, and a sermon "received by his audience with a reverence, better becoming christians than infidels" (II.160).

The more Updike delves into America's interior, the more of an outsider he feels; in Algiers, despite his inferior status as a Christian slave, and despite his initial impression

that "no town contains so many places impervious to strangers" (II.105), Updike soon finds acceptance and friendship in Algerian society. The warm reception which greets him at the at the home of Ben Benjamin contrasts with the cold shoulder he receives in parlors and drawing rooms across the USA. Updike is toasted by his Jewish host, treated as an "intimate" and even given a set of front door keys. Repeatedly rejected and mocked by his American peers, the narrator's North African tale is peppered with references to "my friend the Jew," "my friend the mollah," and "my friends in the hospital," generous Algerians who ply their American colleague with gifts, and, according to Updike, "expressed sorrow at parting with me" - which is more than his so-called "beloved friends" from the USA ever did (II.186, II.76, II.185, II.71).

Incomprehensible to his American peers, Updike has no problem making himself understood in Algiers. His fellow slaves speak "that universal language of benevolence which needs no linguist to interpret" (II.15), and Tyler's Algerine Captive soon becomes an expert on the local dialect:

> It is well known on the sea-coasts of the Mediterranean by the name of *Lingua Franca*. Probably it had its rise in the aukward endeavours of the natives to converse with strangers from all parts of the world, and the vulgar people, calling all foreigners *Franks*, supplied its name. I the more readily acquired this jargon, as it contained many Latin derivatives. If I have conjectured the principle, upon which the *Lingua Franca* was originally formed, it is applied through all stages of its existence: every person having good right to introduce words and phrases from his vernacular tongue, and which, with some alteration in accent, are readily adopted. (II.55)

No longer a barrier to comprehension, Updike's classical education now facilitates communication, enabling him to master the local dialect "all the more readily." Updike's analysis of the Lingua Franca figures the Barbary Coast as an international crossroads and a linguistic melting pot, a land of strangers, where the national language is named for "foreigners," and where foreign-ness is a sign of belonging. While Noah Webster's attempts to introduce American English prove highly controversial back at home, the language that Updike encounters in Algiers is fluid, responsive, and thoroughly democratic. "Every person assumes a right to introduce words and phrases from his vernacular tongue," writes Updike, and when he himself calls for "HASTY PUDDING AND MOLASSES," the phrase is "immediately adopted." Indeed, he is sure that "if a dictionary of the Lingua Franca shall ever be compiled," "the name of the staple cookery of New England will have a conspicuous place" (II.68).

Published in 1798, the *Journal* of former Algerian captive, John Foss, describes the "generosity of the United S." toward "their enslaved countrymen" as being of "inestimable value" (Foss 122-23). In contrast, Updike complains that the USA's "extremely pitiful" ransom offers resulted in a worsening of conditions for American slaves. And while Foss inserts in his *Journal* a series of encouraging letters from US diplomat, David Humphreys, written to the slaves in 1794, Updike's letter to William Carmichael - the

USA's *charge des affaires* at Madrid - goes unanswered. When letters to American friends and family also miscarry, dialogue between Updike and his countrymen, always problematic, now appears impossible.

What we see instead is Updike engaged in a dialogue with his Barbary captors, as the rational and compassionate Mollah - himself a renegade from Christianity - tries to convert the American captive to "the mussulman faith" (II.38). Conversion attempts were a staple of Barbary captivities; according to one seventeenth century account, the Muslims flog their Christian captives until "they bleed at the nose and mouth; and if yet they continue constant, then they strike the teeth out of their heads, pinch them by their tongues, and use many other sorts of tortures to convert them" (Baepler 100). The attempt to convert Tyler's Algerine captive is a far more civilised affair, a measured debate as opposed to an indiscriminate drubbing, but for just this reason it proved a controversial scene, with the *Monthly Anthology* rounding on Royall Tyler for "so decidedly giv[ing] the Mollah the best of the argument." The Mollah does indeed get "the best of the argument." "Abashed for [his] country" and his creed, Updike only wriggles off the hook by abandoning the seminary and resuming his "slave's attire," evading the debate and seeking "safety in [his] former servitude" (II.50, II.53), a truly ignominious sanctuary for a post-Revolutionary American, whose compatriots had laid down their lives to escape the shackles of colonial servitude.

The way in which Updike as narrator represents the religious testing of Updike as captive further reveals an ideological openness that is absent from the closing lines of his narrative. Although he has carefully edited and, in his own words, "condensed [the] conversation," Updike has made no attempt to doctor the argument, to downplay the poor performance of the Christian faith. Instead, presenting the scene in "the manner of a dialogue" (II.41-42), Updike effaces his own authorial, American voice and lets the Algerian Mollah speak eloquently for himself and for Islam. In fact, Volumes One and Two are themselves most profitably read "in the manner of a dialogue." Much more than a trailing echo of the first, American, volume, Updike's Algerian tale is a cogent response to his "home-spun" experiences; it is a provocative call for the questioning of American ideals and the initiation of trans-cultural dialogue. For Updike's Algiers is a mind-altering state, raising questions and opening debate, working against the inward-facing, isolationist clichés that reverberate through the closing lines of Updike's debut novel and the closing years of America's inaugural century.

Dismissed as being derivative and digressive, the descriptive chapters following Updike's dialogue with the Mollah have been repeatedly overlooked, with critics such as Edward Watts arguing that Updike merely "passes on the exoticizing and racist myths common in European writing about Islam." Read alongside contemporaneous Barbary narratives, however, Updike's descriptions of Algiers betray a surprisingly neutral tone and an unusual sympathy for his Barbary captors, resisting patriotic vitriol and shying away from anti-Algerian propaganda. While John Foss excoriates the "diabolical barbarity"

of "merciless *Barbarians*," and Mordecai Manuel Noah denounces Algiers as "the sink of iniquity and curse of humanity" (Noah 365), Updike Underhill strives to dispel Christian misconceptions surrounding Islamic culture. Captured by Algerian pirates, he confesses that "the regularity and frequency of their devotion was astonishing to me, who had been taught to consider this people as the most blasphemous infidels" (I.190). Observing local customs, he finds it "to be a vulgar error" that Algerian men have more than one wife, observing that "they are allowed four by their law; but they generally find, as in our country, one lady sufficient for all the comforts of connubial life" (II.20-21). While other Barbary accounts emphasise the lustful appetites and sexual voracity of the Muslim world, Updike passes up the opportunity to condemn Algerian depravity and instead appeals to an international, male, audience, with the misogynistic hint that wherever the country and whatever its customs, one wife is quite enough.

In Chapter 15, a "Sketch of the History of the Algerines," Updike blames the piratical tendencies of Algerians upon European powers, who destroy and re-arm the region as expedience dictates, perpetuating its warring propensities and discouraging the state from peaceably realizing its full potential. Were it not for the "narrow politics of Europe," Updike asserts, "the state at this time might have been as celebrated for the peaceful arts as they are odious for the constant violation of the laws of nations and humanity" (II.101). And while Updike chooses not to perpetuate unflattering Algerian generalizations, he is happy to denounce the English as "a motley race, in whose mongrel veins runs the blood of all nations," re-directing the very jibe which was most commonly deployed against the multi-ethnic Barbary Coast (I.148). Likewise, the "diabolical" cruelty which readers would expect to witness in the Dey of Algiers is also re-located in Europe, in the bugaboo figure of Robespierre, denounced by Updike as a "ferocious wretch" with "inhuman associates" (I.159). Tyler's Dey, meanwhile, as Malini Johar Schueller has already pointed out, "seems anything but evil." The "signifiers of his power - his riches and accoutrements - are invested with desire rather than loathing" (Schueller 56). While his "countenance" is emptied of danger, his face is "rather comely than commanding," and even his eye "betrays sagacity" (II.5).

Watts has also argued that the twenty chapters following Updike's dialogue with the Mollah constitute what he calls a "narrative retreat" or "rhetorical withdrawal" into travelogue, allowing Updike "the safety of distanced observation," and enabling him "to understand the non-Western world only as something other" (Watts 91). But these twenty chapters are neither the conventional travelogue of foreign observers such as Mathew Carey or James Wilson Stevens, nor the catalogue of horrors seen in the captivity narratives of Maria Martin or James Foss. Instead, subverting both genres as he goes along, Updike relates a captivity that is characterized by increasing social and geographical mobility, and a travelogue that charts its author's increasing rootedness in the landscape he describes.

The fictional *History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin, Who Was Six*

Years a Slave in Algiers (1806) splits its narrative straight down the middle: the first half is a *History of Algiers*, and is taken almost word for word from Carey's *Short Account of Algiers* (1794), while the second half has a new title - *Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Martin* - and relates the attempted violation and subsequent incarceration of the female captive. Maintaining the generic purity of its two parts as well as the chastity of its heroine, the narrative takes great care to divide the story of the captive from the history of her captors. According to the title page, the *History of Algiers* is merely "annexed" to the *Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Martin*, subordinate to but separate from the story of one Western woman. *The Algerine Captive*, however, sees a subversive generic miscegenation, with travelogue and captivity genres weaving in and out of each other throughout the length of Volume Two. The first installment of Updike's story as a slave is followed by a series of chapters discussing "the Habits, Customs, &c. of the Algerines"; these are followed by a continuation of Updike's story, and this in turn culminates with a journey into the Arabian interior and several chapters describing the cities and sights of Mecca and Medina. Within the chapters themselves, the boundaries between the two genres are, at times, surprisingly fluid. Chapter 8, then, though called "*The Language of the Algerines*," is just as concerned with Updike himself, his return to the quarry, and his own contribution to the local dialect. And while the opening lines of Chapter 28 declare Updike's intention to return to his own story, to "resume the thread of [his] more appropriate narrative," Updike diverts to more general description further down the page, moving seamlessly from his own experiences in the Jewish quarter to a wider discussion of Jews in Algiers. Interweaving the thread of Updike's story with accounts of Algerian life, the narrative structure of Volume Two works to strengthen the bond between Algiers and the Algerine Captive, and far from being the dull "narrative retreat" or "rhetorical withdrawal" that Watts proposes, these chapters consolidate the narrator's withdrawal from America, his retreat from American values, and his gradual acculturation to the Islamic world.

Getting back to his "more appropriate narrative" in Chapter 30, Updike at last initiates his plans for repatriation, which only now - after several *years* in captivity - does he begin to lay - although before he actually leaves, he makes the most of an all-expenses-paid trip around the Middle East, visiting religious shrines in Medina and Mecca. Back on US soil in the final chapter, and seemingly forgetting the "*universal* language of benevolence" he has learnt in Algiers, Updike ends his narrative on an isolationist note, cautioning against "foreign emissaries," and warning readers that "Our first object is union among ourselves. For to no nation besides the United States can that ancient saying be more emphatically applied - BY UNITING WE STAND, BY DIVIDING WE FALL" (II.15, 228). Standing alone, Updike's story of disaffection and divided loyalties would indeed have been a most inappropriate narrative for its date of publication. 1797 may have been the year in which liberated captives returned to the USA, but it was also a year of increasing paranoia and xenophobia, and of discussion about the Naturalization, Alien, and Sedition Acts of 1798. While a treaty of peace had been signed with

Algiers in 1795, a factional war between Republicans and Federalists was raging in the 1797 republic, and as the Alien and Sedition Acts were drafted in to silence dissenters, incarceration in a US jail became far more likely than a Barbary captivity. By flanking his tale with a preface that advertises American books and a conclusion that advocates American unity, Updike attempts to escape charges of sedition even as he discloses his alien status in the USA and his naturalization in Algiers. The long-standing critical consensus, enshrining Updike's patriotism, attests to his success.

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PARADISE REGAINED: WASHINGTON IRVING'S MYTHOLOGICAL SPAIN

BARBARA NUGNES

One needn't read too far into *The Sketch Book,* or into *Tales of the Alhambra*, to realise that Irving must have had his own particular vision of earthly paradise: paradise was, to him, a place, *the place,* that could rise up to his youthful readings, fully correspond to the fabulous image he had formed while studying the classics.[1] Like most of his countrymen, he had explored Europe in imagination long before he did so in fact.

This Edenic territory, this Utopian land - the culminating moment of his perennial quest for beauty - he found, towards the end of his European journey, in one of the Mediterranean countries most charged with art and history: "the soft southern region of Andalusia" - Granada, and its magnificent monument, the Alhambra.[2]

Today I have chosen to explore the pre-history of the passionate, manifold and exciting love affair between American writers and our Mediterranean countries.[3] It seems to me indispensable, if we are to gain some historical perspective, to go back to the very beginning, to read - as it were - the first chapter; even if we should find out that - in the present case - it all began "not with a bang, but a whimper."

The book I am going to examine, *Tales of the Alhambra,* initially published in 1832, has, in our discussion, remarkable historical importance: it is, in many ways, the *first* classic by an American author inspired by his exposure to the singular charm and fabulous past of the Iberian South. Besides, I must admit to a special fondness for this country myself - which gives me further reasons for favouring this subject.

As we all know, *The Alhambra* - Irving's last European fiction - is a miscellany: a skilful blend of travel commentary, historical research, personal anecdote, reveries, tales derived from the Arabian world, all of which were designed to satisfy the reader's taste for exotic costumes and lands.

It is widely held that the opening of a text is a vital point of its structure, one highly charged with meaning and formal clues; I have therefore decided - given the limited space I have - to focus my attention on this small but crucial portion of the volume: a travel sketch entitled "The Journey." It is - in intention, at least - a faithful record of the actual journey Irving undertook in 1829, going from Seville to Granada.

The reason given at the outset for the author's Spanish adventure, "curiosity" ("the author... whom curiosity had brought into Spain"), is, in fact, one that should reasonably encourage, on the part of the narrator, an attitude of sound and vigilant realism towards his actual experience - roughly, the same that one would expect of a diary or chronicle: a detailed and relatively objective description of people and places.

Soon, however, the reader's expectations are betrayed; the whole sketch, far from being a real-life testimony, is informed by a totally different approach: conventional, full of mannerism, fairly bookish - a little outmoded, on the whole, even for a time in which writers travelled for the purpose of demonstrating, rather than learning.

Significantly, the first adjective used to describe the unknown country the narrator is about to penetrate - to make it visible, as it were, for the reader - is, far from being specific, tremendously vague: "romantic": ("the romantic mountains of Andalusia"). Together with the ever-present "picturesque", it is more suggestive than expressive, and loaded with literary overtones.[4]

As to the other adjectives, which appear in the opening page (Spain is described as "a *stern, melancholy* country... indescribably *silent and lonesome,* partaking of the *savage and solitary* character of Africa"), though certainly a little more definite, they reveal much more about the observer's emotional and literary stance than they do about the physical features of the land explored.

Not surprisingly, the rest of the chapter exploits, one after the other, a series of romantic clichés: castles, ruins covered with moss, snow-white peaks: it even shows a *bandolero* colourfully attired: "armed to the teeth and mounted on his Andalusian steed" (18) - for the joy of the tourist, one would think. Quite emblematic - as in a coat of arms - is the image of "the vulture and the eagle", soaring from mountain cliffs, as if to suggest some dim spiritual goal.

And yet, probably, no American writer could be romantic - much less "sublime" - without some sense of guilt, and serious qualification. "The Journey" is, in fact, full of menacing robbers and ominous skies; but how delightfully harmless they are.[5] Evidently, Irving's classical education had taught him to play down fears and troubles: many aspects - mainly formal ones - of his prose seem rather lingering relics of eighteenth-century stances.

The following sentence, which forms a premise to the main portion of the chapter, provides a good example, and a key to his conscious technique:

> And here, before setting forth, let me indulge in a few previous remarks on Spanish scenery and Spanish travelling. (15)

Every direct contact with new (and possibly disturbing) circumstances has to be introduced by way of a theoretical assumption: axioms are held to be more trustworthy than actuality, words are more reliable than sensory evidence. More accurately, personal experience appears in the text only as long as it can bear witness to the general statement (or prejudice) it is meant to illustrate; reality exists, paradoxically, only to verify the wisdom of the books.

It has been rightly observed that, for all his travelling around Europe, Irving never seems to leave his library.[6]

Consequently, our narrator usually regards the surrounding world merely as a point of departure toward some imaginative flight. The following passage throws light on the mental process which underlies his prose, always shifting from present to past, from perception to daydreaming:

In the wild passes of these mountains the sight of walled towns and villages ... carries the mind back to the chivalric days of Christian Moslem warfare, and to the romantic struggle for the conquest of Granada. (19)

The above-quoted passage reproduces, in miniature, the whole structure of the volume, consisting of a framework of personal reference, frequently set in the here and now, which leads the way to a plunge into the legendary past: the tales inspired by the *One Thousand and One Nights.*

As for Irving's natural descriptions, which take up a large part of the opening sketch, they are not half as "objective" as one might expect, but rather laid out in very deliberate - perhaps *too* deliberate - patterns of parallels and contrasts, evidently designed to control the author's feelings of insecurity.[7] Silence and sound, light and darkness are often opposed and reconciled, in highly formal arrangements which reveal Irving's constant preoccupation with symmetry and design and support the neo-classical ideal of "Order in Variety."

Here is a representative description:

Vast *sierras* or chains of mountains, destitute of shrub or tree and mottled with variegated marbles and granites, elevate their sunburnt summits against a deep-blue sky, yet in their rugged bosoms lie engulfed the most verdant and fertile valleys, where the desert and the garden strain for mastery, and the very rock is, as it were, compelled to yield the fig, the orange and the citron, and to blossom with the myrtle and the rose. (19)

"The desert and the garden strain for mastery": the savage, natural beauty of the Spanish landscape has been somewhat domesticated to fit the author's need for order, according to the accepted modulus of landscape painting.[8] It is really hard to believe that reality shows so much geometry, or proportion.

Particularly interesting, in this respect, is another frequent stylistic feature: that is, Irving's use of the adversative, which, in a way, transforms the page into a great balancing act. Here is one example, but I could pick out a dozen:

But though a great part of Spain is deficient in the garniture of groves (...) *yet* its scenery has something of a high and lofty character to compensate the want. It partakes something of the attributes of its people.... (16)

Every statement is poised against the opposite point of view, once again paying homage to one of the supreme aesthetic tenets of the classical age: *Aurea medietas* ("In medio tutissimus ibis").[9] In the above passage, as in many others, the dialectical movement impressed on the page is purely rhetorical.

Now, let us examine what happens when the observer shifts his attention to the human geography of the land; a topic which has been introduced through yet another commonplace: the romantic belief in the sympathy existing between the natural setting and its inhabitants: "Its scenery ... partakes something of the attributes of its people ..." The first character depicted in Irving's gallery of types is a herdsman, watching over his cattle, "motionless as a statue."[10]

The static quality of Irving's prose has been discussed sufficiently; let me recall that this attitude should not be viewed only as a consequence of his pictorial bent,[11] but also as another way of imposing a subjective order on reality: it is, in fact, a means of fighting his personal struggle against time, of "freezing" change, of making eternal his ideal world. What counts, once again, is the Utopian element which transforms people and places, turning them into "regions of desire": a mythical geography.

Among the many types who appear in these pages, the most clearly indicative of the narrator's procedure is the portrait of a muleteer, or, more exactly, of *the* muleteer: he is definitely represented not as an individual, but rather as a member of a (dubious, thoroughly picturesque) typology.[12] Therefore, his effigy is sketched through a series of stock images and generalities: "he lives frugally and hardily; … his demeanour is frank, manly and courteous..." (17). The Spaniards that people the book - bandits included - are all ever so gay, ever so noble and pious, no matter how poor they may be.

In passing, let me add that, in Irving, the poor are a lucky sort indeed. Not only do they enjoy the pleasures of a simple life - and simplicity is a supreme value throughout his work[13]- but they invariably possess natural dignity, and a poetical gift: "the Spanish muleteer has an inexhaustible stock of songs and ballads"; "the smuggler and the robber are poetical heroes among the common people" (18).

It is quite natural - *a posteriori* - to find the author's superficial optimism unconvincing, and blame his lack of discrimination; still, he is obviously trying to construct an ideal vision of mankind, a pattern of honesty and decorum that he can, discreetly but constantly, point out as a model to his fellow citizens.

Another example of Irving's handling of characters can be observed later, in the description of the narrator's guide. He is depicted by means of the usual list of well-meaning, rather insipid adjectives as "a faithful, cheery, kind-hearted creature";[14] but the main reason why he deserves special mention is his faint resemblance to "that miracle of squires, the renowned Sancho" (20-1). Actually, he never receives a proper name; rebaptized there and then, he is doomed to be called "our man Sancho" till the end of the sketch, thus functioning, almost exclusively, as a constant reminder of illustrious models: a living *trait d'union* between the actual world and the masterpiece so dearly cherished by the author.

Definitely, like most of his eighteenth-century masters (whether essayists or painters), Irving has no eye for what is original or specific; he's merely interested in what is representative of a class or species and can be easily reduced to its archetypal model.[15]

His strategy is, in fact, so redundant that when a mendicant appears on the scene, the reader is ready to anticipate what follows: the beggar has "almost the look of a pilgrim", he sounds "picturesque and almost poetical"; most of all, he's a living *exemplum,* a personification of a moral abstraction: "a touching picture of the struggle between hunger and pride" (26).

Of course, no modern reader can expect to be overwhelmed by Irving's psychological insight - or by his social commentary; I must admit, however, that his paternalism shows here its most irritating middle-class limits: before offering food to the famished supplicant, the narrator comments: "we were in a favourable mood for such a visitor" (25) - as if charity were a matter of moods...

No matter how disappointing, or even insulting, it may sound, however, this episode should not be overlooked, since it contains a remark which shows, on the narrator's part, a deep-rooted movement of identification with the beggar's state - one which takes on, therefore, interesting metafictional overtones: "....stories of treasure ... are most current among the poorest people" - and again, in a more effective formulation: "nothing is more magnificent than the imagination of a beggar" (28).

Like many of the illustrious expatriates that were to follow, Irving seemed to be well aware of the process at work in his own imagination, and - by implication - of the condition of the American artist, starving after beauty in a "half savage country."[16] Let me recall that he was the first to proclaim that literature, in America, grew out of cultural deprivation; a circumstance that was to be more openly denounced, later, by many "passionate pilgrims": from Hawthorne to James, to Pound.

The dazzling beauty of Granada was to provide the right kind of food for the writer's ravenous imagination. But, before coming to this, let me sum up my observations so far. Irving's landscapes are more symbolic than real; his descriptive writing is never inspired by nature, but rather trimmed to fit heightened contrasts; his characters are confined to predictable stereotypes; his Spain is, in a word, a mythological country, modelled on pictorial or literary codes. It would be easy to conclude that, after crossing the Ocean, the American writer simply shuts his eyes and reverts to his books; that nothing, so far, foreshadows the attitude of Irving's successors: those who found, in their contact with Europe, not only an opportunity to grow as individuals, but a means to rejuvenate their writing, to "make it new." It would be easy - as I said - but it wouldn't be the whole truth. It wouldn't do justice, for sure, to Irving's pioneering role nor to his keen, perceptive sense of the place - a gift he *does* show later in the volume. Besides, closer scrutiny of the text will not bear out the conclusion. There is, in fact, some hint, some sign - however timid and isolated - of a new attitude.

I would like to draw attention to a passage which occurs only about one-third of the way through the sketch, but actually climaxes it. The narrator, who is "about to penetrate into the ancient Kingdom of Granada", is jotting down, rather casually - or so it seems -

a series of fairly impersonal observations "about the general features of Spanish travelling." All of a sudden, however, his tone changes abruptly:

> Sometimes ... he (that is: the voyager) is startled by a hoarse bellowing, and beholds above him, on some green fold of the mountain side, a herd of fierce Andalusian bulls, destined for the combat of the arena. There is something awful in the contemplation of these terrific animals, clothed with tremendous strength, and ranging their native pastures in untamed wildness, strangers almost to the face of man. (20)

The new circumstance has opened a breach in the wall that surrounds the dispassionate stance of the narrator. His imaginative control reels, his language seems to lose its classical poise. For once - despite his defensive use of the third person - he sounds affected, and almost terrified, in the presence of something which cannot easily be ignored or repressed: something which takes the form, tremendously disturbing to an early nineteenth century writer (still rooted in a man-centred tradition of order and clarity), of an apparent disorder of nature, of total *otherness* with respect to mankind: "strangers almost to the face of man."

Significantly enough, this revealing passage is immediately followed by an example of habitual self-castigation:[17]

> …I have been betrayed unconsciously into a longer disquisition than I had intended…

Disclaiming emotion as a lapse of taste, Irving's apologetic attitude belies, once more, the force of his brief epiphany. I wouldn't like to exaggerate its importance, but I see it somewhat as a turning point:[18] from the *frisson,* the shiver that crosses the page, like a breeze in a desert, betraying, for once, a genuine involvement, one can easily infer the immense potential of dreams, fantasies, symbolic projections, which personal contact with southern Europe was to open up to American writers. Hemingway's mythological Spain, for one, is not so far away as it may seem.

As a matter of fact, no matter how cautious the sequel of the first sketch is, the encounter with the fabulous Moorish Palace, narrated in chapter 3 ("The Interior of the Alhambra"), was to be, for Irving, an intense, highly charged experience: a rediscovery of the world - almost a second birth. His exposure to the violent, sumptuous beauty of his "terrestrial paradise" (33) taught him that actuality can be just as intriguing as books, and even more so. As a consequence, he seemed to become reconciled with the world and, perhaps for the first time in his career, looked at it with wonder and respect.[19]

It has long been a critical truism that *The Alhambra* is the most romantic of Irving's works, and I see no reason to disagree, as long as we refer to the second half of the book: the Arabian tales, with their *repertoire* of ill-fated beauties, hidden treasures and witchcraft. Yet - in my opinion - the author has never proved more alert and accurate, more true to life than in the many chapters which describe the Palace, and still work as a perfect Baedeker for modern visitors. Here, Irving's detailed notations reveal - at last - an unsuspected talent

for catching the *genius loci:* the distinctive character and flavor of his environment, the unique spell of the place. Nor can I find anything in his works that rivals the irony and critical self-awareness shown in the sketch called "The Balcony" (91-7).[20]

Right after crossing the sacred threshold into the Alhambra (the legendary "Gate of Justice"), the narrator's attitude and his prose seem, in fact, to undergo a sudden change. In a setting that is, for once, in perfect harmony with his expectations, the artist's urge to flee from reality subsides. The Utopian tension which informed his project from the very beginning finally manages to come upon a space that is tangible and real - flower-scent, murmuring water, the singing of birds, and the sense of an ineffable yet miraculously present serenity: "Behold, for once, a day-dream realised" (59).[21]

I have no space, unfortunately, to explore the range and extent of symbolic implications, both historical and personal, attached by Irving to his Andalusian Eden; yet I feel bound to mention a few, since they seem to be tremendously relevant in the light of subsequent developments.[22]

The Alhambra represents, first of all, an altar to the reassuring presence of the past. And, in Irving's mind, the past was much more than the glory of bygone days: it was the realm of Myth, the house of Possibility, the proper domain in which, at last, the artist could, freely and safely, release his imagination.[23]

And, beyond this, in the exquisite artists who built the monument Irving found a most congenial spirit, a brotherhood of taste. The architecture of the edifice, so delicate and precious, so intricate and lavish, brought by the Moors to the highest degree of refinement[24] - a veritable slap in the face for Irving's practical, rather grim countrymen - became, in his search for literary identity, a vindication of his own "idle and unmanly" (and always guilt-ridden) aesthetic ideals: beauty for beauty's sake, at last; beauty as exorcism and defence against personal and cultural anxiety: or - to borrow a splendid metaphor from an inscription in Lindaraxa's chamber - "*Stones to lapidate the demons....*"[25]

Beauty that, in addition, led to a re-discovery of the senses: there's a delight in seeing, smelling, hearing that has no match in any of Irving's works, a half-pagan satisfaction in the pleasures of this world (glorious gardens, cooling breezes, splendid fountains), which finds expression in a prose that has never been so sensuous or so vivid, nor so clearly enthralled by physical reality.[26]

Moreover, the castellated, self-enclosed fortress, with its peculiar structure, holding its interior riches at the very centre,[27] became, in the artist's imagination, a quiet nest, sheltered from the dangers of the world, offering an almost fetal comfort to the weary wanderer: the safe port "in the midst of a stormy and treacherous sea", he had been looking for all his life.[28]

To Hölderlin, the only significant form of travelling was the *nostos,* the way home. In the future, Irving only looked for the past; he explored the unknown in order to be able to cling to his roots; more than the freedom accorded by the voyage, more than its

promise of renewal, he longed for reassurance, the joy of being confirmed in his faith, the encouragement to carry on with his "sin of authorship."

The Mediterranean, the cradle, the origin where it all began, became in his imagination, the maternal womb which harbors all her sons: especially, those who are helplessly in love with "superfluous" Beauty. It was also, and is - I hope we won't forget it, in spite of the tragic facts of our recent history - the place where three great civilisations, the Moslem, the Christian and the Jewish, mysteriously and miraculously co-operated to leave the world a legacy of Splendour and Grace.

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NOTES

1. At the beginning of Irving's *The Sketch Book,* Geoffrey Crayon - the author's fictional alter-ego - describes how guidebooks have shaped his taste, and immediately connects the image of the Old World with his readings: "Europe. There is a volume of associations with the very name. It is the land of promise..." *The Sketch Book:* A Signet Classic (1961), 1981, 20 (Henceforward *SB).* The same symbolic link appears again in *The Alhambra:* "From earliest boyhood when ... I first pored over the pages of an old Spanish story about the wars of Granada, that city has ever been a subject of my waking dreams, and often have I trod in fancy the romantic halls of the Alhambra." Cfr. *Tales of the Alhambra,* Granada: Miguel Sanchez (1951), 1991, (59). Other references to this popular Spanish edition will be cited in the text.

2. Obviously, the Alhambra is not just any destination: it is a stronghold of Western civilisation, the resting-place in a pilgrimage with solid cultural connotations: "To the traveller imbued with a feeling for the historical and poetical, the Alhambra of Granada is as much an object of veneration as is the Kaaba ... to all true Moslem pilgrims..." (31).

3. This paper was meant to be delivered orally. The present text retains, consequently, some of the traits of the oral presentation.

4. Hedges has especially fine discussions on the concept of "seeing picturesquely" (40-3; 121-7).

5. Other false expectations are created by the use of the adjective "adventurous" ("our *adventurous* companionship"): "the dangers of the road", evoked at the very beginning (17), actually form a great ellipsis in the text. Irving's voyage turns out to be as thrilling as a Sunday picnic, and safely winds up in a comfortable inn, in the middle of a Spanish *fiesta.*

6. In other words, his real journeys seem, at times, to have a truly limited impact on Irving's mental, and therefore preconceived, image of the country.

7. A strong sense of alienation pervades Irving's works: in spite of the "smoothness" of his prose, his world was filled with emotional turmoil, social and economic instability. See Sabbadini, Rubin-Dorsky ("Sketches").

8. A pattern of carefully orchestrated dichotomies (mountains / valleys; desert / garden; myrtle / rose) can be detected here. On Irving's debt to Romantic iconography, see Mamoli Zorzi (XVIII-XXII).

9. Notably, one of the best known studies dedicated to Irving (Wagenknecht) is entitled *Moderation Displayed.*

10. (17). The bizarre reversal of categories is not unusual in Irving's discourse: strange as it may seem, it is Life that copies Art, and not the contrary; its special fascination derives, indeed, from its ability to adapt to a pictorial or literary model.

11. He was skilful himself with the pencil and the brush and, when in Rome, had momentarily considered turning artist.

12. As a rule, Irving deals with large categories: the rich, the poor, the nouveaux riches, widows, orphans.

13. "Here are two classes of people to whom life seems one long holiday, the very rich, and the very poor... none ... understand the art of doing nothing and living upon nothing better than the poor classes of Spain" (75). In *SB,* Irving had often praised "the simplicity of true wisdom."

14. Irving's adjectives seemed, to a contemporary reader, "a family of pretty but sickly children; tall, feeble, and delicately slender." Cited in Leary 73. Indeed, they are usually chosen among the most obvious; their task is not to qualify, but to fix nouns in categories of a false universalism: "All the brothers were brave, and all the sisters virtuous" (*SB* 173).

15. Once again, this approach is typical of an age in which the role in society counted far more than individual value: in the portraits of the period, the interest did not lie in physical similarity or psychological characterisation: the subject desired to demonstrate his social status, the role he occupied in the world.

16. Like his contemporaries and successors, he confronted a practical society that branded the writer a "deviant" and an "idler."

17. The vocabulary of alienation and guilt is ever-present in Irving's works, showing his deep insecurity as a writer with few cultural credentials, who constantly had to vindicate his artistic vocation in the eyes of a hostile culture.

18. At this very point in the narrative, Irving alters his style significantly, by switching almost exclusively to the use of the first person. Such formal manipulation indicates that the narrator's attitude towards his materials is changing.

19. Even his handling of characters modifies: waking up to a more prosaic, everyday world, he rediscovers the eighteenth-century qualities of concrete, lucid observation, not without a touch of healthy American pragmatism.

20. The story is, in fact, a joke at his own expense, in which the narrator mocks his own sentimentality and the easy way in which his imagination betrays him. See Fink 80-82.

21. The temporal reference ("for once") emphasises the uniqueness of the experience recorded. Bell (75) shrewdly ascribes Irving's attraction for European monuments and beauties to his deep distrust of fancy and to his need to relate "scattered ideas" to "real objects."

22. In several ways, Irving's attitude to his Spanish environment anticipates the reaction of many American writers who responded in a similar fashion to landscapes and suggestions of the Mediterranean area. In our discussion, my reference to the microcosm of the Palace is therefore meant as a synecdoche: a part for the whole.

23. In this respect, Irving strikingly anticipates Hawthorne. See the Preface to *The Scarlet Letter*, where the domain of Romance is situated in "a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet..."

24. Irving constantly exalts the "light, elegant and voluptuous character" of the edifice as opposed to "the grand but gloomy solemnity of the Gothic edifices" (51-2). And he seems to be discussing his own poetics when he states that "The architecture ... is characterised by elegance rather than grandeur, bespeaking a delicate and graceful taste, and a disposition to indolent enjoyment" (41). A comparison between this passage and Crayon's theory of style, as expressed in *SB* (13-5), would show surprising similarities.

25. Irving's quest for protected locations, carefully isolated in the midst of a prosaic world, was not, after all, too far in spirit from the enterprise of the Moor Kings who, in a glorious past, had conceived of the Palace as a magnificent oasis, and built it in a pathetic effort to forget the desert.

26. Irving never did probe under the surface of his "Moslem Elysium"; one must admit, however, that his southern stay revealed so much of his hidden self to him that he was almost scared of it. His response to the voluptuousness of the place was not exempt from Puritan fears and doubts: "the Alhambra finally threatened him because he perceived its charm as sexually alluring and therefore dangerous" (Rubin Dorsky 248-9).

27. It has been pointed out that the spatial sequence of the volume is laid out like a series of Chinese boxes: from the country (Spain) to the region (Andalusia), from the inside of the Palace to an even more sequestered apartment: the room that was to become the author's residence. Portelli 234 and *passim.*

28. "Often Crayon gives the impression that he ... would like to retire ... to a quiet niche, a patch of the past ... where everything is properly in its place, stationary, comprehensible, traditional" (Hedges 143). The Palace is therefore reduced to the size of a comfortable Victorian abode: a spot where the author could live "quietly, snugly, elevated above the world and its troubles." I don't need to stress the regressive connotations of Irving's images and metaphors.

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NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S IMPRESSIONS OF FLORENCE

SIRPA SALENIUS

The number of American travellers in Italy increased rapidly during the mid 19th century, reaching its height at the late 1850's before the Civil War would drastically slow down the travel to Europe. Since America was thought to lack traditions and culture, Americans turned to Europe in their longing for history and self-improvement. The art capitals of Italy were among the main attractions of the Old Continent. In 1858 approximately 2,000 Americans passed through Florence, the capital of Renaissance art (Baker 3). One of these Americans was Nathaniel Hawthorne who started his first Grand Tour of Europe in January 1858.

Hawthorne was already in his fifties when he traveled to the Old Continent from England where he had spent five years as the United States consul in Liverpool. The position was considered most lucrative at the time of his appointment in 1853, but financially it barely covered more than living expenses. Hawthorne was in no hurry to return to America, which was engaged in the controversy over slavery, and in a letter written to Ticknor he confessed that America "looks like an infernally disagreeable country, from this side of the water" (Arvin 229). He wanted to go to Italy and "live and die there" (Arvin 229). Already before his departure for Liverpool, Hawthorne had decided to spend one year in Italy since "I can live economically in Italy" (Stewart 188). In addition to looking forward to a more economical life, he was hoping to find a warmer climate and to continue his education in the fine arts. Visiting Italy was also his wife's childhood dream.

Consequently, Hawthorne traveled to Italy with his wife Sophia, his children Una, Julian and Rose, and their new governess Ada Shephard. The party settled in Rome for the spring, and as the disappointing and disagreeable first impression of the "cold, rainy, filthy, stinking, rotten, rascally city" (*Letters* 139) turned into fascination, they took leave of it to continue their journey on to Florence. The four-month stay in Florence was to exceed all the American author's expectations. The weather was delightful, the living expenses were low, and the author had never enjoyed art as much as he did in Florence. Hawthorne's notebooks (*The French and Italian Notebooks*, published posthumously in 1871) describe his experience in the Old Continent. Furthermore, it was in Florence that the author started writing his last completed novel, *The Marble Faun*.

The enjoyable sojourn started with a pleasant eight-day journey from Rome to Florence. As the author indicates in *The French and Italian Notebooks*, it was "one of the brightest and most uncareful interludes of my life" (279). Thus, at the end of May 1858 the family arrived in Florence where Hiram Powers, the American sculptor, had helped them find an apartment across the street from his studio. The family could choose

between two vacant apartments in the building, both available at a very low cost compared to the prices they were used to in Liverpool. The Hawthornes decided to rent the more expensive apartment in Casa del Bello on via dei Serragli number 132[1] for two months at the cost of fifty dollars a month. The apartment was spacious and had a beautiful terrace which gave to a delightful garden in full bloom. In Florence Hawthorne was finally able to afford a comfortable living. Florence was "something like the Paradise of cheapness" *(Notebooks* 283) which they had been told of and had not found in Rome. Everything here seemed inexpensive: not only was the rent for this immense 13-room apartment low but also the salary of their servant (six dollars a month), cigars, cherries, strawberries and wine were extremely inexpensive, especially when compared to the prices in Rome where nothing was cheaper than in England "except maccaroni, figs, bad cigars and sour wine" (*Letters to Ticknor* II 71). Furthermore, the weather was delightful, "too warm to walk, but perfectly fit to do nothing in." Hawthorne wanted to "mollify himself" sitting in his study amid the fumes of his cigar "dreaming of a story." In reality, he enjoyed taking long, pleasurable walks "for the mere pleasure of walking" in the Boboli gardens as well as around the city where he found the "delicious" simplicity of life, to "live in its atmosphere for the mere pleasure of living" (*Notebooks* 283-4).

Hawthorne was a typical American tourist of the mid 1800s visiting Florence in that he did not speak any Italian, did not express curiosity towards local manners, and his itinerary consisted of all the obvious sights of Florence recommended in his Murray guide, one of the most popular guidebooks of the 19th century. Henry James, in his biography of Hawthorne, notes how Hawthorne's "contact with the life of the country, its people and its manners, was simply that of the ordinary tourist - which amounts to saying that it was extremely superficial" (125-6). In addition to being superficial, Hawthorne's approach to local people was also provincial and rather stereotyped. His perception of Italians was based on observations made from a distance, as there seems to have been no verbal exchange with the native inhabitants. Though he had hardly any contact with Italians, he was nevertheless convinced that they were not trustworthy as they were always ready to bargain to get as much profit as they possibly could. This conclusion, which was extended to include all Italians, was based on his experience in negotiating with *vetturini* or carriage drivers, his observations of some poor church attendants, and his dealings with street-merchants. According to Ada Shephard, Mrs. Hawthorne shared her husband's opinion and lived in constant fear of being cheated. As an outsider Hawthorne observed the Florentines in the Boboli gardens where he saw young men throw glances at females passing by and with some embarrassment he noticed young lovers sitting on the park benches, holding hands and passionately looking at each other. He observed the street-merchants with their terribly loud voices and the ill fed beggars who in his opinion belonged to the Old World. It was rather typical of Americans in the mid-1800's who were visiting, or even permanently living in Italy, to interact with their compatriots rather than with local people.

Accordingly, Hawthorne's social life was active but he, too, socialized and spent his time in the company of fellow Americans such as Hiram Powers with whom he had long discussions about art (sculpture in particular) as well as various other subjects like Italian food and the dangers of blood transfusion. The conversations are registered in detail in *The French and Italian Notebooks*. Hawthorne noticed how Powers, who had lived in Florence since 1837, spoke very little Italian and "like most twenty-year exiles, has lost his native country without finding another," as he seemed to be "hermetically sealed in a foreign substance, and cannot begin to assimilate with it" (*Notebooks* 280-82). Powers showed Hawthorne some of the statues he was working on, among them one small piece of sculpture "which was very exquisite, and such as I never saw before… It was the hand of his daughter - …Luly's hand,' Powers called it…" (313). It appears in *The Marble Faun* as the protagonist, Miriam, makes a reference to "*Loulie's Hand* with its baby dimples, which Powers showed me at Florence" (93).

Hawthorne was also invited to visit Robert and Elizabeth Browning whose home, Casa Guidi on via Maggio, had become the gathering place for American visitors as well as Anglo-Florentines living in Florence. He found Mrs. Browning and her son Penny both very delicate, like two fairies "of the elfin-breed" (*Notebooks* 301). Other guests on the first visit to Casa Guidi included Mr. and Mrs. Eckers, Americans from the East; Miss Fanny Howarth, an English literary lady Hawthorne had already met in Liverpool; and William Cullen Bryant, poet and newspaper editor. The Hawthornes passed a pleasant evening drinking tea, eating strawberries and discussing spiritual communications "as regards which Mrs. Browning is a believer, and her husband an infidel" (302). Later on, at one of Isa Blagden's weekly receptions in Villa Brichieri on Bellosguardo, the Hawthornes met Mr. Trollope, the composer Frank Boott and his daughter Elisabeth from Boston as well as Seymour Kirkup, an antiquarian and a necromancer living by Ponte Vecchio. All the guests had a common interest in spiritualism and mesmerism, which at that time were the topics for heated discussions throughout Europe and especially in America. In one of the spiritual manifestations at Isa Blagden's, Sophia Hawthorne's mother contacted her through Ada Shepard, who turned out to be a writing medium. In *The Marble Faun*, Donatello and Kenyon exchange information about an English signore, a necromancer, living close by Ponte Vecchio, who can be clearly recognized as Seymour Kirkup, one of the regular guests at the spiritual séances held at Isa Blagden's.[2]

Hawthorne spent long hours studying art in the city's numerous churches, at the Uffizi Gallery and the Pitti Palace. He had never, not even in Rome, enjoyed pictures as much as he did in Florence. Even if, as he himself admitted, he knew nothing about art, he was happy to notice that some progress was being made as he found himself "capable, at least, of loving one picture better than another" (307). He did not like Giotto's pictures for the lack of perspective and he found the frescoes of Andrea del Sarto in the church of the Annunziata "rather better than Giotto's, to be sure, but not quite so good

as a plain white wall" (362). He objected to nudity in art and his Puritan attitude is expressed clearly in his criticism of certain paintings, such as Titian's *Magdalene*:[3]

> …and best of all, Titian's Magdelene, the one with the golden hair clustering round her naked body. The golden hair, indeed, seemed to throw out a glory of its own. This Magdelene is very coarse and sensual, with only an impudent assumption of penitence and religious sentiment, scarcely so deep as the eyelids; but it is a splendid picture, nevertheless, with those naked, lifelike arms, and the hands that press the rich locks about her, and so carefully let those two voluptuous breasts be seen. She a penitent! She would shake off all pretence to it, as easily as she would shake aside that clustering hair and offer her nude front to the next comer. Titian must have been a very good-for-nothing old man. (*Notebooks* 333-4)

He did like the Dutch and Flemish masters for their realistic paintings and he was convinced that Raphael's *Madonna della Seggiola*, which he also mentions in *The Marble Faun*, was the most beautiful picture in the world.

In July, with the help of Isa Blagden, the family started looking for a villa out in the country where Miss Blagden herself was living. Ada Shepard, who had already been the interpreter for Hawthorne in France, negotiated the contract, in Italian, for renting from Signore Conte Cavaliere Giulio Bambaloni da Montauto his villa located outside the city gates. Subsequently, in August, as the weather became unbearably hot in the city, the Hawthornes moved to Villa Montauto on Bellosguardo. The villa was enormous and the whole family had a separate suite of apartments to live in. The rent for the villa and its *podere* with grapevines, olives and fig trees was extremely low, only 28 dollars a month. In September Hawthorne wrote to James Fields telling how happy he was finally to feel that he was away from America. He also told Fields how he planned to take the villa "away bodily and clap it into a Romance, which I have in my head ready to be written out" (*Letters* 151). Actually, he had already started sketching out the novel in July while living in Casa del Bello. He wrote in his pocket diary on July 14 how he "staid at home all day, principally employed sketching a plot of a Romance" and how on July 17 he "began rough draft of a Romance" (*Notebooks* 603-4). The romance he was writing was *The Marble Faun*. As can be noted from his pocket diary, most days in August and September he stayed home the entire day. He finished the first draft of the novel while living in Villa Montauto.

In Florence Hawthorne was free from financial preoccupations; the city's relaxed atmosphere allowed him to concentrate on his creative work and inspired him as well as providing material in abundance. A comparison of *The French and Italian Notebooks* with *The Marble Faun* clearly shows how he used his firsthand experience as the basis for the novel. In *The Marble Faun*, Kenyon's arrival to Count Donatello's residence, Castello di Monte Beni, corresponds to the description found in *The French and Italian Notebooks* of Hawthorne reaching the gates of Villa Montauto. The portrayal of Castello di Monte Beni is a nearly unaltered representation of Villa Montauto with its ancient medieval tower. The following short excerpts regarding the tower illustrate the similarities:

…About thirty yards from the gate, rises an old, square tower, machicolated and battlemented, with two or three iron-grated windows up and down its height, besides smaller apertures through the stone-work. It dates, no doubt, from the middle-ages, and looks as old as the Palazzo Vecchio itself. The tower is gray and mossy with age, and is venerable of aspect; but the main body of the villa, appended to it, is covered with fresh modern stucco, and looks as new as an American country-house; although I think I can see that the part of the edifice, immediately adjoining the tower, is more ancient than the rest…. In the pavement, at the summit of our tower, a little plant has rooted itself, and seems to be in a thriving state… This is the only vegetation on the tower, except lichens and dry yellow moss, both of which are sufficiently abundant. In England, it would have been completely mantled, with ivy, centuries ago… (*Notebooks* 380, 389, 390)

About thirty yards within the gateway rose a square tower, lofty enough to be a very prominent object in the landscape, and more than sufficiently massive in proportion to its height. Its antiquity was evidently such, that, in a climate of more abundant moisture, the ivy would have mantled it from head to foot in a garment that might, by this time, have been centuries old, though ever new. In the dry Italian air, however, Nature had only so far adopted this old pile of stonework as to cover almost every hand's-breadth of it with close-clinging lichens and yellow moss; and the immemorial growth of these kindly productions rendered the general hue of the tower soft and venerable, and took away the aspect of nakedness which would have made its age drearier than now.

Up and down the height of the tower were scattered three or four windows, the lower ones grated with iron bars, the upper ones vacant both of window frames and glass. Besides these larger openings, there were several loopholes and little square apertures, which might be supposed to light the staircase that doubtless climbed the interior towards the battlemented and machicolated summit. With this last-mentioned warlike garniture upon its stern old head and brow, the tower seemed evidently a stronghold of times long past… Connected with the tower, and extending behind it, there seemed to be a very spacious residence, chiefly of more modern date. It perhaps owed much of its fresher appearance, however, to a coat of stucco and yellow wash, which is sort of renovation very much in vogue with the Italians…. (*The Marble Faun:* "The Tower Among the Apennines").

Especially chapters XXIV "The Tower Among The Apennines" and XXVIII "The Owl Tower" give expansive and detailed descriptions of the villa, its oratory and its tower. Furthermore, in the romance the author mentions paintings he admired in Florence, like "Raphael's favorite Madonna" (105) in the Pitti Palace; artists he studied, for example Giotto; and places he visited in the art capital, such as the Uffizi Gallery. Like Hawthorne, Kenyon saw Galileo's tower, which was visible from the tower of Villa Montauto. The Brownings are named and Hiram Powers is mentioned among other American expatriates belonging to the art colony living in Italy. Besides the mediaeval tower, the abundant gothic elements present in the story include the alabaster skull found in one of Una's rooms, and ghost stories heard from local friends, like the story of Savonarola who had been confined in the tower of Villa Montauto, which he was now claimed to be haunting.

Hawthorne completed the novel in London where it was published in February 1860 with the title *Transformation*. At the beginning of March of the same year it came out in Boston as *The Marble Faun: Or, The Romance of Monte Beni*. In the Preface the author states

how Italy "was chiefly valuable to him as affording a sort of poetic or fairy precinct" (vi) which he had not been able to find in America where there is "no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery…" (vi). He also mentions how he did not attempt to portray Italian manners and character, which, in truth, he had not gained any deeper knowledge of during his stay in Italy. *The Marble Faun* became a guidebook for forthcoming American tourists travelling to Italy after the Civil War. As perceived by several critics, it also laid the foundation for the "international theme" developed further by authors like Henry James.[4]

In September 1858 Hawthorne started the preparations for departure. He spent the last evening in the tower of Villa Montauto smoking his cigar and looking at the lights of Florence below, down in the valley. On the misty morning of October 1, the family reluctantly left their beautiful villa and headed towards Siena where William Wetmore Story was waiting for them. Hawthorne had very mixed feelings about returning to America. He had once confessed to Ticknor that "I had rather be a sojourner in any other country than return to my own. The United States are fit for many excellent purposes, but they certainly are not fit to live in" (*Letters to Ticknor* 72). It seems that Hawthorne would have settled in Florence, the "city of dream and shadow" (*Notebooks* 290), had it not been for his children to whom he wanted to give an American education. According to Nathaniel Hawthorne's son and biographer, Julian Hawthorne, the summer spent in Florence was the happiest time of Hawthorne's life. The Florentine sojourn had surpassed the author's expectations. He had not imagined he would do any serious literary work in Italy, and now, as he left Florence, he was carrying with him his notebooks as well as the manuscript of *The Marble Faun*.

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NOTES

1. On the outside wall of via dei Serragli 132 is a commemorative plaque dedicated to Nathaniel Hawthorne who lived in this "Casa Bella." In *The French and Italian Notebooks* he tells of an evening passed at the Powers' across the street from where they saw "a house or two between" the Teatro Goldoni, which used to be on via dei Serragli 99. Dentler (*Famous Americans in Florence*, Firenze: Giunti Marzocco, 1976) and Barfucci (*Giornate fiorentine*, Firenze: Vallecchi, 1961) claim that Casa del Bello was in number 36; in Soria's *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century American Artists in Italy 1760-1914* (London: Associated Univ. Presses, 1982) the address is via dei Serragli 26.

2. He appears also in *Dr. Grimshawe's Secret* and *The Dolliver Romance*.

3. For more information, see Mamoli Zorzi.

4. See, for example Murray Krieger, "Afterword," *The Marble Faun,* and Udo Nattermann, " 'Europe' in Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun,*" *Essays in Literature*, 21 (1994): 54.

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NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN VIEWS OF NAPLES

SHIRLEY FOSTER

Foregrounded as a significant cultural location during the era of the Grand Tour, Naples and the surrounding area constituted important - even essential - items in a southern European itinerary for nineteenth-century tourists. The region was a place in which to spend the winter months because of its mild climate, and in the mid-nineteenth century was a popular health resort. More importantly, it was one of the parts of Italy most familiarised through art and literature and thus most attractive to cultured travellers. It was especially associated with those painters who influenced Romantic art in Europe and America - Poussin, Salvator Rosa, and Claude Lorrain - as well as with classical writers such as Virgil, and Greek mythology. Between 1820-80, the Bay of Naples provided one of the climactic moments of the Italian visit for travellers seeking the historically vibrant, the sublime and the picturesque.

This kind of foregrounding, however, also problematised the experience. If the area was already "known" pre-conceptually, received as an aesthetic construct before the traveller had even left home, how could he or she ever hope to engage with it on an individual, personal level? What discourse of representation could be implemented when even the response itself had been pre-determined by an already existing set of signifiers and referents? These questions affected all nineteenth-century visitors to Naples (as to other regions of Italy), but were particularly acute for Americans who, as Henry James reminds us, had no historical or artistic past of their own and thus had to look eastwards for cultural enrichment. Many American "pilgrims" to this area, then, sought for an aesthetic and a discourse which, on the one hand, would accurately reflect its remarkable combination of natural and man-made riches, and, on the other, would break with or re-align an essentially derivative angle of vision. This paper will examine some representative Americans who visited Italy between the early and late decades of the nineteenth century and whose writings illustrate the dilemma outlined above. James Fenimore Cooper and Catherine Maria Sedgwick came to Naples early in the period; Mark Twain and Henry James came later, when Italy had already to some extent become "modernised" and questions about its "authenticity" even more peremptory (Buonomo). Their differing responses and strategies of representation reflect this chronological development, but also introduce the additional parameters of gender and social and intellectual orientation.

James Fenimore Cooper spent nearly four months in the Naples area, between August and November 1829, thus, as he himself noted, allowing him a more intimate experience than the average tourist whose visit usually encompassed merely Naples, a drive around the Bay, Pompeii, and possibly Vesuvius. Using the journals he kept during his

stay here, amplified and focalised through a more consciously aesthetically directed viewpoint, Cooper published his account (the English version, issued in February 1838, entitled *Excursions in Italy*; the American, issued in May 1838, entitled *Gleanings in Europe. Italy*) in the form of fictional letters, enabling him to combine the impressionistic discourse of the travelogue and the factual/informative one of the guide book. His narrative focus is primarily on the rural or semi-urban landscape and, unlike his representation of his travels elsewhere in Europe, little concerned with socio-political matters; central to his representation is the way in which the viewed environment can be accommodated to the ideals of the picturesque as a definition of beauty.[1] Like so many other visitors to Italy, he cites Salvator Rosa and Claude, by this time canonised as artistic exponents of the sublime and the picturesque, as points of reference for his appreciation and evaluation of landscape; he depicts the inhabitants of Sorrento, characterised by their colourful costume, as figures in a painting; in his eyes, the "picturesque" local dress at Salerno "made a man fit for a picture" (*Gleanings in Europe: Italy 158).*

The breath-taking sight of Naples from the top of Vesuvius presents a "panorama" (119) equivalent to that viewed through a *camera obscura*, that essential piece of equipment for every aesthetic traveller. In seeing in this way - preferring the picturesque or the "softened sublime" to a more awesome desolation - Cooper is thus drawing on a known aesthetic. He is also allying himself with a *cognoscenti* which divorces itself from a deficient homeland. Cooper, like Sedgwick, derides those American tourists who suggest that the Bay of New York is just as fine as the Bay of Naples, and he notes the transitoriness and insubstantiality of American cities, in contrast to their Italian counterparts.

Unlike later travel writers, Cooper is content to frame his discourse within this predefined aesthetic without self-referentially foregrounding it or attempting to deconstruct it. If all nineteenth-century visitors to Italy, conscious of the impossibility of original response, seek a "meaning" which can validate their own experiences, Cooper's "meaning" is still externally formulated, not inner inspired. Yet, at the same time, as Conron and Denne, the editors of the MLA edition of *Gleanings: Italy*, point out, he establishes his own angle on the aesthetic of the picturesque, evaluating the Neapolitan landscape in terms of a new, symbolic ideography which discovers a harmonious relationship between Italian nature and Italian civilisation (xxxvi-vii). He also insists that the "fixed" icons of history, which make Naples so much a place of "recollection," can achieve fullest significance only through reference to the contemporary, as is illustrated by his description of the view of Naples Bay from the Villa di Tasso at Sorrento, where he and his family were staying:

> The mountains were dreamy, the air was filled with a drowsy repose, while the different objects of historical interest over which the eye rather lingered than glanced, gave the whole the semblance of a physical representation of things past, *adorned and relieved* by a grouping of so much that is exquisite in the usages of the present. (111, my italics)

Interestingly, the reminders of the present here provide both an additional attrac-

tiveness and a lightening of the burden of the past. Moreover, in emphasising an objective physical reality, alongside a subjective aesthetic ideality, Cooper is foregrounding both the constructive power of the interpreting gaze as well as the independent beauty of the landscape itself. He employs the same discursive strategy in his description of Ischia, perhaps his most notably enthusiastic response to the Neapolitan scene:

> Here a scene presented itself which more resembled a fairy picture than one of the realities of this everyday world of ours. I think it was the most ravishing thing, in its way, eye of mine ever looked upon… I can only liken the perfection of the scene we gazed upon this evening to a feeling almost allied to transport; to the manner in which we dwell upon the serene expression of a beloved and lovely countenance. The *refinement* of Italian nature appears to distinguish it as much from that of other countries, as the same quality distinguishes the man of sentiment and intellect from the man of mere impulses. (131-2)

As with his collation of past and present, Cooper's "refinement" articulates his apprehension of a particular quality of the Italian landscape: a humanity which encompasses both sentiment and intellect, response to which demands harmonisation of the instinctive and impressionistic with a more consciously organised and aesthetic apprehension.

Catherine Sedgwick, a popular New England novelist who went to Italy in 1839 and published her *Letters from Abroad to Kindred at Home* in 1841, also knew that the field of European travel writing was thoroughly reaped and that there was little opportunity left for originality of response. Unlike Cooper, however, she neither draws on a pre-established aesthetic as a means of formulating her own experiences of Naples, nor overtly seeks to subvert the conventional discourse of the Italian tourist. Gender may be a factor in this. William Stowe has suggested that while American male travellers often felt the need to justify an interest in landscape, art and history, because such concerns were not commercially productive, their female counterparts did not perceive the expression of such interest as problematic. Moreover, the women were able to adapt different discourses for their own use without self-conscious foregrounding. So while Sedgwick can ironise herself as a naively enthusiastic and "uncultured" American (she notes that to the aristocratic Neapolitan women, whose seats she and her party have inadvertently taken at a ball, they appear North American savages), her narrative easily blends her own voice with the familiar discursive models available to her.

Sedgwick's brief tour of the Naples area would of course have seemed to Cooper woefully inadequate, and in many ways her account seems merely a replication of a guide-book itinerary, covering the usual sights and saying the usual things about them. Her apprehension of the beauties of Vesuvius and the Bay of Naples, for example, is articulated in conventional rhetoric: she describes herself as "spell-bound" (232), claiming that there can be "no image approaching in loveliness the all-surpassing reality" (234). When she observes Neapolitan society, however, a more individualistic, socially conscious American voice is heard. After a few hours spent throwing sugar-plums during the Carnival, she comments briskly that "I think we should all rather play hunt the slipper at home than go again to the

Corso" (239), and she is dismissive of the superficiality of upper-class Neapolitan women, denoted by the vacuousness of their facial expressions. Unlike Cooper, she also takes a political stance towards what she sees. Articulating an essentially idealising American viewpoint, she particularly criticises the king, who, avaricious, unconcerned about the poor, and dishonest, to her represents a corrupt hierarchy which contrasts markedly with "our world of free people and responsible governors" (244).

Sedgwick is thus both the conventional American traveller, enthusiastic about the usual sights and deploring European undemocratic systems, and one who can incorporate her own vision into the familiar frame. Even when she describes the artworks in the Royal Museum of Naples or gives an inventory of notable buildings, her judgments depend more on personal preference than on guide-book evaluation. For her, meaning is simply what you, like others before you, see and consider. This is especially noticeable in her account of her visit to Pompeii. Peopling the ruins with their past inhabitants is a stock response of nineteenth-century travellers (interestingly, Cooper does not do this), but Sedgwick's recreation of the past here moves beyond a conscious strategy of familiarisation to a kind of subjective impressionism, located in an imaginary world into which she interpolates herself and her companions ("We saw the baby-heir of the house creeping over the marble floor…We saw the jovial wine-drinker setting down his drinking-cup…We sat down on a semicircular stone-bench on the side-walk, and heard the old man tell his gossips, how well he fought at Jerusalem…" [249]).

Elsewhere, Sedgwick is content to let meaning remain inarticulate, contained within the gaps or silences of her discourse, instead of seeking an appropriate mode of expression. So when, on a carriage ride round the Bay of Baia, she sees a group of peasant dancers foregrounded against the panoramic view, the symbolic significance of the scene resides for her in the inexpressible. Addressing her correspondent at home, she points to the inadequacy of language as means of re-creation: "Would that I could describe the scene to you…but I can only give you the materials, and you must make out the picture for yourself" (267). This is not a strategy of self-deprecation, seen in so many female travel texts, nor is her failure to "put this scene on paper for you" (269) perceived as a limitation which has to be overcome by a set of familiarising references or tropes. Instead, it represents her acknowledgement of herself as Other in this vibrant yet ultimately alien environment:

> [The] merry girl danced and shouted like a frantic Bacchante… there were children with tangled locks of motley brown and gold, and eyes like precious stones, leaping and clapping their hands, and joining in the old woman's chorus…and we pilgrims from the cold North were looking on. (268-9)

Whereas Cooper formulates the enchantment of Naples as a kind of Transcendental experience, both aestheticised and humanised, for Sedgwick the enchantment itself resides in its resistance to linguistic representation.

Mark Twain's position in Europe has often been noted as that of the uneasy tourist,

anxious to assimilate a cultural treasure house of which he had no direct experience, but also determined not only to avoid replication of formulaic responses but also positively to deconstruct them. He travelled to Europe in the summer of 1867, with a group that he termed the "pilgrims," and his account of the tour,

The Innocents Abroad, published in 1869, is largely a revised version of commissioned letters despatched to the San Francisco *Daily Alta California*, which had employed him as a travelling correspondent. As William Stowe points out,[2] it combines the traditions of the travel chronicle and the American humorist text, and, in so doing seeks to construct a speaking voice which is both informative and amusing. Stowe argues that the text's overall mode of rhetorical deviousness - establishing a particular role or discourse and then undercutting it - is a deliberate strategy, a way of exposing and criticising the ways in which American (male) visitors to Europe responded to a cultural environment which was both theoretically familiar and experientially unfamiliar. It is certainly true that the merciless puncturing of hypocrisy and pretension in Twain's fictional writings features in this travel text as a constant undermining of conventional attitudes and second-hand judgments. Twain is eager to reject an aesthetic of appreciation which merely parrots received opinion, using an approach which sometimes appears to deconstruct the object of vision itself as well as readings of it.

It would, however, be misleading to suggest that Twain totally eschews a pre-formulated or traditional discourse or consistently uses a subversive voice. The most notable aspect of his narrative, in fact, is the constant slippage between different tones and angles of reference, a slippage which makes his ultimate position ambiguous and elusive. Twain's writing on the Naples area provides excellent illustration of this. His tone of mocking self-referentiality (he is the eager pilgrim seeking out the well-known sights) is established immediately by the fact that the three chapters devoted to this region are framed by the progressive stages of their "Ascent of Vesuvius," a journey which, as he himself wryly points out, is actually discussed only after the constant interruptions of interpolated text describing other places and trips. These passages range from "straight" description, to a diatribe against the cruelty of a Neapolitan theatre audience towards an aging actress, to an ironic account of the annual liquefaction of the blood of St Januarius and the shaving of the Madonna ("I am very well satisfied to think the whole population believed in those poor, cheap miracles - a people who want two cents every time they bow to you… are capable of it, I think" (173).

Twain's descriptions of well-known sights tend to follow a pattern; they begin with apparent genuine enthusiasm articulated through a poetical or romantic lexis, which then collapses into parodic absurdity or a sudden strikingly unconventional observation. His second depiction of Naples exemplifies this. It starts with acknowledging the "picture of wonderful beauty… beautiful beyond all description" (174-5) of the view of the city from Vesuvius, drops into a crude and pejorative account of the filth of Naples, and concludes with a vivid and impressionistic view of the extraordinary urban scene, the clothes-lines

"waving their bannered raggedness over the swarms of people below: and the white dressed women perched in balcony railings all the way from the pavement up to the heavens" (175). Similarly, on a boat trip out of Sorrento, Twain echoes the well-known tropes of pictorial exoticism to describe the blue waters of the Blue Grotto, whose "colouring would shame the richest sky that ever bent over Italy. No tint could be more ravishing, no lustre more superb" (177).[3] Immediately afterwards, he debunks both his own "tourist" enthusiasm and the traditional insistence on the historical and classical associations of the area: at Pozzuoli, "I landed at precisely the same spot where St Paul landed, and so did Dan and the others. It was a remarkable coincidence" (178). At Pompeii, too, his amazement at the degree of preservation slips quickly into mockery: having stumbled in one of the rutted streets, he adds that his sadness at seeing an exposed skeleton is "tempered by the reflection that maybe that party was the Street Commissioner" - who obviously failed in his duty of repairing the streets (181). Then, in yet another rapid tonal shift, he moves into an extraordinary mood of bleak reverie in which irony is replaced not by sentimental nostalgia but by a sombre acknowledgement of the hard fact of finality:

> I tried to imagine [the occupants of the theatre]…but I could not do it…. And so I turned away and went through shop after shop and store after store, far down the long street of the merchants, and called for the wares of Rome and the East, but the tradesmen were gone, the marts were silent, and nothing was left but the broken jars all set in cement of cinders and ashes: the wine and the oil that once had filled them were gone with their owners. (183)

Unlike Sedgwick, Twain's imagination here cannot transform historical reality.

This kind of narrative instability seems, as has been suggested, designed deliberately to disorient the reader, as well as being a means of challenging the kind of discourse which Cooper and commentators like him had used, albeit judiciously. The only way to "take" Italy, Twain suggests, is to reduce it to the accessibility of the unadorned normal and familiar. Yet being devious is also a mask, a series of role adoptions which conceals the "real" response, so that finally we are unsure whether even Twain's apparently unmediated enthusiasm or emotional engagement are genuine or yet another parodic voice. Rejecting the traditional ways of finding the "meaning" of Italy, he settles on a set of discursive signifiers which challenge and tantalise the reader.

Henry James presents a somewhat different case from the other three writers. Unlike their travelogues, which appeared relatively soon after their Italian experiences, drawing on material written at the time, his *Italian Hours*, published in 1909, is an expansively retrospective text, a composite revisioning of travel to Italy over nearly forty years. During this period, he made fourteen visits to Italy: the first was in 1869, when he was twenty-six, the last was in 1907. He went several times to Naples and the surrounding area, although there is not extant documentation on all of these visits. Leon Edel's edition of the letters includes a brief one from Sorrento in 1899, and another, more extensive one, from the same place in 1880; the latter gives a vivid description of the brilliance

of the view across the Bay to Naples, Capri and Vesuvius, emphasising the "fantastic" colours of the water and the vibrant groups of fishermen, and humorously personifying Vesuvius as a man smoking a pipe (Kaplan 275). But the chief source of his responses is *Italian Hours*, in which the main intent is not so much to recreate the essence of the experience itself but to articulate - or to seek a means of articulating - its meaning in terms of a personal aesthetic. Whereas Twain reduces the foreign to manageable proportions through deconstructive humour and wry self-referentiality, James searches for a kind of interpretative reciprocity which is in sympathy with the "genius of place"; his individual imaginative vision seeks to turn realised memory into memorialised reality.

Like Twain and, to some extent, Sedgwick, James can be ironically self-referential. He is the "artless pilgrim" and "the brooding tourist"; and in the seven short passages which make up "The Saint's Afternoon and Others" - the concluding portion of *Italian Hours*, dealing with his Naples experiences - the changing personal pronouns ("I," "you," "one") create a constantly shifting narrative focus in which the reader, like James himself, is both participant and observer. At times, too, James takes pains to distinguish himself from those tourists, both German and American here, who mechanically follow a selected route and make the conventional responses. At the close of a golden afternoon of music, dancing and wine at his friend's house on Capri, an experience which sums up for him the "civilisation and amenity" of Italy itself, he adds wryly, "I was quickened to remember that we others, we of my own country… had - by what I had somewhere just heard - opened "three hundred … 'saloons' at Manilla" (357).

James's main impulse, however, is not to make invidious comparison between America and Italy, nor to engage in social commentary. In this respect it is illuminating to compare his and Twain's treatment of local religious ceremonies. Twain, as we have seen, dismisses such activities as evidence of a ridiculous foreign primitivism. James is far less deconstructive. Positioning himself among a crowd characterised by its "robust odour" and air of jollity, he takes a gently ironic look at the feast of St Antony at Anacapri, as "we" wait for the effigy "to come out, or rather to come "on," as the pit at the opera waits for the great tenor"; like them, he enjoys the sight of the sight of the "rejoicing, staring smiling saint, openly delighted with the one happy hour in the year on which he may take his own walk" (351). Turning the whole event into a little drama, his language clearly indicates the theatricality, even absurdity, of the event, but his humour touches it lightly and without venom: this is Italian civilisation on its own terms, and while he may seek to interpret it he will not impose on it his own values or aesthetic.

All of this section of *Italian Hours*, indeed, is driven by the desire to find the "meaning" of the experiences, or rather to "read" acceptable meaning into them. James looks for "the last word," the ultimate signifier, which will complete the "suggestive" with "adequate new notations" and make all "seem quite final." At the same time, he acknowledges that the primacy of perception and apprehension in the process of realising the foreign mean that this finality may ultimately be elusive. As in his fiction, figurative

language is his chief tool of investigation, with the difference that here it plays on external reality rather than objectifying abstract ideas. The view of Naples from Capri melts "into shimmering vagueness and innocence" (353); Pompeii in the evening light burns "as clear as glass, or as the glow of a pale topaz" (358); and on the coastal drive down to Naples,[4] he notes "the great decorated blue vistas in which the breasts of the mountains shine vaguely with strange high-lying city and castle and church and convent, even as shoulders of no diviner line might be hung about with dim old jewels" (359-60). James's encapsulation, through consciously poetic language, of "the possible poetry of the personal and social life of the south" (349), "the transcendent and perfect *idea*" (359) of Italy itself, amidst scenes which perfectly fuse past and present, is still inadequate expression for him. Unlike earlier commentators such as Cooper, who, in their attempts to recreate an essentially visual experience, are content to re-shape an existing aesthetic, James can find his "direct revelation" (358) only by translating the visual into a new textual readability. The image of the farmer whom he sees by the roadside near Posillipo, as he is leaving the Naples area, thus becomes the ultimate signifier, the perceived "genius of the scene personified," which contains and makes sense of the whole:

> He pointed, as it were, the lesson, giving the supreme right accent or final exquisite turn to the immense magnificent phrase; which from those moments on, and on and on, resembled doubtless nothing so much as a page written, by a consummate verbal economist and master of style, in the noblest of all tongues. Our splendid human plant by the wayside had flowered thus into style. (363)

By interpreting the experience, the symbolic moment, the words themselves (found, of course, by the "consummate verbal economist," James himself) confer life and access the previously inaccessible. Finally, the "difference" of the Neapolitan is familiarised through the individual, self-referential act of writing; meaning is not imposed by an external set of referents, but is discovered through the transcending literary imagination of the scribe/traveller.

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NOTES

1. In America at this time, the cult of the picturesque was at its height, reflecting an enthusiasm which had begun in Europe nearly a hundred years earlier. Blake Nevius notes that Cooper was drawn more to the picturesque, with its emphasis on composition rather than the ability to awaken emotions, than the sublime. See Nevius.

2. The editors of the University of Virginia Twain etext web site (http: //etext.edu/railton/innocent/iasrcshp.html) reiterate this: "In many places *Innocents Abroad* burlesques or parodies earlier sentimental or romantic narratives, and throughout it is defined as an attempt to revise previous accounts of the Old World, to show American readers Europe and the Holy Land as they really are, and not as various books have depicted them." Notably, too, contemporary reviews of the work tended to focus primarily on its humour. W.D. Howells' unsigned review in the *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1869, for example, comments on its essentially "good-humored humor," its "charming" impudence, and its "vein of ironical drollery," though he does also note Twain's merciless caricatures of Americans abroad.

3. His descriptions of the colours of the landscape seen from the summit of Vesuvius similarly implements a highly poetic discourse (179).

4. James made this drive by car, a relatively recent mode of travel of which he was extremely fond. He is acutely aware of the changed perception imposed by such travelling, in which impressions became fused and the desire of unreachable distance became actuality. Now, he argues, the observer has to find the ideal in "some artful subjective substitute" (361).

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WALLACE STEVENS' "REPLY TO PAPINI"

DANIELA F. VIRDIS

Only a few of Wallace Stevens' poems have, in their titles, names of real persons, and very few of his texts are introduced by a quotation. Yet "Reply to Papini" (*Poems* 446-8), from the collection *The Auroras of Autumn*, as well as mentioning an Italian writer in its title, has, as an epigraph, passages from "Ai poeti," one of his *Lettere agli uomini di Papa Celestino VI* (153-161).

1. LETTERE AGLI UOMINI DI PAPA CELESTINO VI

In 1946 Papini wrote *Lettere agli uomini di Papa Celestino VI*, as comfort and admonishment "to men" after the War. He gave the fictitious Pope some aspects of his own personality[1] and some traits of the five popes who bore that name,[2] and set his life in a deliberately undetermined age. Papini contrasted Good and the World, and criticized modern society and its political, social, and intellectual foundations.

In the letter "Ai poeti," which provoked Stevens's "Reply to Papini," Celestino is very surprised at the poets' silence after the war: not a single song has been written for soldiers and victims, while "In ogni momento solenne della storia umana, dopo che furon mietute le vite e dissodate le nazioni, i poeti si alzarono a cantare l'epicedio o l'epinicio, l'inno della vittoria o il salmo della supplicazione" (153).[3] This is the first of the two sentences chosen by Stevens to introduce "Reply to Papini." Despair should not obstruct the flowing of verses: Orpheus' task is to express the dismay surrounding him and so overcome it. The artist, thus, does not voice and assuage only his own suffering but all mankind's.

Celestino esteems and praises poetry and its "ufficio umano e divino," artists and their writings: he considers them, in Romantic terms, the discoverers of hidden correspondences among things and demiurges dominating matter and spirit by their use of images and similes. He even compares the writing of poetry to mystic contemplation:

> Nei momenti più felici dell'ispirazione, quando l'umiltà è varco alla sublimità, voi siete irrorati dalla grazia, ascoltate quel che Dio stesso vi detta e che voi, martiri in estasi, cercate di esprimere con tutta la forza dei vostri suoni articolati … voi riuscite a fermare nei vostri canti, spesso a insaputa vostra, qualche frammento ed eco della verità assoluta (158).[4]

He likens the artist to Jacob fighting the angel the whole night: "quando l'aurora invermiglia il cielo si scorge sul viso del poeta qualche rifrangenza del barbaglio dell'angelo" (159).

The letter of Celestino to the poets concludes with the appeal - the second sentence quoted by Stevens - that they "Cess*ino*, dunque, d'essere i callidi calligrafi delle *loro*

fantasticazioni congelate (…), gl'inseguitori delle luminescenze cerebrali" (160):[5] their duty is to bring joy to a world upset by war and to show the right way to man.

2. "REPLY TO PAPINI"

As Gullace notes, "Delle numerosissime opere di Giovanni Papini furono tradotte in inglese soltanto una dozzina, tra le più importanti" (77). *Lettere agli uomini di Papa Celestino VI* is among these few translated works: it was published in New York in 1948, two years after the first Italian edition. In that same year, Father M. Raymond, read this translation and published "A Trappist Replies to …Pope Celestine VI,"[6] another American reply to the Italian writer. Raymond, "a priest and a monk" (81), discusses the letters "Ai preti" and "A monaci e frati."

If Raymond disputes the letters to clerics, Stevens responds to the one addressed to poets. We do not know how he learned of Papini's work. However, in the previous years he and his friend Henry Church had been working on the project of a Chair of Poetry finally undertaken at Princeton (Filreis 82, 83, 84, 100-1, 103): he may have heard of Papini's book through discussions with his learned friends.

In "Reply to Papini" Stevens invites the Italian to consider that poets are powerless and confused before reality: they can only conceive obscure "formulations of midnight."[7] Yet they, by poetry, are able to voice the reality about them, to win a victory over time and space and to help men discover "The way through the world / (…) more difficult to find than the way beyond it." By aphorisms like this and the following ones, Stevens invites his readers to reflect on the deepest meaning of his lines. B.J. Leggett writes that the aphorism is an enigma to be interpreted, and that "it is this emphasis on interpretation (…) that makes (…) the aphorism the ideal form for texts that proclaim the necessity for interpretation but also render it problematical" (207).

Contrary to Papini encouraging the poet to be pathetic and rhetorical, for Stevens he does not need, to accomplish his task, lines broken with grief or solemn works, in other words he does not necessarily have to sing "l'inno della vittoria" or "il salmo della supplicazione": Stevens's artist wants his verses, even the saddest ones, to be faithful to reality. This poetics of clarity and simplicity will also be proposed "To an Old Philosopher in Rome": "Be orator but with an accurate tongue / And without eloquence" (*Poems* 508-11).

In the following couplets, Stevens introduces the character of the artist ordering reality, together with his attributes of solitude, autonomy, immensity (Benamou 172). To treat such an important figure he finds support in the poets belonging to the Protestant tradition (Bacigalupo, "Wallace Stevens" 10); these lines -

The world is still profound and in its depths
Man sits and studies silence and himself,

Abiding the reverberations in the vaults.
Now, once, he accumulates himself and time
For humane triumphals,

- on solitary melancholy meditation, recall, in their style and setting, the final ones in John Milton's "Il Penseroso," on the same theme:

But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high embowèd roof,
With antique pillars massy-proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light (…)
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that heaven doth shew
And every herb that sips the dew,
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.

The affinities between the two passages are remarkable. Stevens' and Milton's characters do not love the light, as if it altered their ability to meditate and perceive, and they enjoy sitting and thinking, but one likes starting his reflections from himself and his own mind, while the other prefers concentrating on all the aspects of creation. Both poets, with diligence, patience and exercise, hope to compose sublime verses: while Stevens' artist "accumulates himself and time / For humane triumphals," Milton's will compose "Till old experience do attain / To something like prophetic strain."

On the other hand, in Papini's opinion, poets in 1946 had to devote themselves to singing victories and defeats, and could not become "i callidi calligrafi delle *loro* fantasticazioni congelate." As Stevens replies, war, just as all the events of life, if not reconsidered in solitude from a personal point of view, is not a subject for the lines of a meditating artist. In fact, he refers to "humane triumphals," the solemn poetical fruit of careful reflection and the ideal means with which to express reality and appearance, multiplicity and chaos; they can only be composed by an artist who succeeded in penetrating these elements deeply, through a slow patient process.

With the spell of art and the power of language, he voices the aspects of reality he has been able to know and reveals their shapes in detail. "Experience" is determined definitively by this magic "enchantment" and by the artist's meticulous investigation, and this poet as a craftsman of the world, as a magician, recalls the artists with the Romantic qualities Celestino writes about. This is the way from solitary meditation to cognition and poetry, to Stevens' "centre": the artist, like a rebellious Titan, is able to reach that point with his will to know and understand the reality he is part of.

3. THE IDEA OF POETRY AND OF THE POET: "ANGEL SURROUNDED BY PAYSANS"

The questions discussed in "Reply to Papini" can also be found elsewhere in *The Auroras of Autumn*. The role of the poet among mankind, the perception and domination of the external world by poetry, the conflict between reality and imagination are expressed in verses which recall Shelley's ("Saint John and the Back-Ache")[8] and Shakespeare's ("A Primitive Like an Orb").[9]

"Angel Surrounded by Paysans" (*Poems* 496-7), the last work of the collection, expounds the idea of poetry and of the poet better than others perhaps, and has much in common with "Reply to Papini." In this text the creature of the title introduces himself as "the angel of reality" and, in the following couplets, lists and at the same time denies what are generally considered the supernatural attributes of poetry. In spite of the Italian author's suggestions, the artist's works in "Reply to Papini" were not extremely bare or too rich, consequently the creature in "Angel Surrounded by Paysans" does not wear mourning or defenses or the symbols of a weak celestial power, distant and uninterested in men. The stars in his retinue are not in fact superfluous ornaments, but emblems of his bright nature and his transcendent wisdom. The creature does not need to be distinguished because he is a man too, endowed with human learning derived from his own nature. Also Papini, in his letter, compares a man - the poet - and an angel. The artist, after engaging the celestial spirit all night, has, on his face, the shining symbols of his rival's divine nature, clear tokens, just like the stars in Stevens's text, of his value and his new nature, which is now not only human.

Though "one of you," the angel of reality is able to exceed common qualities allowing mankind to conceive and understand the world in its essentiality and distinctness. He is an earthly figure particularly caring for material aspects and concrete objects in the world and giving them order and sense with his intelligence. The angel of sight is thus a clear metaphor for the poet: he is the one who "increases the aspects of experience" and who, with his human and inhuman art, frees reality from chaos.

4. THE IDEA OF POETRY AND OF THE POET: THE NECESSARY ANGEL

The Necessary Angel, a collection of essays published in 1951, takes its name from this enigmatic character and some of its themes from "Angel Surrounded by Paysans." In these texts Stevens discusses the poet's figure and task: he believes, like Papini, that the artist often expresses, in his lines, deep truths without even knowing it. But whereas the Italian writer considers them as directly inspired to humble poets by God, the American thinks they can be reached by human means, that is by reason and feeling: this is perhaps the main difference between their ideas on art.

In the first essay, "The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words" (*Angel* 1-36), Stevens defines the question of the "pressure of reality" on poetry and on the poet in wartime, and debates the artist's supposed moral duty:

A possible poet must be a poet capable of resisting or evading the pressure of the reality of this last degree … I confine myself to the outline of a possible poet, with only the slightest sketch of his background … I might be expected to speak of the social, that is to say sociological or political, obligation of the poet. He has none … I do not think that a poet owes any more as a social obligation than he owes as a moral obligation … the role of the poet is not to be found in morals … Yes: the all-commanding subject-matter of poetry is life, the never-ceasing source. But it is not a social obligation. (*Angel* 27-8)

Stevens proposed these ideas again some years later, in the couplets of his reply to Papini, on the epigraph and task of writing about war.

Papini's and Stevens' ideas on the artist's role among men are also conflicting. In both writers' opinion the poet must be a good guide and a trustworthy helper to mankind, but according to the Italian in view of transcendence, according to the American in the immanence of everyday life. In particular, Papini writes, at the end of his letter "Ai poeti," that they are "i profeti che sorregon l'uomo nella salita alla patria sua vera" (160). In all his works, and not only in *Lettere agli uomini di Papa Celestino VI*, one can without difficulty "rilevare il ritornante motivo che potremmo anche definire della trascendenza (…) sulla realtà, come rifiuto del mondo com'è" (Gozzini 137). Stevens, on the contrary, "accepte le réconfort des plaisirs terrestres parce qu'il résiste aux mythes des paradis extraterrestres" (Benamou 99), and "cerca senza dubbio di suggerire dei modelli di una vita pienamente realizzata senza aver bisogno di una trascendenza" (Bacigalupo, "Introduzione" xv); he continues with his argument on the "possible poet" maintaining that "his role, in short, is to help people to live their lives" (*Angel* 29).

The second essay in *The Necessary Angel*, "The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet" (39-67), unexpectedly shares some ideas with the letter "Ai poeti": in both texts poets are compared to saints and poetry to catharsis. Stevens in fact argues:

it is certain that the experience of the poet is of no less a degree that the experience of the mystic and we may be certain that in the case of poets, the peers of saints, those experiences are of no less a degree than the experiences of the saints themselves. (*Angel* 50-1)

Papini, for his part, likens artists to "martiri in estasi" and maintains: "Se tutti gli uomini, in origine e principio, son fatti a immagine e somiglianza di Lui, proprio in voi [poeti], dopo i santi, meglio si scorge la Sua immagine e la Sua somiglianza" (120).

But it is in a later essay, "Imagination as Value," that Stevens seems to give an ultimate reply to Papini, and to oppose his idea of Christian poetry with firm resolution and also with fine irony:

If poetry should address itself to the same needs and aspirations, the same hopes and fears, to which the Bible addresses itself, it might rival it in distribution. Poetry does not address itself to beliefs... Consequently, when critics of poetry call upon it to do some of the things that the Bible does, they overlook the certainty that the Biblical imagination is one thing and the poetic imagination, inevitably, something else. (*Angel* 144)

An artist does not need the "Biblical imagination" to free the world from chaos. Just his "poetic imagination" and his ability to observe and interpret the essence of things are required to be a great poet and to become "the necessary angel of earth."

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NOTES

1. Biographers and critics describe Papini with words similar to those he used to outline the pontiff in his *Lettere*: cf. Ridolfi, Gullace, "America," Gullace, "Resurrected." For Papini's idea of Christianity and society cf. instead Ciliberto.

2. In particular, Celestine I (422-432) wrote several letters to the bishops in southern Gaul on doctrinal questions, and Celestine V (1294), though "he was utterly unequal to the task of ruling the Church and resigned the office" five months after his election (Attwater 66), was the one who, for his humility and integrity, mainly influenced Papini's figure. Cf. also Kelly.

3. "At every solemn moment of human history, after lives have been harvested and nations ploughed under, the poets lifted their voices to sing funeral chants or songs of victory, victorious hymns or psalms of supplication" (Papini, *Letters* 118). The translation of the two sentences quoted by Stevens in his poem is not Murnane's: "In all the solemn moments of human history … poets rose to sing the hymn of victory or the psalm of supplication" ("Reply," epigraph).

4. "In the most fortunate moments of inspiration, when humility is a bridge to sublimity, you are showered with grace, you hear what God Himself says to you; and you, martyrs in ecstasy, seek to express it with all the power of your articulate sounds … you succeed in imprisoning in your songs, often unknown to yourselves, some fragment and echo of the Absolute Truth" (*Letters* 121-2).

5. "Cease then being shrewd calligraphers of your frozen visions …, devotees of intellectual brilliance" (*Letters* 123). Cf. "Cease, then, from being the astute calligraphers of congealed daydreams, the hunters of cerebral phosphorescences" ("Reply," epigraph).

6. This article was soon translated into Italian: cf. Raymond, *Trappista*.

7. This expression recalls those on the stream of thoughts in "The Bed of Old John Zeller," the poem dedicated to Stevens' great-grandfather: "luminous / Sequences, thought of among spheres in the old peak of night," and "It was the structure / Of things at least that was thought of in the old peak of night" (*Poems* 326-7).

8. John, the Romantic poet's incarnation, "speak*s* below / The tension of the lyre" ("Saint John"), while Shelley asks the wind to "Make me thy lyre" ("Ode to the West Wind") and Coleridge describes an instrument blown by the wind itself in "The Eolian Harp." Besides the sentence "at the moment of the year when, tick, / Autumn howls upon half-naked summer" ("Saint John" 11-2) can recall some lines from Shelley's most famous ode, and seems to outline the same wind, the powerful "breath of Autumn's being, /… from whose unseen presence the leaves dead / Are driven" and the earth is left naked.

9. Stevens seems to take his "clairvoyant men that need no proof: / The lover, the believer and the poet" ("Primitive") from Shakespeare's "The lunatic, the lover and the poet" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 5.1.7): in both writers' opinion they are the few able to know the world deeply and to be a part of it.

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PYNCHON IN "BAEDEKER LAND"

MARINA COSLOVI

Although Pynchon's *V.* moves back and forth from the New to the Old World, readers soon realize that the center of the narrative is in the Mediterranean. In fact, the Mediterranean looms in the background even while the scene is set in the U.S, since all the main characters are more or less closely connected to it - be it by birth, by destiny, or by choice.

We are finally landed on Mediterranean shores in chapter 3, which brings us back to 1898 Egypt. One of the many remarkable things happening in this chapter is that, suddenly, the Mediterranean area begins to be called by another name: "Baedeker land" - a strange land where all the characters seem to be neatly separated into two categories, the tourists and the natives.[1]

As is generally the case in Pynchon's writing, this paired opposite tourists/natives turns out to be quite problematic. But in order to investigate it, we need to explore the land generating it first, "Baedeker land."

As is well known, Karl Baedeker was a German publisher who founded a printing establishment specialized in guidebooks in 1839. His red guides were so popular in the English-speaking world that "Baedeker" became a synonym for a guidebook. The success of his "handbooks for travellers" was probably due to the fact that they were not only well-informed from an artistic and historical point of view, but they also provided valuable information on all other aspects of a journey abroad: from expenses to equipment, from the postal service to "intercourse" with local people.

Baedeker's advice on this last point reveals a great deal about him and the public he addressed. The very opening of his guide to Egypt (used by Pynchon in the writing of "Under the Rose," the short story revised to become chapter 3 of *V.*)[2] is eloquent: Baedeker qualifies himself and his public as part of the *civilized* world - an adjective implying the existence of an *un*civilized world, to which the local people would obviously belong. In other words, he has a colonialist and paternalistic attitude which is in fact perceptible throughout the guidebook - and often explicit in statements such as the following:

> While much caution and firmness are desirable in dealing with the people, it need hardly be added that the traveller should avoid being too exacting or suspicious. He should bear in mind that many of the natives with whom he comes in contact are mere children, whose demands should excite amusement rather than anger, and who often display a touching simplicity and kindliness of disposition […] On the other hand, intimate acquaintance with Orientals of the lower classes is to be avoided, especially with the dragomans, who sometimes presume on their opportunities of social intercourse. (Baedeker, *Egypt* xxvi)

We can say that "Baedeker land" is the Mediterranean seen from the tourist's point

of view: a self-contained world where attractions, people, and situations are so perfectly classified and recognizable that the "civilized traveler" always knows what to expect and how to deal with them. It is also a land to whose citizenship local people are not entitled: in "Baedeker land" natives are appurtenances, and the tourist community either graciously tolerates or simply overlooks them.

It is not by one of the "civilized travelers" that readers of *V.* are first introduced to "Baedeker land," however. Our first "guides" to this "supranational domain" are a group of outsiders (five natives, a German barmaid and an impostor posing as tourist) whose stories confirm that "[t]here remains a grand joke on all visitors to Baedeker's world: the permanent residents are actually humans in disguise" (78).

All five natives strongly feel the gap separating them from the tourists - or we should write "tourists" within inverted commas, because it is soon apparent that only a few of the foreigners these people see moving around their part of the Mediterranean are tourists at all. This circumstance does not affect the neat division ruling Beadeker land, in any case - which is an implicit comment on its artificial quality, and a first unobtrusive way of undermining its very foundations.

The first native we meet - Aïeul, a café waiter- sees tourists simply as items feeding his philosophical reflections - and as such, ironically, they are as faceless for him ("didn't all Northerners look alike?" 64) as he is for them. If tourists regard natives as passive objects, natives like Gebrail and Yusef do not grant them much humanity either. The factotum Yusef decides that the diplomats he is serving are not human, and Gebrail the cabdriver claims that his customers are money, not people. Both Yusef and Gebrail violently resent the presence of foreign tourists in their country - a presence which they see as one of the forms taken by colonialism.[3] What's more, both have been turned into devotees of Nothing by this hatred: Yusef has become an anarchist courting chaos ("Let them make holiday while they could. Soon enough the fine clothes would be rags and the elegant woodwork crusted with blood," 66); Gebrail associates tourists with life in the city - and the city is for him but an extension of the dead sand of the desert creeping in and choking life:

> You jolly damn right Inglizi; a man comes to the city and drives for you and every other Frank with land to return to. His family lives all together in a room no bigger that your W.C., out in Arabian Cairo where you never go because it's too dirty, and not "curious." […] Where goldsmiths live in filth and tend tiny flames to make adornment for your traveling English ladies. (83)[4]

Waldetar the conductor has a more favorable attitude towards foreign people. Mere "train's hardware" for the travelers, he is in reality a philosopher, and the only one to show human feelings in an episode where he is contrasted to a group of (fake) tourists calling in doubt the importance of humanity itself. Nevertheless, his attempts at crossing the invisible barrier preventing any real communication between tourists and natives result in nothing, and he ends by retreating into the passiveness expected of him.

The last native we meet is Girgis, by day a montebank and by night a burglar. He is

also well disposed toward tourists - although his sympathy stems from a sentiment which (ironically enough) parallels Baedeker's view of the natives mentioned above: in fact, Girgis divides his customers into two groups, "the children of Cairo and those aged children of Europe, the tourists."

Girgis is the only native who has a personal encounter with a representative of the other side - more precisely with Porpentine, an English spy passing as tourist. This encounter does not bring the two sides closer, however. First, because Porpentine does not realize he is addressing a native; and second, because Girgis, although responsive to Porpentine's plight, finds it impossible to surmount the barrier separating them: "What comfort could Girgis give him? His English wasn't good, he'd only understood half the words […] Girgis opened his mouth to speak, thought better of it, and began to back away" (88).

The last two characters talking about "Baedeker land" in this chapter are not natives. Both live on the fringe of this tourist world, however, and both help lay bare its real nature. The blonde and buxom Hanne works in a beer garden "created by north European tourists in their own image […] so German as to be ultimately a parody of home" (88). She has been able to survive in this artificial world not only because she has the looks and bearing of the stereotypical German waitress, but also because she has never wanted to go past its smooth appearance - politics being one of the critical issues that, like her Baedeker customers, she has always carefully avoided.

Maxwell Rowley-Bugge is a comedian whose presence in "Baedeker land" is the plainest exposure of the fact that this tourist world is at bottom only "a grand vaudeville." Max has easily learnt to impersonate one of the roles required by Baedeker's supranational stage - that of the "well-off fellow tourist temporarily embarrassed by a malfunction in Cook's machinery" (70) - and he is making a living out of it. Because he is aware he is playing a role, Max is able to take advantage of other tourists taking part in the show unwittingly; but being an impostor, he has always been afraid of meeting other frauds who could see through his mask. When his nightmare becomes reality, and he realizes that his "touch" of the day are only posing as tourists, he is compelled to walk away not only from the money he is being given but also (momentarily?) from the Baedeker game.

The point is, Max's "touch" are the same tourists whose movements are being observed throughout the chapter, and Max is not the only one to detect their "irregularity." Why is he the only one to recognize it openly then? Surely because he is the only one who may walk out of his role: natives are given no real choice in "Baedeker land."

In conclusion, if tourism is a game, and tourists are players abiding by precise rules, it is evident that the identity of the fellow players, and even the place where the game is played, are secondary details. It is also obvious that rules cannot be violated: if tourists and natives wanted to act differently - if they decided to enter into real communication by regarding the others as human beings rather than "automata," for instance - "Baedeker land," and the view of the world it presupposes, would cease to exist.

The above image of "Baedeker land" is borne out also by the other chapter where it figures prominently: chapter seven, set in 1899 Florence. The Florentine chapter complements the Egyptian one in that here "Baedeker land" is presented, more conventionally, from the point of view of the tourists. Accordingly, natives are reduced either to features of the background (as in the opening scene, where an *English* girl, conspicuous against an indistinguishable "mob of Italians," is the first person an English tourist who has just arrived in the city takes notice of) or to objects of the tourists' curiosity, condescension, or downright scorn. Not surprisingly, national stereotypes and prejudices about natives abound: lower-class Italian men constantly drink wine and sing; Italian husbands are cuckolded by virile countrymen; Italian police are illiterate and gullible; and so on.

The feeling of a world blindly racing toward its end pervades this Florentine chapter and originates two crucial reflections about "Baedeker land."

The first comes from Hugh Godolphin, a British explorer who unintentionally sets off international trouble. Realizing that, from that moment on, he would have to live in the "demimonde" of fugitives, Godolphin for the first time notices people and although he does not seem to include natives in the common humanity he observes, he is still able to see the big limit of the tourist world:

> He wondered at this phenomenon of tourism: what was it drove them to Thomas Cook & Son in ever-increasing flocks every year to let themselves in for the Campagna's fevers, the Levant's squalor […] To return to Ludgate Circus at the desolate end of every season having caressed the skin of each alien place, a peregrine or Don Juan of cities but no more able to talk of any mistress's heart than to cease keeping that interminable Catalogue. (184)

Whereas tourists in "Baedeker land" are "lovers of skins," Godolphin has tried to get at the heart of the places he has explored. His tragedy is that he has found out there has never been anything to discover, and that what he was looking for was in fact only a projection of his own desires and fears. His conclusion is that Baedeker tourists are doubly deceived: because they do not get past the surface of things, and because they do not realize that the surface is all there is to see.

The other character whose reflections throw a different light on "Baedeker land" is Hugh Godolphin's son, who undergoes a sort of initiation in the course of this chapter: he enters it as a dandyish tourist, but is a sadder and wiser man by its end. In the course of his adventure Evan finds himself involved in plots he does not understand; compelled to surrender his tourist assurance, he sees both the delusive nature of the tourist world and, in an epiphanic moment, a possible way out of the Baedeker deadlock:

> Because the Italian and the English in those consulates and even that illiterate clerk are all men. Their anxiety is the same as my father's, what is coming to be my own, and perhaps in a few weeks what will be the anxiety of everyone living in a world none of us wants to see lit into holocaust. Call it a kind of communion, surviving somehow on a mucked-up planet, which God knows none of us like very much. But it is our planet and we live on it anyway. (193-194)

For the first (and only) time in these two chapters, someone succeeds in transcending Baedeker's binary vision of the world and recognizes that there exists a bond stronger than that uniting the tourist congregation: the bond of a common humanity.

Evan's vision of a possible communion surmounting the tourist/native barrier remains isolated, though. The only communion within Baedeker's domain remains that offered by "Scheissvogel's Biergarten und Rathskeller," another beer garden where tourists "seemed to seek some Hofbrauhaus of the spirit like a grail, hold a krug of Munich beer like a chalice" (203).

There is a last character whose convictions are more relevant to "Baedeker land" than it would appear at first. His name is Sidney Stencil, and he is an English agent working in Florence:

> Brought up by a pair of bleak Nonconformist aunts, he had acquired the Anglo-Saxon tendency to group northern/Protestant/intellectual against Mediterranean/Roman Catholic/irrational. He had thus arrived in Florence with a deep-rooted and chiefly subliminal ill will toward all things Italian, and the subsequent conduct of his running mates from the secret police confirmed it. What sort of situation could one expect from such a scurvy and heterogeneous crew? (190)

It is apparent that Baedeker's attitude toward Mediterranean natives is not unrelated to Sidney Stencil's stance, and that the binary opposite tourists/natives derives from the same matrix. Therefore, it is not simply Stencil's biased mental picture that is being exposed here, but Baedeker's as well. And in fact, similar prejudices had been voiced by other tourists already in the course of the Egyptian chapter, where the cleanness of the North had been contrasted to the "soiled South" (75).[5]

But Stencil helps to explain "Baedeker land" also in another important way. By dealing with tangled international situations he has come to believe that reality is basically the projection of meanings onto one's mental screen: "Baedeker land," with its blind assumptions and classifications, is precisely such a projection.

If we still had any doubt about the real nature of "Baedeker land," we would have to give it up when confronted with another circumstance: the fact that both the characters through whose eyes we see the tourists in the Egyptian section and those whose voices we listen to in the Florentine chapter are "impersonations." And the "quick-change artist" doing these impersonations is Sidney Stencil's son, Herbert, who has inherited from his father both the habit of imposing regular patterns or logical forms on reality and a mysterious quest: the search for V.

Who or what is V.? We can no more give a definite answer to this question as to the question of who or what Moby Dick is. But one thing is indubitable: while looking for V., young Stencil is, more or less consciously, looking for his origins.

If we add all of these elements together, we begin to understand better why "Baedeker land" could become synonymous with the Mediterranean in the chapters analyzed above. The fact is, young Stencil sees the Mediterranean essentially as a place sheltering the

secret of his origins (was V. his mother?) and possibly of his end (how did his father die?) - or in other words, like the Baedeker tourist, he is able to see in it only the projection of a pre-existing mental image.

It is not only by way of impersonations that young Stencil visits the Mediterranean in the course of *V.*, however. At a crucial moment in the novel he embarks for Malta in the company of two people. His first companion is Benny Profane, an American who has accepted to act as an escort for the second voyager, Paola Maijstral. Paola is a native of Malta, and she is taking Stencil to meet her father, Fausto.

Fausto and Paola are the only Mediterranean natives in the novel who are allowed to speak directly - in the sense that they are not "impersonated" by Stencil. In what way is their "inside" view of the Mediterranean different from Stencil's?

Fausto's voice turns out to be closer to Stencil's than we may expect. To begin with, it is not unmediated at all, since he entrusts his view of things to a written confession in which, like Stencil, he talks of himself in the third person. The reason behind this need to detach himself from his own life is soon disclosed: Fausto is not simply Maltese - he is Anglo-Maltese:

> I think our education in the English school and University alloyed what was pure in us. Younger, we talked of love, fear, motherhood; speaking in Maltese […] But what a language! […] we talk as animals might. […] we are torn […] To be merely Maltese: endure almost mindless, without sense of time? Or to think - continuously - in English, to be too aware of war, of time, of all the greys and shadows of love? Perhaps British colonialism has produced a new sort of being, a dual man, aimed two ways at once: towards peace and simplicity on the one hand, towards an exhausted intellectual searching on the other. (309)

In an analysis recalling old Stencil's view of the world, Fausto links his English part with intellectuality and his Maltese part with irrationality. His tragedy is that this binary opposite (just another version of Baedeker's tourists/natives opposite) is engrafted into his system - and although his English side spurs him to silence his native side, the Maltese in him won't be colonized and keeps on vindicating his right to be.

Thus, the fight between the English and the Maltese principles is experienced by Fausto as the fight between two broader principles: that of the Father and the Mother. The harsh, rational and aggressive Father is of course England. The generous, instinctive and enduring Mother is Malta, and by extension, the whole Mediterranean.

The image of Malta as a woman and a mother pervades Fausto's confessions. Malta under siege (the time is World War II) is "The Virgin assailed. The winged mother protective. The woman passive" (338); and it is in Malta's womb that life goes on:[6]

> [Malta] lies on her back in the sea, sullen; an immemorial woman. Spread to the explosive orgasms of Mussolini bombs. But her soul hasn't been touched; cannot be. Her soul is the Maltese people, who wait - only wait- down in her clefts and catacombs alive and with a numb strength, filled with faith in God His Church. How can her flesh matter? It is vulnerable, a victim. But as the Ark was to Noah so is the inviolable womb of our Maltese rock to her children. (318)

Fausto continually rebels against Malta's mother-rule - which his British part associates with passivity and decadence. But the native in him feels he inescapably belongs to Malta's timeless body - a body made up of people who, because of their being continuously under pressure, have become "Parts of a unity. Some die, others continue" (319). In this image of Malta as a communion of people all distinctions disappear: "we are Malta, one, pure and a motley of races at once" (310) the native in Fausto writes.

Because he is torn between his two contrasting identities, Fausto never succeeds in feeling completely one with Malta - and there is a part of Malta that remains wrapped in mystery for him. Even Paola, his daughter, whom he sees as "most of all Malta's child," is part of this mystery.

Paola is the Mediterranean native we meet earlier on in the novel - in the very first chapter, in which she is working as a barmaid in Norfolk, Virginia. Since her entrance Paola is presented as an enigma: nobody knows for sure how old she is, nor what she thinks, or wants, or does. Her main characteristic seems to be passiveness - the "usual" passiveness of natives, we could add: first she clings to Benny Profane, then she accepts to be handed over to Benny's girl-friend, and all the while she is chased by men who think she has "the passive look of an object of sadism" and want to conquer her.

The fact is, for more than half the novel Paola is only spoken about, and this allows the people who enter in contact with her to see in this Maltese girl whatever they want. What happens to Paola parallels what we have seen happening to the Mediterranean turned into "Baedeker land": as much as the land where she comes from, she becomes a reflection of her viewer's mind. In the words of the alto player McClintic:

> You didn't use anything. Didn't have to. No makeup. Mafia, you know, thinks you're German. I thought you were Puerto Rican before Rachel told me. Is that what you are, something we can look at and see whatever we want? (359)

The reason why Paola does not need "protective coloration" is that her multiplicity is part of her Mediterranean heritage: "nobody knows what a Maltese is. The Maltese think they are a pure race and the Europeans think they are Semitic, Hamitic, crossbred with North Africans, Turks and God knows what all" (359).

Because she does not have to reconcile different parts of herself like her Anglo-Maltese father, she accepts this being a medley of races without reservations. And for the same reason, her sentiments toward Malta are not ambiguous: Malta, even the Malta torn by the war, is for her a generous and all-embracing mother.

A cradle of life and a communion of races is what the Mediterranean is when seen directly through the eyes of such natives as Paola and Fausto. For the "tourists" or non-natives like Stencil, it is a screen on which to project one's prejudices and fears - among which the fear that "The Middle East, cradle of civilization, may yet be its grave" (387).

To conclude, we might ask what the Mediterranean is for a character like Benny Profane, not a native and hardly a tourist, who gets there almost by chance.

Apparently, the Mediterranean does not affect him much. When we last meet him, stranded in Malta, he is wearing the same outfit he was wearing at the opening of the novel, he is penniless as usual, and as usual on a date, this time with a WASP girl on her Grand Tour. And yet, something out of the ordinary happens to Benny in the closing scene, when he and his date start running down a street:

> The buildings in this part of Valletta, eleven years after war's end, had not been rebuilt. The street, however, was level and clear. Hand in hand with Brenda, whom he'd met yesterday, Profane ran down the street. Presently, sudden and in silence, all illumination in Valletta, houselight and streetlight, was extinguished. Profane and Brenda continued to run through the abruptly absolute night, momentum alone carrying them toward the edge of Malta, and the Mediterranean beyond. (455)

What is it these two Americans are running toward? Maybe it is the past; maybe the future; or maybe both, since, as old Stencil reflects in the epilogue of the novel, there seems to be "[no] time in Valletta. No history, all history at once …" (484). Whatever it is, Benny and his friend are absorbed by the darkness of Malta's womb, and there, as we know, they are destined to meet the communion of the Maltese people.

In conclusion, this final scene seems to offer a valid chance of stepping out of Baedeker's binary system. The sure way out seems to pass through the acknowledgment that all are already inescapably in - or in other words, that the mixed humanity that the Baedeker tourists in Egypt saw as a sign of the Mediterranean's "soiled" nature was in fact a manifestation of the world as it was, and as it will, necessarily, continue to be.

And at this point, also the presence of the Mediterranean Paola in the New World acquires a new meaning. At the opening of the novel it was suggested that she might have chosen America because there she could find "enough food, warm clothes, heat all the time, buildings in one piece" (p. 14) - in other words, that it might have been a way for her to escape her own Mediterranean history. But, by the end of the novel, her going back to America turns out to be not only a full acceptance of her own history, but above all the disclosure of a continuity between her two worlds: because both the Mediterranean and the United States originated at the crossroads of different cultures, and the existence of both depends on an acceptance of their mixed nature.[7]

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NOTES

1. Pynchon's "tourists" have been analyzed by several critics, like Tony Tanner (50-51); David Seed (60-61 in particular) and Joseph Slade (55-59). Other works that, for different reasons, I found useful in the writing of this paper are McHale, McHoul and Wills, Moore.

2. "It wasn't till 'Under the Rose' (1959) that I could bring myself, even indirectly, to credit guidebook eponym Karl Baedeker, whose guide to Egypt for 1899 was the major 'source' for the story" (Pynchon, *Slow Learner* 19).

3. The connection between tourism and colonialism has been often underlined in recent years. See, for instance, Buzard, Mills, Nicholson-Lord. This aspect of tourism in *V.* has been dwelt upon by Slade.

4. "Frank (in the eastern Mediterranean region): a person of western European nationality or descent" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). As the following passage shows, "Frank" in Gebrail's section refers more specifically to English and French people: "in the heathen jungle, is a place called Fashoda, the Franks - Inglizi, Feransawi- will fight a great battle there, which will spread in all directions to engulf the world" (85).

5. On the assumptions behind Baedeker's ethnography see Mendelson 399-400. See also Moore 23.

6. On the view of Italy (and, by extension, other Mediterranean countries) as a passive woman see Buzard, 132-139 and passim. See also Mills 43-44 and passim.

7. Significantly, Benny Profane is an American with Mediterranean roots (he is half-Jewish and half-Italian) and therefore an illustration of the bond uniting the two worlds.

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WORKSHOP SIX
GENOA AND THE UNITED STATES IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY

CHAIR: VALERIA GENNARO LERDA

The workshop opened with papers given by Pierangelo Castagneto and Luca Codignola. Castagneto explained that lots of information on colonial American history and on the revolution reached Genoa through the diplomatic correspondence of the Genoese representative in London; Codignola (in a paper not included here) illustrated how an American Consulate was established in Genoa at the end of the 18th century. Susanna Delfino spoke of the U.S. presence in the Mediterranean from the early 19th centuy and of the political and economic strategies of the period. Naila Clerici provided an account of the image of the American Indian in the Genoese press in the late 19th century.

Università degli Studi di Genova

"…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 GENOA*

PIERANGELO CASTAGNETO

From the first moments of the protest of the thirteen British colonies in the New World, the Republic of Genoa had at his disposal a considerable amount of information concerning the happenings of events on the other side of the Atlantic. It was Francesco Maria Ageno who carried out this accurate and timely work. He had been Minister of the Serenissima in London since 1759. The account of the revolutionary facts, even if it always unmasks the pro-British spirit of the author, represents a documentation with no equal in its genre. Immediately after the end of the Seven Years' War, Ageno referred about the worries spreading among the American settlers for "un piano di imposizioni" relative to "certi non leggieri diritti prescritti a quegli abitanti sopra l'uso della carta, della stampa, e sopra tutti gli atti e documenti che seco portino una pubblica autenticità." These new burdens could have "cagionare degli avvenimenti notabili fra quelle popolazione," especially considering that "la lontananza in cui tutte si trovano da questa Metropoli, la diversità di tante provincie, di cui ciascheduna forma per così dire uno stato indipendente, i disparati interessi del loro commercio profittevole ad alcune, e a molte altre svantaggioso, e per fine la varietà delle leggi e costituzioni sotto delle quali si trovano ordinate e garantite col patrocinio dell'Inghilterra, sono tutti motivi che fanno a ragion dubitare d'una continuata tranquillità in quelle regioni."[1] The pessimistic previsione of Ageno should have found a more evident confirmation in the facts. A few years after, in January 1776, when time for negotiated solutions was definitively over, the news communicated by Ageno about the decisions adopted by the representatives of the thirteen colonies during the Second Continental Congress were of a very different tenor:

Si sente dall'America che i Delegati delle provincie fossero partiti da Filadelfia dopo aver presi nel generale Congresso tutti i provvedimenti necessari alla loro difesa, e dopo aver stabilito un Consiglio esecutivo incaricato di tutte le incombenze deliberate da detta adunanza. Prima della separazione hanno pubblicati diversi articoli di buon governo, per cui le Colonie confederate indissolubilmente e perpetuamente si obbligano di prestarsi assistenza ed aiuto per difendere la loro libertà e per conservare intatti i loro privilegi a costo dei loro beni e del loro sangue. Ciascheduna Provincia deve ogni anno mandare i suoi rappresentanti al luogo indicato per il Congresso, il quale deve tenersi per rotazione nel distretto d'ogni Colonia confederata, e il detto Congresso sarà il supremo giudice, capo ed arbitro dei comuni interessi. Ogni Colonia avrà diritto di ritenere, costrurre e riformare o tutte o parte di quelle leggi che riguardano il proprio destino intestino Governo; ed acciocchè niuna legge riesca pregiudizievole a qualsivoglia Provincia, spetterà al generale Congresso di approvarla o

modificarla in caso di reclamo. Finalmente non si dovrà mai trattare d'accomodamento colla Gran Brettagna che di comune consenso, e soltanto quando questa riconoscerà la giustizia della loro causa ed offrirà il dovuto compenso e rifacimento alle perdite sofferte dagli americani in questa guerra, caratterizzata col nome d'ingiusta, oppressiva e tirannica. Queste ed altre provvidenze di simile natura sono il complesso della base fondamentale di futuro governo adottato dalle Colonie confederate dell'America settentrionale.[2]

Only some months later, on August 20, the Genoese Minister wrote to the Serenissimi that, notwithstanding the unceasing threat of the British troops, "gli Americani non si mostrano abbandonati di coraggio; persistono nella ribellione; ed il Generale Congresso ha effettivamente pronunziata l'indipendenza delle Colonie."[3] The careful translation executed by the hand of Ageno of the "Dichiarazione de' Rappresentanti delle Colonie Unite radunati in Generale Congresso il giorno 4 Luglio 1776" lies in the State archives of Genoa. Doubtless the content of such a document in which "la vita, la libertà e la felice esistenza" were sanctioned as inalienable rights and even more as well as where it was declared that "ogni volta, e quando una forma di governo diventa distruttiva di questi oggetti, appartenga al popolo il diritto di alterarla, di abolirla, e di istituirne una nuova fondandone la base sopra sifatti principii, e organizzandone le sue parti in quella tal forma che a lui sembri verisimilmente più adattata per ottenere il conseguimento della sua salvezza e felicità," had to make its Genoese aristocratic readers think again.[4]

Ageno followed with attention also the evolving military events: the information of English surrender at Saratoga was communicated with great timeliness:

La fregata Warnwick, spedita da Quebec il 26 Ottobre e giunta a Plymounth Lunedì scorso, porta con i dispacci del Generale Carleton confidati al Capitano l'infelice notizia della totale perdita di tutte le truppe del Generale Burgoyne, nel mentre che si ritirava verso il forte Edoardo e quello di Ticonderoga. La sua armata, composta di circa 4500 uomini, è stata totalmente rinchiusa dai Provinciali in luoghi disastrosi; e si è ritrovata costretta, per la mancanza delle provvigioni di cui è rimasta priva per più giorni per la ritolta comunicazione, a tentare l'ultimo colpo di risorsa per liberarsene. Il giorno 23 Ottobre ha procurato sbucare da qualche parte, tentando un disperato combattimento; ma i Provinciali comandati dal Generale Arnold, e sommamente superiori di numero, avendo rinchiuso tutti i passi, gli hanno impedito qualsivoglia ritirata. Il Generale Burgoyne dopo di aver sacrificato 1000 uomini colla morte del Generale Fraser, ritrovandosi egli stesso ferito in due luoghi e non vedendo più scampo, ha dovuto rendersi, facendo bassar le armi e tutto l'esercito, colla condizione di restar trasferito a Boston per indi ritornare in Inghilterra, dove tra breve si attende. Non si sa se tutta l'armata resti prigioniera di guerra, oppure se venga rimandata in Europa colla condizione agli Ufficiali di non più servire in America durante la presente guerra; ma in ogni modo il colpo è della maggiore conseguenza per gl'interessi di questa Corona nelle presenti circostanze.[5]

During these years the military side of the conflict ended by involving more directly the government of the Republic of Genoa in the struggle between the American insurgents and the mother country. In June 1777, John Collet, British Consul to Genoa, informed, in an alarmed way, one of the State secretaries that "da un piccolo ragazzo gli

era stata consegnata una lettera di incerto autore, nella quale veniva avvisato che la *Barca della Compagnia del Soccorso*, stata ultimamente comprata, doveva in quella stessa sera partire da Genova con bandiera genovese: che la stessa era armata, ed esservi nel suo equipaggio persona munita di patente americana, che doveva spiegare subito uscita dal porto e corseggiare sopra la bandiera inglese."[6]

The Giunta di Marina of the Republic, a sort of Ministry for maritime affairs, after having ordered an investigation, could reassure Collet showing that the ship in question war armed with only six small iron guns, that the crews was entirely formed by Genoese sailors, that no paper or other written document masked the nationality of the ship, and that its destination was Marseilles.[7] In another occasion Ageno again referred rumours about a possible involvement of the Republic:

Nelle ordinarie relazioni che pervengono dall'America, non meno all'Ammiragliato che agli Uffici delle Segreterie di Stato, viene fatta replicata menzione di alcuni vascelli recentemente armati dagli Americani, le di cui particolarità vengono accennate ne' seguenti modi. Si annunzia pertanto che a Filadelfia sia giunta una grossa nave, specificata di costruzione genovese, comprata dal Congresso e dallo stesso fatta armare con 74 pezzi di cannoni. Si scrive dalle coste della Carolina, e credo dall'Ammiragliato che corseggia in quei mari, che a Charles-Town siavi giunto altro vascello di minor portata, descritto come provveniente dallo Stato di Genova, il quale veniva pure destinato all'uso di guerra. Finalmente si ha notizia da Norfolck, nella Virginia, che gli abitanti di detta città abbiano aperta una sottoscrizione, stata assai presto riempita, ad oggetto di comprare un vascello di 70 cannoni, che si accenna provveduto da Nazionali Genovesi. Le pubbliche carte danno qualche cenno circa quest'ultimo, ma le relazioni private sono più positive nel trasmettere ragguaglio degli altri due.[8]

The Giunta di Marina instructed Ageno to belie such a rumours, given that "non esservi alcuna nave o vascello genovese della portata di essere armato in guerra come sopra, né costruirsene alcuno sopra dei nostri scali presentemente, né alcuno essersene fabricato da quindeci o sedici anni addietro a questa parte."[9]

In the same period another notice concerning the selling of war material went around:

Alle particolarità prima d'ora accennate circa la supposizione di fornirsi da nazionali genovesi qualche bastimento da guerra in servigio detti Americani, wrote Ageno from London in a ciphered dispatch on September 19, 1777, si aggiunge in oggi una rimarchevole circostanza impressa sulle pubbliche carte cioè essere giunto alla Carolina un vascello di sessanta cannoni condotto da capitano con nome mascherato ma riconosciuto per genovese assieme a qualche altro marinaro del suo equipaggio spettante alla medesima nazione. Si aggiunge che avesse al suo bordo quantità di munizioni da guerra e che molti cannoni fossero impressi col armi della Repubblica di modo che sembra si tenti di insinuare il riflesso di qualche vendita clandestina fatta da genovesi a persone corrispondenti colli Americani.[10]

Although the English government had never thought to forward an official protest to Ageno for these kinds of rumors, the numerous insinuations related by the most widespread gazettes of the age, tested out the British faith in the repeated declarations of

indifference expressed by the Republic for the destiny of the insurgents. Two meaningful cases happened during early 1778. In an article published in the *Gazzetta d'Olanda* even supposed the conclusion of a treaty between the Serenissima and the United States of America, mentioning as well the name of the American negotiator, a certain Savage, for two years resident in Genoa.[11] In May, soon after the French war declaration to Great Britain, a new and this time well motivated accusation spread: "Essendosi sparso voce, e venendo pure indicato in qualche Gazzetta che certo Signor Gauthier sia incaricato per parte della Francia di fare nel nostro dominio una leva di marinari," informed the Serenissimi Minister Ageno to London "stimiamo di prevenirvi di quello sia realmente succeduto su tale proposito, non già perché ne facciate uso alcuno attivamente, ma unicamente e solamente perché nel caso ve ne venisse parlato possiate valervene e togliere la diversa impressione che se ne fosse formata. Il Console di Francia rappresentò che la sua Corte gli aveva indirizzato il Signor Gauthier per avere da noi il permesso di fare una leva di marinai e quindi richiese di potervi essere autorizzato; sopra di quale istanza noi fecimo rispondere al Console che dalla legge restano proibiti gl'ingaggiamenti nel nostro stato di marinari per le squadre o vascelli da guerra di qualonque nazione, e che perciò non potevamo prestarci ad accordare il richiesto permesso, restando i Tribunali e Giusdicenti incaricati ad invigilare per l'osservanza della medesima."[12]

In all these occasions the offered explanation, in order that any charge of violation of the laws ruling that the commerce of forbidden commodities in war time could be quickly rejected, was extremely simple: Genoa remained resolutely neutral, but in any case she couldn't prevent her subjects from protecting their interests even if this meant having relations with any nations at war. But beyond the formal refutations, not always persuasive, the suspect, which now we can also consider as honour, of a concrete involvement of the Republic of Genoa with the cause of the insurgents, even if by a unconstrained approach and not disinterested at all seems to be confirmed.

After the signature of the Treaty of Versailles, which definitively ended the hostilities with the British, the American Congress intensified his diplomatic action in Europe in order to negotiate treaties of amity and commerce with a greater number of European states. In May 1784, to carry out this delicate mission, a special commission was appointed, formed by Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. The three Ministers plenipotentiary found themselves in Paris and started to contact the diplomatic representatives of the major European powers, submitting to them a common proposal of treaty.

Everybody knows that none of the asked Italian state - the Reign of the two Sicilies, the Reign of Sardinia, the Holy Sea, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, the Republic of Venice - gave a positive answer to the American offers.[13] Even if the Republic of Genoa, as the other Italian states, didn't come to an agreement, it moved on its own initiative. In fact, before that the three American Ministers had officially informed it of their proposal, the Serenissimi entrusted Cristoforo Vincenzo Spinola, Genoese Minister to Paris, with the

task of sounding Franklin "sulla determinazione in cui elleno sono per il vantaggio del commercio de' i loro sudditi in quelle parti, di destinare un loro console o agente da risiedere in Boston colla vista che potesse essere in grado di prestare tutta la possibile assistenza nelli casi e circostanze che ne abbisognassero i bastimenti che ne fossero per approdare e fare il commercio ne' i stati delle prefate potenze americane."[14] On September 13, 1784 Franklin wrote to Spinola, in reply to a letter from the Genoese Minister of 9 September, that "previous to the appointment of a Consul, some convention will be necessary, that may ascertain his powers, privileges, &c, and that such a convention will most naturally follow a Treaty of Amity and Commerce; we take this occasion to inform you of our having full powers for making such Treaties; and that we are willing and ready to enter into a negotiation for that purpose with the Most serene Government of Genoa, whenever it shall be to them agreable."[15] Spinola referred the favourable disposition of Franklin,[16] and on the grounds of the treaties previously signed by the United State with France (1778), with Holland (1782) and Sweden (1783), and by the Republic of Genoa with Denmark (1756), in spring 1785,[17] he drawn up a "Progetto di Trattato d'Amicizia, Commercio, e di Navigazione fra la Serenissima Repubblica di Genova e i Stati Uniti dell'America Settentrionale."[18] In this document Spinola mainly cared that the articles could match "colle costituzioni de' i due stati e al comune vantaggio de' i rispettivi sudditi" and that nothing could "essere pregiudizievole a coteste pubbliche dogane, e contrario al regolamento generale di cotesto porto franco."[19] Notwithstanding the mutual good will, even this well motivated attempt didn't have consequences and Genoa, as the other Italian states, didn't come to an agreement with the American Ministers. The reasons of such a failure can only be supposed: the leaving of Franklin from Paris, perhaps a growing concern on the American side for the Algerian threat in the Mediterranean and, probably, as in the case of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, the impossibility of reaching an agreement on some specific clauses of the treaty.

But the American prospect did not fall: only a few months later, in fact, the right chance should have appeared. At the end of 1790, Giuseppe Ravara arrived in Madrid. Coming from Philadelphia, he was a young merchant who in this city of Pennsylvania had successfully made his practice at Willing, Morris & C., one of the most important American commercial companies. From Madrid, Ravara offered to fill the post of consul for the Republic in the United States.[20] In February 1791 the Serenissimi, "desiderando che li nostri sudditi, mercadanti ed altri della nostra nazione che commerciano e praticano nella città di Filadelfia e particolarmente li capitani e padroni di vascelli e bastimenti di nostra bandiera che potessero capitare in quelle parti siano ajutati, protetti, e difesi," granted him the consular license for a term of ten years.[21] Ravara, officially admitted by the President George Washington on November 1, 1791, in that moment became the first and only one Italian Consul in the United States.[22] During seven years, the tenure of his office, he sent only thirteen dispatches to Genoa, yet all rich of detailed information of the political life of a country considered without hesitation "troppo felice."[23]

That in the same period the American Congress had also considered the opportunity to settle an envoy in Genoa was confirmed by a letter of the State Secretary Timothy Pickering addressed to certain Gaetano Drago, Genoese, who expressed the desire to be appointed Consul of the United States to the Republic. Replying to such a request Pickering had acknowledged on one hand "the utility of the appointment of a Consul in that city to the citizens of the United States trading in Italy" yet on the other hand he had reminded that "the precarious footing on which our commerce in the Mediterranean has rested for several years, and the unsettled condition of our negotiations with the Barbary powers have hitherto forbid any solicitude on our part to make such consular establishments." Nevertheless explained Pickering "our prospects are now brightened, and we hope consular appointments will soon become necessary in the great Italian ports, and among them in Genoa." Moreover the State Secretary urged Drago to "transmit letters to this department from gentlemen whose characters are known among us recommending your appointment: for instance Mr Felicchy our Consul at Leghorn, Mr Cathalan our Consul at Marseilles, Mr Montgomery our Consul at Alicant, or from other persons of reputation known in the United States."[24] Nothing else is known about the fortunes of Drago; one thing is sure that the will expressed by Pickering became concrete. In his last correspondence on May 23, 1797, Ravara, taking leave of his office, could write: "A quest'ora sarà costì arrivato un console americano presso la Serenissima nostra Repubblica chiamato Child."[25]

The Serenissimi would have waited in vain for Francis Childs, this being his complete name: the first American Consul appointed, according to the documents of the National Archives, on February 27, 1797, wouldn't ever have come to Genoa.[26] A figure not very well-known, his name doesn't appear in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, Francis Childs, from his native Philadelphia, moved to New York where, starting in 1785, he became the printer of *Daily Advertiser*, one of the three federalist-inspired newspapers on whose pages Madison, Hamilton and Jay published some of the famous eighty-five articles, signed with the pseudonym Publius, universally known as *The Federalist Papers*. Little else is known about him: in 1789 he was entrusted, by the Congress, with the printing the Laws and Journals of the United States, after his first unfortunate diplomatic office he served as government agent in France and Germany and died in 1830 at Burlington, Vermont.[27]

The reasons of Childs' nonarrival can be only assumed, even if quite rightly: first the fall of the aristocratic Republic, owing to Monbello Convention (5-6 June, 1797). Then the subsequent formation of a provisional government, clearly inspired by the Directory, had to cause a natural indecision and probably persuaded the American government to take a waiting time to better evaluate the evolving of the Ligurian political situation before sending its own diplomatic representative.[28] Furthermore, another element to not underestimate, since the Jay Treaty (1794) which marked a reconciliation between United States and Great Britain, to the famous diplomatic scandal of 1797, well-known as "XYZ

affair," which gave rise to revocation, on American side, of Franco-American treaties ratified in 1778, the relations between the United States and France were progressively deteriorated and the two countries were, in those years, in a state of semi-belligerence.

In all probability, the atmosphere of strong political uncertainty induced the American Government to modify his plans: no more a diplomatic envoy directly from the United States who hardly picked things up in the chaotic situation of the time but, accepting an usual practice, a confidence man already resident on place. In this perspective, the choice of Frederick Hyde Wollaston, a British citizen from years settled in Genoa to run commercial activities, is surly interpreted. His official appointment to consul dates back to July 10, 1797, but it can be almost certainly stated that he started his office only the following year.[29] To render this conjecture quite probable two elements concur. The first dispatch existing in the National Archives sent by Wollaston to Philadelphia brings in fact the date of March 2, 1799, but through its content one can deduce that the Consul had already informed about his arrival during the early days of January of the same year. In addition to this as, for logistic reasons, from the official appointment to the real installation of the consul several months usually passed, - this period of time, for evident difficulties of communication because of war in progress could have been extended- it can be reasonably supposed that Wollaston had started to fill his consular functions at the end of 1798.[30] For sure after Leghorn and Naples, that way Genoa became the third Italian city to host a consulate of the United States. As for Francis Childs the biographical information concerning Frederick Hyde Wollaston is scarce. Son of Francis Wollaston, an Anglican minister, *fellow* of the Royal Society for his researches in astronomic field, he didn't inherit the devotion to study of natural sciences which made famous two brothers of his, Francis John e William, but he preferred to devote himself to commerce. The chosen place was Genoa: in two different years, 1787 and 1799, his name, together with that of another brother, appear among the foreign tenants of warehouses of the Genoese Portofranco.[31]

With regard to the diplomatic correspondence of Wollaston, beginning from his appointment to 1803, year of his replacement, there remain about ten dispatches, while there are several letters in the State archives of Genoa - written in a good Italian - concerning various questions and addressed to representatives of the Ligurian Republic. In the three dispatches sent to the American government during 1799 Wollaston offers an exact picture of the situation: even having Genoa and her port "totally under the control of the French," no manifestations of hostility towards him had been showed by the members of the Ligurian government who, on the contrary, had expressed "the greatest desire to see the trade with U.S. increase here" and, though still not formally accredited, they allowed him "to act in every respect in the capacity of consul."

To confirm this good disposition of the local authorities Wollaston didn't meet any difficulties to provide the American ship *Hunter* with documents, arrived in the port of Genoa at the end of January, coming from New York, and ready to leave in the spring of

that year. Notwithstanding this positive situation Wollaston didn't forget to express anxiety in receiving his credentials from American government, confirming as well the steady will to remain in his own office at all events given that "I have no doubt of being trusted with respect as no change can take place by which I can be considered individually in a more inimical light that at present arising to my being a native of Great Britain." In any case Wallaston expressed his explicit desire to be naturalized, trusting that "being employed in a publick capacity in the service of the United States will be considered by the laws as equivalent to a personal residence."[32]

However, the lag in forwarding the credentials was surmounted by a decree of the Directory of the Republic which, on May 10, officially admitted Wollaston "as consul for the United States in the port of Genoa and its districts." This measure reassured him considering a predictable imminent siege of the city by Austrian troops: "I am the more pleased at this resolution of this Government as the late successes of the Austrian armies against the French have given serious cause of alarm in this city, detachments of Austrian troops having appeared within 12 miles of the town and have met no resistance whatever and the French have drawn off not only their own garrison but also the whole of the regulars of this Republick to defend Alexandria, in so much that the town being guarded solely by unexperienced militiamen, the Directory Councils I am credibly informed have resolved in case the Austro Russians come down in any force to surrender without resistance and I understand a deputation is already appointed to that effect."[33]

On the other side, in his last dispatch of the 1799, Wollaston didn't give to much credit to a victory of the French army: "We are here again in the very same precarious state when I addressed you in may. The French who had rallied their army tho' small has taken some advantageous posts in the line of mountains that back this state and had begun to act offensively in the plains of Lombardy, but the far superior numbers of the Austro Russians have beat them on all quarters and they are now retreating to their former strongholds with far inferior forces and it appears very doubtfull if they will be able to maintain themselves there, there being great prospect of thus being cut off by the Austrians by land and the British Squad of 34 sail by sea which is cruising in this Gulph to intercept the French convoy with provisions of which we are here very short."[34] At the end of 1799, the pressures of Wollaston regarding his position to be regularized by the American government, had their first result. In fact, with a letter dated December 20, State Secretary Timothy Pickering informed the Directory of the Ligurian Republic that the President of the United States "by and with the advice and consent of the Senate," had provided to appoint Frederick H. Wollaston Consul "of the Port of Genoa, and its dependancies." Pickering, asking to admit Wollaston in the discharge of his duties, assured the Ligurian government that "the United States of America will ever be ready to reciprocate the like good offices to your Republic."[35]

Unfortunately only one dispatch of the year 1800 remains to us, but its date, June 27, is quite meaningful. Wollaston informed the American government that "this place

after two months siege had at last surrendered to the allies who had entered here on the 5th." The heroic resistance of General Massena was not so useless as it could have seem: at Marengo, a few days after, the Austrian troops had been "so totally defeated that General Melas the commander in chief was obliged to sign a capitulation." Regarding these facts Wollaston considered it opportune to inform, by courier, both Rufus King, American Minister plenipotentiary to London, and the American negotiators who were in Paris dealing with Napoleon to end the condition of semi-belligerence existing between the two countries; agreement, known as the Peace of Morfontaine, was ratified on September 30. Even in a time of great agitation Wollaston, once again, did not forget to remind in his dispatch, with some uneasiness, the impossibility of having credentials at his disposal, just when, after the return of the French, a new government "is about to be established."[36] Actually, with the arrival from Paris of the French Minister plenipotentiary Dejan, instructed by Napoleon himself to reorganize the institution of the republican government, Genoa would have virtually lost her political autonomy. Meanwhile Wollaston could only rejoice at the Franco-American agreement and to give the news to Citizen Bartolomeo Boccardi, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Ligurian Republic, wishing that the reestablished stability of the relations between France and United States, could be positively reflected on Ligurian Republic, "onde consolidare sempre più i legami che devono unire le due Repubbliche."[37] Maybe not casually after this reconciliation, at the end of 1800 the reiterated requests of Wollaston about his accrediting met with success: in fact President John Adams, by one of the last acts of his presidency, on November 8, signed the official appointment of Wollaston to consul.[38]

By the few documents at our disposal, during two and half years in which Wollaston filled his consular office, assisted by a vice consul, another Englishman, Joseph Walsh, he carried on *routine* duties, mostly concerning the presence in the port of the city of American ships, in an atmosphere marked by the "most amicable disposition on the part of this Government to the United States."[39] But beside the extreme precariousness of the political situation in Europe which at the very moment made sea trade a difficult practice, in the eyes of the American government, the persistent threat moved by the pirates of Tripoli and Algiers to the navigation in the Mediterranean was the question of the greatest seriousness. In February 1800, Wollaston, in a letter addressed to Gio Batta Rossi, Charged of the Foreign Relations of the Ligurian Republic, referred "essere imminente una rottura fra il Pascià di quella Reggenza [Tripoli] e gli Stati Uniti in conseguenze di certe pretensioni ingiuste ed umilianti con l'indipendenza d'una nazione libera come la nostra."[40] One year later the American consul informed Rossi again that all the efforts turned out to be vain and that the Regency of Tripoli had officially declared war on Unites States.[41] Wollaston, in a dispatch dated June 10, 1801, explained his opinions in this connection, thinking that "a very small squadron well commanded would suffice not only to scour these seas of those pirates," but would oblige them to look for a rapid conclusion of the conflict, "which would be of most essential consequence to the trade of U.S. by keeping

the other Barbarian Potentates in aide."[42] In October 1803, by a detailed memoir he came back to the subject, suggesting a real plan of intervention that, according to his opinion, could have rely on the support of the Ligurian Republic. On account of the growing presence of the United States "to all quarters of the globe and in particular to the Mediterranean," wrote Wollaston "seems to render it worthy of the sollecitude of Congress to form a treaty of amity and commerce with the Grand Seigneur of the Ottoman Empire which would pave the way to a very considerable and advantageous branch of trade to the Levant and would at the same time greatly contribute to the stability and permanence of peace with the several Barbary States which have been hitherto a great barrier to the extending traffic to those port."[43]

President Thomas Jefferson, not disposed to satisfy the blackmailing of the pirates at all, adopted a similar conduct to that recommended by Wollaston, sending a naval squadron to Mediterranean. This enterprise, even if not resolving the problem at all, met the favour of the public opinion and gave rise to a patriotic enthusiasm mostly when, in 1804, Stephen Decatur, an American naval officer, daringly sailed into the Bay of Tripoli to rescue American prisoners captured by the pirates, an action that Lord Nelson called "the most bold and daring act of the age."[44]

In the 1803, with the renewal of hostilities, the situation became critical again. In one of his last dispatches, dated July 25, 1803, Wollaston, referring to the decree of the Ligurian Senate which prohibited the admittance into the ports of the Republic "of all goods the produce of England and her Colonies," made his economic difficulties known with great regret: "several considerable losses" had obliged him and his partnership in trade "to declare a state of bankruptcy about two months ago." Hoping for a rapid solution of this personal affair the consul feared that some "invidious people" could take advantage of the situation to promote their own candidature and to succeed him. "I am the more desirous of retaining my post" wrote Wollaston, remembering that, anyway, his action and his experience - "being well acquainted at this place and its resources by 18 years residence"- couldn't be discussed. In any case he asked for a leave "to visit the United. States to settle some claims and see my friends there for the promotion of trade to this country."[45] But with no regards to this concern American government had decided to substitute Wollaston, and in November 1803 had appointed in his place John M. Goetschius.[46] Unfortunately the new Consul wouldn't ever arrive in Genoa: the information of his death, which occurred in Cadiz in September 1804, owing to an epidemic of yellow fever, can be read in the last dispatch sent by Wollaston to Washington on March 16, 1805.[47]

Several months later, a new and this time the first American-born Consul, finally came to Genoa, Peter Kuhn Jr., while a further political change was definitively determining the destiny of the Republic: "I seize this opportunity to advise you the sudden changement which is on the point of taking place here" wrote Kuhn Jr. in May 1805 "since the arrival of the French Emperor at Milan. This Senate was suddenly ordered to

assemble last Saturday, when the French Minister residing here presented the Emperor letter requesting that this country should demand to be united to France; the Senate after much debate and unless opposition decreed that the Books be immediately opened for the people to sanction the union, and that all those who did not appear would be supposed as favorable votes."[48]

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NOTES

*This paper is strictly connected and greatly indebted to Luca Codignola's paper "Note sugli inizi del consolato americano a Genova," read during this Confertence but not published in this volume.

1. Archivio di Stato di Genova (hereafter ASG), Archivio Segreto (hereafter AS), 2291, Ageno ai Serenissimi, Londra, 26 Febbraio, 1765.

2. ASG, AS, 2293, Ageno ai Serenissimi, Londra, 5 Gennaio, 1776. In the following dispatch the determined will of the insurgents came out still more firmly to testify the irreversibility of the decisions taken: "Gli articoli della generale Confederazione, di cui diedi breve ragguaglio nel precedente mio foglio, dimostrano il funesto apparato delle cose avvenire e l'assoluta indipendenza a cui tendono gli Americani, mediante tutti gli atti di sovranità che da qui in avanti hanno intrapreso di esercitare. L'arbitrio di far la pace e la guerra, di contrattare alleanze, i regolamenti del commercio, il corso delle monete, lo stabilimento delle poste e la comune associazione ed assistenza che vicendevolmente si promettono, sono tutte particolarità espresse e convenute negli articoli superiormente indicati, che accennano i fondamenti d'un futuro ben regolato Governo, e che danno peso e consistenza alla premeditata Confederazione. È bensì vero che detti articoli non formeranno epoca di stabilità, e che all'occasione del venturo Congresso indicato ad Annapoli Provincia di Maryland, dove i Delegati di ciascuna Colonia dovranno apporre la loro accessione e ratifica ai medesimi, quando ne restino autorizzati dalle rispettiva municipali assemblee, al cui esame ed approvazione sono stati trasmessi dal Congresso recentemente disciolto che li ha regolati. Siccome però il risultato d'un maturo esame ed una risoluta perseveranza, in cui i rappresentanti delle stesse colonie sono concorsi, così non si prevede che alcuna sia per retrocedere da ciò che rende la loro unione più ferma ed indissolubile" (ivi, Ageno to Serenissimi, London, January 12, 1776).

3. Ibid., Ageno ai Serenissimi, Londra, 20 Agosto, 1776.

4. Ibid., 2760 A.

5. Ibid., 2293, Ageno ai Serenissimi, Londra, 5 Dicembre, 1777.

6. Ibid., Serenissimi a Ageno, Genova, 28 Giugno, 1777.

7. "Questa barca avea servito la Compagnia del Soccorso contro gl'infedeli, ed era stata venduta al pubblico incanto e comprata dal negoziante Alberto Causa, in modo che i sospetti contenuti nella lettera d'incerto autore si sono trovati totalmente destituiti di fondamento" (ibid.).

8. Ibid., Ageno ai Serenissimi, Little Hampton, Sussex, 18 Luglio, 1777.

9. Ibid., Serenissimi a Ageno, Genova, 19 Agosto, 1777.

10. Ibid., Ageno ai Serenissimi, Londra, 19 Settembre, 1777. Also in this case the replay of the Republic was prudent: "Sul proposito di quanto ci scrivete in questa ultima, restate appunto abbastanza istruito dai precedenti dispacci per smentire opportunamente le voci e circostanze impresse sulle pubbliche carte e potete aggiungere la notoria circostanza che non vi sono nostri bastimenti ne della segnata portata, ne di altra anche minore" (ivi, Serenissimi a Ageno, Genova, 11 Ottobre, 1777).

11. "Il Ministro Ageno di Londra ha tramandato a VVSS Serenissime il capitolo di una di quelle gazzette, in cui si suppone la conclusione di un trattato tra la Serenissima Repubblica con li Stati Uniti di America e che la negoziazione di tale trattato sia stata fatta da certo Savage, che siasi intrattenuto in Genova da circa due anni; VVSS Serenissime hanno deliberato che si incarichi detto Ministro Ageno a far pure inserire in alcune di quelle gazzette un altro capitolo con cui si smentisca detto supposto, quale sogno o chimera, con rilevare la totale insussistenza di consimile trattato, e di qualunque apertura, o discorso, non avendosi tampoco cognizione, o notifica dell'indicato Savage" (ivi, 1730, *Relazione dell'Eccellentissima Giunta della Marina relativamente al capitolo di Gazzetta rimesso dal Magnifico Ministro Ageno di Londra,* 27 Aprile, 1778).

12. Ibid., 2293, Serenissimi a Ageno, Genova, 14 Maggio, 1778.

13. See: Visconti; Cortese; Codignola; della Vecchia.

14. ASG, AS, 2259, Spinola ai Serenissimi, Parigi, 6 Settembre, 1784.

15. *The Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States of America* 506-507.

16. "Il Signor Franklin mi rispose che non solamente era persuaso della convenienza di ciò che dalla Repubblica si desiderava e dello interesse che possano avervi i Stati Uniti che rappresenta, ma della cooperazione altresi che i medesimi non mancheranno di apportarvi con eleggere anch'egli un loro console da risiedere a Genova" (ASG, AS, 2259, Spinola ai Serenissimi, Parigi, 13 Settembre, 1784).

17. "Credo per ora non poter meglio corrispondere alle giuste premure di VVSS Serenissime riguardo a detti oggetti che di loro richiamare la spedizione che ho presa la libertà di far loro nel mese di Luglio 1783 d'un libro che questo Signor di Franklin trasmesso mi aveva in idioma francese intitolato *Constitutions des treize Etats Units del'Amerique* nel quale si trovano i trattati d'amicizia e di commercio che i prefati Stati Uniti hanno fatti colla Francia, l'Olanda e la Svezia" (ivi, Spinola ai Serenissimi, 7 Marzo, 1785).

18. "La Serenissima Repubblica di Genova e i Tredici Stati Uniti dell'America Settentrionale, cioè New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pensylvania, le Contee di New Castle, di Kent, e di Sussex sopra la Delawara, Maryland, Virginia, Carolina Settentrionale, Carolina Meridionale, e Giorgia, desiderando sinceramente di stabilire una amicizia solida e permanente ed una perfetta intelligenza hanno giudicato necessario per ottenere un fine così desiderabile, di fissare in una maniera stabile ed equa le regole che devono servire di metodo relativamente alla corrispondenza e al commercio che le due parti hanno stimato opportuno di fissare fra i loro rispettivi paesi, stati, sudditi, e abitanti. La Serenissima Repubblica di Genova e i Stati Uniti hanno creduto non poter meglio riempire questo oggetto, che stabilendo per base delle loro misure l'eguaglianza e la reciprocità la più perfetta, evitando tutte le preferenze onerose, le quali sono ordinariamente una sorgente di discussioni, imbarazzi, e di malcontentamenti, e lasciando a ciascuna delle parti la libertà di fare riguardo al commercio e alla navigazione i regolamenti interni che saranno della maggiore sua convenienza" (ivi, 2760 A).

19. Ibid., 2259, Spinola ai Serenissimi, 21 Marzo, 1785.

20. On Ravara, see: Rotta.

21. ASG, Giunta di Marina 12.

22. "Ieri, primo di novembre, a 3 ore dopo il mezzo giorno sono stato presentato al Generale Washington, Presidente de' Stati Uniti, per mezzo del secretario di stato e ricevuto con il maggior aggrado e riguardo. (…) Il Presidente con la sua naturale amabile serietà mi fece qualche domande indifferenti sopra la nostra Serenissima Repubblica e risposi laconicamente. Poi, sapendo ch'io sono stato al Perù ed alla Cina, passò a poche superficiali domande di que' paesi" (ASG, AS, 2707, Ravara ai Serenissimi, Philadelphia, 2 Novembre, 1791).

23. Ravara didn't miss out on the occasion to explain the significant transformations which had took place in the American constitutional system: "Durante l'ultima Costituzione era tanto limitato il potere del Congresso che non era nemmeno autorizzato a porre dei diritti, di modo che il debito nazionale restò per ben tredici anni senza proviggioni sufficienti per pagarne gli interessi, e da ciò si originò la decadenza del credito pubblico. La nuova Costituzione fece conoscere la necessità di conferire più energia al dipartimento legislativo ed

esecutivo del Congresso, ciò che fece intieramente cambiare l'antico sistema, per il quale i differenti Stati s'erano risservato individualmente il potere che giudicarono essenziale al loro particolare interesse di maniera che ciascuno che li convenisse" (ivi, Ravara ai Serenissimi, Philadelphia, 16 Ottobre, 1791). The Genoese Consul was not only a brilliant observer of the American political life; this is the description of the celebration of the Columbus Day, on occasion of the third centenary of the discovery of America: "Ho fatto una scorsa al Nord ed al Sud e mi trovai a Nuova-York nell'occasione dell'anniversario che si celebrava di Cristoforo Colombo, ove si alzò la bandiera genovese e si tributarono omaggi alle arme di una nazione che fu patria d'un uomo sì celebre. Si è pur distinto un tal giorno in Philadelphia ed in altre molte parti dell'Unione con segni di gioia e d'affetto" (ivi, Ravara ai Serenissimi, Philadelphia, 20 Novembre, 1792).

24. National Archives at College Park, Md. (hereafter NA), State Department Central Files (Record Group 59), Diplomatic and Consular Instructions of the Department of State 1791-1801, Microfilm publication M-28, roll 3, Pickering to Drago, Philadelphia, December 7, 1796.

25. ASG, AS, 2707, Ravara ai Serenissimi, Philadelphia, 23 Maggio, 1797.

26. NA, U.S. Consuls-Genoa, Microfilm publication M-587, roll 8.

27. On Childs, see: Childs.

28. See: Assereto.

29. NA, U.S. Consuls-Genoa, Microfilm publication, M-587 roll 8.

30. NA, Consular Despatches from Genoa, 1799-1906, Microfilm publication T-64 roll 1 (hereafter CDG), Wollaston to Department of State, Genoa, March 2, 1799: "I enclose you copy of my respects 6 Jan and have now the pleasure to inform you, that on the 31 January arrived here the first American ship that has come to this port since my arrival…"

31. On Francis Wollaston, see: *Dictionary of National Biography*, XVII, 778-779. About the commercial activities of the Wollaston brothers in Genoa, see also: Grendi.

32. NA, CDG, Wollaston to Department of State, Genoa, March 2, 1799.

33. Ibid., Wollaston to Department of State, Genoa, May 18, 1799.

34. Ibid., Wollaston to Department of State, Genoa, June 29, 1799.

35. Ibid., Diplomatic and Consular Instructions of the Department of State 1791-1801, Microfilm publication M-28, roll 5, Pickering to Citizens Directors of the Ligurian Republic, Philadelphia, December 20, 1799.

36. Ibid., CDG, Wollaston to Department of State, Genoa, June 27, 1800.

37. ASG, AS, 2951, Wollaston a Boccardi, Genova, 7 Novembre, 1800.

38. Ibid., 2798 B.

39. NA, CDG, Wollaston to Depatment of State, Genoa, June 10, 1801. "Dovendo assentarmi da Genova per affari particolari e per alcune relazioni commerciali dell'America, ho stimato d'incaricare di quelle relazioni che possano occorrere seco voi il mio Secretario Gio Pietro Fasy come mio aggiunto inoltre del Vice Console mio Signor Giuseppe Walsh, quale ha qui l'onore d'esservi già cognito" (ASG, AS, 2953, Wollaston a Rossi, Genova, 12 Settembre, 1801).

40. ASG, AS, 2953, Wollaston a Rossi, Genova, 14 Febbraio, 1800.

41. Ibid., Wollaston a Rossi, Genova, 18 Aprile, 1801. In the first months of that year the situation rapidly deteriorated: "I had the honor to inform you in my circular letters of November 1800 and 3 January 1801 of the state of our affairs with this Regency. I have now to add that all hope of accomodation have subsided: I therefore request you to detain all merchant vessels navigating under the flag of the United States in port, and by no means to permit any of them to sail, unless they are under convoy, as I am convinced that the

Bashaw of Tripoli will commence hostilities against the United States of America in less than sixty days from the date hereof and I am persuaded he has made his demands upon the United States for no other reason than to have an unjust excuse for capturing our vessels and enslaving our fellow citizens, they being of such a nature that none but the President of the United States, and with the consent of the Senate, can agree to; and I having offered him the sum of thirty thousands dollars merely to state his demands, and wait untill answers arrive from the President which he has refused to accept, is sufficient proof that his intentions are as I have stated them, and dictates the necessity of taking every precaution in order to prevent our vessels from falling into their hands. James Leander Catheart, Chancery of the United States of America at Tripoli in Barbary 21 February 1801" (ivi, *Circular to all Agents and Consuls of the United States of America residing in the different ports of France, Spain and Portugal, Italy and Barbary States, and British garrisons in the Mediterranean and others whom it doth, or may concern*). Wollaston added that "in seguito della guerra dichiarata da quella Reggenza alli Stati Uniti predetti dovevano partire alli 25 maggio sudetto li sotto segnati Corsari Tripolini per incrociare sopra le coste d'Europa"; that is to say a naval squadron formed by 7 ships, armed with 106 cannons, and 850 men (ivi, Wollaston a Rossi, Genova, 6 Giugno, 1801).

42. NA, CDG, Wollaston to Department of State, Genoa, June 10, 1801.

43. Ibid., Wollaston to Depatment of State, Genoa, October 8, 1803.

44. Allison 187-206.

45. NA, CDG, Wollaston to Department of State, Genoa, July 25, 1803.

46. Ibid., U.S. Consuls-Genoa, Microfilm publication M-587, roll 8.

47. Ibid., CDG, Wollaston to Department of State, Genoa, March 16, 1805.

48. Ibid., Kuhn Jr. to Department of State, Genoa, May 29, 1805.

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PEACE AND COMMERCE WITH EVERY NATION: THOMAS JEFFERSON AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN COMMERCIAL POLICY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

SUSANNA DELFINO

To Americans of the revolutionary generation peace and commerce were synonyms. Their belief that commerce - an indubitable right of man - was the surest vehicle of progress, liberty, and peace among the peoples had received a first, formal sanction in the Preamble to the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with France of 1778 which declared: "commerce and navigation … not empire … are the principles upon which our confederate republic is founded" (Field 137). However isolationist on matters of political relations with foreign nations, the philosophy of the Founding Fathers was, in fact, strongly internationalist and expansive as far as the individual was concerned. Reconciling these two apparently conflicting facets of American thought, Thomas Jefferson was the proponent of an expansive American culture which, transcending the two extreme visions of the most orthodox Federalists and Republicans, postulated an original style for the American presence abroad. Jefferson's *First Inaugural Address* of March 4 1801 was indeed pervaded by an expansive spirit which manifested itself as he described the United States not only as "a rising nation, spread over a wide and fruitful land, engaged in commerce with nations, " but also, through open recourse to the seafaring metaphor, as a "vessel in which we are embarked amidst the conflicting elements of a troubled world" (Wicker 166).

Gilbert Chinard, one of Jefferson's early biographers, had not only noted the expansive nature of the vision of the future of the United States entertained by the "Sage of Monticello" but had also emphasized his warlike inclination, portraying him as a man very different from the agrarian pacifist that his hagiographers presented (Chinard 443). It is worth highlighting, however, that Jefferson had shown these proclivities well before he became president. His early thought on matters of commercial relations thus provided the solid ground on which Jefferson later developed the main lines of an American strategy for the Mediterranean which, for many decades to come, would imply the presence of the United States in those waters despite the fact that its commerce there continued to be well below expectations - and certainly far inferior to that entertained with Great Britain, France, and Spain (Woodruff 268-69; Secretary of the Treasury, *Reports*: 1851, 318-19; 1852, 40).[1]

During the long confrontation between the United States and the Barbary regencies - which reached a first, critical moment in 1785, when Algerians seized two American ships, taking twenty-one prisoners - John Adams, following the practice then common among the European powers, declared himself in favor of negotiating the release of the prisoners against the payment of a ransom. Quite the contrary, Jefferson immediately

urged the building of a navy to assert and defend freedom of trade in the Mediterranean. Moreover, he suggested that the United States pursue alliances with small nations - presumably more interested in economic prosperity than in outright domination - such as the Kingdom of Naples, Portugal, Venice, Denmark, and Sweden, to patrol the Mediterranean and guarantee safety of navigation there. Congress, however, rejected his proposal (Irwin 40-50, Cappon 582-84).

From 1790, in his new capacity as Secretary of State, Jefferson reiterated his argument for the creation of a navy, on the basis of the importance of the Mediterranean trade for the United States. However, his proposal always met with fierce opposition. Congress would appropriate money to pay ransoms and keep peace with the Barbary regencies, but would not undertake strong measures to defend freedom of commerce and navigation in the Mediterranean (Field 34-36, 42-43). Jefferson did not give up and, in 1793, he finally produced that masterpiece of political persuasion which is the *Report on the Privileges and Restrictions on the Commerce of the United States in Foreign Countries*. A year later, the American navy was finally established by the Federalist administration.

What Jefferson suggested in his *Report* was the adoption of a firm attitude towards the many restrictions - not to say vexations - to which the American merchant marine was subjected by the European powers, Great Britain first of all. Under the rule of reciprocity, each penalizing measure adopted by them to the damage of American commerce ought to be followed by a corresponding counter-measure (Wicker 109-20). Castigating the more orthodox Federalists, whom he stigmatized as mere slaves to the interests of the British, Jefferson maintained that America would not be completely free until perfect freedom of commerce should be established; and it was unlikely that the European powers would wilfully grant it. However - so Jefferson argued - "would even a single nation begin with the United States this system of free commerce, it would be advisable to begin it with that nation; since it is one by one only that it can be extended to all" (Wicker 117). Jefferson was thus the proponent of a gradualist plan in the development of American commercial relations, and the Mediterranean offered this possibility. There, a little known world, the Levant, disclosed its wealth, and Americans approached it in an unprejudiced manner, with the faith that trade would not only bring mutual prosperity, but also the progress of civilization. They sought freedom of the seas, not political interference. The individualistic and commercial nature of their presence abroad, which translated into the fact that American consuls and *chargé d'affaires* normally coupled the performance of their public office with the pursuance of private business, won them the confidence of the potentates of the southern Mediterranean shores and, between 1787 and 1805, the United States was able to stipulate commercial treaties with Morocco and the Barbary regencies. However, owing to the protraction of the war in Europe and the many vexations to which American vessels were subjected both by England and France, the naval squadron Jefferson had sent to the Mediterranean two weeks after his first election could not be withdrawn. Rather, in his sixth annual message to Congress of

December 1806, he asked that it be strengthened further, on the ground that the uncertainty of relations with the European powers could jeopardize American commerce at any time (Wicker 201). This measure revealed itself far-sighted for, with the outbreak of the war of 1812, Tunis and Tripoli, instigated by Great Britain, stopped honoring their treaties with the United States and renewed their acts of piracy against American vessels. This situation was compounded by the unfriendly attitude of Spain, originally due to the Louisiana Purchase and, later, to the eastern Florida question and the position taken by the United States on the issue of the independence of the Spanish American colonies.

Yet, commerce with the Levant, and especially with Smyrna and Constantinople, kept growing. Opium especially, to be destined to the commerce with China, was exchanged in large quantities for New England rum. With these promising prospects, from 1819 the United States began to seek a commercial treaty with Turkey, an attempt which did not stop even with the outbreak of the Greek war for independence. On that occasion, the political debate that took place within the United States confirmed, in fact, the eminently commercial nature of the American presence in the Mediterranean as the maintenance of fruitful and promising commercial relations with Turkey prevailed over idealistic considerations about American support of the principle of self-determination. Ultimately, however, the much cherished commercial expansion in the Black Sea, following the treaty with Turkey of 1831, as well as that in Persia and Egypt, proved illusory owing to the similarity of their exports with those of the United States. The new American tariff of 1828 also created problems for the few products that could be imported from those countries, among which raw wool (Fields 125-28, 194-97; Taussig 89-97). Toward the end of the 1840s, American commerce in the Mediterranean seemed to languish as part of the tonnage was diverted to meet the needs of the booming Pacific trade. However, the Crimean war soon gave renewed impulse to American exports of rum, sugar and flour to Constantinople (Williams 251-56, Hutchins 266-68).

Since the end of the eighteenth century, the commercial interests of the United States in the Mediterranean had also regarded the Italian peninsula and, between 1793 and 1799, consulates had been opened in Leghorn (1793), Naples (1796), Rome (1797) and Genoa (1799). Americans devoted an early attention to the Kingdom of Naples, not only owing to the considerable volume of their imports of raw silk, oil, wines, citrus fruits and sulphur from there, but also because of the strategic location of Sicilian ports as prospective depots for the stores destined to the Mediterranean squadron. After 1815, however, American commercial relations with what had meanwhile become the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies suffered at length from diplomatic tensions, and did not improve much until after the advent of Ferdinand II to the throne (Marraro, *Diplomatic Relations* I, 18-19). In 1832, c*hargé d'affaires* John Nelson wrote to Secretary of State Edward Livingston, "our commercial interchanges with the ports of the Sicilies are extremely limited … our trade is almost wholly confined to the importation into the United States of the silks of Naples, and the wines and fruits of the island of Sicily - our exports to the

Kingdom being merely nominal" (Marraro, *Diplomatic Relations* I, 315). Nelson ascribed this depressed state of commerce to two reasons: the rigor of sanitary regulations enacted by the Bourbons and the discrimination in duties on imports in favor of certain privileged nations (Great Britain, France, Spain). With the existing high tariffs, including those charged by the United States, commerce with the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was forced to take quite a tortuous route. Still in 1843, American tobacco reached Naples by way of Marseille, and Sicilian olive oil was brought to the United States via the port of Trieste, which handled a considerable share of the carrying trade to the United States. This situation persisted until 1856, when a commercial treaty granting to the United States the status of the most favored nation was finally stipulated with the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (Marraro, *Diplomatic Relations* I, 586).

The first treaty of commerce and navigation with the Kingdom of Sardinia was signed in Genoa in November 1838, immediately generating an increase in American exports to that city. This was especially true for cotton, a staple which Americans had always had great difficulties in placing on the Mediterranean markets. Initially, however, the Kingdom of Sardinia did not appear to be of any great importance to Americans, having little to offer in return and, in 1844, a proposal to write Piedmont off from fund appropriations for the support of consular representations abroad was defeated in the U.S. Congress only on the ground of the strategic importance of the Ligurian coast as "a resort for our Mediterranean naval squadron" (Marraro, *L'unificazione italiana* X-XIII). In effect, as a result of the long controversy with Spain about the use of Port Mahon as a base for the American navy, in 1848 Americans asked for and obtained permission to establish a duty free depot at La Spezia (Trauth 5).

The prospects for American commercial intercourse with Genoa were increasingly recognized by Americans and, in 1860, consul William L. Patterson enthusiastically reported that, during the previous year, tobacco and cotton imports had amounted to 188,573 and 979,009 dollars respectively, out of a total value of imports of 1,789,416 dollars (*Abstracts of Consular Returns*: 1860, 385).[2] However, the problem with the port of Genoa was its inability to provide for sufficient return cargoes, so that the vessels were forced to resort to other Mediterranean harbors, or to go on ballast. In 1865, consul D. W. Wheeler reported that exports from Genoa to the United States had amounted to 309,491 dollars of a total of about 4 million and a half dollars in outbound traffic handled by the port, while imports had been in excess of 37 million dollars (*Abstracts of Consular Returns*: 1865, 447-48). This situation was certainly worsened by the economic decisions of the Genoese exporters who, in consideration of the level of duties and the cost of labor, preferred to ship their merchandise in Sardinian vessels. For this reason Luigi Monti, American consul in Palermo, expressed himself against the choice of Genoa as the Italian terminal for the steamship line that was about to be established with New York. Genoa, in his opinion, did not export enough to the United States, while either Palermo or Messina, which exported two million and a half dollars worth of merchandise annually, would have been better choices (*Abstracts of Consular Returns*: 1865, 457).

However, all evidence to the contrary, the United States wished to retain a privileged relationship with Genoa, the strategic importance of which was not overlooked - especially after the completion of the railroad connecting Genoa, Turin and Geneva - in view of further expansion of commercial links as far northward as Switzerland and Germany. In the Ligurian Gulf, La Spezia as well was not neglected as a possible base to further American commerce. In this regard, already in 1857 consul Robert Leese had suggested that the coal and lead mined nearby might be loaded on American ships at La Spezia, thus at least partly obviating the problems existing with return cargoes (*Abstracts of Consular Returns*: 1857, 310-312).

The United States did not stipulate commercial treaties with any other state of the peninsula before Italian Unification, even though this did not necessarily mean total absence of commercial intercourse.[3] Generally speaking, the balance of trade of the United States with each of its Italian commercial partners showed wide variations, being either export-oriented as in the case of the Sardinian possessions, or import-oriented as in the case of Tuscany. Only commerce with the Two Sicilies appeared relatively more balanced. In 1855, the southern Kingdom imported from the United States to a value of about 700,000 dollars, and exported goods worth about 1,700,000 dollars). By that time, the commercial exchange entertained by the United States with Turkey was definitely smaller than that carried on with the Italian peninsula as a whole (*Statistical View of the Commerce*: 1855, 326-27). Trade figures for 1864 showed some improvement in the volume of exports from the former Kingdom of Sardinia to the United States, although its imports continued to be far greater. The "Two Sicilies," meantime, had almost reached parity in their import/export balance with the United States (*Statistical View of the Commerce*: 1864, 320-21).[4]

The period following the American Civil War saw deep changes in the Mediterranean. The financial breakdown of the Ottoman Empire, the insurrection in the Balkans, the Russian-Turkish conflict, the French acquisition of Tunis and the British takeover of Egypt were accompanied by the affirmation in Europe and the United States of a new ideological climate rife with racist overtones, which increasingly polluted American relations with the Mediterranean countries. Even the relations of the United States with Italy, that had seemed to find a solid basis in the signing of the first commercial treaty in 1871, began to be spoiled by lurking allusions to racial hierarchies, reinforced by the polemics which accompanied the first migratory waves from Italy to the United States (Trauth 81-103). Moreover, the tariff structures of the two countries did not facilitate commercial exchange. In 1886, 4.9% of the Italian exports went to the United States, a trifling figure as compared with the 44.3% that went to France. In the same year, Italian imports from the United States amounted to a mere 3.7% of the total, a percentage far inferior to what the country imported from Great Britain and Germany (Zamagni 123).

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, deep changes occurred in the nature, composition and direction of American commerce with the Mediterranean. As the figure of the overseas merchant as an independent intermediary was being supplanted by

the rise of large mercantile houses, the United States was increasingly becoming an exporter of finished products rather than of raw materials. Drastic reduction in Mediterranean tonnage and the growth of carrying trade were matched by a reorientation of American commerce towards the ports of Northern Europe. Also, the import/export balance with the Levant reversed: while the United States had traditionally imported from the Levant three or four times as much as they would import, now Americans exported there arms, ammunitions, and oil on a very large scale (Williamson 554-58, 574-75).

From the 1880s, consular reports became more exhaustive and analytical in their study of marketing potentials for American products in the Mediterranean countries. In 1885, for instance, consul Fletcher from Genoa made an investigation of the prospects for the sale of American oil in that port as compared with Russian oil. As he remarked, the latter had a competitive advantage over American oil because it was imported directly from the Black Sea through England at lower costs, thus inducing the few importers who controlled the Genoese market to prefer it over American oil (*Consular Reports*: 1885-86, 453).

The Mediterranean commerce of the United States had been problematic throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, largely because the achievement of favourable terms of trade with the smaller countries was hindered by their timidity toward the European powers - especially Great Britain - with whom they already had binding commercial treaties in force. Their political subordination to the latter also played a major role. For instance, the Napoleonic invasion of the peninsula entailed severe limitations to the Italian commerce (Clauder 27-91, 139-216). Only from the 1830s was the United States able to conclude advantageous commercial treaties. However, the important fact remained that American commerce in the Mediterranean continued to be heavily unbalanced up to the Civil War era. Until the early 1850s, imports to the Levant were as purely nominal as those to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Conversely, The Kingdom of Sardinia was an eminently importing country, having but little to offer in exchange. Despite the fact that the volume of their Mediterranean commerce was trifling as compared with that entertained with continental and northern Europe, Americans insisted in a policy of presence. Originally inspired by the Jeffersonian idea of the fundamental importance of the symbolic presence of the American flag in those waters, be it even by a single vessel, that policy was fruitful in the long run. With their availability to put their services and technology at the disposal of other peoples while refraining from getting involved in their political struggles, they had little by little earned the respect of the Barbary regents and the Turks, of the Egyptians and the Persians as well. Now, America made weapons available to them without asking whether they would actually be used to forward the noble end of the inalienable human right to self-determination. Differently from the auspices of the revolutionary generation, commerce was becoming more and more estranged from the realization of those peaceful aims for which it had originally been conceived.

Università degli Studi di Genova

NOTES

1. Still in 1851-52, the United States exported to Great Britain goods worth over 100 million dollars as compared with the fifteen million dollars worth of merchandise exported to Mediterranean ports, including the Spanish and French ones.

2. American exports to Genoa included animal skins, sugar, tobacco and wheat above all. Exports, amounting to 139,792 dollars in value, mainly pertained silk, gloves, rags, and fruit.

3. In 1855, the United States exported almost 2 million dollars worth of merchandise to the Kingdom of Sardinia (the heaviest Italian importer of American goods), and 1 million and 200,000 dollars worth of goods to the Austrian possessions in Italy. They imported products to the value of about 1 million and 700,000 dollars respectively from the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the Grand-Duchy of Tuscany.

4. Curiously, for a number of years after the Italian Unification, trade reports continued to refer to the former political subdivisions of the peninsula.

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WORKSHOP SEVEN
"SENSITIVE AS ANY WOMAN": NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN WOMEN AND MEDITERRANEAN MASCULINITIES

CHAIR: ANNA SCACCHI

Since Edward Said's monumental study of the representation of the East in Western culture - claiming that the Oriental discourse provided images of the Eastern Other as morally corrupted, effeminate, weak, sensual and idle, against which the Western subject could define itself as rational, moral, healthy and manly, and at the same time functioned as a disciplinary practice "for dealing with the Orient" (3) - Orientalism has become the object of a sustained and growing interest. Said's claim that the Orient - a large nondescript area including the Mediterranean as well as the Far East, and bordering with the South, invented by Europe and constructed as a gendered "place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (1) - has been instrumental both in the definition of national identities and the legitimization of colonialism and imperialism, has had an enormous influence, and still has. Postcolonialists have critiqued his monolithic and static definition of Orientalism, which does not allow for differences within Western and Eastern cultures. Above all they have attacked his relying on a top-down model, which excludes the possibility of a reversed gaze and the existence of a contact zone where significant cultural exchanges did occur. They have all recognized, however, their debts to his pathbreaking study.

In the last decade or so, Said's notion of Orientalism has also been critiqued by feminist scholars, who have attacked the idea of its being an "exclusively male province" (188), configuring the intercourse between the East and the West as a heterosexual relation between a white, dominant male and a dark, subjugated female body. As Malini Schueller points out, in her *US Orientalisms*, "[t]his configuration […] problematically assumes desire to be a male prerogative alone and situates masculinity as always powerful and separate from that (Woman) which it seeks to control; it also assumes a heterosexist model for gender relations" (5).

Including women in the circulation of Orientalism and using gender as a tool of analysis complicates and dynamicizes Said's dichotomous description of two monolithic blocks facing each other. Not only, as postcolonial studies have emphasized, are there many Orients. There are also many different Orientalisms, representations of the Mediterranean and Eastern Other which are shaped by gender, race, class, age, sexuality, and context. These coordinates are particularly relevant in the American discourses of the Orient, because in the US the dark Other is located both outside and within national boundaries and claims his/her right to citizenship. Indeed, in the nineteenth century, India provided a

powerful model of spirituality for Transcendentalism, while the Islamic world was consistently represented as barbaric and treacherous. Given the importance of Exodus in the founding myths of the nation, the presence of Egyptian geography in Abolitionist accounts of the Southern States signifies the lack of American freedoms. Representations of Egypt appear strikingly unhomogeneous, however, if one also takes into account texts by black writers, who looked at Africa as a mythic site of identity, and they are further complicated by the fact that Exodus was also important as a political myth of deliverance for slaves.

In Said's characterization of Orientalism as a male discourse disciplinating Western relations with the Orient, the presence of women as participants in the production of texts about the East is largely overlooked. Their presence, however, has been remarkable at least since the turn of the eighteenth century, and tended to become prominent in the last decades of the nineteenth century. This was, as Henry James remarks in his "Preface" to *The Portrait of a Lady*, a "wonderful age" when travelling abroad had become, "even for the 'frail vessels' […] a mild adventure" (xvi). While American women travelled to Europe and the Mediterranean by the thousands and enjoyed access to the Old World more and more often without chaperons - a phenomenon whose novelty and unsettling potential for social and cultural mores is proved by the number of texts anxiously trying to discipline the practice - a few bold women embarked on dangerous trips as far as Syria, Tibet, and China, not only as wives and daughters, but also as missionaries, social workers and ordinary tourists, and wrote about their experiences.

Women's marginal location in the Western world obviously shaped and colored their perception of the Eastern Other, and their texts included gender issues which were often invisible to male writers. Studies of women's travel writing have tended to focus on the uniqueness of women's experience of travel. They have tended to assume their necessarily different epistemology as fragmented subjects, which enabled them, to a certain extent at least, to avoid the pitfalls of Western logocentrism. Their unstable identity at home often proved the basis for deeper cultural displacements than those experienced by male travellers, preventing them from readily endorsing the oppositional grid through which they had been trained to envision their identity as Western subjects. As a consequence, in the best of these studies women's travel writing has been predominantly described as a highly conflictual and controversial site of identity, showing a deep cleavage between the public endorsement of Western assumptions of superiority and a buried sense of continuity linking the writing subject to the dark others.

Some studies have taken for granted and essentialized women's difference, producing oversimplified, consoling stories where the gendered Other of Western culture allies and sympathizes with its racial Other. Recently, a countertrend has emerged in reaction to a master narrative which was often blind to the dark spots in women's accounts of the Orient and naively reconstructed their experience as one of transgression and critique of white middle-class male Orientalism. In the last decade feminist scholars have emphasized women's participation in the dominant ideology, not only as passive, coopted masses,

but as agents actively articulating a discourse of Western hegemony. As Amy Kaplan, Nancy Armstrong, Karen Sánchez-Eppler, Isabel Firth, and others have shown, Anglo-Saxon domesticity was not antithetical to imperialism. Quite the reverse happened, they argue: the ideology of separate spheres enabled the legitimation of imperialism on the basis of an extension of "home," the Anglo-saxon home of course, to nation and beyond.

This approach should not be mistaken for a new version of earlier accounts interpreting domesticity as a conservative ideology fashioned by the middle class and "feminizing" America. In reacting against the dominant subversive narratives of (white) women's history, it has tended, however, to overstress class and ethnic membership reducing the significance of gender issues, paying little attention to the fact that class and ethnicity are more fluctuating signifiers than gender. Not only did middle-class women happen to change their social status, either upward or downward, especially while travelling abroad; they might also have found that their class membership did not translate literally in some of the countries of the Old World. One of the issues that has received scant attention so far is the fact that white, middle-class women's Orientalism performed a double function: while, as Said writes, it certainly provided an interpretative grid "for dealing with the Orient," and authorized Western imperialistic drives on the basis of the racial, cultural, and moral superiority of the white over the dark races, it was also an expression of the efforts of women's subcultures to contest and revise gender notions and practices at home.

Nineteenth-century American women's narratives of the Mediterranean often represented Southern European and Northern African men as endowed with a non-conventional masculinity which allowed for a deeper emotional contact between the sexes, suggesting a covert commentary on Anglo-Saxon masculinity. Reading Margaret Fuller's letters, one is tempted to identify, in her experience in Italy, an archetype of what would later become, through and against Henry James, the typical triangular romance involving American women abroad: a cold, stiff, rational Anglo-Saxon male, like Emerson, who keeps at a distance and is afraid of intimacy; an unconventional, excessive Anglo-Saxon woman, often an artist of sorts, who longs for the communion of souls, like Fuller herself; and a passionate, emotional, young Mediterranean man, who lends himself to act as a battleground for the two, like Marquis Giovanni Angelo Ossoli, whose "difference" as a Mediterranean man made Fuller somewhat uneasy, well knowing how difficult it would be for her New England friends, Emerson in primis, to understand him. She never read Mozier's satirical portrait of her companion, voiced and endorsed by Hawthorne, which was written after their deaths. However, she did feel compelled to justify and explain her "marriage" to her women friends, in words that bring to mind, by contrast, the charges she had often applied to Emerson, as being guilty of "superficiality and halfness" in his friendship. Emerson was dismayed by her passionate nature - interestingly enough he compared her to a "Spaniard or a Turk," and her "Oriental" nature was often mentioned by commentators. This passage from Emerson's memoirs of Fuller is almost moving in its fear that Margaret would never get rid of her body:

When I found she lived at a rate so much faster than mine, and which was violent compared with mine, I foreboded rash and painful crises, and a feeling as if a voice cried, *Stand from under!* - as if, a little further on, this destiny was threatened with jars and reverses which no friendship could avert or console. This feeling partly wore off, on better acquaintance, but remained latent; and I had always an impression that her energy was *too much a force of blood*, and, therefore, never felt the security for her peace which belongs *to more purely intellectual natures*. (*Memoirs* I, 223; emphases mine)

What attracted Fuller to Ossoli, however, from what we can judge from her letters, was as much sameness - their sharing an emotional nature - as difference, producing that "peace" Emerson feared she would never know. While she tended to describe herself as a blend of male and female characteristics, in her rare portraits of Ossoli Fuller emphasized his being a "motherly," "sisterly" man, his being able to make a "home" for her.

Young Henry James ridiculed women writers' tendency to invent plots which shipwrecked the heroine's quest for independence on the rocks of a "dark," often older, man. The contemporary ideal of companionate marriage, on which domestic ideology rested in the American Republic, seemed to be undermined by a counternarrative figuring women's attraction to domineering, rapacious Southern men who would shut them up in their castles and dominate their bodies as if they were odalisques in an Oriental harem. James would repeatedly rewrite this plot with minor variations, even ending Isabel Archer's Emersonian quest for self-expansion in the dark embrace of Fuller and Ossoli's son, the Italianate American Osmond.[1] But somehow he failed to perceive another aspect of Anglo-Saxon women's attraction for dark men: the willingness of their bodies to respond to the seduction of a (gender/ethnic) difference which was also a sameness, in their both being the Other of the White Anglo-Saxon man. Mediterranean men a la Don Juan were depicted as dangerous because of their predatory sexuality and overwhelming passionate nature, in women's fiction, but they were also represented as tender and "feminine," opening the way to contradictory feelings, and even fantasies of role-reversals.

While on a visit to Rome in 1860, William Page painted a portrait of his third wife, the only painting we know of figuring a woman alone at the Colosseum, a dangerous exotic place where fast, modern coquettes like Daisy Miller might loose their reputation, the respect of Anglo-Saxon men, and even their lives. "No Isabel," comments William L. Vance, "she stands there like a Victorian female gladiator posing before the scene of her triumphs. […] She in fact appears more sturdy, more noble than the Colosseum itself, and in her own way as beautiful and imposing" (I, 59). Mrs. Page looks like a veritable embodiment of American womanhood, her grave, somber figure contrasting with the warm, sensuous hues of the ruins of the Colosseum. Mrs. Page, however, is in no danger, protected as she is from the "bad airs" of Rome by the armor of her Victorian apparel: dark cape, bonnet and veil turn her into a figure without a body, face and hands the only visible flesh. American domestic ideology - women's pride in being the cornerstone of the national home - could indeed protect women from the Mediterranean seduction,

erasing from their accounts any hint of fascination with soft climates and mores, dark muscular bodies offering themselves to their gaze in relaxed, abandoned postures, narratives of bondage where slaves and masters confounded and reverted their roles (feelings we do find in James's accounts of Italy; see Petrovich Njegosh's essay).

From time to time, however, desire won its way to the surface of texts and bodies, even changing lives forever, as is the case with Margaret Fuller, who gave birth to her Italian child when she was almost forty. Projecting the loving intimacy of their relationships with other women onto heterosexual couples where the male partner was a "dark" man - probably, in part, the displacement of a homosexual desire which appeared increasingly illicit - American women writers questioned the American marriage institution and the hierarchical gender relations structuring society in the US. Imagining nonconventional masculinities located in the Mediterranean provided a terrain to revise and critique Victorian gender prescriptions and the definition of Anglo-Saxon middle-class masculinity. Women's Orientalisms could not rely easily on the configuration of the Western encounter with the East as a heterosexual romance between a white domineering man and a dark subjugated female body. At the least, it implied a degree of transvestitism undermining Said's heterosexual assumptions, as in Dickinson's rewriting of the romance of Antony and Cleopatra, where she casts herself in the role of the Roman hero while dressing Susan's excessive personality in the Egyptian queen's luxurious, seductive garments (see Thompson Rizzo's essay). But if the heterosexual relationship is maintained, then accepted and acceptable gender roles are undermined. The result, in all cases, is a disruption in the highly elaborate notion of Victorian womanhood.

Nineteenth-century American women's Orientalism, combining fear and attraction for the dark man, contempt for his aggressive masculinity and desire for his feminine emotionality, problematically exploded in the homicidal fury which breaks out among the white Northern virgins of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), who consecrate their feminist utopia in black men's blood. A radical departure from her aunt Harriet Beecher Stowe's feminism, which, although in ambivalent and contradictory ways, had articulated a discourse where race and gender shared a common enemy in the aggressive masculinity of Anglo-Saxon capitalism (see Scacchi's essay). Troubling as it might be for white feminism, Herland's homogeneous society of mothers was as much Gilman's feminist response to an androcentric society based on competition, as her nativist response to what she perceived as a menace to Anglo-American democracy: the masses of dark aliens from patriarchal Mediterranean countries that were invading the US. In Gilman's "purely feminine culture" there was no place for sexual desire, a mechanism of oppression exposing Anglo-American women to the lure of primitivism. As a consequence the dark races - for her, stereotypically, the embodiment of out-of-control desire - had to be eliminated from her community of mothers. What had happened to "the intersecting rhetorics of feminism and abolition"? What had happened to the midcentury discourse which, albeit patronizingly and ambivalently, had drawn connections between women and slaves -

both subject to the "lords of creation," Anglo-Saxon males - and had denounced the common root of racial and sexual oppression? Or was turn-of-the-century feminists' erasure of racial difference already contained in the discourse of feminist abolitionism, as some mantain?

Ironically, American women's Orientalism also exploded in the early twentieth-century craze for Rudolph Valentino, the first in a long line of Hollywood male stars who would sell an ambivalent sexuality playing on machismo and femininity (on the modern legacy of nineteenth-century attractions between American women writers and Mediterranean men, see Rabinowitz's essay). American culture could lay claim to having a superior civilization, in Gilman's eyes, only to the extent that American women enjoyed a superior socio-political and cultural position as compared to the other women in the world. In the US, then, the principle of "growth" governing the female of the species would countercheck the male principle of "combat," and eventually erase all the social evils caused by uncurbed masculine desire. But, at the beginning of the new century, not only did American popular culture seem to be fascinated by narratives raving about the vital energies of primitive races. Even American political leaders and intellectuals were arguing that it was necessary for men to rebel against their genteel, sissifying moms, sisters and aunts and go wild, recovering their lost masculinities. And, in addition, American women, the best of the race, seemed willing to capitulate to the dictates of popular culture. In their craving for bullfighters, sheiks, and all sorts of Mediterranean male personae crowding contemporary fiction and the entertainment industry, they displayed a shameful pleasure in fantasies of domination.

Gilman's cultural analysis, like young James's, was shortsighted. As Miriam Hansen has brilliantly proved, Valentino was not the first male star to be marketed as ethnically other, but he was certainly unique in combining "the projections of ethnic and sexual otherness in such a manner that the defensive strategies mobilized around each one of these terms actually fed into the threat of the other" (255). His female fans tended to mention "his special combination of traditionally male and female qualities (strength and grace, will power and courtesy)," while masculinist attacks on him invariably played on his effeminacy. Valentino's appeal - although invariably explained through speculations which "by and large reproduced clichés of mastery and virility, from his hypnotic eyes to his entire body" - "eluded the heterosexual polarity of male and female, hinting in the direction of sexual ambiguity, incest, and perversion" (262). Like Henry James a hundred years before them, contemporary film critics have wondered at the paradoxical attraction of the liberated New Woman for what they see as aggressive mastery, a relic of patriarchy, but, as Hansen writes, "Valentino's films subvert the socially imposed dominance-submission hierarchy of gender roles, dissolving subject-object dichotomies into erotic reciprocity" (287).

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NOTES

1. Twice in *Portrait of a Lady*, Osmond's mother is referred to as "the American Corinne," an epithet repeatedly applied to Fuller.

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EMILY DICKINSON: FEMININE MASCULINITY IN MEDITERRANEAN GARB

PATRICIA THOMPSON RIZZO

For some time now readers of Emily Dickinson have been examining how pervasive the putting on of different masks and embodying different sexual personae is in her work. While the more common masks are those of the little girl, the Queen of Calvary and the woman in white, she also defiantly subverts the conventions of gender by creating startling gender blurring identities.

Back in 1979 Rebecca Patterson was the first to point out Dickinson's proclivity to role playing in what she calls her "masculine masquerade." In letters to her friend Mrs. Holland she calls herself "Uncle Emily" (L315) (L449) and a "Bachelor" (L204). In writing to her Norcross cousins she calls herself "Brother Emily" (L367), and in a letter to her nephew Ned Dickinson she recalls a time "When I was a Boy" (L571). And again the many times when she chooses to sign her letters as "Dickinson," rather than "Emily" or "Emily Dickinson," she is implicitly assuming the kind of authority that in her society was definitely associated with the male role.

As Patterson points out, no less than fifteen poems present the speaker as endowed with a masculine nobility superior to that of an earl, a duke, a prince, a king, and quite often the switch in gender is embodied in such bold statements as "when I'm Earl" (704). Another of Dickinson's favorite impersonations is to have the speaker appear as a boy or a man in a country setting, in what one might call New England garb. In the well known snake poem, "A narrow fellow in the grass" (986), the speaker goes back to the time when she was "a Boy, and Barefoot." In one of the three Master letters she poses as a rustic "Backwoodsman" who might have offended the finer "nature" of the Master (L248). And in Poem 1466, she maintains the superiority of "a rural man" vis-à-vis Jason and the Argonauts' daring quest after the Golden Fleece:

I never thought that Jason sought
For any Golden Fleece
But then I am a rural man
With thoughts that make for Peace.

More recently Pariac Finnerty has traced the relevance which the reading of Shakespeare had on Dickinson's inclination to deliberately assume male roles and finds that gender-crossing is specifically associated with Shakespeare's comedies and the cross-dressings so prevalent in them. It must also be said, however, that Dickinson's bardolatry is most evident in her many references and allusions to Shakespeare's dramas.

Following Thomas H. Johnson's first critical editions of Emily Dickinson's po-

ems and letters in 1955 and 1958, the preeminence of the Bible and Shakespeare's dramas as literary sources for her work was firmly established. Jack L. Capps in his *Emily Dickinson's Reading,* and biographer Richard Sewall in his *Life of Emily Dickinson*, comprehensively surveyed Dickinson's quotations from and allusions to Shakespeare and her identification with some of his characters, who needless to say, happen to be primarily male.

If Emerson faulted Shakespeare for his "Egyptian lifestyle," and the moralistic attitude typical of the Victorian period unanimously voiced disapproval of the bard who was said to be "a libertine in principle and practice" (Bennett 109), Emily and her sister-in-law, Sue Gilbert Dickinson, clearly shared a preference for the extreme moral and aesthetic polarities of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

The play obviously appealed to them, especially because of its hyperbolic use of language and the verbal fireworks in which the royal lovers constantly indulge. One of Dickinson's childhood friends quotes Dickinson as having said, "There's nothing wicked in Shakespeare, and if there is I don't want to know it" (Bennett 128). And in her well known late letter (L757) to her sister-in-law Susan, her intense and indelible involvement with Shakespeare's texts is explicitly spelled out:

Dear Sue - With the exception of Shakespeare, you have told me of more knowledge than any one living -To say that sincerely is strange praise. (L757)

While the first full length study of Shakespeare's impact on Dickinson is still forthcoming, I should like to examine the centrality of the Shakespearean roles Dickinson assigns to herself and to her life-long friend and sister-in-law, Susan Gilbert. Dickinson's preference seems to go to such favorites as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello* and *Hamlet* but the mature Dickinson, who dressed her lovers "in the opulent imagery of kings, queens, courts" and who "envisioned love as redemptive, ecstatic and ennobling but also as treacherous, dislocative and costly" (Bennett, 233), must also be expected to prefer *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Judith Farr, in her "Emily Dickinson's 'Engulfing' Play: Antony and Cleopatra," finds that Dickinson came to use the play "as an emblem for the domination of one person by another; for the conflict between honor and duty on the one hand and pleasure and charm on the other; for, in sum, an allegory of all that was Roman, or Puritan, in herself and all that attracted her in what she thought to be Egyptian scintillation" (232), and especially that of her sister-in-law Susan Gilbert.

Obviously, *Antony and Cleopatra* provided Dickinson with a gorgeous and grandiose backdrop against which to cast herself in the role of an entangled Antony, while treating Sue as the sensuous Cleopatra. Moreover, as Paula Bennett has pointed out, this preference seems to be confirmed by her finding that in the poet's edition of Shakespeare, the two volumes containing the tragedies have broken spines and loose pages. *Othello* has a number of pencil markings, but *Antony and Cleopatra*, the most well read of all the plays contains three markers: a string at Act 3, scene 11, Antony's "Let that be left /Which leaves itself"

speech; another string at Act 4, scene 13, Antony's death scene, and a triangular piece of dress cloth at Act 5, scene 2, the beginning of Cleopatra's death scene.

It is no coincidence that Dickinson should have placed those strings precisely at the points that are more often echoed in her poems and letters: "Egypt, thou knew'st," as she writes to Sue in 1874 in letter L430, and "'You knew. Oh Egypt' said the entangled Antony -" is how she ended a puzzling thank you letter (L978) to her brother's mistress Mabel Loomis Todd (but that's another story).

These quotations are of course a synthetic encoding of Antony's emotionally charged speech as he enters Cleopatra's palace after the devastating defeat at the naval battle of Actium:

Egypt, thou knew'st too well,
My heart was to thy rudder tied by the strings
And thou shouldst tow me after. O'er my spirit
Thy full supremacy thou knew'st, and that
Thy beck might from the bidding of the gods.
Command me. (3.12.57-61)

The second string, the one placed at Antony's bungled attempt at suicide, comes at perhaps the highest point in the drama when Antony believes he has been betrayed by Cleopatra and utters a series of explosive outbursts in his exchange, first with Cleopatra's eunuch Mardian, and then with Eros. And the third string is placed at the point when Cleopatra eulogizes Antony's greatness before committing her own suicide.

Now I think it may be time to look at the way Dickinson pulled some of these strings together at one of the most crucial moments of her stormy relationship with Sue, the moment when Sue and her brother Austin's 8 year-old son, Gilbert, died suddenly and dramatically of typhoid fever early in October of 1883. It is no doubt an understatement to say that the impact of Gilbert's death was a severe blow to Emily Dickinson: as we know, she never fully recovered from this loss.

A few days after the boy's death, Dickinson wrote to Sue a letter that is now considered to be one of the most moving letters in the English language and certainly, as Sewall puts it, "the finest she ever wrote anybody" (234) (See Appendix).

To my mind, this letter to Sue is a brilliant piece of literature because in drawing a literary biography of Gilbert, Dickinson gives expression to her own personal grief and at the same time presents a most moving reworking of the roles played by the two women ever since the days of their passionate adolescent friendship.

It is quite remarkable to see how in this letter Dickinson reverses the role of an "entangled Antony" she most often plays in the many letters and poems sent to Sue. Rather than posing as Cleopatra's lover, here Dickinson modulates her own voice to the exalting tone in which the Egyptian queen delivers a paean to her Emperor Antony.

In the letter, Cleopatra's dream of an Emperor Antony becomes "the vision of immortal life," and if in the magnified scale of cosmic references Antony's "face was as the

heavens, and therein stuck/A Sun and Moon which kept their course and lighted/The little O, the earth," in the letter Gilbert is seen as "my ascended Playmate," whose "Life was full of Boon" and who is now "in the Star," "Dawn and Meridian in one." If Antony's legs "bestrid the Ocean," in the letter "our little Ajax spans the whole"; and while Cleopatra invokes "Oh, such another sleep, that I might see/But such another man!," Gilbert is seen as he "travelled from the Full," for "Such soar, but never set."

Perhaps the parallelism between the two texts may be best appreciated if we consider the heightened, almost triumphant rhythm which links Shakespeare's runover lines to Dickinson's poetic prose, which often reads like scanned trimeters. One more feature the two texts have in common is certainly the precious and majestic ring of the lexicon. In Cleopatra's words, Antony's "delights/Were dolphin-like," and in Antony's "livery/Walk'd crowns and crownets"; realms and islands were/As plates dropped from his pocket." In her letter to Sue, Dickinson herself displays a whole range of verbal choices that is unparallelled in any other text of this length. Some terms like "niggard," "prattling," "Dervish," "Requiem," "Pangless," "Meridian," and "Ajax," plus "ford" used as a verb, are true *hapax legomena*, that is one off occurrences in her prose work. And most of them do not appear in her poems either.

Of all these *hapax legomena*, the most telling is perhaps the mention of Ajax, for in Shakespeare's tragedy Ajax is referred to in quick succession first by Cleopatra and then by Antony. In Act 4,13 Cleopatra, who will soon enter her monument, calls on her women to help her against the feared anger of Antony which is compared to that of Ajax: "Help me, my women! Oh, he is more mad than Telemon for his shield"; and in the next scene when Mardian leads Antony to believe that Cleopatra killed herself, and that her dying words were "Antony! most noble Antony!," Antony echoes Cleopatra's reference to Ajax Telemonian: "Off, pluck off!/The sevenfold shield of Ajax cannot keep/The battery from my heart." Thus, when Dickinson sums up her letter of consolation to Sue saying that "Without a speculation, our little Ajax spans the whole," she is comparing the grief-stricken Antony, who will eventually die because of his love for Cleopatra, to little Gilbert, the sacrificial victim who will heal all past wounds and put an end to "the war between the houses" (as scholars have later called the rift between the Dickinson family's two homes), Emily's *Homestead* and across the hedge, Susan Gilbert's stately *Evergreens.*

Casting young Gilbert in a role that reverses the traditional image of Ajax as an outraged Greek warrior (in the letter he is said to have been "wronged only of night"), and attributing to him the hyperbolic grandeur of an "Emperor Antony," his Aunt Emily is indeed paying homage to the biographied young boy in a dramatic gesture that his mother, who had for years been on the receiving end of encoded literary allusions and verbal transgressions, was certain to have understood.

If we turn now to Dickinson's poems, we can see more closely how the narrative which the poet constructs, albeit in the fragmented form of the lyric, reflects her own 19th-century image of the Roman, Mediterranean male. I said her own image, but I

should promptly add that Dickinson as an inspired reader of Shakespeare goes beyond individual characterization of male versus female, of Antony versus Cleopatra, to suggest a continually shifting perspective where gender differences are finely blurred. Thus, in the famous passage of Act 4, scene 14, Antony gives voice to his diminishing sense of self by showing the dissolution of his physical and mental powers through a vision of reality where concrete elements of nature and human constructs become enveloped in darkness:

Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish;
A vapour sometime like a bear or lion,
A tower'd citadel, a pendant rock,
A forked mountain, or blue promontory
With trees upon't that nod unto the world
And mock our eyes with air. Thou hast seen these signs;
They are black Vesper's pageants. (4.15.3-9)

As we turn to poem J236 the speaker echoes a similar view of a shifting reality, of a loss of consistency and contours where light gives way to a darkness studded with flickering images:

If *He dissolve* - then - there is *nothing - more*
Eclipse - at *Midnight*
It was *dark - before*
Sunset - at Easter
Blindness - on the *Dawn*
Faint Star of Bethlehem
Gone down!
Would but some God - *inform* Him
Or it be *too late!*
Say - that the pulse *just lisps*
The *Chariots wait*
Say - that a *little life* - for *His*
Is *leaking - red*
His little Spaniel - tell Him!
Will He heed?

In this poem Christian and pagan images merge, cosmic elements blend with the psyche, human limbs lose their definition, while inexplicable "Chariots" bring to the scene the rumbling of an imaginary battlefield. In the last stanza, the poem renews the urgency of the message as master and victim take center stage against a blood red backdrop.

Even the presence of a lapping "Spaniel" would not appear out of place in this Dickinson poem, since it instantly recalls Antony's dejection earlier in the act, when he laments both the "foul" Egyptian's betrayal and that of all the followers who are deserting him:

All come to this? The hearts
That spaniel'd me at heels, to whom I gave
Their wishes, do discandy, melt their sweets.
On blossoming Caesar. (4.12.20-23)

In the following fragment, or rather "tiny huge poem," which Sewall finds to have the completeness of a haiku (719), and both Johnson (1127) and Franklin (1146) date to around 1868, we find compressed in a most sublime language, a language which indeed is worthy of Shakespeare, an explosion of violent images suggesting ancient battles fought out from sunset to dawn, the consciousness of an eternally lost battle of the mind endlessly reenacted through memories of past greatness.

Soft as the massacre of Suns
By Evening's Sabres slain. (J1127)

In the narrative I am trying to sketch, poem 492, "Civilization spurns the Leopard," stands out because it shows how suggestive as well as pervasive Shakespeare's language is in Dickinson's mind. In this poem it looks as though it is precisely the verbal excesses and abandon of the protagonists that make them so appealing to her: on the one hand Cleopatra embodied in the leopard and on the other the personae of the poem who clearly recall Antony's infatuation with the bold "Customs" of the Egyptian queen.

Civilization - spurns - the Leopard!
Was the Leopard - bold?
Deserts - never rebuked her Satin -
Ethiop - her Gold -
Tawny - her Customs -
She was Conscious -
Spotted - her Dun Gown -
This was the Leopard's Nature - Signor -

Need - a keeper - frown?
Pity the Pard - that left her Asia -
Memories - of Palm -
Cannot be stifled - with Narcotic -
Nor surpressed with Balm - (J492)

While the reader is immediately struck by the string of terms, peculiar to the depiction of an imaginary East - "Leopard," "Deserts," "Ethiop," "Gold," "Tawny," "Spotted," "Pard," "Asia," "Palm," and "Balm" - I should like to recall the inner connection which this poem seems to have with the paradoxical "Much Madness is divinest Sense":

Much Madness is divinest Sense -
To a discerning Eye -
Much Sense - the starkest Madness -
'Tis the Majority -
In this, as All, prevail -
Assent, and you are sane -
Demur - you're straightway dangerous -
And handled with a Chain -

Here Dickinson dramatizes the inevitable clash between the "Civilization" of her day, that of the chastizing "Majority," and the richness and sensuality of language that

fascinates her imagination. Clearly, she is seduced and dominated by the destructive and alluring power of the bold female leopard, dressed in her showy spotted satin gown and therefore rebuked because of "her Customs," because of her very "nature - Signor." If I were to extend the parallelism between the two poems a bit further, I would definitely read the leopard of poem 492 as being locked in a cage and "handled with a chain." Indeed, as in poem 435, "Much madness is divinest Sense."

The next poem that I would like to bring into our discussion is Poem 628:

They called me to the Window, for
"'Twas Sunset" - Some one said -
I only saw a Sapphire Farm -
And just a Single Herd -

Of Opal Cattle - feeding far
Upon so vain a Hill -
As even while I looked - dissolved -
Nor Cattle were - nor Soil -

But in their stead - a Sea - displayed -
And Ships - of such a size
As Crew of Mountains - could afford -
And Decks - to seat the skies -

This - too - the Showman rubbed away -
And when I looked again -
Nor Farm - nor Opal Herd - was there -
Nor Mediterranean -

This poem most vividly recalls Antony's monologue which, as we have seen before, describes his loss of mental and physical powers. Here, as in poem 236, Dickinson presents a similar view of blurred vision: the sunset gives way to just a "Sapphire Farm" and just "a Single Herd," which of course locate the object of this blurred vision in a rural New England setting. But while maintaining this setting the second stanza introduces the theme of dissolution which is so prevalent in the imagery of *Antony and Cleopatra*: a dissolution which is especially associated with Antony's acknowledgement of his loss of power through a pattern of "melting, fading, dissolving, discandying, disponging, dislimning and losing of form" which was so perceptively analyzed by Maurice Charney (166-69). Here it is "a Hill" that becomes "so vain" and "as even while I looked - dissolved - /Nor Cattle were - nor Soil." The New England setting gives way to a third stanza where the speaker attempts to focus on a seascape which merges the scene of Antony's naval debacle at Actium with that of a "Crew of Mountains," "And Decks - to seat the skies -," thus conflating the sailors and the deck of a battleship with the natural setting of the Amherst hills. The following stanza gives us a clue to the poet's showmanship by explicitly introducing the presence of a "Showman" which I take it we are free to interpret either as a blind god, a stagemanager who rearranges his theater set at will, or the shifting perspective which nature presents to the poet: "This - too - the Showman rubbed away - /And when I looked again - /Nor Farm - nor Opal Herd - was there - / Nor Mediterranean."

To be sure Dickinson's geographic imagination is such as to make her see a country farm made of precious stones and cattle that flash like firey opals an opulent East. In fact, Antony's thirst for this unattainable East becomes transformed into a poet's longing after the ineffable. After all, Emily Dickinson is the poet who concedes that "It might be easier/ To fail - with Land in Sight - / Than gain - My Blue Peninsula - / To perish - of Delight" (P405).

As Harold Bloom said in placing Emily Dickinson at the very top of the American sublime, "What is palpable in her is the charm, in all senses of the word" (287): the charm of a Cleopatra, who can seduce at least three Roman generals to maintain her power, or the charm of a Mark Antony, charmed by Cleopatra, a masculine/feminine sensibility which makes her turn the tragic aura of *Antony and Cleopatra* into the lyrical expression of what is undefinable, of what is ultimately unsayable.

The attempt to grasp simultaneously the masculine Roman prerogatives of duty and the alluring beauty of a seductive East turns Dickinson's performance into the highest kind of endeavour: that of devotion to her work and of personal sacrifice, "a Discontent / Too exquisite - to tell" (J627). Just as was the case with the expression of her own personal grief in the letter to Sue, Dickinson's fascination with the two Mediterranean lovers ends in an exalted exercise of creative power.

Even when dealing with characters who are tragically involved in a struggle for power, and in whom public and private, male and female, sex and desire so clearly merge, Dickinson's discourse, as Joanne Dobson observes, is "either referenced strikingly to the nature and potential of language itself, or it is strongly allusive or metaphoric, referring almost inevitably to personal rather than to public issues" (79). Any attempt to historicize Dickinson's narrative in the light of new perspectives on liberty, abolition, feminism and the politics of the body will have to come to terms with the fact that her work resists all political implications, revealing as it does, "the instability of liberty, domesticity, sexuality and identity. Dickinson's position is uncompromisingly radical, but it also disables all programs of social reforms" (Sánchez-Eppler 130-31). Her rebellious 'eccentricity' leads her to reject as hypocritical the reformist philanthropy of her day, and to transpose the problem of freedom versus slavery from a socio-political level to an ontological one. Thus, as Sánchez-Eppler concludes, "It is not that her position is detachedly depoliticized, it is actively antipolitical." If in her letter to Sue she subsumes or transcends personal grief in an overtly literary performance, in some of her poems she depicts the tragedy of characters cast against a backdrop of a world at war, of East versus West; of conflicting cultural and moral values, which are inevitably and exclusively lodged within the interiority of an intrinsically divided self.

APPENDIX

Dear Sue -

The Vision of Immortal Life has been fulfilled -
How simply at the last the Fathom comes! The Passenger and not the Sea, we find surprises us -
Gilbert rejoiced in Secrets -
His Life was panting with them - With what menace of Light he cried "Dont tell, Aunt Emily"!
Now my ascended Playmate must instruct 'me'. Show us, prattling Preceptor, but the way to thee!
He knew no niggard moment - His Life was full of Boon - The Playthings of the Dervish were not so wild as his -
No crescent was this Creature - He traveled from the Full -
Such soar, but never set -
I see him in the Star, and meet his sweet velocity in everything that flies -
His Life was like the Bugle, which winds itself away, his Elegy an echo - his Requiem ecstasy -
Dawn and Meridian in one.
Wherefore would he wait, wronged only of Night, which he left for us -
Without a speculation, our little Ajax spans the whole -

Pass to thy Rendezvous of Light,
Pangless except for us -
Who slowly ford the Mystery
Which thou hast leaped across!
Emily.

Cleo. I dreamt there was an Emperor Antony.
O, such another sleep, that I might see
But such another man!
Dol. If it might please ye -
Cleo. His face was as the heavens, and therein stuck
A sun and moon, which kept their course and lighted
The little O, the earth.
Dol. Most sovereign creature -
Cleo. His legs bestrid the ocean: his rear'd arm
Crested the world: his voice was propertied
As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends;
But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,
He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty,
There was no winter in 't; an autumn t'was
That grew the more by reaping: his delights
Were dolphin-like; they showed his back above
The element they lived in: in his livery
Walked crowns and crownets; realms and islands were
As plates dropp'd from his pocket.
Dol. Cleopatra -

Cleo. Think you there was or might be such a man
As this I dreamt of?
Dol. Gentle madam, no.

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"BORN BENEATH A TROPIC SUN": SHADES OF BROWN AND MASCULINITY IN *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN* AND *AGNES OF SORRENTO*

ANNA SCACCHI

THE TRUE AMERICAN WOMAN ABROAD

> I wrote what I did because as a woman, as a mother I was oppressed & broken-hearted, with the sorrows & injustice I saw, because as a Christian I felt the dishonor to Christianity - because as a lover of my country I trembled at the coming day of wrath.
> Letter to Lord Denman, 1853

When Harriet Beecher Stowe visited Europe in 1853, her fame as the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had preceded her. Actually, it had brought her there. Her first trip was made to receive a petition on behalf of American slaves signed by over half a million British women. As soon as she was back she published *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands* (1854), modestly recounting the tributes she had received as the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and her impressions of Europe. The book - a series of letters to her family and friends in two volumes - is an interesting example of white middle-class women's ambivalent feelings towards going public and their strategic use of the public sphere. Submitting to the conventions of domestic ideology, Stowe's voice, framed by the fiction of a private, family conversation, is "authorized" by a long introduction written by her husband Calvin, which includes reports of Reverend Stowe's and other abolitionists' addresses delivered at public meetings while the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in true-womanly fashion, silently received the cheers of the audience.

The chairman of the meeting held in Liverpool remarked: "you have taught us that the voice which most effectually kindles enthusiasm in millions is the still small voice which comes forth from the sanctuary of a woman's breast, and from the retirement of a woman's closet" (XVI). He was apparently oblivious to the fact that they were all there to hail a woman whose "small voice" had caused one of the loudest transatlantic debates in the century. Stowe was a woman who, according to the *Southern Literary Messenger*, had "placed herself without the pale of kindly treatment," and could not expect to enjoy "the immunities of [her] sex" (630). After her sketches of slavery began to appear in the *National Era* in 1851, she was often abused in the press and had to make use of all available venues to defend her reputation as a true woman. As a best-selling author, they were many and effective. *Sunny Memories*, written to respond to reports accusing her of being exploited by the British aristocracy to attack the land of freedom, became one of the most popular guidebooks of the century (Hedrick 269), and it circulated Stowe's version of her trip.

The book provoked an outraged editorial in *Putnam's*. Claiming that *Sunny Memories* is "a highly respectable book of travels, but nothing more," its author devotes a full eight

columns to its debunking. Interestingly, the editorial reads as a founding text in the tradition that would canonize a few works as high literature, committed to American democracy, while dismissing sentimental novels as escapist and aesthetically faulty (cfr. Robbins). The editorial's aim is obviously to accuse Stowe of having acted as a political dummy for the nation's historical enemy, but first it ridicules her aesthetic judgements, craftily managing to diminish her as a writer and as a human rights activist at the same time. Its political point is that, contrary to Mrs. Stowe's opinion, slavery is not an American institution:

It is a miserable delusion, it is true, to confound slavery, even remotely, with the reputation of the nation […]. *Let us once get rid of the idea that slavery is a national institution - that it is anything more than a local or municipal usage, utterly impotent beyond the states in which it is sustained - and we shall soon see it dwindle away before the advances of modern industry, and a democratic and Christian sentiment*. (340-42; emphasis mine)

The author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* - a novel where the worst specimen of the slaveholding class is a New Englander by birth and education - had dealt ironically with the idea that slavery was a peculiar institution that only involved the South, exposing its political naivete. By inflecting traders' and slaveholders' defences of slavery with a mix of accents, from capitalist ideology to paternalism, her cultural critique questioned the notion of slavery as a "local" moral sin: for Stowe it was an economic system threatening the whole country (Brown). In the novel's last chapter the author finally asks her troubling question to the "mothers of America":

Do you say that the people of the free states have nothing to do with it, and can do nothing? Would to God this were true! But it is not true. The people of the free states have defended, encouraged, and participated; and are more guilty for it, before God, than the South, in that they have *not* the apology of education or custom. (384)

Her Unitarian-sounding appeal to sympathy and benevolence addressed to mothers turns into a Puritan jeremiad addressed to the nation (see Tompkins, and Hedrick 215). Quoting from the book of Malachi on the second coming of Christ, the writer's womanly, modest voice appropriates the powerful millennial rhetorics of Lyman Beecher, and the prophetical role reserved to men:

But who may abide the day of his appearing? "for that day shall burn as an oven: and he shall appear as a swift witness against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that *turn aside the stranger in his right*: and he shall break in pieces the oppressor." Are not these dread words for a nation bearing in her bosom so mighty an injustice? Christians! Every time that you pray that the kingdom of Christ may come, can you forget that prophecy associates, in dread fellowship, the day of vengeance with the year of his redeemed? (388)

Time would prove that she was right. Slavery was, indeed, a national issue that would lead to internecine conflict. For many, it was a national sin that would have to be washed in blood.

GOIN' ROUND A-TESTIFYIN'

> This horror, this nightmare abomination! Can it be in my country! It lies like lead on my heart, it shadows my life with sorrow; the more so that I feel, as for my own brothers, for the South, and am pained by every horror I am obliged to write, as one who is forced by some awful oath to disclose in court some family disgrace.
> Letter to Eliza Follen, 1852

During her second trip to Europe (1856), Stowe visited Rome, where, at William Wetmore Story's house, she entertained a group of Americans with a "sermon" on Sojourner Truth. Stowe's audience was delighted by her minstrel act, where she played the role of a woman who believed she had been appointed by the Lord himself to "go round a-testifyin', an' showin' on 'em their sins agin [black] people." In many ways, this applied to Stowe as well. "An audience was what [Sojourner] wanted," she wrote in her *Atlantic* piece, and that was also her own aim, though she had problems in combining the prophetic role she had wanted for herself, and had been assigned by her audience, with the gender ideology she had been trained in.

The twinned structure of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* seems to extend to its very conception as well, pointing to the conflicting identities - as a mother whose moral principles could influence her children to do right, as a prophet who could move the nation to action - Stowe was experiencing as one. When asked about its genesis, she gave two different genealogies. Or better, the same story of induced parturition with two different causes, one rooted in piety and anger, the other in sympathy (cfr. Smith, 89-110). In one narrative she gave a gendered version of the birth of the novel, testifying to the "power of sympathy": *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the outpouring of a woman compelled to write by the loss of her own child. At the deathbed of her two-year-old son, dying from cholera, she had learned "what a poor slave mother may feel when her child is torn away from her" and had decided to act for the oppressed as a way to recover from her own trauma (Letter to Follen, qtd. in Fields, *Life* 173).

The other narrative, highlighting her prophetic role as the nation's Jeremiah on the sinfulness of slavery, eventually became dominant. During a church service, she had a vision of a chained slave being whipped to death. She went back home and wrote the fragment which would become Tom's death scene, while tears poured from her eyes. In this narrative, she diminished her agency in the composition of the novel: "the story can less be said to have been composed by her than imposed upon her. […] The book insisted upon getting itself into being, and would take no denial"; "I did not write that book. […] I only put down what I saw […] it all came before me in visions, one after another, and I put them down in words." Stressing that she was a mere instrument, Stowe shifted authorship from herself to God (*Life* 146-47).

Stowe returned to Italy again in 1859. While in Rome, she received one of the many tributes Europeans offered her as a saviour of suffering people. Annie Fields narrated the anecdote in "Days with Mrs. Stowe":

We had gone together to the rooms of the brothers Castellani, the world-famous workers in gold. The collection of antique gems and the beautiful reproductions of them were new to us. Mrs. Stowe was full of enthusiasm, and we lingered long over the wonderful things which the brothers brought forward to show. Among them was the head of an Egyptian slave, carved in black onyx. It was an admirable work of art, and while we were enjoying it one of them said to Mrs. Stowe, "Madam, we know what you have been to the poor slave. We are ourselves but poor slaves still in Italy; you feel for us; will you keep this gem as a slight recognition of what you have done?" She took the jewel in silence, but when we looked for some response, her eyes were filled with tears and it was impossible for her to speak. (146)

It was not the first time that jewels connected with slavery had been given to her in Europe. In England, an artist had given her a cameo reproducing the head of William Wilberforce, a prominent British abolitionist, and the Duchess of Sutherland had presented her with a gold bracelet in the shape of a slave's shackle, on one link the date of the abolition of slavery in the British colonies, on another an empty space to be inscribed with the date of the abolition in the land of freedom (Hedrick 245). The gift, inverting the rhetorics that in the Early American Republic had justified the colonists' rebellion, reads as an emblem of the British intention to humiliate the apostles of human rights. But it also reads as an interesting icon of the intricacies of abolitionism and feminism.

A golden shackle as an ornament to celebrate a woman who was fighting for slaves' freedom was an odd choice, obliquely pointing to white women's appropriation of the issue of slavery and the bodies of slaves to dislocate anxieties about their own bodies and sexuality (cfr. Sánchez-Eppler), or to what Spillers terms "the potential for pornotroping" of captive bodies (67) and Samuels defines as "the erotics of slavery haunt[ing] the nation" (493). Would this Republican lady, a saviour of the oppressed, adorn herself with objects aestheticizing slavery? Would the onyx head remind her, ironically, of the ear cut from a slave's head she had received from the South as a threat? Or of the allusions, in proslavery reviews of her work, to her indecent sexual attraction for black males (see Yarborough 57 and 59)? The gift she received in Rome came from the "slaves" themselves, with an implicit plea to transform tears into writing, to deliver another child of sympathy and anger. Her experience of Italy apparently produced something different: *Agnes of Sorrento* "was a child of love in its infancy, and its flowery Italian cradle rocked it with an indulgent welcome" (6). This novel, the author seems to imply with her striking choice of words, is a child born out of wedlock, a temporary escape from the vows wedding her to her mother country.

Agnes of Sorrento was serialized in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1861, and published as a volume in 1862, right at the beginning of the Civil War. The novel narrates the story of Agnes, a beautiful, poor orphan torn between her religious zeal, which encourages her to convent life, and her budding love for a mysterious cavalier, Agostino, who has been excommunicated by the Pope. Agnes's childlike spiritual fervor and confidence in the Roman Church will grow into a mature, independent piety after a pilgrimage to Rome,

where she discovers the true character of Pope Alexander VI. After learning that marriage can also be a vocation for the true Christian, and that she belongs to the aristocratic family of the Colonna by birth, she is finally free to marry Agostino and work to reform the Roman Church.

The novel, set in an exotiziced fifteenth-century Italian landscape, is a sentimental work full of picturesque descriptions and stereotypical portraits of Italians, and structured on a neat opposition between the simple, unquestioning piety of the lowly and the empty, deceptive ritualism of religious hierarchy. To my knowledge, there is no evidence that, in the manner of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, it was Stowe's outraged response to the "slavery" of Italians; on the contrary her introductory remarks seem to deny any political import to the narrative. As an indictment of the corruption of the Roman Church and of the poisonous power of its priests, it obliquely deals with contemporary events but it never goes farther than an occasional "then as now" remark. Nevertheless, in my opinion *Agnes of Sorrento* can be read as her answer to the plea of Italian "slaves." The episode in Rome, when she was interrupted while shopping like a typical female tourist of her times and reminded of her role as a saviour of the oppressed, is telling. Not only at Castellani's was Stowe obliged to publicly respond to a political and cultural identity that had almost come to her as a surprise from her audience. She probably felt it was her moral duty to write about Italian oppression under Papal rule, although her unfamiliarity with Italian politics and current events forced her to dislocate the subject into a romanticized past.

It is difficult, in the opinion of this reader, to agree with Annamaria Formichella when she contends that "[w]here it corresponds with feminine, domestic values, Catholicism is not only redeemed in the novel but also proposed as a model for American spirituality and Christian charity" (190). Although Stowe did not share Lyman Beecher's views of popery, and had been praised by Cincinnati Bishop Purcell for her handling of Catholics in her *Primary Geography for Children* (1833) (Hedrick 91-92), the novel is openly a millennial reading of the history of Christianity in which the corruption of Rome is to be defeated and a better day to come with Luther and the Puritans. Her Protestantism, focusing on the figure of Christ and granting centrality to mothering, is certainly unconventional, but it still recognizes a "grand design of history, moving providentially from tyranny, monarchy, and class hierarchies to freedom, republicanism, and egalitarianism" (Schriber 179), which is what prompts her to refer to the Florentine monks of the Middle Ages as the "early Puritans of Italy" (283) and to Girolamo Savonarola as the "Italian Luther" (98).

Although *Agnes of Sorrento* betrays a fascination with the passionate piety of early Christians and the emphasis placed on women by Catholicism, it sets the advent of Luther, "a star lying low in the gray horizon of a yet unawakened dawn" (118), as a regenerating moment in the history of the Church, which starts a new millennium. Above all, the novel portrays characters whose personality is a blend of masculine and feminine traits - combining courage, sternness, and boldness, with religious piety, humility, and love - as models of

agency affording a way out of the impasse the ideology of separate spheres entrapped women in. An impasse that was not limited to the role of women in the American Republic for Stowe, but involved the problem of black citizenship as well.

A LITTLE LADY AND THE GREAT WAR

> You have spoken of my article as unladylike. There are some occasions when a true woman must and will be unladylike.
> Letter to the editor of the *New York Observer,* 1852

Although nineteenth-century racialist thinking provided an ideological explanation for Anglo-Saxon superiority, there was a "romantic" variant denying the inferiority of emotional Southern races on the basis of the priority of feeling over intellect in religious matters, to which Stowe subscribed (Fredrickson). Her romantic racialism was built on a geographical understanding of social and cultural history, dividing humanity between Northern and Southern races, the former characterized by the development of intellectual qualities, the latter by a more profound spiritual nature. A divide whose apparently neat borders were complicated by her perception of racial differences in gendered terms. Ascribing "masculine" traits - such as cold rationality and a dominant and aggressive character - to Anglo-Saxons, and "feminine" traits, such as patience, tolerance, sensitiveness and self-renunciation, to Africans, she replicated the divide separating women and men within her own culture.

The cultural continuum Stowe imagined between white women and blacks enabled an interracial communication that would have been impossible with white males, who were unable to perceive black difference as other than inferiority: "[The African is] an exotic race, whose ancestors, born beneath a tropic sun, brought with them […] a character so essentially unlike the hard and dominant Anglo-Saxon race, as for many years to have won from it only misunderstanding and contempt" (*UTC* XIII). In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, white women and blacks are located at the margins of a nation increasingly dominated by a masculine culture which rejects or distorts Christian values. Women's and slaves' subcultures share values and assets that are antitethical to capitalism: nurturance, patience, endurance, self-sacrifice, relational thinking, and, above all, religious piety. Their power to change society, however, is different: while slaves and Southern white women are unable to produce immediate and effective action - after all, both Eva and Tom are defeated in their fight against slavery - Northern women like Mary Bird manage to release slaves from bondage through the power of sympathy.

Their power of influence on men is a process of cultural correction, aimed at filling the widening split between the Christian home and the nation. "But, another and better day is dawning […] The poet, the painter, and the artist […] breathe a humanizing and subduing influence, favorable to the development of the great principles of Christian brotherhood. […] The hand of benevolence is everywhere stretched out" (*ibidem*): in

Stowe's millennial vision, a utopian America is soon to replace the sinful country resting its freedoms on slave labour. A "feminized" nation, where white women will check and restrain the aggressive masculinity of Anglo-Saxon men and solve the opposition of private and public.

Stowe's confidence in the power of moral suasion was shaken in the 1850s, as legal decisions defending the rights of the masters became the rule. If her first anti-slavery novel was written to attack the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act and uphold a jurisprudence of natural rights sentiment (Crane), *Dred* - in which lawyer Edward Clayton, a defensor of the paternalistic version of slavery, is forced to confront its "true character" (355) and, unable to act legally, quits the bar - is a much more radical critique of law as an institution. Revolutionary action, personified by Dred, seems the only alternative in defence of natural rights when sentiment fails. But Stowe was not able to envision a successful slave rebellion in the U.S. at the time, and the novel ends in death for the revolutionary hero and removal to Canada for the sentimentalists.

Many blacks, struggling in antebellum America to claim manhood on the terms that had been set by and for white men, had resented Stowe's representation of them as docile, passive sufferers waiting for delivery from above, as well as her endorsement of colonization (Banks). These responses opened the way to a tradition which interprets Stowe's "feminization" of blacks as evidence of her racism. The fact that George Harris, a mulatto whose white blood is "hot and hasty" (376), is the only slave in the novel to claim his right to active resistance, is read as evidence that love of freedom, a prerequisite for citizenship, was for her a racial trait marking the superiority of Anglo-Saxons.

Stowe was sensitive to black readers' criticism of her colonizationist stance, and publicly admitted that were she to write the novel again she would not send George to Liberia. While she was working on *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she wrote to Frederick Douglass to gather information and to persuade him to change his opinions about the American Church and colonization. She spoke at length of the role of the clergy in abolitionism, but she never got around to her second topic, so we still don't know why for some time she thought Africa was the right place for American blacks. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin* the only lengthy reference to colonization is George's letter explaining his decision to emigrate to Liberia, which echoes the rhetorics of black nationalists such as Martin Delany and foreshadows twentieth-century back-to-Africa movements. If we take him to represent Stowe's position on the subject of colonization, then the letter's concluding remarks, where he prophesies the coming of a new era, ruled by universal peace and brotherhood, when Africa will take the lead among the nations, shed an interesting light on the matter.

Unlike white colonizationists, George does not justify his self-exile in terms of "acquiring manhood" (Dorsey), but qualifies it as a rejection of his white father's country and the free choice of his mother's. George does not go to Africa because he wants to become a man, but, on the contrary, in order to become more of a black, and a "woman," and a Christian, with the assistance of his wife, a quadroon whose white blood does not

trouble her with masculine aggressiveness. He goes there to build a new nation, based on the gospel of Christian love preached by Tom. While in his "declaration of independence" he had resorted to the revolutionary rhetoric of the Founding Fathers, this letter resonates with the mythology of the Pilgrims' "city upon a hill." But, of course, the paradox is that he is free to side with motherhood and Christianity, and can become the founder of a new nation, precisely *because* he has violated their precepts. Killing, or being ready to kill, enables the mothering of Utopia.

> One flash from the heart-supplied intellect of Harriet Beecher Stowe could light a million camp fires in front of the imbattled host of slavery, which not all the waters of Mississippi, mingled as they are with blood, could extinguish.
> Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1857)

Tears, the typical reaction of readers, and the writer herself, to the narrative, have been indicted as an escapist response reconciling the audience to the status quo. But there is evidence that tears provoked by *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were accompanied by the decision to act. A letter from a lady friend, quoted in Fields's biography, gives a revealing gendered version of readers' responses to the novel:

> I sat up last night until long after one o'clock, reading and finishing "Uncle Tom's Cabin." I *could not* leave it *any more than I could have left a dying child* [my emphasis]; nor could I restrain an almost hysterical sobbing for an hour after I laid my head upon my pillow. I thought I was a thoroughgoing abolitionist before, but your book has awakened so strong a feeling of indignation and of compassion, that I seem never to have had *any* feeling on this subject till now. But what can we do? Alas! Alas! What *can* we do? […] And surely the tears of gentle, sympathizing childhood, that are dropping about many a Christian heartstone over the wrongs and cruelties depicted by you so touchingly, will water the sod, and spring up in bright flowers at your feet. And better still, I *know*, - I see, in the flushing cheek, the clenched hand, and indignant eye of the young man, as he dashes down the book and paces the room to hide the tears that he is to proud to show, too powerless to restrain, that you are sowing seed which shall yet spring up to the glory of God, to the good of the poor slave, to the enfranchisement of our beloved country. (149-50)

This passage - where the children's tears watering the earth at Stowe's feet are immediately followed by the anger of the young man and the reference to the seed she is sowing into the nation's soil - evokes by analogy the blood needed to purify the country. The mother/author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the mother/reader who cannot abandon the book as if it were a dying child, become one with the goddess of war obliquely presiding over the last passage.

In some respects, at the turn of the decade women's moral authority was proving to Stowe a force that could exceed the limits of gentle action. While she was writing her Italian novel, Stowe was probably getting more than she had expected and wished for

when she had embarked on the mission to move the women of America to do everything possible to erase slavery from the national home. Soon she would get the death of young American men, by the thousands. "Stowe's novel," writes Stephen Railton, "brought images of slave anguish into the parlors of the northern middle class." It contributed to prepare the way for the first modern war of our times, one that would be fought through ideology as much as technology, by enlisting the American men of the free States in the domestic project of their mothers: cleaning up the national home. Her own restless son Frederick would soon volunteer in the Union Army and get wounded, together with thousands of other boys who had shed tears, in the company of their fathers as well as their mothers and sisters, over Eva's and Tom's deaths, or Eliza's crossing of the Ohio in search of freedom for her son.

Mothers' power, it seemed, could go beyond the gentle action of moral influence. It could give birth, but it could also arm a nation and send its sons to war. In *Agnes of Sorrento* Stowe displaced anxieties about the unfolding events in her own country, which forced her to revise her project of a community of mothers acting in the masculine sphere only through moral suasion, to include a more direct role, one that could justify bloodshed. Stowe's romantic racialism allowed her to envision a similarity between Italians and African slaves that reached far beyond the metaphorical link produced by their common bondage. Her descriptions of the peculiarities of the Italian character are strikingly similar to her descriptions of Africans and Jews: emotional, imaginative, sensitive, spiritual, they all are feminine types. At the same time, however, thanks to their fairer complexion, their spatial location in the Mediterranean, and their cultural history, they offered Stowe a middle ground where she could let her imagination play with alternative gender identities.

In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, "feminized" men totally embrace women's doctrine of nonviolent resistance, yet there are times for violent action: the sentimental plot requires them, though sentimental ideology cannot find a proper denouement without contradicting itself. This produces a narrative tension, bubbling into textual loops where blurred gender identities separate again into masculine and feminine. Simeon Halliday cannot take George and Eliza to freedom: he has to leave his place to Phineas Fletcher, a Quaker whose pacifism is only a thin veneer crackling before the slavehunters. He does not fire, he does not kill, but he enjoys the fight and is ready to use force, when it becomes necessary. Augustine St. Clare, the seductive Southern master whose character in childhood was "more akin to the softness of woman than the ordinary hardness of his own sex" (132), develops a disturbing double, his proud, overbearing, unmerciful twin brother Alfred, who embodies unrestrained masculinity. Augustine is a sensitive, passionate, high-strung idealist whose potential for the development of a feminized manhood was thwarted by an early separation from his mother and marriage to the wrong companion. As a result he turned into a passive skeptic, who "feels right" but is unable to put feelings into action.

In *Uncle Tom's Cabin* the imagined scenario for the abolition of slavery is sympathy,

which will, in the long run, outlaw the peculiar institution. Blood and death are only foreshadowed as the consequences of God's wrath. *Agnes of Sorrento*'s scenario for the enfranchisement of Italian slaves is, on the contrary, war. A war that comes out of the agency of the oppressed, a conflict where "[e]ven women will fight, when what they love most is attacked," as the militant Agostino Sarelli emphatically declares (397), where the meek have to become lions, where pure women like Agnes, who will not fight but will die to defend her faith, survive the deadly power of evil which kills Eva.

In *Agnes of Sorrento* Simeon and Phineas merge into father Antonio, the tender artist monk who seizes "a sword […] with an impetuosity which would be inexplicable to any who do not know what force there is in gentle natures when the objects of their affection are assailed" (298). Augustine/Alfred becomes the Italian Agostino Sarelli:

> Here, then, was our Agostino, with a nature intensely fervent and poetic, every fibre of whose soul and nervous system had been from childhood skilfully woven and intertwined with the ritual and faith of his fathers, yearning towards the grave of his mother, […] and yet burning with the indignation of a whole line of old Roman ancestors against an injustice and oppression wrought under the full approbation of the head of that religion. Half his nature was all the while battling with the other half. Would he be Roman, or would he be Christian? (118)

Like a stereotypical mulatto, where white and black blood are at war and cannot mingle, Agostino's divided personality makes him a yearning, pained, anguished person, but he finally manages to achieve an integrated self, one that is both a warrior and a poet, a Roman and a Christian, a stern enemy of the Borgias and a tender worshipper of the Virgin. The black Christian martyr Tom turns into the Italian Christian martyr Savonarola, a blend of "the old Roman vigor and energy" (292) and "childlike simplicity."

Agnes of Sorrento's frame of reference, then, is less Pius IX's popery than the U.S., and its aim is to provide an ideological context for the Civil War justifying the shift from sympathy to fire, from women's influence in the domestic sphere to men's action on the battlefield. In other words, *Agnes of Sorrento* can be read as a rewriting of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, one step further in the direction Stowe had started to move with *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856). In a direction, that is, which questioned her earlier gendered and racial understanding of culture and history - opposing the aggressiveness of Anglo-Saxon masculinity to the "feminine" characteristics of self-sacrifice and forbearance of the African race - and extended the agency of both white women and blacks to include, besides influence, downright political action.

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CIRCUITS OF DESIRE: HENRY JAMES'S ITALIAN MEN AS MODELS OF SELF-POSSESSION

TATIANA PETROVICH NJEGOSH

PROLOGUE: JAMES'S DESIRES

Hugh Stevens recently demonstrated how Henry James increasingly represented himself within his own circle as a "sexual and desiring subject," acknowledging in his letters his desires for young men (Stevens 167). Stevens's reading of James's life is an example substantiating Michael Moon's recent affirmation of how "mobile, various, … and not definitively object-directed the desires of … James may have been" (Moon 190) and other recent attributions, to him, of a certain permeability of sexual identity (Snyder 66-67; Moon 15, 190; Stevens 167). James's own "choice" of bachelorhood, which has been read as an option which strategically desexualizes "the question … of male sexual choice" erasing male-male sexual desire (Sedgwick 188), has lately been interpreted accordingly. The "panicked erasure" of "homoerotic desire" associated with late nineteenth-century bachelorhood can well "disclose a wider range of desires and identifications" (Snyder 5). Because of this mobility of desire, the figure of the artist bachelor in the British novel from 1850 to the 1920s has been interpreted as a revisionary model of Anglo-Saxon bourgeois masculine normativity (Snyder 104). In James's writings, where these two styles of manhood often come together (Snyder 94), this figure has been interpreted as an attempt to resist to the shift from mid-nineteenth-century Anglo-American civilized manliness - characterized by emotional and physical self-restraint - to that turn-of-the-century primitive masculinity traced by Gail Bederman and others (Snyder 94-95).

James's homophobic responses to Wilde's behavior and trial, following Jonathan Freedman, have recently been attributed to the fact that "the difference between them is not as palpable as might be desired" (Stevens 132). Samesexuality, though, is not the only element in common between James and Wilde. An exhibited physicality and theatricality of dress characterized in fact the appearances of *both* men. If James's image still "corresponds to the received sense of [him] as the … Master" (Moon 46), not everyone looking at him "saw the serene and assured 'master' of legend" (Moon 36). Some of James's U.S. contemporaries such as Harold Frederic and Henry Dwight Sedgwick "found his appearance [at the end of the century] outrageous, ridiculous, and contemptible" (Moon 36). Frederic referred to James as an "effeminate old donkey … [who] insists on being treated as if he were the *Pope*" (qtd. in Edel, *Master* 57, italics mine). While Sedgwick described him as "a figure of vaudeville" in "tight check trousers, waistcoat of a violent pattern, coat with short tails like a cock sparrow - none matching; cravat in a magnificent flowery bow" (qtd. in Moon 37). These less known anecdotes of the "legend of the

Master" are evidences that "an increasing public effeminacy, a slightly grotesque exhibitionism, and a decreasing fear of being perceived as behaving in a ridiculous manner were all conspicuous features of James's habits of self-presentation in the later years of his life" (Moon 38). Through the cultivation of such behavior at the beginning of the twentieth century James augmented his understanding of how "he had himself resisted some of the effects of the "great male renunciation" and its "increasingly homophobic enforcement throughout the second half of the nineteenth century" (Moon 38-39). The "great masculine renunciation," as J.C. Flugel's wrote in his 1930 *The Psychology of Clothes*, consisted in "men's renunciation to forms of ornamentation" at the end of the eighteenth century (qtd. in Moon 176). Since then, "the dandies of the nineteenth-century metropolises and a few of the elite military corps were two of the small numbers of men who" (Moon 176) didn't give up "their right to all the brighter … gayer, more elaborate, and more varied forms of ornamentation" (qtd. in Moon 176).

When the Italian actor Tommaso Salvini played the part of the Moor of Venice in *Othello* at the Globe Theatre, in Boston in 1883, he was dressed, as a photograph of the *Shakespeare Birthplace Trust* shows, in a way that conveyed racial difference through an accumulation of ornamentations. Turban, chain, and a long white kaftan are redeemed by a stern look and a rich black moustache. On that occasion, as usual, Salvini delivered his lines in Italian, while the rest of the company recited the original. James, who had seen the play, in an article published in the *Atlantic Monthly* commented that "This extraordinary system" had "all the barbarism of an over-civilized age. It is grotesque, unpardonable, abominable" (*Scenic Art* 169). Nevertheless, he defined Salvini a "magnificent creature" (*Scenic Art* 172). To James's eyes, Salvini, as an actor and as Italian, was evidently one of the few men who did not renounce to theatricality of dress, spectacular ornamentations and bodily exhibition.

Increasingly towards the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth, James saw Italian men and actors as models of a culturally mediated primitive masculinity which stood as an example of a regulated and civilized display of emotions and corporality. Accordingly with what Moon has defined as James's "intense and strategic anachronism and anatopism" as to male-male erotics (Moon 30), however, James's primitive and sophisticated Italians seem at times seductive and distant creations to resist the powerful attraction of other, different but closer, *primitive* men. Men James described, in a 1895 note in his notebooks, as the "barbarians of the Roman Empire": "The Americans looming up - dim, vast, portentuous - in their millions - like gathering waves - the barbarians of the Roman Empire" (*Complete Notebooks* 240).

ITALY

> Here I sit at last, after many interruptions, distractions, and defeats, with some little prospect of getting a clear time to settle down to work again. The last six weeks … have been a period of terrific sacrifice to the ravenous Moloch of one's endless personal, social relations - one's eternal exposures, accidents, disasters. *Basta.* (*Complete Notebooks* 89)

In a 1894 notebook scrap written at Casa Biondetti in Venice, right after Constance Fenimore Woolson's suicide, James said "basta" to the "exposures" due to one's "personal relations" and seemed to confirm the choice of bachelorhood as the only possibility to a deep desire of "manly" restraint and control. The Italian "basta" seems expressively to contain and end all the desperate turmoil caused by James's fighting of emotions and personal involvements.

On the occasion of his long visit to the U.S. in 1904-1905, while working at *The American Scene* at the *Hotel del Coronado* at Coronado Beach, near San Diego, James recalled the "never-to-be-lost memory" of an evening at the Cambridge Cemetery. There, before his family's tombs, the Italian "basta," repeated twice, bursts out again as to contain James's "flood of emotion."

> Isn't the highest deepest note of the whole thing the never-to-be-lost memory of that evening hour at Mount Auburn - at the Cambridge Cemetery when I took my way alone … to that unspeakable group of graves. It was late, in November; the trees all bare, the dusk to fall early, the air all still …With the western sky more and more turning to that terrible, deadly, pure polar pink that shows behind American winter woods … But why do I write of the all unutterable …? *Basta, basta*! (*Complete Notebooks* 240)

At the end of the century, through the virus of Italian language, James seems willing to contaminate Anglo-American bachelorhood and his exigencies of manly restraint with more expressive and emotional masculine modes of behavior, conffirming an old necessity of resistance to the normative, controlled but troubled masculinities of his own family. His use of Italian, Italy, and Italians increasingly represented, towards the end of the century, a cultural and over-refined system to deal with physicality, sexuality and emotions; a "natural" way to "master" one's freedom.

In 1881, in the notes full of French and Italian phrases written at the Brunswick Hotel in Boston, James recalls "an enchanting drive … to the strange little old mountain town of Ceriana" (*Complete Notebooks* 220). Ceriana's memory starts a chain of recollections of the spring and early summer in Venice, and James fancies himself "coming back every year"; then he concludes: "I *shall* go back; but not every year" (*Complete Notebooks* 221).

To work as a model of cultural otherness, keeping at bay involvements too dangerous, Italy must be kept at distance. Through distance only Italy can be assimilated to the enchanted, picturesque and sensual "south" James evokes in recalling the Venetian time he spent with Herbert Pratt, one of William James's Cambridge friends. In 1881, inter-

estingly, James's imaginary south is a place where, paradoxically and reassuringly, freedom and mastery assume the same meaning.

> Herbert Pratt was there … and I saw him tolerably often … Seeing picturesque lands, simply for their own sake, and without making any use of it - that, with him, is a passion - a passion of which if one lives with him a little (a little, I say; not too much) one feels the contagion. He gave me the nostalgia of the sun, of the south, of colour, of freedom, of being one's own master, and doing absolutely what one pleases. (*Complete Notebooks* 221)

A YOUNG MAN & OTHERS

> You must respect the public which you address; for it has taste, if you have not. It delights in the grand, the heroic, and the masculine; but it delights to see these conceptions cast into … form. It is indifferent to brute sublimity … This democratic, liberty-loving, American populace, this stern and war-tried people, is a great civilizer. It is devoted to refinement. … To sing aright our battles and our glories it is not enough to have served in a hospital … to be aggressively careless, inelegant, and ignorant, and to be constantly preoccupied with yourself … You must forget yourself in your ideas. Your personal qualities - the vigor of your temperament, the manly independence of your nature, the tenderness of your heart - these facts are impertinent. You must be *possessed*, and you must strive to possess your possession. (*Literary Criticism* I, 633-34)

In his infamous review of Whitman's *Drum Taps*, published in *The Nation* in 1865, a 22 years-old James exploits the credibility earned through his father's name in the 'refined' circles of New England literary cultures striving to carve a stern and masculine professional identity. James's early professional and private identity, though, was a troubled one. During his first journey to Italy, in 1869, James wrote his brother William that Rome "operates on the senses," and the effect of the first day "roaming the streets," "moaning," in "a fever of enjoyment," is that of a blessed sensual feast of freedom and life (*Letters* 160). The initiation to the Italian Catholic South, in Naples, seems however to reinforce a straight, progressive and white U.S. masculinity. In a 1869 letter to William, James shows a "manly" and Protestant revulsion for the Catholic "picturesque" of the South: "I'm sick to death of priests and churches. Their 'picturesqueness' ends by making me want to go strongly into political economy or the New England schools system " (Ibid. 182). And that same year, in another burst of anti-Catholicism, he described Pius IX to his sister Alice as "the sexless poor old pope," an obscene and "flaccid old woman" he tried to exorcise with the view of the virile "imperial legs" of Marcus Aurelius (ibid. 165).

Leon Edel's biography of the James family narrated that the three million dollars William James senior left in 1832 spared *all* the James men the necessity of freeing themselves from commerce for culture (*Years* 19-29). But Robertson James moved to Milwaukee to work for the railroad while Garth Wilkinson, after many difficulties, entered into business and in 1877 declared bankruptcy (Maher 109, 134-135). In 1863 and 1865 Wilkinson and Robertson had enlisted in the Union army, and after the Civil War ran without success a plantation with freed slaves in Florida (Maher 28, 78).

Notes of a Son and Brother (1914) is the autobiographical source of the narrative on the innocence of the James family as to "business actualities," an innocence due to the novelist's grandfather's "fine old ability" in the field (35). As James recalled, his father's reply to the children's question about his profession "put" them "off with strange unheard-of attributions such as 'philosopher' or 'lover of mankind'" (278). But James Sr. and his wife Mary Walsh were not immune from the virus of business: the Florida plantation (in which he put 25.000 dollars and his friend John Murray Forbes 275.000 dollars) was a philantropic experiment *and* an enterprise for financial profit (Maher 93).

The famous "sensuous education" James Sr. bestowed on his children was based on the principle of respecting his daughter's and sons' individual interests and needs, without forcing them to choose any specific career or profession. When adolescent Alice declared her intention to kill herself, he told her that she was at liberty to do so whenever she pleased (Gordon 39). In 1866, when Robertson proposed to return to Boston from Florida and study architecture, James sr., who had financed William's painting studies, his trip to Brazil with Louis Agassiz, had agreed to finance Henry while he tried to establish his career, and spent money in expensive cures for Alice (because "learning and wisdom" did not become "woman," qtd. in Gordon 41), denied him the opportunity to train for a profession (Maher 79-80). The "atmosphere of freedom" which, to James Sr., should sourround his *male* children consisted in fact in a double standard of masculinity. That "atmosphere" meant a choice between action or intellectual activities, and the unsaid seemed to be that those who chose strenuous public deeds, as to fight in the Civil War, were to renounce intellectual activities, and "home," forever.

Wilkinson and Robertson enlisted in the Fifty-fourth regiment, and were then transferred to the Fifty-fifth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry (Maher 31). William and Henry, apparently because of Lincoln's politics before the Emancipation Proclamation, were spared the sacrifice (Maher 24). When Robertson was tempted to resign because of a growing homesickness, he was told by his father to combat his "passing effeminacy" (qtd. in Maher 72). But his strongest regret was that he felt, years later, that his recruiting had been a voluntary sacrifice on behalf of his father's ideas: he had been his father's "willing mite … to the cause he had so much at heart" (qtd. in Maher 25).

The transcendentalist freedom James Sr. bestowed on his children through a "sensuous education" consisted in fact in stern lessons on the need of self-possession and control for both sexes. The sudden sensation of helplessness and "impotence" he had experienced at Windsor, England, in 1844, when he felt that some "damnéd shape [was] squatting invisible," reducing him to a "wreck," "from a state of firm, vigorous, joyful manhood to one of almost helpless infancy" (qtd. in Strouse 14), was not to be repeated. In 1868 Alice had the first of what she defined as her "violent turns of hysteria" (qtd. in Strouse 118). As she would recall in her diary, "hysteria" was the result of a fight "between my body and my will" (qtd. in Strouse 118). In those moments, she "abandoned" "the pit of [her] stomach, the palms of [her] hands, the soles of [her] feet," and she was

tempted to throw herself out of the window, or knock "off the head of the benignant pater as he sat … writing at his table" (qtd. in Strouse 118). While Alice inscribed on her body the ecstasies and pains of a troubled rebellion to her father's libertarian authority, William seemed to share his fear for lack of self-possession and physical restraint. The "case" related in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) - a Frenchman in "bad nervous conditions" who suddenly identified with an epileptic patient (qtd. in Strouse 128) - which has been read as a vested fear of moral impotence (Strouse 127), seems in fact to evoke with horror an experience of erosion of physical and psychical boundaries.

ITALIANS

In the first volume of his autobiography, *A Small Boy & Others* (1913), James invests himself as a child with the greatest success a man and a male artist can achieve: to possess his possession. Recalling the different dramatic versions of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* - at Barnum's "lecture room," at the National Theatre in New York City, "deep down on the East side, whence echoes had come faintest to ears polite" (93), he writes that he and his brother William "attended this spectacle just in order *not* to be beguiled, just in order to enjoy with ironic detachment" (94). Even if diminished by an evolutionary frame and deprecating tones, Beecher Stowe and U.S. popular theatre are recognized as important cultural elements in James's aesthetic "initiation."

In 1913 James goes back, cautiously, to dangerous old waters. Back to New York's East Side and Lower Manhattan popular theatre, back to the "fluid" female domestic and sentimental novels, back to his family's contradictory abolitionism, back to the Civil War, evoking homoerotic desire and *the* erased color of his chiaroscuro art: black.

In *Notes of a Son & Brother* (1914), James recalls his visit at Readville, Boston, to Wilkinson's first regiment, the all-white Forty-fourth Massachussets. It is a picture of "bright air" and "azure," warmed by the "laughing, welcoming and sunburnt young men, who seemd to bristle … with Boston genealogies," and who "had all alike turned handsome" (456). The dry and pale New England blank soil of the 1878 essay on Hawthorne is colored and populated by sunburnt but white young men, as if James had suffused a personal and public memory of despair with the "bright golden meaning" of the Bay of Naples in June he evoked in "The Saint's Afternoon," written in 1900 and published in *Italian Hours* in 1909 (303). Those "impure" and alluring soldiers did not renounce their beauty and their physicality. Coloured by a southern tan and tarnished by James's desire, they represent his ideal of an "impure" American white male opposed to the "pure" American turn-of-the-century masculinity of "Theodore Rex," as James called Roosevelt in 1904. "It is purely as an American," James wrote in a 1898 review of Roosevelt's "American Ideals and Other Essays Social and Political" ironically questioning Roosevelt's nativistic rhetorics, that "he constantly reminds us … each of us must live and breathe."

Mr. Roosevelt makes very free with the "American" name, but it is after all not a symbol revealed

once for all in some book of Mormon … the national type is the result, not of what we take from it, but of what we give to it. We are all making it, in truth, as hard as we can. (*Literary Criticism* 1, 665)

James had started his professional career as a critic using conventional gender associations paring the masculine with strength and reason and the feminine with weakness and emotions (Nettels 48), but he increasingly used "female" fluidity to soften and moisten "male" hardhood. In the attempt to create a masculinized and professionalized literary art, he frequently linked the fluidity of the feminine to the looseness of the popular in his literary criticism (Snyder 109). Yet, control and fluidity of self-revelation were for him increasingly interrelated, as he openly admitted when he wrote, in 1914 ("The New Novel"), that his ideal artist, more than Wells or Conrad, was Edith Wharton. Her talent consisted in "the dry, or call it perhaps even the hard, intellectual touch in the soft, or call it perhaps even the humid, temperamental air" (*Literary Criticism* I, 155). Privately, James seemed to perceive emotions as a flood to be controlled not only by men, but also *in themselves*. In 1910, after the failure of the publication of the New York Edition and William's death, James broke down. He burnt most of his private papers, and Wharton recalled how changed he was from the man "so completely the master of his wonderful emotional instrument": "I could hardly believe it was the same James who cried out to me his fear, his despair, his craving for the cessation of consciousness, & all his unspeakable loneliness & need of comfort, & inability to be comforted" (qtd. in Cannon 26).

James's 1914 American models of a white, civilized and primitive masculinity - "dark" presences colouring the aridity and blankness of his New England soil - become possible examples of manhood because of the spatial, temporal and cultural distance he has meanwhile earned living in Europe. At the turn of the century, though, James's models of a civilised and natural masculinity had been Italian men. In a 1875 review of Howells's *A Foregone Conclusion*, James called for the necessity of *chiaroscuro* in U.S. literary art because of the "paleness" of New England's cultural landscape. "Civilization with us is monotonous," an "arid blank," "of *pale colors*," and "we have to take what we can get" in "the way of contrasts, of salient points, of *chiaroscuro*" (*Literary Criticism* I, 486, italics mine). *Chiaroscuro*, though, cannot be obtained through "local color": reinforcing the color line, James asked in fact for a more accurate exploitation of the resources of the Italian picturesque:

Italians have been, from Mrs Radcliffe down, among the stock-properties of romance; … and they are treated, as we may say, as bits of *coloring-matter*, which if placed in solution in the *clear water* of uninspired prose are warranted to suffuse it instantaneously with the most *delectable hues*. (*Literary Criticism* I, 486, italics mine)

Ironically undermining his own racist undertones, James admitted that a "name in *elli*" seems to be the only ascertainable "racial" and "national" characteristic (*Literary Criticism* I, 486-87). Yet, in 1874, he had evoked an astonishingly physical and alluring Italian. In "Adina" a young and unnamed Yankee broods over Angelo Beati, a beautiful Roman boy. Beati elopes with Adina and marries her as a revenge towards the "stiff" New

Englander Sam Scrope. Through the eyes of the anonymous Yankee, James's prose, in a rare outburst, materializes an attractive male young body, dissected by a hungry and desiring gaze into pieces: legs, arms, throat, mouth. A natural man, Angelo's abandoned and sensual posture and his arm "thrust back under his head" evoke the erotic and displayed physicality of the Fauno Barberini rather than the chaste *Sleeping Faun* sculpted by Harriet Hosmer in 1865 or the Apollo Belvedere, the "typical man" and model for the Caucasian race in Arnold's Guyot 1866 *Physical Geography*:

> A young man lay there, all unconscious, with his head upon a pile of weed-smothered stones … It was no more than I owed to my reputation of Byronism, to discover a careless, youthful grace in the young fellow's attitude. One of his legs was flung over the other; one of his arms was thrust back under his head, and the other resting loosely on the grass; his head drooped backward, and exposed a strong, young throat; his hat was pulled over his eyes so that we could see nothing but his mouth and chin. "An American rustic asleep is an ugly fellow," said I, "but this young Roman clod-hopper, as he lies snoring there, is really statuesque." ("Adina" 35)

In 1883, in the article written for *The Atlantic Monthly* on the U.S. repertory of Tommaso Salvini in Boston (*Othello*, *Macbeth*, *The Outlaw* [*La Morte Civile*], *The Gladiator* and *King Lear*), the powerful body of an Italian, the great *milanese* actor, by then 54 years old, dominates the scene. If Salvini's body is clearly the object of James's desiring gaze, his body is represented as a dynamic human force moving in space. Salvini's sophisticated physicality is distant from Angelo's picturesque and natural corporality: James admits that he has heard "this performance [*Othello*] called ugly, repulsive, bestial," but nonetheless he praises the Italian actor as a *man*, evoking the allure and power of his studied "tiger-like pacing" (*Scenic Art* 172, 174) and praising "[h]is powerful, active, manly frame, his noble, serious, vividly expressive face, his splendid smile, his Italian eye, his superb, voluminous voice, his carriage, his tone, his ease" (*Scenic Art* 172). Salvini's charming seductiveness depends on his being in perfect control of his body, as a man and as an actor: "a magnificent creature," he is not at all natural. His "complete organization and consummate manner" gives James immediately "the assurance … that he holds the whole part in his hands and can make of it exactly what he chooses" (*Scenic Art* 172).

Part of Salvini's appeal to James interestingly depends on the fact that his Othello is the portrait of an African by an Italian (*Scenic Art* 172-73). This particular can discourage the audience because "there is a class of persons to whom Italians and Africans have almost equally little to say" (*Scenic Art* 174). Yet, Salvini is not an "African," but an Italian patriot from Milan, and James makes it clear that he *becomes* black "with the aid of a little *red* paint" (*Scenic Art* 171, italics mine). Accordingly, the role of the Sicilian Corrado in *La morte civile* is described as a "simple, well-meaning, generous, hot-blooded, uncultivated, and above all affectionate Sicilian"; a man "personally sympathetic, but charged with the perilous ingredients of his race and climate" (*Scenic Art* 182). A year later, in an article published in *The Pall Mall Gazette* in London, speaking again about Corrado and Salvini's acting of his suffering, James tempers the racist undertones of his critical judgement by

putting on Salvini's "natural" playing the seal of artistic effort. Because of the way he "meets trouble," James seems to see the Italian actor, this "sensuous Italian" (*Scenic Art* 190), as a model of masculinity tempering Anglo-American masculine stiffness:

The part of Corrado is also a capital example of the simple way in which Salvini conceives his characters. They present themselves to him - as they naturally do to the Italian imagination - as embodiments of feeling, without intellectual complications … The picture given in *La Morte Civile* is a picture of suffering pure and simple … Nothing could be more natural, almost more sensual … more Italian - at any rate more expressive and more alien to the English theory of how a man should meet trouble. I have heard a lady say she did not care to see *La Morte Civile* because Corrado is not manly; and I confess I have not recovered from the impression made upon me by this way of considering an artistic effort. (*Scenic Art* 188)

By 1900, to control the powerful attraction of his U.S. "barbarians," James seems to bring about a reversal in his hierarchy of civilizations, placing Italy and Italians at the top, at the expense, needless to say, of "African tribes" (*Italian Hours* 310). The children of Torcello he described in 1875, in *Transatlantic Sketches*, as "the handsomest little brats in the world," "naked as savages … their little bellies protruded like those of infant Abyssinian in the illustrations of books of travel … showing their hungry little teeth" (88-89), are substituted, in "The Saint's Afternoon" (1900), by American children, transfigured by the Italian scene. Hanging "ecstatic" off the extreme point of Posillipo, James drinks the beauty of the Italian landscape. There "all the accidents merge," and he notices "charming … original people even down to delightful amphibious American children, enamelled by the sun of the Bay as for figures of miniature Tritons or Nereids on a Renaissance plaque" (*Italian Hours* 316). The feast of Sant'Antonio in Anacapri, where he was a guest of Axel Munthe at San Michele, is the occasion to appreciate the intimacy of the Anacapresi with their Saint, to reflect on the "turn of affairs about the globe" and wonder about the importance and "prospects of races politically feeble" (*Italian Hours* 310, 313). In evident opposition to the U.S. "barbarians" James had evoked in 1895, just before Theodore Roosevelt and his Rough Riders "triumphed" in Cuba, Italians are introduced as a race "politically feeble." But, as such, they are culturally strong and lively.

And so the afternoon waned … the purple wine flowed, the golden light faded, song and dance grew free and circulation slightly embarassed … It was all purple wine, all art and song, and nobody a grain worse. It was fireworks and conversation - the former, in the piazzetta, was to come later; it was civilisation and amenity … I talked with the contadini about antique sculpture. No, nobody was a grain the worse; and I had plenty to think of. So it was I was quickened to remember that we others, we of my own country, as a race politically not weak, had … opened "three hundred 'saloon'" at Manila. (*Italian Hours* 313-14)

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MEETING ON THE CORNER: MEDITERRANEAN MEN AND URBAN AMERICAN WOMEN

PAULA RABINOWITZ

In the late nineteenth century, Henry James detailed the fatal attraction the exotic/erotic Mediterranean man held for the seemingly naïve American girl. By the mid-1940s, this figure had become a permanent fixture in pulp fiction and film noir. No longer did the young adventurous daughter need to travel across the Atlantic in search of her dark other. With immigration altering the complexion and ethnicity of United States cities, all she needed to do was stand on a street corner. In Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity*, both Lola Dietrichson and her evil stepmother Phyllis involve themselves with hot-headed Nino Zacchetti. The swarthy man appearing from out of the past of the femme fatale is another of her iconic accessories. Like her jewels and minks, he links her to a darker world of sex and violence. His mug shot becomes part of her police file. He's got something on her, if only because of her connection to him. As she circulates seeking to fulfill her desire in the parlors of well-to-do men, he shadows her, hinting at her dark aura.

Since Daisy Miller picked up Signore Giovanelli on the streets of Rome, the Mediterranean man, at once more effeminate and more erotic than American men, has figured instability within the class alignments of America. With immigrants filling the cities' slums and single women able to move freely across town, an inevitable intermingling of classes, genders and ethnicities occurs in modern urban America. From Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie to Anzia Yezierska's Sonya Vrunsky, "Salome of the Tenements," these women, like Daisy and Lola before and after them, find themselves drawn by men to stand on the corner. Restless and available, these men are unmoored from the constraints of domesticity. American writers have used the erotic conventions of cross-class and cross-ethnic relations to comment on the dangerous yet promising lure of urban spaces as for democracy and criminality.

This paper explores the legacy of nineteenth-century attractions between American women writers and Mediterranean men by focusing on their early modern offspring. Anzia Yezierska's Salome, like Sister Carrie, refashioned herself by carefully observing the men and women she passed on the streets and getting a series of men to do her bidding. Lola and Phyllis Dietrichson and Stanwyck's Thelma Jordan also learned how to change their stories; they learned to lie. Like Daisy Miller, meeting dark men with accents and Italian names in the open night doomed them. But that's what thrills us as long as it remains contained within fiction and film. Since September 11, the streets of New York have an altered appearance, those on the make can still be found, but their energy is muted. The attack on the Twin Towers has turned the city's street corners into zones of death and mourning, literalizing, even if reversing, the deadly lure drawing Daisy to the ruins of an earlier imperial city.

In her quest for riches, impoverished Russian-Jewish reporter Sonya Vrunsky succeeds in charming first one then another hardnosed Ghetto businessman into giving her clothes, a new paint job for her tenement room, and money to redecorate it. Her encounter with Jacques Hollins, Fifth Avenue designer for New York's WASP elite, points to the power of the femme fatale to recognize her accomplices and draw them into her plot. Hollins began his career as Jaky Solomon and Sonya's knowledge of his past, plus her outrageous desire for beauty, triggers his interest in dressing her in his creations. Her desire sparks his. So, when she leaves him, as inevitably she must - his clothes are a means for her to entice the millionaire philanthropist, John Manning - he follows her back to the Lower East Side, watching her lunch with Manning in the Russian Inn from behind his raised hands. Yezierska's novel updates Pygmalion: with the right outfit a girl can go anywhere, transform herself and leave her past behind.

Hollins had already accomplished this transformation. Taking his savings, he had fled Jewish New York for Paris, trained in couture and returned with a new name - a deracinated name - that hinted at a Latin connection. Skinny Jewish Jaky had become Mediterranean-chic Jacques (on Jewish men's passing, see Rogin). She had the goods on him as much as he draped her in his expensive goods. This exchange remains hidden from the main action, Sonya's relentless pursuit of a man who wants to get rid of his riches as much as she wants to get them. Yet it crystallizes the system of exchange and desire that had sent the daughters of Jacques Hollins's customers to Italy in search of heat a generation earlier. The flaming Sonya seeks the cold Puritan Manning, rejecting the passion of both her editor Lipkin, the starving poet, or her Pygmalion, Jaky alias Jacques; but her success depends upon them. Lipkin had sent her on her first assignment to meet Manning; Jacques Hollins had dressed her for her second rendezvous with him. His clothes had allowed her to seduce her landlord, Rosenblatt into painting her room and wheedle a one hundred dollar loan, "solid dollars on future hopes," from Honest Abe the pawnbroker: "a temptress… this siren" (60, 63).

Indeed Sonya leaves a trail of men, each with a past that connects her to him, behind her as she quests for money, refinement, beauty and a better life. In this novel, her desire appears tempered by her sense of class injustice and her efforts to work on behalf of the poor. In this she is like the gangsters who would populate Warner Brothers films a decade later. Like Tony Camonte, Scarface, Sonya's rise out of the Ghetto - and her ultimate return to its vital source via marriage to Hollins (the gangsters die but Sonya's marriage amounts to the same thing) - is an act of self-fashioning and sheer will; but it occurs because of the slights and discrimination thrown in their paths. These "city boy" gangsters - Mediterranean men set loose on American soil - as Robert Sklar calls them, are the siblings of Sonya and her fatal sisters. They organize themselves into mutant forms of capitalism and terrorize their neighborhoods and cities. In *King Kong*, New York (and the newly erected Empire State Building) are terrorized by the captive animal

from abroad. Kong's lustful desire for Fay Wray recalled antebellum (and recently revived Ku Klux Klan, note the repetitive Ks) hysteria of miscegenation between African men and white women.

Giant gorillas clearly signified racial anxiety; urban gangsters embodied ethnic contamination as their outfits - replicas of legit business - spread across the city streets. The man who dresses (and ultimately, of course, undresses) the woman - the sensitive Mediterranean brute (even King Kong is careful with Fay Wray, caressing her and sniffing her like the lover he truly is) - is essential for the construction of the New American Woman, a modern woman, often one who is rising from her poverty, her immigrant status, to achieve a new spectacular publicity. She is on display: Fay Wray hangs over the entire New York City skyline; Sonya rules the Lower East Side. She can control these complex and contradictory spaces because she is properly attired. Like the traffic lights and neon signs, she stands out on the street corner.

DRESSING DOWN

Critics Elizabeth Wilson and Giuliana Bruno have discussed the differences between Benjamin's male flaneur, who possesses the modern city by interrupting its hustle and bustle to become an object of contemplation as he observes the passing sight of the city's streets and arcades, and his non-corresponding female streetwalker (see Wilson and Bruno). For Benjamin, the arcade, the structure designed to facilitate shopping by encouraging pedestrian windowshopping, made of glass and steel, at once fragile and breakable and sturdy and permanent, is the precursor of the modern glass and steel skyscraper whose exterior walls of glass serve as both decoration and structure. Exteriority and the interior rapidly exchange places: glass architecture "appears in the context of utopia" because its transparent surface appearance provides its strength (4). In the arcade, records Benjamin, the "young and beautiful woman under glass was called 'the Absolute'" (33). Women remained immobile - as merchandise, as shopgirls, as manikins - men strolled regarding them. Women appear frozen, under glass, as interruptions of the male flow within the arcade - a space of commerce, of commodities; but soon they too move through them as shoppers. They take refuge from the street under this protective glass. It sheathes them, like couture.

Paris fashion remakes both Jaky/Jacques and Sonya into denizens of Fifth Avenue, alienated from its wealth and upper-crust WASP mores, but residents nonetheless. He owns a shop; she moves into a townhouse. Clothing enables this shift in ethnicity and class, encourages this social mobility the city makes possible by hiding origins. What becomes essential is the surface and its transformation which is accomplished on the striving upwardly-mobile American woman by the hand of a foreigner, a dark man from the Mediterranean. In Michael Curtiz's 1945 film, *Mildred Pierce*, Joan Crawford meets and marries Monty Beragon (Zachary Scott), who introduces himself by reflecting on his "Spanish" mother to account for his dark good looks and indolent sensuality. Mildred

needs Monty for his suavity and he needs her for her money. Suffering remorse for her first night of post-divorce passion with Monty after her younger daughter sickens and dies of pneumonia, she eventually marries him anyway. His presence helps decorate her growing chain of restaurants, protects her from the advances of her former husband's sleazy business partner and provides a companion for her acquisitive surviving daughter Veda (Ann Blyth).

Mildred dotes on Veda; it's because of Veda's desire for luxury that Mildred initially heads off to work as a waitress after she kicks her husband out of their Glendale bungalow when he loses his job. Veda knows how to dress and under Monty's tutelage she matures into platformed pumps, slinky evening gowns and padded-shouldered tailored day suits, her black hair upswept in a severe French twist until she resembles a mini Joan Crawford, a replicant of Mildred who stands in as her double with Monty each night while Mildred works. Ever the suave gigolo, Monty supervises the makeover of Veda into another Mildred; then he lets Veda seduce him. But when Mildred catches the two together, Monty calls Veda a "rotten little tramp" and declares his love for Mildred. Monty knows (how to dress) women of a certain class, just as Jaky/Jacques learns how to make bulky rich women fashionable in Paris, because he carries the legacy of the Mediterranean within him, his Spanish mother's blood.

Veda, like Mildred and Sonya, acquires the sheen of class through her apparel. In Mildred's case, her initial work as a waitress means she must don a waitress uniform, which, once discovered by Veda hanging in Mildred's closet, becomes the reason Mildred agrees to marry Monty. She strives to provide Veda with clothes and must also make herself over to avoid humiliating Veda by her cheap, tawdry outfits, her degrading work. Like Sonya, she needs money in order to surround herself - but really just her greedy daughter - with beautiful materials. But unlike Sonya, for whom the elegant clothing Jacques sheathes her in forms a transparent exterior that enables her inner "flame" to shine through, Veda's costumes, always reduced versions of Crawford's - she's physically much smaller, psychologically much narrower - mask an inner coldness. Veda is the icy "Venus in furs" of masochistic fantasy (Sacher-Masoch). She destroys men, killing Monty for his betrayal of her when he declares her a tramp and asserts his love of her mother, as she has destroyed her mother.

No matter how much money Mildred gives Monty to dress Veda, the ingrate daughter ends up leaving her mother and singing in a dive on the Santa Monica pier, just like any rotten little tramp. The social mobility afforded her through her clothes ultimately sends her into the street. As a femme fatale, Veda is doomed; her connection to the Mediterranean man will not save her, it's, in fact, part of what seals her fate. Lana Turner, decked out in her smashing all-white outfits, snares dark John Garfield to kill her darker (and older) Greek husband, perversely named Nick Papadakis, and collect the insurance money on the Twin Oaks Tavern in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Garnett, 1946). She ends up dead in a car wreck mimicking the one that first doomed her and her lover when they survived and

were caught. Like Barbara Stanwyck in Robert Siodmak's 1950 film, *The File on Thelma Jordan*, whose gang moll past connections to the dark and sinister Latino, Tony Laredo, come back to haunt her (she's decked out in brassy blond hair and cheap jewelry in the police file photo of her gambling), Veda's connection to an older Mediterranean man, while giving her certain opportunities for social and sexual mobility, ultimately dooms her to deceit and death. Film noir thrives on repetition and replication. It is never enough to do something once. The trouble with disguise, however, especially in the age of mechanical reproduction, is that there is always a memory, an original that precedes it. Someone is bound to recognize you, to remember the caper, as Sonya knows Jacques is really nothing but Jaky and he knows her as his true mate; as Tony finds Thelma; as Monty unveils Veda. The well-dressed woman eventually must let her hair down. And it falls all around the Mediterranean man who first made her up, first dressed her down.

FLIGHT TIME

So female assertiveness, first inspired by the sensuous dark man, jumpstarts masculine anxiety and it comes out as pulp icons - bad girls on the streets filled with cars, bars, motels, neon signs and the pools of light they cast to illuminate those tramps: standing on street corners, cruising the strip, a long line of dark men and even darker women snakes through American culture. *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd, dubbed "The Cobra" by candidate George W. Bush, suggested that President George W. Bush was in over his head, trapped - like Richard Widmark in Jules Dassin's *Night and City* - in a shady underworld full of deceit and layers of complexity unfathomable by some regular Joe such as he is; the "Office of Homeland Security" is no match, it seems, for secret messages being transmitted through Osama bin Laden's videotapes (4:11).

In an op-ed piece entitled "Touch of Evil," Dowd invoked film noir as the proper trope for interpreting Bush's descent from touting of "communities of character" (a theme he was promoting during his summertime "home to the heartland" so-called "working vacation" as a "compassionate conservative") into an abyss of foreign intrigue spreading like a poison gas (or anthrax) across the world, an "axis of evil," emanating from dark men with odd names hiding out in rough foreign terrain, living in caves and powerfully controlling a vast network of operatives whose identities remain unknown. Selling drugs, laundering money, shipping arms and cash in pots of honey, they traffic in death and destruction. She is right, I think, to invoke film noir, but she could cast more roles. Bush is not the only noir figure, the doomed regular American guy who falls into the wrong frame. That guy, even if he stumbles into the bizarre plot, is always already guilty, full of the dread of the twentieth century which poet Kenneth Fearing thought "only comes once," that guy is already dead. Bush as a member of the Texas branch of the "oliogarchy," with the House of Saud forming its trunk (thanks to Thomas Pepper for that neologism), is certainly structurally guilty, but he lacks even its presentiment, a necessary condition of noir doom.

Dowd might also focus her lens on the likes of the criminals responsible for the September 11 mass murder. Especially Mohamed Atta who piloted the first plane into the North Tower of the World Trade Center on September 11, killing himself and thousands others exactly eighty years after the League of Nations signed the Mandate establishing British and French sovereignty in the Mideast. One of the few non Saudis involved in the attack, Atta, whose two sisters are prominent physicians in Egypt, suffers, according to journalist Fareed Zakaria, from "nostalgia" and "extreme psychological problems" stemming from modernization, from modernism itself perhaps, especially about "the role of women" in contemporary Islamic society ("Midday," Minnesota Public Radio, October 11, 2001). Atta, as an Egyptian, represents yet another stage in the unfolding encounter between American women and Mediterranean men. This time, however, the bad girl on the street corner, the desiring female, cannot be embodied. It is the nation itself, "America the Feminine," that stood in wait (on "America, the feminine" see *differences*). Its most potent symbols - the Twin Towers, center of "World Trade," and the Pentagon - at first appeared to be solid locations of masculine authority. Huge phallic symbols of America's economic and military might, they dominated the landscape, always visible, especially from above; they seemed, like the nation itself, invincible, protected by their massive size and singular isolation. But that seemingly obvious reading was misguided as Sonya Vrunsky and Mildred Pierce and their femme fatale sisters show. The Twin Towers, glowing and luminous, sheathed in their glass sheets, all dressed up and on display, already damaged goods from a previous dressing down, were waiting on the streets of lower Manhattan - not too far from Sonya's Eastside.

On their last day, Atta, accompanied by Abdulaziz Alomari, "did nothing different than almost any other person who visits the state of Maine from out of state. They went to eat, they gassed up their car and they visited Wal-Mart," according to Stephen McCausland, Maine's spokesman for the Department of Public Safety. "Indeed," comments reporter Pam Belluck, "it is the collision between the humdrum night-before errands of the hijackers and their hellish mission the next day that resonates in the photographs and the terse chronology that was released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation" (A1, B7). The twelve hours preceding the mission of death on September 11, 2001, included checking into the Comfort Inn at 5:43 p.m. in South Portland, Maine, a seedy strip-mall mid-sized town resembling any number of noir locations. The two dropped by the Pizza Hut around 8 p.m., stopped at the Key bank ATM at 8:31, then at the Fast Green drive-up ATM at 8:41, got gas at the Jetport Gas station at 9:15 and shopped the Wal-Mart at 9:22. The next morning at 5:33 a.m., they checked out of the motel, entered the airport parking lot at 5:40, checked in at the US Airways counter at 5:43 and passed through security at 5:45 to board the 6 a.m. flight to Boston where they then boarded American Airlines Flight 11 bound for LAX and flew into the city of New York crashing into the north tower of the World Trade Center at 8:48 a.m. to produce the "ghost horizon," the scarred skyline, that we have been living with since.

Belluck's report finds something baffling about the mundaneness of these men's activities. But here is where Yezierska's *Salome* and film noir can help. Here is where the logic of what I call in my forthcoming book "America's pulp modernism," begins to sort out the debris of political culture, cataloguing the horrors of the twentieth and now twenty-first centuries, found in the day's trash. In the typical caper film - say Kubrick's *The Killing* with Sterling Hayden, or *Double Indemnity,* or even *The Godfather* - many of the final scenes that build tension and terror and fear are scenes of non-action. They take place in the crucial hours after the gang, or the couple, have constructed the plot and are waiting to actually carry it out. Hayden hangs around a seedy motel by the racetrack he plans to rob; he drives around town to kill time. The Corleones cook spaghetti sauce in a suburban kitchen while waiting to ambush the rival gang; Fred McMurray and Barbara Stanwyck polish the plot to kill her husband while they meet at Jerry's Market standing idly before the symmetrical piles of canned fruits; the Killers sit in a diner and wait out the appointed hour to kill Swede. Cheesy B-towns up and down the coast - from Florida through Cape Fear to Maine - serve as settings for these eerie tales of evil disguised in the routine American habits of behavior. Motels, diners, drive-ins, car rides along lonely highways at night, brightly-lit interiors. They are places where lone men, in groups of two or three, or sometimes with a woman, can stop briefly, unobserved. Once the mugshot of the shady character with the Mediterranean name - Tony, Monty, the Greek - followed on the heels of crime, now the ubiquitous security camera tracks our movements across this barren post-war landscape, updated with the signs for Comfort Inn and Pizza Hut and ATMs and Wal-Mart. Fluorescent lights glare in each, prefab big-box architecture replacing Twin Oaks Tavern or Mildred's.

The mid-twentieth-century fear of Mediterranean men's attraction masked a deeper horror at the new woman's, the American woman's, ruthless desire. Her sexuality, like his, is suspect. Speculation has turned to Mohamed Atta's sexuality: the *National Enquirer* declared "World Trade Center Terrorist Mohamed Atta and several others led secret gay lives for years" (for an analysis of the history of viewing threats to the national body - whether fascist, Communist, or Islamicists - as homosexual plots, see Robin 23-4). The paranoia of the national security state is built upon cold-war American fears of secret incursions from within and without. Film noir tapped these reservoirs of fears propelling pulp modernism: fascism, McCarthyism, Communism, racism, the bomb, all relocated within the woman's body. Thus Mohamed Atta and the eighteen other men seem to mark a break with modernism. After all what could be more phallic than two gigantic towers rising above the hub of world economy power - the city of steel and concrete, of tough talk and hard hats? The twin towers, it turned out, like any rotten tramp, were easily penetrated. And once their beautiful surface was pierced, their centers could not hold. It was the glass exterior - their coating - that held up these two outlandish structures.

Were Atta and his deadly teams truly post-modern or instead premodern? Or do they continue and extend pulp modernism and the dark men associated with America's femme fatales now transferred to another zone - Arab Muslims living under repressive regimes

searching nostalgically to recapture a lost past: Andalusia, pre-Mandate, pre-Israel, when women were fully veiled seeking revenge on those gaudy symbols of excess? Were they as alienated from America as the image of Islamic suicide bomber would convey? Atta and his accomplices apparently understood very well the long history of engagement between America's upwardly mobile women and Mediterranean men. They penetrated the plots of pulp fiction and film noir. These same men fade into the landscapes of post-millennium USA, a vastly multi-cultural America full of various immigrant communities, with more transients than during either the 1910s and 1920s or the 1940s and 1950s, only now the stops along the road are bleaker: places where people can rent month-to-month to study flying in Norman, Oklahoma, or Eagan, Minnesota, or Delray Beach, Florida. Just as Tom Neal in *Detour* would inevitably get caught, so, our leaders tell us, will this new network of terror be thwarted, though it may happen in secret, in "America's New War" as CNN calls it. "What the British press is calling a 'long, thin war,' and what Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld called 'a much more subtle, nuanced, difficult, shadowy set of problems'," Bush called "the first new and different war of the Twenty-first century" (Purdum 4:1,4). This so-called new war and the new recession that seems attendant upon its heels, however, suggest we are not yet through with pulp modernism, its dangers lurk everywhere, we're still in for a dead reckoning, and perhaps we need the sleek clothing of the femme fatale more than ever to stand America's uncanny street corners in full relief.

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WORKSHOP EIGHT
THE MEDITERRANEAN EDUCATION OF AMERICAN ARTISTS

CHAIR: MARIA VITTORIA D'AMICO

The thematic framework that had been designed for this workshop was only partially explored. The tragic events of 11 September 2001 prevented Edy Giunta (NJCU) and Roberto Maria Dainotto (Duke University) from attending the conference, thus depriving us of contributions on the presence of classical mythology in the works of Italo-American women writers (Giunta) and on the poetic works of United States soldiers stationed in the Mediterranean during the Second World War (Dainotto).

Initially the hypothesis was that discussion on the Mediterranean and its cultural *topoi* might costitute for American intellectuals and travellers something more and something different from the experience of travel, real or imaginary, carried out on a far-flung leg of the Grand Tour. For some of these artists this had meant entering into Mediterranean dimensions that took them back to a magical *meeting with the origins* or, again, to other imaginary panoramas, remote or internal, as Salvatore Marano demonstrates in his presentation, "'Reflections in Windows': The Colors of Amy Lowell's *Can Grande's Castle*." Considering the geopolitical and aesthetic aspects of Lowell's poetry in *Can Grande's Castle*, Marano gives full treatment to her unique effort in conjugating formal experiment with political engagement; demonstrating furthermore how Amy Lowell envisaged the Mediterranean not so much as the Southern double of continental Europe as the gateway to the Near and, by extension, to the Far East. The other contributions emphasize how Mediterranean culture has a role as broad-minded and tolerant educator offering new arrivals not only knowledge of its own past, but the possibility of creating a fruitful contamination with the culture of origin. Indeed, this process of generative contamination is one of Maria Vittoria D'Amico's reading keys for Paul Bowles's novels on the Maghrib. In D'Amico's perspective ("*Wisdom and Ecstasy*: Paul Bowles in the Maghrib"), this writer effortlessly adopted the Weltanschauung of his new North African context, while still remaining anchored to some literary models from his American upbringing as well as to some humors and constructions characteristic of New England mentality. To some extent this is a form of elitist attitude that Kurt Albert Mayer highlights very well in his paper, "Henry Adams's First Sojourns in Italy, 1859/60," which is read as a journey towards the discovery of Italy and the process at the core of the movement for national unification, on the part of "a young man of the world" who "sees the native population as if through the reverse side of binoculars." Through a rigorous analysis of Adams's letters and other texts Mayer points out how Adams himself, "detached observer aware of his own provenance from a superior cultural tradition," was perfectly aware "of what set him apart - his own national identity."

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"WISDOM AND ECSTASY": PAUL BOWLES IN THE MAGHRIB

MARIA VITTORIA D'AMICO

This paper offers the first results of the reflections made during my study of Paul Bowles's Mediterranean education. It is a work still in progress, and one which I present as an analysis still open for discussion and review.

The hypothesis I put forward is that the culture of the Mediterranean Basin - still today the largest melting pot of races and cultures due to the intensity of interaction and the diversity of the traditions that belong to it - in its position as the Great Mother of Western tradition, ought to be considered as a tolerant and generous educator. It leads new arrivals, meaning all those who have chosen to live there, to a magic meeting with Origins. Liberally, it grants them all knowledge of its past, and teaches them to welcome its eternal presence in a process of *contaminatio felix*; and it does all this without taking anything away from the foreigner's own culture, even after he has become a citizen of the Mediterranean. This process of happy, generative contamination is one of the keys to understanding Paul Bowles's frame of mind and intellectual development.

This New Englander first came into contact with the Mediterranean Basin in 1931, and was to spend more of his life in the Moroccan region than in any other place in the world.[1] He effortlessly adopted the Weltanschauung of this new environment, while still remaining anchored to the humor and expressions that are characteristic of the New England mentality. Mediterranean culture instilled in him "pensieri meridiani" - as Franco Cassano put it -, *meridian, or noonday thoughts* that became deeply enrooted habits. Paul Bowles learned and adopted a new respect for time, according to an ancient wisdom, measured in longer units, and even dilated in space. "Here the day isn't measured: it simply goes by," he used to say about his way of living in Morocco. "If you see people, it's generally by accident. Time is merely more or less, and everything is perhaps. It's upsetting if you take it seriously. Otherwise it's relaxing, because there's no need to hurry. Plenty of time for everything" (Bailey 132). Bowles developed also different modes of relating to others - or to the Other - and new strategies for resisting external intrusions or conditionings of any kind: ideological, religious, and especially technological.[2]

And yet paradoxically, despite his passion for full immersion in Moroccan culture, his stay in North Africa maintained, or even reinforced, his New England frame of mind. This is most obvious if we observe his invincible tendency towards sadness (his wife, the writer Jane Auer, called him *gloompot*),[3] his almost sacrificial discipline in intellectual endeavor and a sinister propensity towards Death,[4] which he indeed transferred to his characters, who are all inclined towards romantic destruction, and also connoted with touches of Islamic fatalism: "the Moroccans claim that full participation in life demands

the regular contemplation of death. I agree without reserve" (WS 367), he says at the end of his autobiography. The peculiar Bowlesian Sehnsucht, shaped by both New England and the Orient, bears some peculiar marks that can be detected in other New England artists as well. It is a very Thoreauvian attitude towards the fruition of a frugal economy, and an almost Hawthornian taste for the penumbra as a domain for hidden solitude. The act of dreaming is turned into a site for shelter, into a mobile dimension that allows for oscillation, and as such grants maximum liberty to subjectivity: "since early childhood it had been a fantasy of mine to dream a thing in such detail that it would be possible to bring it across the frontier intact…" (WS 165).

Out of the penumbra of Bowles's consciousness, come places endowed with a magical quality that reach a material consistency and dimension. Tangier is one of those. It is a place that emerges as his favourite refuge, because, in our opinion, it reveals in its very topography those labyrinthine maps of the mind that, as a kid, Paul Bowles drew with minute attention to formulate magic ciphers against the perverse intrusion of adults.[5] It was a dream that revealed to him this magical juxtaposition of reality and imagination with Hawthornian connotations:

> one balmy night in May, asleep in my quiet bedroom, I had a dream.. There was nothing extraordinary about that; I always dreamed, and sometimes I awoke and wrote the dreams down immediately without even turning on the light. This dream was distinctive because although short and with no anecdotal content beyond that of changing succession of streets, after I awoke, it had left its essence with me in a state of enameled precision: a residue of ineffable sweetness and calm. In the late afternoon sunlight I walked slowly through complex and tunnelled streets. As I reviewed it, lying there, sorry to have left the place behind, I realized with a jolt that the magic city really existed. It was Tangier. My heart accelerated, and memories of other courtyards and stairways flooded in, still fresh from sixteen years before. For the Tangier in which I had been wandered had been the Tangier of 1931. (WS 274)

"…Tangier… the place I wanted to be more than anywhere else" (WS 274), Bowles reiterates like a testimony of his affection for that country. He was in Morocco then, in the country whose intellectual ranks he joined in various ways as one of the last expatriate romantics of the twentieth century. Through his chosen exile, he managed to create a synthesis of his own culture and his newly adopted one, which let him penetrate *the absolute* to the core. For this romantic escapist, this was meant to be the projection of oneself towards the unknown, the very essence of unconditioned elusiveness, the sacredness of the moment; all of which lived through and contemplated along unexplored lines of demarcation, along the routes of metamorphosis, produced under an aegis of acceptance for a different logic.[6]

It is the process of an uncommon symbiosis, of metamorphosis, which demonstrates the capacity of this errant psychonaut to celebrate his rite of passage, by moving along risk-ridden border territories and confronting horrid visions that he exorcises by drawing on the energies of survival strategies learned in his own sad and tormented

childhood.[7] "I understood that I would always be kept from doing what I enjoyed… thus I became an expert in the practice of deceit, at least insofar as general mien and facial expressions were concerned," (WS 17) said Bowles, also revealing to the reader a whole series of small tactics of resistance, echoes resonant of his past, which curiously were to serve as instruments to further understand new cultural situations. That is to say they turned into precious, interpretative keys in his reading of the often elusive Arab world, and points of attraction that he recognized as his own: resorting to private codes of communication, escaping into invisibility, searching for magical practices.

"Like any Romantic, I had always been vaguely certain that sometime during my life I should come into a magic place which in disclosing its secrets would give me wisdom and ecstasy - perhaps even death" (WS 125), Bowles would write. There in that magical Moroccan space, almost the sort of no man's land Hawthorne had indicated as the most propitious for the narrator's creative forces, Paul Bowles created above all things the most perfect of his creative expressions: the fusion between imagination and reality as he lived midway between his culture of origin and the Islamic one. It is interesting to note how his moving closer to the Arab world can be traced through his three Maghrib novels. The creative journey that passes through *Let It Come Down* (1952), moves from *The Sheltering Sky* (1949) to *The Spider's House* (1955) and reflects the phases of the author's initiatory journey from the Occident to the Orient, and his resulting change in perspective. *The Sheltering Sky* and *Let It Come Down* are both written from a Western point of view and *The Spider's House* from a Moroccan one.

The first phase, the abandonment of the West and the tragic attempt to acquire a new identity, is represented perfectly in both *The Sheltering Sky* and *Let It Come Down*. The former represents, as written in the novel, "an expedition from New York into the unknown" (SS 106)[8] by the married protagonists, Port and Kit Moresby. Their immersion in the new and primitive, yet exotic world, soon proves not to be a quest for regeneration, but an irresistible tendency towards self-destruction. As they travel deeper and deeper into the Sahara, their flirtation with danger and reciprocal betrayals are finally consummated in death and madness, as a sort of final expiation that gradually becomes clearer as their analysis of the signs, transmitted by the natural world, becomes ever more worrying. The sky and the desert are their most recurrent icons: soothing points of reference at the very beginning of their travel, but soon turning into bad omens.

Port describes the sky as "a solid thing up there, protecting… from what's behind" (SS 100); and we see an image of the desert in Kit's vision:

> … to the north glimmered the white ereg, the vast ocean of sand with its frozen swirling crests, its unmoving silence. She turned slowly about, scanning the horizon… Whichever ways she looked, the night's landscape suggested only one thing to her: negation of movement, suspension of continuity… the sensation came to her… that some part of this landscape was moving even as she looked at it… The monstrous star-filled sky was turning sideways before her eyes. It looked still as death, yet it moved." (SS 236)

This attentive focus on the natural environment is an attitude that Bowles obviously inherited from the Puritan tradition. In *The Sheltering Sky* it emphasizes the originality of Bowles's narrative technique, a technique that constructs and describes the inward and outward identity of his own characters through the systematic depiction of the landscape, even the architecture in which they move:[9] a minute and very articulated description of the setting, to the point of situating virtually every physical and psychic action of the main characters both on the individual and on the oblique plane.

We must infer through the elegant reticence of the author that which is consummated intimately between the protagonists in the privacy of a room, or a corner. But instead we become accredited witnesses to the story of the surrounding environment, of the world that lives and decays like a living creature: the rocks, the walls, and the tortuous alleys are all reduced to dust, evocative of the adjacent desert, always ready for a deathly embrace with the inhabited area.

In my opinion, this can also be seen as an entirely Mediterranean perception of the return to earth, of the petrifying of the being, which returns to the very depths of the Great Mother. Bowles conceives magisterially how communion with nature can be this as well: intense, not with optimistic, transcendentalist faith, but with the easy-going and laid-back resignation of the Arabs, repositories of just codes and the sense of place, masters of wisdom and ecstasy.

This is the unsuccessful lesson learned by the protagonist of *Let It Come Down*, Nelson Dyar (the pun is obvious). It is another dramatization of a self-destructive flight by an American, who moves to Morocco to escape - like Melville's Ishmael before him - the tedious routine of a New York office and to transform himself from a "victim" of other people's conditioning into a "winner." But above all else *Let It Come Down* is a novel about the dark forces, the ambiguous potential of Metamorphosis, and about the destiny that awaits us when we leave the space that is familiar to us. It is not by chance that the title takes us back to the sombre description of a supreme act of metamorphosis - a murder carried out in *Macbeth*.

The episode in *Macbeth* is well-known, and Bowles indicates it in his "Introduction" when he refers to a line that has haunted him since he was "a boy of eight or nine":[10] "I had been fascinated by that brief passage ... where Banquo comes out of the castle with his son and makes a passing remark to the men outside about the approaching rain to be answered by the flash of a blade and the admirable four-word sentence: "Let It Come Down." This terrible image - suggested by the murderer's reply - underscores Bowles's bleak view of civilization.

The novel is set in the midst of the two realms of transformation *par excellence*: the space represented by the International Zone of 1940s Tangier - land conquered by spies, adventurers and smugglers - and the psychic realm, the interior dominion, an immeasurable and timeless territory for hashish users. This place of escape for the Moroccans, who

through their culture and tradition know how to manage it, is instead a trap for the unprepared Nelson Dyar, who becomes another sacrificial victim of a failed attempt at assimilation. Dyar infers that he absolutely has to learn to move through risk-ridden borderline areas, but he remains incapable of seeing anything to hold onto beyond the emptiness he has created around himself. The omniscient author describes him as "numb," "void," and "prey to a demoralizing sensation of motionlessness" (LICD 15). The perfect alienated hero, who is perhaps comparable to other prototypes of the novels that proliferated in the American Fifties:[11] "At this moment it was almost as he did not exist. He had renounced all security in favour of what everyone had assured him, and what he himself suspected, was a wild-goose chase" (LICD 14).

I believe the key to reading these novels is to maintain our distance from the usual critical classification, that is to move away from the narrative of a novel of alienation, or even that of an Odyssean disintegration of a quester, who is incapable of fathoming his own past or of facing a new existential being. Instead we must privilege a reading of Bowles's art as the expression of a quest for the deeper significance of interpersonal codes and relationships, based on the value of communication and language. This is a profound Mediterranean theme that he makes use of in many of his texts with various patterns.[12]

Dyar's final progression toward catastrophe - which culminates in the killing of Thami, the local guide, who was supposed to lead him to salvation in the Spanish zone - is littered with signs of communication that are continually offered him in his surrounding environment, albeit in a cryptic or distorted manner. *Hidden, enigma, equivocal, mysterious, undecipherable, significance*, these are the key words of a reality that for Dyar proves to be deceptive, because the liberating purpose of the use of kif, which Thami would like to teach him, remains unknown to him.

Dyar approaches the question with a totally unbalanced vision of the reality around him:

> By the time the sun had reached a point in the sky where he could see it, he was not conscious of taking steps at all; the landscape merely unrolled silently before his eyes. The triumphant thought kept occurring to him that once again he had escaped becoming a victim […] it was as though each hill, stone, gully and tree held a particular secret for him to discover. Even more - the configuration of the land seemed to be the expression of a hidden dramatic situation whose enigma it was imperative he should understand. It was like a photograph of a scene from some play in which the attitudes and countenances of the players, while normal enough at a first glance, struck one as equivocal a moment later. And the longer he considered the mysterious ensemble, the more indecipherable the meaning of the whole became. (LICD 274)

Walter Benjamin teaches us that the spatial and temporal effects that hashish manifests in all its "regality," open new and immense dimensions of inner experience. He defines them as "regal passages," in which a pure language is revealed, one that history and trivial meaning had sought to silence. It is a prose, in which material and spiritual senses are equipped with a new consciousness, even one that is out of reason.[13]

It was a *regal* dimension that Thami had been granted by his own culture and that he had generously sought to teach Nelson Dyar, before this last split his head open in a dramatic state of unawareness, and above all else of incommunicability.

I mentioned that I would deal with the third Maghrib novel, *The Spider's House*, as a sign of Bowles's knowing penetration into the Arab world. The novel constitutes full evidence of his awareness, in as much as it is a historical analysis of the process of disintegration of native Moroccan culture as a direct result of the French Government's attempts to establish their colonial power, and a study of the opposition of the National Party.

The novel presents a highly elaborate plot structure, as Bowles combines the stories of two different characters: Amar, a young and naïve Moroccan boy; and Stenham, an exiled American writer. According to Gore Vidal, the artistic level of the novel wanes at the moment when the character Stenham is aligned with that of Amar in Books 3 and 4.[14] When I now turn to the first two books, those centered on Amar, it is not because I have been influenced by that judgement. Having had to make a choice, I believe it is the first two books that offer us precious indications of Bowles's great capacity for interpreting Moroccan culture, especially from a linguistic point of view.

As in the other novels, the plausibility of a connection between a young Moroccan and an outsider is explored once more. A predictably sad ending sees Amar transformed from an ingenuous, serene youth into an adult, who is disenchanted with his own future and that of his country.

However, books 1 and 2 represent the golden age of the city of Fez (epitome of the history of Morocco) and its lanes, houses and medieval alleys are once again a resonance chamber for the events and sentiments in the protagonist's life. Bowles's pure language and clear representation ascertain that we do not lose any moment of the highly metaphorical game, which in the Arabic language even includes falsehood - not considered to be a quality of the mind, but a peculiar element in communication.

According to Goethe, the flag of falsehood would be the flag of Islam. But it is not with this meaning that Bowles uses this subtle Moroccan saying as an epigraph to Book 2:

You tell me you are going to Fez.
Now, if you say you are going to Fez,
That means you are not going.
But I happen to know that you are going to Fez.
Why have you lied to me, you who are my friend? (SH 55)[15]

In my opinion this quotation is the perfect introduction to a dimension of Oriental life, in which verbal ambiguity - even falsehood - turns into forms of linguistic art and verbal tropes. An art that is connoted by some peculiarities such as forms of reticence, silence, and understatement.[16]

In his probing essay on "Linguistics of Lying," Harald Weinrich points out a bold statement by Taylleyrand: "La parole a été donnée à l'homme pour deguiser sa pensée";

or he quotes St. Augustine's work *Contra Mendacium:* "Non est mendacium, sed mysterium" - *It is no lie, but mystery*.[17] In the Western world, very few people are as bold as Tayllerand to give voice to this elemental truth, since it would involve the subversion of ontological codes generally accepted in the Western tradition.

In *The Spider's House* Paul Bowles offers us the most sophisticated tools to enter this different dimension knowledgeably. It is a fictional dimension that seems all the more charming because its messages and meanings are played entirely on the shifting of familiar codes. It is not, as a character says in the novel, "the Oriental passion for complications, the involved line, Arabesques" (SH 5). It is a Mediterranean way - and not only a Moroccan one - of representation, of attaining verbal wisdom and transmitting it to others.

I partially disagree with Ralph Coury, who said that Paul Bowles failed to capture the Arab frame of mind, among other reasons, also because of the irony and scorn with which he recounts stories from Moroccan daily life.[18] What Amar thinks - as we are informed by the omniscient author - gives us just an opposite indication as to the author's grasp of Arab-Islamic civilization:

…now he understood the Wattanine whom the French called *les terroristes* and *les assassins*… It was not independence they wanted, it was a satisfaction much more immediate than that: the pleasure of seeing others undergo the humiliation of suffering and dying, and the knowledge that they had at least the small amount of power necessary to bring about that humiliation. If you could not have freedom you could still have vengeance… Perhaps… vengeance was what Allah wished His people to have, and by inflicting punishment on unbelievers the Moslems would merely be imposing divine justice. (SH 121)

In a world that lives on after September 11, we may well say that very few Westerners ever penetrated the Islamic psyche in the way Paul Bowles did.

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NOTES

1. Born on Long Island in 1910, to a well-to-do family of New England stock, Bowles died in Tangier in 1999, at the age of almost ninety.

2. While in Tangier, Bowles rejected even the telephone in his flat, leaving the door of his home always open to unannounced visitors.

3. Bowles, *Without Stopping* 240.

4. Bowles's comment on the theme: "…The act of dying must be longed for as the ultimate attainment." Undated paper, Paul Bowles Collection, Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin, quoted by Pounds, *Inner Geography* 6.

5. "One of my pastimes was the inventing of lists of place-names; I considered them stations on an imaginary railway, for which I would then draw a map and prepare a timetable… the idea occurred to me to carry the fantasy partially into reality." *Without Stopping* 20.

6. The Absolute theme in Bowles' work is highly evocative of similar themes in German Romantics, see

Giannone, "Romantik e inquietudine sacrale" 15-26. It is significant that, while in Heidelberg, young Bowles decided to visit a ruined castle at night; his report: "I tried to feel that I was living in a poem by Novalis." *Without Stopping* 112.

7. "The Bowles family took it for granted that pleasure was destructive" (WS 17), Bowles writes sardonically in his autobiography, emphasising how his family believed his games and all childlike manifestations of enjoyment constituted transgressive acts to be atoned for. On "the aesthetics of deception" in Bowles' autobiography see Moss, "The Child in the Text."

8. All references to *The Sheltering Sky* are from the Vintage/Random edition (1990), and are given parenthetically after quotation.

9. For a comparison between E.A. Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* and Bowles's *The Sheltering Sky*, see Pounds, whose study relates Bowles to the American tradition of "using landscapes to externalise extreme states of mind" (vii).

10. All references are to the Penguin edition (1980). As a little boy Bowles had been an avid reader of canonical texts. Besides Shakespeare, he also read stories by Edgar A. Poe and the *Tanglewood Tales* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Emerson's *Essays*.

11. Dyar (writes Bowles in his introduction) "is the only totally invented character" of the novel, and in the context of the novels of the Fifties, to which we referred above, he might even remind us of characters such as Jacob Horner, the Barthian protagonist of *The End of the Road* (1958).

12. The tale "The Delicate Prey" deals with intertribal feuds grounded on different tribal codes, and "A Distant Episode" tells the story of a linguistics professor, whose tongue is cut out. See Bowles, *Collected Stories 1939-1976.*

13. See Benjamin, "Myslowitz, Braunshweig, Marseilles," *Über Haschisch*; Selz, "Une experience de Walter Benjamin," *Le dire et le faire*.

14. Vidal is reported by Bowles. See Regina Weinreich 272.

15. This psycho-linguistic game was mastered by Bowles perfectly, who commentedon his 48-hour imprisonment "under suspicion of being an international spy" (1952, South India): "My astonishment and indignation were regarded as almost convincing in their sincerity, thus proof of my guil." Bowles, *Their Heads Are Green* 53.

16. These are verbal tropes Bowles learned in his Moroccan circle, from the storytellers he taped and translated without editing. See the stories "The Canebrake" and "The Young Man Who Lived Alone" by Mohammed Mrabet *(M'Hashish).*

17. Harald Weinrich, ch. 7.

18. Coury, on the other hand, is right in pointing out the fact that Bowles was more interested in illiterate or semi-literate Moroccans and that, by his own admission, he had "little knowledge of literary Arabic." "Paul Bowles and Orientalism" 215.

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"REFLECTIONS IN WINDOWS": THE COLORS OF AMY LOWELL'S *CAN GRANDE'S CASTLE*

SALVATORE MARANO

In un quadro, in cui un pezzo di carta bianca acquista la propria chiarezza dal cielo blu, il cielo è più chiaro della carta bianca. E tuttavia, in un altro senso, il blu è il colore più scuro, il bianco il colore più chiaro (Goethe). Sulla tavolozza del pittore il bianco è il colore più chiaro.
Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Osservazioni sui colori*

1. IN TIME OF WAR

The idea that World War I revolutionized the artistic sensibility of the time is a recurrent one in Modernist authors. Gertrude Stein discussed it with Picasso; young American artists joined the army to feed literature with life; avant-garde movements on both sides of the Ocean were literally born from it, and those who were not, like Futurism, prefigured its outcome. So it is not surprising that even two conflicting characters like Amy Lowell and Ezra Pound - at least the Pound of *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* - shared the same view.

For Lowell, the Sarajevo episode was a shocking event that caught her unprepared in London at the time of her disappointing experience with Imagism. Amy was so impressed by the events that, on her way home, she wrote a famous piece for performance, "The Bombardment." Published the following year in *Some Imagist Poets. An Anthology* - the manifesto of *Amygism* according to Pound -, and perhaps influenced by Marinetti's "Bombardamento," that had just appeared in *Zang Tumb Tumb*, this early example of *polyphonic prose* immediately became the forte of her readings. "Patterns," a major effort centered on the drama of a woman who has lost her fiancé in battle, and placed at the beginning of both *Some Imagist Poets 1916. An Annual Anthology*, and *Men, Women, and Ghosts*, suggests the persistence of the war-theme in her poetry while the conflict was raging.

Lowell's attitude toward the war is transparent in her critical pieces of these years. Her 1917 "Preface" to *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry* begins with the claim that "It is impossible for any one writing to-day not to be affected by the war. It has overwhelmed us like a tidal wave. It is the equinoctial storm which bounds a period" (v). "Why We Should Read Poetry," an article published in the *North American Review* the same year, defines poetry as "the height and quintessence of emotion... as vital as the description of a battle would be, told by a soldier who had been in it" (5). And as late as 1920 in a negative review of *Georgian Poetry, 1918-1919* she saves Sigfried Sassoon because:

[t]he war made Mr. Sassoon a poet. He needed to be torn and shaken by a great emotion; he has found this emotion in his detestation of war. Nothing stronger than these poems, which are the outgrowth of his suffering, has been written in England since the war 'stopped our clocks.'" ("Weary Verse" 131)

Because of Lowell's dramatic perception of the conflict, in her mind the latter was inseparable from the Mediterranean. This is clear in *Can Grande's Castle*, her unique effort to conjugate formal experiment with political engagement in the entwined stories of four poems within the historical frame of the Napoleonic epic: "Sea-Blue and Blood-Red"; "Guns as Keys: and the Great Gate Swings"; "Hedge Island"; and "The Bronze Horses." While one year earlier the "Preface" to *Men Women and Ghosts* on the nature and form of polyphonic prose closed on the aside: "No one writing to-day can fail to be affected by the great war raging in Europe at this time. We are too near it to do more than touch upon it" (xii), here the notes on technique are relegated at the end of a long preface on the responsibility of the artist in time of war beginning with the statement:

> The four poems in this book are more closely related to one another than may at first appear. They all owe their existence to the war, for I suppose that, had there been no war, I should never have thought of them. They are scarcely war poems, in the strict sense of the word, nor are they allegories in which the present is made to masquerade as the past. Rather, they are the result of a vision thrown suddenly back upon remote events to explain a strange and terrible reality. "Explain" is hardly the word, for to explain the subtle causes which force men, once in so often, to attempt to break the civilization they have been at pains to rear, and so oblige other, saner, men to oppose them, is scarcely the province of poetry. Poetry works more deviously, but perhaps not less conclusively. (vii)

Such a reversal of ratio relocates the discourse in a field of centrifugal forces whose ultimate validation is to be found in distance and displacement. The title, for instance, at first suggesting an ancient construction, is in fact a literary construct. Lifted from Richard Aldington's "At the British Museum," a poem elliptically cited in the epigraph, it is meant to warn the reader that the events referred to in the text are stories.[1] As such, they have the poetic truth sought after by Imagism, in turn the newest embodiment of a tradition that goes back to the most illustrious guest of *Can Grande's Castle*. In other words, while hinting at Dante's writing of the *Comedy* in exile and in time of war, Lowell emphasizes that:

> I cannot have experienced what I have here written. I must have got it from books. But, living now, in the midst of events greater than these, the books have become reality to me in a way that they never could have become before, and the stories I have dug out of dusty volumes seem as actual as my own existence. (ix-x)

Where the mediated nature of the discourse results in an estranging of the sense of place that Lowell had developed along the routes of the Grand Tour,[2] the historical frame provided by the Napoleonic era brings about a temporal distance from contemporary events that contribute to the general sense of *Verfremdung* surrounding the poem. "Sea-Blue and Blood-Red" represents - to rephrase a precept of Imagism - the only direct treatment of the subject. A recollection of Horatio Nelson and Emma Hamilton's drama,

it maps the Admiral's route between Aboukir and Trafalgar via Naples and Palermo, before its final stop at Hamilton's grave, now lost, in Calais. "The Bronze Horses" closes the circle by recalling the Napoleon epic through the story of the Roman equestrian sculptures that, from Rome via Constantinople to Venice, were for a short time in Paris after the Serenissima's loss of independence at Bonaparte's hand in 1797.

It is worth recalling that, at the end of the XVIII century, the clash between France and England in the Mediterranean was a fight for controlling access to the east. The major consequence of Bonaparte's losses at Abukir and Trafalgar was England's hegemony on the Internal Sea, until the outburst of World War I brought back the question into the XX century (Braudel 118-119). Obliquely, the subject is touched upon in the other two poems. "Hedge Island," subtitled "A Retrospective and a Prophecy," builds up on a motif anticipated in the narrative detour in London and Merton of "Sea-Blue and Blood-Red," and forecasts the persistence of the British power in the four continents ("England forever! Star pointed and shining. Flinging her edges out and asunder to embrace the world," 120). "Guns as Keys: And the Great Gate Swings" transposes the Mediterranean warfare into the distant scenario of the Pacific Ocean. By substituting the United States for England and Commodore Matthew Perry for Admiral Nelson, its narrative develops around Perry's mission to Japan - via Saint Helena! (60) - which between 1853 and 1854 forced the Shogun to accept the treatise that opened up the Japanese ports to American trade.

3. PAINTED WORDS

Stylistically, *Can Grande's Castle* represents the triumph of polyphonic prose. Fully acknowledging the influence of Debussy and Stravinsky,[3] the collection represents the author's most sustained attempt at writing a long prose poem. Polyphonic prose, however, is more the loud-spoken brandmark of Lowell's readings then the decisive feature of her poetry. At first sight, it is hard to see how the imagist notion of conciseness applies to the never-ending flow of orchestral writing in her long compositions. As a matter of fact, the "cadenced poem," as she called it (*Some Imagist Poets 1916* x), attempts to recreate an acoustic rather than an eidetic image. As Amy herself argues:

> "Imagism" does not mean merely the presentation of pictures. "Imagism" refers to the manner of presentation, not to the subject. (*Some Imagist Poets 1916* v)

Since music is perceived in time, such an image is likely to take shape in a long text. The prose poem proposes itself as an appropriate medium for narrative in verse; whether it's modern or successful, of course, is an entirely different matter. This is not the place to discuss the limits of Lowell's belated-Romantic interpretation of a "literary genre with an oxymoron for name," as Michel Riffaterre puts it (Delville 1). It is more to the point to observe that, by choosing it, Lowell was able to find a theoretical basis for distancing herself from Pound's notion of the poetic word as a *written* medium. She went so far as to

maintain not only that her free verse "is written to be read aloud, in this way only will its rhythm be felt," but also that "Poetry is a spoken and not a written art" (*Some Imagist Poets 1916* x).

Yet, in reading Lowell's poetry one is struck by its descriptive quality. More and more her verses, which are for the most part description of the cultural order imposed over nature in places like gardens, aquariums and the like, move towards the realm of the pictorial according to the modernist principle that "music and painting are universal languages" (*Some Imagist Poets 1916* viii).[4] Rather predictable for a poet who writes in the lyrical mode, Lowell's descriptions are nevertheless peculiar. In the first place, since they suggest the very moment of perception more than the object *per se*, they encourage a phenomenological reading in much the same way as her models do; first and foremost the Impressionists. Secondly, her synaesthetic pieces are almost invariably based on a pictorial use of light and color that, incidentally, is at the antipodes of Pound's notion of the image - let alone of the visual strategies employed in his *Cantos*.

Can Grande's Castle is no exception. In "Sea-Blue and Blood-Red" the symbolism of color is announced in the title. The same happens with "The Bronze-Horses," where the reference to the glistening quality of metal adds new stimuli to chromatic perception and gives a retrospective insight to the colorful opening section of the former, "The Mediterranean." Filled with the vibrant shades of a seascape that Amy loved, the *incipit* reads:

> Blue as the tip of a salvia blossom, the inverted cup of the sky arches over the sea. Up to meet it, in *a flat band of glaring colour*, rises the water. The sky is unspecked by clouds, but the sea is flecked with *pink and white light shadows*, and *silver scintillations snip-snap over the top of the waves.* (3; my emphasis)

Despite the sparkling opening lines, the role of color in "Sea-Blue and Blood-Red" is symbolic in a rather traditional way: red, a primary tint, stands for blood and war; blue, the lesser hue, is the color of sky and sea, and carries with it the spiritual overtones of elevation and purity, especially when it refers to Emma, whose Madonna-like "face under the big blue hat works miracles like the Holy Images in the Churches" (5). On a structural level, the progressive fading of light from Part I to Part II underscores Nelson's progressive losses: an eye at Aboukir, life at Trafalgar.

True, interesting variations emerge from a gender-oriented reading of the red/blue complex. For instance, Nelson's injured eye at Aboukir is repeatedly associated with the "red eye" of Vesuvius; but since the poem is narrated from Emma's point of view, suggestions that the lava flow is also an image of menstruation creep up throughout the text, starting from section two ("Naples"). Yet, regardless of the treatment of the symbol, "Sea-Blue and Blood-Red" introduces the reader to a western vision of color and light; the same, to wit, argued by Frédéric Portal in his treatise *Des couleurs symboliques dans l'Antiquité, le Moyen Age et le temps modernes* (1857) and already suggested by Goethe in the closing sections of his influential *Zur Farbenlehre* (1810). A similar attitude domi-

nates the more restrained, almost monochrome Northern Sea of "Hedge Island"; but only after "Guns as Keys: and the Great Gate Swings" has introduced the rather different perspective of eastern sensibility.

Together with the paraphernalia of dresses and fans, lanterns and folding screens, porcelains and jewels, as well as the rituals of the No theatre and the dramatic ceremony of hara-kiri, the poem presents the reader with a strident opposition between east and west, reflected in its two-part division and in the parallel closing sections entitled "Japan. 1903" and "America. 1903." The colorful imagery of the "Postlude," placed as it is just before the end and focused on an *oriental* version of the central symbol of the book, is revealing:

In the Castle moat, lotus flowers are blooming,
They shine with the light of an early moon
Brightening above the Castle towers.
They shine in the dark circles of their unreflecting leaves.
Pale blossoms,
Pale towers,
Pale moon,
Deserted ancient moat
About an ancient stronghold,
Your bowmen are departed,
Your strong walls are silent,
Their only echo
A croacking of frogs.
Frogs croaking at the moon
In the ancient moat
Of an ancient, crumbling Castle. (95-6)

Apparently, then, Lowell saw in the Mediterranean not so much the Southern double of continental Europe as the gateway to the Near and the Far East. "The Bronze Horses," with its four seasonal and elemental sections duplicating in organic form the quadripartite configuration of the volume, expresses clearly what "Sea-Blue and Blood Red" only hinted at. In chromatic terms, this is accomplished through a progressive fusion of opposites; whereas in parts one and two the contrasts are predominantly - although not exclusively - tonal, and tend to be ornamental and, especially in part one, in the service of a recognizable symbolism ("White and purple, like the white sun and the purple shadows, the senators pass, followed by a crowd of slaves," 126), in the Venetian sections of the poem they depend on both the shades of light and the materials determining whether the colors are opaque or brilliant, and tend to have a central pictorial role. The result is a merger of western paintings with Japanese silks and lacquer prints akin to the beautiful haiku-like lyrics and chinoiseries that Amy would later collect in *Pictures of the Floating World* .[5]

4. CHROMOPHILIA VS CHROMOPHOBIA

Lowell's interest in the Far East dates back to her childhood. Well before Pound's discovery of China in Fenollosa's manuscripts, she had long been familiar with the oriental arts and crafts through her brother Percival, who lived in Japan for ten years between 1883 and 1893. He sent home letters written on *wishi* paper, together with various artifacts like combs or kimonos, and wrote influential books such as *The Soul of the Far East* (1888) and *Occult Japan* (1895). Amy's early exposure to eastern culture accounts for her enthusiastic adhesion to Imagism, before the radical differences between Pound's anti-lyrical, classicist stance, and Lowell's belated Romanticism resulted in a crisis that led to their inevitable separation.

The Pound-Lowell warfare was primarily fuelled by two exceptionally strong personalities; but their different approach to Oriental art and culture played a role too. Not only was the focus of their interests divergent - China for Pound, Japan for Lowell; poetical technique and *Weltanschauung* for the former, artistic technique and imagery for the latter -; their appreciation of synaesthesia in eastern art was also markedly distinct. Whereas Pound was fascinated by the cluster effect of meaning conveyed by the ideogram, Lowell worked out the unheard-of arrangement of space in the art of the *ukiyo-e* masters, with their composite formats and framed pictures, their play with decorative patterns and figurative motifs, and their use of gold and silver in the chromatic effects that had so much influenced Impressionists and Art Nouveau artists (Wichmann 10). In this context, of course, Pound's colorless line[6] was hardly a match for the author of a Shelleyan opera prima entitled *A Dome of Many Coloured Glass* (1912).

Lowell sealed the break from her former mentor with the bitter fable of "Astigmatism," addressed "to Ezra Pound with Much Friendship and Admiration and Some Differences of Opinion" and collected in *Sword Blades and Poppy Seeds* in 1914 (*Complete Poetical Works* 34). If in itself the title does not refer to color perception, it obviously suggests a deficiency of sight. The many oversights in Pound's notions about the poetic image, as well as his authoritarianism in establishing hierarchies and standards in order to objectify evaluation, were the patent target of Lowell's scorn. The western idea of pictorial composition has constantly tended to put color at the bottom of its hierarchy of value. According to classical rules, color is subordinate to line, and this to pattern. As late as the 1890s, and with an explicit polemic intent with the vogue of Japonisme among the so-called colorists, the art critic Charles Blanc still associated color with the feminine in art as opposed to the "virile" discipline of drawing (Batchelor 19-20). In cultural terms, however, color is intimately connected with flesh and the body and, by extension, with pleasure and sexuality. Its avatars, either mineral or vegetal such as gems and flowers - in Gaston Bachelard's words, "ontophanies of light" (79) -, are all emblems of nature (Barthes 162-3). If we think that for Percival Lowell Japan was "the feminine half of the world" (Wineapple 85), the distance between Pound's monochrome line and Amy Lowell's bright imagery of jewelry and vegetation becomes incommensurable.

Pound's first collection of poetry was printed in 1908 in Venice, where he was to spend the last ten years of his life, with the chromophobic title *A Lume Spento*. Lowell, who slept in the morning and used to write by the *flamme d'une chandelle*, composed an early "Venetian Glass" poem and placed it very close to "A Japanese Wood-Carving" in *A Dome of Many-Coloured Glass*,[7] before electing the "City of reflections" (170) as the place where to end the journey of her ambitious and fatiguing poem.[8] "The Bronze Horses," written especially for the collection in order to unify its content,[9] works on a double register, so that the fate of the four statues is seen in the context of the never-ending east-west conflict. First the rhapsodic narration follows the decline of the Roman Empire from Rome to Byzantium ("Elements. Rome"; "Pavane to a Brass Orchestra. Constantinople"); then it unfolds at the cultural crossroads of the Laguna, where the story of two Venices is told ("Beneath A Crooked Rainbow. Venice"; "Bonfires Burn Purple. Venice Again"): not so much "the one which we walk upon, and the one which wavers up to us inverted from the waters of the canals" (183), as the Venice of the myth and that of the present, "Sunday evening, May 23, 1915" (219). In an alternate vision of the two, a series of mirrorings and metamorphoses take place: the Republic with an open trade with China sees the equestrian statues become "Great gold horses, quietly stepping above the little mandarin figures, strong horses above the whirling porcelain figures," while "Bronze armies [are] marching on a sea-shell city" (194); and the bombarded "City of soft colours, of amber and violet" is "turning grey-green, and grey-green are the uniforms of the troops who defend you. The Bersaglièri..." (229).

The brutal reality of the war has reduced "Venice anadyomene" (170) to a city of dark colors, "Black as the guns mounted on pontoons among the Lagoons before Venice, green as the bundles of reeds camouflaging them from Austrian observation balloons" (229). Perhaps there is no answer to the question "For how long?" (231); but Lowell is certain that the "ring of searching must be widened, and France, England, Japan, and America, caught within its edge" (231-32) if the meeting of the twain has to have a chance beyond the artistic achievement of a work of art. Meanwhile, "the horses float along the canal, between barred and shuttered palaces, splendid against marble walls in the fire of the sun" (232).

Università degli Studi di Catania

NOTES

1. Aldington's poem reads: "I turn the page and read:/"I dream of silent verses where the rhyme/Glides noiseless as an /The heavy musty air, the black desks,/The bent/heads and the rustling noises/In the great dome/ Vanish.../And/The sun hangs in the cobalt-blue sky,/The boat drifts over the lake shallows,/The fishes skim like umber shades through the undulating weeds,/The oleanders drop their rosy petals on the lawns,/And the swallows dive and swirl and whistle/About the cleft battlements of Can Grande's castle..."

2. The Lowells took their Grand Tour when Amy was only eight. It was a dreadful experience, since the strain of the trip affected her health permanently. Much later, between 1896 and 1908, she spent long months in Venice, Rome and Naples, then Egypt, Greece and Turkey.

3. Note that the second section of "The Bronze Horses" is introduced by a countrapuntal passage entitled "Pavane to a Brass Orchestra."

4. From this point of view it is interesting to compare Lowell's early "In A Garden," included by Pound in *Des Imagistes* (1914), with "Impressionist Garden," a Chinese-box-like ekphrasis of frames within frames collected five years later in *Pictures of the Floating World.*

5. The "Lacquer Print" section of *Pictures of the Floating World*, however, had already appeared in abbreviated form in *Some Imagist Poets 1917,* 79-86.

6. At least in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*; but the presence of color is scarce throughout Pound's work.

7. In between the two there is, profetically, a lyric entitled "Fatigue" (*The Complete Poetical Works of Amy Lowell* 3).

8. The first lines of "After Writing the Bronze Horse," collected in *Pictures of the Floating World*, read: "I am so tired./... /I have written things/Which sucked the breath/Out of my lungs and hung/My heart up in a frozen death." (*Complete Poetical Works* 239).

9. On the contrary, "Sea-Blue and Blood-Red" and "Hedge Island" had already appeared in *The North American Review*, and "Guns as Keys: and the Great Gate Swings" in *The Seven Arts* (*Can Grande's Castle*, Table of Contents, n.p.).

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"MUCH AS I SYMPATHISE WITH THE ITALIANS AND WISH THEM SUCCESS": HENRY ADAMS' FIRST SOJOURNS IN ITALY, 1859-60

KURT ALBERT MAYER

This essay contends that Henry Adams, during the actual journeys through Italy in 1859/60 as well as in their subsequent revisions in writing, never adequately realizes a crucial piece of education gained from the trips. Putting the matter very simply - even risking over-simplification - it is meant to suggest that Adams sets out on these journeys because he wants to learn about Italy and what is at the core of the movement for national unification that is affecting great changes just as he tours the Apennine peninsula. Provisionally, I claim that Adams becomes increasingly aware of what sets him apart - his own national identity, if you will.

Henry Adams' writings on his first journeys to the Mediterranean span over fortyfive years - from 1859, when the young correspondent conveys his days of study and travel in Europe, to 1905/6, when *The Education of Henry Adams* is put to paper. However diverse in form and method of presentation, the two narratives serve to illustrate what Homi Bhabha calls "the recurrent metaphor of landscape as the inscape of national identity" (295). Their treatment of *Italianità*, of Italian nation-ness and nationalism, also complies neatly with the tenets held by E.J. Hobsbawm. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* terms the years between 1830 and the 1870s "the Mazzinian phase of nationalism," which Hobsbawm regards as a "proto-nationalism" different in "major respects from the nationalism of 1880-1914," when "the debate about the national question becomes serious and intensive."[1]

Many a crucial distinction Hobsbawm makes is borne out by the accounts Henry Adams drew up of his first excursions to the Mediterranean. It is well to keep in mind the different circumstances under which the two versions, in Donald Pease's words, "construct imaginary relations to actual socio-political conditions to effect imagined communities called national peoples" (3). The one is written before the out-break of the Civil War, which, Gore Vidal asserts, offered Lincoln the opportunity to recreate the United States as a nation-state; the other bears the imprint of the old man's intractability. *The Education of Henry Adams* is all too intent on fixing national boundaries and never averse to crude ethnic labeling.

In the letters penned in 1860, the political and semantic demarcations of the terms *Italy* and *Italian* are hazy at best. Indeed, when young Henry Adams catches the first glimpse of the Adriatic from a train descending the Karst to Trieste, he has no sense of entering Italy. Trieste is "the last remnant of Germany" (*L* 1: 116), he declares. On arrival in Venice he admits, "my impressions were a good deal confused" as "the German ele-

ment" seems "very much in the majority as to numbers" (*L* 1: 119, 122). By 1905, however, Adams no longer obeys what was meant as a caveat in the large *History of the United States During the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison*: "Of all historical problems, the nature of national character is the most difficult and important" (1: 120). *The Education* flatly asserts that "race ruled the conditions" (*A* 1096) and "race classified thought" (*A* 1123).[2] In that light, the narratives of Adams' first encounters with the Mediterranean afford multi-faceted variations on what Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* has made out as a fundamental paradox: "The objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists" (5).

That paradox and its attendant ironies abound in *The Education of Henry Adams* -particularly in the incongruities dotting the presentation of the Risorgimento. *The Education* depicts young Adams settling as a tourist in Dresden in spring 1859, when "suddenly the Emperor Napoleon declared war on Austria and raised a confused point of morals in the mind of Europe" (*A* 796). The distanced hindsight of the would-not-be autobiographer, who speaks of himself in the third person and makes short shrift of his life, telescopes historical events and slants details. Louis Napoleon did not declare war on the Habsburg Monarchy in 1859. Countering an ultimatum in which the government in Vienna demanded the immediate demobilization of the Piedmontese military, he proclaimed that an Austrian invasion of Sardinian territory would be regarded as a declaration of war against France; Emperor Franz Joseph nevertheless marched his armies against the unobliging neighbor.

Dissociated from the actual experience, the lesson taught in *The Education of Henry Adams* is curiously abstract, for the outbreak of hostilities on the southern slope of the Alps makes merely a problem of taking sides. Alignment with either of the contending empires, France or Austria, is out of the question, since each is "an evil spirit" (*A* 797), while the remaining options, Germany and Italy, are as yet only imagined communities whose desires for national unification have sparked the eruption of warfare. The narrator of *The Education* denounces German efforts at unification and imports as evidence unsavory aspects of "the Germany to come" after 1860, "military Germany" (*A* 796); but he remains silent about the outcome of the Italian struggle for a unified nation-state.

That silence is to be read as a tacit, if not wholehearted, approval, for to all appearances, Adams' first visit to Italy solves the problem of taking sides. The fact-finding field trip, undertaken when in August 1859 fighting had ceased but no formal truce had yet been announced, transports the title figure in a rented carriage to Milan and back north. On the Stelvio, "Garibaldi's Cacciatori … [and] their enemies, the abhorred Austrian Jägers," form "a double line of sentries stretching on either side up the mountains, till the flash of the gun barrels was lost in the flash of the snow." Mals, the village at the northern foot of the pass, is said to be "swarming with German soldiers and German fleas, worse than the Italians, and German language, thought and atmosphere, of which Adams, thanks to his glimpse of Italy, never again felt quite the old confident charm" (*A* 798-799).

With its overdrawn ethnic borders and convictions about national differences spilling over in determining the nationality of fleas, *The Education* is incompatible with Hobsbawm's definition of "proto-nationalism" (cf. *Nations* 46-80). Governed wholly by the perspective of 1905/6, the presentation dwarfs the protagonist and truncates his life to a series of accidents. The point made about Adams' first trip to Washington is also valid for the renderings of the early excursions to Italy. "This was the journey he remembered. The actual journey may have been quite different, but the actual journey has no interest for education" (*A* 759).

If Earl N. Harbert stresses that *The Education of Henry Adams* is very much "a private inquiry" (*Force* 147), the narrative, paradoxically, depends upon establishing a successful dialogue between author and reader. Along those lines, *The Education* is a sermon, not a confession, in which the chapter entitled "Rome (1859-1860)" is to suggest that during the second Italian journey the protagonist awakens by the way to an appreciation of the Euro-Christian tradition of art and culture. This suggestion, however, comes only through an elaborately indirect emplotment. The recollection of the trip undertaken in spring 1860 condenses the adventures of three eventful months to a few pages and barely alludes to the political upheaval convulsing the Apennine peninsula in those days. The title figure is cast as "a mere tourist, and nothing else" (*A* 800), who after two gloomy winters of study in Germany chances upon a blend of culture congenial to his taste. "… Italy was mostly an emotion and the emotion naturally centered on Rome. … The month of May, 1860, was divine." Rome, where "in 1860 the lights and shadows were still mediæval" (*A* 802), is then fast becoming the absent center of the political entity about to emerge under the name of Italy. The account of the visit to the Eternal City, thus seemingly depoliticized, foregrounds a moment of initiation, as young Henry grows aware of the range of Western history opening up before him - though again, the perspective is not the protagonist's, of 1860, but the narrator's, of 1905/6; for the range of Western history unfolding already includes America as the future Rome. Melvin Lyon claims, certainly too grandly, that in *The Education* "the most pervasive analogy" is "that between the development of the United States and the history of the Roman Empire" (123). Appropriately, the author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Edward Gibbon, is summoned in support of the main line of argument, the effect heightened by a biographical twist. While the narrator of *The Education* has the protagonist stumble across a quote from Gibbon's *Autobiography* in *Murray's Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy*,[3] a letter Henry mailed to his brother Charles reports jubilantly that after a long search he finally managed to find a copy of said volume in a bookstore in Rome.[4] The sight of young Henry pondering Gibbon "on the steps of Santa Maria di Ara Coeli" (*A* 803) then occasions a contemplation of the would be historian against the old man's crushingly retrospective knowledge (cf. Decker 263).

Over all the historico-philosophical musings, the political cannot be held at bay for long, however carefully it is hedged. On moving to Naples, Adams "heard rumors that

Garibaldi and his thousand were about to attack Palermo" (*A* 805). He sets over to Sicily; his meeting Garibaldi in person becomes the highlight of the Italian journey. *The Education* recalls "a quiet-featured, quiet-voiced man in a red flannel shirt[,] absolutely impervious," who "was certainly the most serious of the doubtful energies in the world" (*A* 806). Though Adams admits his fascination for "this compound nature of patriot and pirate," he draws a line and dissociates the man from the cause he foght for by an offhanded reference to Garibaldi's posthumously published memoirs: "In the end, if the *Autobiography* tells truth, Garibaldi saw and said that he had not understood his own acts; that he had been an instrument; that he had served the purposes of the class he least wanted to help" (*A* 807). While not a word is lost about Garibaldi's role as torchbearer of a national cause, the statement serves to discredit Garibaldi as a misguided social revolutionary - this all the more so, coming, as it does, from a writer as elitist, socially exclusive and convinced of his own patrician position as the old Henry Adams.

By the somewhat perverse, if nonetheless consistent, logic of *The Education*, the evasion of a topic in question and jabs on the side are to be taken as grudging nods of consent. When Adams in *The Education* looks back upon the course of his life, this partial view privileges the elderly narrator and diminishes the young man's actual opinions. The way those incidents are recalled and positioned in *The Education* - the sweeping survey of the journey down the Apennine peninsula mentions no more than a few stages of the trip and does not even allow a rough reconstruction of Adams' actual itinerary - would warrant a note of alarm such as Ken Kesey in *Last Go Round. A Real Western* puts in the mouth of an old rodeo star looking back upon his life: "I found that my once-gleaming memories had gone alarmingly dim" (1).

Such frankness of confession is denied in Adams' book of his life, though authorial misgivings about the imbalance between the narrator and the protagonist are written into the chapter "Rome (1859-1860)," albeit characteristically veiled. The account of the journey undertaken in spring 1860 is framed by two references to travel letters which young Henry is said to have written during his three-month journey through Italy and "his brother Charles … caused to be printed in the *Boston Courier*." When the narrator of *The Education* commends the correspondent's effort as "still the nearest approach he had made to an intelligent act" (*A* 801), the heavy-handed praise is double-edged. The obvious suggestion to the reader is that, should one wish for more detailed and immediate information about the Italian journey, it might be obtained from the *Courier*, "where the narrative probably exists to this day, unless the files of the *Courier* have wholly perished" (*A* 806).

The invitation expressed is largely tongue in cheek. For had Henry had a say about where he would have wanted the travel pieces, his first publication, to appear, the *Daily Courier* would have been his least likely choice among Boston newspapers; with its pro-slavery leanings and small circulation, the *Courier* was hardly deemed respectable among the abolitionist circles in which the Adamses were prominent. Moreover, the insinuation

that anyone endeavoring to consult the archives might do so in vain is not to be dismissed as mere rhetorical tiptoeing on Adams' part; for the *Daily Courier* ceased publication in 1864, and today, even the holdings catalogued in the Library of the Massachusetts Historical Society are far from complete.

On the side, the references to the *Courier* articles advert to Henry Adams' quite self-conscious beginning as a letter writer. On March 26, 1860, few days before his departure from Dresden, Henry, looking forward to his journey to Italy, addresses his brother Charles. "[T]his trip may perhaps furnish material for a pleasant series of letters, not written to be published but publishable in case they are worth it. This is my programme. You may therefore expect from week to week, letters from me, beginning at Vienna and continuing so long as I don't get tired of it" (*L* 1: 106).

He keeps to his program, by and large, sending, during the next twelve weeks, a total of nine letters, eight of which were printed in the *Courier* and, quite unusual at the time, were tagged with the author's initials, "a disguise that none of Henry's friends could have had difficulty in penetrating" (Samuels 69).[5] Amounting to a small volume by themselves, those letters provide a detailed account of young Henry's Italian journey. Dashed off in hotel rooms while their author would have preferred to stroll in some crowded piazza, they surely are far from the intellectual rigor and crisp style of Adams' mature work. Defects are obvious especially in the installments written before Henry learns that Charles had succeeded in finding a publisher for what had been sent. Uncertain of his audience - if indeed there be one - the author is uncertain in his choice of tone and topic; not quite knowing whom he writes for, he does not really know what to say and how to say what he wants to say. Accordingly, he tries too hard to please too many tastes at once and frequently reverts to sideways rhetorical leaps and to simultaneous self-deprecation and self-congratulation (cf. Stowe, *Going* 199).

Yet for all those shortcomings, the Italian letters do not deserve the treatment critics in general have allotted to them, which has either been haughty disregard or condescending hauteur. William Stowe, for instance, thinks that "the *Letters* are not remarkable for their maturity of tone or of vision - they border at times on the snugly sophomoric" (*Going* 201). Ernest Samuels, Adams' authoritative biographer, finds the opinions contained in them "painfully superficial, the complacent insights of a very young man" (73). Clearly those letters are apprenticeship work; yet for that, precisely, they are instructive. They provide valuable insight in a budding writer's intellectual, psychological, social and cultural make-up. The story unfolding in the letters, foregrounding the correspondent's immediate responses to events and experiences, is in many ways a counternarrative to the selective backward glance of *The Education*.

Contrary to the claims made in *The Education*, the book of his life, Henry Adams in Dresden is never faced with the problem of taking sides as the Austro-Sardinian crisis of 1859 escalates to a full-scale war. "And so far as Austria is concerned," he declares in a letter from Berlin, "I'd like to see that nation wiped out" (*L* 1: 28).[6] Posing as a young

man of the world in the capital of Saxony while living in the household of Amtssecretär Strauss and his family of nine, Adams makes no secret of his leanings. When he vents that opinion in public, sharp rebuttals have him abandon the *ceterum censeo* and change his line of small talk to "*Frankreich und Österreich sind mir ganz einerlei* [France and Austria are all one and the same to me]," while confining his "regular old hallelujerums every night when a fresh battle's won" to meetings with his countrymen (*L* 1: 46).

Henry's Italophilia remains uncontested before his arrival in Venice. During the last weeks in Dresden, his immersion in Goethe's and Heine's books of their Italian travels only heightens his sense of anticipation.[7] When from hindsight he denounces Trieste as "a mean place" (*L* 1: 116), the reflection in all likelihood is based less on what he actually observed than on his frustration about the delay caused by the intransigent schedule of Lloyd Adriatico, which makes him wait for seventeen hours until he can board the next steamer heading for Venice. The distinction that makes Trieste German and Venice Italian, while both cities are under Austrian rule, attests to the arbitrariness of the boundary of what he imagines to be Italy - an arbitrariness which recalls Metternich's cynical definition of Italy as an entity that is exclusively geographical (cf. Kann 216). For by all historical accounts, Trieste in 1860 is an Italian city - that is to say, Italians constitute the majority of the population; only in the inner city is a German element perceptible, while Slovenes, the largest minority (ignored by Adams), dominate the lower-class suburbs and the rural outskirts of the city. It seems that the young American deliberately shuts his eyes and ears to the presence of *Italianitá*, which in Trieste is gaining considerable momentum in the wake of the political upheaval going on beyond the Po and the Mincio, where in the first months of 1860 the process of Italian unification is making momentous strides: the Habsburg rulers of Tuscany and Modena as well as the duke of Parma are deposed, the Romagna has seceded from the Papal State, and all those territories are preparing plebiscites over joining the kingdom of Sardinia Piemont (cf. Corsini 855ff).

To all appearances, Henry is too eager by looking forward to his arrival in what he deems to be Italy, to concern himself with such matters. A personal note written to his mother on the day of reaching Venice is explicit:

> Here I am, sure as eggs is eggs. It's only with considerable difficulty that I can persuade myself it is really I who am wandering up and down before St Marc's and letting myself be gondoliered round under the Rialto and the Bridge of Sighs. In all my travels I've never felt anything so strange as this being in Venice. But it's a fact….
> Is it of any use for me to say that I'm delighted with this broken-winded old hole? that it's the rummiest of all rummy places I ever was in? that it's delicious? splendid? stunning? that it's the only city I've yet seen which made me perfectly happy though I haven't an acquaintance within hundreds of miles? Of course it is. (*L* 1: 115-116)

As he steps on the pier opposite St. Mark's, however, he is already in for an unpleasant surprise. He confides to Abigail Adams, his mother, "I was landed in a gondola and the gentleman who had the honor to row me ashore made a disgraceful use of my imper-

fect acquaintance with the language of Dante, and cheated me of twice his fare; me, who sympathize with Italy!" (*L* 1: 116).[8]

The letter drawn up for a general reading public in Boston has none of the exuberance of the private note. It is quite subdued; in the face of great excitement, Adams affects a tone of studied indifference. He does not mention the gondoliere who fleeced him, although the tale of that encounter would have shed light on the contradictory nature of the first impressions gained in Venice. Instead, he alludes vaguely to the gondola being "an expensive luxury" (*L* 1: 120) - and thus diverts the reader's attention from an issue that throughout the Italian journey would remain a source of irritation between the young traveler and his father, who would receive frequent requests for more money. In the letters to his mother, Henry alludes repeatedly to his inability to lower his expenses, no doubt seeking to win her support; but he has no compunctions about the sybaritic vein he displays when on arrival in Venice he makes the Hotel Danieli his quarters and hires a valet, for "one can't do without a guide where one can't speak a word" (*L* 1: 116).

Casually, the opening lines of the public letter also imply that the traveler entertained inordinate expectations, which are then duly disappointed - even if at first only bad weather is to blame.[9] Rain and cold spoil the first tour of the Canal Grande and discomfort his idlings in the cafés under the arcades. Though Adams concedes that "Venice as she now stands, is an object calculated to make one gloomy rather than gay," his difficulties stem less from the first impressions falling short of expectations. Rather, they result from the dilemma travel writers face in confronting the particular topic, as travel writings dealing with Venice amount to a sizeable library.[10] Adams, too, resorts to what Manfred Pfister has identified as an "exordial topos" (115) in those accounts. "After all that's been written and that's being written every day about Venice, you won't care to hear me repeat much more than is absolutely necessary" (*L* 1: 119). The statement echoes the words Goethe used in his *Italienische Reise*,[11] which in turn echo what Goethe's father had written up in *Reise durch Italien im Jahr 1740* (cf. Pfister 115). Adams' account of the stay in Venice by and large heeds the prescriptions of Goethe, father and son, for as William Stowe observes, he "is always the ironic observer, the critic rather than the participant, … [a]voiding the conventional tourist's rapture" ("Traveler" 183) and relying as much as possible on personal impressions.

Exploring the city, Henry finds palaces "half in ruins," the church of San Sebastiano and its Veroneses "all blackening, moldering and dropping to pieces." The prevailing gloom and decay are for him inevitably linked to the political situation, the foreign rule under which the city is groaning. Austrian oppression, he states, is "talked about and journalised about all the time," and he concludes, "The accounts do not seem to be exaggerated" (*L* 1: 119-120). Negotiating premises on which to found his assessment of the political situation in Venice, Adams opts to play it safe by catering to his presumed audience's biases; for on the issue of the Habsburgs' clinging tenaciously to their Italian crown lands in 1859/60, "American opinion was almost unanimously hostile to Austria"

(Gazley 109). On the whole, however, the lengthy comments on the political situation of Venice contained in the letter for the *Courier* are hardly commendable for sharpness of insight. Superficial, often rehearsals of common prejudices, they are off the mark rather frequently and substantially.[12]

Henry has no hope that matters will change in the near future, since the omnipresence of Imperial Whites and the strong fortifications guarding the city make a military conquest unlikely; and the civil disobedience bravely exercised by the population of the city has only entailed severe economic disadvantages, besides crippling social life. Given the circumstances, he would advise Venetians to seek some sort of accommodation with the ruling power rather than continue with the system of non-intercourse. The objection he raises against the Venetians' insistence on keeping all theaters closed in protest against the occupants is impish:

> Much as I sympathise with the Italians and wish them success, I must say that I think in this affair of the theatres they have bitten their own noses off, as they certainly have mine. As a demonstration it has undoubtedly made a great effect everywhere, but is there any use in holding so tight to it? However in this matter I wont pretend to judge, for I'm a severe sufferer by the dullness and find the evenings so heavy on my hands that even patriotism sometimes seems a bore when it interferes with amusement. (*L* 1: 120)

That effusion of adolescent wishful thinking seems dictated by the hardships of traveling alone and suffering the lack of companions.[13] It must have been that passage or many a similar one in the first letters from Italy, which prompted a harsh rejoinder from Charles Francis Adams, the father: "… if you write for the press I recommend it to you to take a graver style and give attention to the more solemn changes that are in progress all around you" (quoted in Chalfant 201).

When Adams leaves Venice after four days, he is glad to have done with the visit that was "bookishly inspired," and be rid of the qualms arising from the difficulties the travel writer encounters in Venice - the impossibility of finding spaces in which past sight does not dominate present site (Henderson 231). Henry changes his pattern of journeying and composing travelogues, preferring roads not so well trodden and less often prescribed; indeed, he more and more comes to ignore wilfully the prescriptions.

Appalled at the sights of Venice cloaked in grey cold and rain for the four days of his stay,[14] he seems all too eager to go on in search of the "true" Italy, which, he now suspects, begins at the Po. In this vein, he closes his letter with a quip, "I hope they won't cut my throat there for an Austrian spy" (*L* 1: 122). The way he sums up his last impressions foreshadows the attitude he displays in the next letters, which makes him really a forerunner of Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad*. For as Twain writes of the brief visit to "the widowed bride of the Adriatic" that "In the treacherous sunlight we see Venice decayed, forlorn, poverty-stricken, and commerceless - forgotten and utterly insignificant" (169, 173), he resorts precisely to the issues taken up by Adams.

Henry opens his second letter from Italy with the assertion that "I was determined

at any price not to lose the Romagna on my journey. It's now one of the important squares on the chessboard of humanity, and may before long become still more so" (*L* 1: 123). Subsequently, he relates his progress by way of Padova and Ferrara to Bologna. On crossing the Po at Santa Maria Maddalena, he realizes that the river is not a cultural border but a political dividing line whose arbitrariness is emphasized by the recent changes on the Southern bank. In Ferrara:

The tone of the crowd seemed many degrees more assured than on the other side of the river. National-Gardists were strutting about in magnificent independence. The cross of Savoy was everywhere, and occasionally the tricolor, red, white and green, would be flying, out of shop-windows and public buildings. Almost every door had a placard pasted on it. "Evviva Vittorio Emmanuele II. nostro legitimo Re." (*L* 1: 124).

The Piedmontese army of 25,000 soldiers garrisoned at Bologna is then described as "prodigiously gay." But Adams is less than impressed by the troups' overall appearance, and the puerile malice written into the assessment is obviously meant to belittle the efforts at national unification.

… I think the army here has not yet settled into it's [sic] uniform; every thing looks new and unused; too pretty by half. All the soldiers I saw, officers or privates, seemed to me to be trying to look military; they had their beards artistically arranged to be ferocious; their caps a shade too much on one side; their salute was a shade too formal or informal; their walk a continual effort to do it right; their waists laced very nicely and tight enough, but not exactly the thing. All this is French, but as yet the Piedmontese are a little behind hand and want practice. (*L* 1: 125).

The secession of the Emilia from the papal state - which entailed the wholesale excommunication of the renegate people - feeds Henry's anti-Catholic sentiments, though the turmoil adds more inconvenience than excitement to the daily routines of travel.

Adams stays only over-night in Bologna before hurrying on to Florence, where he expects to meet his sister Louisa Kuhn and thus put an end to the loneliness and isolation which had been plaguing him time and again since leaving Dresden. He also counts on being able to catch a few glimpses of the official festivities held to celebrate Sardinia-Piemonte's annexation of Tuscany. Though arriving late for Vittorio Emanuele's grand entry and parade in the city, Adams gets a good view of the king during horse races held in his honor.

My first impression was that "il nostro Re" looked like a very vulgar and coarse fancy-man, prize-fighter or horse-jockey. He was in civil clothes, and wore a sort of glossy shooting jacket; at least so it looked to me; and as he stood in the front of the stand, his head thrown back and his hands in his coat-pockets, I began to think that my admiration for him, not only as a soldier but as a King, must have sprung from some mistake or false information. (*L* 1: 129)

The condescension pervading that caricature derives from a reflex observable in young Henry Adams' letters whenever the occasion has him describe a member of the highest ranks of European nobility. Alluding, on the side, to the king's reputation as an

inveterate philanderer, Adams concludes that Vittorio Emanuele may nominally be the head of the movement for Italian unification, but the brain is provided by Count Cavour, the true champion of the Italian cause, whom Adams has a chance to observe on the next evening in the opera.

> I ... examined him through my glass for five minutes steadily, as I always wanted to do. He's a most quiet, respectable-looking middle-aged gentleman. From his appearance I never could have guessed that he was the greatest man in Europe. He seems, too, very modest and retiring, and is said to hate to be displayed for show. (*L* 1: 130)

Like the contempt held against Vittorio Emanuele, the esteem expressed for Cavour is neatly in line with young Adams' political thinking. In the family tradition, he is a strict constitutionalist, a liberal conservative who has no mind for revolutionary experiments. Cavour, thoughtful and moderate, seems to fit the ideal of the statesman rather than the politician (if a distinction crucial for *The Education* may be employed in this context).

The letters published in the *Courier* make believe that during the ten weeks spent between Trieste and Palermo Adams never abandons but grows increasingly conscious of his pose of the detached observer aware of his own descendancy from a superior cultural tradition. At best, a brief moment of wavering can be made out, when Adams, having in mind the Florentine landscape blooming in spring, writes of Tuscany as "the prettiest, pleasantest, quietest little kingdom it was ever my fortune to meet in Europe" (*L* 1: 131).

Henry leaves Florence after a week. He turns to Livorno and boards a steamer for Civitavecchia and Rome. The time spent in the Eternal City affords the correspondent some respite from the political unrest brought about by the Risorgimento. "Politics are out of place here for a mere visitor" (*L* 1: 146), he tells his readers, leaving to guess the implications - whether he means fear of censors or his own reluctance about the issue of Italian unification. Quite content that for a while he hears no more than faint rumors, he settles into one of his favorite roles, that of the young man of the world, which in Rome is all the more pleasant because a good many American acquaintances make his social life eventful and entertaining. On arrival, he need not even bother with a hotel but, for the time of his stay, takes up his abode in a spacious apartment in Palazzo Bonaparte on Piazza Venezia, thanks to the invitation by the master of the house - John C. Hooker, the Boston banker, longtime resident of Rome, and unofficial secretary of the American legation to the Papal States, is wed to "Lizzy Winthrop," Henry's second cousin. As the entrée to the upper echelons of society is provided by happy family connections, Henry is exuberant. "Of all my travelling experiences this is the rummiest" (*L* 1: 135), he repeats himself in a private note to his mother. Sightseeing is kept to what is deemed obligatory, and he hardly ever makes an extra turn; exemplarily, he states that "St Peter in effect disappoints me. It doesn't approach in grandeur and dignity, to my mind, to any of the great Gothic cathedrals nor even to St. Marc in Venice." When this idiosyncratic

aberration of taste is attributed to "my German education [which] sticks out in Italy" (*L* 1: 136), Adams admits only half the truth. In part, his assessment bespeaks the latent anti-Catholicism perceptible in all of the Italian letters; in part, it attests to a budding proclivity to medieval architecture that would bloom in *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*.

Having soon gorged himself on the overabundance of cultural monuments, Henry prefers rather leisurely carriage or horseback rides in the "Campagna" and dinners with countrymen of his own background. The letters say more about "his lounging in the studios" (L 1: 155) of expatriate American artists such as Randolph Rogers and William Wetmore Story than about wanderings through Roman museums, churches, and palaces.

It is only with difficulty that Adams can get himself to depart from Rome and continue his tour. Proceeding by boat, he lands in Naples on June 1. The city proves to be "an agreeable surprise" (*L* 1: 159), and is soon termed "the gayest and liveliest place in Italy" (*L* 1: 176). But there, the spirit of revolt against the Bourbon regime and the momentum toward national unification are so strong that Henry's prediction - "Naples … looks as if it had enough energy to rebel, which Rome and Venice do not look like" (*L* 1: 159) - would become true by October of that year. Also, news has it that Garibaldi landed in Palermo with a volunteer corps and in a surprise attack won the city. Henry's Italian journey takes an unexpected turn as the American Consul in Naples, Joseph R. Chandler, is looking for a courier willing to cross over to Sicily and carry orders to American officials there. With his name to his advantage, Henry is equipped with a diplomatic passport and sent off on the next boat.

The excursion to Palermo marks the high point of Henry Adams' Italian tour of 1860, not least because Adams can boast of being the first American eyewitness of Garibaldi's conquest and meeting the famed liberator in person. The report of the trip and the encounter with "the Great Dictator" (*L* 1: 168) bear the mark of the young correspondent's claim that he cannot comprehend the full scale of what he witnesses. "I'm not writing a history of events but only an account of a flying visit" (*L* 1: 164), he reminds himself and his prospective readers before relating details. The streets of Palermo are still crammed with barricades and sentries; wherever Adams turns, "I found a still greater confusion and chaos," and somehow, it all seems out of time and place. "There were guns of every shape and length from the short, fat blunderbuss suggestive of stage-coaches and highway robberies two centuries ago, up to long-barreled, thin affairs such as the Arabs might have shot with when Mahomet was a boy" (*L* 1: 165).

The correspondent resorts to crude orientalisms in his efforts to grasp what has been going on around him. The very sights force a reconsideration of his own position; the urgency is indicated by the invocation of George Washington as a yardstick, however preposterous such a comparison may seem from a U.S. American point of view. Near the insurgents' headquarters:

… some red-shirts were on guard ..., armed half with muskets and half with rough pikes. - …

After fairly seeing it all, I came to the concluion in the first place that Garibaldi was all he was ever said to be. … Europeans are fond of calling him the Washington of Italy, principally because they know nothing about Washington. Catch Washington invading a foreign kingdom on his own hook, in a fireman's shirt. You might as well call Tom Sayers, Sir Charles Grandison" (*L* 1: 166-167 - Tom Sayers is a noted British prizefighter of the time, according to the Notes in the *Letters* [*L* 1: 172]).

The recollection of the personal encounter with Garibaldi, then, marks a sharp contrast.

Garibaldi had apparently just finished his dinner ... He rose as we came in, and came forward shaking hands with each of the party as we were introduced. He had his plain red shirt on, precisely like a fireman, and no mark of authority. His manner is, as you know of course, very kind and off-hand, without being vulgar or demagogic. He talked with each of us and talked perfectly naturally; no stump oratory and no sham. Just as an instance of his manner, there was one little action of his that struck me. I was seated next to him and as the head of our party remarked that I had come all the way from Naples in order to see him, he turned round and took my hand, thanking me as if I had done him a favor. This is the way he draws people. (*L* 1: 168)

Having thus positioned Garibaldi as the eye of the storm that swept Sicily, Adams sets out to dislodge the monument he had just propped up. "… Heaven knows why he of all men, has been selected for immortality. I for one think that Cavour is much the greater man of the two, but practically the future Italy will probably adore Garibaldi's memory and only respect Cavour's" (*L* 1: 168-169). Juxtaposing the two different liberation movements he had seen at work while touring the Apennine peninsula, Adams opts for the constitutional way advocated by Cavour rather than the revolutionary spearheaded by Garibaldi. Conceivably, that may also be the reason why the correspondent from Italy never even mentions Giuseppe Mazzini, whose radical republicanism and permanent calls for revolt against all sorts of oppressors may have been even less appealing than Garibaldi's - admittedly courageous - adventurousness. Looking back from Sorrento, the last stage of his Italian journey, on the impressions gained in Palermo, Adams concludes, "There is, to be sure, a great deal that's admirable in this Sicilian revolution, but a great deal too that reminds one very much of a servile insurrection" (*L* 1: 174).

In the final review of his journey down the Apennine peninsula, Adams points out that:

… Garibaldi and the Italians are after two separate objects; one is a Free Italy; and the other is a United Italy. These are two separate things, and though we all sympathize with their struggles for the first, we can afford to hold our opinions as to the value of the last. That is purely a question of Italian politics and interests us only as … a minor question of local importance. (*L* 1: 177)

Adams cannot have heard the famous phrase Massimo d'Azeglio uttered in the first meeting of the parliament of the newly united Italian kingdom - "We have made Italy, now we have to make Italians" (cf. Hobsbawm, *Nations* 44). But he would have certainly agreed, even if one reason for d'Azeglio's call escaped him - that the national language spoken for everyday purposes was used only by a small minority estimated for Italy "at

2.5% at the moment of unification" (Hobsbawm, *Nations* 38). Deeply ambivalent toward popular movements (cf. Decker 100), Adams views the Risorgimento with disdain; already in the letter from Rome he betrays his condescension when proclaiming offhandedly, "We all, of course, wish luck to the 'rissorgimento' [sic]" (*L* 1: 145). For him, the patriotic exuberance and gaudy display of national colors and emblems are intended, though they never manage, to cover up serious deficiencies, the hasty improvisation, fiddle and swagger, in the community grandly imagined but hardly realized. If he dwells on what may be regarded as possible benefits of unification, he belittles and ridicules the strong belief in a united Italy but emphasizes divergencies and centrifugal forces; and he sharply distinguishes the regions he traversed, seeing them preeminently as separate entities. The inhabitants of the Romagna may have done well in ridding themselves of the yoke of the Papal state, but the model administration of Tuscany gave no reason at all for overthrowing the grand duke and reducing an independent monarchy to the status of a mere province of yet another monarchy. By the time Adams returns from Sicily, his memories of Austrian oppression in the Veneto and the presumptions expressed in the letter from Vienna, that "In Venetia … a reign of terror certainly exists" (*L* 1: 114), have faded. Rather than recalling that at Padova the university had been closed and the largest church of the city had been converted into a magazine for a regiment of hussars, he remembers the orderliness and efficiency of the administration in the Habsburg Monarchy, which he has felt to be sorely lacking South of the Po.

Sceptical of the prospects of a united kingdom of Italy, he favors - quite in accord with what Napoleon III proposed at Villafranca - an Italian Confederation consisting of several independent states. The backwardness of the means of travel and transportation he has encountered gainsays the coherence between the individual regions. The coach he takes to cover the sixty-odd miles from Bologna to Florence is on the road "for fifteen endless hours," two or three of which Adams spends walking by the side of the conveyance, as oxen are harnessed on before the horses to cross the highest hills (*L* 1: 129). Below Florence he thinks it advisable to avoid altogether overland routes for longdistance travel and rather subjects himself to inscrutable schedules of steamers. The further South Adams proceeds during his tour of Italy, the more distanced is his account - the more often he views the native population as if through the reverse side of binoculars.

In his light, the differences between the North and the South of the Apennine peninsula seem unbridgeable. They show on the "fleameter," a thoroughly conventional device which Adams likes to employ during all his travels and regards as an unerring indicator of the level of civilization attained in a locale; the further he advances in the *Mezzogiorno*, the worse he is pestered by those parasites. "I can never forget, in thinking of Sicily and the Kingdom of Naples, that under the Roman government these countries were the great slave-provinces of the empire, and there seems to be a taint of degradation in the people ever since. It's not good stock" (*L* 1: 174).

Unlike his great idol Goethe, Henry Adams on his Italian tour does not find the

land of his dreams. Goethe says he wanted to travel with his eyes wide open and report on what he saw. Adams rather often gives in to trying to anticipate what his readers in Boston may want to read, and he rather eagerly applies the narrow yardsticks brought along with his cultural baggage. The political unrest noticeable almost everywhere on the Apennine peninsula is largely responsible for his frequently feeling ill at ease and his consequent efforts at withdrawal.

Oscillating in tone from "selfconsciously casual and superior" (Stowe, *Going* 199) to an unbearably awkward adolescent waggery, young Henry Adams responds in his own way to what Hobsbawm has called "the growing significance of the 'national question'" (*Nations* 104).

> To us Americans all these Italian troubles reduce themselves simply to a single process, by which one more of the civilized races is forming itself on the ground that we have always stood on, and taking up as its creed the same list of ideas that we have always declared to be the heart and soul of modern civilisation. Feeling sure of the result as we must, we can afford to be a little cooler than other people, and being so strongly prejudiced, we can almost be impartial. (*L* 1: 175)

It only remains to be said that this impartiality is never achieved in Adams' reports conveying his Italian journey of spring 1860. For first of all, the lands traveled become an inverted mirror, a focal point of the writer's growing sense of his own national identity.

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NOTES

1. 101-102, 43-44. For a similarly compelling assessment, if from a different angle, see Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, ch. 6.

2. On Adams' notions of national character and race, and how they developed up to 1906, see Mayer, "Race."

3. The "Notes" Ernest and Jane N. Samuels contribute to the Library of America edition of *The Education of Henry Adams* point out that the web of references in this instance is complexly tangled. For Adams in fact quotes, not from Murray, but directly "from the first printed version of Gibbon's *Autobiography*. The quotation actually used by Murray came from a later interpolation in the *Memoirs* and differed in certain respects from the passage Adams quoted" (A 1240).

4. Henry already hunts for Gibbon's *Autobiography* while residing with the Reichenbachs during the previous winter in Dresden, but there, his search is in vain. When finally able to find the book in Rome, he immediately sits down to read it. A letter to his brother Charles records his first reaction: "Striking, very" (L1: 149).

5. That the letters published in the Courier were "uniformly signed 'H.B.A.' " (Samuels 69) is all the more striking when compared to Henry Adams' lifelong reluctance, increasing as the years went on, to publish things in his own name. *Democracy*, for instance, came out under the pseudonym of Frances Snow Compton, *Esther* appeared anonymously, and *The Education* became available to the general public only after the author's death. Its title and the use of a third person narrator telling the story of the author's life are but facets of the aversion against the public display of his name as an author.

6. Adams' depreciation of Austria results largely from a compound of anti-Catholic and anti-monarchist sentiments and prejudices. See Mayer, "Retouched."

7. On Adams, Heine and Goethe, see Mayer, "German Chapters."

8. Henry had taken Italian and German each for one year as an elective course at Harvard which is to say that upon arrival in Italy his command of Italian was about as good as was his German on reaching Berlin for the first time, when, according to *The Education*, he was unable to give directions to a cabman. Adams' fluency in Italian improved during two extended visits in the winter and spring of 1865 and the first months of 1868, but he would learn "the language of Dante" methodically only much later, when posing as a private scholar in Washington and wanting to be able to read *La Commedia* in the original.

9. If Adams blames the weather which spoiled his ill-timed visit at the height of Easter week, when many sights are closed, he is quite in line with the main stream of traveloguers. Heather Henderson observes that "in travel literature, the narrator moves in a climate of expectation engendered usually by other literature but the potential for disappointment becomes so great that it becomes virtually a convention of the genre itself" (235).

10. Henderson argues, "Travel writing is in fact a doublepronged quest for domination, not only of actual experience (foreign lands and foreigners) but also of literary experience (prior travel texts and their authors). … Travel literature is so highly intertextual that at times texts are actually substituted for experience itself, and the attempt to control crucial passages … represents an essential strategy in the campaign to make a place one's own" (245-246). Given the bulk of what has been written on Venice, the city is exceptional in the difficulties confronting the travel writer.

11. Goethe wrote: "Von Venedig ist schon viel erzählt und gedruckt, daß ich mit Beschreibung nicht umständlich sein will, ich sage nur, was mir entgegenkömmt [Of Venice, so much has been told and printed that I will not be long-winded with descriptions; I only speak of what comes my way]" (11: 67).

12. Notably, for instance, in the assessment that the large-scale emigration from the city (a fact often mentioned in those days) was largely an exodus of the upper classes. Corsini states the opposite (849).

13. Henry's inability or unwillingness to make friends with people other than Americans is conspicuous already during his two years in Germany. In part, this trait may be attributed to a blend of excessive shyness and diffidence which he thought to be stemming from his lack of familiarity with the language, but which is also grounded in exalted notions of social superiority Henry habitually entertained towards those Germans and Italians with whom he had a chance to associate.

14. Adams' letters comment on his stay only once in later years. Revisiting the city for a few days in July 1896 and residing at "Hôtel Royal Danieli," he writes to Elizabeth Cameron that he "had gone into schwärmerei over Venice… in the unsophisticated atmosphere of the fifties, when the Austrians still braved my Gods in the poetic beauty of Venetian despair" (L 4: 396).

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WORKSHOP NINE
MEDITERRANEAN MEDIATIONS: TRANSATLANTIC IMAGINARY AND GENDER IDENTITY

CHAIR: LIANA BORGHI, CRISTINA SCATAMACCHIA

In Joseph Pulitzer's America, Nelly Bly's bet that she would beat Phileas Fogg and tour the world in less than 80 days may offer further proof that by the end of the nineteenth century the globe was already shrinking under pressure from the new technologies, and that concepts of globalization were already present in economic and cultural fields. And we may agree with Ioanna Laliotou that the world had become the central cultural representation, whereas Europe and America by that time merely represented two poles of contemporary imagination: exoticism and exceptionalism.

In this framework, the unaccompanied American woman traveller of those years, on account of her "singular anomaly," assumed a double role: she was exceptional in that she was independent (in all possible economic and existential implications), and she was exotic in that she was gendered female according to Mediterranean stereotypes recorded in the sacred texts of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The inner and outer negotiation of this condition seems to be a recurring theme in many different narratives.

Within the ethnographic scheme governed by the tropes of identity and difference, naturalization and de-naturalization (also discussed by Laliotou), transatlantic travellers face experiences which require the deconstruction of those same tropes. Consequently, their travel narratives are both authoritative and "ambi"-valent. Being neither wholly positive nor wholly negative, neither deconstructive nor affirmative, mixing memory and desire, they appear historically bereft and liminal. They reveal (in a freely derridean reasoning mode) that their authors are constructing for themselves "different" identities based on a critical vigilance which does not cast off traditional and patriarchal values and patterns, but rather subverts and perverts them, de-naturalizing them in subjective fashion. If this observation applies to narratives written by American women travelling in the Mediterranean area, it may be worthwhile to inquire whether it also applies to Mediterranean women describing their sojourn in the United States.

What do they have in common, Nellie Bly's story, Royal Tyler's tale of the Algerine captive, Ruth Benedict's anthropology, or the travel writings of some 19th century women writers? This question set the focus for our workshop, highlighting the political connection between identity, narration and space in travel writing.

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CRITTOGRAFIE SPAZIALI DI GRACE GREENWOOD, MARION HARLAND, MARIETTA HOLLEY, MAUD ELLIOTT

LIANA BORGHI

Come il turismo culturale sia stato raccontato nei vecchi libri delle visitatrici nell'Ottocento offre nuovo interesse nel recente contesto delle geografie dell'identità su cui hanno lavorato, per esempio, Caren Kaplan, Patricia Yaeger, Judith Maynes, e Giuliana Bruno.

Viene infatti dalle teorie di Jaeger (1996) il mio suggerimento qui di considerare i libri di viaggio delle crittografie spaziali, cioè delle storie nascoste in uno spazio normativo disegnato da testi precedenti, come *Il viaggio in Italia* di Goethe, o il più pratico ma indispensabile Baedeker. Possiamo dire con Jaeger che in queste narrative lo spazio "reale" viene criptato, nascosto, occultato. Ma possiamo anche riproporre l'idea di Edward Soja, che lo spazio sia un prodotto materiale che esiste in rapporto con altri elementi, tra cui le narrative di viaggio, con le quali le donne (in questo caso) entrano in una particolare relazione che le porta a dare una certa forma e funzione, e un certo significato sociale alla loro esperienza del viaggio (Soja 10-15).

Le viaggiatrici dell'Ottocento, e anche degli anni successivi, raramente facevano turismo culturale da sole. Di solito viaggiavano in compagnia, sia che potessero permettersi di viaggiare lussuosamente o che fossero loro stesse accompagnatrici di amici o parenti benestanti, come Margaret Fuller, o le "fictional" Amy di *Piccole donne* di L.M. Alcott e Samantha Allen dell'omonima serie di Marietta Holley. Le donne in viaggio venivano e tuttora vengono considerate, a torto o a ragione, soggetti da proteggere. Le scrittrici protagoniste di questo saggio - Grace Greenwood (Sarah Clarke Lippincott), Marion Harland (Terhune), Marietta Holley, e Maud Elliott - vanno a occupare lo spazio immaginario di un soggetto ingenerato al femminile, appartenente a una "specie a rischio," cagionevole e vulnerabile, protetta da usi e costumi che regolano movimento e accesso. Le donne stesse, di norma, lavorano assiduamente per costruire e rafforzare le barriere di protezione che però spesso ci appaiono, a distanza, meri codici di perbenismo, feticci.

Circondata da parenti e ragazzi, Samantha Allen si affida all'ombrello e agli indumenti fatti in casa - feticcio della sicurezza domestica abbandonata si spera per poco. Questa operazione scaramantica risponde a una necessità riconosciuta: il viaggio (non solo quello culturale) porta a vedere il mondo fuori dai parametri abituali, sviluppa nuove coordinate, sta per passaggio, cambiamento, metamorfosi interne ed esterne. Permette di localizzare "siti di dislocazione, interferenza e interazione" (Clifford 102). All'estero si capisce meglio cosa sia la casa (per Samantha, la casa è il posto più comodo che c'è), chi siamo noi, cosa vuol dire possedere una identità nazionale. Maud Elliot, per esempio, capisce che la cultura americana è qualcosa di radicato in un dato spazio - ma altre scrittrici capiscono che queste radici sono aeree, e si muovono con loro.

Il viaggio produce esperienza, istruzione, e sapere. Non è solo nella cultura postmoderna che le nuove geografie ripensano la dialettica tra spazio, tempo e socialità, ma certo ora le coordinate di questa dialettica si configurano diversamente dal passato, quando le tecnologie della comunicazione erano meno avanzate. Alcune di queste coordinate, per le donne nell'Ottocento, riguardano il carattere di esotismo ed eccezionalità del viaggio, che tendeva ad assumere una valenza etnografica basata sull'impianto "stereotipo" (=identità) / "eccezione" (=differenza). Nell'equazione viaggio=cultura, la ricerca di circolarità culturale (e validazione dell'identità nazionale) veniva affidata a luoghi pre-identificati (paesaggi e monumenti, ma anche, nell'ambiente della filantropia, prigioni, manicomi, fabbriche, comunità utopiche) e a personaggi famosi (dagli scrittori Romantici ai Vittoriani, ai patrioti, agli artisti, i politici, la nobiltà…). Questi fungevano da corto-circuiti temporali, spaziali, culturali che servivano da diaframmi, o da interfacce, poiché i bramini del New England, così come i mezzi di trasporto e i mezzi di comunicazione, i souvenir, e gli abiti di Worth, dilatano e restringono il tempo-spazio della soggettività, evidenziando come da sempre la nazione sia narrazione, e il viaggio una forma di percezione globale.

Il breve excursus che segue ricostruisce una cartografia a partire da alcune situazioni molto visitate dalla letteratura sulle donne viaggiatrici, e dai loro spazi narrativi autorevoli. Si tratta più che altro di una piccola mappa di coincidenze che ripetutamente evocano il viaggio di Margaret Fuller perché il suo ambiente, bostoniano, trascendentalista, di riformatori, abolizionisti, e intellettuali famosi si dimostra a più riprese la chiave per il passaggio dal locale al globale. Varie considerazioni si potrebbero fare sulla cartografia culturale che collega la biografia di Margaret Fuller pubblicata da Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910) nel 1883 (33 anni dopo la morte di Fuller), e i personaggi che popolano l'autobiografia di sua figlia, Maude Howe Elliott (1854-1948), intitolata *Three Generations* (1923). Nel New England classico era ancora possibile minimizzare lo scarto economico all'interno del cerchio della sua "aristocrazia."

Maud Elliott scrive all'età di quasi settant'anni, negli anni 1920, radicata ormai a Newport con tutto l'affettuoso riconoscimento della colonia di artisti da lei fondata insieme al marito pittore. È una donna che ha viaggiato moltissimo, con o senza i genitori, e non solo in Europa. È stata in Italia da piccola, e vi è tornata, tra il 1894 e il 1900, e poi dal 1906 al 1910, abitando a Roma, nel palazzo Odescalchi dove sua zia aveva continuato ininterrottamente a risiedere, al centro di una corte di viaggiatori ed espatriati.

Il primo capitolo dell'autobiografia si intitola "The Twilight of the Gods." Nel 1916, la data dell'inizio, Henry James è appena morto, e sono ormai scomparsi, tra tanti altri che continuano a vivere nell'affettuoso ricordo dell'autrice, i grandi "gufi" del New England a cui è stata legata la sua vita: Charles Sumner, Francis Parkman, Sam Ward, R.W. Emerson, George Bradford, e l'unico "gufo femmina," Elizabeth Peabody (sua maestra all'asilo di Pinkney Street). Sono questi i comprimari della generazione precedente, raccontata da Maud e da sua sorella Laura attraverso la bella biografia della loro famosa mamma, Julia Ward Howe, abolizionista, suffragista, filantropa, fondatrice dei Women's Clubs.

In retrospettiva, Maud è perfettamente in grado di localizzare "my evolution from a New Englander to an American" (136). Succede nel 1876, appena morto suo padre, quando, durante un viaggio a Chicago in compagnia di un direttore della ferrovia, dichiarata la sua aspirazione di diventare macchinista, le viene permesso di guidare la locomotiva, suonare la campana e soffiare il fischietto. Quell'esperienza epifanica del potere tecnologico le apre le porte del vasto mondo. L'anno dopo parte per l'Europa su una nave della Cunard, per un soggiorno in Inghilterra dove incontrerà molte persone famose, e non solo nell'ambiente artistico che sente più vicino ("for several years I hoped to be an artist," confessa a p. 135): Browning, ormai sessantacinquenne, Edmund Gosse, gli Alma-Tadema, i Pre-Raffaelliti; e i Rothschild, oltre a una buona campionatura della nobiltà inglese. I suoi aneddoti dell'alta società saranno l'argomento degli articoli da lei scritti negli anni Ottanta. Ma questo viaggio è solo l'inizio di vagabondaggi in Europa e sulle rive del Mediterraneo. Altre visitazioni - frutto del privilegio di avere accesso a personaggi politici e culturali di ogni parte del mondo - allargheranno sempre più i confini della sua America. Cosa ci si può aspettare da una che ha sentito Lizst suonare la Rapsodia Ungherese, e ha fatto un tableau vivant con La Ristori?

Da questo empireo spazio-temporale vorrei tornare indietro nel tempo, verso altre tre scrittrici: Grace Greenwood (Sara Clarke Lippincott, 1823-1904), Marion Harland (Mary Virginia Terhune, 1830-1922), Marietta Holley (1836-1926).

Il libro di viaggio di Greenwood, *Haps and Mishaps of a Tour in Europe* (1854), ricalca (anche nell'indice) il modello reso popolare in America dai dispacci di Fuller, dove la descrizione di paesaggi con o senza rovine, feste popolari, compagni di viaggio, disgraziati alloggiamenti e incidenti di percorso, visite a penitenziari modello, fabbriche e personaggi illustri si alterna alla descrizione dei reperti conservati in questo vasto museo che è l'Europa, e in particolare l'Italia. Greenwood non ha la passione politica di Fuller, e tanto meno il suo investimento personale, per quanto si interessi moderatamente alle condizioni sociali dei paesi che attraversa. Ma non è un caso che il libro sia rimasto in stampa per 40 anni. Anche Grace Greenwood aveva buone credenziali: vissuta tra lo stato di New York e il New England, era di buona famiglia, discendente del grande teologo Jonathan Edwards. Anche lei era impegnata nel movimento abolizionista e in quello per i diritti della donna. Poeta, giornalista, redattrice della rivista *Godey's Ladies Book*, scrittrice sentimentale molto versatile, dopo il viaggio in Europa nel 1852-53 diventa anche conferenziera, dimostrando come si possa combinare matrimonio e carriera. Di lei scrive la storica Barbara Welter, "As for 'the vulgar cry of unfemininity' it was simply a necessary burden to be borne by any woman 'who dares to live up to her own capacity to be an *individual* and not a thing'" (Edward T. James 409).

Greenwood può fungere da tramite per un altro gruppo di donne emancipate che riescono a navigare le acque degli stereotipi mediterranei della femminilità e a cavalcare difficili incroci di nazionalità, classe e genere. È amica della scultrice Harriet Hosmer, della scrittrice canadese Anna Jameson e dell'anglo-indiana Isa Blagden, dell'attrice

Charlotte Cushman e del loro entourage in America e in Italia, di cui troviamo notizie sparse in corrispondenze di viaggiatori famosi (Henry James e i Browning, per esempio), ma anche un resoconto approfondito in una recente monografia di Lisa Merrill.

Marion Harland è anche lei una rispettabilissima signora. Kate Sanborn, che la conosceva, la descrive come "a bright-faced, keen-eyed, self-poised woman, with a great deal of individuality and energy" (*Our Famous Women* 629). Nata in Virginia in una famiglia del New England, si sposa felicemente con un noto reverendo del New Jersey ed è molto attiva nel movimento per la temperanza. Nei suoi 25 romanzi e tre raccolte di racconti, la domesticità delle eroine di solito trionfa sulle tentazioni femministe poiché è sua ambizione "'to relieve literary domesticity from the odium that now rests on it'," confessa a Kate Sanborn (626). Nel 1871 pubblica un tomo di economia domestica, *Commonsense in the Household*, destinato a rimanere un best seller per mezzo secolo, e coniuga etica ed economia domestica nelle conferenze dove discute di argomenti quali "The Kitchen as Moral Agency." Come Catherine Beecher prima di lei, è favorevole alle innovazioni tecnologiche e a tutto ciò che razionalizza e snellisce il lavoro domestico. La sua teoria attinge da un'esperienza di attivismo punito: "Not until I broke down physically, under the combined pressure of public charities, church duties, social calls, literary work, and the death of my precious, gifted child, did I understand that the labor we delight in may be carried beyond bounds" (639). Nel 1873 manifesta infatti i primi sintomi della tubercolosi, e nel 1876 si trasferisce per due anni in Italia dove per fortuna guarisce del tutto.

Loiterings in Pleasant Paths (1880) ("another fresh and chatty record of a woman's travels in Europe, full of historical allusions, anecdotes, and practical information," scrive Kate Sanborn) viene raccontato in retrospettiva da Springfield (MA), con un formato abbastanza dissimile da quello di Grace Greenwood. Ne è protagonista autobiografica una signora in viaggio con la famiglia per motivi di salute. Nel capitolo 13, in una notte gelida di dicembre, la signora arriva a Firenze dalla Francia con i suoi compagni di viaggio, senza sapere una parola di italiano e senza prenotazioni. L'alloggio dove trova posto, in un palazzo fatiscente abbastanza tipico, è umido e triste, appena stiepidito da un misero fuocherello. A ragione la protagonista teme per la propria salute. La città le sembra "brutta" anche se non sono male le strade della "parte nuova" (quelle costruite quando Firenze era capitale), ma le apparirà meno peggio con il sole, durante una visita successiva.

Convinta da una amica americana (la provvidenziale "conduttrice-guida" di tanti libri di viaggio) che li scova curiosando tra i nuovi arrivati, si trasferisce timorosamente a Roma, dove si sistemerà egregiamente. Nei capitoli romani troviamo lo sketch esemplare e obbligato della "viatrix americana," in questo caso nativa del Vermont e presumibilmente residente nell'Iowa, ferrata "sugli asini egiziani e l'entomologia domestica della Siria" (*Loiterings* 183-84). Ha girato tre quarti di mondo accompagnata dal marito, "suo banchiere e scorta"; ora sta "facendo" Roma in 15 giorni e ha tutto da raccontare, in dettaglio, sul costo di una visita al Papa.

Un'altra avventura ha luogo durante la visita a Napoli, quando alla protagonista e

alla sua amica si aggregano quattro giovani ragazze scanzonate per una visita a Pompei e Sorrento. È grazioso l'episodio, avvenuto dopo una triste nottata in uno squallido albergo e una pessima colazione, della visita all'agrumeto dove, per pochi soldi, hanno il permesso di mangiare e cogliere arance e mandarini a volontà. Il malcapitato contadino non si aspetta la spoliazione delle piante che possono compiere sei signore americane, affamate e provviste di ampie tasche (304-07). Ma l'episodio è visto come una restituzione per tutte le vessazioni e i taglieggiamenti subiti nel viaggio. Anche in questo libro gli italiani, con poche eccezioni, sono considerati ladri, scaltri e falsi. I napoletani rubano; il cibo di solito è cattivo, ecc. Insomma, l'economia domestica americana è infinitamente superiore a quella mediterranea.

Il mio quarto libro è di Marietta Holley (1836-1936), alias "Josiah Allen's Wife," e si intitola *Samantha in Europe* (1896). Diversamente da tutte le altre viaggiatrici di cui sopra, Marietta Holley non si è mai sposata. Timidissima, vive con la sorella Sylphina fino alla morte di lei, poi adotta un'orfanella e si circonda di giovani che la curano affettuosamente. Metodista, anch'essa attiva nel movimento della temperanza e dei diritti della donna, nonostante provenga dalla stessa zona di Elizabeth Cady Stanton e Susan B. Anthony rifugge da manifestazioni, dai comizi e dalle folle. Alcune rare visite a New York rappresentano tutto il suo viaggiare. Ma se Holley non viaggia di persona né in America né in Europa, ha a disposizione una quantità di libri di viaggio e amici viaggiatori pronti a fornire meticolosi dettagli. A fine secolo anche lei scrive il suo libro su un viaggio attraverso l'Europa verso l'Italia.

Holley è una scrittrice umoristica autrice di molti romanzi popolarissimi fino all'inizio del Novecento, quando le sue tecniche quasi all'improvviso passano di moda. La formula dei suoi romanzi poggia su due o tre personaggi ricorrenti, sulla parodia, e sull'uso del dialetto. I personaggi sono Samantha, una pingue e filosofica campagnola piena di buon senso che fermamente crede nei diritti delle donne e nella temperanza, suo marito Josiah Allen, un ometto magro e nervoso con la barba a punta, portavoce di tutti i pregiudizi del patriarcato, che non ha mai l'ultima parola; e Betsey Bobbet, un'amica zitella che pensa solo a trovare marito. *Samantha in Europe* è stato definito dai contemporanei il miglior libro umoristico di viaggio dopo *Innocents Abroad* di Mark Twain, afferma Kate Winter (126). Personalmente preferisco Twain, ma Holley è certo una scrittrice a cui ci si affeziona.

La filosofia dell'alterità di Samantha Allen si basa sulla constatazione che "i luoghi non sono meglio o peggio, solo diversi" (127). In questo suo libro, l'esotismo è rappresentato nei capitoli iniziali dalla inspiegata visita e permanenza a casa Allen di un indù, l'asiatico Al Faizi, un miscredente missionario negli USA a cui viene attribuito il tipico ruolo del visitatore in utopia - quello di osservare sbalordito e disgustato dagli usi e costumi della società di arrivo che aveva supposto essere più avanzata di quella di origine (133). Attraverso le sorprese e talvolta addolorate osservazioni di Al Faizi, Samantha e la sua famiglia si convincono del "valore del viaggiare" (33) e si preparano allo straniamento che loro stessi sperimenteranno in Europa.

Fedele alla sua propria formula, Holley gioca fin dall'inizio con lo schema dentro/fuori rappresentato dai vestiti. Al Faizi arriva vestito in un modo che il vicinato ha visto solo alla World's Fair, tanto che vedendolo per la prima volta Samantha nutre il sospetto che sia venuto a rubarle il modello della camicia da notte che sta cucendo. Poiché l'indù si rivela una persona per bene e interessante, Samantha decide di onorarlo adottando per uso domestico la foggia dei vestiti di lui. Il privato non è il pubblico, naturalmente, e a Josiah Allen non viene permesso di portare a una riunione la splendida vestaglia ornata di tasselli rossi, da lei confezionata con una stoffa da tappezzeria. Ma gli Allen e compagnia partono per l'Europa forniti di 2+2 berretti da notte confezionati personalmente da Samantha per proteggere dalle intemperie di climi alieni.

Anche loro, come la protagonista di Marion Harland, incontreranno viaggiatori da cui prendono le distanze. In Svizzera riconosceranno nella solerzia di un gruppo britannico il nuovo turismo organizzato di marca Thomas Cook (562) e in contrasto rallenteranno ulteriormente i propri spostamenti. Questo tipo di distanziamento identitario ha molte applicazioni umoristiche, spesso basate su osservazioni ingenue che appiattiscono a un quotidiano d'oltre oceano il meraviglioso esotico delle città d'arte. Per esempio a Pisa - un posto terribilmente rumoroso (599) dato che gli urli in lingua straniera sembrano peggio degli urli yankee - Josiah Allen fa notare a Samantha quanto cambino le cose da luogo a luogo. Nessuno è restato a bocca aperta di fronte al granaio sghilembo che ha costruito lui in America, mentre tutti se ne stanno lì ad ammirare la torre pendente. Incoraggiata dal successo del libro, quattro anni dopo il suo viaggio in Europa Marietta Holley si avventurerà ancora più lontano, con *Around the World with Josiah Allen's Wife* (1899). Non ci sono confini per l'immaginario.

Per le viaggiatrici, l'avventura del viaggio è uno scenario su cui proiettare desideri e paure. Di per sé, il viaggio costruisce mappe autobiografiche della conoscenza, concatena gli spazi sociali in geografie scopofile. La sua ripetitività rivela la crisi del sistema di rappresentazione proprio della narrativa del viaggio, intenzionalmente metonimica, necessariamente metaforica. La viaggiatrice ("The viatrix" di Terhune) si costruisce come *effetto* ingenerato interattivamente con le tecnologie del genere (insegna Teresa De Lauretis), ma inevitabilmente deborda, svelandosi per quello che (non) è: in eccesso del genere, in relazione alla classe, alla provenienza e alle condizioni materiali della sua esistenza. Ma questo "assoggettamento" chiede di essere riconosciuto socialmente proprio attraverso l'auto-traduzione dei tropi stabiliti dalla cultura alta, egemone e sessuata al maschile.

Senza dirselo, queste donne condividono un progetto politico: la visibilità, il desiderio di conquistare il mondo, l'augurio che la loro parola, performativamente, si riproduca e si moltiplichi.

All'interno della progressiva globalizzazione del tropo del viaggio, le viaggiatrici, ancorate a modelli di eccezionalismo ed esotismo che l'incontro con i paesi del Mediterraneo riproduce, si costruiscono identità "differenti," appropriandosi del passato per af-

fermare una loro eccentrica vitalità sociale e culturale. La messa a fuoco di questa indagine è il rapporto tra identità, spazio e narrazione.

Il viaggio, con il suo misto di spaesamento, necessità di comfort, e stimoli sociali, educa all'alterità. Riflette la non-appartenenza del soggetto femminile (non solo di allora), le sue incursioni in un mondo pieno di rischi e di eclissi, refrattario ai desideri.

Marietta Holley, con la sua ironia popolana, e Maud Elliott con il suo agio aristocratico, accennano quello che il Novecento espliciterà: la perdita del filo conduttore, del "senso" del femminile che quasi tutto deve all'interfaccia con il maschile. Le ragazze, insieme alle loro accompagnatrici, protagoniste della "Sorosis Lark" raccontata dalla conservatrice Terhune, escono dalla loro incursione nel giardino delle Esperidi gonfie dei frutti del patriarcato. E se il prezzo del consumo lievita e va debitamente pagato, il gusto dell'avventura ne è di per sé ricco compenso.

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ROYALL TYLER'S THE ALGERINE CAPTIVE AND THE SYMPATHETIC WOMAN READER

ALGERINA NERI

The Algerine Captive; or, the Life and Adventures of Doctor Updike Underhill, Six Years a Prisoner among the Algerines was initially published anonymously in the United States in 1797. It was brought out in England in 1802 and in 1804 ran serially in the British periodical *The Lady's Magazine*.

Three years before, in 1794, Susanna Rowson had written her only surviving play, *Slaves in Algiers; or, A Struggle for Freedom*. The drama played on the nationalist passions inflamed by a series of attacks on American merchant ships in the Mediterranean by Algerian pirates during the early 1790s. The horrors of these raids along the Barbary Coast made for exciting copy in the press. That same year the Philadelphia printer Matthew Carey published *A Short View of Algiers*. Undoubtedly, Rowson saw an opportunity to exploit a contemporary news item for dramatic effect. The play was first performed at the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia ten months before the United States signed a treaty with the Bey of Algiers agreeing to pay tribute in order to halt the attacks (Kennedy 27-40).

However, interest in North-African countries did not wane. *Humanity in Algiers; Or, the Story of Azem* was published in 1801, *The History of the Captivity and Suffering of Mrs. Maria Martin who was Six Years a Slave in Algiers* came out in 1807. Barbary wars continued to be the subject of plays such as *The Siege of Tripoli* by Mordecai Noah of 1828. The North-African world preoccupied and intrigued not only the American, but also the European public. In 1908 Angelo Anelli had been commissioned by the Teatro La Scala to write the libretto of *L'Italiana in Algeri*, based on the legend of Rosellana, the favorite of Soliman II, with music to be written by Luigi Mosca. It was completely eclipsed by Gioacchino Rossini's version, which he wrote in three weeks and was staged on May 22, 1813 at the Teatro S. Benedetto in Venice.

The Algerine Captive's long second section concerning Updike's captivity has a historical importance lost to contemporary readers. How to face the Algerian question vexed the United States government for about thirty years, from the 1790s to the 1820s. Algiers, then the most powerful state on the Barbary Coast, and Algerian pirates occupied an important position in American foreign affairs.

The title, *The Algerine Captive*, draws the readers' attention to the second part of the novel which concerns the Muslim world and American slavery because the author was sure it was a subject popular with the American public. However, Tyler's book is literally split in two and it could be called *At Home and Abroad*. It purports to be the autobiography of Dr. Updike Underhill and the whole apparatus of the book - even its dedication

to David Humphreys (U.S. minister to Portugal appointed by the government together with Joel Barlow to solve the Algerian conflict) - corroborates this pretense. The free-wheeling satire of the first volume yields to the moralizing and factual exposition of the second. In volume I, Dr. Underhill tells his family history, his education, his unsuccessful search for work in the United States, his departure for England aboard a ship called *Freedom*, his experience of London life, his trip to the Ivory Coast aboard the *Sympathy*, and his capture by the Algerian corsairs. In the first volume Tyler attacks Puritan intolerance, useless classical learning, the ineptitude of doctors, and the hypocrisy of the South. In the second part he tells of Underhill's six years as a slave in Algiers, his experience of "otherness," and his final return home in 1795. The book ends with a celebration of the United States, the freest nation in the world, and an appeal to uphold the federal government and John Adams, the federalist president, who belonged to the same party of Tyler, Barlow, and Humphreys.

Tyler's book offers different readings (Bottalico, *Athanor*, *Prospero*). What I would like to explore here is how Tyler, in *The Algerine Captive*, in order to advance the federalist ideas he supported, used fictional devices that decentered the narrative voice in various ways. With the failure of authorial reliability, the now adrift hypothetical woman reader to whom the book was addressed was positioned at the center of American experience and decolonized.

In the Preface Dr. Underhill explains how, after an absence of seven years, he found the reading habits of his fellow countrymen turned upside down. He condemns the national craving for English literature, which exposes the "farmer's daughter ...to the attacks of vice, from which her ignorance would have formed her surest shield.... The English novel... impresses on the young female mind an erroneous idea of the world in which she is to live... and renders the homespun habits of her own country disgusting" (XI).

Underhill prefers American women ignorant rather than depraved by foreign literature, therefore he will try to cure his readers and win them over to a revised concept of sentiment, which will no longer be a form of feminine self-indulgence, but an instrument of public virtue. While he alerts American women on the issues he wants to promote, he also destabilizes all his women characters without suggesting a plausible female alternative that may be taken as an example.

All through the book Underhill endeavors to capture his readers' sympathy by presenting himself as a victim both of the world he lives in and of all the women he meets. Even his poor ancestor, Captain John Underhill, had been the prey of women's whims, first as an attendant to the lovers of Queen Elizabeth I, whose "extravagant passion which that princess was supposed to entertain for various male favorites, occasioned the disgrace of one and the premature death of another..." (I, 2). Later "this gallant soldier" had been banished from Massachusetts in 1637, charged with adultery because, at a lecture in Boston, he "had

fixed his eyes steadfastly, and perhaps inordinately, upon one mistress Miriam Wilbore, ... who had appeared in public with a pair of wanton open working gloves, slit at the thumbs and fingers, for the convenience of taking snuff" (I, 11).

After introducing a capricious queen and an irreverent colonial woman, Updike speaks of his mother, whose love cannot protect him either from savage Indians or from the Algerians which he describes as ferocious barbarians from the preface to the end of the book. Neither can Updike be saved from his mother's ambition. Despite his father's wish that the son become a farmer like himself, she wants to give him a classical learning hoping he will become a minister. His knowledge of Greek and Latin ruins him for life.

Like a new Don Quixote, Updike tries different jobs and moves around only to discover the deficiencies of the American society of his time. First he becomes a schoolmaster in a country school, but risks being whipped by one of the pupils' father. Then he decides to become a doctor. During his apprenticeship he is almost killed in a duel by the lover of a young woman to whom he had addressed an ode after the manner of the Greeks. Later he is attracted by a woman in her thirties because she loves literature and laments with him her ignorance of Greek, only to find out that she has not even opened the many books he has lent her.

Updike has no better luck with women when he decides to go South to seek a better fortune. The manners of Southern young ladies are haughty, as he points out: "Every attempt at familiarity in a young stranger, habituated to the social but respectable intercourse customary in the Northern States, excited alarm" (I, 143). In the South Updike meets for the first time with slavery. The tone of the book starts to change. The ironic mode turns into a realistic description of the African world. When reduced to his last dollar, Underhill accepts the position of surgeon on a ship. He believes he is going to see the world, acquire practical knowledge of his profession and obtain property. He does not realize what he is going to face. He starts a slow descent to the underworld. He sees how slaves are purchased, and, as a surgeon, he has a principal and active part in this inhuman transaction. The worst treatment is reserved to young women who are tied together in pairs, and if they are released "it was only to gratify the brutal lust of the sailors: for though I cannot say I ever was witness to an actual rape, yet the frequent shrieks of these forlorn females in the berths of the seamen left me little charity to doubt of the repeated commission of that degrading crime" (I, 172-3).

Women slaves fare no better in the Muslim world. They are sold at the market like the men, except that they are concealed in a latticed shop. However Updike finds women's condition in the Barbary States better that he had thought. They are confined in the apartments at the back of the houses and are completely covered when they travel or go outdoors.

The chance for Updike to meet a woman presents itself when he is called to visit a sick lady, but he is greatly disappointed. After long preliminaries which include washing his feet, washing his hands three times, and having a thick muslin veil thrown over his

head, Updike is presented with a pulse glass, which is inserted through the curtains, and the bulb applied to the pulse of his patient, and the other extremity put under his veil. "By this I was to form my opinion of her disorder and prescribe a remedy; for I was not allowed to ask any question, or even to speak to, much more to see the lady, who was soon re-conveyed to her apartment" (II, 83).

After travelling through the recently independent states of America and going back to the mother country and Africa, Updike eventually returns home and is induced by some respectable friends to submit his memoirs to the public. Now he will do what is expected from him: he will unite himself to some "amiable" woman, pursue his practice as a physician, and contribute to the support of the excellent federalist government of the United States of America.

Ten years before *The Algerine Captive* Tyler had written his most famous play, *The Contrast*, where he adopted the techniques of Sheridan's comedy of manners to produce a nationalistic drama which juxtaposes the innate decency of American society with the corrupting influence of the British. Tyler introduced two important characters to American literature: Jonathan, a comic rustic from New England, whose acuteness is masked by his good-natured simplicity, and the British-bred Dimple. *The Contrast* describes through Jonathan the sights and sounds of New York and comments on them; the same technique is used in *The Algerine Captive*. Underhill's travels at home and abroad show American society at the end of the 18th Century and the difficult situation it was in, as a group of thirteen states each with different customs, religion and education. The political links had been cut, but economic, diplomatic, cultural relations had to be created for America to become truly independent. The problem of slavery was impending; the difficult international situation which saw France and Britain waging a battle for naval supremacy over the shipping lanes of the world between 1790 and 1815 made the U.S. foreign policy even more problematic. Although George Washington had proclaimed American neutrality in 1793, in battle neutral ships were often the prime victims.

The strong stress Underhill/Tyler puts on the necessity of union and peace in the U.S. shows how much he was worried about the situation. Tyler finished his book with an appeal to every citizen of the nation: "Let us one and all endeavour to sustain the general government... Our first object is union among ourselves. For to no nation besides the United States can that ancient saying be more emphatically applied - BY UNITING WE STAND, BY DIVIDING WE FALL." (II, 228). The end of the century was a turning point in American society where men and women had to forge their own and the national identity. The sympathetic American woman reader had to realize what it was required from her to be up to the situation, at least from Tyler's point of view.

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FROM THE GRAND TOUR TO THE TOUR DU MONDE: NELLIE BLY AND THE METAMORPHOSIS OF WOMEN'S TRAVELS AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

CRISTINA SCATAMACCHIA

The publication of Jules Verne's novel *Around the World in Eighty Days* met with extraordinary success and directly involved millions of readers. The novel was originally issued in instalments, which appeared on the pages of the French newspaper *Le Temps* from November 6th to December 22nd, 1872, and were collected in a volume the following January. While today one usually considers this text as belonging to juvenile literature, its first readers were adults who followed the plot with eagerness and anxiety, since it was a serial story. Actually several of them began to bet in favour or against the attempt of the main character of the novel, Phileas Fogg, to travel around the world in eighty days. Thanks to technological advances in the field of transport, it had become possible, for the first time in history, to make the tour of the globe in such a limited amount of time. However, unforeseen contingencies and unexpected obstacles could delay the travel beyond this pre-arranged time limit. As a result, the attempt of circling the globe at full speed, of "girdling it," fascinated the public which perceived it as an extraordinary adventure and an audacious exploit.

The appeal of the novel, which was translated immediately in several foreign languages, was widespread and international. When Verne adapted his text for the stage in 1874 with the help of Adolphe d'Ennery, he met with an even more striking success: the theatrical version was performed for years and years in many European countries and in the United States. *Around the World in Eighty Days* was thus very profitable, yielding more revenue to the French writer than all his other works together. At the same time, the idea of traveling around the world in a race against time was so attractive that soon several people tried to put into practice Verne's fictional adventures. The first attempts to beat Fogg's record took place in the decade after the publication of the novel, but the general public remained unaware of them because they were not advertised by the press. On the contrary, the flying trip around the world carried out a few years later by the American reporter Elizabeth Cochrane, alias Nellie Bly, became very famous in the United States as well as in France, Great Britain, Germany, and even Japan (but not in Italy). This was due to the fact that she did not travel independently, but as a correspondent of an important daily newspaper, *The New York World*, who sponsored her venture and advertised it widely.

From a comparison of the various trips around the globe emerges a common element, which seems rather surprising and unexpected: almost all the travelers who tried to follow the path of Verne's character were unaware of the fact that their trip was neither

unique nor original. They acted independently from each other, and many of them believed to be the only ones to carry out such a deed. Instead, their exploit had been done before and was to be repeated frequently in the following years. The very idea of a race against time was not even an original invention of Verne, who was well aware that in 1870 an eccentric American traveler, George Francis Train, had already accomplished a trip around the world in eighty days.

Even Nellie Bly, who carried out her attempt to beat Fogg's fictional record between the end of 1889 and the beginning of 1890, thought that her venture was unique and unprecedented; and in a way she was right, since she was the first woman to do so. Moreover, she traveled alone and without any piece of luggage except a small handbag, two elements that were quite unusual at that time. These features - especially the lack of a chaperon - turned her trip into a most daring and original exploit in the eyes of the general public, who were able to follow the various stages of her travels thanks to her cabled reports printed in the pages of *The New York World.* The readers became involved in her attempt to go around the world in less than eighty days (she wanted to accomplish it in only seventy-five days) and hoped she would arrive in time. As had previously happened to Verne's serial novel, the public showed deep interest in Bly's adventures and began to bet on the results of her race. Consequently the American journalist, just like the French writer, achieved success, wealth and international renown.

Although Bly was only twenty-five years old at the time of her trip, she was not unknown in her own country. Actually, she was the most famous American woman reporter thanks to a series of sensational investigations that had uncovered corruption and abuse of power. Bly, who was born in 1864, had begun her career as a reporter for *The Pittsburgh Dispatch.* Showing from the beginning a considerable amount of courage and independence, she set up investigations on the conditions of young women workers, then went to Mexico as a correspondent for her newspaper. Upon her return to the United States, she moved to New York City and started working for the most exciting and prestigious daily of the time, *The New York World*. This paper had been bought in 1883 by Joseph Pulitzer who had improved its quality and expanded its circulation (from 20,000 copies to 100,000 in 1884 and 250,000 in 1887). As the epitome of a new type of journalism, *The World* was cheap - only two cents a copy - aggressive and independent. In 1887 Pulitzer also started *The Evening World*, which sold at only one cent and soon became more popular than the morning edition. At first the paper's editorial policy made a large use of sensationalism as a way of expanding its readership; thus most of the articles dealt with sex and violence. But gradually the worst elements of sensationalism subsided, the tone of the articles improved, and *The World* involved itself in popular crusades against political corruption. The editorial staff, however, continued to print sensational news and stunts in order to entertain the readers and sell additional copies of the paper. The stunts, in particular, were extraordinary and daring exploits carried out by *The World*'s journalists, who later related their deeds in their own reports. And the most

famous of all the stunts ever sponsored by Pulitzer's newspaper was the race around the world performed by Nellie Bly.

The reporter had previously accomplished other risky tasks in the course of her investigations, since she often carried them out undercover. The most impressive of these dealt with Blackwell's Island Insane Asylum for Women, a New York mental hospital where the inmates were subject to all kind of violence and mistreatment. In order to be admitted into that asylum, Bly pretended to be a poor girl, rented a room in a boarding house, and started looking mentally deranged. She acted so convincingly that she was taken to Blackwell's Island, where she spent ten days before a lawyer sent by *The World* came to her rescue. Immediately thereafter she published a series of articles in which she exposed the horrifying conditions of the mental hospital and made charges against doctors, nurses, and administrators. These articles, later collected in a volume entitled *Ten Days in a Mad-House* (1887), prompted an investigation that led to the reform of the asylum; at the same time they turned Bly into a local celebrity. In the following two years she pursued her work in the field of investigative journalism, acting often in disguise and publishing numerous exposés. While working unremittingly, she found the time to write a work of fiction: it was a detective novel called *The Mystery of Central Park* (1889) that appeared serially in the pages of *The World*.

If Bly was well-known in America when she embarked in her trip around the world, she became an international celebrity at the end of it, and years later she was to be remembered for this venture rather than for her many reports and investigations. The journalist started her travel from New York on November 14th, 1889, sailing to Europe from the nearby harbour of Hoboken, New Jersey (Kroeger 143). She reached Southampton, crossed the English Channel and went directly to Amiens to pay a visit to Jules Verne and his wife.

The World - that had previously announced Bly's departure in an article entitled: "Can Jules Verne's great dream be reduced to actual fact?" - organized this meeting in the belief that it would give further recognition to her exploit. And the newspaper was right, since her circling of the earth was to be noticed in many countries, and her adventures followed by millions of readers.

After her encounter with Verne, Bly took the *India Mail*, a fast train that went through France and Italy, reaching Brindisi in time for a connection with a steamboat that was to take her across the Mediterranean to the Suez Canal and then to Ceylon. She followed the same itinerary that Fogg had covered in the novel, except for the crossing of India. Thus she went to Penang, Singapore, Hong Kong and Yokohama, where she took a steamer to San Francisco. Upon her arrival in California an unforeseen obstacle confronted her, because all trains bound for the East Coast were blocked by snow-storms raging on the Sierra Nevada. She was running the risk of not reaching New York in time, but *The World* overcame such obstacle by paying for a special train that ran through a southern railway line and took the reporter safely to Chicago. From there she resumed

her travel on regular trains, reaching her final destination in New Jersey on January 25th, 1890. It was the end of her flying trip around the world, which she completed in 72 days, 6 hours, 11 minutes and 14 seconds, covering 24,899 miles. Therefore the reporter not only beat Fogg's fictional record, but also arrived three days in advance on the timetable she had originally forecasted.

Bly's venture was highly rewarding for the newspaper that sponsored it since *The World* expanded its circulation, but its success went beyond the readers of Pulitzer's publication. Millions of people developed a keen interest in the exploit of the young globetrotter and followed anxiously the last stages of her trip. While the trains were taking the journalist across the American continent toward her final destination, festive crowds gathered at railway stations and along the tracks to greet and compliment her. Her arrival in New York gave rise to unprecedented celebrations on the part of the public: Bly became an American heroine and her circling around the earth was to be praised for many years in songs and poems. According to the lines of an operetta, in the future she might achieve even more impressive results in the field of travel, becoming the first woman to fly into space:

I wonder when they'll send a girl
To travel round the sky.
Read the answer in the stars,
They wait for Nellie Bly.
(Rittenhouse 215)

The reporter's adventure created a widespread enthusiasm because it took place in a period of transition regarding the travels of women and represented a great novelty in that area. Before the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 American women had traveled extensively in their own country, and many of them had already done so on their own in the western frontier before the civil war. On the contrary, very few women visited Europe, and they invariably followed their own men (husbands, fathers, brothers). These early tourists provided the models for some of the characters of Henry James's novels - Isabel Archer and Daisy Miller - but their numbers were quite limited since the transatlantic crossing involved a long, uncomfortable and expensive journey. A few exceptions to this trend were the first women journalists who came to Europe as correspondents for their newspapers: in 1846-1850 Margaret Fuller worked for Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune* while being in Great Britain, France and Italy; and in 1857 Nancy Johnson traveled extensively in Europe then publishing her reports in *New York Times.*

The situation began to evolve only in the late 1870s and early 1880s with the advent of the so-called steam palaces, the fast new vessels which made for speedier and safer travel. Prices lowered, since such steamboats were larger and could carry more passengers; also, being quite comfortable and luxurious, they allowed women to travel in a lady-like manner (Lockwood 295-297). Thanks to these factors, transatlantic crossing became more attractive and could be afforded by larger groups of people. Hence American

tourists - especially women - flocked to Europe, while at the same time European immigration to the United States increased. Other elements concurring to the growth of the number of women travelers were faster railway communications, higher quality hotels and Thomas Cook's invention of the package tours. Cook, in fact, not only created his famous travel agency, but also introduced new modes of traveling that revolutionized the entire tourist sector; the package tours, in particular, were appealing to women because they made them feel protected (Swinglehurst 38). Therefore American females came to Europe as tourists in unprecedented lots: in 1890 there were 11.000 of such young women visiting mainly Great Britain and France, but also cruising the Mediterranean sea, and covering the routes of the *Grand Tour* - for centuries an exclusively male experience (Schriber xii). Some of these women went even beyond the *Grand Tour* taking part to around-the-world trips, often under the supervision of the Thomas Cook (the very first *tours du monde* organized in France by this agency dated back to the 1870s and lasted at least three months) (Boyer 150).

If the aforementioned factors played a crucial role in the enlargement of the multitude of women travelers in the 1880s, another element that favored its expansion had to do with a basic change intervening in the mentality of many bourgeois women. For the first time women's travels were the result of their own autonomous decisions, so that females no longer traveled in order to follow and keep company with their men, becoming instead the protagonists of their trips. And the very act of traveling was a way of infringing accepted social codes, since it gave women the opportunity to enjoy an amount of freedom unthinkable in their daily lives. Moreover, though women never traveled without a chaperon, it was not necessary any longer for such a person to be a man; now a sister, a girlfriend or some other kind of female relative could very well escort them, and often maids, waitresses and other servants came along as well.

Instead Nellie Bly made her trip alone and "unprotected" playing intentionally the role of a single woman traveler, a highly controversial role at that time. Her adventurous journey represented a rare exception to the prudent and timorous ways of most women tourists. Actually Bly was not the first woman to circle the globe alone, since that record belonged to the great Austrian traveler Ida Pfeiffer, who completed two tours of the world on her own much earlier, in 1848 and 1851. But Pfeiffer's trips took a long time: two and a half years in the first case, and four years in the second. In the 1870s other women, mostly British, carried out alone courageous exploits; the most famous among them were Isabella Bird Bishop and Marianne North. Still others would follow in the 1890s, after Bly's venture, the most bold of them being the American Mary French Sheldon who during her life would circle the earth not once but four times. However, these women, while going around the world alone, did not make any race against time.

Thus the great novelty of Bly's deed was not so much that she traveled alone as that - following the example of Phileas Fogg - she transformed an around-the-world trip into a restless competition. By introducing the challenge of speed into women's travels, she

inaugurated a new kind of female heroism and added an additional dimension to the *tour du monde*, which was already an attractive adventure in itself (Schriber 221). It was, in fact, a circular kind of travel and followed the typical itinerary of heroes' wanderings and circumnavigations in ancient history, in which the beginnings and the ends always coincided. From a symbolic point of view, the circularity of a travel around the world was very appealing to many people, because it permitted them to hold the whole globe in one embrace. By circling the earth, globe-trotters had the feeling of circumscribing and containing it; by girdling the world they also imagined to conquer it and, in a way, to own it. For such reasons, after Bly's exploit, the attempts to establish ever new records in races around the world have continued until today, with travelers resorting to many different means of transport (cars, airplanes, sailing boats, balloons, etc). Nevertheless, none of such trips has ever achieved the widespread renown of the *World*'s young journalist: the image of Bly in her traveling gown (a checkered redingote over a blue dress) appeared in thousands of drawings and photographs, becoming so famous that women would copy her costume for more than a decade.

The extraordinary and long-lasting success of the reporter's globe-trotting feat was also rooted in the cultural and political climate prevailing in American society in last decade of the nineteenth-century: it was a time of nationalism and euphoria. Just a few months before her globe-girdling started, the Centennial Celebrations had taken place to commemorate the founding of the federal political system and the presidential election of George Washington. Americans were conscious that their own country was going through a period of mighty economic and political growth, and looked with optimism to the new challenges that the future would bring about. In this context, Bly's daring exploit stirred up the masses and produced enthusiastic public demonstrations, because it appeared as a symbol of the American ability to overcome successfully any obstacle that might stand in its way. Moreover, from the viewpoint of the American women the reporter's solo travel was deeply emancipatory, since it provided a contribution which modified public expectations regarding women's social roles. Thanks to Nellie Bly, it was no longer considered utterly inappropriate and morally disreputable for a woman to travel without a chaperon; on the contrary, the journalist's traveling alone and as a single woman was celebrated and approved by millions of Americans in the name of patriotism.

Regarding nationalism Bly wrote: "They say no man or woman in America ever received ovations like those given me during my flying trip across the continent. The Americans turned out to do honor to an American girl who had been the first to make a record of a flying trip around the world, and I rejoiced with them that it was an American girl who had done it" (Bly 269). These very ideas were spelled out in un article published in *The World* on January 8th, 1890, according to which public enthusiasm for Bly's venture was "a tribute to American pluck, American womanhood and American perseverance." And recently similar concepts have reappeared in a historical study by Harold Evans who, tracing the origins of the American Century, has dated its beginning

not in 1900 but rather in 1890, and has quoted among the most significant events that marked its advent Nellie Bly that "flew a flag for liberty and equality" in her trip around the world (Evans xxii).

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RUTH BENEDICT E L'IDENTITÀ DI GENERE TRA APOLLINEO E DIONISIACO

ALESSANDRA LORINI

All'età di 32 anni Ruth Fulton Benedict, poetessa, laureata in letteratura, e con un forte senso di mancanza di autorealizzazione, approdò all'antropologia professionale per diventare, molti anni dopo, la prima donna *full professor* in quella disciplina. Quel che sappiamo della sua vita lo dobbiamo, in gran parte, al racconto biografico che Margaret Mead, sua allieva prima e poi collega, amica e amante, ci ha lasciato quale curatrice degli scritti di Benedict; un testo che biografie più recenti hanno ripreso ampliando le fonti e le interpretazioni (Mead, Babcock, Caffrey, Modell, Stocking, Lapsley). È dalla Mead che apprendiamo che la "scena primaria" alla radice del percorso intellettuale di Benedict avvenne nel 1887 alla morte del padre, giovane medico dedito alla ricerca sul cancro, quando lei non aveva ancora compiuto due anni. La madre portò la piccola Ruth e la sorellina di pochi mesi a vedere il padre nella bara e, secondo il racconto che Benedict lasciò a Mead, la madre "in un attacco di pianto isterico mi implorò di ricordare." Dalla memoria di quella scena sembra derivi l'adozione della dicotomia apollineo-dionisiaco nell'antropologia di Benedict, come rappresentazione di due mondi contrastanti, perennemente in conflitto: "È certo che fin dalla primissima infanzia riconobbi l'esistenza di due mondi… quello di mio padre, che era il mondo della morte con la sua bellezza eterna, e quello di mia madre fatto di confusione e di scoppi di pianto che subito rifiutai" (Mead 98, 99).

Dal ricordo nitido del rifiuto che provò allora per il dolore della madre e l'immagine del padre conservata come quella di un uomo bellissimo, immune da ogni passione, discende anche la tensione identitaria femminile che accompagnò Benedict tutta la vita: il mondo della madre, pur rifiutato razionalmente, le restò radicato nel corpo manifestandosi in ricorrenti attacchi biliari, mentre il mondo del padre divenne il simbolo della forza e serenità della sua mente.

Questa contrapposizione apollineo-dionisiaco su cui si fonderà *Patterns of Culture* (1934), il lavoro che la rese celebre, è rintracciabile nei suoi scritti privati, anteriori al suo approdo antropologico, nella lettura della *Nascita della tragedia*, opera prima di Friedrick Nietzsche che Benedict fece frequentando il college femminile di Vassar a Poughkeepsie, nello Stato di New York, dal 1905 al 1909. In questo saggio del 1872 Nietzsche ribalta l'immagine del mondo greco come simbolo della razionalità rappresentata dall'architettura, la scultura e la filosofia di Socrate e Platone e legge invece la civiltà greca come il prodotto di due impulsi contrapposti: l'*apollineo* che ha a che fare con le arti figurative e la poesia, e il *dionisiaco* caratteristico della musica legati, rispettivamente, ai culti di Apollo e di Dioniso. Se secondo Nietzsche la tragedia greca era l'espressione massima della convivenza di questi due elementi contrapposti, Benedict sembrava cogliere questa convi-

venza nella complessa soggettività femminile - che senza mezzi termini chiamò "quella cosa terribile di essere donna" (Mead 119) - e nel concetto stesso di *cultural pattern*, cardine della sua antropologia. A tale riguardo Sydney Mintz, allievo di Benedict, richiamando alla memoria la prima lezione dell'antropologa sulla cerimonia del Potlach presso le tribù native del British Columbia, ricorda : "Non avevo mai pensato prima di allora che una cultura nel suo insieme potesse essere vista come un'opera d'arte, qualcosa da contemplare con distacco, qualcosa di unico e distinto, tuttavia disponibile per essere studiato, analizzato, compreso" (Mintz 156).

Durante i suoi studi a Vassar Benedict pubblicò poesie e saggi sul rapporto tra letteratura e democrazia e sui tratti razziali degli eroi shakesperiani. Diplomatasi in letteratura nel 1909, trascorse un anno in Europa, uno a Buffalo come assistente sociale e altri tre come insegnante in una scuola femminile in California. Ben cosciente delle limitate possibilità in campo professionale allora aperte alle donne, Benedict considerava l'insegnamento e il *social work* dei veri e propri ghetti femminili assai poco creativi e remunerativi. Da questa amara constatazione dedusse che una donna, in fondo, aveva "un unico potere supremo, quello di amare" (Mead 119-120), deduzione che può apparire come un primo tentativo di riconciliare apollineo e dionisiaco. Convinta di aver trovato il grande amore, nel 1913 sposò un brillante scienziato chimico ritirandosi in un *suburb* newyorkese nel ruolo di colta casalinga benestante. In quegli anni, constatata l'impossibilità di avere figli, e finita l'illusione del grande amore, Benedict si rifugiò nella letteratura. Si immerse, in particolare, nella scrittura biografica, dedicandosi alla vita di "donne inquiete e oppresse delle generazioni passate" (Mead 131). Ma il progetto biografico di Benedict, intitolato "New Women of Three Centuries," centrato su tre figure di donne straordinarie quali Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97), Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) e Olive Schreiner (1855-1920) non vide mai la luce restando sotto forma di manoscritti che si trovano tra le sue carte conservate a Vassar. Scorrendo quello sulla vita della Wollstonecraft non si può fare a meno di notare una quasi identificazione di Benedict con la straordinaria personalità e il femminismo appassionato dell'autrice de "I diritti delle donne" (1792): "La storia di Mary Wollstonecraft," scrive Benedict, "è uno dei documenti umani più preziosi: la storia di una vita che portò a termine un'idea" (Modell 103, 106). E Benedict, davanti al naufragio del suo matrimonio senza figli, cercò di portare a termine la sua idea di autorealizzazione intraprendendo un viaggio intellettuale che dalla letteratura la porterà all'antropologia.

Nel 1919 cominciò a frequentare la New School of Social Research, luogo centrale di quel fermento intellettuale radicale che era il Greenwich Village nei primi decenni del Novecento, rimanendo affascinata dalle lezioni di Elsie Clews Parsons su "Sesso ed etnologia," un approccio comparativo alle differenze dei ruoli sessuali in varie società. L'incontro con Parsons fu una svolta fondamentale nella vita di Benedict. L'antropologa femminista, finanziatrice dei maggiori progetti di Franz Boas e dei suoi allievi della Columbia University, presentò Benedict al maestro dopo averla convinta a perseguire il

dottorato in antropologia. Accomunate dal femminismo, Parsons e Benedict avevano tuttavia motivazioni e interessi intellettuali assai diversi. Viaggiatrice ed etnografa straordinaria, sperimentatrice di un'identità femminile "non classificabile," mobile, molteplice, Parsons era induttiva, completamente assorbita dall'accuratezza e dal dettaglio della descrizione etnografica e la raccolta dei dati empirici (Lorini 619-650). Benedict invece, forse anche perché il *fieldwork* etnografico le era in gran pare precluso da una sordità parziale di cui soffriva, retaggio di una malattia infantile, era invece deduttiva, meno interessata agli aspetti descrittivi e più orientata all'analisi teorica dei comportamenti culturali (Babcock 108).

Fin dal primo incontro Boas rimase colpito dalla mente brillante e fortemente immaginativa che Benedict nascondeva dietro una forte timidezza. L'accettò immediatamente nel programma di dottorato in antropologia facendole ottenere tutti i crediti necessari affinché potesse, quanto prima, dedicarsi alla *dissertation* su un tratto culturale comunemente riconoscibile nella religione degli indiani nordamericani: lo "spirito guardiano," che Benedict definì "l'elemento religioso unificante dell'America del Nord" (Babcock 109). Tesi interpretativa e non di ricerca, questo lavoro di Benedict già contiene in nuce quel concetto di *cultural pattern*, in cui si intersecano elementi apollinei e dionisiaci, che elaborerà nell'opera che la fece diventare l'antropologa più celebre per molte generazioni, cioè *Modelli di cultura* (1934). Ma prima di esaminare quest'opera, è necessario coglierne i presupposti nel rapporto con il maestro Boas, guardando alla posizione di Benedict in quel cerchio di allieve per le quali l'antropologo di origine tedesca era "Papà Franz." Docente e direttore del dipartimento di antropologia della Columbia University, Boas nel 1920 dichiarò pubblicamente che le donne erano le migliori studiose di antropologia (Babcock 109). Forse era convinto che Benedict fosse la migliore di tutte, poiché la volle prima come sua assistente e poi come docente incaricata annuale. Dal canto suo Benedict, pur chiamandolo "Papà Franz" come le altre, aveva tuttavia un rapporto diverso con il maestro: era il vero alter ego di Boas, date le responsabilità di cui il maestro la investiva in campo disciplinare, nei rapporti con gli studenti, nell'introduzione dei corsi. Tuttavia, pur ritenendola "indispensabile," Boas non la scelse per prendere il suo posto di insegnamento a Barnard College quando lo lasciò nel 1923. Scelse invece un'altra studentessa, Gladys Richard, perché aveva solo trent'anni e non era sposata. Nonostante avesse dimostrato una totale dedizione al dipartimento, agli occhi di Boas Benedict era una donna "sposata" e quindi non si riteneva "responsabile" nei suoi confronti. Infatti, sarà solo nel 1930, quando Benedict si separerà ufficialmente dal marito, che Boas accoglierà la sua richiesta di riconoscimento professionale poiché, secondo lui, solo allora sarebbe appartenuta totalmente al dipartimento e non a una famiglia. Tuttavia, quando Boas andò in pensione nel 1937, la sua cattedra fu data a un uomo, non a Benedict che diventerà *full professor* solo nel 1948, anno in cui fu anche eletta presidente della American Anthropological Association, ma anche l'anno della sua morte. Questo, dopo ben ventisei anni di lavoro alla Columbia, anni tuttavia straordinariamente proficui sul

piano scientifico, dei rapporti personali e per la sua crescente consapevolezza politica del rapporto tra scienza e democrazia.

Uno degli aspetti che favorì la crescita interdisciplinare degli studi sul rapporto tra cultura e personalità fu l'arrivo a New York di esuli dall'Europa nazista appartenenti alla scuola freudiana e a quella della *gestalt* (Stocking 226). Negli anni trenta, intellettuali come Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, Franz Alexander, Erik Erikson partecipavano con Ruth Benedict ai seminari di Abram Kardiner prima al New York Psychoanalytic Institute e successivamente alla Columbia (Babcok 115). Ed è in questo contesto che Benedict elaborò quello che ancor oggi è forse il testo antropologico più letto: *Patterns of Culture*.

Questo volume, esempio rilevante di divulgazione antropologica, un vero e proprio *best seller*, tradotto in quattordici lingue, divenne il libro più influente dell'antropologia del ventesimo secolo e generò un considerevole dibattito disciplinare. Forse il suo successo sta in un uso ricorrente della dicotomia nietzschiana apollineo-dionisiaco e nell'organizzazione dei "frammenti" delle culture in un modello attraverso il principio di integrazione: "una cultura, come un individuo, è un insieme più o meno coerente di pensieri e di azioni, e nell'ambito di ogni cultura si delineano certi scopi caratteristici, che possono essere soltanto suoi, non condivisi da nessun altro tipo di società" (*Modelli di cultura* 52).

Esperta di critica letteraria, Benedict leggeva le culture e le personalità come dei documenti, dei testi organizzati attorno a tropi - ad esempio l'idea di fertilità nella cultura dei Pueblo. Questo intreccio tra letteratura e antropologia traspare anche dalla lettura di *The Waves* di Virginia Woolf fatta da Benedict mentre scriveva *Modelli di cultura* (Modell 192). Invece dei sei personaggi di Woolf, sei diverse versioni della stessa persona, Benedict fa il ritratto di tre culture - i Pueblo, i Dobu, i Kwakiutl - e tre diverse versioni della realtà. Invece di scrivere biografie di tre donne, come aveva tentato anni addietro, scrive le biografie di tre culture e, per implicazione, di una quarta, la sua. È il gioco "alla Swift," come osserva Clifford Geertz, dove il troppo familiare e l'assolutamente esotico vengono scambiati (Geertz 106-107). Infatti, in un gioco di specchi, contrariamente al lavoro altamente descrittivo di Parsons, Benedict sceglie ed esaspera quei tratti caratteriali dei Pueblo che sostenevano la sua convinzione di un loro genio apollineo e sottovaluta, invece, gli elementi conflittuali anche forti esistenti nella società Pueblo. Per Benedict il contrasto fondamentale tra i Pueblo e le altre culture del Nordamerica è quello definito da Nietzsche nel saggio sulla tragedia greca, dei due modi opposti di accostarsi ai valori dell'esistenza. Il dionisiaco per Benedict li persegue attraverso "la distruzione dei normali confini e limiti dell'esistenza" e nei momenti più alti cerca di sfuggire ai limiti impostigli dai suoi cinque sensi, per entrare in un altro ordine d'esperienza. Il desiderio del dionisiaco, nell'esperienza personale o nel rito, è quello di "aprirsi per mezzo di essi un passaggio a un certo stato psicologico, di giungere all'eccesso." Lo stato di ebbrezza somiglia più d'ogni altra cosa alle emozioni dionisiache con le relative "illuminazioni della frenesia." Con Blake, dice Benedict, il dionisiaco crede che "la via dell'eccesso porti al palazzo della

saggezza." L'apollineo, invece, diffida di queste cose, trovando spesso il modo di bandirle dalla sua vita: "conosce una sola legge, la misura in senso ellenico." Cammina in mezzo alla strada, in territorio conosciuto, e lontano da stati psicologici così sconvolgenti. Per usare la bella frase di Nietzsche, anche nell'esaltazione della danza "rimane quello che è, e conserva il proprio nome e cognome." Per Benedict i Pueblo del Sudovest appartengono al tipo apollineo (84, 85).

Già in uno scritto del 1928 intitolato "Psychological Types in the Cultures of the Southwest" Benedict rilevava che la caratteristica più significativa della cultura Pueblo, il cerimoniale con le danze ritmate il cui scopo era raggiungere la perfezione e non l'estasi, non la distingueva di per sé da altre culture dei nativi americani, poiché in gran parte di queste le danze rituali erano altamente sviluppate. La differenza sta nello spirito dei cerimoniali dei Pueblo che erano *apollinei* e cioè, nell'accezione di Benedict, pur esistendo usi cerimoniali di allucinogeni, non esisteva nessuna traccia di estasi dionisiaca. Anche in un saggio pubblicato nel 1932 "Configurations of Culture in North America" Benedict riprendeva l'opposizione apollineo-dionisiaco elaborando ulteriori distinzioni rispetto al culto dei morti che saranno approfondite in *Modelli di cultura*: realisti apollinei (Pueblo), realisti dionisiaci (Indiani delle Pianure), dionisiaci romantici (i non-Pueblo del Southwest). Infatti il quarto capitolo di *Modelli di cultura*, dedicato ai Pueblo del New Mexico, è una versione estesa di questi articoli precedenti, proseguendo l'approfondimento del contrasto apollineo-dionisiaco. Tuttavia Benedict non romanticizza la cultura Pueblo, dove pur esisteva la matrilinearità, dove le case costruite dagli uomini appartenevano alle donne, dove il divorzio si risolveva semplicemente nel mettere tutto ciò che possedeva il marito fuori dalla porta di casa e dove l'omosessualità era accettata, l'omicidio era inesistente, il suicidio considerato troppo violento per essere contemplato, gli affari economici avevano scarsa importanza e qualsiasi controversia si risolveva senza il minimo comportamento aggressivo (263, 128, 117, 76, 78). Se la vita quotidiana dei Pueblo era la rappresentazione apollinea di "misura e sobrietà," priva com'era di esperienze individuali estatiche o forme di tortura, tuttavia portava all'estremo la cooperazione e non favoriva, pertanto, nessuna iniziativa individuale. Per Benedict, che valorizzava l'individuo, tra i Pueblo non c'era posto per quella "forza di volontà o iniziativa personale" per lei aspetti altamente positivi dell'Occidente.

Negli ultimi due capitoli, dedicati all'individuo e alla società, Benedict presenta invece una critica sottile e arguta della cultura americana, raffrontando l'aggressività e la competizione americana con la sobrietà dei Pueblo del Sudovest da un lato e la grandiosità dionisiaca dei Kwakiutl dell'Isola di Vancouver dall'altro. Questi ultimi per Benedict "erano dei dionisiaci e nelle cerimonie religiose miravano a raggiungere l'estasi." Ciò si desumeva dal rito iniziatorio dei danzatori del "Cannibale," all'insegna del "terribile e del proibito," o della società dei "Folli": "tale iniziazione significava l'acquisizione di privilegi che spettavano all'individuo per nascita o per matrimonio, ed era convalidata da un

grande spreco di beni." Questo gioco di convalidare e di esercitare tutte le prerogative e i privilegi ricevuti dagli antenati o acquisiti grazie a un dono o al matrimonio, sembrava essere l'occupazione preferita degli indiani della costa nord-occidentale. E nuovamente Benedict inserisce un rispecchiamento "alla Swift" sulla *sua* cultura: "Il sistema economico della costa nord-occidentale era per molti versi una chiara parodia del nostro" poiché si trattava di "una contesa in cui ciascuno cercava di gettare la vergogna sull'avversario" al fine di "dimostrarsi superiori ai propri rivali" mediante la distruzione dei propri beni (181, 182-83, 185, 191, 192, 195).

Nel 1934 Benedict non era d'accordo con il fatto che Boas avesse lasciato la ricerca scientifica per dedicarsi all'attività pubblica di denuncia al razzismo e alle gerarchie razziali. Ma di lì a poco gli eventi mondiali la spinsero a rendersi conto che gli antropologi non potevano più permettersi di restare neutrali nella loro scienza "pura" e, dopo che Boas si ammalò gravemente, nel 1936, Benedict ne continuò l'impegno pubblico contro il razzismo e l'intolleranza. Nel 1938 Ruth Benedict e Franz Boas furono tra i 1284 intellettuali americani che sottoscrissero il "Manifesto on Freedom of Science," che condannava il nazismo affermando che soltanto la democrazia poteva garantire la libertà intellettuale e che ogni attacco alla libertà di pensiero in qualsiasi campo, anche in uno non-politico come quello della fisica teorica, era da considerarsi un attacco alla stessa democrazia (Barkan 180-205).

Nel 1939-40 Benedict scrisse *Race: Science and Politics*, che mostra il suo approccio essenziale alla questione delle conseguenze umane della discriminazione razziale. Al libro seguirono attività pubbliche a carattere educativo quali lezioni, filmati, articoli in riviste popolari e il pamphlet scritto con Gene Weltfish *The Races of Mankind* di cui circolarono 750.000 copie. Forse Benedict stava formulando lo stesso interrogativo che Virginia Woolf ne *Le tre Ghinee* poneva agli intellettuali dell'epoca: "Che cosa è questa civiltà in cui ci troviamo? Che cosa sono queste cerimonie e perché dovremmo far parte di esse? Che cosa sono queste professioni e perché dovremmo ricavarci del denaro? Dove, in breve, ci sta portando il corteo dei figli degli uomini colti?" (92). Questa domanda si traduceva in un impegno etico-morale verso la società a cui antropologi come Benedict appartenevano. Ma le risposte assumevano connotati diversi.

Con l'emergere della minaccia nazista e lo scoppio della seconda guerra mondiale, tra gli antropologi si insinuò un dilemma che riguardava il loro ruolo di scienziati sociali dentro una società, che si definiva democratica, nel momento in cui la democrazia era messa in discussione dalla minaccia fascista e nazista proveniente dall'Europa. Come osserva Virginia Yans-McLaughin a questo proposito, in quanto convinti relativisti e empiristi culturali che avevano rifiutato "gli assoluti aprioristici," questi scienziati si trovarono di fronte al dilemma di difendere la democrazia in termini altrettanto assoluti: "Pensando di essere scienziati obiettivi dediti alla libera espressione delle idee, si trovarono di fronte al dilemma di prendere parte nella manipolazione delle idee" (207).

Dopo l'attacco di Pearl Harbor Benedict accettò di assumere la direzione della Basic

Analysis Section, dello Office of War Information di Washington. Qui, con Margaret Mead ed altri antropologi, sperimentò l'applicazione dei metodi antropologici alle società complesse e lo studio di una cultura "a distanza," lavorando su fonti letterarie e interviste di emigrati in una serie di studi sul "carattere nazionale." Il suo lavoro più complesso ed eloquente di questo periodo è *Il crisantemo e la spada*, un'analisi tematica basata interamente su documenti scritti e interviste con giapponesi-americani. Questo libro contiene sia una critica alla cultura americana che un'integrazione delle identità di poetessa e di scienziata dell'autrice. Troppo ben scritto per alcuni, e considerato quindi un *divertissement* letterario e non una seria analisi scientifica, in realtà si tratta del tentativo ambizioso di rendere i giapponesi, nemici degli Stati Uniti, culturalmente comprensibili e più vicini di quanto gli americani potessero immaginare. A tale proposito, come ha osservato Clifford Geertz, Benedict demolisce l'eccezionalità americana confrontandola con quella, persino più eccezionale, di "un'alterità spettacolarizzata" (122). Attraverso l'espediente del Noi che diventiamo Loro, in una continua oscillazione tra un qua e un là senza più contorni geografici precisi, Benedict gioca il ruolo di uno Swift della società moderna.

Tuttavia è troppo forte la pretesa di Benedict di definire la cultura giapponese come un tutto coerente, dove ogni parte deve trovare una sua ragione a tutti i costi: "È inevitabile che alcuni degli atteggiamenti più radicati dello spirito giapponese si manterranno ancora per molto tempo, e fra questi vi è appunto una profonda fiducia nella gerarchia; ed anche se ciò è estraneo alla mentalità americana, più favorevole all'uguaglianza dei cittadini, tuttavia resta per noi indispensabile comprendere quali valori e quali prospettive positive la cultura giapponese attribuisca al concetto di gerarchia." D'altra parte, sorvolando sulla segregazione razziale esistente negli Stati Uniti, che negava in modo esplicito quei principi egualitari, restano forti accenni alla democrazia americana come l'unica forma di governo in grado di fornire un modello da imitare: "Quando, poco prima di Pearl Harbor, riaffermammo gli alti principi etici su cui gli Stati Uniti fondavano la loro politica nel Pacifico, ci eravamo fatti interpreti delle nostre più radicate convinzioni, certi che ogni passo nella direzione indicata avrebbe contribuito al miglioramento delle condizioni mondiali" (*Il crisantemo e la spada* 31, 57).

Ma perché in questo testo eloquente non si fa menzione della bomba su Hiroshima e Nagasaki? Margaret Mead spiega questa omissione con il fatto che nel momento in cui Benedict scrisse *Il crisantemo e la spada* quell'azione tragica non era ancora entrata nella coscienza degli americani; inoltre tale opera voleva rispondere a "un urgente bisogno di comprendere un popolo con il quale, a quel tempo, chi faceva ricerca non poteva comunicare direttamente e la cui cultura non poteva essere studiata nel loro paese" (Mead 65).

Il crisantemo e la spada termina con un invito ai "Signori della Vittoria" a rispettare il processo in corso in Giappone, ribadendo ancora una volta che non era pensabile obbligare un paese ad adottare il "nostro" sistema, la "nostra" democrazia. Tuttavia simili affermazioni sembravano contraddire le pagine precedenti in cui la "nostra" democrazia appariva come la forma più perfetta e perfettibile di società possibile. Ma per Benedict era forse l'unica che

pur con le sue contraddizioni laceranti, come il coro della tragedia greca era in grado di riconciliare l'ebbrezza del trance dionisiaco come lato oscuro della ragione apollinea. E la fede nella scienza al servizio della democrazia era l'anima di questa riconciliazione.

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WORKSHOP TEN
THE SEA AND REVOLUTION: THE MEDITERRANEAN, THE EARLY REPUBLICAN AGE, AND U.S. CULTURE

CHAIR: SALVATORE PROIETTI, IGINA TATTONI

This workshop was meant as an exploration of some connections between Mediterranean histories and cultures and the post-Revolutionary age, as they have been articulated in literary and nonliterary writings, and as an occasion to reconsider some issues concerning the Revolution, above all its novelty and its relative erasure from the national mythology.

Cultural historians have examined at length the legacy of classic and Renaissance culture, manifest in the thought and rhetoric of the Revolution; yet so many writers have engaged themselves in concealing these presences. Thomas Paine wrote in *Common Sense*, "We have it in our power to begin the world over again"; *The Federalist* no. 14 talks about "a revolution which has no parallel in the annals of the human race," that might inspire "governments which have no model on the face of the globe"; and of course Tocqueville insists on the importance of "the starting point" in making the democratic history and culture of the US an "entirely new world."

Yet Tocqueville himself remarks that "the great advantage of the Americans is that they have come to democracy without passing through a democratic revolution." As historian Michael Kammen argues in *A Season of Youth*, the Revolution was for a long time largely neglected in the self-image of the nation. The Revolution, Sacvan Bercovich writes, "like Beckett's Godot, is at the same time omnipresent and conspicuously absent" in American culture and literature, denied and asserted at the same time in Rip Van Winkle's sleep, Israel Potter's exile, and so many of Hawthorne's ungraspable hallucinations, delusions, and ghosts.

The image of the Mediterranean, thus, could be seen as the mark of both a European past that the official tradition wants to break from and keep at a distance, and a non-European world that challenges the notion of the sinonimity between Whiteness and civilization.

The call for papers was twofold. One focus was the role of "classic" and Renaissance models and of European art, the use of Mediterranean settings and landscapes - whether stereotypically exotic or ironically estranging - in early republican writings. The workshop also urged contributors to discuss the occurrence of this connection in later US and European texts; from Alfieri, Longfellow, and Cooper to Ezra Pound and Hannah Arendt, many authors have chosen the comparison between the early republican age and Mediterranean cultures as a tool for reconsidering the usability of the national past and the stability or instability of the self-image of "America."

The interdisciplinary call was responded to by both historians and literary critics. Among the former, Richard Samuelson reads a late work by John Quincy Adams and Marco Sioli reconstructs Joel Barlow's Algerian diplomatic mission; their papers describe two different approaches to the issue of the desirability of extending the Revolutionary principles to more than one country, in which two very different kinds of intellectuals felt the necessity to link the notion of freedom the US intend to embody with a Mediterranean history and tradition that goes beyond Europe's classical legacy. Among the latter, Alessandro Portelli's communication on Olaudah Equiano's autobiographical *Narrative* (which is part of a longer study to be published elsewhere) focused on Equiano as transcultural mediator, striving to build for himself - an African American in the newly independent US - an identity framed by both inclusiveness and heterogeneity; Cinzia Schiavini explores Melville's disturbing European topographies as spatializations of the American body politic: the displacement into Europe is meditation on the condition of the nation *vis-à-vis* its manifold places of historical origin; Igina Tattoni's deconstructionist analysis problematizes the crucial theme of time and the Revolution in Charles Brockden Brown's *Arthur Mervyn*: the confrontation with European culture and people is inescapable for the self-definition of subjectivity, language, and experience; and my reading of Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive* focuses on this novel's foregrounding the instability of the social, cultural, and linguistic roles inscribed in the notion of race as the crucial pathways to the achievement of democracy in America.

This workshop should be taken as an attempt at reassessing what the Revolution and the post-Revolutionary age could mean to us in 2001, as possible founding members in what a widespread discourse keeps calling (as a rule with highly uncritical implications) "United States of Europe" - an issue which September 11, 2001 has rendered all the more urgent.

Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza"

SAILING ACROSS THE COLOR LINE: ON ROYALL TYLER'S *THE ALGERINE CAPTIVE*

SALVATORE PROIETTI

Towards the end of the Royall Tyler's fragmentary, unfinished novel, *The Bay Boy* (written around 1825), the narrator Updike Underhill describes a violent assault by a "mob" of "white men" against a group of Black slave girls dressed in their best clothes, returning from the Harvard College Commencement Day, in Boston, just a few years after 1776.[1] Intervening in their support, Underhill is about to be beaten up, when a good-principled dignitary addresses the crowd, convincing them that the principles of freedom officially upheld by the American nation should be applied to everyone, Blacks included:

> Mr. M, a popular orator of the day … intimated that … while we were contending for our own rights we ought not to infringe those of the meanest among us, that their conduct … was sanctioned by an old custom which we had learned from our English ancestors from whom no good to this land of liberty ever came. (*Prose* 161)

In his opinion, slavery and racism are wrong as they are *English* principles. But Underhill, who finds questionable and "barbarous" the nonviolent custom of the Whites who come to see what a well-dressed Black woman looks like, is not convinced: "I do not agree with orator M. that we owed this custom to our English ancestors. I believe this to be one of the few bad customs which was purely colonial" (162).

Throughout Tyler's works, the discourse on race and slavery is placed along the examination of what, after the Revolution, is or is not "purely" American.

In the preface to his 1797 *The Algerine Captive* the Revolution is presented for the first time in the form of cultural change.[2] The protagonist - the same Updike Underhill - says he is witnessing "a surprising alteration in the public taste" (1: vi), now influenced by gothic novels such as Ann Radcliffe's, and no longer by folklore or religious books; public libraries or local bookstores distribute "books designed to amuse rather than to instruct" (vii). The point is not that the new public reads unworthy books, but that the post-revolutionary public sphere is challenging the social division of genre within the reading audience; together with the growth literacy rate in New England, we have had "[t]he diffusion of a taste for any species of writing through all ranks" (*ibid*.). What is to be lamented is the absence of America as literary matter: "we [should] write our own books of amusement," and these books should "exhibit our own manners" (xii). Tyler knows that the novelist should not write for and about the elite only. And his book chooses to be more ambitious than mere realism: the matter of America is both setting (in Volume One) and metaphor (in Volume Two), and the Mediterranean coast of Algeria becomes a defamiliarizing landscape that presents the "purely" American "manner" of slavery.

Similarly to later arguments by political theorists such as Tocqueville and Hannah Arendt, or by the exceptionalist school of Americanist cultural historians, in Tyler's novel the origin of American history is made to go far back in time, well before the Revolution and the Constitution. The effect is not a reassuring assertion of the national continuity; this novel - but the same could be applied to other contemporary writers, such as Brackenridge, Brockden Brown, and Irving - stages a legitimation crisis involving the very bases of the American democracy, a "crisis of political, historical, and textual authority" (Portelli, *Text* 38).

The paradoxical anxieties of the Federalist culture about the notion of democracy receive an allegory in the apologue about Underhill as a teacher. With his classical erudition, he hopes to appear as a model of republican virtue, but his village-school pupils make fun of his pretenses; an openminded teacher, he is blamed for being too liberal, and cannot keep his class under check; when he hits back a bullying kid, he is blamed for being too repressive. In the end, someone burns down the building, and he is almost forced to pay for it.

In the discussion of the birth of the nation, the issue is once more the vulnerability of a newly-established authority. Along with Founding Fathers like Benjamin Franklin and John Jay, Underhill meets Thomas Paine, who tells him that if Britain had been ruled by the "sensible minority" of the "men of sense," the US would still be colonies (154-57). Both America and the schoolmaster have yet to learn how to give themselves some form of authoritativeness.

In the dilemma between the precariousness and the necessity of authority, the key role is given to slavery. When Underhill finds a job as a ship surgeon, he first reaches London on board of the *Freedom*, bound for Africa, then leaves on a slave-trading vessel named *Sympathy*. Because of this assignment, he is overwhelmed by inner doubts, but his self-scrutiny is not abstract like Thomas Jefferson's. In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson had lamented slavery's "unhappy influence on the manners of our people," and had expressed his fears about this influence: "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just" (214-15); only the soul and manners of impersonal abstractions such as the country and the people (that is, the *White* people) are under threat, not the concrete bodies and freedom of the slaves. In *The Algerine Captive*, on the other hand, the tone is one of personal, sentimental involvement; the open horizon of Freedom needs to be supplemented by some forms of Sympathy, in order to become an active force. Underhill had already been horrified by slavery during a visit to the South; his vicissitudes during the voyage and in Africa teach him that some multitudes should not and cannot be contained within the same identity. An individual and a nation cannot at the same time despise slavery and collaborate in the slave trade, and once he has been a slave for six years, a notion of free citizenship that tolerates and *entails* the presence of slavery will no longer be acceptable to him: "I pray a merciful God," Underhill says in retrospect, "that

the miseries, the insults, and the cruel woundings, I afterwards received when a slave myself, may expiate for the inhumanity I was necessitated to exercise towards these, my brethren of the human race" (1:169-70).

Underhill's journey will be one of self-discovery, but the liminal space of the sea - both the Atlantic and the Mediterranean - will not be an empty interval allowing for the regeneration of the subject as a clean slate ready for the new beginning; instead, he will discover, to quote Toni Morrison, the persisting shadow underneath the exhilarating romance of the new nation. Moreover, his encounter with otherness will not bring about a reassertion of separateness and hierarchy; on the contrary, his voyage will bring *him* on the other side of American freedom: like Frederick Douglass, he will end up taking the oxymoronic role of "American slave." Tyler, as an eccentric Federalist and a sincere believer in democracy, is not yet ready to reduce otherness to the role of ghostliness, as will happen in Jackson's and Melville's age. If the Christopher Columbus celebrated by poets like Joel Barlow and Philip Freneau had crossed a "trackless" sea in order to give a shape to the void of the New World, in *The Algerine Captive* both the sea and the world (Old and New) are always already marked and connected by violent hierarchies and social relations. Tyler's answers will be formulated within the space of ethics and responsibility, and not along the linear axis of national manifest destiny.

Before the journey, as Cathy Davidson observes, all of Underhill's vicissitudes are a long chain of failures (as land speculator, erudite, schoolmaster, orator, farmer, physician, adventurer). His involvement with the slave traffic places him in a more challenging position than any other character among contemporary works by White authors. His role as the antihero of a mock-heroic quest for a place in the sun does not erase his position as a member of the dominant class and race; he may not have embarked out of ideological choice, but there are responsibilities he cannot escape: "by my station in the ship, I had a principal and active part of this inhuman transaction" (1:166).

In a horrific section reminiscent of slave narratives such as Olaudah Equiano's, Underhill manages to wear a mask of naive innocence and pretends to remain untouched by the widespread cynicism; his shipmates, with their constant use of weapons such as chains, whips, and rape, despise him for his "Yankee nonsense about humanity," and look down upon him as a foolish humanitarian. Nevertheless, he is a physician, an authority figure meant to bestow "scientific" dignity and legitimation on the commerce of human property, and has to examine the physical health of the captives, to "inspect the bodies of the slaves" (177), so that no "unsound flesh" be admitted to the market after the captives have been "exposed to this severe scrutiny equally insulting to humanity and common decency" (169): this activity appears to him as an unacceptable action. Far from the *terra firma* of the standpoint of Enlightenment men such as Jefferson, or of Neoclassic poets such as the Connecticut Wits or the later Freneau, and similar to the last letters of Crèvecoeur's American farmer, the intellectual in a hegemonic position does not always have the right to observe and scrutinize.

Most important, the opposite of individual self-doubt is collective death. Underhill's former colleagues on the slave ship deny their cargo of captives a right to individual existence, and cynically comment on the atrocities of the middle passage saying: "*What signifies … the lives of the black devils? They love to die. You cannot please them better by chucking them into the water*" (178). On the contrary, even on the ship the Blacks preserve - as should be - a point of view and a gaze of their own, an autonomy of observation and judgment. As the slaves, from the other side of the color line, observe and judge the tormented, well-intentioned slave-trader, they manage to detect the individual differences within the dominant, oppressive homogeneity of the Whites' market democracy: "Our linguist has told me, he has often heard them … asking him why [God] put my good *black* soul into a *white* body" (180).

Underhill's Algerian captivity carries one step further the irony implied in the slaves' phrasing, and in Volume Two the position of Underhill himself is that of a "black" - that is, a slave - with a white body: like Equiano and other slave autobiographers, he is kidnapped, interrogated and studied by Islamic priests and scholars, carried in a public parade, bought and sold:

> In the centre of the market an oblong square was railed in, where the dealers in bests and slaves exposed their commodities for sale: here were camels, mules, asses, goats, hares, dromedaries, women and men, and all other creatures, whether for appetite or use; and I observed that the purchasers turned from one article to the other with equal indifference. (2:10)

The scrutiny remains, but the observer's standpoint has changed: Underhill is a white man who observes slavery from the other end.

Algerian piracy had been a cause for long-lasting alarm and warlike actions since the mid-1780s (the capture of the Boston vessel *Maria* in 1785), giving material to a number of fictional texts, from Susanna Haswell Rowson's 1794 *Slaves in Algiers* to Washington Irving's "Mustapha letters" in *Salmagundi* in 1807-08. The satiric force of *The Algerine Captive* specifically stems from its refusal to posit any simplistic dichotomy in the American confrontation with the Mediterranean's African otherness. The cæsura between the two Volumes is not just between America and rest of the world, but between freedom and slavery. And in the Mediterranean setting, the American becomes the slave: America and freedom are not synonymous terms. Algeria is a world turned upside down that becomes a mirror image of the US. Like New England, Algeria is for Underhill - an American Candide and a participant observer very different from the "candid" observer invoked in the *Federalist Papers* - a culture that moves from self-denial to appropriative expansiveness, going from the public "confession … to decry the luxuries and vanities of this world" only to "some how or other contrive to possess the greatest portion of them" (35). An emblematic place is the Islamic college, "a large gloomy building on the outside, but within the walls an earthly paradise" (34). Obviously, in this Orientalist Eden as well some people remain slaves and some other remain masters; sarcastically, though, Algeria is a kinder, gentler version of America's closed utopia: indolent, voluptuous, luxuriant, and less brutal.

He describes the Algerian society in a pseudo-ethnographic style, moving from the top down, from political government and religious structure to the outcast Jews. The dark humor in this clash of civilizations comes from the fact that neither culture has the ethical grounds capable of placing it on higher moral level. During the dialogue with a "mollah" of the Islamic college, the only thing Underhill manages to say in defense of Christianity is that the Bible's divine authority is something "we have received … from our ancestors" (43), but cannot reply to the history of the cruelties inflicted in the name of the Christian religion:

> The history of the Christian church is a detail of bloody massacre; from the institution of the Christian thundering legion under Constantine the Great, to the expulsion of the Moors out of Spain by the ferocious inquisition, or the dragooning of the Hugonots from France under Louis the Great…. We leave it to the Christians of the West Indies, and Christians of your southern plantations, to baptize the unfortunate Africans into your faith, and then use your brother Christians as brutes of the desert. (49-50)

Underhill feels "so abashed for [his] country" (50) as to remain speechless. The cognition of slavery leaves him with no usable grounds for maintaining any notion of cultural or political superiority over non-American institutions.

At the beginning of his period of slavery, as he learns he is bound for sale in Algiers, Underhill decides to devote his existence to the Abolitionist cause:

> Grant me … once more to taste the freedom of my native country, and every moment of my life shall be dedicated to preaching against this detestable commerce…. If [my fellow citizens] are deaf to the pleadings of nature, I will conjure them for the sake of consistency to cease to deprive their fellow creatures of freedom, which their writers, their orators, representatives, and constitutions of government, have declared to be the inalienable birth-right of man. (1:189)

This is the explosive potential of the problem of slavery: now the American laws and Constitution have for him an ironic and distant flavor, and that repeated "*their*" will appear again in Frederick Douglass's oratory. His critique applies also to the slavery as myth: if Equiano, in order to legitimate an African culture, needs to present himself as a respected man in his original world, Underhill reminds himself that the mass of the slaves is socially less differentiated: "I did not meet among my fellow slaves the rich and the noble, as the dramatist and the novelist had taught me to expect." As the other slaves, Arabs and Africans, do not meet the expectations of the widespread *mythology*, he can have some degree of real communication with the *real* people he encounters, with whom he shares the common condition of human property: "Sometimes I even contemplated with pleasure the company and converse of my fellow slaves" (15).

Underhill retains a radical faith in individualism, in a notion of inner freedom of the mind indifferent to the oppression coming from the outside world: "I now found that I was indeed a slave … but the dignity of a free mind remained" (76). But the inner freedom of the mind will be actualized in democratic institutions only if this freedom

becomes truly *universal*: "Let those of our fellow citizens, who set at nought the rich blessings of our federal union, go like me to a land of slavery, and they will then learn how to appreciate the value of our free government" (27). In this crisis of the "we the people," founding the charter of the nation, lies the rebirth of the character, anticipating that of Frederick Douglass: "I had been degraded to a slave, and was now advanced to a citizen of the freest country in the universe" (226-27). At this point, in the last page, the patriotic appeal to the unity of the American "we," from a figure that can now at last resume the place of the "enviable character of an useful physician, a good father, and worthy FEDERAL citizen," at the end of a narrative like this one, results altered and estranged: "Our first object is union among ourselves. For to no nation besides the United States can that ancient saying be more emphatically applied - BY UNITING WE STAND, BY DIVIDING WE FALL" (228).

Union now can only mean a utopia of universal equality not exclusive of Blacks and slaves: language and expression, Tyler implies, depend among other things on the history and stories of those who speak or write. We could add, the American middle class too feels its position of relative privilege as still precarious, and feels its freedom is strongly in the hands of authorities beyond its reach, nationalistic calls notwithstanding; even the certainties and self-assurances that ground servitude and freedom on the allegedly "natural" notion of race are challenged. Unity and division, individual and nation, are very different notions if slavery is allowed a role in the play.

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NOTES

1. This essays is a reworking of the discussion on Tyler included in my forthcoming *Storie di fondazione*. For an overview of post-revolutionary US culture, see the volume in the *Storia delle letterature di lingua inglese*, general editor Agostino Lombardo, *La formazione di una cultura nazionale*, ed. Portelli.

2. As the available reprint of *The Algerine Captive*, following the first edition (Walpole, NH: Carlisle, 1797), maintains separate page numbers for the two Volumes, I also provide Volume indication when necessary.

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JOHN QUINCY ADAMS' LOST HISTORY OF THE RUSSO-TURKISH WAR: GREEK INDEPENDENCE AND THE SACRED CAUSE OF LIBERTY

RICHARD SAMUELSON

When the Greek revolt against Turkey began in 1821, American Secretary of State John Quincy Adams wished the Greeks well, but he did almost nothing to help them. In a speech on July 4, 1821, he declared, "wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own" (*Address* 32). After he became President, Adams tried to do a bit more, but not much: Adams was the architect of the Monroe Doctrine, denying the right of European powers to intervene in the Americas, particularly to re-colonize nations that had secured their independence from a colonial power. Should the Americans have sent troops or ships to help the Greeks, the European powers could have demanded the right to intervene in the Americas.

Given Adams' reaction to Greek independence when he was in office, it is surprising that he chose to revisit the issue after he retired. Yet he did.[1] The history of the Russo-Turkish war over Greek independence that Adams wrote in the late 1820s and early 1830s has received little attention from scholars. Yet Adams thought the untitled piece, published in a little remembered New York journal - the *Annual Register* - in 1827-1829, was important. As he wrote in his diary on January 4, 1830, "I wrote this morning and evening upon the Russian and Turkish war paper, but perceived my incompetency to write worthily of the theme" (*Memoirs*, VIII: 164). Adams wrote a case study in statecraft. We can find in it the principles that undergirded Adams' politics, and discover the framework in which he analyzed European politics in general and the Eastern Mediterranean in particular.

John Quincy Adams grew up during the American Revolution, and spent most of his time in public life. As a youth, he watched his father go off to Philadelphia to lead the push for American independence in 1776. A few years later, he accompanied his father's missions to Europe during the war for American independence. In 1781, the fourteen-year-old youth began his own public career when Francis Dana took Adams with him to Russia to serve as his French translator. Adams returned to Paris in time to serve as his father's secretary in the final negotiations to secure American independence from Britain in 1783. Young Adams returned to the U.S. in 1785 to attend Harvard and afterwards to prepare for the bar. In time, Adams would be one of the most learned men in America, with broad interests in the arts and sciences. In the mid 1790s, President Washington returned Adams to Europe. Between 1794 and 1800 and 1809 and 1816, Adams repre-

sented the fledgling federal republic in the Netherlands, Germany, Russia, and Great Britain. In 1817, he returned to the U.S. to serve as Secretary of State under President James Monroe, and he became President in 1825.

Because Adams believed in science and enlightenment, and because he was the son of the "Atlas of Independence," the two most striking elements of Adams' history are its strong Christian tone and its forthright support for the Russian Czar. As we read through Adams' history, we will find that the contradictions were only apparent. Adams tethered science and Enlightenment to Christianity, holding that the Enlightenment, rightly understood, grew from Christian roots. Believing that all societies went through a series of stages, and believing that republicanism took root in a more advanced stage than monarchy, Adams held that a good monarch prepared the ground for republicanism. In addition, he held that the Christian revelation played a crucial role in that development. He viewed developments in the Mediterranean through that prism.

CHRISTIAN REPUBLICANISM

The Christian character of Adams' thought comes through at the very beginning of his history. The opening paragraph set the tone:

> In the reign of Octavius Ceasar, master of Rome, then mistress of the world, there appeared in a small and obscure province of the Roman empire, a man of humble birth, yet lineally descended from the kings of Judea; born in a stable of an inn, yet born of a virgin, and announced to the world by the voice of angels as the savior of mankind. The result of his appearance upon earth, was then declared by a multitude of the heavenly host, to be "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward man*." (*Annual Register* 267)

Rather than writing a narrative about politicians, generals, and soldiers fighting for their cause, Adams wrote about the spread of the Gospel Truth through the world. The birth of Christ was the turning point of human history. The Greeks were fighting for Christian liberty against Muslim oppression. "If ever insurrection was holy in the eyes of God," he wrote, "such was that of the Greeks against their Mahometan oppressors" (278).

Adams held that the Christian revelation was republican in character. "The Christian religion," Adams wrote, "is philanthropy leaning upon heaven. …This sentiment, when expanded into action, consists not in submission to the will, or in yielding to the violence of others" (270). The doctrine of rights grew logically from the Gospel. Adams emphasized this reading of Christian doctrine in his history, "THE ESSENCE OF THIS DOCTRINE IS, TO EXALT THE SPIRITUAL OVER THE BRUTAL PART OF HIS NATURE" (268). Since man was made in God's image, to exalt the spiritual meant to exalt that part of man's nature which reflected the divine. That part was the deliberative faculty. It was the part of our nature that allowed reflective choice, and contemplated helping our fellow man, rather than merely satisfying the wants of the flesh.

By furthering the principle that men are endowed with rights, Adams held, the American Revolution had furthered the work begun with the birth of Christ. Slavery, the submission of one man to another, was contrary to the Christian brotherhood of man. In an oration of July 4, 1837, Adams linked the American principles of 1776 with the Gospel of Christ. "Why is it that, next to the birth day of the Savior of the World, your most joyous and most venerated festival returns on this day? … Is it not that, in the chain of human events, the birthday of the nation is indissolubly linked with the birth-day of the Savior? That it forms a leading event in the progress of the gospel dispensation. Is it not that the Declaration of Independence first organized the social compact on the foundation of the Redeemer's mission upon earth? That is laid the corner stone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity" (*Oration* 1-2).

No country in Europe represented the universal aspirations of Christian republicanism better than Greece. Greece was "the birth-place of philosophy, of eloquence, of all the arts that embellish, and all the sciences that dignify the human character" (*Annual Register* 278). If revelation spread the idea of the universal brotherhood of man, politics, rightly understood, was the effort to use reason to guarantee the rights of men. Adams supported the Greeks because they were Christians fighting the "Mahometan imposture," a false post-Christian revelation, and because of Greece's classical heritage.

In Greece, Christian and Muslim fought a war for history. "We have ill read the lesson of history, and ill observed the condition, conduct, and principles of the several parties to this great conflict between the divisions of the globe and the elements of the moral world, if this Russian and Turkish war for the independence of Greece (for that is its true character) be other than the first act of a drama, which shall change and improve the destinies of man" (401-402) The first effort to bring American principles to Europe, the French Revolution, had failed because it had divorced modern republicanism from its Christian roots. The Greeks, Adams hoped, would not repeat that error.

HISTORY

Adams was troubled to find that the Western European powers did not agree with his analysis of the events in Greece and Turkey. Western Europe sided with the Turks, "seeing in the Greeks only *revolted subjects* against a lawful sovereign" (*Annual Register* 278). Having fought a war to keep colonists from breaking away from their empire, and still holding many colonies, the British and their allies did not want to legitimize the principle of rebellion. Yet Adams found that stance regrettably narrow. Adams criticized them not because they sided with a colonial power against revolted subjects, but rather because they sided with a Muslim power against Christian subjects. Adams was not reflexively anti-colonial. He supported British colonialism in India. The British "have subdued in the far more distant regions of Hindostan, ten times as many millions of the disciples of Mahomet" (270-271). Whether the imperial center or the colonial periphery

deserved support depended upon the relative stages of Providential time in which the nations and colonies found themselves.

Adams built upon a modified version of the stage theory of history that was popular among men of the Enlightenment. "The transitions from the hunter's to the shepherd's state, and from the shepherd's state to that of the cultivator of the soil, the permanent domicile, and the land flowing with milk and honey, are as clearly announced in the dispensations of Providence as we have seen them to be in the nature of man" ("Society" 47). Adams linked the progress of true morality to the spread of ethical monotheism. In the pastoral stage, for example, man had too much time to contemplate the heavens, and "he fancies a Deity in every star. He believes that these inhabitants of the skies are the arbiters of his destinies upon earth; his understanding sinks into the grave of superstitious terror, and he worships the whole host of heaven" (83).[2] Ethical monotheism gained a foothold once men acquired permanent houses, and it became stronger when men began to dwell in cities.[3] God revealed himself to men only when they had entered the stage of history at which they could appreciate it.[4] Christ's appearance on earth was well timed, as was the American Revolution which revealed the political implications of the Gospel.

Adams argued that the arrival of the son of God on earth was a necessary but not sufficient condition for the redemption of the world. "But in revealing this system of morals to man, it was not the design of Providence to change his nature," he wrote in his history. "It was consistent with the divine purpose, that the operation of this system should be slow and gradual. That its conflict with the powers of the earth, and the gates of hell, should be long protracted; that it should be perverted by heresies and schisms; that it should be encumbered with the most portentous and incredible absurdities" (*Annual Register* 268). The promise of Christ's teaching was to remain unfulfilled until man learned to use his reason. Only when reason was sufficiently elevated, he thought, would men truly understand the Gospel, and begin to live as God wished.

That so few of the statesmen in Western Europe saw the congruence of Christianity, liberty, republicanism, and progress disturbed Adams. The Western powers reacted as they did to the Greek Independence movement not only because of their narrow self-interest as colonial powers, but also because they upheld a mistaken philosophy. In the name of charity and benevolence many of the Philosophes had trained Europe's leaders to think that all religions were alike. Voltaire, for example, had taught the Czarina "to treat with equal indifference, the religion of Mahomet, and that of Christ" (275-276).

Adams regarded the religious indifference of Enlightened thinkers as paradoxical. The Philosophes had knocked Christianity off its pedestal in the West for the best of reasons. "The philosophical spirit of the last century …under the fair and virtuous vizor of religious toleration, harbored a deadly hatred to Christianity, and a secret devotion to the absurdest of all dogmas, the superstition of atheism" (275). As part of an effort to end religious wars, the Philosophes denigrated and degraded religion. Yet Adams found that

the only reason why the Philosophes pursued that goal was because they believed in benevolence, charity, and more generally in pursuing peace on earth, and acting with good will toward man. Reason could not defend those goals on its own, nor could it even define progress without the aid of Christianity.

By secularizing Christian values, the Philosophes robbed them of their *raison d'etre*, rendering nominally Christian lands oblivious to the real and enduring distinctions among the world's religions. In the eyes of the Enlightened Westerner, there was no necessary difference between Islam and Christianity. Hence policy decisions could be made on other grounds. Adams disagreed. The religion, and hence the relative stage in Providential history, made all the difference. Adams' disagreement with the Philosophes came down to this point. They regarded religious persecution as the quintessential Christian act, and for that reason concluded that Christianity was an anachronism in an Enlightened world. Adams, on the contrary, held that religious persecution was alien to the true spirit of Christianity. Christianity's crusades, religious wars, and persecutions, Adams held, grew from the pagan roots of the West. As true Christianity triumphed, the evils of false religion would decline.

Adams took Britain and the other Western European nations to task for failing to learn the lessons written by the hand of Providence. Fighting Napoleon, the British stood for civilization against barbarism. The Duke of Wellington "once undertook, in the face of civilized man, to give a moral lecture to the French nation," Adams noted. "Let him learn, himself, that his laurels will wear far greener in the eyes of future ages, for his homage, reluctant and late as it was extorted from him, to the rights of human kind, in his concessions to the Catholics of Ireland; than in his cold and heartless policy of dooming the Christian Greeks to groan under the burden of perpetual tribute to their oppressor" (289). By the 1820s, the British had learned from history that it was not only prudent politics, but was also just in principle to grant the right to worship freely to Catholics in Ireland. They had turned back the anarchy of the French Revolution. They had defeated Islam in India. Their one loss had been in America, where they confronted a republicanism unalloyed with monarchism or atheism. Yet they did not learn that it was their duty to help the Greeks.[5]

All a statesman had to do to win Adams' approbation, was to plug his situation into an historical flow chart. To represent it schematically:

Christian nation against non-Christian colonies:	Support Christian nation
Non-Christian nation against Christian colonies:	Support Christian Colonies
Christian nation against Christian colonies:	Support the more republican of the two

To emphasize his point, Adams commented on the contrast between British failure in American and success in Hindostan: "as if Providence had specially intended the contrast of glory and shame between the crescent and the cross" (270-271).

Into the vacuum left by Western indifference to the plight of the Greeks stepped the Czar. The Czar made an odd hero in a history written by a proud son of the American revolution.[6] Of Czar Nicholas, Adams wrote: "His superior acquirements have vested him with the privilege, and imposed upon him the obligation of becoming the teacher of his less enlightened fellow creatures; to make them acquainted with the blessings within their reach; and to lead them in the path of their own felicity" (*Annual Register* 273). In other words, those who received an enlightened education had a duty to show their less fortunate fellow men the way God wished them to live on earth. The attainment of learning imposed certain obligations on an individual. So too with power. The Bible said that in rendering justice, one should "not favor the poor or show deference to the rich," and Adams did not want to fault a man for being born a Czar (Leviticus, 19:15). Because the Russian people had not attained the same level of education and of political self-consciousness as had the Americans, it was the duty of the Czar to enlighten them and move them in that direction. With his title the Czar inherited an obligation to create his own obsolescence.

In Greece, Nicholas had an opportunity to shape history outside of his realm. He had completed the first half of the task by assisting the Greeks when the rest of Europe refused to do so. After winning the war with Turkey, great obligations fell upon the Czar - to ensure that the fall of the Ottoman empire and its religion occurred and turned out a blessing for humanity.[7] "The religion and the government of the Osmanlis are indissolubly interwoven with each other," Adams wrote. "Together they must fall. That their fall may be rendered subservient to a great melioration in the condition of man, depends upon Russia alone; perhaps upon her present sovereign. Never since the existence of the species, were higher destinies in prospect before any one individual, than *may* be reserved for him" (402). By making a benevolent peace with "an enemy whose powers of resistance against him were extinguished," Nicholas demonstrated that Christianity was no longer a faith that conquered and converted by the sword. Even though, "for the first time since the Hegira, the standard of the prophet was prostrated in the dust," and even though "it would have been as easy for Nicholas to have re-consecrated the church of St. Sophia, as it had been for Mahomet the Second to convert it into a mosque," he forbore the opportunity. "This was strictly conformable to the declaration, with which he had commenced the war. He had disclaimed all purposes of aggrandizement" (401). The Czar thus upheld the honor of Christianity, and showed himself to be a model of Christian charity toward his enemy, displaying the true meaning of religious toleration.

CONCLUSION

Adams' history of the Russo-Turkish war over Greek independence describes the principles which had guided his statecraft. Rather than analyzing each event within a narrow framework of balance of power or national interest, Adams tried to contemplate the world as a whole, and he tried to do so within a universal scheme of human history. The Czar was a hero for his efforts to save Christianity, and hence republicanism, from its enemies East and West. By standing up for the Greeks, the Czar stood up for Christianity, furthered the republican cause, and acted to rectify a major defect in Enlightened thought. Aided by the Czar, the Greeks would carry forward the religious mission begun with the birth of Christ by spreading the political dimension of that mission. Hence, they would further the work the Americans began in 1776. Adams found the Greek cause important for practical, symbolic, and ideological reasons. The Greek independence movement, Adams hoped, would pave the way for a liberal, Christian Europe to rise, one in which the U.S. could be actively engaged without fear of reprisal. As in ancient days, light in Europe would go forth from Athens.

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NOTES

1. The author stumbled upon the piece while reading Henry Adams' bound set of his grandfather's writings at the Massachusetts Historical Society. Neither the librarian of MHS nor the staff of the Adams Papers recognized the piece, and did not know whether John Quincy Adams had actually written it.

2. Owens (47) notes that Adams wrote "Society and Civilization" in 1822 but didn't use it till 1840 when he was too pressed for time to write a speech.

3. He noted that "*civilization* is, from the derivation of the term, that condition of the human society, which naturally follows the congregation of men in *cities*" ("Society" 86-87).

4. "The unity and omnipotence of God are specially revealed, and in the fullness of time, when the chosen people shall have gained possession of the promised land, the son of David, the wisest of men, shall erect a magnificent temple at Jerusalem to the Lord of Hosts, where the tribes shall all repair once in every year to worship the inexpressible name of Jehovah" ("Society" 89).

5. Adams criticized "the more than stoical apathy with which they regard *the cause*, for which the Greeks are contending; the more than epicurean indifference with which they witness the martyrdom of a whole people, perishing in the recovery of their religion and liberty" (*Annual Register* 306).

6. In all likelihood, Adams' affection for the Czar was partly personal. While serving as America's minister to Russia during the Napoleonic wars, Adams and Czar Alexander I had gotten along rather well. When Alexander died, Adams may have transferred some of that affection to his successor, Nicholas I.

7. In his diary on January 5, 1830, Adams recorded a visit he made to Baron Krudener, Russian minister to the U.S.: "I told him that I expected and hoped great things from him [the Czar] for the benefit of mankind. … The power of Russia was great, and was in his hands. I hoped and believed it was given him by Providence for good purposes, and there was none, in my belief, more wise and good than that of the total expulsion of the Turks from Europe" (*Memoirs*, VIII: 164-165).

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FROM THE EDGES OF REVOLUTION TO THE SHORES OF MODERNITY: MELVILLE AND THE MEDITERRANEAN

CINZIA SCHIAVINI

> Sometimes, when these Atlantics and Pacifics thus ondulate round me, I lie stretched out in their midst: a land-locked Mediterranean, knowing no ebb, nor flow.
> Herman Melville, *Mardi* (1849)

GEOGRAPHY AND IDENTITY BETWEEN OLD AND NEW WORLD

"Space" and the "sense of place" are fundamental elements in the definition of national identity, and this is especially true for the United States. The process leading to this definition of identity, in time and space, cannot be reduced to the "fixing" of national boundaries, geographically and ideologically (although in the U.S. the very closure of the expanding nation played a central role in the national self-perception). Sacvan Bercovitch reminds us that the definition of identity is not only about what a nation is, but also about what a nation is not - a process implying strategies of inclusion as well as of exclusion (see also Bloch). As a consequence, the dialectics between one nation and external spaces and other countries are inescapable moments of cultural and political self-recognition.

This is particularly evident in Herman Melville, who constantly links the representation of space to the dialectics of cultures; this strategy brings about, rather than separation, a constant re-negotiation of the basis on which "national identity" is built upon. The US are often a sort of "middle ground" between the other two important sites in Melville's geography, the South Seas and Europe - as if, in order to give answers about his home country, transnational questions were first of all required.

The relationship between Old and New World, although also present from *Redburn* onward (especially in that novel and in the three "diptychs," "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs," "The Two Temples," "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids"), comes again to the surface toward the end of his literary career, with two very different works: a historical novel, *Israel Potter* (1855), and the *Journal of a Visit to Europe and the Levant* (1856-57).

Israel Potter brings together the dialectics between New and Old World and the theme of the American Revolution. Through Israel's fifty years' exile in France and England, Melville explores and subverts the American rhetoric and optimism regarding the post-revolutionary era. In Melville's pages, the archetypal Puritan "History of an Israel in New England," as Cotton Mather wrote in his *Magnalia Christi Americana*, becomes the "history of an American Israel in Old England," where Europe plays a maieutic role in the discovery of the betrayal of the very promises and ideals that sustained the Revolution.

In the *Journal*, Melville's record of his long travel in Europe and the Middle East, a shift can be detected (to the subjective level) involving the same issues and questions embodied in fiction by the "American Everyman" Israel. Between the entrance in the Mediterranean through the Strait of Gibraltar (a "Paridise"; *Journals* 52) and the voyage's last stage, Genoa ("The bleakness, the savageness of glens between, seem to make Genoa rather the capital and fortified camp of Satan: fortified against the Archangels"; 123), between heaven and hell, in a geographical circularity resembling the cyclical view of history his last writings lead to, Melville's 1856-57 journey is located in space as well as in time. By constantly comparing present and past geographies, American myths and historical doom, Melville outlines and clarifies those social and cultural hinges revealing the contradictions of the Revolutionary rhetoric, and the dream of any "new beginning."

Through this geographical superimposition, Europe and the U.S. emerge as two moments in the same historical process; a process moving from the millennial utopianism of messianic time and manifest destiny to the cyclical time of an ever-repeating disillusionment towards the fate of every new nation.

In both works, the voyage into the depths of Mediterranean geography and American identity is structured around three pivots: the "vertical" voyage (that is, the Mediterranean underneath the U.S. - and the American Revolution); the key symbols associated with space, nation and revolution (that is, the tomb and the body); and finally, the question of time and memory versus myth and erasure.

THE MEDITERRANEAN UNDER THE REVOLUTION

The need to ground the American identity into the European past and the search for a "tradition," a national premise, back towards England, are recurring themes in Melville's fiction. From *Redburn* to *Pierre*, the Old World is explicitly associated with figures of fatherhood, and the main characters' quest becomes more and more a quest for legitimacy, through the acceptance of the "European heritage" (Redburn's journey to England, Pierre's recognition of his illegitimate sister) and the struggle to come to terms with it.

Pierre's and Redburn's troubled search for origins and the overlap of European past and American present are endowed with a national dimension in *Israel Potter*, where the individual rebellion of a son against his father is associated with the American rebellion against "mother England." This act is delineated first of all as a sort of "spatial necessity" for Israel: after having traveled everywhere, from the Far West to the South Seas (like Melville), there seems to be "no place to go but back"[1] for him. Israel's individual Revolution again appears (as often happens in Melville's fiction) as an experience forced upon him by the closure of the surrounding space. The act of "going back" is precisely a journey back to the continent of origin (Europe) and back in time (to the memories of the Revolution).

Israel's experience of the Revolution is an experience of exile, and finally of oblivion. If England is the Egypt where Israel spends his last fifty years, the conflict between

England and the colonies is nevertheless presented as "a war of the worlds" rather than as a war between two countries; it is a representation that exceeds historical contingency, and is permeated with universalistic meanings.

This "change of focus" directly involves the Mediterranean Sea itself. Using similes, metaphors, etc., Melville symbolically shifts the climax of the action - the naval battle between the American ship, *Bon Homme Richard*, and the English *Serapis* - from the North Sea to the heart of the Mediterranean: if the main mast of the *Bon Homme Richard*, where Israel stands, is defined as "the tower of Pisa" (*Israel* 558), the North Sea is transfigured into a land-locked sea, with pyramids and obelisks emerging from the waves:

> From the Tees to the Humber, the eastern coast of Britain, for the most part, wears a savage, melancholy, and Calabrian aspect. It is in course of incessant decay. Every year the isle which repulses nearly all other foes, succumbs to the Attila assaults of the deep. Here and there the base of the cliffs is strewn with masses of rocks, undermined by the waves, and tumbled headlong below; where, sometimes, the water completely surrounds them, showing in shattered confusion detached rocks, pyramids, and obelisks, rising half-revealed from the surf - the Tadmores of the wasteful desert of the sea. Nowhere is this desolation more marked than for those fifty miles of coast between Flamborough Head and the Spurn. (561-562).

Gradually, the two ships become joined like Siamese twins. The "darkling water lay wedged between, like that narrow canal in Venice which dozes between two shadowy piles, and high in air is secretly crossed by the Bridge of Sighs" (566). The ships become a single unit, a two-storey flat compared to Florence, where Guelphs and Ghibellines, English and Americans, were forced by fire to occupy, the first the lower storey, the others the upper one (568).

The universal significance of the battle transcends the historical dimension, and the geographical transfiguration is associated with biblical iconography: many poor souls fall from the ships into the "Lethean canal" (567) until the *Bonne Homme Richard*, "gorged with slaughter, wallowed heavily, gave a long roll, and blasted by tornadoes of sulphur, slowly sunk, like Gomorrah, out of sight" (573).

Several historical moments and biblical images come together in a single event (and in a single image) and get mixed in a kaleidoscopic reality where history seems to be reenacted over and over again, in a postmodern fashion. Using the sea (as often in his narrative) as a sort of symbolic door leading towards another level of significance, Melville widens the focus of his discourse to embrace all Europe; thus, the sea can be equated with historical cyclicity. The Mediterranean becomes not only the symbol of the past, but also the point of origin of the independence the US are trying to achieve. European and American history, like the two embraced ships becoming a two-storey house, are two different moments in one historical process: at the lower (older) level stands Europe, while at the upper (newer) level is America.

In this cosmology, Europe and the Mediterranean become the geography under-

neath (past) the newborn nation; and Israel's exile becomes, not the conventional type of displacement, but a "descent" from the heavenly Berkshire of his youth to the hellish London where the forgotten hero struggles to survive. If the protagonist of the previous novel *Pierre* ended his life in the subterranean prison of New York, "the Tombs," Melville's further excavation brings Israel to dig into American geography reaching a half historical, half religious European no-man's land; a geography that Melville himself is called to experience and "descend" into his own 1856-57 voyage.

Melville's comparison between America and the Mediterranean countries appears to be a *leitmotiv* of his entire travel. At the beginning, the traveler's perspective seems to be crushed in an unresolved diachrony: Greek street scenes remind him of New York's Five Points (*Journals* 55), the Bosphorus is similar to Brooklyn Heights (62), Lake Como is like Lake Charles, Turin resembles Philadelphia, and Venice's Lido is compared to New York's Battery (119).

This bidimensional perspective[2] nevertheless constitutes the outer frame of perception, the picturesque, theatrical representation preceding and following the central part of the voyage. These impressions are the surface - or, better, the "edges" - of the crater that the Eastward journey embodies for Melville, a geographical and historical descent resembling that of Israel himself. The verticality of the travel is clearly marked: if Greek houses "seemed clinging round [the mountain's] top, as if desperate for security, like shipwrecked men about a rock beaten by billows" (71), Genoa is, as already quoted, a fortification of rebel archangels against God, and Villa Doria Pamphili a "Paridise within a Paridise" (112). The whole Mediterranean appears symbolically sloping and descending, from the Paradise of Gibraltar to the Tartarus of the Holy Land. For both Melville and Israel, it is a shared cinematic sequence (descent and ascent) transfiguring the historical background into religious parallels and further overlapping European geographies.

Martin notes in *Parables of Possibility* how the rhetoric of Transcendentalism, from Thoreau to Emerson, often linked the idea of a "new beginning" with images of ascent (esp. Ch. 5). Needless to say, Israel's odyssey and Melville's *Journal* are permeated by images of descent. As J.L George notes, Israel, "mountain born," also embodies spatially the highness of the widespread spiritual exaltation towards the Revolution: while he is often associated with images of elevation, his fight is primarly not against English soldiers, but against the social forces dragging him downwards into modernity and into a developing mercantilistic capitalism.

Melville's dystopian intent is manifest: not only any "new beginning," but also *the* (political) beginning of his home country is spatially subverted and transformed through Israel into a fall. This fall, for both Israel and Melville, significantly ends in the city. Thus, Melville's gradual disillusionment takes the shape of a stumble, from the utopian "city upon a hill" that American mythology never despaired to achieve, to the infernal city caught between Babylonian imagery and glimpses of modernity surrounding Israel in England.

PRISONS AND TOMBS: THE BODY OF THE NATIONAL DREAM

"Facilis descensus averni," writes Melville about Israel's journey into the depths of the London captivity. Like the ocean, London too is a symbolic crossroads condensing both Israel's and Melville's key experiences. To Israel, London is an exact counterpoint to the Revolutionary experience and ideals, as can be seen in the vertical opposition between America and Europe, and in the descent associated with Israel's progress into London and Melville's voyage through the Mediterranean.

These movements present not only a descent, but also a contraction of space. Opposed to the open land as pervasive symbol of opportunity in American rhetoric in Israel's and Melville's time, Europe is more and more associated with images of prison, entrapment, entombment. Every place in Europe is a prison for Israel: Paris ("You must absolutely remain in your room, just as if you were my prisoner" [474], is the order given by Benjamin Franklin to Israel), England (emerging as a series of walls, from the enclosures of the King's garden to the bricks Israel has to make). Melville too, in his Mediterranean journey, insistently records images of prison, as Howard C. Horsford notes in his Introduction to the *Journals* (19-20). The almost dystopian subversion of the spatial premises of the Revolution is further reiterated by the apocalyptic temporality in both works, where any possible rebirth or renewal on a national scale is replaced by the two key images of death: the "tomb" and the "dead body."

Apart from the well-known "coffin-cell of the Templars," where Israel has to hide in order to survive, both American and English tombs and tombstones are pervasive symbols throughout the novel, from the collective tomb of Bunker Hill to the few stones left of Israel's house (615). But while American tombs are "fragments," or (even worse) erased spaces and memories replaced by false commemorative parades (a process that appears as an "erasure" of death itself), London is presented as a huge tomb-stone entrapping the exiled hero, resembling the ancient death-trap of Pompeii:

> Hung in long, sepulchral arches of stone, the black, besmoked bridge seemed a huge scarf of crape, festooning the river across. Similar funereal festoons spanned it to the west. …As in eclipses, the sun was hidden; the air darkened; the whole dull, dismayed aspect of things, as if some neighboring volcano, belching its premonitory smoke, were about to whelm the great town, as Herculaneum and Pompeii, or the Cities of the Plain. …Nor marble, nor flesh, nor the sad spirit of man, may in this cindery City of Dis abide white. (605)

The *Journal* summarizes the images of the tomb (and the city) in various forms: Cairo's streets (compared to London's on a Saturday night) have a "dusty, cadaverous ogerish look" (74); Constantinople, with its "forrests of cemetery" (62) and its towers, whose architectonic movement of ascent is "negated" by the comparison with "inverted pyramids" (61). The description of the pyramids themselves is one of the climaxes of the *Journal*: these ancient tombs, repeatedly mentioned in his novels as symbols of death, are finally associated to a significant American geography: to the Illinois Indian Mounds.[3]

The whole Holy Land gradually becomes a gigantic tomb, whose history and present are embodied in a petrified corpse, the last stage of the huge Leviathan of progress and industrialization that engulfed and swallowed up Israel Potter, and that is also menacing Melville's America.

If the tomb is the first concrete symbol of Melville's sense of doom and pessimism linking Old and New World, this is reinforced by the second key image connected with the nation: the gigantic petrified body emerging both in *Israel Potter* and in the *Journal*. In the novel, the *national body* becomes a sort of frame around Israel's exile: at the beginning, there is the collective body made up of the soldiers slain at Bunker Hill and during naval battles; at the end of the novel, Israel's return to his home country is called "less a return than a resurrection" (613), as if the hero embodied not only the past, but all those lives lost for Independence. The anthropomorphizing process reaches its climax with London and its "gulf stream of humanity" (603), a Dantesque hell wherein invisible forces incessantly move thousands of people, in a hybridity of bodies and machines that directly anticipates modern representations of the city (and T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" in particular).

The anthropomorphic lens reappears again in the *Journal*: in contrast with the "roundness" of Greece and "Asia," and to reinforce the symbolic descent into the reign of death, Melville describes the barrenness of Judea as the skeleton of a nation: "You see the anatomy - compares with ordinary regions as skeleton with living & rosy man. - No moss as in other ruins - no grace of decay - no ivy - The unleavened nakedness of desolation… sepulchral ravine, smoked as by fire, caves & cells - immense depth - all rock - enigma of depth" (83-84).

The body of a petrified nation, the skeleton of civilization, represents the exact inversion of the same process of (re-)birth that the American (both Revolutionary and Transcendental) rhetoric acclaimed. Rather than leading towards the apotheosis of the Reign of God on Earth, Melville's Eastern (and American) geography leads towards a fast-approaching Apocalypse made of European bones and American dust.

While Judea is a "written body" produced by historical past-oriented forces, as Melville underlines (from the monuments and ruins to the different paths "worn by the multitude of divergent faiths"; 91), the American body constitutes an erased future-oriented space (moving west, as Israel finds out when he returns to the Berkshires), where rocks bury the past instead of being mementoes of it.

THE WILDERNESS AS DESERT. OLD WORLD AND NEW BEGINNINGS

…the wanderer made no response; his eye was now fixed on a curious natural bend or wave in one of the bemossed stone jambs…. "'*Father*!' here," raking with his staff, "*my* father would sit, and here, my mother, and here I, little infant, would totter between, even as now, once again, on the very same spot, but in the unroofed air, I do. The ends meet. Plough away, friend." (*Israel* 615)

These are Israel Potter's last words: the landscape where he spent his childhood has changed, it has been (and is still being) "erased," as the ploughman's hard work testifies. No more the luxuriant wilderness described at the beginning, the Berkshire hills are now a blank space, a proto-waste land where Israel sits "mute, gazing blankly about him" (613).

The wilderness and the desert (or rather, the wilderness as a desert) are recurrent images in Israel Potter and the *Journal*, providing another link between the geographies of the New and Old World. In *Israel*, from the "deserts of London" (606) to Benjamin Franklin's "wide maps of far countries in the New World, containing vast empty spaces in the middle, with the word DESERT diffusely printed there" (468), Melville places side by side the deserts of the unknown (or not yet explored) America and the European worn-out ones.

As Leo Marx notes,[4] the superimposition of Middle Eastern and American deserts is a fragment in the ideological equation between Holy Land and New World, this last considered a "New Canaan" and placed within a religious and secular symbolic system in both the Puritan and the Revolutionary era. If the Revolutionary rhetoric/ideology equates old and new deserts, old and new wilderness, Melville underlines how the American desert ultimately negates all the hero's expectations; how the search for roots and belonging turns out first in exile and then in displacement. The desert Israel finds in his home-country after exile is a "space left-behind," a "middle ground" which is neither primeval nor historical, but a transitory stage of action in the dream of national fullfilment.

Through the protagonist (and his significant name), Melville represents the entire national nemesis. If the US were seen as "the Israel of our time" (Arac 760), then Israel Potter becomes the product and victim of the national new beginning, of the American "strategies of disengagement" (Marx 265) driving the national dream further west, substituting historical and geographical stratification (the overwritten landscape which Israel and Melville found in Europe) with movement. The ideal of the new beginning then turns into a *consumption of space* that locates Israel's America between a *wilderness* and a *waste land*. It is a "modern wasteland" in its apparent lack of remembrance, in the inability of a history written on its geographical body, marked only by hollow symbols like the Bunker Hill monument, in the centrifugal force that privileges horizontal rather than vertical projection. Israel's return to the New World thus is a coming to the surface again - a surface which is far more disquieting than the hellish subterraneans experienced in Europe. The Old World's "reign of the dead" keeps alive Israel, memory, and utopia, while his return to the US turns first into a spiritual, and then into an actual death (as far as Melville is concerned, into a literary death).

Melville's journey across the Mediterranean reenacts on the subjective scale the "universal" post-revolutionary disillusionment that Israel embodies; in Melville's literary production, these two experiences turn into a "frame" enclosing the self-deception of America's ideology, from the Battle for Independence to the second half of the nineteenth century.

In the historical novel, through the experience of the relationship with the Old World, Melville depicts the American destiny as less and less manifest, but more and more similar to its European counterpart. Messianic (millennial) time turns dystopically into cyclical time; it is a dimension pervaded, in *Israel*'s last pages (as in "Bartleby the Scrivener" and the *The Confidence-Man*), by a disquietingly modern temporal stasis - like the "landlocked Mediterranean, knowing no ebb, nor flow" that encloses Taji's paralysis. Melville's Orienda then finally turns into the symbolic epigraph of America's national promise itself - since the paralized body, metaphorically turning into a skeleton, lying stretched between Atlantic and Pacific, cannot be but America itself.

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NOTES

1. As Kerouac writes in *On the Road.*

2. "But the scenery is all outline. No filling up. Seem to be sailing upon gigantic outline engravings" (*Journals* 97).

3. See also *Clarel*, 2.11. 55-61.

4. "Of the many versions of the redemptive journey into the wilderness known to the revolutionary generation of Americans, perhaps the most vivid was the migration of the people of Israel, or its individual counterpart, the retreat of the Old Testament prophet into the desert. Such withdrawals from the world into nature made possible a spiritual redemption, a new sense of righteous purposeand commitment, a zeal for the triumph of justice like that of the American patriots. …In essence the analogy is topographical. It works only so far as the colonists are prepared to see themselves, like the Hebrew prophet, as having been redeemed by their journey into desert places (The 'deserts of North America' was a stock phrase of the period)" (Marx 253).

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LIBERTY AND NATURE: JOEL BARLOW'S MISSION TO ALGIERS

MARCO SIOLI

> All the facts in natural history taken by themselves, have no value
> …but marry it to human history, and it is full of life.
> (Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*, 1836)

American liberty did not start from Revolution but from nature. This seems a provocative statement, especially after the publication of Eric Foner's *Story of American Freedom*, recently translated into Italian. As I was working on this paper, I immediately looked to see if there was a quotation regarding Barlow's idea of liberty. Unfortunately there was no reference to Barlow at all, though the book started considering the story of American freedom with the Revolution.

I was left alone in my reflections, realizing how distant one generation of scholars may be from another. Important echoes reached me, however, from another famous historian, Simon Schama. In *Landscape and Memory* Schama analyzes Barlow's experience in the Marseilles pesthouse and his reflections on the liberty tree. The question Schama uses to start his chapter on Barlow is: "How was the world governed? By machinery or by magic? Resolve this …and you resolve everything: nature, revolution, freedom - everything" (245).

Yet, even in this case I was left alone in my reflections. Schama chooses to stress the philosophical aspects of Barlow's painstaking attempt to find the origins of liberty. Barlow's radicalism is showed as a mixture of deism and Enlightenment. "The Revolution," Schama writes, "seemed to him (as to so many other Friends of Liberty) to be the fulfillment of a universal prophecy: the coming of the Age of Reason" (248). The same Age of Reason that caused so much trouble in America and France to Thomas Paine, Barlow's close friend, whose sharp refutation of Edmund Burke's critique of the French Revolution he shared. Shama's reflections stemmed from the analysis of Barlow's unpublished manuscript *Genealogy of the Liberty Tree*, but they were suggested by Carla Mulford's essay "Radicalism in Joel Barlow's *The Conspiracy of Kings* (1792)."

At any rate, Foner's and Schama's books were a helpful starting point for my own reflections on liberty, nature, and, of course, Barlow. In effect, this essay is part of a broader study: my interest is to build up a history of the Liberty Tree in America starting from the real tree - though later legendary as well - where William Penn and the Indians negotiated what was probably the only absolutely upright treaty offered the red man; from the liberty tree of revolutionary Boston discussed in my latest book, *Le città della Rivoluzione*; from the liberty tree of Toussaint L'Ouverture that meant liberty to the Blacks, to the liberty of the woods in Thoreau's thought. And going on until today - in the years marked by terrorism -

to note that Timothy McVeigh, the Gulf War veteran executed for the 1995 bombing that killed 168 people in Oklahoma City, on the day of the explosion wore a T-shirt proclaiming "'The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants' - T. Jefferson," and that the blast's memorial will be a low circular wall surrounding the "Oklahoma City Survivor Tree": the tree which survived the bombing and stands as a natural triumph over human adversity.

This last episode suggests a consideration on the ambivalence of the tree as well as the ambivalence of liberty. What is liberty for one person might signify slavery and sufferance for another. But, especially, liberty for a people must be kept close to their history and the political, linguistic, religious, cultural parties composing that particular type of society. In consequence it may happen that both parties in a conflict assert "they are defending liberty while they are fighting fiercely one against the other" (Geymonat 18). What is the truth? The etymology of the word "true" takes us back to the old English word "tree." A truth is nothing more than a deeply rooted idea: the same roots that lay at the base of a tree and find nourishment from the soil (Polland 159). At the same time the soil is a place to come together, to find that ideal we call "community": to plant trees in this soil means giving more opportunities for a better world for the community.

But let us come back to our argument: Joel Barlow and his mission to Algiers. First we have to say briefly who Joel Barlow is. He studied philosophy at Yale; he was a teacher; he was one of the publishers of *The American Mercury* and, in 1786 and 1787, he was a contributor, together with David Humphreys, to the famous publication of the "Connecticut Wits," *The Anarchiad*. Still in 1787, he published with great profit and wide circulation *The Vision of Columbus*: a hymn to nature.

In this work, the American Revolution appeared as a political path built on the special relation between colonists and nature in several senses. In the land discovered by Columbus it was nature that forged the spirit of the settlers from different countries - England, Sweden, Holland, France - who first arrived on the American shores in search of a religious liberty that figuratively lay in a natural symbol: Plymouth Rock. The icon of religious liberty - the rock placed there by nature - would be soon replaced by another natural symbol more capable of adaptation and fruition: the Liberty Tree. Liberty became "a common cause and the right of nature," a self evident proposition that was not only supported by religion but by nature itself (Seelye 131).

In *The Vision of Columbus* Barlow described the American continent by describing mountains, rivers, soil, temperature, and some of the natural products he saw as a physical expression of the Republic as ideal and reality. Just a couple of lines: "The wide range of nature's boundless plan, / Traced all the steps of liberty and man" (Barlow, *Works* 165).

In May 1788 Barlow departed for Europe as a European agent for the Scioto Company, selling acres of land in the Ohio country to the French. Sales in France were slow and people who did purchase land in Ohio were rewarded with a miserable existences at their settlements. The Scioto Company was a financial failure and an administrative

fiasco under the shadows of the Ohio Company (Cayton 41). The bankruptcy of the Scioto Company forced Barlow to move to London where he lived between 1790 and 1792, becoming a close friend of Thomas Paine. When Paine was imprisoned in Paris, Barlow took charge of the manuscript of *The Age of Reason* and obtained its publication. In London he wrote *The Conspiracy of Kings* - a "caustic poetical squib" suggested by the coalition of States which conspired to crush out republicanism in France, published successfully in many newspapers (Todd 89) - and *Advice to the Privileged Orders* - a volume of political essays worthy of a place with Paine's *Right of Man* as a major document of the time (Parrington 1:390).

Barlow's work was an assault on the tyranny and abuses of kings and ecclesiastics. It is easy to understand why the British Government suppressed the pamphlet, and proscribed Barlow starting to control his correspondence. John Adams, too, considered this book a heresy. Only Jefferson seemed close to Barlow assuring from America that Barlow's "endeavors to bring the transatlantic world into the world of reason are not without their effect here." Jefferson's solidarity was unhelpful: Barlow was forced to quit England in November 1792, to escape arbitrary arrest for his "political heresy" leaving in London his wife, whose correspondence with her husband will be especially useful for our study (Todd 97).

Arriving in Paris, Barlow was made a citizen of the French Republic and in December he was in Chambery as a deputy of the National Convention "to organize the internal government, and teach them how to act in forming themselves and choosing their deputies" (*ibid.*). It was in Chambery that his famous poem *Hasty-Pudding* had its birth. But the election in Savoy, held in late February 1793, did not turn in favor of Barlow. He was not elected Deputy and went back to Paris in March, where he settled his affairs.

In the summer of 1795, Barlow met David Humphreys, one of his Connecticut friends loaned to diplomacy as American Minister to Portugal (Sioli, "One of the *Beaux Esprits*"). Humphreys was in charge of the general supervision over "Barbary States," an euphemism to describe the Islamic States along the Mediterranean coast of Africa that, in this way, seems derived much more from the word "barbarian" - non-Christian - than from the real origins of the "Berber," the early inhabitants of North Africa.

In the eighteenth century, the Islamic States along the Mediterranean coast of Africa encouraged and organized piracy, assaulting European ships for ransom and consigning sailors and officers to slavery. This behavior was especially odious for the sensibility of contemporary Europeans. When the commercial traffic of the United States started in the Mediterranean it was subjected to the same peril. The first depredation of an American ship happened on July 1785. In 1791 the American government increased the excise tax on whiskey - giving rise to the Whiskey Rebellion in Western Pennsylvania - to pay the ransom for the American sailors enslaved in Tangiers and to settle a treaty with the emperor of Morocco (Sioli, *Contro i Padri Fondatori*). Other ships were captured by Algerians: by 1795 one hundred and fifty American sailormen had been captured and made slaves - some serving in the bey's palace, others used for building public works. All

the crew and the officers were forced to work as slaves: they were beaten with ferocity and suffered humiliations (Ray). Washington's administration chose to follow the example of European nations, preferring to negotiate a treaty for the liberation of the captives and charged his friend David Humphreys to free all the American slave prisoners. Counting on his patriotism, Humphreys was able to convince Barlow - who was close to the French government, which had a great influence on the bey - to accept the mission.

Barlow left Paris in December 1795, reaching Algiers in March, after a terrible storm and having suffered the most violent sea-sickness (Todd 125). Hassam Bashaw, the bey of Algiers, was described as "full of fancies and whims, a monarch subject to no check except to secure money and titles to his officers and parents to prevent revolts or mutinies." Barlow settled in a "country house" where he tried to amuse himself in the garden: "A charming country to promenade *à pied et à cheval*" (131-32).

In May the plague broke out with virulence in Algiers. Two enslaved prisoners died. "They were not yet paid for; they were therefore the property of the Regency" wrote Barlow to David Humprhreys on June 12. And again on June 16: "Since my last, Joseph Keith, a native of New Foundland, one of our mates, has died with the plague. Lent is still in the hospital and John Thomas, a black man from Massachusetts, also" (132). It is important to note that Barlow does not use the word *negro* or *nigger*; it is also interesting to reflect how a white man could loose his liberty and become a slave. This was the case of the American sailors and officers who fell into the hand of the Algerian pirates. Also American citizens in the Barbary States - white sailors and officers too - suffered the privation of liberty just as the Black slaves in the United States did.

"Using a sum of 200,000$ borrowed by the new French Consul to prove the sincerity of their friendship of the Republic" Barlow was able to free both black and white American prisoners. Thanks to this skilful initiative he was able to pay the ransom of the American slaves that were at once embarked and dispatched to Marseilles, on their way to America. "Sir: This will be presented to you by the remnant of our captive citizens who have survived the pains and humiliation of slavery in this place. …I have the pleasure at last to announce the liberation of our citizens from slavery" wrote Barlow to Thomas Jefferson at that time Secretary of State (135).

After the liberation of the slaves, Barlow remained "without means, without money, and without credit." "I hope to finish all business soon: but how? I have not yet the orders to make peace with Tunis, and still less the funds," he wrote again to his wife. Without enough money, but eager to do something to ensure peace with the Algerians, Barlow and the other American agent Joseph Donaldson, offered the bey "a new American built ship of 20 guns." The bey said he would not listen to the proposition unless the ship was of 36 guns. "We were convinced that we ought not hesitate for a moment" wrote Barlow and Donaldson to David Humphreys (*Naval Documents* 1: 144). The ship, the *Crescent* arrived in Algiers a few months later, starting quite casually the Americans' willingness to arm their possible enemies.

It is easy to understand that the Algerian treaty of peace and the tribute of a warship had inflamed the avarice of Tunis and Tripoli. Peace secured with Algiers, negotiations were begun with other Barbary States. "A tragic diplomatic blunder" was made by Barlow (Kitzen 20). Throughout the eighteenth century Algiers had held a preeminent position in the area, but by the 1790s Tripoli was increasing its economic and political predominance in the Mediterranean. Despite Jefferson's motto "peace and commerce with every nation" the spirit of neutrality of the Americans was strained by piracy until the ultimate humiliation of American national honor - the loss of the US vessel *Philadelphia* - that provided the basis for the first war of the American Republic under the new Constitution: the Tripolitan War.

The pretensions of the bey of Algiers also increased, and there were "always new difficulties" for Barlow to free other ships that were broken up and confiscated. "The Tunisians and the Tripolitans make a cruel war against us," wrote Barlow again to his wife on February 13, 1797, "there will be war, that is the end" (Todd 146). On July 18, Barlow had sailed for Marseilles, where he had to stop for the quarantine in the lazaretto: "the most agreeable place in the world." He also informed his wife on August 1, that he was wearing "large mustaches-long, beautiful, and black. …It is necessary to say why I let them grow. There is a proverb which is only too true, although very humiliating of humanity, 'Who makes himself mutton, the wolf eats'. …[M]y mustaches give me very nearly the air of the tiger, a beast which the wolf does not eat" (149-50).

In the Marseilles pesthouse Barlow wrote a "Genealogy of the Liberty Tree," an interesting, still unpublished, philosophical reflection on the Liberty Tree, whose origins he brought back to the myth of Osiris. Isis collected all parts of her husband's body except his penis, which she threw into the Nile communicating "a fecundating power to that river which from that time became the source of life and vegetation to all Egypt." To commemorate the tragic death of Osiris and at once the fertility of the land a solemn feast was instituted "in which the phallus in a posture of strong erection, was carried in a procession." By the time the liberty pole appeared in America centuries later "it assumed a more venerable appearance; it grew to an enormous mast and without regard to any particular day it was planted in the ground as a solid emblem of political liberty."

When Barlow returned to Paris the city was the same, but the Republic had changed: the victories of Bonaparte in Italy had given her prestige. Barlow's literary activities were intense. He published a superb edition of *The Vision of Columbus* and started working on a larger and more complete work, to be called *Columbiad*. Volney chose him to have a better translation for *Les Ruines*. While the echo of war with the Barbary States reached Europe, early in 1805 Barlow was back in America, obeying the injunction of his wife to go home and be respectable, in his house near Washington named Kalorama. After 18 years of absence he was well received by the Republicans who considered him an "honored citizen of two Republics." President Jefferson wrote him a generous letter inviting him to Monticello for a visit. The Federalists instead could see nothing noble in the man

who, in the Algerine mission alone, had performed an act of heroism (Todd 205).

Barlow had great projects: a School of Mines; a School of Road and Bridges, which also included river, navigation, canals, and hydraulic architecture. But his projects got lost in the chaos of the new Republic. Instead, in 1807 he was ready to publish *The Columbiad*: "a moral work" or, as Giorgio Mariani wrote, an "American counter-epic" (73). Barlow himself declared that "the real object of the poem embraces a larger scope: it is to inculcate the love of rational liberty, and to discountenance the deleterious passion for violence and war" (*Works* 2: 382). Here are a few rhymes which reveal clearly his eighteenth-century view of nature and its structural role in sustaining liberty:

Ah, would you be slaves, with lords and kings,
then be not Masters; there the danger springs
[…]
Equally of right is nature's plan;
and following nature is the march of man
[…]
Restore their souls to men give earth repose,
And save your sons from slavery. (*Works* 2: 697)

More than a counter-epic of war, this poetry seems an enlightened epic of liberty and nature. Barlow was one of many thinkers that at the end of eighteenth century converted the nascent romantic appreciation of nature, and particularly wild nature, into a sort of political civic religion. Nature was not only beautiful but it was morally healing. The value of the wilderness was not just negative - a place to be fearful of and to conquer - as in the past, but it assumed a more positive role, exercising a beneficient effect on those who inhabited it (Thomas 260-61).

Originally a European phenomenon, this consideration of nature was starting also in America, and it followed the improvements in communication, the introduction of intensive farming, and the demand for books, maps, and lithography with landscape views. This sentiment will be fully interpreted by the American authors of the early nineteenth century: Ralph Waldo Emerson *in primis*. Barlow's words, freed from patriotic enthusiasm, seem at the bases of Trascendentalist thought: not only in the radical sense Carla Mulford pointed out referring to Barlow's poetry, but also in the formulation of the bonds between nature and liberty (151). Liberty and nature would together guide man toward happiness.

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"THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR HESITATION": THE REVOLUTION OF TIME IN CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN'S *ARTHUR MERVYN*

IGINA TATTONI

Four introductory statements:

1. In reading Brockden Brown's *Arthur Mervyn*, one experiences an urgency best expressed by the words: "there was no room for hesitation."

2. "ROOM for hesitation" links together space and time, which are usually difficult to reconcile. How can we join space/room with time? The essence of this process - which includes writing itself - is a "rigidification of mind that ultimately freezes living process" (Holdheim 256). As Edoardo Ferrario reminds us, if we agree with Immanuel Kant, "time does not belong neither to figure nor to place" (128). The speech of time can only be a translated, a re-written speech because, in Derrida's words, "it is always too late to pose the question of time. It has already appeared" (74).

3. The intricate story of *Arthur Mervyn* - too intricate to be summarized here - mainly revolves, in those parts related to Mediterranean culture, around two portraits, one real and one metaphorical: the "portrait of a lady," a beautiful, mysterious, artistically gifted and deceived woman coming from Italy, called Clemenza Lodi; and the pencil sketch of a young man who happens to be Clemenza's brother and who very much resembles Arthur Mervyn. In portraits space and time are reconciled forever: European art, like conventional time, is seen as reproduction and reflection.

4. "Written narrative is a mirroring mimesis of the movement of life itself. A mirror (*speculum*) provides a framing, concentrating image, a reflection with signs reversed. Narrative, accordingly, is a specular mimesis of living process that (in the full sense) 'reflects' the complex structure of that process, rendering its working more transparent" (Holdheim 265). Reflection in *Arthur Mervyn* is absolutely crucial: the story is continually told and re-told by different narrators (mainly Dr. Stevens, Mervyn and Welbeck), representing events and possible interpretations of them in a mirror's game that becomes ever more ambiguous and ungraspable.

What can we know about the relationship between this book and Mediterranean culture? My inquiry will focus on the uses of time and reflection, showing how Mediterranean culture appears as the still, mysterious, past-oriented beauty of a portrait thrown into the hectic future-projected time of the Revolution.

Brockden Brown himself wrote in furious haste, producing at least six novels and a great amount of shorter fiction in barely four years (1797-1801). Before being able to devote himself to writing, he had to follow his family's wishes and attend law school.

Once started, his career as a writer went in a rush. He had something to say: as Warner Berthoff writes in his Introduction to *Mervyn*, "he was offering… a defence of American society and manners as a field for serious fiction" (x). He had to deal with extremely crucial and contradictory issues: the American and French Revolution, the passage from Enlightment to Romanticism, his own Quaker and merchant background: "Happily you are a stranger to mercantile anxieties and revolutions" (217), Arthur Mervyn exclaims relating his perilous adventures to the economically more stable Dr. Stevens. Moreover Brown, though making regular visits from Philadelphia to New York, toward the end of his life settled down to a more withdrawn style that gave him an opportunity for further reflections about the political and literary situation of his new-born country. Last but not least, the 1793 yellow fever epidemics in Philadelphia: these are some of the issues that his narrative faces. In order to express so much "in a system of rational forbearance… carried to a pitch of Quaker extravagance," as he said in an interview (qtd. in Berthoff's Bibliographical Note to *Mervyn*, xx), he certainly had to hurry.

This haste is reflected in *Arthur Mervyn* (the First Part was published in 1799, the Second Part in 1800) through a fragmented narration given in a rush without quotation marks,[1] that, "despite all the narrator's intermittent efforts at a vivid immediacy" (Berthoff, Textual Note to *Mervyn*, xxiii), emphasizes the flowing dimension of time and offers continuous room to time: a narration that is not still as in description but flows with the flowing - the speed - of the dialogue. We are almost never directly looking at the scene in action; instead, we are nearly always listening to someone telling the story to someone else (or to someone listening to someone else's story). However, *Arthur Mervyn* is also a highly structured Bildungroman, an initiation into life in which the protagonist (like Tom Jones or Émile or Werther) grows in the knowledge of himself and of the peculiarities of the scenes he enters. The hero's initiation develops and is accompanied by his continuous changes from "meditation," "hesitation," and "inquiries" to "haste" and "precipitation." The more Arthur gets away from a peaceful rural setting, the more he gets trapped into a hectic sequence of events that prevents him from reflecting about his situation and actions. He is compelled to act, to decide on the spot what to do. And he continually informs the reader about his uneasiness as if to emphasize a new way/rhythm of living to which he is not yet accustomed. His perception of the world is confused, and he asks the reader for advice. His need to "rush" stems, basically, from two reasons, both a matter of survival: either to save his own life, or to rescue somebody else's life or honour: "I aimed at nothing but the rescue of an human creature from distress or dishonor" (309). It is always a matter of life and death. He cannot lose time. "There was no room for hesitation" (or, can we say, there is no space for time).

The theme of haste is introduced by Welbeck, the villain, and his schemes: "I quickly discovered that to execute this scheme demanded time, application and money" (84). Overwhelmed by fear and remorse, Welbeck decides to commit suicide in a hurry: "There was no room for hesitation"; he pronounces this memorable sentence while informing

Mervyn about his decision.[2] Then, after a fortuitous coincidence (his encounter with the Lodi family story) he changes his mind about suicide, but not about his evil schemes. Action for Welbeck is linked to evil, exploitation, and a dramatic, pessimistic view of time: "*Yesterday* is remembered with remorse. *Tomorrow* is contemplated with anguish and fear: yet *every day* is productive of the same crimes and of the same follies." (81, my emphases): evil as repetition and despair.

Repetition, despair and lack of time characterize the villain's story. Both for him and for Mervyn, the Lodi family represents salvation and safety, but Welbeck decides to organize a scheme to deceive and exploit them.

Though in a hurry, Mervyn, on the contrary, always thinks in positive terms: "Every moment is precious" (104). Later, he gradually "recovered the power of arranging [his] ideas" because "he reflected that the source of all energy, and even of life, is seated in thought" (161), almost in an anticipation of Emerson's concept of "man thinking." Mervyn is continually balancing between haste and meditation; however, even when in haste, he never loses track of his main purpose in life: to promote humanity and justice: "All the circumstances of my present situation tended to arrest the process of thought and chain my contemplations to one image; but even now there was room for foresight and deliberation… to promote the welfare of mankind" (201).

In terms of time, this is the biggest difference between Welbeck's and Arthur's behavior: the former is totally trapped into his own evil schemes, the latter is always trying to find some space/time to reflect on his and other people's need, especially those of the "lost and friendless mademoiselle Lodi" (111).

Between these two movements, rushing and reflecting, the experience of Mediterranean culture enters with the apparition of Clemenza Lodi. Of Italian origin, probably descending from the "ducal house of Visconti," she appears like a vision, in Mervyn's account, in a marble palace that emphasizes the mysterious yet conventional splendor of her beauty: "I now came to the mansion itself. The principal door was entered by a staircase of marble. I had never seen the stone of Carrara, and wildly supposed this to have been dug from Italian quarries" (44). The scene appears like a dream or, at least, an oasis against the plagued background of the city: "The beauty of the poplars, the coolness exhaled from the dew-besprent bricks, the commodiousness of the seat which these steps afforded, and the uncertainty into which I was plunged respecting my future conduct, all combined *to make me pause*. I sat down on the lower step and begun *to meditate*" (44, my emphasis). In this mansion he finds a job, wealth and friendship together with many problems that soon will lead him, once again, away. But his involvement with Clemenza brings him his final happiness with Mrs. Fielding.[3]

Clemenza wears an improbable turban (see Parmigianino's "The Turkish Slave") and is so beautifully adorned that Mervyn feels inadequate to describe her: "I was not born to execute her *portrait*. Perhaps the turban that wreathed her head, the brilliant texture and

inimitable folds of her drapery, and nymphlike port, more than the essential attributes of her person gave splendor to the celestial *vision*" (49, my emphases). It is not her person but the beauty of her ornaments that strikes him. This is not the only time that Mervyn (and I believe Brown as well) expresses his inadequacy in terms of traditional, ornamental "art": "in this art as in most others, I was an unpractised simpleton" (50).

Clemenza's turban and splendid drapery, and even her allegorical name, give her the status of a Renaissance portrait and the Mediterranean allusion adds to her aura of mystery: we do not learn the whole of her story until the Second Part. Moreover, the man she lives with, the mysterious villain Welbeck, is called by people the "Nabob." No one knows either his origin or his real profession. Clemenza is an artist: an extraordinary pianist with a charming and melodious voice. Everything she does or says has a beauty impossible to find anywhere else in the appalling world of Philadelphia in the plague year. She is an icon of art and - which is more important in this paper's perspective - an icon of PAST art. So much so that her child - her only chance to live fully in the present and, eventually, in the future - will not be able to survive.

Contrary to Clemenza's appearance, characterized by the leisurely time of the PAST, the PRESENT is characterized by a pattern of haste: both Welbeck, the villain (and he is a villain, I would say this is one of the few aspects of the text that leaves no doubt or ambiguity) and Mervyn, the protagonist and in some way the hero (but this is more uncertain) use the same pattern of RUSH. "There is no time" is reproduced throughout the book with expressions such as: "it was now incumbent on me to" (148); "a delay of twenty minutes… would determine whether my life was extinguished or suspended" (144); "the offering was too late" (138); "it is not my custom to defer till tomorrow what can be done to-day. The destiny of man frequently hangs upon the lapse of a minute" (319); and many, many other expressions conveying the same sense of urgency.

But the difference between the two characters reinforces their ethical contrast: whereas Welbeck's haste is connected with death and ruin (including his own), Arthur's haste, on the contrary, brings him to save his own life and accomplish his own pursuit of freedom and happiness. Arthur's haste is the performance of virtue, especially if we consider that he is not "naturally" an active person and that when at home he was criticized by his family and neighbour for his idleness: "I preferred to ramble in the forest and loiter on the hill" (326). There are therefore two types of haste; one is a "deadly sin," the other a life-giving virtue.

Brown's didactic desire seems for him a way to put together his studies in law and his love for literature and art: in his Preface, after explaining the setting of his story, he gives us hints on how to read and interpret it in the light - I believe - of the poetics he affirms. He says: "The author has ventured to methodize his own reflections, and to weave them into an humble narrative, such incidents as appeared to him most instructive and remarkable among those which came within the sphere of his own observation. It is

everyone's duty to profit by all opportunities of inculcating the lessons of justice and humanity" (1). His narrative is "humble" in its awareness of his being a "simpleton," incapable of reproducing Clemenza's precious expression.

In Revolutionary times the need for "humanity and justice" was felt with urgency. Paradoxically, in the American literature of that period many are the references to lack of time in the sense of an interruption, time suspended (as in "Rip van Winkle"). In *Arthur Mervyn,* the "suspension of time" is a notion best summarized by the image at the end of one of the countless stories told by Mervyn: "Mervyn's auditors allowed *no pause* in their attention to the story, having ended a deep silence took place. The clock - which stood upon the mantle, had sounded twice the customary 'larum' but had *not been heard by us*" (324, my emphases). Interestingly enough, *larum* is an archaic word for alarm: time is perceived as a menace. In order to trace time, that is, to tell a story, to write, to "verbalize [the] very shaping of the flux of time" (Holdheim 252), in order to mark time and experience, to make his time go on and his narration remain, the narrator has to forget about it, even to deny it. "There was no time," there is no time.

Clemenza Lodi, by simply appearing in the text, opens up a space of stillness, beauty, mystery and love. Yet, being poor and deceived, she also starts the movement from need to compassion. She deeply touches Arthur's heart and moves him away from schemes and greed and, at least for a short time, out of his preoccupation for himself. Clemenza, as, probably, suggested by her name, gives way to the "reasons of feeling" in Arthur's experience: Clemenza - he says - "affected my feelings as the shock of an earthquake" (71).

She marks the beginning and the end of Arthur's success story: when he ends up in the mansion where she lived with Welbeck, in the middle of the First Part, he is desperate. He has lost everything, he has been robbed and he does not have money to go home, to the country where he does not have anything left anyway: "The house in which I lived was no longer my own, nor even my father's… I knew not whither to go, or what kind of subsistence to seek" (19); this refrain in Mervyn's and other characters' stories links them to the psychological experience of *dis-placement* in the time of the Revolution.

The thought of Mademoiselle Lodi impresses upon Arthur's mind new feelings: beauty, art, and even a book with its commercial allusions. Let us open here a brief metanarrative parenthesis: "pen and book" are mentioned quite often in this text; Mervyn considers them the only "instruments of rational improvement" (297), and confesses that he "can manage … no tool that can be managed in the city, but the pen" (46). Mervyn and Welbeck also differ in their use of "pen and book." Whereas Welbeck uses them to promote his tricks, "for the execution of this scheme pen and paper were necessary" (76), and hires Mervyn "just to write what [he] dictate[s]," Mervyn is fascinated with the idea of getting a source of living by translating a text from Italian - a work he believes he can do thanks to his knowledge of Latin: "I was well instructed in Latin, and knew the Tuscan language to be nearly akin to it… I despaired not of being at some time

able to cultivate this language, and believed that the possession of this manuscript might essentially contribute to this end, as well as to many others equally beneficial" (113).

The theme of translation seems to be quite interesting in connection with the idea of Clemenza Lodi as a middle ground that needs to be *translated* from one country into another, from one time into another. The "volume" itself reflects this idea of a culture of the PAST to be translated into the PRESENT: "the volume proved to be a manuscript written by the elder Lodi in Italian and contained memoirs of the Ducal house of Visconti" (88). The difference between Past and Present, the discourse about time cannot be "shown," it can only be *translated*, rewritten (Ferrario 109-10). Clemenza cannot remain a portrait: beauty is not enough. As she does not have a scheme of her own she becomes the object of both Welbeck's evil plans and Mervyn's good one. In the America of Revolutionary schemes, haste can be good or evil, but goals are unavoidable. Without Mervyn's *act of translation*, Clemenza will remain literally "framed" and squeezed in her own portrait: the turban, the beauty, the stillness of her character, all point to her becoming a portrait, an image, a vision. Nonetheless she helps Mervyn achieve a new life, growth and happiness.

Moreover, as Mervyn's story develops, he is willing to "free" himself from the power of the book. Through a series of translations - of the Italian book into English, of Clemenza's portrait into his future wife's (Mrs. Fielding's) "real" image - he passes from his book into happiness and life: "There is no book in which I read with more pleasure than the face of a woman" (386). After rescuing Clemenza, once Mervyn has reached his own happiness in getting Mrs. Fielding's heart, he cannot help but imagining another scheme. He literally says, giving his story - I believe - a thematic and stylistic conclusion: "such and such should be our amusement and employment abroad and at home, and would this be no true happiness?" (429).

We can wonder whether this would be true happiness but, at this point, we can certainly affirm a few things:

1. In this book, Mediterranean culture (especially as expressed in the two portraits), represents the experience of time as a leisurely, aesthetic dimension that includes and somewhat reconciles past, present and future, opposed to a hectic notion of time, unnatural for Arthur, that is always projected into the future.

2. With all its implications, Clemenza's image grants Arthur a new start and a way out of a situation that trapped him in reflection - the reflection of a life made up of schemes that interact yet remain basically self-enclosed; and in the novel's game of narrative (stories within stories) the finding of a truth becomes more and more intricate and difficult.

3. Here, I believe, Brown finds another, more definitive way out of the trap that in the end seems to close Mervyn's narrative again into a scheming game. We have the final image of a book entirely devoted to the pen - that he, after using it throughout his entire search for life, freedom, and happiness, decides to save in a leather case: "Lie there, snug in thy leath-

ern case, till I call for thee, and that will be not very soon. I believe I will abjure thy company till all is settled with my love. Yes I will abjure thee, so let this be your last office, till Mervyn has been made the happiest of men" (430). After abjuring his career as a lawyer, Brown abjures also his writing career in order to continue his pursuit of happiness. Happiness, for Mervyn, consists in love, marriage, and the rescue of the people he loves, as well as in the appreciation and overcoming of European art - seen basically as a beautiful but repetitious, merely representational kind of art, and that, in some way, has to be rescued, brought to a new life by the American artist. As in St. Augustine, it seems that "the extraordinary greatness of joy will not know the limitation of syllables."

4. The past must be translated into the present, but only the present can be experienced and enjoyed. Thus, Arthur's main desire, at the end of the book, is the assimilation of the pattern of the past into the dynamic dimension of the present. He has not elaborated a completely new vision yet; however - is this the new dimension? - he sets the pen aside.

Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza"

NOTES

1. Actually Berthoff's Textual Note informs us that "Passages of dialogue are set off by quotation marks only through chapter 9 of the first volume. Thereafter this procedure is abandoned and dialogue is indicated only by paragraph divisions" - another sign of haste. The edition I have followed "has rendered the typography uniform eliminating the quotation marks throughout the whole text. This decision has the effect of neutralizing some of the undeniable awkwardness and unreality of Brown's dialogue in which the characters' speeches are used, really, as another kind of narrative exposition" (xxiii) that gives the text an even more pressing cadence.

2. The woman whom Arthur will marry in the happy end of this story. She is a Jewish widow, beautiful and gifted like Clemenza, with a special aura of art - her name represents, obviously, another link with the European tradition. At the end of the book, Europe will also appear as a nightmare: Mervyn is haunted by the fear that Mrs Fielding's first husband might return from France where he has embraced the cause of the French Revolution.

3. Even this episode gives us the opportunity to discuss time. As Harold Weinrich points out, "the most frequent forms of suicide, at least in male individuals, are performed against the pulse: a stab at the heart, the cut of the wrist veins, a revolver shot to the temple …European literature seems to offer these three 'classical' forms of suicide that aim directly to time intended as 'pulse' " (18). Welbeck represents an exception because de decides to "put an end to [his] life rushing into the stream" (98).

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WORKSHOP ELEVEN
U.S. MIDDLE EASTERN POLICY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: ASPECTS AND PROBLEMS

CHAIR: ANTONIO DONNO

The contributions of the present workshop try to draw the main lines of the U.S. presence in the Mediterranean, particularly in the Middle East, in the 20th century. If in the first half of the century American Mediterranean policy was irregular but not without significance - above all on the ground of the American commitment for the "open door" (Donno) -, since the end of the Second World War the Mediterranean became one of the main zones of American globalism. The U.S. political and military interest towards the Mediterranean area developed in a series of interventions more and more inserted in a general policy for the defence of American (and Western) interests against Soviet penetration (De Luca). A very important chapter of such a policy was the role of U.S. Congress (Olimpo). Moreover, the oil question was decisive in almost all American political initiatives (Vantaggio). A particular, but not secondary, aspect was represented by Italo-American relations in the first years of the Cold War as an example of the bipolar confrontation in a strategically crucial region for the hegemony in the Mediterranean (Del Pero).

Università degli Studi di Lecce

U.S. MIDDLE EAST POLICY IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

ANTONIO DONNO

Generally speaking, in the first half of the twentieth century, the United States held a position of non-involvement in Middle East affairs and on the policy of the countries on the eastern and southern side of the Mediterranean sea. Historians agree that the U.S. Mediterranean policy was devoted mainly to support the action of groups of missionaries and educators in some areas of the Mediterranean basin. This analysis is well-grounded, but, considering the question more carefully, one finds that the United States, in some cases, laid the foundations of their future intervention in that large region. As will be evident, there were episodic facts, without any connection and any coherent political project, sufficient to explain the U.S. Middle East policy in the second postwar era, considering some engagements that were taken in the previous decades. So, the "Zionist question" is just exemplary.

The U.S. non-involvement policy respected the principles of the 1823 Monroe Doctrine. It was the pole-star of American foreign policy through more than half a century and was confirmed by the American war against Spain for Cuba. U.S. public opinion was persuaded that the United States, born with an anti-colonial war, was only interested in defending the zone of influence of the Americas, without interfering in the affairs of tangled zones as the Mediterranean basin, where the traditional colonial powers developed their political games. In some cases, the U.S. government favored France's and Great Britain's Mediterranean policy, without any involvement; in others, it showed its disappointment, which never turned into open opposition. However, it was the First World War and its consequences that deeply changed the geopolitical situation of the Mediterranean basin, partially involving U.S. policy.

The Algesiras Conference on April 7, 1906 was the first American political presence in the Mediterranean basin. The American delegates signed a convention assuring the territorial integrity of Morocco, a special position for France and Great Britain, but mainly a condition of "open door" for U.S. trade in the region. This third clause was very important. The United States obtained, in a region which until then had been extraneous to American economic interests, a preferential position, beginning a wide policy that aimed to spread the principles of the "open door" in the whole Mediterranean basin. The next decades will confirm that the American economic interests in that region were the starting point for a deeper and deeper political and diplomatic involvement. With the Algesiras Conference, Theodore Roosevelt began a growing American engagement in the Mediterranean basin. In the same years, the Persian government offered the United States,

accepting the principles of the "open door," but mainly for domestic reasons, the possibility to trade freely in the country, and asked Washington for political aid to stop the penetration of the European powers in Persia. It was an invitation for the United States to involve itself directly in an enormous country which was strategically vital and very rich in oil. But Washington still was not ready for so important a step. Nevertheless, the Algesiras Conference and the Teheran invitation will be the starting point of future political developments of the U.S. political presence in the Eastern Mediterranean basin.

Another stage of this slow involvement was the development of U.S.-Turkish relations. The United Stated tried to deter the Ottoman Empire from entering in the First World War. The fall of the Ottoman Empire would have allow Czarist expansionism, as well as the defense of Turkey in the second postwar years would have been a political indispensable item against Soviet infiltration in the Middle East. Of course, the conditions were different. The brutally repressive Turkish policy towards the ethnic minorities, above all the Armenians, had struck American public opinion in a very unfavorable way and created the image of the "terrible Turk." American public opinion supported the fall of a brutal and crumbling empire, even if without an American involvement in the war.

But it was the "Zionist question" that involved the United States in Middle East affairs. The Zionist movement was obtaining in those years great political dimension and authoritativeness, supported by a public opinion favorable to the reconstruction of a Jewish national home in Palestine and linked to Hebraism with the same cultural and religious roots. There were leaders of great charisma like Louis Brandeis, a judge of the Supreme Court and then head of the Zionist movement, Mack, Wise, Frankfurter. Particularly Brandeis, who was Wilson's great friend, had a crucial role in convincing the American president to agree with the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917. It was just a watershed for U.S. Mediterranean policy, and particularly for the American future Middle East commitment. But, in addition to Brandeis' unquestionable influence, we must not underestimate some very important geopolitical considerations. On the ground of the available documentation, it is essential to understand if Wilson gave his approval to the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine, considering the new Middle East order that would be born from the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The power vacuum that would have been created in the inner core of the Middle East could have helped, in the long run, Czarist expansionism in that region. In 1917, when the Balfour Declaration was announced, there was not yet the possibility to begin the mandate policy that, after some years, will give France and Great Britain the Middle East. Thus, it is very interesting to study American diplomatic documents to find out if these considerations - or, above all, these considerations - really caused Wilson's decision. The subsequent victory of the Bolsheviks will give Wilson's approval a greater effectiveness.

When Wilson, at the Paris Conference, promoted point 12 of his 14 - that is, the question of the self-determination of peoples - American non-involvement had already

vanished. Wilson's approval of the Balfour Declaration had cancelled decades of American disengagement policy towards the Mediterranean basin, while U.S. participation in the First World War had overcome American indifference towards European affairs. So it was the American involvement in the European questions and in the Middle Eastern region that also caused Wilson's approval, even if with great reluctance, of the mandates to the traditional colonial European powers. In short, the principle of the self-determination of peoples was overruled by realpolitik's power. As to Palestine, the Jewish right to self-determination surely was sanctioned, but entrusted to Great Britain's mandatary policy. In this case, principle and realpolitik were reconciled by a compromise which pleased the Zionist movement and British colonialism.

The "Armenian question" was felt by American public opinion almost as the Jewish one. The genocide by Turks from 1909 to the First World War caused great emotion and disdain in the United States and also a great solidarity towards a Christian people massacred by Muslims. At the Paris Conference the possibility of creating an independent Armenian State was discussed, but almost immediately that project - strongly supported by Wilson - failed because the great European powers did not want it. But in the United States the establishment of a real "Armenian lobby" gave the opportunity to go on struggling for Armenia's independence. So, when in 1923 a Turkisk-American treaty was signed, the "Armenian lobby" strongly opposed it, until in 1927 the U.S. Senate rejected the treaty. We can say that the principle of the self-determination of peoples was strongly felt by American public opinion, which was mindful of the struggle of the American colonies against British colonialism, while U.S. diplomacy, already entangled in the European and Mediterranean affairs, must confront allies defending their colonial position in the Mediterranean basin.

A third geopolitical zone was represented by Persia. Here, the British interference, concerning oil above all, was not greatly esteemed by Washington. In Persia the principal problems did not combine with the economic questions. The Americans blamed the Anglo-Iranian agreement, which allowed the British to control in practice all the Iranian oil and to reduce that country to the condition of a client, rightly fearing that the deep British presence would have caused - as it really caused - the Soviet response, which in a short time would settle in the northern regions of that country. But Washington, which did not want to be at odds with the British allies, did not interfere in domestic Iranian affairs, appealling to the principle of non-involvement. However, it allowed individuals to stipulate agreements with the Iranian government.

In conclusion, three of the main "Mediterranean" questions were treated in a different way by the American government. In the years following the end of the First World War, non-involvement, self-determination and realpolitik mixed in the American Mediterranean policy. In spite of the lack of coherence of such a policy, the United States made a decisive step towards a political presence in the Mediterranean basin.

This step was not invalidated by the relative American indifference towards the international relations in the 1920's . In particular, the "Zionist question" was already an important item in the American political agenda, because the Zionist international movement, and the American one above all, had an undeniable prestige and political importance, in spite of the efforts made by some in the State Department to withdraw the American support to the Zionist cause and cancel the previous American assent to the Balfour Declaration and to the San Remo Conference agreement. American Zionism was very strongly linked with a large part of Congress, with the Washington government and, above all, with American public opinion. Never, until then, a political lobby had got so much power in the American political world. Neither during the 1920's nor during the long Roosevelt presidency, considerations and evaluations about the inconvenience of alienating the Arab world because of the "Zionist question" will be able to annull an engagement which had been taken in the First World War years and was supported by a Zionist movement that, helped by American public opinion and by a large part of the American political world, demanded observance of the American promise. The Zionist moral foundation - that is, the return of a national home to a persecuted people - represented Zionism's strenght in regard to American public opinion, very sensitive to the plight of the Jews whose civilization was recognized as the source of Western culture, and to a large part of the American political world. After the Balfour Declaration, the "Zionist question" became a constant item of American politics and, until the outbreak of the Second World War, the only true item of U.S. Mediterranean policy.

The Roosevelt years were ambiguous years as far as the "Zionist question" was concerned. The State Department was contrary to the birth of a Jewish State in Palestine because that would have kept away the Arabs from the West; but the United Stated never denounced the Balfour Declaration and the San Remo Conference clauses which had incorporated the Declaration itself. The Arab oil was precious and that urged Roosevelt to state that nothing would have been altered in the Middle East without Arab consent. At the same time, Roosevelt - aware of Zionist movement prestige and American Jewish political importance - always assured Zionists that the United States were linked to their promise of supporting the reconstruction of a Jewish national home in Palestine and this promise would have been kept. This ambuigity increased during the war years, because the Arab oil and the Jewish community role in Palestine were vital for the Allies' victory on the Axis.

In conclusion, until the end of the Second World War, the only true American engagement in the Mediterranean was the "Zionist question." All other initiatives were sporadic, because they were a consequence of the long American policy of non-involvement. Though some of these initiatives were somewhat important, they never turned out to be a coherent American Mediterranean policy. Moreover, the "Zionist question" could not be defined as an American Mediterranean initiative. The "Zionist question" had various aspects that dealt with both European events and U.S. domestic policy. Of course,

it involved many Mediterranean countries. It became one of the most important questions of international policy, mainly after the Second World War. This happened because the United States - after Great Britain had given up - started a complex Mediterranean policy in order to face the Soviet Union in a wider geopolitical zone, economically and strategically viable. In the making of this policy Washington found already in the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean puzzle the Zionist tessera, and it could not (or would not) help taking it into consideration. Anyway, all this is a part of the second postwar era.

Università degli Studi di Lecce

STRATEGIC VALUES AND MILITARY POLICY IN THE U.S. INTERVENTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST (1946-1967)

DANIELE DE LUCA

At the end of the Second World War, the failure of President Roosevelt's *grand design* and the new rising role of the United States of America in the world arena was clear. It should be said that Roosevelt too had the clear project of a new world order based on American hegemony (Aga Rossi 224), but he failed to realize the new role the Soviet Union had the intention to play. At the end of the 1940's the hope for a collaboration between U.S. and U.S.S.R. became impossible so it was now time for hard political and military competition wherever possible.

The Soviet Union - having seen the defeat of Germany and Japan - saw no limits to a possible expansion towards its western and eastern political borders and the chance to spread communism. Neither Secretary of State James Byrnes' "bomb diplomacy," nor George Kennan's containment[1] could halt Soviet attempts to define its new areas of influence. Even if - between 1944 and 1945 - conferences at Moscow and Yalta had established - at least as moral commitment - the political division of Europe, new regions waited to be "conquered" by the new superpowers (Boyle 54).

The Second World War made clear that without oil no military expedition could have success. So Soviet refusal to withdraw from Iran in 1946 was seen by Loy Henderson, Director of the Middle East Division in the Department of State, as a little light on a bigger Soviet project to control the whole Middle East. Henderson "directed his staff to prepare a map depicting recent movements of the Red Army in northern Iran and indicating where the Soviets units might be going. Henderson took the map into the office of Secretary of State James Byrnes, where he pointed to three large arrows representing likely Soviet thrusts. One arrow aimed at Turkey and the Turkish Straits; a second headed toward Baghdad and central Iraq; the third targeted the oil fields of the Persian Gulf" (Brands 10). The Pentagon as well feared a possible Soviet expansion, and was scared by communist presence in the region which held most of the oil sources. The American Government had to ensure that the region's oil remain in friendly hands. These definitely did not include Moscow (Yergin 180).

Loy Henderson's fears seemed to become real when, in 1946, the Soviet Union began to threaten both Turkey and its Straits, and Iran. The Soviet aim was free movement of its fleet between the Straits, so that they could arrive without control in the Mediterranean and the warm seas. It was the time to face and to prove Soviet determination. While President Truman wrote to Kremlin leaders, he decided at the same time to send a naval task force close to the Turkish Straits. Stalin gave up. The Soviet Union was not ready for a war, at least not for Turkey. Almost in the same period the Soviet Union

tried to control Iranian oil refusing to leave Persian soil (occupied with the British to avoid Nazi control of the primary sources). Even here the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union was hard but, once again, Moscow gave up.[2]

When, in February 1947, Great Britain announced its intention to abandon its responsibility in Greece and Turkey, the American Government realised it had to take this responsibility without giving up Europe. The United States were becoming a global power but they had to share some commitments with their traditional allies. One of the areas to share for containing a possible Soviet penetration was the Middle East. Something had to be done. First of all, it has to be said that British withdrawal from Greece and Turkey were joined by Great Britain fears in the Near East. Troubles with Egypt for the British military base on the Suez Canal, and clashes in Palestine between Jews and Arabs, put in peril London authority in a region considered a real key towards its imperial domains in the East. What could be the American role in this contest? To understand it and, at the end, to understand the British role as well, American and British high officials decided to meet in Washington between October 16 and November 7, 1947 for the so called "Pentagon Talks."

Both the Pentagon and the Department of State considered the Middle East as a region of primary strategic and political importance for Great Britain. The Department of State was against an expansion of American military bases abroad, and military planners followed a regional design which preferred the defence of the whole western hemisphere. For this reason, the best American response to the Soviet menace, according to George Kennan, lay in strengthening "in every way local forces of resistance, and persuade others to bear a greater part of the burden of opposing communism. The present 'bi-polarity' will, in the long run, be beyond our resources."[3]

According to the London Government, on the other hand, the British position had to be reinforced in the so called "inner ring" (the area between Transjordan and Egypt), leaving to the United States the defence of the "outer ring" (Greece, Turkey, Iran and Iraq). For Washington, it was necessary to back Great Britain to maintain its responsibility in the region just to strengthen the military security of the whole Middle East. The Pentagon Talks seemed to be a meeting of the deaf. In fact both parties pursued personal political aims: the United States wanted to leave the whole responsibility to Great Britain, and London was looking for Washington money avoiding an American involvement which could tie British hands above all in Palestine. The British Foreign Minister, Ernest Bevin, instructed his officials to maintain the Middle East under British influence, leaving out the United States as independent military force.[4]

Considering American involvement in Europe, the Washington Government was not ready to replace the strategic and military position of Great Britain. A new commitment in the Middle East was not advisable or desirable.[5] The Joint Chiefs of Staff, as well, advised against a direct military involvement in the Middle Eastern area, because of Administration commitments on various fronts.[6]

It was only in 1950, three years later, that the United States decided to intervene in the Middle East with two important actions: the Tripartite Declaration and the constitution of the Middle East Command. The Tripartite Declaration was an abortive attempt to stop the arms race in the region. It failed for two fundamental reasons: the Soviet Union was not involved in the initiative and, above all, Washington was the only Government to respect an arms embargo. In fact Great Britain and France - the other subscribers - continued to sell arms to the Arabs and to the Israelis. As for the Middle East Command (transformed later in the Middle East Defence Organisation), it was a British initiative to reinforce its own military position in the area. In fact, while Washington sought to involve just local military forces, London decided to guide the Command, leading the initiative to failure.[7]

For the same reasons a military initiative of the new Republican Administration: the Baghdad Pact failed. President Eisenhower and his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, believed that international communism was the real danger in the Middle East and tried to stop it by forming a large alliance of the "outer ring" States: Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkey.[8] States which felt the real Soviet "breath" on their neck. The initiative failed, again, because of British will to reaffirm its position - by then very weak - in the Near East. British participation - and Egyptian exclusion - led the Baghdad Pact to a sure failure, transforming it in a useless tool.[9]

It will be just after the Suez war - and the final destruction of the colonial power of France and Great Britain after their strategic failure against Egypt - that the United States will become the only power able to defend Western rights in the region.[10] It should be said that the Eisenhower Administration had a real handicap: President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles were convinced that the Soviet Union and international communism were the real and strong danger in the Middle East. They were not able to recognise the intimate strength of Arab nationalism and the humiliation of the poor Arab masses provoked by Arab leaderships. In particular, they did not realise the importance of the leadership of the Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser and what he really represented. So, when Eisenhower and Dulles decided to use the American armed forces for the invasion of Lebanon, they thought to stop communism and not just a civil war begun for local reasons and strong resentments towards a leadership too close to Western interests.[11]

When John F. Kennedy came to power, he was involved in a series of issues quite far from the Middle Eastern problems. Eisenhower's heritage pushed the new President towards new questions. Cuba, first of all, and Vietnam, then, led Kennedy to examine the Middle East just as a secondary issue. In any case, following the directives of the last two years of the Eisenhower Administration, Kennedy and his aides decided to reconsider the Israeli position in American strategic plans. So, for the first time in the Israeli-American relations, the Kennedy Administration decided to respond to the Israeli request for military aid. In fact, because of the strategic weakness of Israeli airfields defence, Kennedy authorised the sale of modern arms: the surface-to-air Hawk missile. This sale, in any

case, did not lead the American Government to a formal commitment with Israeli security more than the commitments taken with other Arab States.[12] Furthermore, it was not an occasional sale but, even if President Lyndon B. Johnson - may be for personal hostility against Nasser's Egypt and for his own sympathetic tie with the Jewish State - decided to continue to sell arms to Israel. In 1965, after a conspicuous sale of Soviet arms to Syria and Egypt, the Johnson Administration fulfilled the Israeli request of 210 new Patton M-48 tanks. No sentimental pressure was behind the Johnson decision but simple strategic considerations of global and regional nature. Israel was becoming a real strategic asset in the Middle Eastern area and it had to be supported. The same strategic considerations pushed the Johnson Administration to side with Israel before and during the six-day war. Notwithstanding these actions, in any case, the Johnson Administration did not give to Israel the formal commitment it desired. Even in this case, strategic and military considerations of balance of power played against Jerusalem. It was counterproductive to chose a single ally in the region while the Soviet Union was courting most of the important Arab States.

The Middle East, after the stabilisation of the European situation, became the new theatre of the Cold War. Notwithstanding a strong competition in the region, the United States avoided to take real military commitments beyond the usual one to stop communist penetration. In any case, the problems were others because, to penetrate in the area, the Soviet Union used different ideological tools. Socialism, atheism and communism were far from the minds of the Middle Eastern leaders and masses. They understood just words like "money" or "arms" and Moscow was ready to enter in their hearts fulfilling their requests. Washington decided to follow a different way balancing the political power in the region. Its armed forces appeared on the theatre only in Lebanon, and for a limited time. The traditional strategic policy to support the local forces and only the local forces was never in question from Truman to Johnson.

Università degli Studi di Lecce

NOTES

1. On Kennan's containment see Kennan to Secretary of State, February 22, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946*, Vol. VI: 696-709 [hereafter cited as *FRUS*]; X (G.F. Kennan) 566-582; Miscamble 25-28.

2. On the 1946 Iranian Crisis see Vantaggio; Yegorova; McFarland 239-256.

3. Resumé of World Situation, PPS/13, November 6, 1947, *The State Department Policy Planning Staff Papers, 1947*, Vol. I: 130 [hereafter cited as *PPSP*].

4. Louis 112. On the "Pentagon Talks" see De Luca, "Gli Stati Uniti" 477-496; *FRUS*, *1947*, Vol. V: 485-626.

5. Mr. Rusk's Memorandum of January 26, 1948 Concerning PPS/19, PPS/19/1, January 29, 1948, *PPSP*, *1948*, Vol. II: 64.

6. Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, November 19, 1947, U.S. Department of Defense, *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, Part 2, 1946-53, The Middle East, JCS 1819.

7. On the Tripartite Declaration see Moore 575; The Acting Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic and Consular Offices, May 20, 1950, *FRUS*, *1950*, Vol. V: 167-168; Donno 707-722.

8. On the strategic and ideological belief of the Eisenhower Administration in the Middle East, the basic document is the National Security Council 155/1: Statement of the Policy by the National Security Council, NSC 155/1 ("United States Objective and Policies with Respect to the Near East"), July 14, 1953, in *FRUS*, *1952-54*, Vol. IX: 399-406.

9. On the Baghdad Pact and its failure see Podeh; De Luca, "Il Processo di polarizzazione" 141-160; Sanjian, 226-266; Troen and Shemesh.

10. On the Suez crisis see De Luca, *Fuochi sul Canale*; Bar-On; Lucas; Troen and Shemesh.

11. On US intervention in Lebanon see Little 27-54; Alin; Gendzier; De Luca, "La diplomazia armata" 665-682.

12. On the new strategic alliance between Israel and the United States see Ben-Zvi, *Decade of Transition*; De Luca, *La difficile amicizia*. On the American sell of the Hawk missiles to Israel see Ben-Zvi, *John F. Kennedy.*

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SHARING RESPONSIBILITY: CONGRESS-EXECUTIVE RELATIONSHIP IN THE MAKING OF AMERICAN MIDDLE EASTERN POLICY, 1945-1968

PAOLA OLIMPO

In November 1998 Lee Hamilton, Director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and a former Member of the United States House of Representatives from January 3, 1965 to January 3, 1999, delivered a speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C. In his speech Hamilton stated that though sometimes "Congress goes too far, acting unilaterally; sometimes I think it doesn't go far enough."[1] In the first case "Congress does not like to be reminded that the U.S. has to work with its allies in order to carry out its policies."[2] In the second case Congress exercised its constitutional obligations "timidly. The clearest case of Congressional timidity in exercising its constitutional responsibility is its failure to authorize the use of force. In almost every case over the last 15 years save the Gulf War, …Congress has refused to take a stand. Often, it doesn't even debate it. Instead, it leaves it to the President to make the most difficult decision that any government can make, which is whether or not to intervene militarily."[3] Hamilton also underlined that "another way in which the Congress fails to take responsibility in foreign policy is by criticizing the President's policy without offering any alternatives. …I have served with seven Presidents of the United States and not a single one of them has consulted enough with Congress on important questions of American foreign policy. The result is that every President has experienced deep trouble or failure at some point from an inability to convince Congress of the merits of his policies."[4]

The Congress début in the formulation of American Middle Eastern policy was, to say the least, a failure if we consider criticisms expressed by Syrian, Iraqi, and Saudi governments respectively. In the mid 1940s everything centred around Palestine's future and the Zionist movement, questions to which President Truman himself could not give an answer: "That is the sixty-four-dollar question,"[5] he said, adding that, already in 1944, both Democratics and Republicans had made promises on Palestine's future without considering the international political situation in that area.

In 1946 the Department of State and the presidency were working out the so called "containment policy." In an undated document the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, Loy Henderson, focused United States interest on nations considered as part of the Near East, a region that could turn out to be "a breeding ground for international misunderstandings."[6] Considering that Palestine was under British mandate, Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson quickly underlined that to carry out development projects only in that area, would have been misunderstood and ascribed to pres-

sure from Jewish groups. He also stated that a sort of Tigris-Euphrates Valley Authority and Nile Valley Authority, and other projects in Iran and Saudi Arabia should be introduced in a general plan. Furthermore, it was fundamental to consider that Congress funds appropriation to carry out those projects would have been tantamount to a British funds appropriation to carry out the same projects in Puerto Rico without consulting the United States government. It was the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on November 29, 1947, which declared the partition of Palestine, and that overcame the British mandate. From that point, it became clear that in the Middle East, American interests were focused on Palestine and that any change in that area should be supported by both the President and Congress leader members.[7] In April 1948 Loy Henderson put pressure on the Undersecretary of State Robert A. Lovett so that Republican and Democratic leaders, presidential candidates, and members of Congress could be informed of the gravity of the "Palestinian question." The Palestinian question could not be treated "as a football of domestic politics, but as a matter seriously involving the security of the United States."[8] And security had to be protected establishing a Selective Service System and a long-term program for the universal military training of air, naval and land forces to be used in Palestine; this was a solution that the Department of State supported by every means even through depositions before Congress committees.[9]

Between 1948 and 1949 Congress and the Executive became involved in another fundamental question: the resettlement of Arab and Jewish refugees. As far as the Executive was concerned Congress would not favor the appropriations to solve the Arab refugee problem at the moment. One had to wait till January 1949 when it would be in session.[10] In the document cited, sent by John D. Tomlinson, Assistant Chief of the Division of United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, it was also suggested that "because of the important strategic and political interests of the United States in the Near East, it is considered that those interests would be advanced by announcing the intention of this government to seek an appropriation from Congress for the assistance of these refugees."[11] The amount would be around $10.000.000, but it was easily increased to $16.000.000, and then to $36.000.000. To obtain this money Congress' support was essential. That is why Undersecretary of State Lovett managed to meet with the Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg.[12] He also met with other Democratic Senators, Scott W. Lucas, Alben W. Barkley, Tom T. Connally, and Representatives Charles A. Eaton, Republican, Sol Bloom, Democratic, and the Executive Director of the Democratic Party Committee, Leslie Biffle. Their reaction though not enthusiastic was favorable on the whole. Secretary of State George C. Marshall authorized an American delegation to state officially that the President, following the approval of the General Assembly Resolution for the Relief of Palestine Refugees on November 19, would ask Congress the appropriation of $16.000.000. Marshall underlined that the "final decision must rest with Congress."[13] The Palestinian refugee question took all year long, and at the end the aid program became something more complex then the mere loan of $32.000.000, as we deduce from the following table.

Table 1.

	1st Year	2st Year	3st Year	TOTAL
LOAN	$32,000,000	$19,000,000	$19,000,000	$70,000,000
GRANT	64,000,000	38,000,000	38,000,000	140,000,000
TOTAL	$96,000,000	$57,000,000	$57,000,000	$210,000,000

Source: *FRUS, 1949,* Vol. VI, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Washington, DC: GPO, 1977): 942

The refugee question could not be solved quickly and the Acting Secretary of State, James E. Webb, following a meeting with the President stated that "the President understands that he has made a commitment. …He understands that this problem is a long-term one and that there is no immediately available solution…"[14] Webb reported Congress' position as well, after he had received a memorandum from Ernest A. Gross, the Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations. Congress was not enthusiastic about the aid program for the Palestinian refugees and it was looking, before coming to an agreement, for the State of Israel to take part in it.[15]

In the early months of 1950 the arms question had priority. Secretary of State Acheson met with some members of Congress on their request.[16] As far as the Democratic Representative Antony F. Tauriello was concerned "there was a growing sentiment in the House that if the U.K. continued to arm the Arabs an amendment should be offered in the House to cut the ECA [Economic Cooperation Administration] funds destined for the U.K."[17] Acheson remarked that since the lift of the United Nations embargo on arms intended for Palestine, the U.S. government had decided not to start an arms race in the Near East, allowing exportations of arms only for internal security and self-defense.[18] Acheson pointed out that the Israeli government had presented two requests as to arms supply. The first was a commercial one, to execute after consultations with the National Military Establishment; the second concerned an arms supply not provided by the American government stocks but by a small stock meant to satisfy previous requests from the governments of Saudi Arabia and Nationalist China. Syria, Lebanon and Egypt had asked for military aid as well and, considering the recent meeting with the Secretary of State, Saudi Arabia itself turned out to be the "special case" to which military aid could be offered.[19] Therefore, at the beginning of 1951 the American government's real targets in the Middle East became clearly defined.

Table 2.

Special U.S. Interest	Special U.K. Interest	U.S.–U.K. Shared Interest	French Interest	U.S. – U.K. – France Interest
Saudi Arabia	Egypt Jordan Iraq	Syria Israel Lebanon	Syria	Implementation of Tripartite Declaration of May 25, 1950[20]

Source: *FRUS, 1951,* Vol. V, The Near East and Africa (Washington, DC: GPO, 1982): 124

The United States was particularly interested in the Dhahran airport and the oilfields of Saudi Arabia, while British bases in Egypt and the maritime traffic through the Suez Canal were considered of minor importance. It also supported along with Britain and France the implementation of the Tripartite Declaration which aimed to maintain Palestine *status quo*, avoiding an arms race in the region. If either the Arab States or Israel moved to violate 1949 armistice lines, the Western powers would take immediate military action to stop such transgressions.

In 1953 the shift from the democratic administration to the republican did not turn out to be that easy. Arab complaints because of the influence of American-Jewish groups during the presidential elections were immediately hushed up by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles who stated that the new administration had been elected by the majority of American people in its wholeness, and for this reason it was not in debt to any particular part of the electorate. And to prove this, Congress legislation had been planned to favor the Arab States. This represented "a break with the past."[21] In reality, between the two administrations there were not so many differences. In fact, in April 1956, during a meeting with some Congress members on President Eisenhower's request, Dulles outlined American Middle Eastern policy's two main aims: the first was to preserve the State of Israel; the second was to preserve the oil flow, being on good terms with the Arabs. The only way to carry out both policies was to pacify the Middle Eastern area. If only the United States had supplied Israel with arms the Arabs would have cut off oil supplies from Europe. The meeting between Dulles and the Congressional delegation ended with both parts agreeing that Congress had not been asked to intervene in any way though some of the participants expressed their worries about the U.S. government's future behavior towards a preventive Israeli attack. Even if there was not any formal treaty between Israel and the United States, the preservation of the Jewish State, as to Dulles, was an integral part of American foreign policy.[22]

Between the 1940s and the 1950s the first regional defensive organizations had been established. The Baghdad Pact, set up in February 1955 by Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan, Iran and Great Britain was one of them. The opportunity for the United States to join it was considered beyond dispute by both Eisenhower and Dulles. The Secretary of State did not think that the Senate would approve the United States assent to it without a

security pact in favor of Israel, in return.[23] In a letter to the Secretary of Defense, Charles E. Wilson, Dulles declared that he had discussed the question of joining the Pact with some Congress leaders who were sure that to introduce such a problem in Congress would raise even more complex questions.[24]

The Baghdad Pact events were put quickly in the shade by the Suez Crisis, preceded by the establishment of a military alliance between Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Notwithstanding American and Soviet support for the newly founded State of Israel, both the United States and the Soviet Union warned Israel to retreat from Sinai. Congress' only concern was what kind of relation could be found between the Suez and Panama Canals. Dulles stated that the Panama Canal had never been completely internationalized, that it had been built by Americans only, and that all operational rights were reserved for the United States government. Moreover the free transit in the Panama Canal was not in danger. The real question was whether to support France and Great Britain or not, in case they had used force in the Canal area. Dulles's reply was unambiguous: "It was Congress who declared war,"[25] and in November 1956 Eisenhower knew that in Congress the majority would be Democratic, and the will to allocate funds to support Europe which had been shown in the past, would be stronger. The pressure under which France and Great Britain were put, though Eisenhower informed his advisers that in bringing Congress up to date on the situation they should not have put the blame completely on Western powers because of the crisis, made Israel pull back its army gradually from Sinai between November 1956 and January 1957.[26] In the aftermath of the Suez Crisis Eisenhower asked and made Congress pass a resolution (called the Eisenhower doctrine or Middle East Resolution) in which the Middle East was declared of vital importance to U.S. national security (Public Law 85-7, March 9, 1957).[27]

The decade between 1957 and 1967, though marked by some stormy events, was a period of relative tranquility in the Middle East.[28] At the beginning of 1960 discussions in Congress focused on Israel's construction of a nuclear complex in Dimona, on Egypt as the sole member of the United Arab Republic, and on arms supply to Middle Eastern countries. Israel's secret construction of the nuclear reactor caused the concern of some Senators, which included the Republican member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Bourke B. Hickenlooper, and the Democratic member of the Near East Subcommittee of the SFRC, Albert Gore, who stated that Israel had "deliberately misled" United States government, declaring that the complex was first a "textile plant" and then "metallurgical works."[29] As far as Egypt was concerned, in a memorandum from the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs McGeorge Bundy, the Egyptian President's certainty was expressed stating that "the U.A.R. emerged from the Suez Crisis convinced that it could not depend on the Western world, but that American policy in this Administration had made him hope that this judgement could be reversed."[30] It was clear to the Kennedy Administration that Nasser wanted to turn back the clock to 1957 even though the Gruening Amendment could keep him from doing it.[31] Even though the Amend-

ment let the Executive openly discuss with Congress whether an aggression had taken place or not, in a press statement, on November 14, Kennedy had reaffirmed that the Executive had to be free in dealing with international matters. Two weeks later, on November 27, it was Johnson's turn to state before Congress that the Executive need to preserve its flexibility in foreign policy. Johnson had no intention of starting a crisis with the U.A.R. by withholding foreign aid, but if there was stalemate in the situation it would be up to Congress to ban economic aid to the United Arab Republic.[32] And in 1964 Congress played such an important role that the Undersecretary of State George W. Ball made the American ambassador to the U.A.R., John S. Badeau, assure Nasser that "under our form of government he [the President] must take popular and Congressional sentiment into full account."[33] The 1965 Foreign Assistance Act (P.L. 89-171), approved on September 6, stopped the fight between the Executive and Congress.[34] Johnson had to keep in touch with the Senate Foreign Relations and Appropriation Committees, and with the Speaker of the House, as far as the sales to U.A.R. were concerned always in accordance with Title I.[35]

In the meantime a new front was opening: the arms supply to Middle Eastern countries. To tell the truth that front had been half-open during the Kennedy Administration, when the United States started supplying Israel with defensive arms. The sale of five Hawk missile batteries was not only the result of the "special relationship" between Kennedy and the American Jews but also the result of a bargaining policy between the two governments.[36] The Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion in fact allowed periodic inspections of the Israeli Dimona nuclear plant in return for the Hawk missile, surface-to-air missiles designed to destroy attacking aircraft. The Israeli government required an additional sale of modern tanks as well.[37] Kennedy could not personally carry out the sale because he was assassinated on November 22, 1963. It was the Johnson Administration that decided to approve the Israeli request for 210 M-48 Patton tanks.[38] The involvement of the United States in the Middle East could not be considered a marginal one anymore. U.S. Middle Eastern policy had been influenced by "the lobbying efforts of such Congressional supporters of Israel as Congressman Leonard Farbstein (D., NY) and Senators Ernest Gruening (D., Alaska), Jacob K. Javits (R., NY), Kenneth Keating (R., NY) and Hubert Humphrey (D., Minnesota)," though occasionally these pressures infuriated Kennedy "and made him even more determined to persist in his accommodative posture toward President Nasser."[39]

The new White House tenant, Lyndon B. Johnson, kept several members of the Kennedy Administration among whom was Myer Feldman, his Deputy Special Counsel, who wrote in a memorandum to the President, dated May 11, 1964, that he had "rarely been exposed to as much pressure as I have had recently on the question of tanks for Israel. It has been only after considerable effort that members of Congress have been restrained against making speeches on the question."[40] Feldman together with McGeorge

Bundy and Robert Komer represented the *trait-d'union* between the President and the Middle East in its wholeness. Johnson was aware of the power of the Jewish lobby in Congress and he knew that in order to carry out his domestic agenda he had to compromise with it. In February 1966 Komer informed the President of the possibility of supplying planes both to Israel and Jordan. "So" Komer said "we've finally reached the point where we have to fish or cut bait."[41] Komer underlined the fact that between 1948 and 1961 the United States had made Europe supply arms to Israel but now "it is in our interest to help Israel to maintain a sufficient deterrent edge to warn off Nasser and other eager beavers. And the more secure Israel feels, the less likely it is to strike first, as at Suez."[42] The Johnson Administration was caught between two stools: if it refused to supply Israel it would face domestic problems, on the contrary if it refused to supply Jordan, Hussein would succumb to United Arab Command pressure to purchase the MIG fighters. That is why Komer stressed the point that "Jordan's independence is important enough to us, and to Israel,"[43] and that it was fundamental to make the Israelis keep their lobby in Congress as far as possible. At the end of consultations the Administration concluded its negotiations with Israel authorizing the sale of 48 Skyhawks bombers, with 52 additional aircraft soon to follow (Ben-Zvi 134). In April 1966 "the United States acknowledged the sale of American tanks and aircraft to the pro-western monarchy of Jordan" (Schwam 92).

On June 5, 1967 the Six-Day War broke out. It was waged by Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq against Israel. On June 8, the U.S. government announced an arms embargo against the region. "The embargo precluded the delivery of the 48 A-4 Skyhawks that had been contracted for in February 1966" (Schwam 105). The clash between the Executive and Congress on the sale of military equipment started to become fiercer. In the past these sales had been financed by both the Defense Department funds and Export-Import Bank resources. Under the new Defense Aid Bill, the Department of Defense could not sell arms on credit, or provide guarantees for loans extended by the Export-Import Bank. At this rate Israel would be able to purchase arms from the United States but without securing a viable means of financing from the U.S. government (Schwam 105-106). On October 12, the Israeli government was informed that the U.S. arms embargo was going to be lifted, and that the United States would release not only the Skyhawks but also the F-4 Phantom. On November 14, 1967 the Foreign Assistance Act was signed by Johnson and became law (P.L. 90-137). Under its provisions the United States could make commitments to foreign governments until the end of the fiscal year 1968. The United States had become Israel's primary arms supplier, and when Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul C. Warnke met with Lieutenant General Yitzahak Rabin and other Israeli military experts in the Pentagon, the new U.S. approach to the Middle East was made official. The Nixon era was about to start.

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NOTES

1. Lee Hamilton, *Congress and U.S. Foreign Policy*, The Trilateral Commission Site. <http://www.trilateral.org,: 1>

2. Ibid. 2.

3. Ibid. 3.

4. Ibid. 3-4.

5. Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs (Henderson) to the Secretary of State, November 13, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, *Diplomatic Papers*, *1945*, Vol. VIII: 17 [hereafter cited as *FRUS*].

6. Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs (Henderson), [undated], *FRUS*, *1946*, Vol. VII: 1.

7. See Memorandum by Mr. Dean Rusk to the Under Secretary of State (Lovett), January 26, 1948, *FRUS*, *1948*, Vol. V: 557.

8. Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs (Henderson) to the Under Secretary of State (Lovett), April 22, 1948, ibid. 841.

9. See The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of Defense (Forrestal), April 23, 1948, ibid. 851-852.

10. See Draft Position Paper on Relief for Near Eastern Refugees, October 5, 1948, ibid. 1454.

11. Ibid. 1456.

12. See The Acting Secretary of State to the Secretary of State, at London, October 30, 1948, ibid. 1533-1534.

13. The Secretary of State to the United States Delegation at Paris, November 29, 1948, ibid. 1635.

14. Memorandum by the Acting Secretary of State, May 23, 1949, *FRUS*, *1949*, Vol. VI: 1042.

15. See Memorandum by the Acting Secretary of State, [undated], ibid. 1056.

16. See Memorandum of Conversation with Various Congressmen, by the Secretary of State, March 28, 1950, *FRUS*, *1950*, Vol. V: 125.

17. Ibid. 126.

18. See Resolution 73 (1949) Adopted by the Security Council on August 11, 1949, *FRUS*, *1949*: 1302.

19. See Memorandum of Conversation, by the Politico-Military Adviser, Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs (Robertson), May 5, 1950, *FRUS*, *1950*: 148-149.

20. See The Acting Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic and Consular Offices, May 20, 1950 - 1 a.m., ibid. 167-168. See also Donno 707-722.

21. Memorandum of Conversation, by the Second Secretary of Embassy in Lebanon (Meyer), May 17, 1953, *FRUS*, *1952-1954*, Vol. IX: 83.

22. See Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, April 10, 1956, 9-10:35 a.m., *FRUS*, *1955-1957*, Vol. XV, Arab-Israeli Dispute January 1-July 26, 1956: 504-511.

23. See Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Department of State, March 6, 1956, *FRUS*, *1955-1957*, Vol. XII, Near East Region; Iran; Iraq: 250.

24. See Letter from the Secretary of the State to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson), April 23, 1956, ibid. 294.

25. Memorandum of Conversation, Department of State, Washington, September 6, 1956, 2:30 p.m., *FRUS*, *1955-1957*, Vol. XVI, Suez Crisis July 26-December 31, 1956: 397.

26. By the way Israel kept controlling the Straits of Tiran, a road leading to them, and the Gaza Strip. It was the fear of economic sanctions, also predicted by Dulles to Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson (D.), that made Israel withdraw its forces, after lengthy negotiations, from the Gaza Strip and Sharm el-Sheikh. See Letter from the Secretary of State to Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, Washington, February 21, 1957, *FRUS*, *1955-1957*, Vol. XVII, Arab-Israeli Dispute 1957: 231-232. Dulles's letter answered back to Senator Johnson's one, dated February 11, 1957.

27. In December 1956, Dulles had already spoke to a member of Congress, James P. Richards (D.), telling him that the Executive was ready to present a military and economic cooperation program in the Middle East in order to make United States' role in the area more realistic, considering the missed opportunity to join the Baghdad Pact. The resolution authorized the President to use armed force to support any Middle East nation requesting assistance against attack from any country controlled by international communism. See Memorandum from the Director of the National Security Council Secretariat (Boggs) to the National Security Council Planning Board, September 5, 1957, *FRUS*, *1955-1957*: 582.

28. Moreover the Egyptian government had established on February 1, 1958 together with Syria the United Arab Republic and had refused with the other Arab States to negotiate a solution of the Arab refugee question and the water development project with Israel. Jerusalem stood as a divided city; Jews were denied access to their Holy Places, though Article VIII of the Israel-Jordan armistice agreement provided it. As to the Arab refugee question see Paper Prepared in the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, February 6, 1961; Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary for the Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (Talbot) to Secretary to State Rusk, May 1, 1961, *FRUS*, *1961-1963*, Vol. XVII, Near East, 1961-1962: 17, 95.

29. Memorandum of Conversation, January 9, 1961, ibid. 2.

30. Memorandum from the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to Senator J. William Fulbright, November 11, 1963, ibid. 775.

31. According to the Amendment, foreign aid, including agricultural sales, would be withheld from any country that was engaging in, or preparing for, aggressive military action against the United States or any country receiving American assistance.

32. See Letter from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (Talbot) to the Ambassador to the United Arab Republic (Badeau), *FRUS*, *1961-1963*, Vol. XVIII, Near East, 1962-1963: 824-825.

33. Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Arab Republic, January 28, 1965, 11:43 a.m., *FRUS*, *1964-1968*, Vol. XVIII, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1964-1967: 282.

34. Section 401 amended the 1954 Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act Section 107 (P.L. 480) in order to prevent any sale to U.A.R. in accordance with Title I of P.L. 480, till the moment the President had established that the sale was essential to the national interest, and that it took place for not more than a Fiscal Year.

35. See *Editorial Note*, *FRUS*, *1964-1968*: 492.

36. For a full account of the Kennedy Administration's Arms Sales to Israel see Ben-Zvi, *John F Kennedy;* De Luca 69-102.

37. See Schwam 16-23.

38. See Ben-Zvi, *Decade* 134.

39. Ibid.133.

40. Memorandum from the President's Deputy Special Counsel (Feldman) to President Johnson, May 11, 1964, *FRUS*, *1964-1968*: 122.

41. Memorandum from the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Komer) to President Johnson, February 8, 1966, ibid.: 543.

42. Ibid. 544.

43. Ibid. 545.

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OIL AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST 1928-1956

VALENTINA VANTAGGIO

"Oil enough oil, within our certain grasp seemed ardently necessary to our independence in the twentieth century"(97), wrote Herbert Feis, historian and for a time advisor to the State Department, in 1946, with a clear understanding of the extent to which national security would depend on oil from then on. Head of the Committee for International Policy on Oil during the war, he was convinced of the necessity for the United States to formulate a clear national policy on foreign oil. An aggressive nationalist policy might, in Feis's opinion, have provoked an oil war, while a conciliatory international policy would have been more costly than beneficial to the American population. In favour of internationalism, he insisted on reaching an agreement with Great Britain on oil, but at the same time he went ahead with a project that foresaw federal government acquisition of an oil company (Stoff 1).

The first attempt at defining an international American oil policy was sought during and after the First World War. The war had made the US aware of the indissoluble link between foreign sources of fuel and national security. The war had been won, in the words of Lord G. Curzon, on "a sea of oil," most of which had been American oil.[1] The post-war policy of the great powers, was, indeed, intimately linked to oil, in particular to Middle East oil. It was no longer individual businessmen but governments who were now involved in the fight for control of oil in the Middle East. Oil had become an essential part of national strategies. Realisation of this, expressed forcefully by the United States Navy, together with a growing anxiety regarding the possibility of running out of national oil resources, did not immediately initiate a real international policy on oil, but did push the State Department into diplomatically supporting American companies' attempts to obtain oil concessions overseas, in particular in the Middle East. These American oil companies, led by Walter Teagle, head of *Standard Oil of New Jersey*, accused the government of not being able to provide the diplomatic support that other countries, in particular Great Britain, had given to their European antagonists.

Initially, the support given by the government to the American oil companies working in the Middle East did not go beyond demanding an open-door policy: that is equal conditions of access both for capital and for American companies.[2] But the door to the Middle East was not completely open. Through establishing mandates in the territories of the Ottoman Empire European powers had succeeded in perpetuating the old colonial policy, defending their own interests in the region. Among these interests, undoubtedly, was oil, or rather the control of supply sources, which the Middle East is rich in. Thanks to the secret Sykes-Picot agreements, afterwards confirmed during the San Remo

conference of 1920, Great Britain reinforced its position in the Middle East, controlling a large part of Mesopotamia, and improved its position in the field of international oil, going from 5 to 50% of control of world oil production.

The American oil companies hit out against the British monopoly and against the "violation" of the open-door policy in the Middle East, denouncing the San Remo agreements as old style imperialism, which divided the Middle East into zones of Anglo-French influence and thus established the division of Mesopotamian oil between France and Great Britain, and also against the "nationality" clause, according to which, in countries under a British mandate, oil concessions could only be consigned to British nationals (Nash 55).

The American oil companies had a vital role in the slow process of defining, on the part of the American government, a real international oil policy. Even though the State Department shared some of their views regarding the nature of the nation's political economy and the importance of oil in deciding this, it did not always agree with their ways of going about things, or on the degree of influence that the government should exert. For leading American politicians guaranteeing access to fuel supplies abroad was a question of national security; for the oil companies it was a question of market and profit. Access to oil had to be obtained, according to the State Department, on the basis of antitrust policy, through the liberalisation of international commerce and the application of open-door principles; for the oil companies it was necessary to break down colonial barriers and gain access to new oil resources, if not for the present, as a defence in the future (Randall 10-11).

This collaboration, that was not without its difficulties, between the State Department and American oil companies, guaranteed in the 1920s and 1930s, on one hand, the entry of American capital into Middle East oil, with the Red Line agreement[3] and with the concession obtained from the *Arabian American Oil Company* in Saudi Arabia, and, on the other, recognition by the American government of the need to create an international oil policy, but more generally, to define American foreign policy, policy that would be more active and responsible at an international level, that would not only enforce those principles that had already been laid down by President W. Wilson in the Fourteen Points (1918) and confirmed in the Atlantic Charter (1941), but would also defend their own economic and strategic interests in regions that were perhaps remote but recognised as "vital" for the American nation's own security. Early American oil policy developed therefore through collaboration between the government and industry, collaboration for which the government had the job of facilitating the private sector's entry into the market abroad and of ensuring access to foreign resources, guaranteeing supplies to the United States.

The relationship between the American government and the oil companies, that began in the twenties, continued to develop in later years along clear lines. The American government, which considered Middle Eastern oil to be an important factor in the National Economy, and the basis of strategic considerations, supplied the oil companies with diplomatic aid, and guaranteed them commercial help, reiterating the necessity for

American companies to have equal access. The American companies, for their part motivated only by economic profit, found themselves negotiating not only with other European companies and businesses, but with the Middle Eastern countries themselves. In this way they opened up the way to United States political and economic involvement in the Middle East, a region which until the outbreak of the Second World War had been considered a European sphere of influence (Klebanoff 13-18).

The inter-war years were difficult for the American oil industry. The discovery of new oil wells in the south east of the country and the exploiting of Middle East oil in which American companies were involved, created a situation of overproduction not only in the United States but all over the world, with a successive drop in prices. In spite of various attempts made to remedy the situation, both on a national and international scale, total chaos reigned in both the American and the world oil industry. In addition to efforts made to regulate internal production, the leaders of the larger oil industries stated the necessity for greater international co-operation between producers and exporters, so as to contain world production, and a renewed collaboration between governments and industry that favoured the stabilisation of the oil industry (Stoff 58-69). An attempt to move in that direction was made by Roosevelt's Administration, and in particular by his Interior Secretary Harold L. Ickes. Roosevelt's *New Deal* aimed to overcome the depression, revitalise the economy and to "avoid a total collapse in the oil industry," through a series of government interventions aimed above all at stabilising the price of oil, at controlling production levels and at ensuring secure sources of fuel from abroad.

Franklin D. Roosevelt's *New Deal* favored the birth of a national oil policy and, with the outbreak of the Second World War, an international policy. Heavy American involvement in the war and fear of exhausting national oil resources forced the American government into carrying out a more active role in promoting the development of oil reserves abroad. Concern about a reduction in national oil reserves, recognition of the growing importance of having oil concessions abroad and American companies' faith in the initiative led to a debate between political leaders and industrial magnates on the nature of the United States foreign policy, on the role that the State should have in the private sector, and on the relationship between the major international oil powers (Randall 12). American policy on oil, which until that moment had been the prerogative of the State Department and had aimed at maintaining an open-door for American companies abroad, at giving diplomatic support to private industry in order to obtain concessions and at monitoring national and international oil resources, with the outbreak of the war needed to be rethought. The question of oil took on new meaning, and with this an important strategic role was assigned to the Middle East. In December 1940, Roosevelt defined the United States as "arsenal of democracy" and, the following March, with the approval of the Lend Lease Act, petroleum was one of the American products that was "lent" to the Allies. A new oil policy was necessary, and so was a new administrative organisation, within the American government, which could rationalise control of this new indispensable strategic

resource not only for the war effort, but also for the future of international relations. With the creation in 1942 of the *Petroleum Administration of War* (PAW), Harold Ickes took from the State Department control of questions of national and international oil policy and with the creation, the following year, of the *Petroleum Reserve Corporation* the divide became more and more evident. Ickes wanted an aggressive nationalist policy, based on effective federal control of international oil resources, while the Secretary of State opposed this with a conciliatory internationalist policy, based, instead, on close collaboration with Great Britain and respecting the principles of the Atlantic Charter.

Fear of exhausting oil resources pushed the American government into taking on a more active role in promoting the development of foreign fuel supplies, in particular in the Middle East. Indeed, based on a report prepared by the PRC, definite and probable reserves amounted to 25 million barrels, 20% of which were in Saudi Arabia alone: "The centre of gravity for world petroleum production had moved from the Caribbean Gulf to the Middle East," where it was to remain in the following years.[4] Soon the United States would no longer be oil exporters but, together with Europe, would have to depend on oil from the Middle East. Oil, therefore, was recognised not only as being strategically fundamental in winning the war, but also as being indispensable to national security and to post-war international predominance. A new American oil policy had to, in Harold Ickes's opinion, "to strengthen the position of the companies and of this government in those oil fields" through "participation by this government in the ownership of the two named companies or of their oil reserves in the Persian Gulf area."[5] He saw the only way of defending national interest to be through the American government's direct participation in exploiting oil resources through the acquisition of shares in American companies present in the Middle East and through investment in large projects, such as the construction of an oil refinery in Saudi Arabia and the construction of an oil pipeline that could guarantee the transportation of oil throughout the period of war operations.[6]

The State Department was of a different opinion; it thought that an aggressive stance from the United States in the Middle East would cause fighting over oil, compromising the course the war would take and the future of allied relations. On the contrary, an agreement with Her Majesty's government on oil would be useful in reaching the Americans' objectives: access to oil resources and stabilisation of the region. It would eliminate Anglo-American rivalry, and increase the revenue of local governments, who were oil producers, in this way helping to bring stability to the region. It would assure both allies of the oil availability necessary to their security and to constructing a future, lasting, peace.[7]

The international oil policy of the United States thus developed in two different directions. In the same period in which the State Department was promoting preliminary meetings with the English to reach an international agreement on oil, Harold Ickes was negotiating with American companies; with the *Standard Oil Company of California* and *Texas Company* (associates of SOCAL) which operated in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, and with the *Gulf Oil Company*, which operated in Kuwait, for the acquisition of shares

in the society, for a federal financing of the construction of a refinery in Saudi Arabia and for the construction of an oil pipeline to guarantee the transportation of Arab oil as far as the Mediterranean, where it would be shipped to Europe. But Ickes's project for direct State control of Middle East oil was short-lived. The American oil industry responded, above all the independent oil companies, with indignance and fear. The state was becoming a player in the field of oil business and, as a consequence, a dangerous rival on international markets. For the companies it was the first step towards federal control of the whole private sector and would lead to nationalisation, representing for them a real "threat to national security and a step towards fascism" (Yergin 340-342).

In the meantime, in a memorandum prepared by the State Department the objectives of American international oil policy were defined, with particular reference to the Middle East region, and ways of achieving them were suggested.

The necessity of implementing an "equal access clause" was repeated and the "principle of equal opportunity for American enterprise in exploration for additional source of supply of petroleum." It affirmed the need to draw up "a broad policy of conservation of Western Hemisphere petroleum reserves … in the interest of hemispheric security." The creation of a new oil policy would, it said, require some home and foreign policy measures to be implemented, such as 'curtailment' of the flow of petroleum and its products from western hemisphere sources to Eastern hemisphere markets," the "facilitation, by international agreement and otherwise, of substantial and orderly expansion of production in Eastern hemisphere sources of supply, principally in the Middle East" and, finally, the "removal, by international agreement or otherwise, of impediments to the exploitation of Middle Eastern concession held by United States nationals." The document, furthermore, suggested that the United States create a "system of collective security" in the Middle East region, so as to guarantee adequate protection of Arab oil, it called on the American government to "assure maximum economic benefits to the foreign areas in which petroleum is located" and it hoped to conclude an "international understanding concerning the development of Middle Eastern petroleum resources."[8] With regards to Middle East oil policy, the document stated that "the key points" must be (a) development and (b) assurance of adequate American participation in that development and, to this end an international agreement between the British and the American governments was indispensable. Internationalist policy, as desired by the Secretary of State, seemed to be the only way forward, after the failure of Ickes and of the PCR to guarantee international oil management, in particular in the Middle East.

Once again, an agreement with the English guaranteed the Americans access to Middle Eastern oil, but, in contrast with what had happened with the Red Line agreement, the *Anglo-American Petroleum Agreement*,[9] signed in August, 1944, was negotiated directly by the two governments. The main objectives were those of developing international oil commerce, of ensuring equal opportunities in obtaining new concessions and of ensuring a supply of sufficient quantities of oil to all the countries. The United States' objectives were

both to ensure itself a place in exploiting oil in the Middle East and to obtain political and legal recognition from Great Britain of the concessions that had already been guaranteed to American oil companies in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

However, Cordell Hull's attempt to formulate an American international oil policy based on international co-operation, like that of Harold Ickes before him, was destined to fail. The failure of the American Senate to ratify the agreement brought to an end the attempts made by Americans to introduce some kind of International Regulation of the oil industry in the Middle East. Indeed the conviction that oil development in a strategically important region like the Middle East should require international understanding between governments, consolidated by an agreement between the powers that had the greatest interest in Middle Eastern oil, clashed with and was destroyed by the suspicions and the fears expressed by the American oil industry, which feared that government intervention in international oil commerce constituted a dangerous precedent that would lead to a great deal of government interference, thus compromising the principles of free enterprise (Lenczowski 171-172). The agreement, in the opinion of American industry, went beyond the Federal Government's constitutional competence, favoring the creation of a central power that would regulate the entire national industry. The creation, in fact, of an International Commission on oil, foreseen in the agreement, with the job of evaluating world demand for oil and attributing, in accordance with various factors including economic ones, the different quotas of production for each country, risked, in the eyes of independent American producers, transforming itself into a big international oil cartel that would have endangered equal access principles to oil resources, guaranteeing production quotas to the big oil cartels and thus destroying small producers.

The non-ratification of the agreement also meant the end of internationalism in the development of oil resources in the post-war period, but above all it bore witness to the political failure of the federal government against American private enterprise. Whereas the American companies revealed themselves once more as capable of influencing American politics and of guaranteeing more stability in the international field of oil by private means than could be achieved with state support.

The American state would have intervened to support the companies following the war, not by offering diplomatic weight, as happened in the 20s and 30s, nor by proposing daring initiatives which compromised American free enterprise, but by creating a foreign defence policy for the Middle East, capable of defending American interests in the region. The strategic importance of oil and the huge potential of the Arab oil reserves acquired new meaning in the context of the Cold War, they contributed to defining the system of access to resources, an element of utmost importance to American and to Western security. Foreign policy, questions of international economy, national security and private sector interest all converged on oil. No American president would ever say again, as Roosevelt did in 1941, that Arabia was too far away. Arab oil had become indispensable, not only to national security, but also to a rapidly growing economy. For

the United States, defending oil resources in the Middle East was just as vital as defending independence in Western Europe (Yergin 352-366).

The 1950s saw the American private sector's growing involvement in exploiting Middle East oil, accompanied by a great deal of economic help being given by the government to most of the Middle Eastern countries. This increased American presence bore witness not only to the fact that the United States had substituted Great Britain in managing the region, but also to the fact that, the security of the Middle East, in particular of its oil plants, was indispensable to United States security and that of all the free world. The intensifying of the Cold War in fact, pushed the Americans to create a Middle East defence policy, based on a system of alliances: military and economic, bilateral and regional, that would at the same time prevent the Soviet Union from penetrating into the region, defend the important oil fields and stabilise the economic and political situation in the region (Campbell 11-28). The growing nationalist threat, that had spread throughout the Middle East, from Egypt to Iran, however, showed how difficult the United States' job would be, and underlined how the oil question had become, by then, an indispensable element in the process of defining American foreign policy in the Middle East.

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NOTES

1. For more than fifty years, the American oil industry was the world's largest oil producer, satisfying from 60 to 70% of world demand. In the first two years of the war alone, the United States supplied Britain with 80% of its oil.

2. Secretary Hughes to President Coolidge, November 8, 1923, in Hurewitz, II:80.

3. This agreement was signed 31st July 1928 between Royal-Dutch/Shell, APOC, CEP and Near East Development Corporation (NEDC), who received the same quota of petroleum (23.75%) supplied by the Turkish Petroleum Company concession assigned to them by the Iraqi King Faisal. The agreement contained an auto-exclusion clause according to which the companies agreed to colloborate in an pre-arranged area which included most of the Middle Eastern States, with the exceptions of Persia and Kuwait. For the text of the agreement see Hurewitz 161-176.

4. Preliminary Report of the Technical Mission to the Middle East, February 1, 1944, cit. in Anderson 35-36.

5. The Secretary of the Interior (Ickes) to the Secretary of State, January 7, 1944, in *Foreign Relation of United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1944,* Vol. V: 13-15 [hereafter cited as *FRUS*].

6. Cfr. *FRUS 1943*: 8-22.

7. The Secretary of State to the Chargé in Egypt (Jacobs), May 17, 1944, in *FRUS 1944,* Vol. V: 6.

8. Memorandum by the Inter-Divisional Petroleum Committee of the Department of State, April 11, 1944, in FRUS 1944, Vol. V: 27-33.

9. For the text of the agreement see Anderson 216.

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CONTAINING CONTAINMENT: AMERICAN PRESSURES AND ITALIAN RESPONSES DURING THE EARLY COLD WAR

MARIO DEL PERO

In this paper, I will try to examine the impact of the Cold War on the Italian political system. My objective is to understand how post World War II international dynamics interacted with Italian domestic politics, eventually influencing its evolution and consequently limiting Italy's sovereignty. A former enemy, punished with a severe peace treaty, Italy was rapidly transformed into a fully contributing member of the Atlantic anti-Communist community. Anti-Communism became the crucial principle of legitimacy that defined inclusion and exclusion within the international alliance of which Italy was a member; as such, it inevitably clashed with the Italian constitution, approved in 1948, that was explicitly based on the popular front experience of the resistance and post-war years, thus recognizing the political legitimacy of the Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*, PCI).

American attempts to solve once for all these contradictions, the efforts of the Christian Democrats (*Democrazia Cristiana*) to preserve the benefits gained after Italy's admission to the Western *communitas*, while preventing the country from being thrown into a new civil war, and PCI's ambiguous and ultimately self-defeating relation with Moscow are the aspects that will be considered in this paper. For this reason, the essay is divided into three distinct parts:

1. An analysis of the relations between the United States and its main Italian interlocutor, the DC, in the period that goes from 1947 to 1955.

2. A rapid examination of the PCI's strategy and of its dependency on the Soviet Union.

3. A final attempt to summarize the main elements that characterized the Cold War in Italy.

1. THE UNITED STATES AND THE DC

External and domestic factors determined the position of Italy in the new post-World War II international system. Italy became a natural member of the British-American sphere of influence as a consequence of both military operations and implicit geopolitical agreements between the allies. The successes of the pro-Western parties at the polls confirmed this outcome.

Nonetheless, DC leaders were extremely reluctant to understand the evolution of international affairs and the division of Europe into two antagonistic blocs. Nationalist *topoi*

still permeated the thinking of many Christian Democrats. In the immediate post-war years, the DC flirted with the idea, supported also by some Vatican circles, to create a neutral Christian Europe impermeable to the corrupting influence of the different, but equally unacceptable forms of modern barbarism represented by American and Soviet models. This nationalist milieu manifested itself also in the initial attempt (1946-47) of the De Gasperi governments to pursue a neo-mercantilist economic policy, intended to contain the country's exposure to international trade and post-war financial interdependence.

International and domestic difficulties obliged the Christian Democrats to attenuate their most extreme nationalist inclinations. In 1947, the political differences between the DC and the Left terminated the Italian experience of "popular frontism." The international financial crisis of 1946-47 showed the impracticability of neo-mercantilist panaceas. The radicalization of international tensions in Europe and the specter of a new conflict reminded Italy's governments of the absolute vulnerability of the country. The necessity to find an "external dispenser" of economic and military security led the DC leadership to moderate its "third-forcist" and nationalist tones. The years between 1947 and 1949 were thus characterized by the effort of the Italian government to be included in the strategic and economic interdependence developed within the Western bloc.

The DC rapidly abandoned its most high-sounding nationalist rhetoric. The progressive inclusion of Italy in the Western bloc led the United States and the DC to search an ideological convergence through the elaboration of a shared and often artificial Atlantic mythology. In the context of this analysis, however, two strictly interrelated aspects need to be emphasized. First, DC nationalism did not entirely disappear. In many ways the so-called phase of "invitation" ended once Italy was accepted into the Atlantic alliance, and in the following years the relation between Italy and the United States became much more dialectical. Second, even in these early years of the Cold War, American capacity to condition Italian affairs was very limited. The stubborn resistance of Italian political and economic elites often frustrated ambitious American projects to radically reform the Italian political and economic system. The first years of the Cold War in Italy (1947-1950), which I define as the period of positive containment, were thus characterized by very limited implementation of American plans for Italy.

a) *Positive containment, 1947-1950*[1]

American interpretation of Italy's problems during the first years of the Cold War can be defined as a form of "economic determinism." The origins of the Italian political situation and the success of the Communist ideology were considered to be mainly economic in nature. The strength of the PCI was interpreted by Washington in a double and ambivalent way: as the inevitable product of Italy's poverty and social backwardness, on the one hand, and as a subversive and mainly political phenomenon directed by the Muscovite headquarters on the other. In the late 1940s, however, the first interpretation was clearly predominant.

US officials believed that through the adoption of an a-conflictual model of industrial and economic relations, the presence of anti-systemic parties like the PCI would be reduced within the limits proper to any civil and democratic country. These projects represented the clear (and often naive) expression of a "New-Deal" mentality largely diffused among the officials of the agency in charge of administering the Marshall Plan (the Economic Cooperation Agency, ECA). They were based on the assumption the Italian government would use public investments (and the Marshall Plan funds) to compensate for the paucity of private investments. This assumption proved to be unfounded. De Gasperi opted for an ambiguous economic policy where anti-inflationary monetary policies combined with the protection of several sectors of the Italian economy: a strategy that was harshly criticized by the first ECA's report on Italy (the 1949 "Country Study") (Spagnolo).

The geopolitical experts of the department of State, who supported a more direct action against the PCI, often criticized the pedagogic and optimistic approach of the ECA's new dealers. However, in the phase of *positive containment* even the State Department European desk believed in the "transformational power" of the Western *communitas*. This was evident during the discussion preceding the ratification of the Atlantic Pact, the second pillar of the US strategy of containment. The inclusion of Italy in the alliance was one of the most debated and controversial issues. Those who opposed its admission stressed that Italy was politically unreliable, militarily weak, and geographically (when not culturally) outside the Atlantic perimeter. In other words, accepting Italy in the Atlantic community implied assuming the danger of introducing the "communist virus" inside the "healthy body" of the Western bloc.

Those within the US government who supported Italy's admission underlined how the exclusion of Italy would weaken the De Gasperi government and the pro-Western parties. But they also stressed the emancipatory effects assured to Italy by becoming a member of the Atlantic bloc: it represented for the Italian government a step toward reentering the international arena and reassuming its sovereignty. However, this emancipation was based on the willingness of the Italian government to accept the binary and dichotomous premises on which the Cold War rested.

During the first years of the Cold War, the divergences between ECA's "new dealers" and State Department geopolitical experts often impaired the consistency and effectiveness of American policy in Italy. Nonetheless, the plans of the two groups shared a common radicalism that stood in contrast to the process of political and economic stabilization promoted by the DC. With the intensification of Cold War tensions, the ambitious projects to promote a sweeping transformation of the Italian socioeconomic fabric were replaced by a more direct effort against the organizational structure of the PCI.

b) Negative containment, 1950-1953

During the last two years of the Truman administration the United States began to abandon an economic response to Italy's problems. The emphasis thus gradually shifted from a positive form of containment of Italian communism, largely based on an optimistic faith in the capacity of social and economic engineering to reduce and de-radicalize the level of political conflict, to a more dynamic and negative effort against the PCI, aimed at putting an end to the Italian anomaly, not by "curing" it, but, more simply, by "removing" it.

Following the inception of the Korean War, the United States intensified its pressures on Western European countries, asking for a greater participation in the common effort against the Soviet Union and international Communism. This new approach was matched by the request that local governments assume a more severe posture toward domestic "subversive" trade unions and political groups. The passivity of the Italian government in adopting more drastic action against the PCI, its conservative fiscal approach, and what was perceived as an insufficient commitment to Atlantic solidarity led many United States officials to criticize the Italian government and ask for a change of direction. These requests became more intensive during 1951-52, when the newly established Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) elaborated a plan for intervention in Italy that became known by the codename of *Demagnetize* (later *Clydesdale*). Based on the assumption that "the doctrine of economic determinism" was "too simple a hypothesis for France and Italy," these plans provided for a series of measures the Italian and French governments should undertake under the guidance of the United States aimed at "reducing the strength and appeal of Communist Parties in France and Italy, with the ultimate objective of outlawing them." These plans were extremely generic and vague. Besides, they were based on the unfounded assumption the Italian government would cooperate: its refusal to put in practice most of these projects thus exacerbated Washington's resentment and frustration.[2]

In Italy, the Truman administration left therefore a threefold legacy to its successor. First, the decision to adopt a more drastic approach vis-à-vis Italian Communism. Second, a difficult relation with Italy's government. Finally, a marked discrepancy between the absolute aims pointed out in American plans, and the means the United States effectively had in its hands to achieve such goals. The attempt of the Eisenhower administration to come to terms with these contradictions led to a further shift of policy: removing ("rolling back" in the rhetoric of the time) Communism from the outpost it had conquered in Italy became one of the objectives of the new "strategy of containment" promoted by Washington.

c) Roll back-Containment, 1953-55

The defeat of the governmental parties in the elections of June 1953 caused a further reappraisal of American policies in Italy. De Gasperi's successors followed in large

part his approach, which relied first and foremost on the maintenance of the DC's absolute centrality within the Italian political system. They did so, however, facing much more difficult circumstances, and in a party lacerated by internal struggles. As an outcome of the elections, the Christian Democrats lacked an absolute parliamentary majority like the one they had enjoyed between 1948 and 1953. In order to form one, it became necessary for the DC to enlarge the coalition to new actors, either on the Right (Monarchists) or on the Left (Socialists). An "opening to the left," namely to the Socialist Party (*Partito Socialista Italiano*, PSI), was inevitably hindered by the PSI's neutralism in international affairs, by its strong ties with the PCI, and, most of all, by intransigent American opposition toward the PSI.

The political instability following the elections of 1953 led Washington to opt for a radical change of direction, which implied both a greater interventionism in Italian domestic affairs and the adoption of a more critical and rigid attitude toward the traditional vehicle of United States policies in Italy, the DC. Accepting the premise that Italy was very close to falling prey to Communism it became necessary to promote what the new US Ambassador to Italy, Clare Boothe Luce, would soon call an "agonizing reappraisal" of American policy in Italy.[3] This reappraisal was based on four distinctive elements: (i) a more aggressive and unscrupulous use of American aid as an instrument of pressure; (ii) support for a possible shift to the right of the governmental coalition, either through an alliance of the DC with the more moderate and non-Fascist sectors of the Italian Right and/or through the mobilization of new groups not yet directly involved in Italy's political life; (iii) acceptance of the possibility of military intervention in Italy to prevent the potential accession to power of the PCI by legal (i.e.: electoral) means, or to repress an eventual Communist uprising, provoked by the government's adoption of U.S.-suggested anti-Communist measures; (iv) opposition to the DC Keynesian economic projects (the so called "Vanoni Plan").

Paradoxically, in this new approach and in the attempt pursued by Luce to encourage a political mobilization of Italy's entrepreneurial world, we can find many elements of continuity with the logic that inspired several ECA's officials in Italy. Luce shared with them the assumption that Italy's economic, social, and cultural fabric needed to be drastically transformed in order to save the country from Communism. The obvious difference consisted in the kinds of modifications she tried to promote.

The orthodox laissez-faire of Luce and of her main economic adviser, Henry Tasca, helps to explain their hostility toward the economic projects pursued after the war by the Social-Democratic and Christian-Democratic governments of several Western European countries. In the specific Italian case, Luce criticized the Italian policies of the Truman administration not only for not having used economic aid as a leverage ("a political weapon") to compel the adoption by the Italian government of discriminatory measures against the PCI and its militants, but also for their incapacity to promote "the enlargement of free enterprise areas in the economy." The main consequence - Luce argued -

was that of having allowed Italy to preserve the economic structure of the "corporate fascist state": "When we created [sic] the Italian republic we merely clapped Thomas Jefferson's political wig on Mussolini's economic skull."[4]

For these reasons the line followed by the Eisenhower administration in Italy can be considered a major departure from previous United States policies. This departure did not consist simply in a more radical anti-Communist attitude: American requests to outlaw the PCI had begun already in 1951. The major changes were instead in the effort to mobilize new political actors, in the endorsement of the possible "opening to the Right" of the Italian governmental majority, and in the rejection of corporatist economic formulas previously supported by some U.S. policymakers.

Again, the radicalism of American projects clashed against DC resistance. At the end of 1954, the new DC Prime Minister, Mario Scelba, finally approved a package of measures against the Communist party and trade unions that was largely modeled on United States plans for Italy. Scelba's decision, however, soon proved to be a cosmetic as much as desperate initiative undertaken in the vain attempt to consolidate his position at home, and his government fell a few months later. His successor, Antonio Segni, overcame Luce's objections and rapidly moved to revoke Scelba's decision.

Analogously, in the economic field, American opposition did not prevent the approval in late 1955 of the scheme of economic development elaborated by the DC. Its technical limits would soon manifest themselves in the inability of the plan to manage and control the impetuous and disorderly growth generated by Italy's economy during the second half of the 1950s. The economic development of Italy, therefore, took place within an "Italian pattern" that ended up exacerbating several historical distortions of which the country suffered, but did not immediately produce the political consequences United States officials feared.

2. THE SOVIET UNION AND THE PCI

For many years Italian leftist historiography has minimized the tie between the Italian Communist party and the Soviet Union or, at least, played down its importance in shaping the PCI's domestic political behavior. The alleged "Italian national road to socialism" theorized by Italy's postwar Communist leader, Palmiro Togliatti, has thus been described as an autonomously elaborated project aimed at offering a feasible alternative to the conservative path undertaken by the DC governments. Such a project, it has often been argued, was nonetheless doomed to fail because of systemic international constraints. Most of the new documentary evidence, however, does not support this interpretation. Alas, many recent studies have made a rough and clearly instrumental use of these new documents, presenting them as the unquestionable and ultimate proof the PCI was a subservient agent of Moscow, and, transforming the entire experience of Italian Communism into a mere projection of Soviet policy.

The rigidity of both the "autonomy" and the "externally-directed" interpretative models of the history of Italian Communism leads to simplistic and instrumental explanations. Understanding the reasons that led the PCI leadership not to break with Moscow is an indispensable step to comprehending how this influenced the domestic choices of the PCI and Italy's political system.

The link between the Soviet Union and the PCI guaranteed to the latter relevant financial, symbolic, and political rewards. Financially, the money coming from Moscow represented the most conspicuous source of income of the PCI and a vital element to match the resources assured to the DC by its control of the state apparatus and American backing. Crucial as it was to sustain the growing costs of politics, Soviet help became nonetheless a "double-edged weapon" for the PCI's leadership, exposing it to the constant blackmail of a possible reorientation of this help toward the most pro-Soviet elements of the party. Symbolically, the power of the Soviet myth in the immediate aftermath of World War II guaranteed to the PCI an invaluable instrument to capture the support of large strata of the Italian population. Politically, the opposition of Stalin to hazardous revolutionary actions in Italy and Soviet implicit recognition of Italy being part of the American sphere of influence allowed Togliatti to keep in check the "insurrectionalist" factions of the party. Paradoxical as it may appear, the moderating influence of the Soviet Union contributed to the ability of the PCI to contain the pressures of its radical minority.

The link with the Soviet Union represented therefore a "constant" in the history of the PCI. Consequently, the possibility for the PCI to reassume governmental responsibilities came to depend from the overcoming of what, in PCI jargon, was known as the *politica dei blocchi*, namely the bipolar division of the European continent. Since international bipolarism proved to be systemically very stable, at least in Europe, the only other alternative path left to the PCI was to try to exploit any relaxation in international tensions to re-form a coalition government with the DC.

Quite paradoxically, the tie between the Italian Communist Party and the Soviet Union made the PCI dependent not so much on eventual changes in the Soviet attitude toward Italian affairs, but instead on the evolution of the international and European situation (and therefore on American foreign policy), and the choices of the Christian Democrats.

By not breaking with Moscow, PCI freedom of action was severely circumscribed. This happened, however, not because the party was transformed into a docile and obedient puppet of the Soviet Union, but, more simply, because any possible assumption of governmental responsibility by the PCI was subordinated to changes that could be brought about only by external agents. The end of bipolarism, either through détente or the collapse of one of the two poles, and/or DC willingness to cooperate with the PCI were the two essentially independent prerequisites to a Communist participation in the Italian government. A "double dependency" of the PCI on the DC on one side and the

direction of U.S. foreign policy on the other was thus ironically nourished by the USSR-PCI tie, and contributed in its way to further consolidating the domestic political hegemony of the Christian Democrats.

PCI's absolute dependency on these external variables was noticeably evident in the three different phases of containment (positive containment, negative containment, and roll-back containment) of the period 1947-1955.

a) Positive containment, 1947-1950

The reaction of the PCI to the U.S. strategy of *positive containment* was adamantly hostile. However, the hostility to the most innovative and reformist elements of U.S. policy, and the Marshall plan in particular, was bound to be rejected by Italian voters and thus inevitably self-defeating.

In 1947-49, the intensification of bipolar tensions, the creation of the Cominforn, and the tightening of Soviet control over Western European Communist parties led the PCI to escalate the level of political and social conflict. Radical and counterproductive as it was, the PCI's maximalist stance privileged propaganda over action. Even in the moments of maximum tension, the PCI continued to operate within the boundaries fixed by the democratic constitution. While a virulent propaganda was used to exalt the image of a structural diversity of Italian communism, the decision to remain within the strict limits of a verbal maximalism confirmed once more the anti-insurrectionalist commitment of Togliatti (Pons).

Thus, between 1947 and 1950 the strategy of the Italian Communist Party was at the same time maximalist, propagandistic, self-defeating, and defensive. It was maximalist in its lexicon and contents. It was exclusively propagandistic in its instruments and forms, despite the pressures for action coming from part of the PCI's base. It was self-defeating, because there was no possibility of opposing much needed American economic aid without paying a high price at the polls. Finally, it was defensive and reactive, because it represented a response to successful initiatives taken by others.

b) Negative containment, 1950-1953

The shift in the American strategy of containment, undertaken in 1950-51, represented a major threat to the survival of the PCI. At the same time, however, this shift offered to the PCI the possibility to partially re-enter Italy's political interplay. The progressive militarization of American foreign policy that followed the inception of the Korean war allowed the Western European communist parties, and the PCI in particular, to effectively embrace the cause of peace, promoting a highly successful campaign. Despite the clearly instrumental support of the Soviet Union, the peace movement of the early 50s was able to exploit the strong anti-War feelings of large sectors of the European population and the growing fear of a nuclear war.

Analogously, in the domestic field the PCI was able to present itself as the politi-

cal force defending the constitutional rights now menaced by American pressures. In the early 1950s Cold War dynamics and American choices in Italy were thus paradoxically helping the transformation of the PCI into the Italian "constitutional party" par excellence.

c) Roll-back containment, 1953-1955

PCI's behavior in the phase of roll-back containment was in many ways similar to that of the period 1950-1953. The harshly anti-Communist crusade promoted by U.S. ambassador Clare Boothe Luce and the growing strength of the Italian Right reinforced the democratic credentials of the PCI. After 1953, the main problem for the PCI was the marginalization of De Gasperi within the DC, and the consequent opening of a struggle for his succession. Several DC leaders lacked the commitment of De Gasperi to the defense of the constitution. The previously mentioned "anti-Communist package of actions" approved by the Scelba government in December 1954 was largely a photocopy of the U.S. plans. While its half-hearted implementation exacerbated Washington's resentment and barely affected PCI's organizational structure, the PCI used the episode to denounce the illiberal nature of the Christian Democrat regime and to pose itself once more as the real defender of political liberties and constitutional rights.

When the first phase of international détente began to influence even Italy's political climate, the PCI was finally able to abandon an exclusively antagonistic stance toward the DC, and take advantage of the credibility and legitimacy gained after 1950. The PCI was able to reassume an indirect, but nonetheless significant, role in policy-making. This happened primarily through the administration of several important cities. But the new role of the PCI was also evident in its increasing participation in the legislative activity of the Italian parliament. In the second half of 1955, Communist and Socialist parliamentarians often voted along with their Christian Democrat colleagues: a fact frequently overlooked by Italian historiography, but indignantly denounced at the time by Clare Boothe Luce. This first moment of cooperation between the DC and the PCI was extremely significant: it showed again that any accession to power of the PCI could take place only in a subaltern role.

3. THE COLD WAR AND THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

The first aspect I want to underline is represented by the "clash" between the radicalism of American plans for Italy, and the conservatism of the DC political project. By radicalism, I mean the assumption that Italy needed a drastic transformation of its political, economic, social, and cultural fabric in order to become a fully legitimate member of the Atlantic *communitas*. Such an assumption characterized the Italian policy of Washington. It was shared, from opposite perspectives, both by ECA's new-dealers, and by laissez-faire and anti-Communist libertarians such as Clare Boothe Luce and Henry Tasca. In both instances, the Italian particular was rapidly inscribed in a Western universal,

consequently losing its historical, political, and cultural peculiarities. However, this radicalism collided with the intrinsic conservatism of the centrist and moderate stabilization promoted by the Christian Democrats. The DC hegemonic project was based first and foremost on the capacity to contain drastic fractures with the old order. Containing discontinuity (and, consequently, "containing containment") was a crucial precondition of the stabilization promoted by the DC.

The "containment of containment" of the Christian Democrats was not caused only by the incompatibility between American reformist goals and DC conservatism. Political opportunism certainly helps to explain the lukewarm reception given by Christian Democratic representatives to American pressures. Guaranteed American economic support and military protection, Christian Democrats consistently followed a *do ut des* logic, frequently modeling their Atlanticism to the possibility of obtaining additional aid and concessions from Washington. This strategy could be implemented only by preserving the presence of a strong Communist Party, which obliged the U.S. to support the DC, consequently strengthening its hold on political power. Ambassador Luce was therefore right in denouncing the feeble participation of the Italian Christian Democracy in the U.S.-led anti-Communist crusade.

But opportunism was not the only motivation. The DC's actions originated also from the desire to safeguard Italy's constitutional democracy. De Gasperi and many others within the DC were aware that the Cold War imperatives of the anti-Communist struggle could provoke an authoritarian regression in Italy. Even in the tensest moments of the Cold War, Christian Democracy never ceased considering the PCI as a legitimate enemy to be defeated rather than eliminated, as the United States would have wished.

Finally, I don't believe the PCI was simply a passive actor, impeded from undertaking governmental responsibilities by inescapable systemic constraints. While international structural conditions did in effect prevent the PCI from re-entering the government after 1947, the PCI's choices were central in shaping and determining those conditions. The link with Moscow tied the eventual return to power of the PCI to a highly unlikely overcoming of the bipolar division of Europe or to the DC's acceptance of the PCI as an inevitably subordinate and junior ally.

The issue of the dependency of the PCI on external variables is therefore crucial to understanding the influence exercised by international dynamics on the evolution of the Italian political system. But the PCI's real dependency was not on the Soviet Union. The PCI represented for Moscow primarily a propagandistic tool: a useful outpost in the citadel of Western capitalism, but not an instrument to alter what Soviet leaders considered a very convenient equilibrium in the European continent.

The link with the Soviet Union made the PCI absolutely vulnerable to two other external variables: American foreign policy and the DC's decisions. Christian Democratic policies were crucial to the PCI not just because the only option left to re-enter the

government was in a PCI-DC *Grobekoalition*, but also because the survival of the Italian Communist party came to depend on the capacity and the willingness of the DC to continue to recognize the PCI as a legitimate enemy and to contain American pressures.

Hence, the structural subalternity of the PCI. By "containing containment," the DC was able to consolidate its hegemony and its almost monopolistic control of the state apparatus, exploiting the latter to extend the former. This monopoly of power was intrinsically conducive to corruption, and to the further consolidation of the Left's subaltern role in the Italian political system. But it also contributed in many ways to the preservation of Italy's constitutional democracy. Only by understanding these contradictions, we can try to assess the results of the DC's strategy to "contain containment," and to fully comprehend the experience of Italian democracy during the Cold War.

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NOTES

1. The term "containment" is used here as a convenient catchall formula to indicate American anti-Communist strategy. See Gaddis.

2. "French and Italian elections," 6 July 1951, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri (hereinafter HSTL), Staff Member and Office Files: Psychological Strategy Board Files (hereinafter SMOF-PSB), Box 11, folder: 091.4 Europe File # 1 [2 of 2]; PSB, "Psychological Operations Plan for the Reduction of Communist Power (Code Name: Demagnetize)," 21 February 1952, HSTL, SMOF, PSB, Box 7, folder: 091 Italy - File #1 [3 of 3].

3. Luce to Bedell Smith, 8 April 1954, United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), VI: 1952-54,* US Government Printing Office, Washington DC, 1987, 1672.

4. Clare Boothe Luce to Eisenhower, April 1955, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene Kansas, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 33, Folder: Italy (7).

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WORKSHOP TWELVE
"WARS THEY HAVE SEEN": AMERICANS IN MEDITERRANEAN CONFLICTS

CHAIR: GABRIELLA FERRUGGIA, MASSIMO RUBBOLI

The focus of Workshop 13, "'Wars They Have Seen': Americans in European Conflicts", was American involvement in Mediterranean Wars. Two papers were concerned with war novels. While Gabriella Ferruggia's "'*One Writer's Initiation*': John Dos Passos and World War I" underlined the connection between experiencing war and writing, Seçkin Ergin's "Impressions of Italian Art on the American Soldier in the Novels of World War II" dealt with the re-definition of identity suffered by the American soldier during his encounters with a new culture. Ergin's concern was with several novels by ex-soldiers, such as A. Hayes, J.H. Burns and J. Hersey. Other four papers dealt with historical aspects of that involvement. Luigi Bruti Liberati presented a paper on the main features of the periodical *Stars and Stripes*. Augusta Molinari discussed the methodological problems involved in the study of the "Italian Prisoners of War between History and Memory." Oliviero Bergamini and Ilaria Favretto, in a work in progress soon to be published in book form, examined the image of Italy and Italians in the reports of the Psychological Warfare Branch from 1943 to 1945. Finally, Massimo Rubboli's paper focused on the relief work of American voluntary organizations at the end of World War II.

Università degli Studi di Genova

THE STARS AND STRIPES E LA CAMPAGNA D'ITALIA DALLA SICILIA A ROMA 1943-1944

LUIGI BRUTI LIBERATI

Nella Prima Guerra Mondiale la voce della American Expeditionary Force in Europa era stato *The Stars and* Stripes, pubblicato a Parigi. Il giornale uscì dall'8 febbraio 1918 al 13 giugno 1919. Al foglio collaborarono alcuni dei futuri migliori talenti letterari americani, incluso Harold Ross, il creatore di *The New Yorker.*

Durante la Seconda Guerra Mondiale, come conseguenza del dispiegamento di truppe americane nel Regno Unito all'inizio del 1942, si sentì la necessità di un nuovo giornale per i soldati oltremare. A Londra venne costituito un gruppo di lavoro guidato dal maggiore Ensley M. Llewellyn, che aveva fatto esperienza editoriale a Tacoma, nello stato di Washington. Al suo staff furono assegnati i soldati Benny Price e Mark Martin, entrambi in precedenza giornalisti al *Des Moines Register*. La decisione definitiva per l'uscita del giornale fu presa nel mese di aprile, dopo la visita in Gran Bretagna del Capo di Stato Maggiore George C. Marshall. Il generale assicurò il suo appoggio all'iniziativa sin dal primo numero e ne sottolineò l'importanza:

> Like any other veteran of the AEF in France, I am delighted to welcome the new version of *The Stars and Stripes*… I wish the staff every success in this important venture. Their responsibility includes much more than the publication of a successful newspaper. The morale, in fact the military efficiency of American soldiers in these islands, will be directly affected by the character of the new *The Stars and Stripes.*[1]

All'inizio si trattò di un settimanale di quattro pagine, con una diffusione di 5.000 copie, ma nel giro di poco tempo la tiratura aumentò in modo esponenziale. Nell'estate la circolazione raggiunse le 100.000 copie e il giornale arrivò a impiegare alcune decine di redattori. Nel mese di novembre la redazione trovò una sede appropriata in alcuni uffici lasciati liberi a Londra dal *Times* e infine il 2 novembre 1942 il giornale divenne quotidiano. Quello stesso mese, dieci componenti della sua redazione parteciparono agli sbarchi alleati in Nord Africa durante l'operazione *Torch*. Poco tempo dopo, a Natale 1942, questo gruppo di soldati-giornalisti iniziò a pubblicare un'edizione ad Algeri. Fu questa la prima delle 25 differenti edizioni di *The Stars and Stripes* pubblicate in tutto il corso della guerra. Quella di Algeri accompagnò le truppe in Sicilia, in Italia e in Francia. Fu considerata ben presto la migliore e la più onesta tra le edizioni di *The Stars and Stripes*. La redazione era continuamente nei guai con i comandi superiori. Proprio questo testimoniava del suo approccio diretto e disincantato alla realtà della guerra.

Il nuovo *The Stars and Stripes* differiva molto dal suo predecessore del 1918. Quel giornale, il cui motto era "This is your paper," era stato molto apprezzato dalle truppe,

nonostante il suo carattere intellettuale. Si trattava però di un foglio sostanzialmente d'élite, che aveva lo scopo di elevare la cultura dei giovani soldati. Il suo contenuto era principalmente letterario e lo stile degli articoli era decisamente "alto." Nel 1942 serviva qualcosa di completamente diverso. Con milioni di americani di tutti i ceti sotto le armi, il giornale delle forze armate doveva essere capace di parlare a tutti con il loro linguaggio. La storia da coprire era tutto sommato una sola: la guerra e gli uomini che la combattevano. Per fare questo si doveva abbandonare ogni velleità letteraria e raccontare la dura realtà della battaglia attraverso le parole dei soldati. Si dovevano affrontare verità anche scomode, urtandosi così con la censura e la suscettibilità dei generali. Questo era il prezzo da pagare per fare un giornale che gli uomini potessero sentire come proprio. I redattori potevano però contare su di un valido aiuto. Il generale Dwight Eisenhower sosteneva in pieno il loro approccio disincantato e poco convenzionale alle notizie. In questo senso è emblematica la testimonianza di Andy Rooney, un giovane soldato privo di esperienza aggregato alla redazione nel 1943:

Eisenhower was just an amazing hero to us. That he would give us this licence to be journalists was incredible. He just understood that it was better for everybody if people trusted the paper as being an honest work of newspapermen rather than a house organ. Inevitably, brigadier generals and colonels were coming to us and pleading with us that their troops needed a morale boost and please do this story about them. Maybe they were right, maybe it would have boost their morale. But we did not do those stories. We had this great pronouncement from Eisenhower, we were under his protective custody.[2]

Questo saggio, che si basa sulla consultazione dell'edizione di Algeri, vuole dare alcuni esempi significativi dell'atteggiamento e della mentalità dei soldati americani durante la campagna d'Italia attraverso le parole del loro giornale. L'analisi è concentrata sul periodo dal luglio 1943 al giugno 1944, sino alla liberazione di Roma. Già alla vigilia dell'invasione risultava chiaro l'approccio del tutto antiretorico del giornale. I redattori erano tra i soldati e registrarono in modo vivace e realistico il loro stato d'animo. Dopo lo sbarco, avrebbero descritto la "scoperta dell'Italia" da parte dei giovani GI. La Sicilia e i siciliani stupivano i nuovi arrivati. Ben presto questi si accorsero che l'immagine da cartolina illustrata dell'Italia era del tutto irrealistica e che non solo quel paese era difficile da comprendere, ma che la lotta sarebbe stata assai dura.

Il soldato Jack Foisie, prima della guerra giornalista al *The Los Angeles Times*, passò alcune ore tra le truppe aviotrasportate che si preparavano a partire per la loro prima missione di guerra. Lo stile dell'articolo è scarno. Questi paracadutisti erano ragazzi che, dopo tanta attesa e preparazione, aspettavano di lanciarsi nell'ignoto. Non sapevano se avrebbero avuto di fronte i temibili tedeschi o i poco bellicosi italiani. La descrizione di Foisie cattura perfettamente l'atmosfera d'attesa:

Advanced Airfield, North Africa, July 9 (delayed) - American paratroopers who will be landing amid the enemy in Sicily less than an hour from now are ready.

This is the moment they have long awaited. There is a year of concentrated training behind them. Many of them will now get their first taste of war - of the toughest kind - the invasion of Europe. They are lounging in the shadow of the wings of the big transports which will carry them over the black shadowed Mediterranean to carefully designed dropping zones.
But not until this morning were they told "Tonight is it." They cheered that announcement and at least one good crack came from the ranks - "Hurrah! No more C rations" (Men carry D and K ration packages into battle).
But the bivouac atmosphere remained businesslike and grim. No boasts, no doubts, no horseplay, no heroics. The Yanks were ready and confident.[3]

Molti di questi soldati non avrebbero mai più mangiato razioni C. L'operazione aviotrasportata si risolse in un disastro. Gli equipaggi degli aerei erano poco addestrati e solo alcuni disponevano di buoni navigatori. I venti in quota e altri errori fecero il resto. Come se non bastasse, la stessa contraerea navale alleata aprì il fuoco contro la forza aerea d'invasione. Come risultato, otto aerei furono abbattuti e le formazioni si dispersero, sganciando i paracadutisti lontano dai loro obiettivi.

Alla vigilia dell'attacco, anche il famoso corrispondente di guerra Ernie Pyle era tra i marinai della flotta d'invasione. Le sue impressioni erano molto simili a quelle di Foisie. Il giornalista si trovava in mezzo a "normali" ragazzi americani che parlavano della loro vita e delle loro aspettative. Questo articolo è notevole per l'assoluta mancanza di retorica patriottica:

The night before we sailed I sat in the darkness of the forward deck helping half a dozen sailors eat a can of stolen pineapple. Some of the men of our little group were hardened and mature. Others were almost children. They all talked seriously and their gravity was touching. The older ones tried to rationalise how the law of averages made it unlikely our ship out of all the hundreds in action would be hit. They spoke of the inferiority of the Italian fleet and they argued pro and con whether Germany had some hidden Luftwaffe up her sleeve she might whisk out to destroy us. Younger ones spoke but little. They talked to me of their plans and hopes for going to college or getting married after the war, always epilogued by the phrase: "If I get through this fracas alive"… I never heard anybody say anything patriotic like the storybooks have people saying. There was philosophizing but it was simple and undramatic. I'm sure no man would have stayed ashore if given the chance. There was something bigger than the awful dread that would have kept them there. With me it probably was an irresistible egotism in seeing myself part in the historic naval movement. With others it was, I think, just the application of plain, ordinary, unspoken, even unrecognized patriotism. (Pyle 139-40)

Una volta sbarcati in Sicilia, gli americani furono favorevolmente sorpresi dalla scarsa resistenza offerta dagli italiani. Un soldato descrisse questa situazione dandone un'interpretazione politica e psicologica. Il popolo italiano non aveva voluto veramente la guerra e nei confronti dell'America non vi era affatto ostilità:

Although the fighting is now in their homeland, they seem no different from thousands of prisoners I have seen in Libya. There has been the same lack of interest in the war and the same apparent relief that for them it is now all over.

Most of them displayed a pathetic admiration for America - so many of them have friends and relations there.[4]

Un altro giornalista, Alan Humphreys, intervistò il capitano James Pennie. L'ufficiale dava un'immagine vivace di quella strana guerra:

One minute the men were fighting forward, five minutes later they were giving cigarettes to prisoners; five minutes after that they were pacifying nearby women and children as Axis aircraft swept over, too late to save the batteries.
Opposition was chiefly encountered by artillery; the Italian infantry was as fight shy as at the start of the invasion. We fired a few shots and out came the white flags.[5]

Nelle descrizioni di *The Stars and Stripes* riguardo ai nemici si mescolavano accenti diversi. Da un lato si riscontrava l'adesione al vecchio stereotipo "gli italiani non si battono." In altri casi si notava al fondo una certa simpatia per un popolo che era stato traviato dai capi fascisti. Con una pesante ironia si ricordava l'appello fatto da Mussolini alle sue truppe prima dello sbarco: "I am with you in spirit in your magnificent fight for the defense of Fatherland".[6]

Il giornale commentava che doveva proprio essere un grande conforto per i difensori della Sicilia avere il proprio capo con loro… in spirito. Per tenere alto il morale delle truppe non mancavano però articoli nei quali si mettevano in ridicolo i soldati italiani:

With U.S. Parachutists, Sicily July 16 - Two American parachutists, a Sgt. Rosenkrantz and Cpl. Lee Black, captured 200 Italian soldiers in Sicily. They began by being captured themselves when they stumbled in the Italians. Then the Italians held a conference and decided that they would surrender to the two Americans.
After that everyone dined, wine being provided by the mayor of the village. At dawn next day the Italian colonel paraded his 200 men and, with the two Americans at their head, they marched to headquarters and surrendered.[7]

Tuttavia, vi erano anche italiani che volevano combattere contro il fascismo. Furono segnalati diversi casi di soldati che, dopo essersi arresi, dichiararono di volersi unire alle truppe alleate per liberare la Sicilia.[8] Non solo. *The Stars and Stripes* diede anche ampia notizia della protesta contro la guerra da parte dei lavoratori italiani:

Italian workers are demonstrating against the war in factories at Milan and Turin and street demonstrations have taken place in Bologna and Florence. The demonstrators were only dispersed when the police threatened to fire on them according to travellers from Northern Italy reaching Switzerland.[9]

In generale si può dire che dopo i primi giorni di combattimenti il giornale pose l'accento sulle differenze tra gli italiani e i tedeschi e sulla vera e propria ostilità che i primi sentivano verso i loro cosiddetti alleati.

Quali fossero i sentimenti dei siciliani verso le truppe alleate fu ben presto confermato durante la rapida avanzata nell'isola. L'ormai traballante regime di Mussolini non

era più in grado di esercitare alcuna influenza sulla popolazione e i giornalisti-soldati registravano con esattezza questo stato d'animo. Quando la notte del 22 luglio il generale George Patton entrò a Palermo, lo fece tra l'entusiasmo di gente che si sentiva non sconfitta, ma liberata dall'incubo della guerra. Alexander Clifford descrisse questa atmosfera con grande efficacia, ma anche con un certo sarcasmo:

> If only Mussolini could have seen what I have seen this evening - Palermo, capital of Sicily, welcoming with delirious enthusiasm the army that had bombed and conquered it.
> Palermo is the biggest enemy city the Allies have yet captured in the war, and in one brief hour its people shed 20 years of Fascist propaganda and welcomed the Americans like beloved heroes… Everyone was there, the women in their best clothes, and all of them seemed completely hysterical. They screamed and shouted and clapped and waved flags all at once. They grabbed you as you passed and ran alongside to shake you by the hand. On the least encouragement they kissed you… If you spoke three words of Italian you were lost. You had to listen to a thousand stories about what they had suffered and why they were glad to see us and how they had been waiting.[10]

Il giornale delle forze americane non si limitava però a pezzi "di colore." Condurre la guerra in Italia implicava per gli Alleati risvolti politici e psicologici che andavano al di là delle pure considerazioni militari. Una questione particolarmente delicata era quella relativa alla città di Roma. Doveva la capitale italiana essere considerata un legittimo obiettivo di guerra, e quindi essere sottoposta a bombardamenti aerei? Il problema era stato ampiamente discusso per almeno un anno dai governi e dai comandi britannici e americani, senza però giungere a delle conclusioni operative. I feroci attacchi subiti da Londra e da altre grandi città europee all'inizio del conflitto sembravano giustificare l'abbandono di qualunque restrizione nell'uso dell'arma aerea contro la "Città Eterna." D'altro canto, era chiaro che motivi religiosi e culturali andavano contro l'adozione di tale misura. Alla fine i dubbi vennero sciolti e il 19 luglio Roma venne pesantemente bombardata. Oltre ai nodi ferroviari e alle installazioni industriali, venne colpito anche il quartiere popolare di San Lorenzo e si ebbero 1.500 morti tra la popolazione civile. La decisione del Comando Alleato venne all'epoca presentata come dovuta a motivi esclusivamente militari, ma si seppe poi che si era trattato di una mossa politica intesa ad accelerare la crisi interna del sistema fascista.

Nella strategia della campagna d'Italia, il bombardamento di Roma rappresentava tutto sommato un dettaglio poco rilevante. È però importante analizzare la copertura che *The Stars and Stripes* diede all'avvenimento. Da questo episodio è possibile cogliere alcuni dei punti forti del giornale. Sarebbe stato facile liquidare l'attacco come un'azione bellica necessaria e limitarsi a metterne in luce gli aspetti positivi nella guerra contro gli italiani. Non fu così. La redazione si rendeva perfettamente conto che ai propri lettori-soldati la pura e semplice notizia non era sufficiente. Ai tanti cattolici andava spiegato perché la sede del Pontefice era stata colpita. E in generale bisognava tenere conto che il mettere in pericolo una città considerata patrimonio dell'intera umanità era qualcosa che ripugnava alla coscienza di moltissimi americani che vestivano la divisa. Dunque il gior-

nale dell'esercito dedicò ampio spazio alla vicenda pubblicando dei veri e propri editoriali in cui la questione di Roma venne analizzata nei suoi molteplici aspetti. Il 20 luglio 1943, sotto il titolo scarno "Rome Bombed," uscì un lungo articolo che, pur mettendo in evidenza l'effetto positivo del raid, dava conto delle sue implicazioni più complesse:

To the idealists who sincerely advocated "no bombing" we say that the raid was as fair as anything can be in war, which, by its very nature, is basically unfair in every aspect. The raid was preceded by the dropping of leaflets warning Romans that the attack was coming. The attack was made in daylight. The target area, containing key rail centers and certain war industries, was distant from the "cultural area of the city." Your historic monuments and shrines were safe.[11]

È senza dubbio raro trovare in una pubblicazione per i soldati un giudizio così drastico sulla natura della guerra ("unfair by its very nature"), ma *The Stars and Stripes* era un giornale per molti versi anomalo. Ciò che comunque non mancava ai suoi redattori era la professionalità. Il giorno dopo, un altro articolo passava in rassegna le reazioni della stampa americana al bombardamento e non veniva taciuto il giudizio negativo del *San Francisco Chronicle*, che parlava di "error of judgement."[12]

Le operazioni militari in Italia erano cominciate sotto i migliori auspici. Dopo lo sbarco in Sicilia del 9 luglio le truppe americane e britanniche impiegarono ben poco tempo ad avere ragione della resistenza nemica. L'11 agosto le forze tedesche cominciarono a evacuare l'isola, e quando il 17 le avanguardie alleate entrarono trionfalmente a Messina il nemico si era ormai ritirato attraverso lo stretto. Stava ora per cominciare la campagna sulla penisola italiana e questa volta gli Alleati avrebbero dovuto affrontare gravissime difficoltà per arrivare alla vittoria finale. Con l'inasprirsi della lotta, il ruolo dei giornalisti diveniva molto più importante. Non si trattava più di raccontare una semplice "passeggiata militare," ma di dare conto della dura realtà di una guerra sporca e poco gloriosa che logorava i combattenti. Per la retorica patriottica restava davvero poco spazio. Il 9 settembre 1943 gli Alleati sbarcarono a Salerno e iniziarono la lunga e faticosa risalita della penisola.

Paul Green, uno dei migliori giornalisti di *The Stars and Stripes*, arrivò sulla spiaggia di Salerno pochi giorni dopo lo sbarco, il 13 settembre. Green, arruolatosi nel luglio 1942, seguì le truppe americane in Nord Africa e in Italia sino alla liberazione di Roma. Coprì poi le operazioni in Francia e l'avanzata americana sino alla resa della Germania. Dopo la guerra proseguì la sua carriera di giornalista e pubblicò nel 1999 un libro di memorie in cui raccolse la maggior parte degli articoli scritti tra il 1942 e il 1945. Lo stile di Green rifletteva perfettamente l'approccio di *The Stars and Stripes* alla guerra. Oggetto della sua attenzione erano gli uomini e la realtà quotidiana che essi dovevano affrontare. Dei combattimenti intorno a Salerno raccontò in presa diretta l'esperienza dei soldati:

I tag along with two columns of infantry… We stop for a short rest under the trees. Suddenly big guns roar nearby. We tense. Somebody says, managing a chuckle: "Those are ours." We relax. For a few minutes the Gis talk about their favorite topic - home.

"If I was back in Ohio, right now I'd be…"
We are up on our feet and off again… No one speaks. The only noise is the crunch of leather against rock, heavy breathing and the swish of water in canteens. More farmhouses. More farmers. More chickens. Life goes on, even in war… Two litter bearers carrying a stretcher round the corner above us. One man, dog-tired, slips and falls, and the wounded man slides to the ground. Two of our men rush forward and help set up the stretcher again. An improvised truck-ambulance is literally pushed uphill and other wounded are loaded on. They had been hit mostly by shrapnel but several by snipers. (Green 267-69)

Si ha qui un tipico esempio di come era scritto *The Stars and Stripes*. Anzitutto il giornalista era assieme alle truppe e ne condivideva la vita, se necessario impugnando il fucile. Poteva dunque raccontare le sue storie dal punto di vista dei soldati proprio perché era uno di loro. Ecco dunque un articolo fatto di piccoli dettagli (la fatica, la paura, i brevi momenti di riposo) e che fotografa perfettamente la vita della fanteria. Non c'è bisogno di descrivere grandi fatti d'armi per narrare la guerra. L'immagine dell'infermiere stravolto dalla fatica mentre soccorre un suo compagno è altrettanto efficace di quella di uno scontro a fuoco. Leggendo pezzi come questo, scritti tra l'altro con grande professionalità, è facile capire perché il giornale fosse popolare e apprezzato tra le truppe, soldati e ufficiali allo stesso modo.

Tra i giornalisti di guerra, Ernie Pyle divenne in breve tempo il più celebrato, grazie ai suoi articoli sulle campagne in Nord Africa e in Italia. Per *The Stars and Stripes*, Pyle era l'esempio migliore di come si dovesse svolgere quella professione. Nel dicembre 1943 era ormai famosissimo negli Stati Uniti, anche grazie ai libri in cui aveva raccolto i suoi articoli, e il giornale decise di dedicargli ampio spazio. Quello che venne messo in luce fu il modo in cui il giornalista faceva il suo lavoro:

Whatever advantages Ernie Pyle finds in his new fame are more than deserved if the opinion of the soldiers in the ETO is any criterion. While here Ernie made a point of shunning the comfortable places, preferring instead the cold, dank tents of a field unit or a lonely anti-aircraft station where he would squat for hours listening to the boys so he could tell the true story to the folks back home… His segment of the picture is the tired and dirty soldiers who are alive and don't want to die.[13]

Il giornale era sempre in cerca di notizie curiose e originali. Una di queste fu la storia del 100º Battaglione della 34ª Divisione di fanteria. Quest'unità era interamente composta da Nisei, americani di origine giapponese tutti provenienti dalle Isole Hawaii. La lealtà dei Nisei agli Stati Uniti era stata messa in questione all'inizio della guerra, ma essi dimostrarono il loro patriottismo con i fatti. Il 100º Battaglione divenne l'unità più decorata di tutto il fronte italiano e il Capo di Stato Maggiore, il generale Marshall, espresse a più riprese la sua ammirazione per questi suoi soldati. Su *The Stars and Stripes* apparve un tributo a questi uomini, probabilmente dietro ispirazione di Marshall. Era un modo di fare ammenda per il duro e ingiusto trattamento inflitto alla popolazione americana di origine giapponese nel 1942. L'intera comunità che viveva sulla Costa Occidentale, circa 120.000 persone, era stata deportata e messa in campi d'internamento:

"Guinea Pigs from Pearl Harbor" is the name given to a unit of American infantry, composed almost entirely of men of Japanese descent, who have fought in Italy to prove they're as good Americans as any other doughboys. They have won their place, as far as fellow-fighters are concerned.
Every one of the enlisted men is from the Hawaiian Islands. Only a few of the junior officers and the commanding officers are not of Japanese descent.
Their motto is "Remember Pearl Harbor." They refer to themselves as guinea pigs - test units. They are the first such unit to go overseas. They're probably a good criterion for loyalty among all Americans of Japanese blood…
From the beaches of Salerno right into Nazi winter lines, these troops of Japanese descent have fought and now are fighting some of the hardest battles of the entire campaign.
They've asked no quarter, nor have they received any. They rank on a par with other troops for endurance, skill and ability. They average five feet four inches, but officers declare they can outmarch and outwork most troops.
Officers who watched the unit along the Volturno front were unrestrained in admiration. They declared they never had seen any troops handling themselves better in their first trial under fire.
The Island troops don't like to be called Japanese Americans. Nor they like to be regarded as different from any other troops.
"The boys feel they've been on the spot and they have a personal duty to make the people at home feel they really are as much Americans as anyone," Maj. Johnson said.
"They are no different from any other soldiers. But they have that added incentive to fight - some have their fathers in internment camps at home."[14]

Anche Paul Green si interessò a questi strani soldati:

When the Japanese-Americans first came into combat their appearance made many Jerries rub their eyes in disbelief. But those days are over. "The Germans recognize us by now," explained Lt. Young O. Kim, Los Angeles. Most of them realize we're here and they are no longer surprised, as they were early in the campaign. Axis Sally even plays Hawaiian music, although we don't know whether it is for us or not."
Pfc. Wallace Shigetani, Honolulu, came in from the kitchen to show off a beautiful lei that one of the boys had strung together from yellow flowers growing in the field. It was made on May 1, which in Hawaii is "lei day"… None of these Hawaiians think that "Sunny Italy" can be compared in any ways with Tropical Hawaii. "They may have grass shacks around here," pointed out Capt. Alex Mckenzie, Honolulu, "but they are full of fleas." As for the recent eruption of Vesuvius, they say that their crater of Kilauea can spout just as much without half trying. (Green 302-03)

L'ingresso a Roma il 4 giugno 1944 non rappresentò un vero punto di svolta nella campagna sulla penisola italiana. Restava però il fatto che la capitale rappresentava un simbolo particolarmente importante. Per questo motivo i giornalisti-soldati coprirono l'evento con grande attenzione. Oltretutto, lo studio delle reazioni dei soldati americani a confronto con la maestosità della Città Eterna poteva offrire ottimi spunti giornalistici.

Per la redazione di *The Stars and Stripes* la liberazione di Roma fu un grande successo. Proprio un gruppo di reporter si trovò all'avanguardia delle truppe alleate entrate nella capitale. Nel giro di poche ore "liberarono" una tipografia e il 5 giugno *The Stars and Stripes. Published in Rome* era nelle strade:

We were eight miles south of Rome. We tried to get some sleep that night in a farmhouse. But there were 12 men to a room and we were sleeping on straw on the floor. You can imagine how much sleep we got. Early next morning we started out for Rome. Sgt. Lehman orders were to go directly to the plant of *Il Messaggero* (a leading Rome daily). Riding in our jeeps we arrived there at 6:30 a.m. There were some Italian newspapermen there. "Is this thing going?" Sgt. Lehman asked. "Si, si, si," the Italians bowed and grinned. "Good," said Lehman, "We'll print a paper." Assignments were given. The small staff went into action. Stories the different war correspondents were filing to their papers were collected. Sgt. Green wrote the lead story to run under a four column streamer: WE'RE IN ROME. (Green 331-332)

Una delle storie migliori pubblicate nell'edizione del 5 giugno descriveva con vivacità l'atmosfera della capitale, cogliendo anche l'occasione per mettere in ridicolo Mussolini e il fascismo:

The crowds gathered in the Piazza Venezia again and stood cheering wildly under Mussolini's historical balcony, but the speech they heard today was very little like the old days.
Sgt. John A. Vita, a 27-year-old Italian-American from Port Chester, N.Y., leaned over the marble railing of the balcony and to a sea of friendly civilian faces promised death to Mussolini, to the tedeschi and to the Fascisti.
Sgt. Vita, who landed with the American infantry at Anzio and came all the way with them… knew his speechmaking and paused after each significant phrase while the people applauded enthusiastically. He parodied a Mussolini speech, starting out with "Vincere, vincere, vincere" (Conquer, conquer, conquer), then added, "Not for Mussolini, the Fascists or the Germans, but for the Allies."
"Instead of castor oil," he told his eager listeners, "We bring you caramelli and food." [15]

Se c'erano soldati che si divertivano, altri ragazzi americani erano impressionati da quella città di cui tanto avevano sentito parlare. Nella loro semplicità erano intimiditi e sopraffatti dalla maestosità dei luoghi santi:

A bearded, dust-grimed American infantryman, holding his helmet in his hand, stepped inside the vast, vaulted coolness of St. Peter's Cathedral at 3:15 this morning, only a few hours after Allied troops entered Rome.
He stood looking straight ahead and then up and he gulped and blinked his eyes and said in a quiet, shaky voice: "I never thought there was a place in the world as wonderful as this. I didn't know there was anything so beautiful."
He would not give his name, his organization or anything else. "I'm just here" he said "and I know what I am seeing is too big to talk about." And he walked out, down under the great high ceiling toward the tomb of St. Petet I, at the far end of the great entrance way.
Outside the Vatican, British soldiers, American and French strode beside the great fountain while Piper Cubs swooped down low overhead and guns roared in the distance.
Then bells began tolling from somewhere in Vatican City. And the soldiers, nearly everyone of them, stopped in their tracks. You had the feeling they were all walking on tip toe.[16]

Molti però pensavano alla dura realtà della guerra e vedevano in Roma solo un temporaneo momento di riposo. Ancora Paul Green diede un realistico apprezzamento dello stato d'animo dei soldati:

GI Joe was a little too tired today to realize the full importance of what he had done, it's been a tough fight all along the line and the dogfaces are plenty weary… The GI could relax their trigger fingers for a while. The city was theirs - completely. It was especially the pretty signorina who caught the eye of appreciative Yanks. Far seeing ones scrawled down a few addresses for reference later on when they come back to Rome on leave. Others took a little time out to get a quick look at the famous ruins.
But to most of them Rome is just another stop - although a main one - on the road that leads home.[17]

Il giorno dopo, il 6 giugno, la notizia dello sbarco in Normandia apparve in tutte le prime pagine, relegando la liberazione di Roma a una storia di secondo ordine. L'esultanza fu ben presto dimenticata. Per i soldati americani, la strada verso casa era ancora molto lunga.

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2. J.L. Kominicki, "50 Years of The Stars and Stripes," *The Stars and Stripes. Special Edition*, April 18 1992.

3. Jack Foisie, "Men Were Set for Air Invasion," *The Stars and Stripes*, July 12 1943.

4. "Wooden Dummy Guns," *The Stars and Stripes*, July 14 1943.

5. A. Humphreys, "Italians Not Defending Own Island. Troops Surrendering Civilians Cheering Invading Force," *The Stars and Stripes*, July 16 1943.

6. "Newsreel Caesar," *The Stars and Stripes*, July 15 1943.

7. "200 Fete Their Two American Captors," *The Stars and Stripes*, July 17 1943.

8. "Italians Offer to Help," *The Stars and Stripes*, July 15 1943.

9. "Invasion Success Severe Blow to Axis Propaganda at Home," *The Stars and Stripes*, July 15 1943.

10. Alexander Clifford, "Yanks Greeted like Heroes in Palermo," *The Stars and Stripes*, July 26 1943.

11. "Rome Bombed," *The Stars and Stripes*, July 20 1943.

12. "Bombing Rome," *The Stars and Stripes*, July 21 1943.

13. "Ernie's Celebrity," *The Stars and Stripes*, December 11 1943.

14. "Italy- Japs Fight Germans," *The Stars and Stripes*, January 8 1944.

15. George Dorsey, "VITA, VITA! Replaces Old Cheer for DUCE," *The Stars and Stripes*, *Rome Edition*, June 1944.

16. "Vatican Awes Battleworn GI," *The Stars and Stripes*, *Rome Edition*, June 5 1944.

17. Paul Green, "We're in Rome," *The Stars and Stripes*, *Rome Edition*, June 5 1944.

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"THAT'LL MAKE A LETTER HOME." DOS PASSOS, *ONE MAN'S INITIATION*, AND WORLD WAR I

GABRIELLA FERRUGGIA

The status of Dos Passos's *One Man's Initiation: 1917*, both as a novel and as a war novel, has often been questioned. This paper will argue that Dos Passos's narrative technique is consistent with the patterns of modernism, and that his representation of war, rather than an attempt at objective documentation, is a strongly subjective statement interacting with the war propaganda which had circulated in the United States well before their engagement.

Dos Passos's first novel was published in London in October 1920. Having appeared well before Willa Cather's *One of Ours* (1922), E.E. Cummings' *The Enormous Room* (1922), Edith Wharton's *A Son at the Front* (1923), William Faulkner's *Soldiers' Pay (1926)*, and Ernest Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms* (1929), it stands as one of the first novels on World War I written by an American. All the same, the English publishers, Allen & Unwin, had not signaled any eagerness. After negotiating for over one year, and asking the author's help to offset their costs, they only printed 1,250 sets of sheets, of which they bound a half. After six months, the sales amounted to 63 copies. It took *One Man's Initiation* almost two years to find its way to the United States. It was published in June 1922 by George Th. Doran Company, of New York, after the stir caused in the same country by Dos Passos's second war novel, *Three Soldiers* (1921). *One Man's Initiation* never was a success. It was reprinted for the first time by Philosophical Library, New York, with the new title *First Encounter,* again in a small edition, in 1945 at the end of World War II.[1]

The palpable lack of enthusiasm on the part of Dos Passos's English publishers was possibly caused by the fact that they were well aware that, by 1919-20, the reading public was growing weary with the subject of war. At least one reviewer uttered this feeling, when he greeted the new book with the following comment: "That minor horror of war, the war book, is mercifully on the wane" (Ennis 89). Although most of the standard novels on World War I, both European and American, would be published in the two following decades, some influential ones were already in print. For instance, the importance of Henri Barbusse's *Le Feu* (1916) (Stoltzfus 56 n22), which had been translated into English with the title *Under Fire: The Story of a Squad* the following year, was acknowledged by Dos Passos himself. Moreover, the need for detailed information which civilians at home had felt so keenly during the first years of the war, had been met by the first-hand reports of established writers like Arnold Bennett, Rudyard Kipling, Conan Doyle, and John Galsworthy. These authors, invited to tour the various fronts by the

British government for propaganda purposes, had usually published their findings first as articles in British and American newspapers, then in book form (Buitenhuis 79-101). Both forms found wide circulation. Readers had also been strongly devoted to personal narratives of the war. According to historian Charles V. Genthe, over 400 memoirs were published in the year 1917-8 in the U.S. only, many a best-seller. American volunteers in the British or Canadian Expeditionary Forces, nurses, ambulance drivers, Red Cross Workers, members of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, combat reporters, charity workers, and simple observers, had made their first-hand accounts of war available even before the United States' actual engagement. Only a handful of these men and women were professional writers, and many had resorted to the epistolary form.

The issue of setting boundaries between fully-fledged fiction, autobiography and reportage, far from being very clear, was not of vital importance for the public. When Dos Passos's own war novels appeared in print, reviewers often implied that they could not rightly be considered fiction. One commentator, while praising "the beautiful simplicity" with which *One Man's Initiation* had been written, pronounced it to be simply "these memoirs" (Maine 62).[2] As for *Three Soldiers*, Dos Passos complained in a letter to fellow-author Theodore Stanton that the book was "*not*, as people have tried to make out, autobiography" (Ludington 350). The title chosen by Dos Passos for his first novel, conveys several meanings. Rather than being an "awkward title,"[3] *One Man's Initiation: 1917* emphasizes, with its stress on the year the United States entered the war, the intertwining of history, the author's autobiography, and the exemplary literary theme of initiation into manhood.[4]

Dos Passos's writing came straight from his war experience. He had sailed for France on June 20, 1917. Sent first with Section 60 of the Norton-Harjes Volunteer Ambulance Service behind the front lines at Erize-la-Petite, near Verdun, then in Northern Italy with the American Red Cross, Dos Passos kept jotting down notes frantically when off duty, convinced, as he jokingly wrote to his friend Arthur McComb, that "The great war novel" (12) was slowly taking shape. *One Man's Initiation*, based on the impressions from the French front, was "scribbled down" (1) on the trip back from Bordeaux to New York in August 1918, and completed in September of the same year in New York. At that point Dos Passos, dismissed by the Red Cross for writing a letter critical of the war, was desperately trying to find a way to return to Europe. He eventually joined the United States Army Medical Corps and embarked again for France on November 11, 1918, the day of the Armistice. This new experience would be the starting point for *Three Soldiers*.

Dos Passos's participation in the war had been in the air for some time. On graduating from Harvard College in June 1916, he had immediately tried to volunteer for the Norton-Harjes Corps. This first attempt had met with the opposition of his father, who had offered a winter in Spain, in order that the young man could study Spanish language and architecture. Dos Passos turned twenty-one on January 14, 1917. Two weeks later, while in Madrid, he was reached by the news of his father's death. President Wilson's declaration of war, on April 2, 1917, found him alone in the family estate in Westmoreland

County, Virginia, where he had returned. A letter written on the same day to his friend Roland Jackson, a Harvard classmate left behind in Madrid, reveals that Dos Passos's intent to participate was no longer to be postponed: "The war: in which ogre-pie I want to stick my innocent white fingers - to the glory of God, Mr Morgan and the munition-dealers."[5] Two months later, he set out for Bordeaux.

The idea of being severed from reality had preoccupied Dos Passos since his Harvard years. In June 1916, he had written from Cambridge to his friend Rumsey Marvin: "It's wonderful - he added - how much college interferes with one's education" (Ludington 42).[6] Then, in December 1916, still in Madrid, where he was experimenting with poetry, he lamented the "frightfully paralyzing" effect war was having on his work. "Everything I do, everything I write," he mused, "seems so cheap and futile. It is as a crevasse had opened" (Ludington 60). When it finally arrived, the experience of war was perceived by Dos Passos with a heightened sense of excitement and curiosity, as the letters he immediately dispatched to his friends make clear: "I've not been so happy for months," he wrote Arthur McComb in July, "There's a rollickingness about it all that suits me" (Landsberg 57). Having set foot in France, Dos Passos found himself "nearly bursting with impatience to get to work," "dying to write." "Horror" he observed "piled on horror that there can be no more." All the same, the young writer who a few months before had still been groping for his artistic medium, found "the dull infinity of dead" encountered near the French battle-fields more inspiring than "all the cant and hypocrisy" left behind in America. In no time, he felt confident that "the space for a new edifice" (Ludington 88-90) had been cleared, and that his sole business was "to tell the tale" (5).

One Man's Initiation, a third-person narrative, roughly relates the events of the Summer and the Fall of 1917, "about six months" (157) of the war waged on several sections of the French front, along the Marne and in the Forest of the Argonne. Although a large number of characters is involved, the story is mainly told through one point of view, that of young Martin Howe, an American ambulance driver. The novel is structured in eleven brief chapters, each made of diverse fragments, juxtaposed one against the other in swift succession, both in the past and in the present tense.

When *One Man's Initiation* appeared in print, reviewers objected that the novel was disconnected, that it lacked continuity and synthetic qualities, in short that it could not be considered "a complete war history." They viewed it as "a series of preliminary sketches, vignettes of ambulance experiences" (*New York Evening Post*). Later assessments have often been similarly critical, pronouncing the narrative to be "unimpressive" (Holditch 117), "disjointed, episodic" (Clark 62) in style, a "fairly slight affair" (Rohrkemper, "Great War" 23) on the whole. That non cohesiveness is a significant trait of the novel is also apparent from the attempts made to unearth, no matter what, its organizing principle. Michael Clark, for example, writing in 1987, pointed to the middle chapter, the sixth, where the war experience is told "in its most intense form" (64-65), as the climactic chapter, and discerned, in addition, that *One Man's Initiation* is patterned on the cycle of nature.

More to the point, perhaps, John Rohrkemper observed, in the same years, that Dos Passos, with his fragmentary style, accumulation of details, and use of sharply juxtaposed images, was "coming to terms" with modernist technique. Through his imagistic method, Dos Passos was "trying to incorporate the lessons of the poetry" of Ezra Pound and Amy Lowell (Rohrkemper, "Dos Passos's War" 41). Other scholars, with British authors mainly in mind, have convincingly argued that the patterns of modernism are consistent with the representational strategies experimented by those who attempted to write World War I (Booth, Tate).

One Man's Initiation does not claim to be a "complete war history." First of all, since it selects an ambulance driver as its principal point of view, it tells its story from behind the front lines, from dugouts and dressing stations, quarries along the roadside, farmyards and hilltops. It erases the standard fixtures of the war novel, the front lines, battles, and trenches. One main shell and gas attack only is represented and trenches are seen only once, from a distance, as gangrened wounds in the soil lined with men who are similarly scarred: "And all along these random gashes in the mucky clay were men, feet and legs huge from clotting and clotting of clay, men with greyish-green faces scarred by lines of strain and fear and boredom as the hillside was scarred out of all semblance by the trenches and the shell-holes" (70). What the novel describes of the war is rain and mud, the sordid smells and unbearable noise, the endless waiting, the drunken leaves, the random orders, the filthy, rebellious allied troops, the unbearably forlorn German prisoners, the mentally deranged soldiers, the dismal wounds, the casual deaths, the injuries inflicted on the land, and the "close-packed wooden crosses" (113) in the cemeteries. Dos Passos's conclusive statements, the meaninglessness of slaughter and the absurdity of war, are conveyed at times through conventional similes. Soldiers are like the "herd of cattle being driven to abattoir one fine May morning" (108), and the shells exploding madly around them are "like dice thrown on a table" (149). More often, the images introduced are deft and abrupt, as the girl "like pierrot" (91) met in a café in Paris, or the "rabbit who put butter in his watch round every corner" expected at any moment by one of Howe's companions: "Ever read 'Alice in Wonderland'?" (59), he asks. The shadow of a man projected, "huge and fantastic with its loaf of bread and its pair of shoes and its pots and pans" (103) on a wall at night, the "strange large eyes and grey oilcloth flaps instead of faces" (117) of the soldiers wearing gas masks reinforce a strong sense of the grotesque. Natural landscape is in turn disfigured, surreal: "Torn camouflage fluttering greenish-grey against the ardent yellow sky, and twining among the fantastic black leafless trees, the greenish wraiths of gas" (122).

In the foreground, rather than the completeness and the accuracy of the report, is the impossibility of representation other than a very limited, subjective perception. Choosing to narrate through the alert senses and vivid imagination of an extremely young protagonist enables Dos Passos to render the war in its immediacy and aggressiveness, through an astounding if discontinuous explosion of colors, lights, odors and sounds:

"The woods at night, fantastic blackness full of noise and yellow leaping flames from the mouth of guns. Now and then the sulphurous flash of a shell explosion and the sound of trees falling and shell fragments swishing through the air" (114).

One Man's Initiation subtracts all factual information. Topography is restricted to a handful of small towns and villages mentioned with apparent randomness, and all clear markers of time and duration are abolished. With the exception of one French officer who is uncospicuously interred in chapter VII, and of the four French comrades who die in the last, the throng of characters who sorround the two protagonists is nameless. Martin Howe and Tom Randolph possess, apart from their names, no peculiarity other than youth and an elaborate speech. Their personal histories prior to the war are untold. The only ascertainable fact in Randolph is his Southern background, while Howe is vaguely associated with Cambridge Bridge in Boston, and Cape Cod. Of the two characters, the former plays an "old coon song" (105) on the accordion. The latter, meditating at times on Shelley's *Hellas*, is more clearly an intellectual.

Even the physical identity of the soldiers is effaced by the mud which, pasted on faces and bodies alike, abolishes all distinction with the enemy: "The prisoner had grey flesh, so grimed with mud that you could not tell if he were young or old. His uniform hung in a formless clot of mud about a slender frame" (146). This physical indeterminacy is mirrored in the instability of the world surrounding them, in the indefiniteness of orders, the unpredictability of attacks, the uncertainty of movements, the endless flow of disorienting rumors: "They say one of their planes chased an ambulance..." (58). "Somebody had dope this morning that we'd leave here for Soissons to-morrow..." (60). "They say they are shelling the Etat-Major to-day..." (69). "I heard that Germans were concentrating for an offensive in the Four de Paris" (104).

Like many a modernist text, *One Man's Initiation* highlights subjectivity and incompleteness. What the novel really aims at is recording the "elusivess of factuality" (Booth 86) in war. Wounded bodies only are accorded objective representation in agonizing detail, and their obdurate reality restores integrity and truth. In chapter II, for example, Howe's complacent daydreaming in a café in Paris before going to the front is interrupted by the eyes of a soldier, eyes "like those of a hurt animal, full of meek dismay," staring from above the "triangular black patch" and the "mechanical contrivance" (54) which replace his nose and jaw. In chapter VII, Howe clutches a wounded German prisoner tightly, in the effort of carrying him to the dugout: "Sweat dripped from Martin's face, on the man's face, and he felt the arm-muscles and the ribs pressed against his body." Howe perceives the common bond with the enemy through a physical act, when his body merges with the agony of the other's body. The reality of "blood and sweat" dispels all the false distinctions upheld by war propaganda. This knowledge leaves Howe with a sense of elation, a strange happiness: "At last they were washed out, all the hatreds, all the lies, in blood and sweat. Nothing was left but the quiet friendliness of beings alike in every part, eternally alike" (148).

One of *One Man's Initiation*'s distinctive traits, and one responsible in part for the novel's alleged "disjointedness," is the large number of stories, all told by different characters, which are interspersed throughout the text. All these stories, ostensibly interfering with the main narrative, are concerned in one way or the other with war propaganda. At the very beginning of the novel, on board the ship sailing from New York to Bordeaux, Howe seems suspended between a past he has effaced, and a future he envisions as blank: "a new white page spread before him, clean and unwritten on" (45). On the contrary, the young, nameless American woman, eager to do her "bit" in Paris, who intrudes on his speculations, is already equipped with a narrative of the war. Her version relies on anonymous voices, and lacks all firmness of detail: "It was just when the Germans were taking Bruges, the Uhlans broke into this convent ... But I think it was Louvain, not Bruges" (49). All the same, it claims authenticity: "It's absolutely authentic, too. I heard it before I left New York from a girl who is really the best friend I have on earth. She got it from a friend of hers who had got it directly from a little Belgian girl, poor little thing, who was in the convent at the time..." (48). This narrative, handed from woman to woman, attests the truth of atrocity stories, the "frightful things" (47) allegedly committed by Germans.

With her bared teeth, "white and regular as those in a dentist's show-case" (47) and provocative attitude, this figure seems to suggest female complicity in the war. "Oh, if only I was a man, I'd have shouldered my gun the first day; indeed I would" (47). It is also remindful of the many female figures taunting men from the recruiting posters.[7] The anonymous woman's narrative is invalidated in chapter V. The haunting tale, told by an Englishmen who has been at the front eighteen months, during a leave in Paris, reverses a German atrocity story: "Before I left the front I saw a man tuck a hand-grenade under the pillow of a poor devil of a German prisoner. The prisoner said, 'Thank-you.' The grenade blew him to hell" (92). In addition, the whole of the rhetorical construction extolling the "splendid" virility of the young men fighting on behalf France is destroyed in chapter IV, by one single image, the wounded man without the middle: "Where the middle of the man had been, where had been the curved belly and the genitals, where the thighs had joined with a strong swerving of muscles to the trunk, was a depression, a hollow pool of blood" (71).

Chapter VII comprises four different anecdotes, all seemingly related to bravery, all undermining heroism in general, and heroism in the French army in particular. The first, by an American, about "how our lieutenant got the Croix de Guerre" (128), tells of the wound faked by a French officer: "he rode around all day with a handkerchief over one eye and a look of heroism in the other" (129). The second and the third tales are by French participants to bayonet attacks. The former soldier, an Alsatian, impassively boasts of the enemies he has killed: "The time they gave me the Croix de Guerre I got three in succession, just like at drill" (139). The latter, instead, remembers how he trembled all over at the sight of the one German he had slain. He is permanently deranged by those fragments of private life, postcards and pictures, he has stolen from his victim: "You see,

it's a woman and two little girls. They look so nice. … It's strange, but I have two children, too, only one's a boy. I lay down on the ground beside him - I was all in" (139).[8] The fourth story again involves an American, an ambulance driver. He relates how he escaped one night from a group of drunken French soldiers, bidding him to make his promise to die on their side real: "You've come to die with us. Remember you said so" (145). The valor of the French army was often emphasized by official propaganda in order to persuade the United States to join the war effort. Genthe has pointed out how the American war memoirs also abounded in romantic descriptions of personal courage, especially on the Allies' side.

Both the above quoted incidents related by Americans carry innuendos to propaganda circulating in the United States, and assert the need to write antagonistic stories. "Somebody ought to write a book called *Heroism in the Great War*" (128), comments the first soldier. The ambulance driver asks, in turn, whether his tale sounds exemplary enough to "make a letter home": "Guess my girl'll think I'm heroic enough after that (145). This comment probably refers to one of the most successful personal narratives which appeared in print before the United States' engagement in war, *Ambulance No. 10. Personal Letters from the Front*,[9] by Harvard graduate Leslie Buswell. Buswell, who had been conferred the Croix de Guerre for valor, narrated his experience on the French front, near Pont-à-Mousson, from June to October 1915. His book, published in 1916 with the approval of the French government, offered various examples of French fairness in war: "I shall always remember that in France the German went before the less wounded German!" (52). It also carried, in the end, the forms for enlisting in the American Ambulance Field Service. No doubt, as a Harvard collegian, Dos Passos had been exposed to propaganda.[10] Writing on April 2, 1917, the day the United States declared war, he observed: "All the world parades and wants to knock hell out of the poor damned Germans. At college particularly..." (Reinitz 56).

One Man's Initiation seems to originate from two conflicting versions of the war, one handed down from propaganda, the other mainly recorded by experience centered on the male body. Like other modernist texts, Dos Passos's first novel is preoccupied with the issue of authenticity. When *Three Soldiers*, his second war novel, appeared in print, reviewer Henry Seidel Canby speculated that, of all those involved, Americans only participated in World War I without their own sets of words: "We alone were primed with other people's sayings of the war, with phrases, some true, some merely sentimental; none of which were made really our own."[11] Dos Passos's principal aim, seems, with this novel, to restore the language, to counteract "the phrases, the phrases" (159), which have blinded the people to war. The last words spoken by the French comrade Dubois seem to attest that, amidst the chaos of war, the intellectuals' role is to combat the lies: "First we must fight the lies. It is the lies that choke us" (169).

Università degli Studi di Genova

NOTES

1. For a detailed account of *One Man's Initiation*'s publication, see Ennis.

2. Maine 62-63. (Unsigned Review, *Bookman,* New York, August 1922).

3. Maine 61-62. (Unsigned Review, *New York Evening Post Literary Review*, 29 July 1922).

4. In his Preface to the 1945 edition, Dos Passos reverted to the impact World War I had for the whole of his generation: "For one thing I think the brutalities of war and oppression came as less of a shock to people who grew up in the thirties than they did to Americans of my generation, raised as we were during the quiet afterglow of the nineteenth century, among confortably situated people who were confident that industrial progress meant an improved civilization, more of the good things of life all around, more freedom, a more humane and peaceful society" (36).

5. This letter was published for the first time by Reinitz. Reinitz adds that Jackson, who enlisted in June 1917, was killed at Château-Thierry on June 6, 1918.

6. Thirty years later, introducing his novel as a "narrative written more than a quarter of a century ago by a bookish young man of twenty-two who had emerged half-baked from Harvard College and was continuing his education driving an ambulance behind the front in France," Dos Passos was still insisting on the same idea (35).

7. One of the most famous recruiting posters featured a young woman, with burning Belgium in the background, shaming a reluctant young man into action: "Will You Go, or Must I?" (Shover 474-475). On the issue of women and propaganda, see also Casey 70-74.

8. For the disturbing presence of corpses in the war novel, see in particular Booth 50-63.

9. There are some striking similarities between Buswell and Dos Passos. Buswell, for example, observing the absurd behavior of an officer, comments: "I couln't help remembering the Dormouse in 'Alice in Wonderland' " (22).

10. Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard College from 1869 to 1909, had been one of the most prominent public figures who supported the Allied cause (Buitenhuis 18).

11. Maine 37-42 (Henry Seidel Canby, "Human Nature under Fire," *New York Evening Post Book Review*, 8 October 1921).

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UNA GUERRA VISTA DA LONTANO. STORIE DI PRIGIONIERI DI GUERRA ITALIANI NEGLI STATI UNITI (1943-1946)

AUGUSTA MOLINARI

LA PRIGIONIA. UNA STORIA POCO NOTA

Molte e diverse sono state nel corso del tempo le ragioni che in Italia hanno relegato ai margini della riflessione storiografica le vicende della prigionia nel secondo conflitto mondiale. Nel difficile passaggio dallo stato fascista all'Italia Repubblicana (Pavone), i prigionieri di guerra erano i reduci di un passato che si voleva "archiviare" al più presto. Le esigenze della pacificazione sociale e politica non lasciavano spazio alla storia e alla memoria dell'esercito fascista sconfitto. C'erano poi motivazioni di tipo etico: l'orrore dell'olocausto stabiliva implicite gerarchie nella valutazione delle esperienze dell'internamento. In una guerra totale dove la violenza aveva dato luogo a fenomeni nuovi ed estremi e aveva reso labili i confini tra l'esercito e la popolazione civile, la prigionia appariva come un "naturale" sbocco della guerra. Non era un fatto nuovo, né estremo. Anzi, poteva garantire una condizione di sopravvivenza che spesso era problematica per chi rimaneva "a casa." Basti pensare alle deportazioni nei campi di lavoro, agli eccidi per rappresaglia, ai bombardamenti. L'inusitata violenza di una guerra che era stata anche una guerra civile aveva esasperato gli stereotipi negativi della prigionia prodotti nel corso del primo conflitto mondiale (Procacci). Chi era caduto in mano del nemico era un cattivo combattente o, peggio, un disertore .

Testimoni scomodi di una sconfitta politica e militare (Isnenghi, *Le guerre*), i prigionieri scontano nel dopoguerra la loro estraneità agli eventi che avevano portato alla vittoria degli Alleati. In quanto non partecipi dei cambiamenti politici in atto nel paese, i prigionieri sono ammessi con diffidenza alla nuova "cittadinanza" repubblicana. Si teme, in genere senza fondati motivi, che l'esperienza della prigionia renda difficile l'abbandono della precedente "cittadinanza" fascista.

Molti e diversi furono nel corso del tempo, gli "imprenditori morali" (politici, intellettuali, diplomatici, storici) che misero in campo buone ragioni per non far uscire da una ristretta cerchia di addetti ai lavori (storici militari, società di reduci) l'interesse per lo studio delle vicende della prigionia. Esemplare appare a questo proposito la vicenda editoriale di cui fu protagonista Alessandro Natta. L'autore, esponente di spicco del P.C.I, partito del quale fu anche segretario, scrisse nel 1953 una memoria della sua prigionia nei campi tedeschi. Per motivi di "opportunità" politica le case editrici vicino al partito ne rifiutarono la pubblicazione. Dovettero passare più di quarant'anni perché Natta potesse dare alle stampe la sua memoria. Uscì nel 1997 con il titolo: *L'altra Resistenza. I militari italiani internati in Germania*.

Se è certamente vero che sulla storia della prigionia hanno gravato ipoteche politiche e censure morali, sono stati però anche altri i motivi che hanno scoraggiato gli storici dal praticare questo terreno di ricerca. Come ha osservato in più occasioni Mario Isnenghi, (*La tragedia*) la prigionia fu nel corso della seconda guerra mondiale una condizione di drammatica normalità per l'esercito di una nazione sconfitta. Fu una vicenda che assunse dimensioni di massa e che presentò una varietà di situazioni non facili da documentare e da interpretare. Sono troppe e troppo diverse le storie di prigionia da ricostruire. Anche se si limita l'area di interesse ai prigionieri catturati dai francesi e dagli angloamericani si è costretti a confrontarsi con una molteplicità di esperienze eterogenee e diversificate al loro interno. La prigionia è condizionata sia dalle dinamiche delle vicende militari sia dalla "storia" personale del prigioniero. C'è una forte differenza tra essere prigionieri dell'una o dell'altra potenza alleata. Come nell'essere rinchiusi in un campo piuttosto che in un altro. Il trattamento del prigioniero varia a seconda della sua collocazione nella gerarchia militare e del suo atteggiamento nei confronti del paese che lo detiene. Può, infatti, essere un prigioniero "cooperatore" o "non cooperatore." Decisive sono poi nel determinare l'esperienza della prigionia le caratteristiche individuali del prigioniero: l'estrazione sociale, l'età, la formazione culturale.

La storia dei prigionieri di guerra italiani è un ambito storiografico sovraffollato di storie individuali che solo raramente hanno assunto il carattere corale di una "storia di tutti." Ha contribuito non poco a mantenere in una dimensione privata la storia della prigionia la difficoltà nel reperire tracce documentarie di questa vicenda. Come tutte le situazioni di internamento e di esclusione la prigionia ha lasciato molti testimoni e poche fonti. Dei tanti testimoni della prigionia sono però pochi quelli che hanno scritto o raccontato la loro storia. La memoria della prigionia non sembrava presentare particolari motivi di interesse. Pochi avevano voglia di ricordare la storia di un paese e di un esercito sconfitto. Lo hanno fatto alcuni prigionieri "illustri," in genere intellettuali, e qualche ufficiale appartenente ai livelli intermedi della gerarchia militare

È a questa produzione memorialistica che resta affidata a tutt'oggi la storia della prigionia. Si tratta di una fonte di indubbia utilità, ma da utilizzare con precauzione, soprattutto quando si tratta di testi scritti a distanza di molti anni dall'evento. La memoria della prigionia non si caratterizza infatti per l'urgenza della testimonianza. Al contrario, a parte qualche eccezione "illustre," è il caso di Mario Rigoni Stern, *Amore di confine*, di Giampiero Carocci, *Il campo degli ufficiali*, del già citato volume di Natta, la memoria della prigionia sembra rispondere prevalentemente a sollecitazioni che vengono dall'esterno (Rigoni Stern; Carocci). Può essere il clima della Guerra Fredda o, in anni più recenti, l'attenzione che in ambito storiografico è stata rivolta al recupero della soggettività (Passerini). C'è poi, ed è un aspetto ancora poco studiato della storia del reducismo del secondo dopoguerra, l'attività svolta dalle associazioni combattentistiche e da quelle dei reduci nel promuovere la pubblicazione di memorie e di scritti autobiografici. Anche se non si dispone di un censimento delle memorialistica della prigionia, difficile da realizzare

per il carattere "carsico" di gran parte di questa produzione, spesso affidata a iniziative locali o ai canali di diffusione delle associazioni degli ex-prigionieri, esistono elementi sufficienti per verificare come siano poche le esperienze di prigionia che hanno lasciato tracce di memoria. La produzione memorialistica più consistente è quella relativa a due condizioni di prigionia che hanno avuto caratteristiche di eccezionalità. L'una, quella in Russia, per la particolare drammaticità e per l'uso strumentale cui è stata sottoposta. L'altra, quella negli Stati Uniti, per ragioni del tutto antitetiche. Perché è stata una condizione di prigionia privilegiata ma sentita da alcuni come particolarmente umiliante. In entrambi i casi la memorialistica documenta esperienze singole o di piccoli gruppi. La massa dei prigionieri era composta da soldati che non percepivano le loro vicende come "eventi memorabili," ma come storie di "ordinaria" prigionia. C'è poi da considerare che non era certo impresa facile per soggetti appena alfabetizzati trasmettere una memoria scritta delle loro esperienze.

Una conferma dei limiti che presentano le opere di memorialistica si riscontra nel caso della prigionia negli Stati Uniti (Rainero; Istituto Storico della Resistenza). Nella maggior parte dei casi gli autori di queste memorie sono ufficiali e sottufficiali del campo di Hereford in Texas dove erano concentrati coloro che non avevano accettato di collaborare, dopo l'8 settembre, con gli Alleati. A scrivere queste memorie sono prigionieri che hanno un alto livello di istruzione: lo scrittore Giuseppe Berto, che propria durante la prigionia scriverà il romanzo che lo renderà celebre, *Il cielo è rosso*; il giornalista e pubblicista Gaetano Tumiati, la cui memoria *Prigionieri nel Texas,* fisserà il canone della memorialistica sulla prigionia negli Stati Uniti; Amedeo Boscolo e il giudice scrittore Dante Troisi; il pittore Burri e lo studente Roberto Mieville. Quest'ultimo autore di una memoria, *Fascist criminal Camp*, che, nel dopoguerra , divenne una specie di manifesto del reducismo fascista. Si tratta di memorie che documentano la storia di un gruppo omogeneo di prigionieri, la storia di un campo di prigionia, non certo di un "modello" di prigionia.

La rappresentazione della prigionia negli Stati Uniti proposta dalla memorialistica ha fissato in una serie di stereotipi una vicenda complessa e ancora in larga parte inesplorata. In queste memorie prevale il desiderio degli autori di documentare le ragioni etiche e politiche della "non collaborazione." Il loro intento è dimostrare come questa scelta non sia stata influenzata dai disagi della prigionia. Per questo nelle loro memorie riportano episodi che documentano come a Hereford i prigionieri fossero ben nutriti, disponessero di cure mediche, avessero alloggi confortevoli, potessero organizzare liberamente la loro socialità. In *Prigionieri nel Texas,* Tumiati racconta che nel campo vi era una tale abbondanza di viveri che i prigionieri utilizzavano la farina per delimitare il terreno dove si svolgevano tornei di football. L'immagine del campo di prigionia come "paese della cuccagna" diventa in questa, come in altre memorie, una metafora dell'opulenza della società americana. Al benessere di quello che per loro resta un paese nemico, i "non cooperatori" di Hereford contrappongono le condizioni di miseria in cui versa l'Italia. Scrive Tumiati : "Chissà cosa direbbero a casa se potessero vedere questo mezzo chilo di farina

adibito a dischetto di rigore su un campo di calcio, loro che il pane bianco se lo sono dimenticati da un pezzo" (95). Implicito nella memoria di Tumiati, come nel romanzo che Giuseppe Berto scrive negli anni di prigionia, è il rancore contro la "Grande America." Tanto ricca da potersi permettere durante la guerra ogni tipo di spreco ma indifferente alla miseria e alla sofferenza della popolazione italiana.

Se esistono pareri concordi e verificati dall'indagine storiografica (Lewis and Mewha; Conti) sulle buone condizioni di sussistenza dei prigionieri detenuti nei campi statunitensi occorre però rilevare che episodi come quello raccontato da Tumiati non possono essere ritenuti esemplari della vita di prigionia. Quel che è certo è che l'immagine della prigionia trasmessa dai memorialisti colti ha finito per omologare a un'esperienza di "pochi" altre e diverse storie di prigionia. In primo luogo quelle dei soldati ma anche di tutti gli ufficiali che, a differenza di quelli detenuti a Hereford, furono dei "cooperatori."

IL DIARIO DI UN "COOPERATORE"

Nel gennaio 1944 sono 49.285 i prigionieri italiani negli Stati Uniti, di questi 3.642 sono ufficiali, 7.115 sottufficiali, 39.068 soldati semplici (Conti; Lops). Lo status di questi militari resta ambiguo fino alla fine della guerra. Con il cambio delle alleanze e la cobelligeranza dell'Italia, i militari italiani avrebbero dovuto perdere lo status di prigionieri. Questo di fatto non avvenne. Le clausole dell'armistizio prevedevano la consegna dei prigionieri alleati in mano italiana e ritenevano il governo italiano responsabile di un loro eventuale trasferimento in Germania. Non facevano invece alcun cenno ad un possibile futuro rilascio dei prigionieri italiani. Da parte sua il governo italiano era in una posizione di tale debolezza da non poter trattare con gli alleati. Lo sfaldamento dell'esercito italiano dopo l'8 settembre rafforzò la convinzione dei governi alleati a non rilasciare i prigionieri e a utilizzarli invece come forza-lavoro nei paesi di prigionia (Aga Rossi). I prigionieri venivano così a trovarsi in una posizione di particolare svantaggio: non potevano usufruire delle garanzie internazionali previste per i prigionieri di guerra e al tempo stesso erano trattati come tali.

A partire dall'ottobre 1943 gli americani decidono di organizzare i prigionieri italiani nelle *Italian Service Units,* unità di servizio da adibire oltre che alla produzione civile anche a compiti militari di combattimento. La formazione delle Unità di servizio avvenne senza che né il governo italiano né l'opinione pubblica americana fossero informati. Solo il 7 maggio 1944 il ministero della guerra americano rese noto il programma delle unità di servizio. I prigionieri italiani rappresentavano una forza-lavoro efficiente e disciplinata che gli Stati Uniti utilizzarono anche a guerra conclusa. Nonostante qualche blanda pressione del governo italiano, il rimpatrio dei prigionieri avvenne infatti lentamente e non si concluse che nel maggio 1946.

L'adesione alle unità di servizio era volontaria, ma veniva sollecitata facendo ricorsi a metodi diversi. A volte attraverso la persuasione. Più spesso con la promessa di una maggior

libertà di movimento. I prigionieri-cooperatori non erano tenuti in recinti di filo spinato, non avevano guardie armate, potevano uscire dai campi sotto sorveglianza, potevano ricevere visite o essere ricevuti da famiglie americane. Si trattava però di un trattamento privilegiato che era a discrezione dei responsabili del campo. La "collaborazione" creò fratture insanabili tra i prigionieri all'interno dei campi e contribuì non poco ad inasprire i rapporti tra i prigionieri italiani e i militari americani. Rifiutò di collaborare il 25% degli ufficiali, 28% dei soldati. Non sempre, il rifiuto alla collaborazione ebbe motivazioni di tipo politico. È possibile supporre che molti, soprattutto tra i soldati, abbiano rifiutato la cooperazione per il timore di ritornare a combattere. Come che altri lo abbiano fatto per la difficoltà a comprendere quanto stava accadendo sia sul fronte di guerra sia in patria.

L'opinione pubblica americana non si rendeva conto di quale fosse la condizione degli italiani nelle Unità di servizio e li considerava dei prigionieri di guerra. Per questo vi furono prese di posizione, sostenute anche dal *New York Times* contro l'eccessiva libertà concessa alle unità di servizio. Un giornalista del *Boston Herald* si chiedeva ad esempio: "Stiamo combattendo una guerra oppure dirigendo un paradiso gratuito per i fascisti?" (Conti 255).

La storia dei prigionieri "cooperatori" è senza dubbio meno nota di quella dei "non cooperatori": pochi sono quelli che hanno lasciato delle memorie. Proprio perché veniva presentata come una scelta volontaria, sebbene spesso fosse sollecitata anche con metodi coercitivi, la cooperazione era vissuta dai prigionieri come una condizione umiliante. Chi accettava di cooperare lo faceva in genere per godere di maggior libertà e di qualche privilegio. Le ragioni di opportunità che determinarono la scelta ne condizionarono il ricordo e la trasmissione del ricordo. La sottomissione, seppure volontaria, alle richieste degli ex-nemici, appariva ai più come la sanzione di una sconfitta. Era una scelta vissuta con rassegnazione, a volte con rabbia. L'atteggiamento pedagogico che gli ufficiali americani delle Unità di servizio avevano nei confronti dei prigionieri risultava più irritante che convincente. I campi di prigionia non erano certo i luoghi più adatti per dare lezioni di democrazia, soprattutto a chi era cresciuto sotto il regime fascista.

Una conferma di quanto difficile fosse per i prigionieri lo status di "cooperatore" viene da una fonte qualitativa : il diario di prigionia di un soldato. Si tratta di un manoscritto inedito che , come altre scritture dei ceti subalterni, è stato recuperato attraverso ricerche negli archivi familiari. È attraverso fonti di questo tipo che l'esperienza della prigionia può emergere dalla "clandestinità" della dimensione privata e diventare una "storia di tutti." I diari, le memorie, le lettere dei prigionieri di guerra rappresentano un deposito di memoria che solo in anni recenti è diventato patrimonio della ricerca storica (Molinari). Come tutte le esperienze di internamento la prigionia ha generato scrittura. Mettere per iscritto frammenti della propria quotidianità di vita era per i prigionieri un modo per sottrarsi all'alienazione dell'isolamento e per ripristinare una comunicazione almeno con se stessi. Anche una prigionia "privilegiata," com'era quella dei campi statunitensi, poneva l'individuo in una condizione di sospensione dei diritti civili che ne

mutilava l'identità. A differenza degli intellettuali "non cooperatori" di Hereford, che per contrastare gli effetti dell'internamento potevano contare su di un credo politico certo o su strumenti culturali "forti," la maggior parte dei prigionieri doveva cercare nelle pratiche della quotidianità le risorse per la sopravvivenza. Una di queste risorse era la scrittura, anche per chi non la praticava abitualmente. È questo il caso di un soldato, Alfredo Barozzi, che ha annotato quasi giornalmente su di un taccuino a quadretti la sua esperienza di prigionia. Il manoscritto è stato recuperato nell'ambito dell'attività di ricerca promossa dall'*Archivio Ligure della scrittura popolare* (Gibelli).

Alfredo Barozzi era diventato un prigioniero di guerra nel maggio del 1943 , dopo la caduta di Tripoli e la conquista da parte alleata della Tunisia. Dall'agosto 1943 al gennaio 1946 restò nei campi di prigionia del Nebraska, inizialmente in quello di Scoottsbluff poi in quello di Sioux O.D., Sidney. Barozzi era stato richiamato alle armi nel settembre 1941. Era nato a Carbonara Po nel 1917 ed era impiegato negli uffici postali di Mantova. Il diario che scrive nel periodo di prigionia copre un arco cronologico che va dal 25 settembre 1941, data del suo richiamo alle armi, al 27 maggio 1945. Del suo ultimo periodo di prigionia, Barozzi rientra in Italia nel gennaio 1946, non si trova traccia nel diario. Possiamo supporre che egli abbia smesso di scrivere nella convinzione che con la fine della guerra avvenisse un immediato rimpatrio dalla prigionia.

Nella prima parte del diario sono riassunte in modo schematico le vicende che precedono la prigionia: l'arrivo in Libia, il rientro in Italia per una breve licenza nel luglio del 1942, il ritorno in Africa attraversando la Croazia, la Bulgaria e la Grecia. Barozzi condensa in poche pagine la memoria della "sua" guerra. Che, nella condizione di prigionia, sembra apparirgli come un evento appartenente a un passato ormai lontano. Con precisione annota invece, a partire dall'11 maggio 1943, tutte le tappe del percorso verso la prigionia. Dal rituale della resa, alle marce di avvicinamento al porto di imbarco, al viaggio. Fino all'arrivo negli Stati Uniti: "Il 10 agosto 1943. Sbarcai a Norfolk! New-Port, Virginia."

Il diario presenta i caratteri di una scrittura dell'internamento. Con scansione quasi quotidiana Barozzi annota le pratiche della sopravvivenza e registra i suoi pensieri. Ci dice invece assai poco della sua attività di "cooperatore" e della vita che conduce all'interno del campo. Sono le "piccole cose," quelle che rappresentano la vita sotterranea della prigionia , a occupare gran parte della narrazione: "25 dicembre 1943. Natale di prigionia un piccolo albero che ho fatto in baracca, una grande melanconia nel cuore"; "Lunedì 7 febbraio 1944 taglio della barba"; "11 agosto 1944 oggi per la prima volta abbiamo assistito a un film parlato in italiano." Numerose sono le annotazioni che documentano la vigile attenzione di Barozzi per qualsiasi informazione sull'esito della guerra e sulla situazione italiana. Queste "voci" che arrivano nel campo rappresentano una risorsa essenziale per la sopravvivenza dei prigionieri. Sono una delle poche occasioni per rompere l'isolamento e per continuare a sperare in un prossimo ritorno. Si legge nel diario: "6 novembre 1946. Notizie riferitemi in questo periodo dall'infermiere americano che si

cura di me e m'insegna un po' d'inglese Ray mi dice che dal giornale americano riferisce l'abdicazione di Re V.E. III in favore del Principe"; "6 gennaio 1944. Il maresciallo Badoglio ha esposto un proclama telegrafico a tutti i P.W. nel quale assicura che siamo considerati come soldati ex-combattenti che hanno compiuto il loro dovere e che troveremo al nostro ritorno assistenza e lavoro per noi e pure per le famiglie."

Il diario documenta con efficacia come, pur in presenza di condizioni materiali "privilegiate," la prigionia fosse un'esperienza traumatica di isolamento sociale e emotivo. Barozzi non lamenta di soffrire la fame o il freddo o di svolgere come "cooperatore" mansioni faticose o degradanti. Anzi: "19 gennaio 1944. Il mio primo lavoro è all'aperto in un cantiere di legname. In seguito lavori in ufficio di contabilità a contatto diretto con l'elemento femminile americano mai avvicinato fino ad ora. Le prime impressioni qui sono ottime, una certa affabilità da parte dei civili." È piuttosto il senso di impotenza che gli deriva dalla condizione di prigionia la ragione prima della sofferenza. Scrive ad esempio il 15 maggio 1945 "Terra di Nebraska, suolo arido e freddo di questo statunitense paese, tu mostri in questo giorno ben crudo ed abbondante la tua neve. Voglio sperare che sia l'ultima neve che io vedo nel tuo continente e che la prima che rivedrò sia quella del mio italico paese nel suo mite inverno." In più occasioni Barozzi sembra riversare nella descrizione del paesaggio la sua esasperata solitudine. Soprattutto in occasione delle festività, quando diventa più forte la nostalgia degli affetti lontani: "9 aprile 1944-Pasqua. Pasqua ben triste, questa. È un aprile cupo e crudo come un gennaio senza sole grigio e freddo fatto di vento e di neve. L'invernata è stata piena di neve e di rigori siberici."

Il diario testimonia con efficacia la mutilazione esistenziale che vive lo scrivente. È un soggetto senza diritti, prigioniero in un paese lontano e sconosciuto, votato alla continua attesa di un ritorno continuamente dilazionato. A rendere ancora più definitiva la sua condizione di non-persona (Dal Lago) è l'impossibilità di mantenere un contatto epistolare con la famiglia. Nel periodo di prigionia Barozzi riceve una sola lettera da casa:

> Oggi 15 dicembre 1944. Per la prima volta da quando sono in terra d'America ho ricevuto notizie in una lettera della mia adorata mamma. Questa prima lettera è datata 18 agosto 1944. Ringrazio Iddio d'avermi fatto questa grazia e ne sono felice.

Non è però solo l'esigenza di rompere una situazione di isolamento a determinare il ricorso alla scrittura. C'è anche, molto forte, il bisogno di dare sfogo all'umiliazione e all'impotenza che genera la condizione di prigionia. Scrive, ad esempio, Barozzi dopo aver accettato la cooperazione: "1 maggio 1944. Andata in vigore della contratta libertà. Quale ironica frase che vuol dire tutto." E, sempre a proposito della cooperazione: "11 maggio 1944 - Nell'appartenere al gruppo dei lavoratori i benefici personali sono talmente esigui che poco cambia il nostro stato di vita, anzi vale a farci attrar su di noi l'odio della popolazione civile, che vede aperti i cancelli ai prigionieri di guerra e trattati quasi alla stessa stregua dei loro soldati, però moralmente abbiamo la consolazione di tenere alto l'onore del nostro paese. W l'Italia."

Nel diario la rivendicazione di un'appartenenza nazionale appare più come una reazione alla condizione di prigionia che l'espressione di sentimenti patriottici. La patria che lo scrivente evoca non è quella che lo ha mandato a combattere. È piuttosto quella comunità di relazioni e di affetti che la guerra ha bruscamente infranto. Significativa appare a questo proposito la frase con cui Barozzi commenta l'annuncio ufficiale della fine della guerra: "8 maggio 1945. È stata ufficialmente confermata la fine della guerra in Europa, annunciata ieri mattina dalla Radio Americana verso le 7 del 7 maggio 1945. Dal 1939 al 1945 la Germania ha combattuto e perso la seconda guerra mondiale che ha toccato e rovinato la mia vita."

Soprattutto nell'ultima parte del diario Barozzi sembra seguire con trepidazione quanto accade in Italia. Non ha notizie precise sulla guerra ma tiene scrupolosamente nota di tutto ciò che riesce a sapere. Al tempo stesso però manifesta diffidenza nei confronti di quanto apprende. Sembra stupito delle vittorie degli Alleati e dello sfaldamento dell'esercito tedesco: "14 settembre 1944 . Notizie vaghe, forse tendenziose diffondono la voce che dal Nord Italia le truppe tedesche abbiano fatto un preparativo movimento di evacuazione pronte a raggiungere il Brennero" "16 settembre 1944. Una vera smania è pervasa in questi americani, quella di creder tanto vicina la fine del conflitto, vi è per fino chi fa scommesse su ciò precisando perfino l'ora e il giorno. Ciò dimostra quanto poco essi conoscano la potenza d'armi tedesca." L'incertezza su quanto sta avvenendo sul fronte di guerra rende acuta la preoccupazione per la sorte dei suoi familiari: "25 aprile 1945. Forse oggi anche la mia città e la mia famiglia si trova in mano agli alleati, poiché distano poche miglia dal Po. Che Dio li salvi i miei cari, risparmiandoli dagli orrori della guerra."

Scarse sono nel diario le informazioni sulla vita quotidiana nel campo e sui rapporti di Barozzi sia con gli altri prigionieri sia con i militari americani. Molti indizi lasciano però supporre che nel campo esistesse un costante stato di tensione tra i prigionieri italiani e i loro "custodi." Si legge, ad esempio, in una nota del 9 agosto 1944: "Oggi si compie esattamente un anno di nostra permanenza in territorio americano. In questo ultimo periodo l'atteggiamento dei civili e dei negri nuovi venuti e pure il contingente di bianchi soldati di aviazione ci sono particolarmente ostili e da vari incidenti e liti avvenute a testimoniare l'ostilità di costoro." E pochi mesi dopo: "7 dicembre 1944. Stasera 12 italiani aggrediti da 50 soldati americani nell'ambiente del P.X si sono difesi così duramente adoperando bottiglie, tavoli e sedie, che con una breve lite di qualche minuto hanno disperso gli aggressori che si sono dati alla fuga, mandandone 4 soldati all'ospedale, in pessime condizioni."

Sebbene Barozzi svolga la sua attività di "cooperatore" fuori del campo sembra avere poche occasioni per conoscere il paese di prigionia. Egli infatti dice poco o nulla dell'America e degli americani. È possibile supporre che la mancanza nel diario di informazioni di questo tipo sia dovuta allo scarso interesse dello scrivente per un paese che considera nemico e ostile. Per Barozzi l'America c'è ma è come se non ci fosse. Non a caso a

conclusione del diario, quando elenca quelli che, a suo parere, sono stati i maggiori responsabili dei "crimini di guerra" inserisce, tra questi, anche Roosevelt: "Chorchill si è dimesso ed Himmler si è avvelenato tutti i massimi esponenti dei crimini di guerra sono quasi tutti fuori circolazione. Mussolini giustiziato sommariamente, Rousewelt deceduto, Hitler scomparso non si accerta la morte, Chorcill dimesso, Himmler autoavvelenato, restano Stalin e Hirohito."

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"FRIENDLY SERVICE TO SUFFERING PEOPLE": AMERICAN AND BRITISH FRIENDS' RELIEF WORK IN ITALY (1943-45)

MASSIMO RUBBOLI

Historical research has generally overlooked the work of relief and reconstruction carried on in Italy, at the end of World War II, by several humanitarian organizations.[1] The story of these efforts evolved alongside the advance of the Allied armies, and became more and more important during the last part of the war and in the postwar period.

This paper focuses on the first period of that story and on a circumscribed area of Central Italy, the province of Chieti. Its presupposition lies in the persuasion that events and persons who did have a limited impact on the problems of their time, have nonetheless a value and a meaning that deserve to be remembered. Especially when, even if they did not change the world, they made a change in the lives of many people.

1. THE WAR SCENE

During the Allied offensive of 1943-44, in the central part of Italy still under German military control, destruction and massacre became more intense. It was desperately urgent to help those who had survived, but the task could not be performed by the Allied forces, still deeply engaged in the war effort. The Allied Military Government (AMG) adopted the policy of confining its control to "a comparatively narrow area behind the Allied Armies; the territory to the rear being handed back progressively [...] to the administration of the Italian Government, under the supervision of the Allied Control Commission (ACC)" (Harris 74; Ellwood 212-21). The policy was made public in a joint Allied statement, generally known as the Hyde Park Declaration, which was published on 26 September 1944. The declaration also gave "first and immediate considerations" to "the relief of hunger and sickness and fear." To this end the Allied governments had instructed their "representatives at the United Nations' Relief and Rehabilitation Administration [UNRRA] conference to declare for the sending of medical aids and other essential supplies to Italy" (Harris 251-52).[2] However, both the Allied and the Italian authorities could barely face the major problems besetting the civilian population, above all the shortage of food. They could not deal with the problems of small towns and isolated areas.

Following communication and discussion with General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson (Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theater of Operations), in July 1944 a small UNRRA Observer Mission was sent to Italy. Two months later, on the ground of the Observer Mission's report, the UNRRA Council approved a resolution providing for limited aid to Italy. At the beginning of November 1944, Spurgeon Milton Keeny was

appointed Chief of Italy Mission; he remained Chief of the Mission to its end on 30 June 1947 (Woolbridge 257-59). The newly established UNRRA Italy Mission had wished to begin right away a special relief program, using supplies borrowed from the Allied Commission (AC) - the name had been altered in the Hyde Park Declaration by dropping the word 'control' from its title - but the AC, desperately short itself, was unable to lend them what they requested. As a result of UNRRA Director General's appeal to Roosevelt and Churchill, supplies were made available "subject to military necessity" (Woolbridge 263). UNRRA finally commenced operations in the Naples area in the first quarter of 1945 (Harris 248).

2. THE FIRST HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS

In this difficult context, behind the battle front which was moving northwards, a group of voluntary societies - both secular and religious - launched their offensive for relief and reconstruction.[3] Among the very first who operated in Italy, two were connected to the Society of Friends: the (British) *Friends Ambulance Unit* (FAU)[4] and the *American Friends Service Committee* (AFSC).[5]

FAU teams, who had followed the Allied Forces through North Africa, arrived in Sicily in the last months of 1943, and worked closely with the ACC/Civilian Affairs Branch in the liberated part of the island and with the AMG in the war front. On October 1944, Norman Barns and Leo Davies "were officially attached to the Public Health Office of Catania province, thus becoming the first FAU and probably the first voluntary society relief workers on the continent of Europe" (Gibson 2). At the beginning of 1944, when an epidemic of typhus broke out in Naples (Harris 419-23) a team with twelve FAU members worked for three months in the Hospital for Infectious Diseases. By the end of March the epidemic had subsided and part of the team was sent south to the camps where all the Yugoslav refugees were passing through to the Middle East. The remaining members of the team were posted as Welfare Officers to camps for Italian refugees set up behind the Gustav Line. On May 1944, about 80 FAU volunteers were active in southern Italy in health services and civilian relief work.

The AFSC had been allowed to open an office in Rome on May 1940.[6] For more than a year, the office was involved in assistance to refugees in cooperation with the *Delegazione per l'assistenza agli emigrati* (Delasem), the relief organization of the Union of Italian Jewish communities, and with the *Sankt-Raphaels-Verein* of Hamburg, which had its Roman headquarters in the convent of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate (Pallottine Fathers and Brothers). After Italy had declared war on the United States on 11 December 1941, the Rome office was shut down, but the AFSC continued to be involved in covered relief operations for Jewish and other refugees.

The Allied authorities charged several commissions with the problem of refugees. On October 1943, the ACC created the Displaced Persons Sub-Commission, later renamed

Displaced Persons and Repatriation Sub-Commission, which dealt exclusively with foreign and stateless persons.[7] The Italian refugees from war zones - who amounted to 25,000 to 50,000 people in southern Italy - were taken care of by the Italian Refugees Sub-Commission, in cooperation with municipal relief agencies established by Italian authorities.

On January 1944, high rank officers of the AMG met in Algiers with representatives of the AFSC, the FAU and the *American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee* (JDC) to discuss the problems related to the camps for refugees in the liberated part of Italy.[8] The members of the three agencies declared their willingness to cooperate, though the AFSC Commissioner for North Africa, Kendall Kimberland, pointed out that active participation by his organization was dependent upon pending negotiations between the Philadelphia office and the American government. On 17 April 1944, in response to an official request from the *Inter-Governmental Committee for Refugees* (IGCR), the Foreign Service Executive Committee of AFSC approved the transfer of two members to Bari in order to cooperate with Sir Clifford Heathcote-Smith, the IGCR's official delegate, and the Displaced Persons Sub-Commission.[9] The first one, David Hartley, arrived in Bari on 14 May and the second, Howard Wriggins, a week later.[10] Their first assignment was to check the list of about 600 refugees who had to sail for Palestine. While Hartley and Heathcote-Smith were visiting various refugee camps near Bari and Taranto, Wriggins went to the camp of Ferramonti di Tarsia, about 40 km. north of Cosenza in Calabria.[11] The three men met for the first time in a transit camp outside of Taranto, where the refugees going to Palestine had been moved from Ferramonti, Santa Maria di Bagni, and other camps. When the list was completed, they returned to Bari, where they were joined by Sam Marriage[12] and Dennis Mann, detailed to IGCR by FAU.[13]

On June 1944, Wriggins sent to the AFSC headquarters in Philadelphia an outline of the program which could be undertaken jointly by AFSC, FAU, IGCR, JDC and the Displaced Persons Sub-Commission.[14] The program included several areas of operation: assembling and screening information on all non-Italian refugees, including Jews, who wanted to emigrate overseas; assisting refugees not eligible for emigration to be integrated into the Italian community; helping IGCR with every group emigration schemes; participating in the development of community activities in centres of refugee concentration; and searching for some supplementary financial assistance.

It was planned that the IGCR representative should be stationed in Rome to deal with Allied and Italian authorities; Hartley (AFSC) should organize southern Italian work from Bari, including Potenza, Naples, Salerno and the rest of Campania and be in charge of transit camp No. 1 and Bari refugees; Perlman (JDC), also based in Bari, should distribute JDC funds according to the program worked out with IGCR, keeping in close touch with Hartley; Marriage (FAU) was to organize the Ferramonti di Tarsia camp activities under, at first, the supervision of Hartley; Mann (FAU) was to do the same in the camp of Santa Maria di Bagni (today Santa Maria al Bagno), near Gallipoli.

Wriggins (AFSC) was to collaborate temporarily with Hartley in all activities until called to the Rome headquarters.[15]

When Mann, on 15 August 1944, was transferred to the IGCR office in Rome to "take care of individual cases,"[16] Marriage continued to work in the southern camps to meet the needs of the refugees and setting up wood, metal and sewing workshops. The purpose was not only to produce useful objects for the refugees but also to give them back self-confidence and self-esteem.[17] On the occasion of a visit which David Hartley and Max Perlman made to Santa Maria di Bagni, the camp "gave a program of entertainment, planned and executed entirely by themselves, which seemed to me," wrote Hartley, "a high point in the camp morale [...] Sam Marriage has stimulated their interest in the shop work and other projects, but this is something they have done entirely on their own. It marks a big step in the regaining of confidence after years of fear and flight" (Hartley 3).

3. "SO THAT LIFE CAN START AGAIN": THE SHIFTING OF THE VOLUNTARY SOCIETIES WORK

The first meeting of the Advisory Committee, Refugees and Displaced Persons, Mediterranean Theatre of Operations, Allied Forces Headquarters (AFHQ) was held in Rome on August 1944. Kimberland represented France and Wriggins Italy for AFSC. IGCR, the War Refugee Board (WRB), the American and British Red Cross, JDC, UNRRA, G-5 (the military district to which IGCR was attached), the Internee and Displaced Persons Sub-Committee, and the Italian Refugee Branch of the AC, all were represented. Each agency was given time to present a short report of its work. It was decided that this Advisory Committee would meet once a month and that its object would be "to assist in the development of methods and plans for the care, repatriation and resettlement of refugees and displaced persons in the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations." The members were to be representatives of AFHQ, UNRRA, the U.S. Political Advisor, the British Resident Minister, the AC, the American and British Red Cross, the War Refugee Board, IGCR, JDC, AFSC and FAU.[18]

The establishment of a co-ordinating committee gave also the opportunity of evaluating the activities done and planning further work. While work with the IGCR continued for some little time, at the end of 1944 AFSC and FAU manifested their interest to work directly for and with Italians. The secretary of AFSC Foreign Committee, Julia Branson had first expressed this concern in a letter written to Wriggins on 19 October 1944: "As reports have come of the conditions in Italy, many of us have felt rather guilty because the Service Committee was not trying to do anything to see that relief got to the Italian people [...]."[19] However, the possibility of helping Italians returning to their ruined homes had already been circulating among the staff in Italy. As Wriggins wrote:

> The problem is this: [...] the energy and drive of the country people whose villages have been devastated and whose orchards and crops have been frequently completely destroyed by military activities have been lost. [...] there is an important place in the rehabilitation of these devastated

areas for such a program as the work camps have developed in the States. The CPS [Civilian Public Service] men could be the nucleus [...] to help the people find again their energies and imagination, to clean up and rebuild the villages *so that life can start again*.[20]

This for the moment was tentative since CPS men had not yet been allowed to go overseas, although Hartley felt that a beginning could be made before they arrived.

After further consideration, AFSC and FAU members agreed that, while UNRRA was committed to a program for refugees, medical assistance and child welfare, and ARI was dedicated to general clothing and food distribution, AFSC and FAU were interested in the possibility of the reconstruction of villages destroyed by the war. The aim was not that of dealing with the problem on a large scale, but "to establish a demonstration project which might be taken up by another authority be it UNRRA or some Italian office [...]."[21]

In order to decide which would be the best area for the project, Hartley and Perlman took a trip through the Abruzzi at the eastern end of the Gustav Line. The war front had remained in that area from September 1943 to June 1944. During that period, the German armies together with the Italian soldiers of the *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* organized operations not only against military objectives but also against the civilian population. The effects of the violence of the Nazi-Fascists was visible almost everywhere, but most of all in the province of Chieti. During their retreat along the Sangro valley, the German troops and the "*repubblichini*" razed to the ground small towns and villages, destroyed crops, killed or sacked cattle (Felice).

The human losses and the material damages had been terrible: a very high number of military victims on both sides (5,000 Allied soldiers and more than 4,000 Nazi-Fascists died, while the wounded were 20,000), about 10,000 civilian victims, more than 15,000 buildings totally destroyed (of which more than 10,000 in the province of Chieti alone), and almost 5,000 damaged (of which 50% in the same province). In the Summer of 1945, the homeless persons in the province of Chieti were still 75,000.

On 26 December 1944, Hartley and Glyn George (FAU) left Rome for another exploratory trip to the provinces of Chieti and Pescara. The first town they visited was Lanciano, where they found a team of four officers who had just completed "a survey of the devastated areas for the AC," and who were transporting "clothing [...] from the railroad in Ortona to the communes."[22] Using Lanciano as a base, they visited the devastated communes and observed that:

> Transport and materials are short, but they can be found on a modest scale if needed. Shelter is the greatest problem, [...]. Some planned program is needed so that the immense problem of rebuilding Italy will not waste scarce and badly needed material. Utilization of local resources and initiative should be one of the principles of this plan [...]. We completed our trip with the sense of the immensity of the job before the Italian people.[23]

Once the area had been found, the representatives of the two voluntary societies had to decide how to realize the project:

The plans for working in devastated areas are slow in materializing. The need is apparent and the job unquestioned, but the right approach has been difficult to find.[24]

To complete their exploration, Hartley and George made another trip to the province of Chieti from 16 to 24 January 1945. Their task was to determine what building materials, if any, would be available for such a project; to define further what part a voluntary society might play in the reconstruction of devastated areas; and to discover what factors would help to be accepted into whichever specific communes might be selected for this operation. At the end of the trip, they thought that the conditions for starting the project existed. In a letter to the Prefect of Chieti, they expressed their regret for not having been able to meet him during their last trip, but informed him that they were able to discuss their project with "*varie autorità, tra cui il Genio Civile*" [various authorities, among whom the Civil Engineer].[25]

At that point, it was necessary to get clearance from the AC authorities. By the end of February the AC had agreed to the project and undertaken to support it (rations, accommodations, petrol, oil, and lubricants), but wanted it cleared with UNRRA.

Wriggins, on behalf of AFSC, met in Rome with Keeny, UNRRA Chief of Mission, to examine the terms of cooperation between UNRRA and voluntary agencies such as AFSC and FAU.

Upon his return to the United States, Wriggins discussed Keeny's request for additional teams with UNRRA officers in Washington,[26] who approved of the project and offered any help possible, and any supplies which could be construed as medical care, care of children, or care of nursing mothers. Heathcote-Smith accepted to release Hartley when the project was ready to start, since the FAU agreed to leave Sam Marriage and Brian Sorenson with IGCR temporarily.

The preliminary preparations for the Devastated Areas Project included a final visit to the province of Chieti to conclude arrangements with the AC and UNRRA. Finally, at the end of April 1945, a small group (Hartley of AFSC, Louis Doré, James Brunton, and Norman Kay of FAU, and an Italian interpreter, Sergio Del Bo) left Rome for Casoli, in the Aventino Valley, near the Maiella mountains.[27] When the group had settled in at the small town, the problem was to decide where to start:

The most obvious thing that one sees is the destruction [...]. When one stands in the middle of one of these villages and lets one's eyes sweep in a complete circle, there is nothing except great piles of debris with a few parts of buildings still standing [...].[28]

The degree of destruction being the main criterion for first consideration, the villages selected were Montenerodomo, Palena, and Colledimacine. The group started making a survey of the three villages in order to determine the amount of building material needed for essential housing. The second step was to carry wood, cut by the villagers, down to the nearest local kilns to exchange for bricks and tiles.

At a meeting held in Caserta on 29 May to evaluate the beginning of the project it was decided to continue the work until October and to explore the availability of additional units in the field.[29] By the end of June, the pattern of work was pretty well set. The Reconstruction Committee in each village (made up of the mayor, a representative of the house owners, and a representative of homeless persons) compiled two lists of families desiring to buy materials, and one of families wishing to exchange wood for materials. The next step was for the house owners to go to the factory with the truck (the group had two half-ton Studebaker) so that they could make their own bargain for cash or for wood.

The group gradually came to concentrate on those who had neither wood nor capital. The Civil Engineer (*Genio Civile*) of the province of Chieti was asked to supply building materials in advance to those persons who wanted to rebuild but had no means to do so, "setting no limit to the amount of the amount of material that could be brought into the community in this way."[30]

On August 1945, Sam Marriage was sent to Palena to join the AFSC/FAU group. At the same time, John A. Waddington arrived in Italy to replace Wriggins as AFSC representative, the latter being assigned to AFSC work in France. Reporting on his first impressions of the Devastated Areas Project in Chieti Province, Waddington wrote:

> When I first saw the almost hopeless destruction in the villages in the Aventino Valley, [...] I wondered if we could ever hope for much improvement here. [...]
> However, after two or three days of visiting the several communes with different members of the AFSC-FAU project here, of closely observing the work and the attitude of the people, of passing through places where we have been asked to help but cannot because of limited facilities, the first feeling is gradually replaced by a sense of real meaning in the project, a feeling of great respect and kinship with these hard working little people of the mountains who are courageously rebuilding, and a realization of the much larger number of homes under construction in the communes in which we are working than in those left to themselves [...].
> I feel that this work is a real Quaker job of doing vital work not being done by someone else and giving Friendly service to suffering people in a quiet way which encourages their self-respect (Waddington 121).

Waddington's remarks confirm that, in the mind of the American and British Quakers who were involved in it, the project was a small but symbolic effort done in a truly Quaker way: a concrete "service to suffering people" not coming from above, but alongside them, in order to help them to recover "their self-respect."

The special contribution of the voluntary organizations was later acknowledged also by UNRRA Chief of Mission in a letter to the chairman of the "Italian Government Delegation for Relations with UNRRA":

> several units and groups of Voluntary Society personnel have been [...] making a substantial contribution toward enabling needy Italians [...] to repair and rebuild their homes by providing essential transport for the movement of building materials and by otherwise assisting to resolve local problems relating to the work of repair.

Such assistance was first undertaken in Italy by Voluntary Society personnel in March of 1945 when members of British Voluntary Society Units, working under the authority of UNRRA and stationed at Forte Aurelia, undertook to assist the Italian High Commissariat for War Refugees in building the first experimental group of houses for needy Italian Refugees in Velletri and Cisterna; soon after an UNRRA Voluntary Society Unit, composed of members of the Friends Ambulance Unit and stationed in the province of Frosinone, undertook to assist the Genio Civile, as well as needy individuals, in the repair of homes and shelter for Italian war-displaced and homeless persons, and subsequently a number of other such units working in different areas undertook similar assistance. In addition to these efforts by members of Voluntary Societies working under the authority of UNRRA, valuable initiative in this work has also been provided by the Friends Devastated Areas Group, composed of members of the American Friends Service Committee and the Friends Ambulance Unit, who in May 1945 undertook similar assistance independently of UNRRA, in the province of Chieti. The contribution of this latter group has been a real and increasingly useful one [...].
These groups have, to date, made possible the repair of over 7,000 rooms which provide shelter for over 20,000 persons. More important still has been their contribution toward resolving the many local problems relating to the work of repair and toward stimulating individual initiative among needy persons and enabling such persons to repair and rebuild their houses themselves. The spirit in which these groups have carried out this work, their genuine goodwill and concern for the welfare of the needy persons, is also a real and important part of their contribution.[31]

This official recognition of the importance of the voluntary societies' work stands in striking contrast with the almost complete obliviousness of their work in historical works on the subject.[32]

Università degli Studi di Genova

NOTES

1. In the official history of the Allied Military Administration in Italy, there is no mention of the work performed by the voluntary organizations, excluding two references to the Friends Ambulance Unit (Harris 422, 438).

2. On 9 November 1943, in the East Room of the White House, representatives of forty-four United Nations and associated governments signed an agreement in which they pledged to carry "aid and relief from their suffering" to civilian population in countries damaged by the war. To achieve this objective, the signatories created the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, or UNRRA. See Department of State, "Agreement for United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration," 9 November 1943, *Conference Series 53, Publication 2040, First Session of the Council of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, Selected Documents*, vol. 1, 7.

3. The American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service (Italy Branch) included -among others - the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the American Relief for Italy, the Brethren Service Committee, the Congregational Christian Service Committee, the International Rescue and Relief Committee, the Mennonite Central Committee, the Save the Children Federation, the Unitarian Service Committee, and the War Relief Services of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. To the Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad belonged the Catholic Committee for Relief Abroad, the Friends Ambulance Unit, the Friends Service Council, the International Voluntary Service for Peace, and the Save the Children Fund.

4. The FAU was first established in 1914 as a voluntary association of young men and women who organized themselves to relieve suffering caused by war (Greenwood 185-193).

5. The AFSC was created by Friends in Philadelphia less than a month after the United States entered the First World War to give young Quakers of draft age an opportunity to serve their country in ways not requiring violence.

6. Refugee Services/Italy/Refugee Program 1940, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia (hereinafter cited as AFSC Archives); Roswell and Marjorie McClelland to Pickett, 4 January 1941, Italy/Reports from Rome Center 1941, ibid.

7. During the Spring of 1945, the Displaced Persons Sub-Commission transferred to UNRRA the assistance to refugees.

8. Foreign Service Executive Committee, 17 January 1944, AFSC Archives.

9. Foreign Service Executive Committee, 17 April 1944, AFSC Archives.

10. Program of work of IGCR personnel, 14 June 1944, Italy/Reports 1944, AFSC Archives. Cf. Clarence E. Pickett, *For More than Bread: An Autobiographical Account of Twenty-Two Yeras' Work with the American Friends Service Committee* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), 202, and Tegla A. Davies, *Friends Ambulance Unit*, 370 f.

11. The "Campo di concentramento Media Valle di Crati" had been the largest Italian internment camp for "foreign Jews." Between June 1940 and September 1943, when the Badoglio government released the internees, there were 3,682 foreign Jewish and 141 Italian Jewish internees (Folino).

12. Sampson D. Marriage joined the FAU at the beginning of the war and in the Winter 1940/41 participated in the relief operations for the civilian population during the bombing of London. From the Fall of 1941 to the end of 1943 he was in charge of a service of medical assistance for the British Army in the Middle East. On December1943, he was attached to the small FAU unit in Catania until his assignment to Bari. Later, he was responsible for accompanying on a British ship more than 900 Jews to Palestine.

13. Program of work of IGCR personnel, 14 June 1944, Italy/Reports 1944, AFSC Archives; Italy/Letters from Italy 1944, Howard Wriggins, Memorandum, 5 July 1944, ibid.

14. Howard Wriggins to Julia Branson [Foreign Service Secretary], Program of Operations, 14 June 1944, Italy/Letters from Italy 1944, AFSC Archives.

15. Sir Clifford Heathcote-Smith to Lt. Col. John T. Zellers, HQ. Region II, ACC, 1st July 1944, Italy/IGCR, AFSC Archives.

16. Report by Kendall Kimberland to AFSC, 11 September 1944, Italy/Reports 1944, AFSC Archives.

17. Interview with Sam Marriage, October 1998.

18. Report on Italy, 8 September 1944, Italy/Reports 1944, AFSC Archives.

19. Julia Branson [Foreign Service Secretary] to Howard Wriggins, 19 October 1944, Foreign Service Executive Committee/Italy, AFSC Archives.

20. Howard Wriggins to James Vail [AFSC, Philadelphia], 7 October 1944, Italy/Reports 1944, AFSC Archives.

21. David Hartkey to James Vail [AFSC, Philadelphia], 31 October 1944, Italy/Letters from Italy 1944, AFSC Archives.

22. Report on Trip to the Devastated Areas of Chieti and Pescara Provinces, by David Hartley, 26-31 December 1944, Italy/Reports 1944, AFSC Archives.

23. Ibid.

24. David Hartley to AFSC [Philadelphia], 10 January 1945, Italy/Letters from Italy 1945, AFSC Archives.

25. David Hartley, AFSC, and Glyn George (FAU) to S.E. il Prefetto di Chieti, 24 January 1945, Archivio di Stato di Chieti, Prefettura, I versamento, 1ª serie, b. 9. I am grateful to dr. Marcello Benegiamo of the State Archive of Chieti for his assistance in locating this letter.

26. Maude Barrett to Gay Shepperson, 22 March 1945, Italy, PAG 4/1.3.1.4.0.1 #5, UNRRA/UN Archives.

27. David Hartley to AFSC [Philadelphia], 27 April 1945, Italy/Letters from Italy 1945, AFSC Archives.

28. David Hartley to AFSC [Philadelphia], 18 May 1945, Italy/Letters from Italy 1945, AFSC Archives.

29. Report by David Hartley, 12 June 1945, Italy/Reports 1945, AFSC Archives.

30. Report on Colledimacine by David Hartley, 23 July 1945, Italy/Reports 1945, AFSC Archives.

31. S.M. Keeny, Chief of Mission, to Avv. Lodovico Montini, President [of the] Italian Government Delegation for Relation with UNRRA, 18 April 1946, AFSC/Italy, PAG 4/1.3.1.4.1 #3, UNRRA/UN Archives.

32. To my knowledge, the only exceptions are books and memoirs written by members of these societies (*Volunteers for Peace*; Smith 270-6).

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AFTERWORD
PAVANE FOR A DEFUNCT HOTEL

MASSIMO BACIGALUPO

On February 6, 2002, the Faculty of Languages of the University of Genoa hosted a panel, sponsored by AISNA, on "The Hotel Croce di Malta and Its Guests." The occasion was the inauguration of a plaque on an old building overlooking the Genoa harbor, which in the eighteenth and ninenteenth century was the city's foremost inn. The Hotel Croix de Malte was named after the Knights of Malta, who still preside over the nearby church of San Pancrazio (with a notable triptych) and run a day-hospital for the neighborhood, one of the city's oldest and poorest. However, proximity to the new Aquarium and marina has brought it crowds of visitors - at least in the daytime.

When Tobias Smollett sailed from Nice into Genoa in 1764, he reported:

> We passed through a considerable number of ships and vessels lying at anchor, and landing at the water-gate, repaired to an inn called *La Croix de Malte*, in the neighborhood of the harbour. Here we met with such good entertainment as prepossessed us in favour of the interior parts of Italy, and contributed with other motives to detain us some days in this city. (*Travels* 205)

A little over a century later, in 1877, the Croce di Malta was still in business and attracted Henry James's considerable powers of attention. "I had found my hotel," he wrote in *Italian Hours*,

> extremely entertaining - the Croce di Malta, as it is called, established in a gigantic palace on the edge of the swarming and not over-clean harbor. It was the biggest house I had ever entered - the basement alone would have contained a dozen American caravanseries. I met an American gentleman in the vestibule who …was annoyed by its troublesome dimensions - one was a quarter of an hour ascending out of the basement - and desired to know if it were a "fair sample" of the Genoese inns. It appeared an excellent specimen of Genoese architecture generally; so far as I had observed there were few houses perceptibly smaller than this Titanic tavern. I lunched in a dusky ballroom whose ceiling was vaulted, frescoed and gilded with the fatal facility of a couple of centuries ago… (114-115)

Soon after James' visit, the Croce di Malta was shut down and all traces of it disappeared. By consulting directories from the nineteenth century I found its address to have been "Vico dei Morci," and was happy to discover that a Vico Morchi still emerges from the dim labyrinth of Genoa's "topographical tangle" (James) into the light of the seafront square, Piazza Caricamento. It turned out to be close to a little eatery where I often stop between classes (Friggitoria Carega, Via Sottoripa 113r), for it serves some of the best *farinata* (hot chickpea bake), fried shrimp and boiled octopus I know - if one is willing to

stand or sit on a metal perch in the narrow shop, near the oven, still a wood-burning one. Winter and summer, there is no door to this venerable establishment, certain proof that this is a temperate climate.

Vico Morchi is a rather dingy alley on the next corner from this Genoese fish & chips. Here I discovered a barber-shop which could have gone back to the times of Henry James, were it not for the pictures of Marx and Engels adorning the walls and the strange metal constructs or erotic modernistic sculptures lying around the premises. The courteous and aged barber informed me that Fidel Castro was a great statesman and that his brother's sculptures were not for sale. He lives in the opposite building and he has heard from the daughter of an old lady who died long ago in her eighties that her grandfather said that the house was a hotel.

This seemed sufficient proof. In the 1890s the old palace was renovated by a new owner and turned into apartments for his extended family. And so it has remained. The friendly barber climbs up to the top floor - no elevator. And on top of that is a red medieval tower, where some of the more romantic guests may have stayed. Only, I can't see traces of the immensity that so impressed Henry James. Pehaps I will if I ever venture inside. I once visited a Genoese painter's studio nearby, and thought the apartment was as big as a football field. But there was no electricity, and perhaps not even a bathroom. He said he only painted in the daytime anyhow.

James was the last of three notable American guests of the Croce di Malta. In February 1829 James Fenimore Cooper wrote his wife in Florence: "I am at the Croix de Malta, which looks directly upon the harbor. I can scarcely describe to you the pleasure I feel in seeing ships, hearing the cries of seamen, a race everywhere so much alike, and in smelling all the odors of the trade." He even considered bringing wife and child "as high as this in June" (*Letters and Journals*, I, 361).

In *The Innocents Abroad*, Mark Twain wrote enthusiastically:

> The hotel we live in belonged to one of those great orders of knights of the Cross in the times of the Crusades, and its mailed sentinels once kept watch and ward in its massive turrets and woke the echoes of these halls and corridors with their iron heels. (122)

At the time of the Innocents' visit, Genoa was still an important tourist stop, and even Clemens's friend William Dean Howells has a bemused chapter in his *Italian Journeys* on wandering through the city's labyrinth. He doesn't say where he spent the night, but catches the scene very well:

> A very great number of the streets of Genoa are footways merely, and these are as narrow, as dark, as full of jutting chimney-places, balconies, and open window-shutters, and as picturesque as the little alleys in Venice. They wander at will around the bases of the gloomy old stony palaces, and seem to have a vagabond fondness for creeping down to the port, and losing themselves there in a certain cavernous arcade which curves round the water with the flection of the shore, and makes itself a twilight of noonday. Under it are clangorous shops of ironsmiths, and sizzling shops of

marine cooks, and, looking down its dim perspective, one beholds chiefly sea-legs coming and going, more or less affected by strong waters… (34)

Unfortunately, today one is as likely as not to see somebody stagger under the influence of a shot of heroin, but sailors and ship chandlers and sizzling shops still abound.

Mark Twain, for his part, was impressed by the women of Genoa: "I did not see how a man of only ordinary decision of character could marry here, because before he could get his mind made up he would fall in love with somebody else" (117). This is surely tongue-in-cheek, though Balzac claimed somewhere that Michelangelo had used Genoese models for his wide-breasted nudes in the Medici chapel. Genoa reminded Clemens "of a cave I used to know at home… with its lofty passages, its silence and solitude, its shrouding gloom" (122). I am sure this is the cave we all remember from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer.*

So it was only right that there should be a marble plaque in Vico Morchi, informing all strollers who will crane their neck around this unpromising corner of the building's illustrious past.

AISNA and AIWC, American International Women's Club Genoa, shared the expense and - all due permissions having been obtained - the tablet was inaugurated on February 6, 2002. My Scottish friends will be disappointed that Smollett's name was forgotten (I only came upon the relevant passage in the *Travels* later). But, besides the Americans Cooper, James and Mark Twain, three European figures are listed: Mary Shelley, Stendhal, and Giuseppe Verdi. Verdi, it turns out, spent in Genoa most of his winters, because the climate there was milder than in his native Parma, and people would refrain from accosting him during his strolls. (The Genoese still have a reputation for reserve, as well as for stinginess. In fact, they are credited with "inventing" three things: capitalism, *pesto*,and America.)

Certainly many other notable guests of the Croce di Malta will turn up. For every one of them there is a story, letter or chapter that takes us back into time, and seems to call for novelistic treatment. Imagine Henry James meeting Giuseppe Verdi in the frescoed ballroom, and the two planning together an opera on Daisy (not Luisa) Miller. Or Mary Shelley, a widow of 25, musing on her beloved Percy in September 1822, and worrying about her - and her child's - future, "in this busy hateful Genoa where nothing speaks to me of him, except the sea, which is his murderer" (*Letters* I, 258). After she moved from the hotel to Casa Negrotto, Albaro, in the suburbs, Mary wrote Jane Williams about Edward Trelawny: "He is at the Croce di Malta; Gabrielle [Wright] sees him every day - generally dines with him there, & what will become of him when W[right] comes home? - I have seen L.B[yron]. only once & that by accident… I have copied for him the 10th Canto of Don Juan" (1.281). The plot thickens.

That these lives should have passed under the dim arcades of the Genoa waterfront does not cease to intrigue me. Perhaps the plaque on the former Hotel Croce di Malta will help our

students at the Faculty of Languages to get a closer perspective on those remote poems and stories they are assigned to read in their anthologies from London and New York.

Università degli Studi di Genova

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AUTHOR INDEX

Bacigalupo, Massimo, 655
Balestra, Gianfranca, 67
Borghi, Liana, 493
Branciforte, Suzanne, 139
Briasco, Luca, 315
Bruti Liberati, Luigi, 613
Buonomo, Leonardo, 259
Castagneto, Pierangelo, 381
Cinotto, Simone, 145
Coslovi, Marina, 369
Costigliola, Giuseppe, 287
D'Amico, Maria Vittoria, 455
Daniele, Daniela, 157
De Luca, Daniele, 575
Del Pero, Mario, 599
Delfino, Susanna, 397
Donno, Antonio, 569
Dowling, Gregory, 75
Ferruggia, Gabriella, 625
Fornari, Roberta, 301
Foster, Shirley, 351
Francini, Antonella, 85
Gardini, Nicola, 93
Garroni, Maria Susanna, 227
Ginzburg Migliorino, Ellen, 267
Hahn, Robert, 57
Irmscher, Christoph, 23
Loreto, Paola, 103
Lorini, Alessandra, 515
Mamoli Zorzi, Rosella, 3
Marano, Salvatore, 465
Marazzi, Martino, 165
Marino, Elisabetta, 173
Mattiello, Cristina, 237
Mayer, Kurt Albert, 475
Molinari, Augusta, 635
Moramarco, Fred, 43
Nardi, Paola A.,111
Neri, Algerina, 501
Nori, Giuseppe, 119
Nugnes, Barbara, 333
Olimpo, Paola, 581
Pedersen, E. Martin, 127
Perrin, Stephen, 247
Petrovich Njegosh, Tatiana, 435
Prezzavento, Paolo, 293
Proietti, Salvatore, 525
Rabinowitz, Paula, 445
Rossi, Umberto, 279
Rubboli, Massimo, 645
Russo, John Paul, 187
Salenius, Sirpa, 343
Salvini, Laura, 309
Samuelson, Richard, 533
Sanfilippo, Matteo, 201
Scacchi, Anna, 423
Scatamacchia, Cristina, 507
Schiavini, Cinzia, 541
Siniscalco, Federico, 179
Sioli, Marco, 551
Steel, Ronald, 19
Tattoni, Igina, 559
Thompson Rizzo, Patricia, 413
Vantaggio, Valentina, 591
Vezzosi, Elisabetta, 215
Virdis, F. Daniela, 361
Wood, Sarah, 325

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