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Discourses of Emancipation and the Boundaries of Freedom

Selected Papers
from the 22nd AISNA
Biennial International
Conference

Edited by
Leonardo Buonomo
and Elisabetta Vezzosi

with the collaboration of
Gabrielle Barfoot
and Giulia Iannuzzi

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From the start we decided that this volume would include only a selection of the papers presented at the conference. Accordingly, each of the essays submitted for publication in this volume was first read, critiqued, and evaluated by two anonymous referees. We were fortunate to be able to avail ourselves of the expertise and generosity of numerous colleagues from Europe and the United States and to all of them we extend our heartfelt thanks. As with the organization of the conference, so with the publication of this volume, we received encouragement and assistance from Marina Sbisà, the Humanities Department, and the United

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Leonardo Buonomo and Elisabetta Vezzosi

Introduction

LEONARDO BUONOMO
ELISABETTA VEZZOSI

Taking inspiration from the 150th anniversary of President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington, the 22nd International Biennial Conference of Italy's American Studies Association was held in Trieste on September 19-21, 2013. The city's strong ties with the United States—dating back to 1797, when a United States Consulate was first established there, and culminating in the 1947-54 period when Trieste, as a “free territory,” was partly under American administration—made it a fitting location for this event. So also did Trieste's rich and complicated history of national, cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity, still perceptible today in its demographic makeup, architecture, and lifestyle.

Entitled *Discourses of Emancipation and the Boundaries of Freedom*, the conference witnessed a very large international participation, incontrovertible evidence that its general topic and the historic landmarks to which it paid tribute resonated strongly with scholars of widely differing backgrounds. Over the course of three days, plenary and panel speakers discussed issues of personal and national liberty, of social, political, and religious expression, and exchanged views about the ongoing battle to end discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Retracing the United States' past, confronting its present, and pondering on its future, the lectures and papers presented in Trieste provided a wide array of disciplinary approaches, from such fields as literature,

history, linguistics, cultural studies, gender studies, performance studies, political science, law, and psychology.

Revised and grouped in sections on the basis of thematic affinity, the essays collected in this volume constitute a representative selection of the many different points of view and methodologies which informed the stimulating debate about the significance of emancipation and freedom in Trieste two years ago. They explore the connection between physicality and the quest for freedom; the defense of identity in the face of racial or ethnic discrimination; the legacy of failed attempts to achieve freedom and justice; the great tradition and current prominence of nature-related writing as an instrument of interpretation of the American experience; the problematic aspects of American freedom as an exportable ideology; the ways in which emancipation and freedom figure in popular culture; the many different facets and meanings of collective emancipation, personal emancipation, and empowerment.

The use of different scholarly approaches to analyze key categories in United States history and literature in this volume may be considered as an example of *intersectionality*. Coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, the term *intersectionality* originally described a form of analysis that took into account both race and gender. It was subsequently adopted by several humanities scholars to define works in which issues of race, class, gender, nationality, and age intersect and clarify one another (Winker and Degele).

In recent years the concept of *intersectionality* has been discussed and contested because, according to some scholars, its emphasis on certain specific social categories disregarded the question of “Whether *all* identities are intersectional or whether only multiply marginalized subjects have an intersectional identity” (Nash 9). Some scholars have therefore re-defined *intersectionality*, interpreting it as a concept that by reconfiguring domination/subordination dynamics, is capable of generating new forms of empowerment (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall).

As demonstrated, more or less explicitly, by many of the essays collected in this volume, the concept of *intersectionality* may help us develop a more sophisticated approach to such binary oppositions as emancipation and oppression, agency and subjugation, empowerment and victimization. In particular, it provides us with a fresh perspective on freedom: no longer a fixed or immutable concept but rather a subject of persistent conflict in American history. As Eric Foner has convincingly argued:

If the meaning of freedom has been a battleground throughout our history, so too has been the definition of those entitled to enjoy its blessings . . . Efforts to delimit freedom along one or another axis of social existence have been a persistent feature of our history. More to the point, perhaps, freedom has often been defined by its limits. The master’s freedom rested on the reality of slavery, the vaunted autonomy of men on the subordinate position of women. By the same token, it has been through battles at the boundaries of freedom—the efforts of racial minorities, women, workers, and other groups to secure freedom as they understood it—that the definition of free-

dom has been both deepened and transformed and the concept extended to realms for which it was not originally intended . . . Today, the idea of freedom remains as central as ever to American culture and politics—and as contested. One thing seems certain. The story of American freedom is forever unfinished. Debates over its meaning will undoubtedly continue, and new definitions will emerge to meet the exigencies of the twenty-first-century world, a globalized era in which conversations about freedom and its meaning are likely to involve all mankind.

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1. Emancipation and the Temporality of the Body

Did Apparel (Eighteen-eighties- Nineteen-twenties) Help American Women's Emancipation? A Socio-Literary Problematic Response

CRISTINA GIORCELLI

Fashion historian Aileen Ribeiro maintains that “clothing is simultaneously personal ... and ‘the mirror of history,’” as Louis XIV had first declared (*Art of Dress* 3). Clothes and accessories are indeed signifiers of the historical and cultural codes of their times. They are literally the “stuff” of life. I will analyze some of the most paradigmatic changes in women's clothes and accessories in the years between the eighteen-eighties and the nineteen-twenties because, insofar as it was related to the sexual politics of Western cultures, fashion was “an integral part of the social, intellectual, and aesthetic ferment of the *fin de siècle*” (Steele, “*Femme Fatale*” 316) and, also, of the beginning of the twentieth century. My aim is to show if and how, either urged by organized struggles for the rights of women or anticipated by sensitive *couturiers* with an eye to epochal innovations, such changes *emancipated* American women from the vestimentary *shackles* with which fashion had previously *enslaved* them. It is not surprising that the vocabulary generally employed on the subject by fashion historians is the same as that of abolitionism, since it is from this crucible that the suffragist movement emerged—even if full recognition of the “woman question” came only after the Civil War (Gilbert 93-114), as did most changes in female attire.

According to several fashion scholars and sociologists, through a combination of necessity and choice, the new attire helped women fight for social status, creative fulfillment and, therefore, a new place in society: in other words,

these changes allowed them to be “self-reliant,” as Emerson had preached every human being should be. In my opinion, however, such exultant assertions stand in need of, at least, some qualification. First of all, even within such a relatively short span of time—from the eighteen-eighties, when the paradigm of woman as frail (physically, mentally, and morally) still meant that she needed to be protected by the safe walls of the house and indeed be the “angel in the house,” to the nineteen-twenties, when she was theoretically accepted as equal to man in all sectors of society and, after the approval of the nineteenth amendment, was finally permitted to vote—there were set-backs in the way clothes and accessories were fashioned: since fashion history is not linear—even though, due to repetitions and doublings back, it is relational—, changes in clothing “came in oddly overlapping impulses” (Joslin 148). For instance, during this period, corsets kept going in and out of fashion: was this because, according to the male ideal of female erotic beauty, they “improved” on woman’s body shape? (Steele, “The Corset” 449-73). And if this is the case, when did emancipation *really* begin?

Secondly, hygiene, comfort, and mobility—the proclaimed musts of female clothing—were not the only criteria according to which female attire was designed and accepted. In particular—Anne Hollander maintains—comfort is often “a mental rather than a physical condition,” as “it is the image of comfort that is desirable, the look of wearing something sanctioned by the fashionable ideal of comfort” (*Seeing* 339, 348). Thirdly, before some radical, structural vestimentary changes were taken into serious consideration, for at least three decades (from the eighteen-eighties to World War I) only a minority of women—mostly from the middle and upper middle classes, those who till then had been the arbiters of fashion—had the audacity to wear garments that allowed them to move with ease and feel free. Finally, it must be taken into account that while some of the social advances made by women were institutionally very important, others were transient and illusionary (and, in everyday living, perhaps, still waiting to be fully realized), for women had not really been able to convert their voting power into sustained political power. If it is true that, after World War I and in the nineteen-twenties, a new way of thinking and acting, a totally new “fashion” of conceiving clothes and accessories for women was brought about by the modernist impulse to break away from tradition and prioritize the individual over social norms, it is also true that, in those same years, some sections of society were still very traditional and in the labor market women were often compelled to settle for underpaid and sex-segregated jobs (Dumenil 98-144). Therefore, although this period was, in many ways, an exciting one for women, it must be evaluated with caution.

I will focus attention, as intimated, not only on clothes, but also on accessories. Far from dismissing them as superfluous, I consider them as ornaments that give *access* to a personality, particularly at a time when the position of women was largely cast as, indeed, ornamental.

It should be immediately pointed out that the relevance of apparel is complex. Operating “on the boundary between self and other,” clothes and accessories are

what Joanne Entwistle defines as “an intimate experience of the body and a public presentation of it”; they are “one of the means by which bodies are . . . given meaning and identity.” Better still, they are “an embodied activity . . . embedded within social relations” (274-76). Since clothing articulates the relationship between the body and its milieu and affects the way people “see themselves . . . feel about and communicate with others” (Hughes, *Henry James* 185), in her seminal text, “The Dress of Women,” Charlotte Perkins Gilman convincingly argued that “cloth is a social tissue” (20).

Clothes and accessories, however, can also be used to conceal identities, that is, to play with identity to create disconcerting effects, because appearances can be manipulated through apparel to produce inauthentic resonances. Clothing can thus contribute to a confusion of identity or even a usurpation of identity. Dressing may, in fact, also entail dressing up. It has been pointed out that “You can lie in the language of dress” (Lurie 24). Furthermore, in so far as clothes have much to do with class and money and often function as indices of desire, they are, in Claire Hughes’ view, “a dream of alterity, of what one wants to be” (*Henry James* 113), but one is not or is not yet. Finally, one must also be aware that clothing is not only a means to connect, to conceal, or to give the reins to the imagination, but it also sets the body apart from the social world. As Elizabeth Wilson puts it, “Dress is the frontier between the self and the not-self” (*Adorned* 3)—a frontier that is, at times, impenetrable. Clothing can thus turn out to be the body’s shield, even its armor, thanks to which people defend themselves or close themselves off from the world.

If, according to Hollander, “Western dress requires the body to give clothes meaning” (*Seeing* 337), especially in the past garments imposed themselves on the female body: they quite literally fashioned the physical form of woman, and in so doing they set themselves forward “as the visual manifestation of her femininity.” But if “the woman . . . is revealed . . . through the garment that shapes and articulates her” (Bancroft 74), the garment could not but impinge upon her subjectivity, and, in particular, upon her sexual expression.

Changes in female apparel stood for changes in the ways women’s bodies (and personalities) were looked at and evaluated as social signs. In particular—Martha Banta has argued— “[t]he way a woman dresses and looks may be the means by which she displays her ideas to the world, as well as revealing her complex affiliation with the very society she wishes to alter” (78-81).

In my observations on some canonical texts that mostly refer to the American middle or upper classes—the only ones for whom, especially at the end of the nineteenth century, at a time of conspicuous consumption and waste, garments were a matter of choice—I will comment on how some authors registered and reacted to certain items in women’s apparel: entirely or only partly emancipatory. One must keep in mind, however, that authors often ostensibly treat their characters’ dress, that is, “their historically determined or specific and stylistically presented way of looking,” as “irrelevant” (Hollander, *Seeing* 421). Nonethe-

less, behind such a “universalist” attitude, even when apparently unobtrusive, synecdochical and meaningful details may be lurking.

There is a distance that must be accounted for between the visual and the verbal. What happens when textile becomes text? Hughes has pertinently asked, “What do words do for dress?” (“Dressing” 11). A tentative answer may be found in the question that an iconic figure like Diane Vreeland (fashion editor of *Harper’s Bazaar* and of *Vogue* and consultant to the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art) once posed, “Where would fashion *be* without literature?” (82); I take the emphasis on “be” to mean that, contrary to its intrinsically temporary life, fashion achieves permanent status thanks to literature.

Honoré de Balzac was the first Western writer to openly assert and demonstrate that clothes and accessories are the most powerful of symbols. He went so far as to draw a sort of physiology of appearances. Thomas Carlyle, in his 1836 social satire, *Sartor Resartus*, had already understood the significance of clothes when he affirmed that they not only are the man, but replace him. Much more recently, Quentin Bell is even more explicit when he proclaims that clothing is “a natural extension of the body, or even of the soul” (19). According to Wilson, dress in literature (the “written” dress) is “a cultural metaphor for the body; it is the material with which we write or draw a representation of the body into a cultural context” (“Fashion” 6). If, as Henry James maintained, in a narrative every touch must count—and, knowing him, one would want to specify, both morally and aesthetically—it seems that one must give presentations of clothes and accessories their due weight. They, in fact, serve several functions: they contribute to the reality effect, they assert or hint at the nature of class and gender relations, they may communicate intentions, and they may at least provide, as has been minimalistically proposed, “insights into culture, allowing a momentary articulation of meaning” (Oliver 11). As James, again, cautiously put it—and he was too much of an admirer of Balzac¹ not to draw this lesson from him—clothing may be regarded as a “seen” from which “to guess the unseen,” from which to “trace the implication of things” (“Art of Fiction” 53). This “implication,” however, must be delicately assessed since it must be unraveled from descriptions or, most often, from flashing presentations of clothes and accessories conveying fragments of diverse associations. Not only, but, following Roland Barthes, for whom clothing functions “simultaneously as [the body’s] substitute and its mask,” we may agree with him that, when presented in literature, thanks to the rhetorical connotations lent by language, clothing turns into a “spectacle” (236). If what an author stages for readers through apparel is a “spectacle,” such a spectacle stands in need of being interpreted, that is, of being unraveled by “feeling the inner echo of visual memory and unconscious fantasy” (Hollander, *Feeding* 106). Clothes and accessories, especially in literary texts, may thus be elusive because they are polyvalent: dress, in Alison Lurie’s view, is both a performance and a metaphorical language.

¹ James dedicated four essays to Balzac (1875, 1877, 1902, 1905).



1 Bell body shape.

In the nineteenth century, various utopian communalists, both religious and secular, as well as some health reformers considered trousers or pantaloons the proper dress for women. But it was only at the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention in 1848 that women not only invoked the right to vote but also that of wearing clothing that, besides being ornamental, should be conducive to their health, comfort and utility. Such clothing had to be the opposite of what, in use in those years, fashioned the so called bell-body shape, thanks to its tightly corseted busts—harmful to lungs, abdomen, and spine—and to the many layers of petticoats—often up to a weight of 17 lbs. Above all, the new clothing would have to allow for the articulation of the leg, a part of a woman's body that conventional morality forbade even to mention. Promoted, if not invented, by Amelia Bloomer, the new attire (called "bloomers") consisted of loose trousers gathered at the ankles, like those worn by Turkish women—thus conveying, in spite of their inventor's declared intention, an exotically voluptuous touch. They were often topped by an ample shirt and a short skirt hanging over them. Even if the intention was to combine utility and beauty, bloomers were ridiculed by the press and were not widely adopted even by suffragists. In the eighteen-eighties, for the comfort of New Women, bloomers were superseded by the divided skirt



2 Bloomers.

generally worn under a long jacket. They were proposed by Lady Harberton in England at the founding of the Rational Dress Society. She proclaimed that as long as woman was recognized as a biped, she was entitled to garments that would give freedom to all her limbs. The Rational Dress Society also campaigned against high-heeled and narrow-toed women's shoes. During the Gilded Age, at the end of the eighteen-eighties and in the eighteen-nineties, thanks to an impetuous sports craze for women—cycling, hockey, archery, golf—the divided skirt was replaced by the knickerbocker suit, with baggy-kneed trousers worn with stockings. It must be stressed that safety bicycles—and the knickerbockers worn to ride them—changed “the conventions of courtship and chaperonage, of marriage and travel” (Marks 174): they provided transportation and entertainment and encouraged exercise and good health (Marks 201). Addressing women, feminist Mary E. Ward wrote that by bicycling they would “become alert, active, quick-sighted, and keenly alive as well to the rights of others as to what is due [to themselves]” (13). At a time when women started being admitted to a University education, physical and mental exertions—that had been previously believed to detract from womanly functions—validated each other. This notwithstanding, society at large was afraid that women's muscles and intellectual careers would entail a gender trans-



3 Divided skirt.

ference: because women hold the physiological key to the next generation, they were feared to emasculate men and bring about a different era.

In 1895 Kate Chopin published a short-story, “The Unexpected,” in which cycling helps the protagonist, Dorothea, move beyond convention, while affirming her physicality. Engaged to Randall, who has become very ill, Dorothea, after a mad ride on her bicycle alone in the countryside, decides not to marry him thus going against society’s rules and her relatives’ presumable psychological pressures. If the new vehicle helps her make up her mind and assert herself, the writer, who evidently did not want to portray her protagonist as a rebel, does not specify what kind of riding costume she is wearing, even though she states that it covered her “toes.” Did Chopin intend to instill suspicion in the minds of trusting parents and fiancées that even in conventional dress young women might now dare proclaim their autonomy? Quite different is the case that she proposed five years later, in 1900, when she wrote the long short-story “Charlie.” Its protagonist is a seventeen-year-old girl—the second of seven sisters—much loved by her widowed father (a Louisiana plantation owner), to whom she is deeply devoted. Rather than playing the piano, dancing, and painting, as befits the *cursus honorum* of the women of her social class, Charlie likes to go fishing, shooting, riding,



4 Knickerbockers.

and indeed cycling. Not by chance her nickname is epicene and her given name, Charlotte, derives from Karl, whose German root means “man.” Consequently, Charlie is an androgynous woman, a (grown up) tom-boy: accordingly, she bursts into the setting of the story mounting her black horse and immediately afterwards readers are informed that a new bicycle has just arrived for her. While her dark hair is unconventionally cut short, she wears “a costume of her own devising, something between bloomers and a divided skirt which she called her trouserlets” (639). As she lives in the countryside and is not up-to-date fashion-wise, her clothing combines the two previous costumes for active women (and not the by then well-known knickerbockers). The name she finds for her outfit bespeaks her linguistic inventiveness (later on readers will learn that she even writes poems). This garment’s cut is its most significant characteristic, since, contrary to the information we are given about the dresses of her older and younger sisters, we know neither its color nor its fabric. The mention of the “divided skirt,” while obliquely referring to the female sex, points to the structural discontinuity and hybrid nature of this costume, indeed to its intrinsic “in-between”-ness (Giorcelli, “Gender” 229-59). When Charlie becomes infatuated with a young man, Firman, in the vain attempt to attract him she doubles the frills and furbelows on

her newly-bought feminine dresses to the point of becoming grotesque: adopting a language of dress that she does not know, she turns into the caricature of what a young lady should look like. She even combs her short hair with curling irons, making her head look now like “a prize chrysanthemum” (657). But, when she finds out that Firman has proposed to her very lady-like elder sister, Julia, Charlie puts on her “trouserlets” again. The return to her former garment could be seen as a sign of regression if, at the same time, she had not matured into the “mistress” (669) of her father’s plantation. Because he had lost his right arm in a mill accident, she will run the property in a garment that underlines her double role. As she takes care of both her father and her five younger sisters, in fact, she also carries out the recognized feminine functions: those of nurse and (vicarious) mother. No longer the uncouth tomboy and no longer the ridiculous female, she commands respect in a costume that simultaneously presents both genders with neither predominating. Differently from *Little Women’s* Jo March—whom in many ways she resembles—Charlie will defer to an indefinite time marriage to the young, but elderly looking, suitor who loves her as she is. Charlie may indeed be the precursor of the woman Gilman would invoke fifteen years later: that is, someone who would “strike out for oneself, . . . cultivate an original distinctive personal taste . . . invent for oneself . . . choose a special personal style and hold to it.” (“Dress” 331). Given its unconventionality, it will not come as a surprise that this short story was not published until 1964.

It was also in the eighteen-nineties that the Gibson girl type became fashionable: both fragile and voluptuous, tall and slender, with narrow-waist, but large bust and hips, she was the counter-New Woman in that she did not question traditional feminine roles. For day-wear she adopted a long skirt and a tight shirt, worn with a corset, and combed her abundant hair high in a chignon with a waterfall of curls and waves. Her hair, indeed, became the benchmark of her style. In spite of her tight lacing, she was portrayed as athletic, independent, seeking personal fulfillment, and even flirtatious, so as to be a captivating and contradictory figure that stood mid-way between the traditional and the progressive woman, both undermining and sanctioning women’s desires for social progress.

Edith Wharton had the economic ease to buy and wear expensive and always up-to-date clothes. She was so interested in clothing that not only did she visit textile factories, but, during World War I, she even managed a sewing-room for working-class refugee women in Paris.² Wharton’s sense of elegance and inner insecurity were such that she hoped—in vain—to attract Henry James’s attention through her apparel at their first two meetings: the first time she wore a “newest Doucet dress” and the second time she donned “a beautiful new hat” (*Backward* 172). As, at a time of exuberance in adornments, her aesthetics praised

² In her first story (published in 1916, but written in 1892), “The Bunner Sisters,” Wharton’s protagonists are two seamstresses.

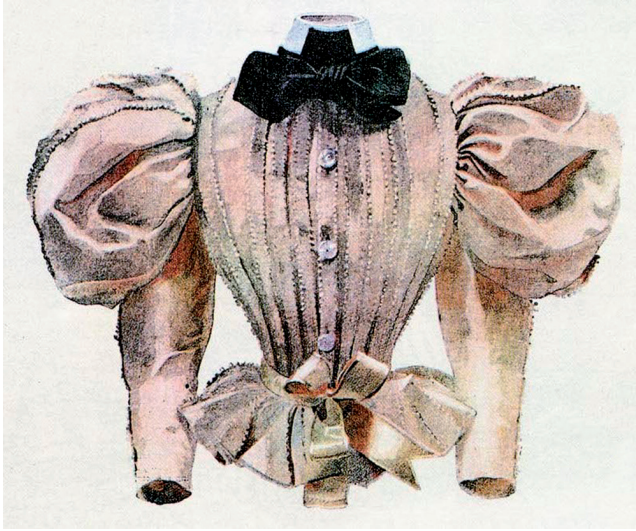


5 The Gibson girl.

“moderation, fitness, and relevance,”³ the narrator of one of her stories, “Madame de Treymes” (1907), significantly insists on singleness, when he states that elegance can be detected in “the very fall of a flounce and tilt of a feather” (18; italics mine). Even though Wharton objected to the Gibson girl’s conflicting message,⁴ for one of her early short stories, “The Touchstone” (1900), she must have had her in mind when she portrayed the character of Alexa, the woman loved by the protagonist, who appreciates “the deep roll of hair that overhung her brow like the eaves of a temple” (210). In order to be able to marry her, he sells the letters sent to him by a great woman writer, who had been in love with him. Being traditional in his tastes, he could not love this artist because she was physically plain and did not know how to dress: “Her dress never seemed a part of her; all her clothes had an impersonal air, as though they had belonged to someone else and been borrowed in an emergency” (170). Such a pitiless verdict ends with this final stroke, “Genius is of small use to a woman who does not know how to do her hair” (170). The conventionally beautiful Alexa (who *does* know), however, is capable of rescuing the protagonist from the deep sense of guilt in which he is engulfed, thus proving that she is not only attractive, but, although she overtly eschews feminist statements, is also intelligent and forgiving. If she is not a New Woman, like the Gibson girl she is, at least, a new version of “the angel in the house.”

³ These are the three principles that Edith Wharton (with Ogden Codman) considers as milestones of taste in *The Decoration of Houses*, 198.

⁴ For the serialized *House of Mirth* in *Scribner’s Magazine* (1905), Wharton disliked the fact that its illustrator, A. B. Wenzell, drew Lily according to the conventions of the Gibson girl.



6 Leg-of-mutton sleeves.

From the eighteen-eighties to the first decade of the twentieth century, at the other end of the spectrum lay the great majority of women: how did they dress? Succinctly: when bustles and trains went out of fashion at the end of the eighteen-seventies and then again in the middle of the eighteen-eighties, in the late eighteen-eighties and in the eighteen-nineties the so called hour-glass or S-shape figure came into fashion with dresses worn over tight, elongated corsets. Specifically, in the eighteen-nineties, women's clothes featured a tight bodice and enormous leg-of-mutton sleeves, so closely fitted to the lower arms as to impede movement. In the nineteen-hundreds women's clothes, with their sinuous lines, serpentine sweeps, soft hues, and ravishing effects, were characterized by a taste for ornamentation, rich materials, and elaborate draperies. At the same time, however, soberer tailored clothes and sailor hats, worn for outdoor activities and traveling, became the latest novelty; they featured, as a sign of important innovation, ankle-length skirts and, often, neckties. Although not as radical as trousers, the tailored suit, with its masculine associations and austerity, was an emblem, however feeble, of the New Woman.

In 1900, when *Sister Carrie* appeared, Theodore Dreiser—who would later become editor of a women's magazine, *The Delineator*—showed that he already knew much about female apparel. Whereas the beginning of the story is pushed back to 1889, from its outset Dreiser dresses his protagonist, who “longed for dress and beauty with a whole heart” (25) and who had a sure “instinct in the matter of dress” (60), in accordance with the fashion of the time of the book's publication. In *Carrie*, a sort of *femme fatale* is portrayed—one who leads men to their ruin, also owing to the alluring power of clothes. We see her rise from poverty to fame through her progressively more expensive and *à la page* changes of garments. When Carrie goes out to work on her first job in Chicago she dons



7 Sailor hat.

a poor apparel, “a worn shirt-waist of dotted blue percale, a skirt of light-brown serge rather faded, and a small straw hat . . . Her shoes were old, and her necktie was in that crumpled, flattened state which time and much wearing impart” (37). After becoming Drouet’s kept woman, however, when she clandestinely meets Hurstwood in Jefferson Park, she wears a similar, but now smart outfit: “She had just recently donned a sailor hat for the season with a band of pretty white-dotted blue silk. Her skirt was of a rich blue material, and her shirt waist matched it, with a thin stripe of blue upon a snow-white ground—stripes that were as fine as hairs” (162). This is a sporty apparel worn by a woman who is neither practicing a sport nor traveling: Carrie simply pretends (she will become an actress) to be one who does in order to look up-to-date. It must be remembered that at the end of the century both the bourgeois dictates about *what* should be worn *where* and the boundaries between *le monde* and *le demi-monde*—inhabited by courtesans and, indeed, actresses—had been called into question. In addition, consumerism was being catered to by department stores which were beginning to provide cheaper facsimiles of fashionable clothes and displaying them so as to inculcate desire (Brown 31). In Walter Benjamin’s famous observation—“the sex appeal of the inorganic”—a sexual exploitation of commodities was taking place in these temples of consumerism, because “Fashion prescribes the ritual according to which the fetish commodity demands to be worshipped” (18). Dreiser shows through



8 Hats (1900-10).

Carrie how clothes are a means to move up the social ladder in the anonymity of the big city, which itself is synonymous with modernity and novelty. Carrie follows all the prescribed fashion rules: for instance, as if she were a lady, she would never go out without a hat, to the point that, when she is still very poor, she buys a new one even though what she really needs are a jacket and shoes to face the rigors of winter in Chicago. When she finally reaches New York, she learns a lot by looking at stylish women in Broadway and by listening to the “dashing” Mrs. Vance’s advice, “The next time you get a pair of shoes, dearie, . . . get button, with thick soles and patent-leather tips” (347). In the emerging consumer culture, such fashion fetishes as shoes (Carrie’s first job had been in a shoe company) are recurrent in Dreiser’s narrative. Unhampered by moral scruples, Carrie might have been daring in her apparel, but, since she is not aiming to make a social statement, but, literally, to climb up the social ladder, she ends up by dressing like the Fashionable Woman as opposed to the New Woman.

Both in the eighteen-nineties and in the nineteen-hundreds, for formal wear, fashion dictated huge, broad-brimmed hats, trimmed with masses of feathers—and, occasionally, life-size stuffed birds—decorated with ribbons, long pins, and artificial flowers, thus sporting an extraordinary fusion of the artificial

and the natural.⁵ Gilman was so incensed by her dislike of these hats that she wrote, “There is today no stronger argument against the claim of Humanness in women, of Human Dignity and Human Rights than this visible and all-too-convincing evidence of subhuman foolishness” (“Dress” 161).

Henry James set the time of his short story “Crapy Cornelia” (published in 1910) in 1898, that is, thirty years after an episode that the narrative twice indicates as taking place in 1868. It is an episode that gives the story its point. For our purposes, what these two dates (1898 and 1868) have in common is the style of women’s hats that, at both times, sported feathers and other trimmings, but with a definite difference: those of the late eighteen-nineties were, as just affirmed, much more ornate. They were, in fact, to all intents and purposes excessive or, to use a word that appears twice in the story with reference to the coeval clothes and furniture, quite “rococo” (822, 833). One must remember that James was also an art critic and, therefore, paid great attention to visual details. The protagonist of this story, Cornelia, is “crapy” (crape wool was then worn by widows as a sign of mourning) because she wears “a sparsely feathered black hat” (825), a “frumpy, crapy, curiously exotic hat” (827-28) that is “quite unlike those the women . . . were now ‘wearing’” (825). This hat is so important that the title of the short story refers to it via Cornelia who is designated by it. It is probably a Tyrolean (since it is “exotic”) peaked crown hat. Although at the beginning of the story Cornelia is nothing more than “a dingy little presence” (823), “a poor thing” (826), and “a poor dear” (836), as the narrative progresses she is credited as possessing “the pitch of history, the pitch of acquired and earned suggestion, the pitch of association” (821): that is, she embodies what the “distinguished” bachelor narrator is looking for. He is weary of “the world about him, a world of constant breathless renewals and merciless substitutions” (822)—very much like the world of fashion, one would be tempted to add. Cornelia (who lives in a house named “The Gainsborough,” to underline the flamboyant hats in style both at the end of the eighteenth and at the end of the nineteenth centuries) stands out against the contemporary new rich of New York to the point that the narrator finally decides not to propose to the young, beautiful, wealthy and seductive widow, Mrs. Worthingham—whose dresses and ornaments possess a “scenic extravagance” with “their curves, and convolutions, and other flourishes” (822)—, but, instead, opts for cherishing the companionship of the plain, but stylish Cornelia. James would seem to be passing a negative judgment on women’s fashion of the late eighteen-nineties, if it were not that the narrator, nostalgic as he is of a previous time and of previous ways of being, is portrayed as much “refined and trimmed” (819), even sepulchral, in his White-Mason surname. He thus perfectly matches the mourning entailed in the crepe worn by Cornelia.

⁵ With the new century, the new sport for women of means was car-driving; to protect them from dust, fashion prescribed enormous, unpractical hats wrapped up in veils.



9 Paul Poiret's gown.

In her Utopia, *Herland* (1915), Gilman describes its female inhabitants as hatless, with short hair, and wearing a comfortable garment made of a tunic and breeches, similar to the “Chinese dress” (216). For practical reasons (practicality being one of Gilman’s staples), this garment features many pockets. Apart from these, if the style of hair and the type of dress were in line with Gilman’s nationalistic re-evaluation of American sobriety (Scacchi 122-27), they were contrary to her hostility toward foreign models (Giorcelli, “The Power” 37): in effect, both the hair style and the dress of her utopian women had *already* been proposed in France by Paul Poiret, who in 1904 had created his revolutionary “Confucius” coat (a vertical top-to-toe sweep of lacquer-red silk) and cut his models’ hair short for his 1908 collection. After the success of the *Ballets Russes* in Paris in 1909, when a wave of Orientalism ensued, for his wealthy patrons Poiret even more enthusiastically embraced Chinese- and Japanese-looking dresses in strong colors (also in accordance with the colors used by *Les Fauves* in their 1905 exhibition) eschewing corsets and petticoats altogether. With these innovations Poiret initiated a no-going-back revolution. Yet he may also have been inspired by another, less revolutionary, but still subtly innovative, fashion trend that in those years tended to liberate women from clothing strictures: the revival of the mid-eighteen-



10 Tea-Gown.

seventies tea-gowns, that had, incidentally, also been influenced by Asian clothing. Tea-gowns did not usually have a defined waistline and favored simplicity of line. To counterbalance such an unstructured and untrimmed style, they were made of gorgeous fabrics that only middle- and upper-class women could afford. Notwithstanding the fact that tea-gowns could be seen as “a new type of seductive dishabille” (Steele, “*Femme Fatale*” 321) and, therefore, considered “as a sign of indolence and degeneracy” (Ribeiro, *Dress* 148), it was thanks to them that underwear came to acquire extraordinary success and the idea of seductiveness began to lurk behind discourses about femininity, even when applied to “virtuous” women as opposed to a *femme fatale* like Proust’s *Odette*, for instance.

As mentioned before, however, the great divide came with World War I: the absence of fathers, brothers, sons, and husbands from the domestic scene reversed the traditional gender roles: women had to work outside their homes, for private or public necessities. After the war—even though many women were thrown out of their jobs when the men came back to resume theirs—their style of dress never returned to its previous characteristics: hems were cut to the knees, waistlines disappeared, clothes were loose-fitting, cloche hats without brims became fashionable, and corsets were substituted by girdles and brassieres. But, if

truth be told, what rendered corsets obsolete was probably the change in women's physical ideal of themselves: their slimness and androgyny was made possible less by constrictive underwear than by diet and exercise. It was especially the bobbed hair, the *coupe à la garçonne*, however, that became a symbol of female independence and freedom. Released from the previous heavy and voluminous hairdos—"that had been a sort of metaphor for the structures of bourgeois life" (Zdatny 378)—women chose a style of hair that was much less cumbersome, albeit not so practical as commonly believed, as it required constant trimming at the beauty parlor. The bob was certainly more youthful-looking: youth having become the new myth of Western societies. A picture of the new ethos and fashion is to be found in an article, "Eulogy on the Flapper," written by Zelda Fitzgerald—an icon of the times:

The Flapper awoke from her lethargy of sub-deb-ism, bobbed her hair, put on her choicest pair of earrings and a great deal of audacity and rouge and went into the battle. She flirted because it was fun to flit, . . . she refused to be bored because she wasn't boring. She was conscious that the things she did were the things she had always wanted to do. (38)

The tone of this article clearly illustrates the individual pleasure in the description of apparel and behavior as acts of defiance, but also as a means of self-creation. Sociologist René König stated that in those years the shape of women's dresses and their hair style were so wide-spread as to become "democratic" (40): women from different social classes joined in. The nineteen-twenties, in fact, changed the context in which fashion was consumed: fashionable attire was no longer the province of conspicuous elites. The stress on vibrant physicality included also "an emphasis on sexual attractiveness" (Dumenil 134): even if promiscuity was not condoned, a "variety of sexual activities short of intercourse" were (Dumenil 136). Gloria Gilbert, in Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922), is a representative of such young women. At the novel's outset, the narrative time is pushed back to the year before the beginning of World War I, but the fashion of the garments Gloria displays is that of the nineteen-twenties—the luscious, supple, charming nineteen-twenties. In particular, with her "boyish and slim" figure (307), Gloria wears laces and furs in abundance—fur coats and trimmings being the great hit of those years, as these few instances show: "Under her fur coat her dress was Alice-blue, with white lace crinkled stiffly about her throat" (53); "Her fur trimmed suit was grey" (57); "She was in a shop now . . . moving lithely among the velvets and the furs" (94); she also dons "a new brown dress edged with fur" (235). When she becomes poor she longs for a "grey squirrel coat" (310). The last time we see her through the eyes of the "pretty girl in yellow" on the deck of the liner that will take her and Anthony to Europe, she wears "a Russian sable coat" (368). Fur,⁶ with its softness, warmth, luster, and, especially, its animal deriva-

6 According to Freud, fur has the capacity to turn into a fetish as it recalls pubic hair (Sigmund Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" [1903]).



11 Clothes of the nineteen-twenties.

tion, hints at the cruelty embodied by Gloria, whom Anthony sees as a predator, or, in Keats' words, as a *'belle dame sans merci.'* Victorious in the law-suit that turns the impoverished and desperate couple into millionaires again, fur stands for the cold-blooded drive that, with her invalid husband, Gloria's future will probably take.

In 1928, when *Quicksand* came out, the roaring twenties and the excitements of the Harlem Renaissance were about to end, engulfed by the Great Depression. Nella Larsen must have sensed this when she chose such a disquieting title for her first novel, centered on a very thought-provoking protagonist. Larsen was well aware of the time's stylish items when, in the first scene, she portrays her mulatto protagonist, the young, beautiful, cultivated, single Helga Crane, in the intimacy of her room, in elegant *dishabille*: a "vivid green and gold negligée and glistening brocaded mules" (2). Helga, a teacher at a Southern College for African American students, possesses a "rare and intensely personal taste" (1) and buys expensive clothes: "Most of her earnings had gone into clothes" (6). The narrative stresses all along that Helga wears beautiful "things" for the simple reason that she likes them and delights in them. While the black bourgeoisie that administers the College, afraid of having its women judged as sexually approach-



12 Fur trimmings of the nineteen-twenties.

able, prescribes sober clothes in dark colors, Helga likes to don “dark purples, royal blues, rich greens, deep reds,” that is, bright (but not gaudy) colors, in “soft, luxurious woolens, or heavy, clinging silks . . . Old laces, strange embroideries, dim brocades” (18), that is, in precious (but not showy) fabrics. Nevertheless, her superiors do not appreciate such subtleties. Considered a means of attracting attention to the body, in fact, up to the end of the nineteenth century, a penchant for bright colors in clothes was a euphemism for prostitution (Aindow). In the nineteen-twenties, however, fashionable colors were often bright and the most up-to-date fabrics were chiffon, taffeta, silk, velvet, and brocade. In addition, besides the custom-jewelry copiously introduced by Coco Chanel, clothes were trimmed with feathers, flowers, and, as with Fitzgerald’s Gloria, furs and laces. Helga is thus dressed as fashion demands, even if not according to the Black bourgeoisie’s social code. To the point that her “small plain hats” are considered by her superiors as “positively indecent” (18), adopting a vocabulary usually employed to condemn immoral behavior. Only once, after leaving her College, when she looks for a job in Chicago, she wears what they would have recommended: “She dressed . . . in the plainest garments she possessed, a suit of fine blue twill faultlessly tailored, from whose left pocket peeped a gay kerchief, an unadorned,

heavy silk blouse, a small, smart, fawn-colored hat, and slim, brown oxfords" (31). The "gay" kerchief is the only item that departs from the rigid rules laid down by her superiors. When Helga moves to New York, initially she seems to agree with her upper middle-class friend Anne's ideas about the necessity for blacks to keep themselves to themselves, but, in time, she finds that Anne is hypocritical for she apes the clothes, manners, and ways of living of the whites. Helga then decides to leave New York and go to Copenhagen, to her Danish maternal relatives. Just before taking off, however, she goes dancing in Harlem, purposely wearing an outfit which she herself judges as "too *décolleté* and too *outré*": a "cobwebby black net touched with orange" (56). The net fabric and the low cut bodice, combined with black—traditionally the color of sin—, bespeak her defiance of black bourgeois precepts, while reflecting, as usual, what was perfectly in fashion. In Copenhagen, where she goes to find stability, she ends up by being appalled by the garments bought for her by her relatives. Dressed, in her own opinion, like "a veritable savage" (with long earrings, big bracelets, shining buckles, vivid colors, turban-hats, feathers, furs, strange jewelry and even "a nauseous Eastern perfume" [74]), she feels like "a decoration," "a curio," "a peacock" (73). Turned into an exotic/erotic object to be admired because "different"—a sort of Josephine Baker, unwillingly exhibited—she chooses to go back to New York. Here, after having been humiliated when she had finally resolved to no longer repress her erotic feelings, one night she enters a Baptist church wearing a red dress that, drenched with rain, clings to her body. For the third time in the narrative, here, on account of both her red dress and of her walking the streets alone, she is mistaken for a prostitute. In her final move Helga goes South, to a poor community in Alabama, having married the minister of the New York Baptist church. After four pregnancies, the last of which had almost killed her, we see her for the second time in *dishabille*: but not, as at the beginning, in elegant attire, but in a "flimsy *crêpe*" nightgown that is "a relic of pre-matrimonial days" (129). This underwear makes her an object of desire for her husband whom by now she hates. If in the nineteen-twenties, as mentioned above, unassailably respectable white women could don attractive underwear without stirring moralistic reactions, a *black woman* (a double shortcoming in Larsen's understanding and representation) could not, because—and this is one of the novel's messages—both white prejudices and, as W. E. B. Dubois had pointed out, blacks' double-vision about themselves would turn the meaning of such items upside down: fashion and elegance in black women were seen by whites and blacks alike as devices for hustling. If in Foucault's and Marcuse's view, the nineteen-twenties were a time of new subjugation for women since consumerism—the antithesis of freedom—turned shopping into another sort of enslavement, it is doubly ironical that Helga is enslaved by her desire for beauty. All those who surround her do not consider the beautiful clothes she buys and wears as a means for her self-expression and self-enhancement; on the contrary, they condemn and damn her on account of her clothing which is seen by them as a *vanitas vanitatum*, in its most sanctimonious sense.

What kind of emancipation through garments, then, really *did* take place for American women from the eighteen-eighties to the nineteen-twenties? The response is indeed problematic.

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- 8 Women's picture hats from 1911, Nordiska Museet, Stockholm.
- 9 Paul Poiret, evening dress, 1913, Fashion Institute of Technology, © The Museum at FIT, New York.
- 10 Tea-Gown, designed by Redfern, photograph in *Les Modes: Revue mensuelle illustrée des arts décoratifs appliqués à la femme*. Feb. 1902. Cliché by Léopold-Émile Reutlinger.
- 11 Fashion advertisement from *McCall's Magazine-L'Echo de Paris*, circa 1928.
- 12 *Hedda Hopper of the films*, New York, 31 Oct. 1929, photo by Bain News Service, Library of Congress, Washington.

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- 1 Woman's plaid silk tafetta dress, France, circa 1855, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles.
- 2 The bloomer costume, lithograph, New York: Currier, 1851, Library of Congress, Washington.
- 3 *The start*, American Stereoscopic Company, circa 1897, photographic print on stereo card, Library of Congress, Washington.
- 4 Portrait of Alice Manfield, between circa 1900 and circa 1930. Written on image lower left: "Guide Alice, Mt. Buffalo." State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.
- 5 Engraving after Charles Dana Gibson's original drawing *America Picturesque: Scenes Anywhere along the Coast*, circa 1900, detail.
- 6 Advertisement by Charvet and Gelot, *Herald Tribune*, 1896, detail.
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Trauma, Temporality, and Testimony in Carolivia Herron's *Thereafter Johnnie*

MARINELLA RODI-RISBERG

Carolivia Herron's *Thereafter Johnnie* is an experimental, non-linear and multi-perspective work composed in free-indirect speech that poetically depicts the horrors of contemporary familial sexual abuse linking it to the tragic history of slavery. In the process, the novel breaks with literary conventions by referencing Western classical myths and classics, biblical stories, and African American literature and culture, including slave stories and spirituals. Herron's novel also blends the generic styles and traditions of epic, myth, realism, fairy tale, and historical fiction. Consequently, critics and reviewers have called it variously "an epic," "a multi-voiced historicized narrative," and a "contemporary narrative of slavery" (Christian 152; Daly, "Whose Daughter" 473; Keizer). While Herron's novel can be said to be all of these things, *Thereafter Johnnie* is primarily a trauma narrative of the family and the nation, in which the generic and narrative (con)fusion of the novel indicates innovative narrative techniques in order to represent a traumatized consciousness, which is, in turn, characterized by what Michelle Balaev calls a "lack of cohesion" (xvi).

Herron was identified as a survivor of familial sexual abuse when the novel was published (see Britt; Mills, "Can You Believe It"; Mills, "Three Therapists' Opinions"), and within the context of the recovered memory/false memory syndrome debate of the nineties, the early work by African American women writers was even seen, as Gillian Harkins puts it, "as a historical record of incest survivor

writing" (115): however, rather than exploring *Thereafter Johnnie* as a testimony in this sense, this paper examines—by drawing on contemporary literary trauma theories—trauma-inscribed female bodies in the novel as testimonies. More specifically, it examines the potential liberation of the abused and traumatized daughter who in Herron's novel represents a source of conflict between linear or historical time and traumatic time—a locus where traumatic experiences that have been repressed are encoded through violence—and ultimately argues that the temporality of the daughter and her testimony reflects a disjoined, traumatized consciousness which is at odds with linear narratives and discussions of emancipation that accommodate the repression of a painful history.

Although it was critically acclaimed when it was published in 1991, Herron's debut novel has since suffered from a lack of critical attention. Fewer than a dozen scholarly analyzes have been published on it (see Breau; Champagne; Daly, "Seeds"; Daly, "Whose Daughter"; Glave; Harkins; Keizer; Roberts). While it is not possible to establish precisely why *Thereafter Johnnie* has been largely ignored by critics, in her review of the book, Barbara Christian predicted that the incest in the story would be "disturbing" to feminists because of the way it was represented: "In *Thereafter Johnnie* both father and daughter seduce each other . . . And Herron writes of their sexual intercourse in language so erotic it approaches the divine" (154). Unlike the first contemporary incest narratives to confront incest from the daughter's perspective such as Alice Walker's *Color Purple* which introduces father-daughter incest "as a powerful father-figure's brutal assault upon a helpless girl-child" or Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* which describes the incest between father and daughter "as a powerless father's sense that sexual love is all he can give his wounded daughter," the daughter, rather than coming across as a victim of incest, in Herron's novel "appears to be an active agent" (Christian 154, 154-55). This paper queries, however, if what is so unsettling in this story—apart from what Thomas Glave calls "the disturbing gaze at incest" (86)—is not, in fact, the reader's difficulty in coming to terms with the issue raised by the idea of incest within the context of race and slavery; a difficulty which might well account for the silence on the part of the critics.

While existing studies on the novel often concentrate on questions of complicity and agency, and how these issues ultimately extend to its readers (see Keizer 166; Roberts 1071), it is also possible to view Herron's novel as forcing readers to examine their role as witnesses so they can move beyond the duality of seducer or seduced and focus instead on how the traumas that result from abuse and oppression are culturally produced. Whether the daughter is assigned the role of victim or agent she reveals something about our response as readers. The novel asks readers to critically analyze their judgment of the daughter. As readers we are forced to accept or refute myths and cultural stereotypes of black deviance. These include: that incest is normal in black communities, that black women have an over-active sexual appetite, and cannot, therefore, be sexually abused or raped but actually instigate both consensual and abusive sexual relations (see

Wilson 7-10, 118). At a first glance, Herron's erotic representations seem to corroborate these stereotypes. However, *Thereafter Johnnie* negotiates the reader's understanding of victim and abuser in contexts that involve racial trauma. Also, while it is true that continual graphic depictions may produce a numbing effect on readers which could weaken their impact, it is also true that strong images can be the most effective way to shake readers out of their complacency. As Jennifer Griffiths points out in another context, striking graphic representations may be needed to "overcome the stereotyping" of marginalized individuals (35).

It is inevitable that investigating the testimony of trauma in an African American context invariably raises issues of race, and intervenes in the critical debate on the matter of contemporary trauma concerning the deployment of trauma theory, which is based on psychoanalysis and its tendency to attribute universal features and responses to traumatic experiences, to specific texts and their contexts. Jennifer Griffiths, however, explores in *Traumatic Possessions* "the complications that arise within traumatic response and witnessing encounters that cross identity differences, including race and gender" (97). More to the point, Griffiths examines "the interactions between the black female body as a site of inscription for cultural values and the body as a source of the memories in the production of testimony," and emphasizes the importance of "acknowledging the actual bodily experience of trauma, or telling the body's story, instead of inscribing a story onto the body" (5, 11). Following on from Griffiths's work, I suggest that Herron examines the connection between, on the one hand, the body inscribed by stereotypes that reflect cultural values, and on the other, the body in which traumatic memories are stored, showing that the racism inscribed onto the body causes trauma which is then, in turn, remembered by the body, and that this bodily memory is ultimately used to produce testimony. Herron attempts to create in the reader resistance to the perpetuation of trauma and to view the black female body not as an object discursively inscribed by generations of traumatic experiences but as a witness-bearing subject which calls into question the sequential narratives and histories of emancipation.

Herron's novel is a multigenerational story of trauma and testimony set mainly in Washington D.C. and it relates the story of a black middle-class family consisting of John Christopher Snowdon, his wife Camille, and their daughters Cynthia Jane, Patricia, and Eva. The story revolves around the incestuous relationship of Patricia and John Christopher: Patricia was sexually abused by her father at two and she begins to pursue him at fifteen. They begin a sexual relationship two years later on the same night that Patricia's sister Eva is raped by a white vagabond. A child, Johnnie, is born of the incestuous union between Patricia and her father. Seventeen years after the relationship with her father has ended, Patricia takes her own life by drowning in the Potomac. Her lover Diotima returns to Mexico and Johnnie goes on a quest to find out about her family's past and cultural history. In the novel's last chapter, the consummation of Patricia and her father's incestuous relationship and Eva's molestation are ultimately linked to

slavery through an account of the rape of the sisters' forebear, the slave Laetitia, by her owners. The non-linear narrative begins (and ends) with Johnnie assuming the role of a disembodied witnessing light, as a descendant of Diotima's tells the story of the apocalyptic demise of the United States, after a futuristic race war has been waged against the country by developing nations.

The link between the body and testimony is visible throughout the text; *Thereafter Johnnie* offers a new understanding of traumatic witnessing through the trope of the body which is psychologically, culturally, and historically inscribed by the letter X. Trauma is contained in the physical experience of characters in the form of living personal consequences of history as Herron calls attention to the high cost of repressing trauma both in individual and communal contexts. The recurrent body in the form of an X is a symptom of unresolved trauma caused by racial and sexual abuse. This return of the X shape in different bodies makes possible a re-visiting of the traumas of the past in such a way as to make witnessing possible in the present. This kind of corporeal witnessing calls attention to present day sexual abuse in an African American context and the history of both collective and individual traumas during the period of slavery.

The first time the X is explicitly mentioned is halfway through the book in a chapter entitled "The First Time." The reader witnesses a scene where father and daughter engage in incest, indicating Patricia's recollection of the first time she was molested in early childhood in a second moment and through the body. This narrative technique of recounting evokes what Michelle Balaev calls "narrative dissociation," employed to convey the workings of the mind and a character's perception of the interaction "between internal and external realities" (xvii). Patricia perceives the world around her in the present but she also remembers what happened to her when she was two, or rather, her body does. The shifting scenes between past and present mark a change in the protagonist's identity from adolescent back to infant as, in a dual vision, she describes two states of consciousness and sees both present and past contemporaneously. From a state of bewilderment in present time Patricia is transported to a different place in the horrific past, causing the boundary lines between the present and the past, fifteen years earlier, to become blurred. Patricia has lost her place in time or rather, within her body, she exists in two times simultaneously: "Shaking and trembling and no one to hold her as she shakes and trembles in her first orgasm, not this time but the first time . . . hidden, forgotten, violated by a touch of her father's fingers upon her two-year-old clitoris" (Herron 120). Thus both the molestation of Patricia's infant self and the later abuse take place contemporaneously in a kind of eternal present. The two incestuous incidents are separated merely by the words "not this time but the first time." The bodily memory that produced trauma in the first place is triggered by an orgasm in the present, the unconscious corporeal reaction to a similar situation in the past, when Patricia's original trauma occurred: "fifteen years later her body stiffens into a catatonic X of horror, violation violently enforced pleasure and pain" (121). The narrative dissociation here

resonates with what can be called corporeal time, in the sense that dissociation is often portrayed through what Balaev refers to as “the disjunction of time” (xvi).

Patricia’s mental confusion resonates throughout the narrative in an interrupted and a non-linear fashion interspersed with an alternative mythology of her own creation: in an effort to recover what official history denies and to voice her own personal experience, she sees the immolation of her family as the cost of survival. Consequently, the novel interweaves biblical characters, such as Lot and his daughters, with present realities; this interrupted narrative reflects in turn Patricia’s confused state and expresses her way of coping with the guilt of having derived pleasure from the incest and participated in it.

In the face of oppression and trauma, Patricia’s strategy for affirming her human agency is to reclaim testimony through having a child. She is not driven to reenact or relive the trauma as much as to (pro)create a witness as a mechanism for survival. The link between body and testimony is hence literalized as a corporeal testimony. In *Thereafter Johnnie*, procreation is depicted as representing an urge to transmit testimony to descendants. Herron’s novel links procreation with bearing witness by insisting on the etymological relationship between *testimony*, *testify* and *testis*, *testicle*. While the original meaning of the Latin *testis* was ‘witness,’ *testis* also suggests notions of passing on not merely genes but also knowledge. Ross Chambers, in this connection, discusses the etymological roots of testimony:

many words in English and the Romance languages derive from Latin *testis*, and in German the verb *zeugen* (from *Zeug*, stuff)—from which *Zeuge*, “witness,” and *Zeugnis*, “testimonial” derive—means both to bear witness or give evidence and to procreate, presumably on the theory that it is the male who fathers (and the female who merely bears) a child. So it is the idea of “having the right stuff”—of being legitimated to *pass on* (genes, property, and information)—that is semantically active here, and credibility is the criterion by which witnessing is judged. (18)

Herron’s novel insists on testimony as evidence; the child, Johnnie, is living proof of incest. Patricia’s pregnancy and her refusal to accede to her father’s plea for abortion almost give him a heart attack (Herron 214). Choosing to give birth rather than to undergo an abortion entails agency and control over body and future alike. As Brenda Daly points out, “it is generally assumed that the seed is the property of the father who sows it in the body of a woman” and “whoever controls the seed controls the future” (“Seeds” 108, 103). *Thereafter Johnnie* portrays a daughter who not only, as Daly puts it, struggles to act as an agent of her own body (107), but as I suggest, to use her body as testimony as well. Patricia’s sister Cynthia Jane, however, sees Patricia more as the sexual predator than the prey and her sister Eva is also, seemingly, traumatized: some critics have suggested that Eva too may have been molested by their father (Champagne 163; Keizer 184n14; 187n24). Eva envisions her body in the shape of an X as she is being raped which connects the event with Patricia’s experience of incest (Herron 102).

Ultimately Patricia's and Eva's raped bodies are linked to their forebear Laetitia's violated body through the X shape that their bodies take on. This means that the familial, cultural, and historical dynamics of incest are made corporeal in the novel. This connection is first made explicit in the last chapter in a primal scene where Rowena, Camille's mother, watches her mother, Laetitia, and her slavers:

The two masters standing with their private parts exposed, holding the naked Laetitia horizontal between them. The young master between her legs with his hands gripped around her thighs, the old master at her head, his hands hooked under her shoulders and Laetitia was held in the air in the shape of an X in order to be fornicated. (Herron 238)

Herron with this book indicates that slavery is the primal scene for African Americans, from which a "curse" has come upon the Snowdon family:

'The females shall be raped and the males shall be murdered.' And the males that are not murdered shall be sold, and to certain ones of the males that are neither murdered nor sold, to certain of those few males come late into the house marrying, and to certain of the males born to the house but who nevertheless survive murder and slavery—to these shall be given the power of revenge upon the females of their own house who consented with the white males for their destruction, these males shall be given the female children of their own house, and these shall be raped. And raped again. (239-40)

The stories of the traumatized bodies are a result of the repressed and unstated past (and present) where the body is the site of sexual trauma and enslavement in the past as in the present. Laetitia is her owner's mistress and child-bearing machine: "we can fuck her like this 'cause she's our nigger" her masters tell Rowena (238). The dynamic between Patricia and John Christopher mirrors the family's past; on the last occasion of their having sex, the latter tells Patricia: "I own you. I can do what I want with you now," echoing the words of Laetitia's masters (14). By making this history present in the body of the character the cultural narrative which allows people to implicitly accept institutional rape against women is interrupted. Consequently, the father becomes an instrument of the institutional racism that he himself has experienced, and incest becomes less an individual act by a single perpetrator than a socio-cultural evil practiced by a white racist and patriarchal society.

Herron significantly places Patricia's body in her attempted seduction of her father on the National Mall between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. That the history of the nation and the Snowdon family's past are linked is also highlighted by the daughter's name Patricia which is a variant of *pater* (father) and *patria* (nation). Literature such as Herron's challenges cultural myths about traumatic experiences, uncovering repressed personal histories as consequences of cultural traumatic events. It investigates the black daughter's potential emancipation from a nation-state born within a racist patriarchy by conceiving of its apocalyptic demise and the birth of a new one through the discourse of incest, paralleling present-day incestuous violations with the histori-

cal institution of slavery and its family structure of interracial rape and incest committed by white slave owners, thus bringing these events to our awareness. Not only will Johnnie be a testament to what has happened between Patricia and her father but Patricia believes that while she herself symbolizes the fall, not only of Washington D.C. but the United States, her daughter will restore its soul. However, just as it is not the incestuous union between daughter and father that brings about the apocalypse but the injustice to the African Americans, the soul of the nation cannot be redressed as long as they remain in bondage: the Proclamation did not put a stop to white supremacy and racism, manumission does not equal freedom, "Slavery won't go away," Johnnie says (Herron 174). The temporal rupture created and conveyed through the corporeal, which bears witness to the past in the present in the novel, expresses a disjointed traumatized consciousness and disrupts the linear and sequential narratives of emancipation that allow the repression of a painful history. Thus, the body's traumatic time reconstructs the progressive history of emancipation. A black roach crushed by Camille against a white pillowcase, "flightless wings and senseless antennae misshapen into a pulsing X" (230), demonstrates that the bodily X is an indirect reference to emancipation in the novel, and indicates how in African American history, folk-tales of how Africans trapped in slavery wished to 'fly away' to freedom as expressed in the words, "All of god's chillen got wings" in the spiritual sung by the three Snowdon sisters (50).

Herron's novel is often challenging for readers, both regarding form and content, but it is always testimonial. According to the novel's logic, the traumatized body simultaneously breaks down the boundaries between past, present, and future, and emerges as a faithful witness that testifies to private violations and a history of slavery to which the private trauma is linked. This kind of testimony incorporates both contemporary and past bodies. Herron's text elicits a reaction from readers, forcing them to recognize the violence implicit in the gender and racial exploitation of bodies: to create for themselves a position from which to address difficult issues such as incest and slavery and to heighten awareness of America's past of slavery and abuse.

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Deposition, Decomposition. Losing the Body Sublime: Marina Abramović between Performance and Performativity

ANGELO CAPASSO

On the occasion of her show at the Serpentine Gallery (2014),¹ Marina Abramović confirmed that she considers herself as the “grandmother of performance art” (Brookes). She is actually the artist whose work is identified with performance art since its apex period, the seventies, when painting and sculpting were abandoned as the conventional expression of ‘commodity art.’ She also continued to perform during the crisis years of performance art in the eighties, and she brought new ideas to it when it resurfaced at the beginning of the nineties in different and complex forms.

Art history books generally consider the first appearance of performance art as coinciding with the first Futurist Evening, presented at the Teatro Rossetti in Trieste on January, 12th 1910 (Marinetti), when Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and other futurists harnessed the underlying irredentist and nationalist tensions of the town as an additional element in their unrehearsed performance. They declaimed the tenets of their Manifesto, abusing the audience for its bourgeois values and triggering a riot. Public scuffles, arrests and considerable press coverage became the typical Futurist fare in the wake of the Trieste episode (cf. Goldberg

¹ *Marina Abramović 512 Hours*, Serpentine Gallery, London from 11 June 2014 to 24 June 2014. Marina Abramović performed in the gallery for the duration of her exhibition: 10 am to 6 pm, six days a week, attracting a total of 129,916 visitors. Bags, jackets, electronic equipment, watches and cameras were not permitted to accompany them.

11-15). Their “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting” (1910) declared that “the name of ‘madman’ with which it is attempted to gag all innovators should be looked upon as a title of honor.” Futurists regarded the variety theater as the ideal setting for their performances, because it destroyed “the Solemn, the Sacred, the Serious and the Sublime in Art with a capital A” (Goldberg 15).

The wave of action that from the late fifties spread throughout Europe, United States, South America and Japan was directed against those bourgeois values that permeated art in its traditional forms of commodification. An important component in the action was the role played by the camera (at first in photography and then in video in the sixties): it was not only an irreplaceable instrument for documenting events, but it also acted as a mute spectator toward whom the action was addressed and, indeed, it was sometimes the main inspiration behind the action. The artist who first understood the potentiality of photography in action is Yves Klein, whose *Leap into the Void* (1960) is a form of photography that generates a performance: an image of the artist soaring over an empty street with an expression of pure bliss on his face. Down below, a cyclist rides into the distance, unaware of the miraculous occurrence overhead, while at the end of the street a train passes by. This famous photomontage was made by Shunk and his partner, Kender, two official photographers for the group of artists that art critic Pierre Restany named the Nouveaux Réalistes.² The photomontage captures the idea of a dream, an illusion or, perhaps, the project of jumping into the void which the printed image made real. Since then, photography became a co-protagonist in performance art, and opened up the way to new potentialities at the end of the eighties—when performance art was rehabilitated after a long period of reversion to traditional art forms. The improvements in recording, developing and printing technology stimulated the rapid growth of cold events: many performances were specifically created for the camera rather than for a live audience—the viewer’s access to the ‘performance’ was exclusively through the photograph.³ Action became the implicit energy of installations. The persistence of the performance aspect in art continued to be a relevant element although used in a very different manner, where action does not resolve the whole question, and performance becomes theatricality or ‘performativity’ (cf. Parker 95). The term ‘performativity’ brings to mind what in the philosophy of language and speech act theory, are ‘performative utterances’: sentences which not only describe a given context, but also change the context itself. ‘Performative utterances,’ J. L. Austin remarks, constitute “*doing* something rather than merely *say-*

2 Shunk first photographed the street empty except for the bicyclist. Then, according to the obituary, Klein “climbed to the top of a wall and dived off it a dozen times—onto a pile of mats assembled by the members of his judo school across the road. The two elements were then melded to create the desired illusion.”

3 The shift from live performance to staged photograph and the reasons behind it are a central anchor to the exhibition *Action-Camera: Beijing Performance Photography*, 16 January to 19 April 2009, The Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada.

ing something” (Austin 137). In the art context, the perlocutionary implication of that *doing* finds in performance art its being as a living act that transforms, exclusively, in the present.

The etymological origin of the word ‘performance’ derives from ‘forming,’ creating a form as a necessary completion: carrying into effect, fulfilling, discharging, finishing to/through a form.⁴ Rather than formulating (giving form through concepts, sculpting ideas),⁵ performing is “to work for a form.” ‘Per’ defines ‘extension.’ Therefore ‘performing’ defines not only duration and persistence but also extension, which is a temporal value as well as a spatial one. ‘Performativity’ puts the emphasis on a conceptual potentiality that implies a metamorphosis, spatial extension, protruding duration, inclusion; in relation to a work of art, it underlines its potential to enlarge space through concepts, or rather perform space through concepts by using objects and/or gestures. Performance and performativity share an original dialectic within Marina Abramović’s work from its very beginning when her art demanded a single *conditio sine qua non*: in other words, her presence.

The Artist Is Present (2010) at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City was the most comprehensive retrospective of Marina Abramović’s work on two different levels: a collection of past forms and a new project: a performance for the Museum, the art space that traditionally collects and archives art forms. Some artists re-performed Marina Abramović’s seminal works, under her direction, challenging the ephemeral nature of an art form that generally survives only in memories or in photographs. In *The Artist Is Present* Marina Abramović spent seven hundred fifty hours seated in MoMA’s atrium during its opening hours, staring with an unwavering glance at the viewers as, one by one, they came up to sit before her after hours of queuing. It was her longest performance ever: she remained silent and still, enduring hunger, thirst and back pain while visitors, confronted by her placid gaze, variously wept, vomited, stripped naked, or proposed marriage.⁶ Two people: the artist and a person “from the crowd” con-

4 To perform comes from Middle English *parformen* (1250-1300) < Anglo-French *parformer*, alteration (by association with *forme* form) of Middle French, Old French *parfourmir* - to accomplish (*par*- “completely” + *fornir* “to provide”). Theatrical-musical sense is from 1610. “Perform is the general word, usually implying regular, methodical, or prolonged application or work: to perform an exacting task” (“Perform.” *Dictionary.com*). “The word has been influenced by form; cf. Latin *performare* - to form thoroughly. 1. To carry through; to bring to completion; to achieve; to accomplish; to execute; to do. ‘I will cry unto God most high, unto God that *performeth* all things for me’ (Ps. Lvii.2). ‘Great force to *perform* what they did attempt’ (Sir P. Sidney). 2. To discharge; to fulfil; to act up to; as, to perform a duty; to perform a promise or a vow. ‘To *perform* your father’s will’ (Shak). 3. To represent; to act; to play; as in drama. ‘*Perform* a part thou hast not done before’ (Shak) (“Perform.” *Webster’s*).

5 Joseph Beuys speaks extensively about the word “formulate” as justifying the origins of art (art-making) from words in the video-documentary *Joseph Beuys: Transformer*.

6 The documentary film *Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present* reconstructs perfectly the whole performance.

fronted each other in a secular confession that relied not on words, but in an exchange of energies: one actor—one spectator, a precept that Jerzy Grotowsky considered as the basis for his “poor theater.”⁷ However the word “theater” here is not pertinent because there is no “enactment,” nor “acting,” but “action”: time transformed into a visual icon.

Marina Abramović’s first experiments with “re-performance” took place at the Guggenheim Museum for her *Seven Easy Pieces* show (2005) in which she re-performed (and reinterpreted) five performance art classics: Bruce Nauman, *Body Pressure* (1974); Vito Acconci, *Seedbed* (1972); Valie Export, *Action Pants: Genital Panic* (1969); Gina Pane, *The Conditioning, First Action of Self-Portrait(s)* (1973); Joseph Beuys, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965); together with her seminal work *Lips of Thomas* (1975) and a new piece: *Entering the Other Side* (2005).⁸ Each performance lasted seven hours, the whole performance cycle lasted seven days. She explicitly chose to re-perform other artists’ performances put on between 1960 and 1970—a period that is crucial in the history of performance and about which there is very little documentation apart from accounts by ocular witnesses. What then are the sources she worked on?

What happened to the spectators when they watched re-enactments of performances that had previously plunged the observers into crises, transferring them into a state of liminality? In order to be able to answer this question we must first clarify the status of the re-enactments. The title *Seven Easy Pieces* is undoubtedly reminiscent of titles of musical pieces such as the *Easy Pieces* by Beethoven, Bartók, Stravinsky, or Lloyd Cole. Or the film *Five Easy Pieces* by Rafelson. Or even the book *Six Easy Pieces* by Richard Feynman. Along these lines, the performances were advertised to the public in a notice published by the museum where it was stated that Marina Abramović would “interpret” the past performances of her colleagues and herself “as one would a musical score.” But does it really make sense to compare the re-enactment of performances to playing music according to a score? In a score, the composer has written down the notes through which he wants to convey his intention of how the music should sound on the basis of the instruments being played and the skill of the musicians all of whom follow the composer’s score. Performance Art, on the other hand, depends on an event that is, by its very nature transitory, ephemeral—something that cannot be repeated. What is left of the performance are traces of it or documentation on it—in some cases, an object the performer used, or comments by him on the performance; photographs and sometimes even film recordings that have been taken during the performance; reviews on the performance or other reports about it delivered by various kinds of participants. Neither the traces nor the documents can claim a status comparable to that of a musical score. They are able to arouse memories and images that refer to certain moments of the performance or other kinds of associations, ideas, etc. But by no means do they serve as instructions. (Fischer-Lichte in *Marina Abramović: 7 Easy Pieces*, 40-41)

⁷ Jerzy Grotowsky’s fortune in art is also related to the radical conceptualism of Germano Celant’s *Arte Povera*.

⁸ *Seven Easy Pieces*, Guggenheim Museum, New York City, 9-15 November 2005, from 5 pm to 12 pm.

Is it possible for a performance to be re-performed by a different artist, a different body, in a different historical time, with different objects, especially when scant information about the original work is available? How can a performance be considered a text that can be repeated, reanimated, quoted and/or re-performed by either the artist him/herself or by other artists? Abramović's *Seven Easy Pieces* shows that performances can be re-interpreted departing from the unique, time-based elements upon which much performance art has been based. Her work derives its legitimation from a visual text that writes itself during the actual performances and is collectively shared in ocular, oral and (partly) written testimonies. The "score" of the performance as Erika Fischer-Lichte calls it, is a moving icon with blurred edges to which the artist gives a new body. The "grandmother of performance art" moved from those first steps in reinterpreting performance art to a further development when, in 2010, she decided to work for a Foundation for Preservation of performance art at MAI (the Marina Abramović Institute), Hudson, New York (cf. Abramović, *Mai*). It is the first institution devoted to cataloguing, archiving and propagating performances. The Architectural form of the Museum, the Foundation offers performance art a tangible place where the borderless space of performances acquires a well defined form.

More than other performance artists, Abramović's work deals with spatial issues. In her works with Ulay,⁹ the concern about how the self relates to space, translated into performances that explore the relationship between the physical body and architecture, is determinant. Since 1975 Marina Abramović and Ulay have engaged in a series of actions in which pain and risk are largely present. Their seminal works are *Relation in Space* (1976), *Relation in Time* (1977), *Imponderabilia* (1977), *Interruption in Space* (1977), and *Extension in Space* (1977). *Relation in space* was presented in Venice in July 1976: in an empty room two naked bodies clashed frontally, at full speed, over and over again. In *Relation in Time* they are back to back knotted together by their long hair: two opposites pulling in opposite directions. In *Interruption in Space*, Abramović and Ulay ran towards each other from different directions and collided into each other as though there was a wall between them. In *Expansion in Space* they tried to expand their bodies in the space by moving two large columns of one hundred forty and one hundred fifty kilos respectively.

[That] piece was very important because there was an audience of almost one thousand people. It was the first time that we experienced what the energy of the audience means and we went over our limits—physically and mentally. (Abramović, "Body Art" 33)

Imponderabilia (1977) is probably their most famous piece: the artists' image of themselves becoming the door at the Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna in Bo-

⁹ Ulay is the pseudonym of the artist Frank Uwe Laysiepen. He has been partner in Marina Abramović's art and life from 1976 to 1988.

logna is probably the most widely published in art history books.¹⁰ On that occasion the artists stood facing each other naked in the main entrance so that visitors entering the museum would have to choose which one of the two to face. All these performances deploy architectural space to create complex situations of endurance, in which the body performs in close intimacy with the formal architectural elements of the gallery, often as if it were part of the architecture itself.

Empty space is the zero degree of art: as Yves Klein showed with his exhibition at the Iris Clert Gallery (April 1958), where he exhibited nothing but an empty space: “nothingness.” The exhibition was entitled *La spécialisation de la sensibilité à l'état matière première en sensibilité picturale stabilisée, Le Vide* where the only presence in the gallery was a large cabinet with every surface painted white. An elaborate entrance procedure was staged for the opening night, when three thousand people were queuing up (thanks to an extensive publicity campaign), waiting to be let into an empty room. That show at the Clert Gallery changed the nature of exhibiting, showing the borders of a screen where action is entrapped in the tradition of exhibitions; performers consider the screen a limit that needs to be overcome by putting on performances in non conventional spaces, or in private spaces, only for the camera. The outer border in performance art is substituted by an object placed in between. Even in the starkest performance there is something in between which delineates a limit to be overcome. This limit is not the theater stage, but an avoidable distance from the everyday.

In *The Artist Is Present*, a table is what is in between. Marina Abramović stated that she had projected other solutions for the performance, but the table was always ‘present’: it was unavoidable.¹¹ Probably because it incarnates that ‘something in between.’ A black table was also present in one of the last performances she shared with Ulay, the one in which she and he decided to share each other.¹²

¹⁰ For that occasion a catalog documenting the performances was published. Cf. *La performance oggi*.

¹¹ Abramović talks extensively about the installation at the MoMA in the documentary film *Marina Abramović: The Artists Is Present*.

¹² Abramović and Ulay first came to Australia in 1979 for the third Biennale of Sydney. Inspired by a brief trip to Central Australia, they returned in 1980 to spend five months in the Australian outback. Traveling between various Aboriginal communities, they spent long periods alone in the desert, much of the time sitting in the shade in silence, exhausted by the heat of the day. Unlike many of their joint performances that involved a form of mental communication and mutual trust to create unity in front of an audience, they were now alone. It was during their time in the Australian desert that they first conceived the performance *Gold Found by the Artists* that was to become the first of a series of twenty-two performances collectively titled *Nightsea Crossing* staged in various locations around the world between 1981 and 1986. For the first performance, the artists sat opposite each other at a table in silence, for the seven hours that the gallery was open to the public, every day for sixteen days. Abramović was dressed entirely in black and Ulay in red. Between them on the black painted table were two hundred fifty grams of gold nuggets, which they had found in the desert, an Aboriginal boomerang covered in twenty-four-carat gold leaf and a live diamond-back python. After each day they returned directly to their lodgings and consumed nothing but water: endurance performances often involve fasting as a way of purifying the body and in some cases where a performance goes for

The documentary *Marina Abramović, The Artist is Present* features her encounter with Ulay, after nearly twenty-five years of separation, during her performance at MoMA as the most moving event: she opens her eyes to the new spectator sitting in front of her and recognizes the total correspondence of art and life in her past: an implicit tenet of performance art. For a few minutes, the table in-between returned to being a private border inside her intimacy, her private space. Such liminality is another *conditio sine qua non* of performance art; indeed it is arguably its innermost core.

Since in the space-in-between we are able to leave our old patterns of behavior and ways of living, we find ourselves in a permanent state of traveling. We are always in the space-in-between, like airports, or hotel rooms, waiting rooms or lobbies, gyms, swimming pools . . . all the spaces where you are not actually at home . . . This is where our mind is the most open. We are alert, we are sensitive and destiny can happen . . . [this] means that we are really completely alive and that is an extremely important space. (Rico 50)

The definition Marina Abramović gives of that ‘something in between’ is close to what Marc Augé defined as ‘non place,’ a space that is not anthropologically connoted, a neutral space for circulation, consumption and communication (cf. Augé). The table in-between is the performative element that communicates that the event is happening; it denotes that a performance is on even if nothing is going on. It is an architectural element that defines directions, positions, shows distances or maybe helps shorten them. During the last weeks of *Artist Is Present* the table disappeared. The audience, the social body had absorbed or conceptualized that distance which dissolved in an invisible condition.

The condition of crossing borders is implied in all performances. The last limit is the body, it is there that the condition exists: the internal and the external, flesh, skin. Performance art shows that body-ness is a continuous ‘becoming.’ This is manifest in the self-mutilation performances of Marina Abramović, Gina Pane and Chris Burden (amongst others) in the seventies. Abramović’s flesh appears in the five-pointed star carvings and her whip lashes in *Lips of Thomas* which she performed in 1975. The flesh appears here as an ultimate presence and reality that cannot be transcended. With the evidence of blood, flesh shows the signs of pain, and the audience’s inclination to contextualize flesh as representation is curbed; the semiotic distinction between subject and object and between performer and recipient gets to an existence level, an ‘out of body’ experience becomes an ‘out of art’ experience: it signals its ineffability. In performances the triangle body-flesh-blood represents at its most profound “the totally direct transmission of energy” that each performance wishes to achieve (Denegri 33).

days at a time, it is necessary for purely practical metabolic purposes. The culmination of these performances was their final work together, *The Lovers: The Great Wall Walk 1988*, which marked their mutual decision to separate.

[Masochistic artists of the seventies] defied pleasure in the most easily misinterpreted manner possible: by presenting and representing pain through the material of their own bodies. In the process, these artists nullified the expectation that pleasure should accompany pain, and anticipated response so deeply engrained that it sometimes allows the viewer to avoid dealing with the complexity of an individual's choice to endure pain. The performance artists of the 1970s proved that if there is any pleasure whatsoever attainable in masochism, it has to do with alienation. (O'Dell 13)

In the eighties Abramović's new performances took a step out of the flesh, and her performing acquired a bi-dimensional status shifting from performance to performativity. Photography comes into its own. Abramović is present in frozen images that imply action, or rather are built on a historical background made up of actions that now emancipate the body from the living motion. These changes, take performativity to new levels: any detail can take on a symbolic meaning. It is because of the decisive role played by photography that the original border defined by the flesh, now moves to attire.

In my work clothes are mostly uniforms and have a very precise purpose, I never used fashion strictly speaking in my performances because I consider art and fashion two separated fields. In "The Abramović Method" for example, the gowns are those classic ones that you can find anywhere. They served to distinguish people exercising from the general audience participating as spectators. In other cases however clothes have a completely different meaning. In *The Artist Is Present*, for example, I used the same dress in three colors: during the first month it was blue, to calm me down, then red, to give me strength in moments of weakness, during the last month it was white, to transmit purity. In *Crossing Nightsea* me and Ulay were changing the color of our clothes every week. According to the Vedic culture, we had studied in India, every color transmits a different energy: if you wear green robes everybody will talk to you, the blue relaxes you, black or white will make you appear neutral, red will give you strength, yellow acts seriously on your nervous system. It's just a code, and painters, in particular the American abstract artists, understood the power that certain color combinations have on the human psychology and have used certain colors to elicit certain feelings, reactions. Rothko was a master in this sense, but I think about Klein as well with his Blue (IKB - International Klein Blue). (Nobile Mino)

The new performances design an ontological space that recalls her past actions. Stillness and silence are not new issues in her work. Some examples are already present in *For Project-Empty Space* (1971) where she set up a circular projection of a panoramic sequence of large black and white images of Belgrade around the walls of a small room. As the sequence progressed, the photographs showed less and less of the city, until the final image revealed only people in an open space. In *Spaces* (1973), Abramović explored further this transformative relationship between "space" and "self" through a performance, during which she encountered seven empty rooms in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb and translated her feelings through metronomes placed on the floor of each room. Her preoccupation with the idea of space as 'empty' or 'liberated' in the early works is to be interpreted as her search, not only to represent the abstract concepts of the

‘immaterial’ and the ‘infinite,’ but also to explore the interrelationship of the self to those concepts as a form of performativity. Other witnesses of that stillness are the “transitory objects,” motionless objects that perform the empty space.

In this work, since the artist is removed, the transitory objects, as I call them, have to function in my place in order to trigger the experience of others. I set up everything in such a way that my presence is not needed. There is also the question of mortality. What happens when the artist is dead? We have to depend on our own resources and not the resources of the artist anymore. I feel that I have to prepare this transitional stage for the public to take over and still have the experience, as I used to, in this kind of installation. (Kosmidou 42)

Such objects cannot be considered as scenography (theater) nor sculpture (art). Abramović says about the difference between her transitory objects and sculpture:

They are not separate from life; you can enter them. They are small settings that have to be used. Unlike the minimal object, they demand some kind of participation. Rejection of detachment, therefore, and attraction. These objects are not self-sufficient; they seek an interlocutor in order to become active, almost “incandescent.” (Celant 11)

Transitory objects are the spark that lights the gasoline in performances and opens the way to the process of action, encounter, confrontation, interaction—an active body that moves other bodies—that is the kernel of performance art. Out of action is performance art in the seventies, because the word action implied political action and political transformation.

... the term “action” keeps the pressure on the political reference inherent in the term activism that was, and remains, so central to the use of the body as a medium. Action was a term that reflected a highly determined strategy for artistic intervention in public life. Action in art was imagined as a means to remedy the aestheticism that transformed art as an integral part of the production of meaning in culture into the empty category of “art for art’s sake,” a shift in the social role of art that robbed art of its cultural efficacy in favour to its surface appearance prized as a prestigious emblem of status and taste. (Schimmel and Stiles 234)

Photography keeps those actions alive. Performance photography transformed into tangible and unmovable data those actions, imaginations and energies. Performance art photography played a determinant role in their appreciation, not only for their becoming an historical witness but also because they keep a fragment of that event not only visually, as O’Dell declares:

In a larger sense, any understanding of the photographic documentation of performance depends on the way it supplements visual responses. For one thing, the photographs allow for an ongoing (if fragmentary) experience of a performance on the part of a beholder. Unlike reproductions of other types of artworks, photographs of performances, by virtue of their focus on the artist’s body, allow the viewer to engage with the artist in a haptic as well as a visual sense. Encountering the shared ontology of the body makes the viewer mindful of his or her own physical presence as witness to the

pictured event (even if it is well after the fact). One's involvement in the event—the choice to become a 'contracted partner'—is thus made tangible. This contracted partnership is made manifest by the visual and haptic dynamics that one experiences is literally 'handling' the performance photographs. (O'Dell 13, 14)

The (motionless) sculpture-like performances of the eighties demonstrate that photography is more than a transparent recorder of reality: "It is a mode of representation and, in the visual realm, a cultural dominant."¹³ Lambda print photography wraps low definition events in high definition images, it inspires the creation of settings, the presence of a pre-organized set of signs: it increases reality in details, amplifies reality in bit resolution.

Anima Mundi, a two section performance that Abramović put on in 1983,¹⁴ is an example of how high definition photography influenced performances. In the first section, Ulay stands at the top of a flight of stairs, while Abramović is on the ground, some distance away. They are standing motionless, with their arms reaching out to each other. They hold this position until Abramović's shadow climbs the stairs and joins Ulay's. The second section shows Abramović sitting on the topmost stair, with her red dress spread out around her. Ulay, dressed entirely in white, is lying crosswise over her lap: his body forms an 'M' (Marina - Holy Mary?). With Ulay lying across Abramović's lap, the association with the Deposition of Christ is inevitable. *Anima Mundi* involves the "sacred" and the "sublime" that drew the Futurists to performing acts. The photography that captures the event probably represents the only sacred image that there is in Marina Abramović's work: her interpretation of Michelangelo's *La Pietà*. The title *Anima Mundi* relates the work to neo-platonic thinking (Plato) while the traditional Medieval iconography is reduced to a dialectic of colors: Abramović wears a red dress, while Ulay is totally in white. This is a clear reference to the fusion of a drop of female menstrual blood and a drop of sperm that Chinese mythology considers as the origin of the Universe (Birrell 33). Mari(n)a here is contemplative, neither in *dispear*, nor in *pietas*. Photography is the quintessential partner, as it suspends time within the action and makes reality correspond to the image. It recalls a question that Jean-François Lyotard poses in his reading of the sublime in Barnett Newman's paintings (Newman): *Is it happening?* "[sublime art] confronts the possibility of nothing happening" (Lyotard 198) and becomes itself the event (*Ereignis*) that holds this possibility in suspense. From 'performance' to 'performativity' time becomes an *aporia*, a creation of the mind that art cannot transform into an image, but can exploit for its perlocutionary force:

The avant-gardist task remains that of undoing the presumption of the mind with respect to time. The sublime feeling is the name of this privation (Lyotard 211).

13 On the subject see Bezzola.

14 *Anima Mundi* was performed in Bangkok, Thailand, in February 1983.

At MoMA, Marina Abramović presents her iconographic body in history, in the Museum, in memories, in the present, in presence, and shares with us the collective possibility of taking the sting out of the barb of time.

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2. Topographies of Freedom: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

“Onto the hard path toward freedom”: Urban Environments and Asian American Agency

PIRJO AHOKAS

Like many other American ethnic minority literatures, Asian American fiction has traditionally been tied up with urban landscapes. In this paper, I explore the relationship between three fictional Asian American protagonists and their urban experience in three novels from the postwar period: John Okada's *No-No Boy* (1957), Hua Chuang's *Crossings* (1968), and Nami Mun's *Miles from Nowhere* (2009). Okada's novel remained out of print until 1976, and it took even longer before its literary merit began to be appreciated. Chuang's modernist novel was likewise ignored when it first appeared in 1968. However, since the novel began to win recognition, it has been praised as "a work of remarkable aesthetic and stylistic innovation" (Pehkoranta 81) and is currently regarded as a forerunner to Maxine Hong Kingston's landmark work *The Woman Warrior*. Fiction in English by Korean American writers was mostly published after 1980, and women writers in particular proliferated in the nineties (Kim 156, 173). Although Mun's 2009 novel received favorable reviews, it has, so far, not attracted scholarly attention.

The settings of the three novels are very dissimilar. Okada's novel is set in Seattle's bleak Japantown in the wake of the United States World War II policy of interning Japanese Americans. By contrast, Chuang portrays an upper-class Chinese family who moved from China to England and then to the United States where they are depicted as living in comfort in New York. Whereas Chuang's novel was written in the socially conscious and experimental sixties, *Miles from*

Nowhere represents the flipside of neoliberal politics and post-ethnic thinking which, by failing to recognize the mechanisms of racial oppression, suggests that people are free to choose their ethnicity. Nevertheless, the three novels are closely linked in thematic terms by the protagonists' sense of displacement in the various urban locations in which they find themselves. Like other second-generation Japanese Americans, the marginalized Nisei protagonist of Okada's novel grapples with his desire to belong to America, whilst the upper-class female protagonist of Chuang's novel searches for her identity and agency between the three countries during her self-imposed exile in Paris. The reality of the inequalities in contemporary urban American society is palpable in Mun's 2009 novel about a runaway Korean-born teenager.

These three relatively neglected Asian American texts represent fiction created by authors from three different Asian American groups in three different periods in Asian American literary history. In his book entitled *Literary Chinatowns*, Jeffrey F. L. Partridge regards the textual worlds under study as potent mediums of cultural transformation, but claims that at their best they begin to push us "onto the hard path toward freedom" (25, 203). Taking my cue from this notion, my aim is to examine to what extent the three protagonists' construction of transformative agency is related to their experience of their urban environment. When analyzing the novels and their changing responses to the city, I will draw upon studies of spatial relations between people and urban environments.

As the geographer Doreen Massey points out, scholars have detected a close connection between place and personal or cultural identity, but she criticizes their research for its tendency not only to see identities, but also places as pre-given and static (137). Conceptualizing places as localities characterized as intersections of social relations, Massey stresses that—in addition to geographical places—people's identities are constructed out of a whole complex of other relations, such as "race" and gender. When discussing the three novels, I will place an emphasis on their responses to the city. Furthermore, I will pay particular attention to their complicity with and challenges to not only hierarchies of race and gender, but also of class. If both place and identity are understood to be processes rather than products, human agency as self-direction or resistance is also subject to the effects of social situatedness and inequalities of power.

At the beginning of Okada's novel, the twenty-five-year old protagonist, Ichiro Yamada, returns home from a period of internment and, subsequently, of imprisonment. The internment experienced by Japanese Americans during the war has always been viewed as a traumatic watershed in their lives. In 1943, the United States Army began a recruitment drive to provide a quota of volunteers for an all-Japanese combat regiment in the internment camps by asking each Nisei internee to answer two crucial loyalty questions. The double negative in the title of Okada's novel refers to the fact that the questions asked could only be answered by "Yes" or "No." The fictional Ichiro is a so-called "No-No Boy," one of the young men who answered "no" to both questions and hence was condemned to serv-

ing a prison term. When approaching his former neighborhood, the protagonist is depicted as feeling “like an intruder in a world to which he has no claim” (1). Although American by birth, Ichiro feels by now that “American” relates to white America and hence he intuits that the Japanese community will be split on the basis of the loyalty oath.

A former inhabitant of Seattle’s once vibrant prewar Japantown describes it as a place where “everyone was intertwined economically, which reinforced social ties” (George). This description echoes an older sense of a “place-called-home” characterized by its social support networks, which “may provide stability, oneness and security” (Massey 167). However, Massey is critical of scholars who associate home as a geographical place “with stasis and nostalgia, and with an enclosed security” (167), and claims that “the social relations out of which the identities of places are produced are themselves by their very nature dynamic and changing” (169). Seattle’s Japantown emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Seeking economic opportunity in the United States, immigrant families from Japan settled and opened small businesses in the racially segregated south end of the city’s downtown area. Generational conflicts characterize American immigrant literatures in general, and they also plagued the first Japanese American families. As Jinqi Ling argues, one of the internal conflicts in the community derived from the fact that the Issei parents regarded themselves as sojourners in the United States, but saw their own children, who had dual citizenship, as Americans (144). Suffering from a psychic split, Ichiro perceives the city to be even dirtier than when he left, which matches his negative feelings of isolation, self-hatred and passivity. Surmising that his decision to say “no” was made when he was not man enough and in control of his life, he initially wonders whether committing a crime and returning to prison would not be preferable to returning to his parents’ house.

The opening scene of Chuang’s novel underscores the female protagonist’s physical and mental displacement in Paris when she has to ask for directions. Just like Ichiro, the protagonist, called Fourth Jane, no longer finds her previous identity formation viable. This former self was constructed in terms of Chinese ethnicity, gender and class in her adopted homeland, in the context of New York. In Paris she suffers from a loss of agency induced by her temporary psychic passivity. Unlike Ichiro, who has a masculine need to exclude painful memories of the places where he was incarcerated, Chuang’s protagonist dwells on her memories, which unexpectedly and in no chronological order, punctuate the narrative about her love affair with a married, white, French journalist. While she revisits in her mind meaningful episodes that occurred in all the places where she has lived in the past, her actual world consists of a simultaneous multiplicity of spaces and temporalities.

Elizabeth Wilson argues that, at the “commonsense” level, the whole notion of city culture has been developed as one pertaining to men (9). However, using modernist literary figures as her examples, Wilson points out that many male

modernists “drew a threatening picture of the modern metropolis,” whereas “modernist women writers such as Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson responded with joy and affirmation” (157). Presumably, the reason for this was that it was easier for women to escape the rigidity of patriarchal social controls in the metropolis (Massey 258). It is true that when Fourth Jane worked as a stockbroker in her father’s firm in New York and lived in her own apartment, she enjoyed a certain amount of personal freedom from patriarchal control. Moving to Paris against her father’s will, she hopes to find her way out of a complicated family situation, which has everything to do with her understanding of her female Chinese ethnicity. Paris, as the setting of *Crossings*, offers little of the glamour and charm of its traditional literary and artistic representations. The basic function of the city in the novel seems to be that it provides enough distance from the United States to enable the protagonist to come to terms with the complex Chinese and American components of her ethnic identity. China and America are instrumental to the new identity she seeks, but as she remarks: “[E]ach part equally strong canceled out choice” (121-22). As her ethnic, gender and class identities inevitably intersect, gender has a crucial role in blocking Fourth Jane’s agency in the two major metropolitan cities between which she shuttles.

In contrast to *Crossings*, the aptly titled *Miles from Nowhere* concentrates on the American underworld. Mun’s feisty protagonist, Joon, the daughter of recent Korean immigrants, leaves the one-family house she had shared with her parents up to the age of thirteen, after her adulterous father walked out on his wife and mother and daughter and her mother finally succumbed to her mental instability. Set in the Bronx in the eighties, the novel’s social context is the urban crisis of New York City. While the Bronx was known as a lively, ethnically diverse neighborhood in the fifties, it underwent a rapid decline from the sixties onwards. Marshall Berman succinctly describes the degradation of the Bronx by the early eighties into “an international code word for the epoch’s accumulated urban nightmares: drugs, gangs, arson, murder, terror, thousands of buildings abandoned, neighborhoods transformed into a garbage- and brick-strewn wilderness” (290). Mun’s protagonist and first-person narrator spends five years of her adolescence in the fictional version of this multicultural wasteland. What Joon calls “homes” are squats in abandoned buildings that she shares with any one of her undependable boyfriends or even “with roughly twenty people” (111). The novel’s central plotline follows her attempts to survive her years on the streets. Given the fact that her identity is rooted geographically in rundown urban areas in the midst of derelicts, she gradually becomes a drug addict who sells her body in order to survive.

Houses and homes are usually regarded as private areas in spite of the inextricable connection between public and private spaces. This connection is certainly true for the Yamada household in *No-No Boy*, since the family lives in the back of their grocery store. Ichiro’s deranged mother is associated with Japan as a place and as a nation, because she had sided with her native country during the

war. Moreover, she clings to the belief that Japan has won the war. On the night of his homecoming Ichiro and his mother pay ritualistic visits to the homes of their remaining family friends in Japantown. Massey has stressed that places are full of internal conflicts (155) and, indeed, these visits underscore the split that emerged over draft resistance and participation in the war as being at the heart of the divided Japantown. The dimly-lit bars such as the Club Oriental, which Ichiro frequents together with hostile Nisei veterans, is permeated by the same Japanese/American loyalty split. Ichiro's younger brother, a school-boy called Taro, embodies the American side of the ethnic duality. Indeed, it is Taro's eagerness to join the American army that drives a wedge between him and Ichiro.

The masculine outer spaces of Japantown are dominated by unthinking masculinist Nisei veterans. However, Ichiro's identity and burgeoning agency are positively influenced by his friendships with a fellow no-no boy and with a sensitive invalid who has returned from combat in the war. One of the important places outside Japantown, which is considered white and which Ichiro remembers with pleasure, is the university where he used to study. It is significant for his new identity formation that he is met with sympathy there. Mr. Carrick's engineering office in Portland is another white space where Ichiro is treated with respect. In stark contrast to the city, the countryside is marked as feminine, and it also contributes to Ichiro's construction of Asian American identity and agency. A young Nisei woman called Emi, who lives in the country, is the diametrical opposite in the novel to the fanatical figure of Ichiro's mother. Emi is also associated with land, but as a nurturing figure. Drawing upon the Edenic tradition in American literature, Okada's narrator associates her with light, neat lawns and flower beds. Emi tries to help Ichiro to heal his internal schism by bringing his American side to the fore.

The domestic space of the family in *Crossings* consists of a large apartment in the city and a country house with a large walled-in garden. Having left China because of the political turmoil that raged during the civil war, the close-knit family lives under the firm patriarchal control of Dyadya. As Monica Chiu points out, the spatial arrangement of his armchair in the living room is a trope for family control (71). In the novel, the view from this armchair begins from one end of the entrance hall and not only includes "the long corridor giving on to all the bedrooms," but also "a part of the dining room in view and the door to the pantry" (71). Echoing Michel Foucault's adoption of Bentham's idea of a 'panopticon' Chiu calls the father's position "panoptic" (124). However, a conflict arises when the first son, Fifth James, escapes his father's surveillance by going to Europe. He marries a white woman whom the family regards as a "barbarian" on the basis of her racial identity. This is intimately linked to Fourth Jane's voluntary exile. The rift in the family deepens when the father suddenly decides to accept his pregnant Caucasian daughter-in-law. While the protagonist continues to side with her mother, she is depressed after her recent abortion and decides to leave for France.

Nevertheless, the positive representations of the garden and Dyadya's love of gardening give expression to the soft and caring side of his construction of Chinese masculinity. Like the strategic placing of the father's armchair, the garden is also reminiscent of Foucault's ideas about space. Referring to the profound significance of the garden in the Orient since time immemorial, Foucault sees it as a "microcosm," because it can contain elements that represent the rest of the world (6). The connotation of the garden as a liminal space is highlighted in a moving episode in which the mother goes to the countryside by herself. On her return she presents Dyadya with flowers they have planted together as a token of reconciliation. As the spatial and temporal categories enmesh in the protagonist's memories during her dislocated existence in Paris, her positive memories of life at home with her father are also suffused with reconciliatory garden imagery.

Miles from Nowhere is devoid of representations of nature as a form of redemption despite the fact that the club, where the underage Joon has her first devastating sexual experience as a so-called "dance hostess" is ironically named Club Orchid. Joon's series of odd jobs typically include work as an assistant in a small nursing home and as a door-to-door salesgirl, when she wants "to get straight" (104). Mun's representation of the contemporary Bronx brings to mind Don DeLillo's mammoth novel *Underworld* (1997) where the postmodern city is characterized by the polarities of the crumbling urban wasteland and the "topside world" defined by "new fortified, gleaming corporate architectures" and the insular "affluent kingdoms of suburban wealth" (Heise 221, 248). Each is fueled by global capital. In *Miles from Nowhere* the figure of Frank, a former stockbroker, in the underworld proves that the two worlds are not entirely separate. The rise of the negligent father figure from a hopeless drunk to a wealthy real estate agent is another indication of the gendered nature of the neoliberal topside world.

DeLillo's story of the underworld not only highlights the dignity of modern day marginalized communities, but also pinpoints their solidarity in the face of extreme poverty. Joon's most enduring bond is with an African American runaway called Knowledge. As a geographical place Union Square in Manhattan has an accumulated historical significance of its own, but in Mun's literary world it acquires an interethnic, symbolic meaning, when the two young runaway girls discuss freedom on a bench right on that spot. When Joon says that she would like to visit the Statue of Liberty, Knowledge answers that she does not need to see it to know that she is free: "'You are free right now,' Knowledge continues, 'You can do whatever you want with your life'" (66). In spite of their lives of deprivation and racial discrimination in the United States they express their faith in utopian optimism that indisputably smacks of post-ethnic thinking.

Unlike the protagonists of the other two novels, who are conscious of their ethnic roots, the Korean-born Joon has neither ties to a Korean ethnic community nor an awareness of the historical past of her original home country. Despite her post-ethnic imaginary assimilation into mainstream America, she spies on her parents and sporadically meets them in the course of the novel. It is the con-

ventional conflation of mother and the mother country as the place of origin of an immigrant group that links Okada's *No-No Boy* to Mun's novel. Before leaving home Joon observes how her mother works at night in the yard on a hole in the ground, "as if trying to tunnel her way back to Korea" (3). After her mother's death Joon returns to her abandoned home and finally understands that the severing of ethnic ties constitutes a great loss. Realizing that she is guilty of having left her mother "when she needed me most" (234), Joon metaphorically conceives her as "a place to begin" (235). This place is a shared space that is important in Joon's search for a new diasporic identity and agency in the global world.

It is time to return to Partridge's phrase about the "hard path toward freedom" and to the question of agency in each of the three novels. In *No-No Boy*, Ichiro has dream visions about his readjustment to his home country, and on the last page of the novel he feels reassured that Japantown is just "a tiny bit of America" (251). The glimmer of hope he has gained through his positive encounters with certain Japanese Americans and white Americans have strengthened his masculine Japanese American identity and given him a burgeoning sense of agency. The dislocated protagonist of *Crossings* suffers from her inability to imaginatively fuse her sometimes frightening childhood memories of China and her family's construction of Chinese ethnicity in the United States. Positive memories of her strong-willed father ultimately help her to achieve agency after his death and to free herself from the paternal-type control of her unreliable French lover. Like Okada's Ichiro, she takes responsibility for her actions, assumes a female Chinese American identity and, upon returning to the United States, she—to quote Amy Ling—"reaches toward a personal coherence" (36). Although the female protagonists' class and geographical positions are poles apart in Chuang's and Mun's books, Joon's individual agency also emerges in the context of group-based oppressions when she finally achieves a new awareness of her deceased mother's fate. There is no doubt that in looking at these three intriguing texts the identities of personal places are constructed in interaction with other places under the influence of ever-shifting power relations. At the same time, places, as well as a whole complex of other intersecting axes, participate in the construction of personal identities and agency. Like identity, agency is a socially fluid process that is potentially of great value to people belonging to ethnic minorities including Asian Americans.

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Toward a Transnational Perspective on Seattle's Japantown: Nagai Kafū's *American Stories**

FRANCESCO EUGENIO BARBIERI

The aim of this paper is to provide a short analysis of the literary representation of the Japantown that evolved in Seattle toward the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, as portrayed by Japanese writer Nagai Kafū. I will concentrate on Kafū's *Amerika monogatari*, translated into English as "American Stories," a brilliant collection of short stories and autobiographical sketches based upon the author's experience as an observant traveler and observer in the United States. In these stories, written in the first years of the twentieth century, his description and narration of the buildings and the life and people of the Japantown can be taken into consideration as a vivid and realistic set of images, that give us a detailed idea of the constitution of and the socio-historical realities present in the area of the United States where the first Japanese immigrants arrived and settled.

As pointed out by Rachael Hutchinson, Kafū's primary task in this collection is to use the description of Japantown as a literary metaphor to express the problematic duality between East and West. Although this was not his only artistic

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1 For the autobiographical vocation of the stories in *Amerika monogatari*, and its related discussion, see Follaco 249-50.

intention, since the text deals with a wide range of themes such as labour conditions of the immigrants and life in America, nevertheless on a second and perhaps more extended level of interpretation, we can also read these urban descriptions as adding to our knowledge of the constitution and the reality of Seattle's Japantown of the time. In fact, as its English translator, Mitsuko Iriye, points out:

... *Amerika monogatari*, described by Donald Keene as "Kafū's first masterpiece," is worth reading both as one Japanese writer's attempt to come to grips with Western literature, art, and music at the turn of the twentieth century and as a unique observation of American life in various parts of the country. Few Japanese, or for that matter writers from any country, have produced more intimate, sensitive depictions of America. The American stories are therefore of interest not just to students of modern Japanese literature but also to historians of American culture and society. (Iriye xxv)

As the first son of a high-ranking Japanese Samurai bureaucrat, Kafū pursued an intellectual career and became interested in Western literature and culture, specifically French, longing to spend some time in France to complete his studies. But his father decided to send him to the United States, a country which at that time was one of the main commercial and political partners of Japan. During this trip, which lasted from 1903 to 1907, he stayed mainly in Tacoma and Seattle, but spent some time in New York. Kafū registered his observations about American culture, landscape and lifestyle in several beautiful pieces of literature that, after his return to Japan, were collected and edited with the title of *Amerika monogatari* and provided Japanese readers with a description of the United States.

Among his numerous sketches about American culture, Kafū reserved some space in order to provide an accurate description of the condition of Japanese immigrant workers within their work environment. Kafū in fact describes very precisely both the environment—for example the Japantown of Seattle—and the social condition of Japanese immigrants, a unique document that is of interest, as Iriye underlined, not only to Asian studies scholars, but also to American studies specialists.

As many critics note (see for example Whitworth), the city has occupied a prominent place in literary works since the second half of the nineteenth century, as it is the place where signs of modernization can be seen at their highest concentration. It comes as no surprise that a writer such as Kafū who was born and started his writing career in a country like Japan—which had experienced a very intense and problematic process of modernization and reshaping of social and political structures—concentrates part of his analysis on urban landscape (see Maeda; Lippit).

Kafū's description of the urban space and the life in Seattle's Japantown provides an accurate historical and cultural description of both the social condition and the culture of the first wave of Japanese immigrants in America and, on a deeper level, a textual metaphor questioning the possibilities and the limits of modernity and its impact on various civilizations.

I will focus attention on two stories of *Amerika monogatari* that I find significant, because they offer a highly detailed description of Seattle's Japantown and its urban landscape: "Shyatorukō no ichiya" ("A Night at Seattle Harbor") and "Akuyū" ("Bad Company"). The first, "A Night at Seattle Harbor," tells the story of a stroll taken one night to visit Japantown in Seattle for the first time. The first person narrator, who we can reasonably suppose is the author himself, is taking a long stroll around Seattle.² He walks down from Second Avenue reaching the crowded and glamorous First Avenue and then continues on to a street that he says was called Jackson. Kafū provides quite a precise topographical account of his itinerary, and even today we can trace it on a map of Seattle and follow his exact path. For this reason, I think it is correct to assume that the subsequent description of Japantown mirrors this degree of reality, and we can reasonably expect to find an accurate description in the story. In fact as Bienati (86) reminds us, it is Kafū himself, in one of his later stories *Bokutō kitan* (*A Strange Tale from East of the River*, 1936), who claimed that:

The things that most interest me when I write a novel are the choice and description of background. I have from time to time fallen into the error of emphasizing background at the expense of characterization. (Seidensticker 286)

Again, we can infer from this that Kafū is a reliable narrator and hence it is reasonable to expect that he will provide a trustworthy representation of the Japantown of the time.

In fact, the contrast between the Western lifestyle and the lifestyle lead in the Japanese area is strongly stressed by an accurate description of the urban environment. The Anglo-American part of Seattle is depicted as a vibrant, modern city illuminated by electric boards, full of people and traffic:

This is the most thriving part of Seattle, and although is generally considered as a newly developed city, the Ginza is no match for the way tall shops of stone and signboards are electrically illuminated in beautiful colors here. Besides, this is the early evening on a Saturday when many people come to take a walk, and innumerable men and women pass one another, rubbing shoulders and laughing under brilliant lights. At the intersections, a large number of streetcars full of passengers crisscross each other, while carriages thread their way through them. It's enough to dazzle you. (Kafū 228)

When the narrator turns left onto Jackson Street, the atmosphere gradually changes, as he enters one of the most depressed areas of the city, which constitutes the beginning of Japantown. Now the urban environment is connoted by an air of dilapidation and neglect:

² Although in all Kafū's work the sudden shift from one character to another which makes it possible to give voice to a multitude of different characters that come from a variety of social classes, in this specific story it would seem that the author and the first person narrator are the same.

The street was still wide, but there were fewer and fewer shops, and on the pavement covered with boards horse dung was piled high here and there, while an acute stench coming from sooty smoke somewhere was filling the air, naturally making it quite difficult to breathe. Those impressed with the bustle of First and Second Avenues must be even more startled at the drastic contrast of this gloomy dark street. (228-29)

Although this is not Japantown proper, it is significant that there is a drastic change in the description of the environment. Whereas the Anglo-American part is rendered through a visual and auditory description, this area is described mostly by olfactory elements that convey to the reader a profound sense of disgust. Kafu provides us with a sensory depiction of the urban space (Hutchinson 334), he does not confine himself only to the visual elements.

As the narrator finally leaves the outskirts of the area and enters the central part of Japantown, the city landscape changes once again:

Coming closer, I found that the buildings on both sides were far different from those on prosperous First Avenue; they were all low, wood-frame ones, as it is usually the case in poorer quarters. I happened to look up at the window of one of the two-story houses and noticed hanging there a lamp with some Japanese words, so I ran toward it and read the words, RESTAURANT, JAPAN HOUSE. I had heard about this place, but actually encountering it aroused a queer sensation in me, and I just stood there for a while, gazing at the sign for no particular reason. Soon I began hearing a sound of *shamisen* coming from the second-floor window.

As it was a Western-style building with windows shut, I could barely make out the dim noise that was seeping through, but surely it was a woman singing a tune. It was a kind I had never heard in Tokyo, so I stood there, struck with a sense of amusing incongruity as if I were traveling in the countryside and listening to some comic songs in a distant post town in Japan . . . (Kafu 229-30)

Back to a predominance of the visual element, the reader is provided with some sketches of the urban environment, that is radically different from the one depicted in the first description. Here in fact, it seems to recall the atmosphere of traditional buildings in Japan: houses are low, have wooden frames and the voice of the woman singing brings his mind back to Tokyo.

As the narrator penetrates into the the heart of Japantown, the focus of his attention changes from its urban architecture, which is low, dark and made of wood, to the many signs written in Japanese which partially recreate the landscapes of Japanese city centers.

By now, all the signs that I noticed were in Japanese characters. It was exactly as I had heard on the ship; everything from tofu makers and *shiruko* restaurants to sushi bars and noodle shops, was as one would find in a town in Japan, so that for a while I could only look around restlessly, in a state of shock. (Kafu 230)

Nevertheless, the atmosphere is permeated by a feeling of strangeness conveyed by this recreation of the Japanese urban space in a foreign country. As Rachel

Hutchinson (326) points out, in fact there are various elements in the description of Japantown that convey a mood of strangeness: the partial recreation of original space of the city in pre-modern Japan by immigrants, faraway from their homeland, among western buildings, evokes a “queer sensation”; a sensation that after few lines becomes a “shock” to the narrator, who experiences a feeling of “amusing incongruity.”

Not only does Kafū in this story provide the audience with a vivid and detailed description of the urban landscape and spatial organization of Seattle’s Japantown, but he also describes the people inhabiting this space:

Three Japanese were talking and looking up at the second floor. They all wore hom-burgs and dark suits, but their long torsos and short and, moreover, bowed legs must look quite funny to white people, I thought . . .

More people were crowding into the area, but most of them were my bow-legged and long-torsoed compatriots . . . (230)

The feeling of incongruity is thus also mirrored in the description of the bodies of his compatriots. In the text above, Kafū describes the three Japanese men as not physically suited to wear western-style clothing, thus reinforcing the sensation of strangeness and incompatibility that was already conveyed in the depiction of the urban environment.

Akuyu, translated into English as “Bad Company” starts with an accurate historical reference to the very delicate socio-historical background that saw Japan and the United States opposed in political tension, because of the expulsion of Japanese children from American schools.³ Building upon this background, the story uses a refined narrative device that helps Kafū to keep a distance from the matter and to avoid expressing a strong opinion. In the story, the narrative voice shifts from an unnamed first person narrator which seems to be Kafū himself, to a fictional character named Mr. Shimazaki who narrates the story of his own first days in the United States, which he spent in Seattle wandering around Japantown.

The story elaborates themes of “One Night in Seattle Harbor” and a strong parallel can be discerned in the description of the urban environment of Japantown:

We got on a train for Japanese quarter. We ended up at a dingy wooden inn at the corner.

It is no wonder that Japanese are misunderstood in that part of the country. The inn is located in an area that is at the extreme point of the city where the bustling streets lined with stores are gradually deserted, just as though people are falling upon bad times. The only buildings around there are shipping companies, communal stables, and such, and the streets, which are covered with horse dung, are monopolized by carts and laborers.

³ Kafū is certainly referring to the regulation passed in 1906 by the California Board of Education, whereby the children of Japanese descent should attend separate, racially specific schools. The situation of diplomatic tension that derived from this act brought to the stipulation in 1907 of the so-called “Gentlemen’s Agreement” between Japan and United States.

Sticking my head out of the inn to which we had been taken, I was able to see the backs of the city's buildings far away and, closer, a tall, dark and huge gas tank. The street became suddenly narrower near that area, cramped with dirty, wood-frame little houses, through which a thin alley penetrated and then disappeared.

This alley, these squalid wood-framed houses, these made up the den of the Japanese and the Chinese, the Oriental colony, and also the place where unemployed Western laborers and poor, oppressed Negroes found shelter. (83-84)

The narrator, as is clear from the very first sentence, re-reads the urban space of Japantown as the key by which his people are understood (or rather, misunderstood) in that part of the foreign country. The impression that the narrator conveys about the Japantown in Seattle is one of a dirty place. Nevertheless, with its old-fashioned wooden buildings, it's a space that has been built by Japanese immigrants in an attempt to recreate the buildings and the traditional urban architecture of Tōkyō. The streets are narrower than in other parts on the city, which suggests a desire to imitate the topographies and the spatial distribution of Japanese cities. But here the wooden, or wood-framed, houses are described as squalid and dirty, nothing to compare to the residential quarters of the Japanese imperial capital.

It comes as no surprise to the narrator that Japanese people are held in extremely low regard, considering the area and the urban decay in which they live. For these reasons, this space has become a shelter for a variety of marginal and unwanted members of society, such as "unemployed Western laborers and poor, oppressed Negroes." This is noted in fact by Rachael Hutchinson:

The population of this "colony of Orientals" . . . is thus supplemented by the unwanted of American society. Japantown occupies a marginal, liminal space, as befitting a place suspended halfway between "Japan" and "America." (337)

Japantown is a marginal part of society, a place where all kinds of people come to take refuge from the gaze of the wealthy areas of the city.

As Hutchinson points out (338), this spatial duality in the representation of the wealth of the Anglo-American part of Seattle and the poverty of Japantown is used by the author to signify the opposition between Japan and the United States as part of a broader set of polarities that were prominent in those years: East vs. West, Orient vs. Occident, Asian vs. Euro-American countries. In fact, not only does Kafū provide a trustworthy image of the conditions in which his compatriots lived their lives as immigrants, but in his description of the urban space he makes extensive use of textual strategies to represent the polarity between East and West; an opposition understood to be between civilized and uncivilized worlds, between colonizers and colonies. For instance, all the people and all the situations in Japantown are described as belonging to the rural part of the country. This creates incongruity and a feeling of strangeness to the observer who belongs to the Japanese upper class. We must not forget that the narrator, who perceives these feelings of strangeness, is a very well-educated and intellectual

Japanese man. It is natural that he is able to understand differences in the accents, customs and traditions of his people; immediately being able to acknowledge that they are from the rural parts of the country, as opposed to Japanese people like himself from the city, and therefore feeling removed from them. The opposition between country and city within the Japantown of Seattle is thus personified by the polarity established between the inhabitants of Japantown and the narrator, who belongs to the Japanese urban upper class.

As we have seen in the examples discussed above, Kafū provides a detailed and accurate description of the urban environment, the architecture and also the people of the Japantown where the two stories are settled. The urban space of Japantown in *Amerika monogatari* is a relevant narrative element because it serves a dual function. On the one hand, it faithfully and historically represents the life of Japanese migrant workers in twentieth-century America. It is an accurate description of a reality that, in the case of modern day Seattle's Japantown, does not exist anymore. On the other hand, as pointed out by Rachael Hutchinson, urban space becomes a metaphor for an opposition that embraces a global context; that is to say the reflection on colonialism and on the opposition between East and West, from the point of view of an Asian intellectual.

All these concepts converge and coexist in the narrative of *Amerika Monogatari*, a unique piece of literature that functions within many poetic dimensions and as that, as may be seen from the examples above, can be used as an essential piece of the jigsaw in the historical and anthropological inquiry into the reality of Seattle's Japantown at the beginning of the twentieth century. It not only provides details about that area of Seattle and the life in it, but it also describes the appearances and habits of its inhabitants.

In this case, literature offers not only pleasant moments of amusement but also accurate and valuable description of socio-historical elements—here, Seattle's Japantown's urban space and its inhabitants. As Iriye suggested, *Amerika monogatari* deserves attention not only as a beautiful piece of Japanese literature but also as a reliable and articulated document that provides both historical facts on the situation of Japanese workers in the United States as well as many critical reflections on a much wider topic: the intellectual background of modernity as structured by the opposition between East and West.

In the global dimension of the literature of today's cultural panorama, cooperation between different disciplines such as Japanese literature and American literature can therefore reveal interesting perspectives in both American and Japanese studies.

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The Italian American Family
between Past and Present:
The Place I Call Home (2012)
by Maria Mazziotti Gillan,
and *Mystics in the Family* (2013)
by Maria Famà

ELISABETTA MARINO

The creative output of prominent Italian American writers such as Maria Mazziotti Gillan and Maria Famà has long been characterized by the inevitable presence of parents, grandparents, siblings and relatives, by a “fierce loyalty to *la famiglia*” (26), in the words of Mary Jo Bona, and, above all, by what Mary Ann Vigilante Mannino describes as “a powerful connection between generations of women that does not end with any individual’s death” (130). As Lina Unali has elucidated, however, far from merely signifying the authors’ retreat into the sheltered—albeit isolated—realm of affectivity, their flaunted “cult for the family bond” (74) has often been expressed in a provocative and confrontational stance, a firm intention to resist the alluring pressure of assimilation, thus undermining the annihilating potential of the melting-pot. The seemingly unsolvable tensions between past and present, between the cherished memories of one’s land of origin and the American way of life have been among the most recurrent topics in Italian American poetry, as well as the dilemmas especially second generation immigrants had to contend with, leading—in the words of Edvige Giunta—to “a deeply internalized and complicated self-deprecation” (25), to a mortified silence which only writing “as a source of personal and social healing” (Giunta 134) could eventually break. The fear of being stigmatized, the feeling of not belonging, and the urge to fit in have been frequently chronicled in several collections by the two above-mentioned female poets. Moreover, Catholicism (often imbued with

folklore elements and superstitions), Italian food and the rituals surrounding its preparation and consumption may be regarded as staples of most of their literary production, as powerful markers of identity.

This paper sets out to demonstrate that, contrary to what has been conventionally assumed, the notion of family in the most recent works by Maria Mazziotti Gillan and Maria Famà has undergone a subtle but noteworthy transformation, shifting from being a cluster of blood ties, a tightly knit network of mutually protective relations, to a much broader concept, that expands to embrace humankind. As Søren Askegaard and Dannie Kjeldgaard have emphasized, by delving into the conception of the “cosmopolitan self” (336), Mazziotti Gillan’s and Famà’s new idea of family may be viewed as global “in the sense that its cultural orientation is not confined to a particular socio-historical, national and/or ethnic context, but consciously searching an openness toward the multiculturalism of the contemporary global society” (336). As will be demonstrated, therefore, even if the poems of the two writers persistently draw on personal recollections, they are never confined only to the Italian American experience. They no longer aim at overcoming the traumas of displacement, shame, and discrimination but rather deal with issues every reader can relate to, regardless of his/her background; they build bridges across the wider community; they encourage sympathy and understanding among people; they expose social problems, and provide successful tools to heal collective wounds and empower oneself. The first part of this essay will deal with Maria Mazziotti Gillan’s latest anthology, *The Place I Call Home* (2012), also making reference to her handbook for aspiring authors, *Writing Poetry to Save your Life* (2013). In the final section of this paper, Maria Famà’s *Mystics in the Family* (2013) will be the object of investigation.

In a letter dated September, 8th 2013, when asked about the latest developments of her artistic discourse, Maria Mazziotti Gillan replied as follows:

I think my grief over my husband’s death and the deaths of my mother, father, sister, best friends, opened out into my grief for the world and what we’ve done to the environment and to people, my grief over the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor, and what appear to me to be our unending wars.

My poems always incorporate the personal narrative, but my work seems to be weaving the personal with my concern for the larger world.

Her strong sense of responsibility and her profound commitment to the well-being of society are evident in the poem entitled “First Son,” where the writer acknowledges that she and her son John (a medical doctor) are very much alike, despite the different fields they operate in: “he wants to be able to fix the world, just as I do” (Mazziotti Gillan, *The Place I Call Home* 43). Her ethical mission is reiterated in “When I Speak Sometimes,” where she compares her mother’s total devotion to her children, her forceful way of dispensing advice and words of wisdom to her beloved offspring, to her own wider aspiration to contribute, with her poems, to a better future for the human family: “I can’t resist taking care / of

the world” (69). Accordingly, *the place* Maria Mazziotti Gillan calls *home* (to quote the title of her volume) necessarily goes beyond geography, since it cannot be pinpointed on any map; it is neither Italy, nor America, nor Paterson’s Little Italy, that pale imitation of an imaginary homeland where immigrants often lead a suspended life, trying to recreate the well-known environment they left behind in their mother-country. Thus by refusing to take sides or to write from any privileged point of observation, *home* is identified with interpersonal relationships, with a core of affection within the heart, with her mother’s “warm arms” that, as the author remarks in the poem called “Little General,” are actually the only “place / [she] call[s] home” (37).

Unlike her previous collections, where she recalled the pain she herself suffered as an ostracized child, and the abuse she had to endure on the part of insensitive teachers and bullying schoolmates,¹ in her latest artistic endeavour, instead, Maria strives to write from her detractors’ perspective. As she tries to uncover the underlying reasons for their misbehaviour, she manages to reach an understanding of human beings that is capable of converting enemies into friends, outcasts into kinfolk. Hence, in “So Much That is not Right with the World” (a poignant poem with a thought-provoking title), little, obnoxious Delores, who “pushed / [her] and screamed, her face ferocious and untamed” (30), is treated with compassion by the writer, aware of the child’s own burden of grief: “she was a girl who was always twanging / with anger, her mother dead less than six months, / her father remarried to a woman she hated” (30). Misery, wretchedness, and an overwhelming sense of guilt are effectively turned into universal bonds, into connections stronger than blood, ethnicity, age, social class, or gender. Readers readily participate in the affliction of the unnamed protagonist of “In My Dream, the Light,” a friend of the poet’s who, given the rapid worsening of her physical condition, longs to be reassured “she will survive / and be cancer-free” (64). A soothing sensation of relief, of self-acceptance and reconciliation with one’s innermost thoughts is perceived while listening to Maria’s courageous apology to her husband, affected by Parkinson’s disease, “for the way [she] ran away / from everything [she] could not face about the illness / that crucified [him]” (66), as she unreservedly confesses in the poem entitled “A Man Stands over My Bed.”

Even the theme of *betrayal* is revisited and reinterpreted by the author, after first exploring it in *Where I Come from*, her 1995 anthology. While in the writer’s past production the idea of disloyalty was inextricably linked with the uneasiness of Americanized teenagers about their embarrassing parents (in “Betrayals” she disowned her father Arturo, “ashamed of [his] broken tongue” and his menial jobs [Mazziotti Gillan, *Where I Come from* 7]), in *The Place I Call Home* it refers to a husband’s despicable desertion of his wife, an incident that sadly brings people together beyond the boundaries of the Italian American experience. The

¹ Compare, for example, the following poems included in her 1995 collection entitled *Where I Come From*: “Public School No. 18 Paterson, New Jersey” (12-13), “Talismans” (42), “Growing up Italian” (54-57).

devastating breach of trust on the part of the husband which actually upset the life of Jennifer Gillan (the poet's daughter), is compared to the nuclear tragedy of Fukushima, to a deviant violation of nature's perfect balance. "My daughter has been touched by the radiation / of her husband's betrayal," as Maria Mazziotti Gillan underlines in "In Japan, the Earthquake," "She is only one person, / and though she is mine, I know that the world is full / of destruction" (77). Indeed, the artist's concern for the wider human family prompts her to further expand her horizons, by mentioning both the riots in Cairo (as well as the feelings of imbalance and bewilderment they generated), and the cholera epidemics in Rwanda, where people still drink water from polluted wells. Even in these cases, however, far from giving rise to dejection and discontent, the writer aims at empowering her readers, by reminding them that the security, the prosperity, the privileges that they benefit from them daily, should not to be taken for granted but welcomed with gratitude, like extraordinary gifts, as suggested in the poem entitled "Forgetting to Give Thanks," where the immigrants' struggles are hinted at, in order to underline how harsh life can be: "We forget how much of the world does not have / what we have and even I forget, I who grew up in an apartment heated by a coal stove" (62).

Gratitude is not the only key to enhancing one's life: a fair number of poems in the collection are devoted to the task of finding one's own voice, by hushing what Maria defines as the "crow" inside our head (71). This metaphor had already been used in her 1995 poem entitled "The Crow," where the author recalled the irritating, internalized whisper—"you are not really very much, you guinea, you wop" (Mazziotti Gillan, *Where I Come From* 68)—that, as a young girl, caused her to remain shamefully silent. In *The Place I Call Home* readers are struck by the realization that, in truth, everyone has to face the same ordeal commonly suffered by immigrants: we all have to cope with our individual crow, with "the critic in [our] head, that voice that tells [us] what is wrong with everything [we] do, that voice that makes [us] doubt [ourselves]" as she elucidates in *Writing Poetry to Save Your Life* (16), where this theory is clearly expounded. It is not surprising, therefore, that many poems in the anthology are focused on writing as a liberating act, as well as being dedicated to her poetry students, highlighting their courageous efforts to lay bare their scars and "put down [their] sorrow / like a basket full of stone"² (*The Place I Call Home* 79). While in her first volumes the author had tried to persuade all Italian Americans to stop their passive brooding, and had encouraged them to untie their knots of woe, the invitation is now extended to the wider community in the inspiring words of her creative writing handbook, "you can transform your life by telling your own story. . . . Seize your power" (*Writing Poetry to Save Your Life* 81).

The notion of the Italian American family has also dramatically changed in *Mystics in the Family*, Maria Famà's latest poetry collection following *Looking for*

² This poem is entitled "Here in this Gray Room."

Cover (2007), a book where poems such as “Nonna Mattia,” “Pasta e Piselli: Lunch-time Memories,” and “Comari” were clear indicators of the prominent meaning she attached to her personal and communal roots at that stage of her artistic career. As Maria convincingly remarked in a letter dated September, 9th 2013, when I asked her about the subject of this essay and the issue of belonging,

I believe it is hard for immigrants and the children of immigrants to feel at home completely in either Italy or America. Yet, if one thinks of oneself as part of the whole world, as part of the whole universe, differences slowly melt away. The pain of being different, of being isolated, can be somewhat eased.

Consequently, the strategy employed by Maria Famà to mould her new ideal of a global family relies on the recovery of a collective spirituality, on the awareness that “life is open / that life is more” (*Mystics in the Family* 10), as she observes at the end of the poem of the same title, stimulating her readers to pierce the surface of different phenomena and find unexpected connections. As she wrote in the above-mentioned letter,

spirituality is at the core of all human beings. It is not about organized religion, although all religions try to address this yearning toward the force of the universe. I try to use my poetry to speak of oneness, of universality. In *Mystics in the Family*, I tried to celebrate spirituality as a transcendent human theme running through all cultures. We are all related, even though hierarchical thinking dominates the human species.

Catholicism, one of the most frequent common denominators of Italian American communities, is therefore revisited in this light, and infused with primeval elements, shared by the whole of humankind, since they date back to a time before the beginning of history, with its harsh corollaries of wars, separations, and asymmetrical relationships. Hence, the Black Madonna of Tindari (to whom one of the poems is dedicated) can be viewed as the mirror image of the African Dark Mother, the creative, nurturing and regenerative principle for prehistoric people, in whose challenging figure, as Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum points out, “there was no division between feminine and masculine. She was beloved by women and men, young and old, and all social classes” (21). Far from being a mere object of devotion, the Black Madonna becomes an active instrument of social reform, more influential than any sociologist or politician: to the pilgrim who mocked the color of her skin, she reacted by making her child vanish for a short time; as Maria Famà reiterates, “the Black Madonna of Tindari taught / that racism is a sin” (*Mystics in the Family* 13). Another figure commonly associated with Italy and the Catholic religion that is transformed by the writer into a universal icon of empowerment is Saint Rita, whose celebrations are recalled in the poem entitled “The Feast of Saint Rita.” Her statue is symbolically carried in procession by “men and women of European, African, Asian, and Mexican descent” (17)—all the threads composing the complex fabric of America—who jointly pay tribute

to “a woman who believed nothing is impossible” (17). Rita Lotti Mancini, introduced with more—and less—everyday qualities as a herbalist, a healer, a wife, a widow, a mother, and a nun who received the stigmata, becomes an emblem of everyone’s potential: “Rita is the best of us within us / because Saint Rita channels the force of the universe / which binds us all in love” (18).

To conclude, as has been observed, both Maria Mazziotti Gillan and Maria Famà have recently developed a new concept of an all-encompassing human family by cancelling boundaries and partitions. Nevertheless, in so-doing, they have not forgotten where they came from nor the lessons of generosity and mutual respect they learned from their families. “Saluta cu cappeddu chi hai,” Maria Famà’s grandfather used to say,

Tip the hat you got
If you are poor
If you are rich
It does not matter
Respect yourself
Respect the others
Do your best with what you got
Saluta cu cappeddu chi hai
Tip the hat you got. (*Mystics in the Family* 54)

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Chronopoetics: Race, Time, and Narrative in Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*

SUNN SHELLEY WONG

I see in the plots we invent the privileged means by which we
re-configure our confused, unformed, and at the limit mute
temporal experience.
Paul Ricœur

Various years in general beat in the one which is just being
counted and prevails.
Ernst Bloch

This paper looks at the politics and poetics of time—specifically, the relationship between race, time, and narrative in Carlos Bulosan's semi-autobiographical work *America Is in the Heart*. Through a reading of *America Is in the Heart*, I pursue both a more generalized discussion of the relationship between time and narrative (in the writing of both fiction and history) and the more specific ways in which processes of racialization inflect or rearticulate that relationship. At issue here is the formal challenge, or problem, of representing difference. Paul Ricœur opens the first volume of *Time and Narrative* by noting the “predicative assimilation” driving the semantic innovation of both metaphor and narrative:

With narrative . . . semantic innovation lies in the inventing of [a] work of synthesis—a plot. By means of the plot, goals, causes, and chance are brought together within the

temporal unity of a whole and complete action. It is this synthesis of the heterogeneous that brings narrative close to metaphor. In both cases, the new thing—the as yet unsaid, the unwritten—springs up in language . . . [The plot] ‘grasps together’ and integrates into one whole and complete story multiple and scattered events, thereby schematizing the intelligible signification attached to the narrative taken as a whole. (Ricœur ix-x)

Where the assimilative temporality of metaphor is instantaneous (“this is that”) (as compared to the assimilative temporality of simile which admits a pause in the identificatory process through its inclusion of the comparative term—i.e., “this is like that”), the assimilative temporality of narrative works by imposing a temporal unity that does not so much organize heterogeneity as it does submerge it.¹ For Ricœur, it is the synthesis of the heterogeneous that provides the ground of possibility for the “new thing,” “the as yet unsaid,” and “the unwritten.” What remains unsaid in Ricœur’s valorization of the “predicative assimilation,” however, is the way in which heterogeneity—once bound over to the “intelligible signification attached to” this “new congruence in the organization of events”—is at risk of being consigned to the realm of the unsaid and the unwritten (Ricœur ix). Is it possible, then, to represent difference without subsuming it as sameness?

With this particular problematic in mind, I take up issues of temporality in Carlos Bulosan’s semi-autobiographical *America Is in the Heart*. The discussion here is part of a book project examining the politics and poetics of time—specifically, the relationship between race, time, and narrative in the work of a number of twentieth-century Asian American and African American writers.² Through a reading of *America Is in the Heart*, I explore both a more generalized relationship between time and narrative (in the writing of both fiction and history) and the more specific ways in which processes of racialization inflect or rearticulate that relationship. How does reflecting on temporality tell us something about the limits and possibilities of representational forms such as narrative? What structuring mechanisms and ideological imperatives are at work in the social construction of time? Working with the concept of “chronotypes” (the term coined by John Bender and David Wellbery to describe the “models or patterns through which time assumes practical or conceptual significance”),³ I explore how historically and culturally constituted typologies of time underwrite the narration of human action—whether individual or collective, and fictional or historiographical. If assigning meanings to time raises issues of power, how do those issues emerge in the time-bound act of narration? What kinds of ideological or episte-

1 I am indebted to David Lloyd for formative conversations about, as well as important scholarship on, this issue of “the function of metaphoric processes, as minimal narratives of identity, within the larger plot of self-formation” (72). See Lloyd.

2 This paper is drawn from the chapter on *America Is in the Heart* in a manuscript-in-progress entitled *The Waiting Room*.

3 Bender and Wellbery, *Chronotypes* 4.

mological work do chronotypes perform? What is the relationship of temporal construction to narrative form?

From the late thirties through the forties, Carlos Bulosan was one of the best-known Filipino writers in the Western world. While most readers today associate him with the semi-autobiographical *America Is in the Heart*, his literary output during the war years included two volumes of poetry—*Letter From America* (1942) and *The Voice of Bataan* (1944)—and a bestselling collection of stories, *Laughter of My Father* (1944). Bulosan had come to the attention of the American reading public a year earlier through the publication of an essay, “Freedom From Want,” that had been commissioned by the *Saturday Evening Post* (6 March 1943) to accompany one of a series of paintings entitled “Four Freedoms” by the well known artist and illustrator Norman Rockwell. At the time, the essay was regarded as a stirring testament to an immigrant’s faith in the promise of American democracy. For a postwar audience (both mainstream American and international), *America Is in the Heart* (1946) clearly reaffirmed that promise. Its popular acclaim led to its translation and publication in 1947 in six languages—including Italian.

The reception of the text after its republication in 1973 differed in a number of ways from its earlier postwar reception but I focus on only one of those differences here. The conditions of reception in the immediate post-civil rights era of the seventies left many critics (especially Asian American critics) wrestling with the questions raised by what was perceived now to be a peculiarly sanguine resolution of a text that relentlessly exposed a history of brutal discrimination directed toward Filipinos in the United States in the thirties and forties.⁴ After recounting his, and other Filipinos’ experiences of beatings, mutilations, humiliations, vigilante actions, murders, and exploitative labor practices—a litany of

4 As E. San Juan, Jr. notes: “Almost everyone who has read Bulosan—I am speaking chiefly of those who matured politically in the 1970s and 1980s, after which Bulosan suffered the fate of the “disappeared” of Argentina, Nicaragua, the Philippines—cannot help but be disturbed and uneasy over the ending of *America Is in the Heart*.” This unease prompted efforts to “explain” (which often meant to explain away) the apparently affirmative and conciliatory character of the ending. The perceived “problem” of an overly sanguine conclusion (conceptually framed within binary constructions of capitulation/resistance, assimilation/subversion, and reconciliation/conflict), however, likely says more about the politics of reception than about the speaker/author’s politics. This paper, and the larger discussion of *America Is in the Heart* from which it is drawn, refocuses the issue by asking whether we can problematize the ending in other terms. Might we read, for example, the ending not in relation to the ostensible politics of the author/speaker but, instead, to the politics of genre (in this case, the *Bildungsroman* as a developmental narrative governed by a formal and ideological emphasis on resolution and reconciliation)? Might we complicate the sense of the ending by noting the presence of other narrative formations in the text, each underwritten by a mode of temporalizing that differs from, or conflicts with, that which authorizes the developmental progress of the *Bildungsroman*? The larger argument behind this paper locates the politics of the text in the text’s ability to re-function narrative conventions and shift their meanings not by focusing exclusively on a single genre but by bringing into contention a number of different narrative forms and the respective modes of temporalizing that underwrite them. Within the context of that larger argument, time, narrative, and race emerge here as an alternative set of critical coordinates for engaging the aesthetics and politics of *America Is in the Heart*.

brutalities occasionally leavened, however, by moments of kindness and generosity toward the protagonist—the narrator declares:

[M]y faith in America . . . was something that had grown out of my defeats and successes, something shaped by my struggles for a place in this vast land . . . It was something that grew out of the sacrifices and loneliness of my friends, my brothers in America and my family in the Philippines—something that grew out of our desire to know America, and to become a part of her great tradition, and to contribute something toward her final fulfillment. I knew that no man could destroy my faith in America that had sprung from all our hopes and aspirations, *ever*. (327)

Commenting on the conclusion's challenge to readerly expectations, Sau-ling Wong wryly notes: "[I]f the tribute [to America] remains profoundly affecting, it is less from the reader's conviction of its inevitability than from marvel at such single-minded devotion" (133). However, rather than locating the thwarting of readerly expectations in the realm of psychodynamics, we might look to the realm of aesthetics—for example, in the requirements of classical realism whereby "narrative closure operates as an ideological mechanism guaranteeing that disturbing issues are laid to rest and that competing discourses are subordinated to the text's hegemonic discourse through narrative inevitability" (Foley 54). Narrative inevitability, however, can only arise in the context of a narrative emplotment "that unifies into one whole and complete action the miscellany constituted by the circumstances, ends and means, initiatives and interactions, the reversals of fortune, and all the unintended consequences issuing from human action" (Ricoeur x). Here, I want not so much to reiterate the point that the imposition of such a unified whole always risks assimilating difference into a hegemonic sameness but, instead, to introduce the question of how the unifying operation of emplotment works through the mobilization of organizing chronotypes. The semantic innovation in the narrative of *America Is in the Heart* is located not in the synthesizing function of plot but, rather, in the proliferation and dynamic interplay of chronotypes that underwrite the narrative taken as an apparent whole.

If ever there was an apt word to describe the contents of *America Is in the Heart*, "miscellany" might be it. The text features an episodic and sometimes disjointed narrative, a cast of thousands—each of whom receives only cursory (and sometimes inconsistent) definition, and the incessant movement of that cast across vast expanses of the western United States. While the text proceeds chronologically, there is no overarching developmental trajectory. The text seldom provides the expected detailing of events, feelings, or thoughts that customarily lead up to momentous turning points in the protagonist's life. Encounters with other characters often seem random or accidental. Remarking on the text's "perfunctory characterization and emplotment," Sau-ling Wong notes how "[e]vents that should, in commonsense logic, vary in significance are indiscriminately described in an unmodulated prose. Amount of detail is not pro-

portionate to the event's alleged developmental import" (134). Over the course of the book, the protagonist's experiences pile up in such a way that each significant turning point in his life is almost immediately countered by an event that challenges, if not thwarts, the possibility of a unified, developmental process of subject formation. The invocation of a challenge or a thwarting only makes sense, of course, in the context of a given readership's horizons of expectation vis-à-vis the formal procedure, and the temporal modality, of an autobiography or a narrative of formation. In the next section, I focus on a moment in the text that makes legible how *America Is in the Heart* brings into contention different narrative constructions and the respective modes of temporalizing that underwrite them, contending constructions that contribute to the peculiarly disjunctive quality of the narration.

The moment in question has the protagonist, Carl, puzzling over why his friend and political mentor José, a Filipino American labor activist, has suddenly been arrested and almost as suddenly released. José tries to explain to him the significance of the events unfolding before them:

It's hard for me to explain to you. It is a long story. This is a war between labor and capital. To our people, however, it is something else. It is an assertion of our right to be human beings again, Carl.

How are the Filipino farmworkers discursively positioned in relation to these respective "stories"? What does it mean for José and other Filipino farmworkers to participate in both of these stories simultaneously? Do they represent compatible or contradictory projects? What are the chronotypes underwriting these two stories—one a story of class emancipation and the other, a story of Filipinos reclaiming their humanity? From labor's standpoint, the story of the war between labor and capital is underwritten by a revolutionary *telos*; it is represented as a linear, stagist development of an emancipatory progress. However, the latter story is not necessarily aligned with the former and, in fact, may cut across this first story in a number of significant ways. What chronotypes are mobilized in the telling of the story of the Filipino struggle to assert their right to be human beings again? How has this latter story been shaped or circumscribed by an historical repertoire of temporal constructions of racial otherness? What might be the conceptual significance of the temporal coordinates used to frame the story of the Filipino struggle to assert their right to be human beings?

Here, Johannes Fabian's work on chronopolitics in *Time and the Other* offers a useful point of departure. In the course of critiquing the epistemic foundations of his discipline, Fabian argues that anthropology has emerged and established itself as a "science of other men in another time. [Anthropology] is a discourse whose referent has been removed from the present of the speaking/writing subject" (143). This process of temporal distancing—or "allochronism"—denies "coevalness" to the Other. The denial of coevalness was exemplified in the way nineteenth-century evolutionary anthropology "promoted a scheme in terms of

which not only past cultures, but all living societies were irrevocably placed on a temporal slope, a stream of Time—some upstream, others downstream. Civilization, evolution, development, acculturation, modernization (and their cousins industrialization and urbanization) are all terms whose conceptual content derives . . . from evolutionary time” (Fabian 17).

For Fabian, chronopolitics is the mobilization of time as a modality of power. Chronopolitics in the form of a scientific discourse on evolutionary hierarchies helped justify both European colonial enterprises, as well as restrictive immigration policies in the United States. In the early decades of the twentieth century, debates over immigration restrictions for Filipinos were often couched in the language of evolutionary advancement, with Filipino men described as “jungle folk,” “untamed,” “primitive,” and “little brown men about ten years removed from a bolo and a breechcloth” (Takaki 325, 327). In his study of American socialism and evolutionary thought, Mark Pittenger notes that from the nineteenth century through the first two decades of the twentieth, American socialists believed that social development was a universal, teleological process wherein “[n]on-westerners and non-whites could be judged either as less advanced in the hierarchy or as predestined to achieve a lower level of development” (178). The politics of time enabled American socialists to read difference as distance—both spatial and temporal, and helped stake the majority opinion that one’s comrades had to be one’s evolutionary peers. To the extent that discourses of emancipation and developmental narratives continue to incorporate conceptual content deriving from evolutionary time, the temporal construction of freedom-as-progress can simultaneously be the temporal construction of unfreedom—in this instance, constituting Filipino farmworkers as spatial and temporal outsiders of the nation-state as well as of class emancipation. Even for those within the socialist ranks who did not espouse a scientific racism predicated on evolutionary time, a strong current of socialist inevitabilism meant that it was not necessary to take up the race question because it was understood that the arrival of socialism would bring with it the end of racism.

In this final section of the paper, I discuss this text’s formal challenges, and resistance, to the ideological imperatives of the chronotypes underlying progress theories of history and developmental narratives of subject formation. On a bus to San Francisco, having fled the town of Stockton after being mistakenly accused of being the Filipino Communist leader of the strike underway there, the protagonist dreams about his childhood in the Philippines. In the first of two dreams, he sees that his mother will not eat because there isn’t enough food for everyone. Feigning illness and a diminished appetite, the young Carlos leaves the family gathering so that his mother can have his portion. In the second dream, the young Carlos has run away again from the poverty and hunger of home but has been returned to his family by a kindly police chief from a neighboring town. In this dream, his mother assures him that there is now enough food for everyone. Awakened by a fellow passenger who tells him that he had been crying in his sleep,

Carlos says apologetically: “it was just a dream” (283). Then Carlos comes to the sudden realization that the events of the dream had actually taken place when he was a child: “it had come back to me in a dream because I had forgotten it. How could I forget one of the most significant events in my childhood? How could I have forgotten a tragedy that was to condition so much of my future life?” (283).

If to forget is to consign to an irretrievable past that which one had experienced, then Carlos’s forgetting in this instance should be referred to another order of remembrance. That is to say, in his dream, Carlos retrieves not that which had happened on that occasion of too many people and too little food but, instead, retrieves that which had not yet happened. The misrecognition, or missed recognition, pertains to the mother’s feigned story of having enough food for the entire family when, in actuality, the larder was still empty. In this text, misrecognitions and missed recognitions abound, and explanations do not always follow immediately on the heels of the event or issue to be explained. Particular tensions are often hinted at, even noted, but then left in narrative limbo until some later point in the text. For example, the promised explanation about the tension between race and class only surfaces some ninety pages later. The text regularly suspends the requirements of probability and necessity that constitute the conventional basis for a meaningful connection or arrangement of events, and its meticulous recording of innumerable departures and arrivals, “accidental itineraries,” foreclosed possibilities, abortive starts, and premature endings keeps cutting across a historicism that privileges the straight lines of progress theories of history. The child Carlos’s then helpless desire to resolve the problem of hunger and poverty for his family finds renewed expression as well as greater political traction and danger at a later moment when he begins to play an increasingly effective role in the labor struggle.

His present recognition of the incident’s significance is what Walter Benjamin would call a recognition of the sign of a “chance in the fight for the oppressed past” (Benjamin 496). Carlos’s present recognition of continuing conditions of scarcity and hunger in the United States (as evidenced by the striking farm workers) allows the past trauma to be crystallized into an historical subject. The site of personal, familial trauma becomes the site of social trauma. The text represents the process whereby Carlos moves from a recognition of his plight as a personal one, to a racial and class condition, and traces his shifting affiliations from his immediate family to a universal brotherhood.

The text’s emphasis on redeeming the “lostness”⁵ of the past bears a formal resemblance to the phenomenon of *déjà vu*, understood here as the peculiar temporal operation and historical force of the coming again of remnants of the past. In a comparative reading of Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch’s philosophies of history, David Kaufmann refers to a conversation between Benjamin and Bloch

⁵ The preeminent figure of “lostness” in the text is Carlos’s brother Amado. See Amado’s letter to Carlos on p. 322.

on the subject of *déjà vu* in which the two interlocutors arrive at a new interpretation of this phenomenon. For Bloch, “the actual ‘fausse reconnaissance’ does not lead us back to real experience in a previously existing life . . . [instead,] it reproduces an act of the self’s own orientation” (Bloch, qtd. in Kaufmann 35). The eerie sensation occasioned by the feeling that one has already experienced something that is actually happening for the first time is reconceived here not as a movement from the past into the present but, instead, from the future into the present via the past. What appears to be the coming again of something from the past is, in fact, the coming again of that which is not yet past. In this recasting of *déjà vu*, Kaufmann tells us, the “eerie sensation of shock . . . registers an orientation that has been forgotten or repressed . . . Shock marks the recognition of what has been displaced and disrupted” (36). The sudden appearance of that which appears to be a repetition of the past is, instead, “a reminder of what one had meant to do for the future” (36). Here, we would do well to recall another aspect of Carlos’s dream in which the police chief, on the drive back to Carlos’s home in Binalonan, tells Carlos that he once had a friend from Binalonan who had become “a maker of songs in America” (283):

“America is a land far away,” he said.

It was the first time I had heard about America. I was going back to my family from a town that seemed hundreds of miles away.

This invocation of an as yet uncalibrated set of spatial and temporal coordinates adumbrates an open field of historical possibilities. The passage operates with the sense of *déjà vu* that Ernst Bloch characterizes in *The Principle of Hope* as a kind of “forward dawning,” an anticipatory orientation that comes from the “opposite side of forgetting.”⁶ Here, Bloch tells us, latency belongs not to the “No-Longer-Conscious” realm of forgotten or repressed content, but to the “Not-Yet-Conscious” realm of “content that is only just objectively emerging in the world” (116). Carlos’s dream registers not forgotten or repressed content but, instead, content that is only just objectively emerging in the world. The reappearance of Carlos’s memory content launches a non-linear and non-teleological concept of history in which ideas or actions that that were either too early or too late in their own historical moments to gain sufficient transformational traction could do so at a

6 Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 116. In *Part II* of this volume—entitled “Anticipatory Consciousness”—Bloch refers to a process of “forward dawning” and to the “forward dream”: “The Not-Yet-Conscious is thus solely the preconscious of what is to come, the psychological birthplace of the New. And it keeps itself preconscious above all because in fact there is within it a content of consciousness which has not yet become wholly manifest, and is still dawning from the future. Possibly even content that is only just objectively emerging in the world; as in all productive states which are giving birth to what has never been there. The forward dream is disposed towards this, and Not-Yet-Conscious, as the mode of consciousness of something coming closer, is charged with it; here the subject scents no musty cellar, but morning air.”

later date. We see in this return of individual memory the possibility of a collective futurity. On this point, David Kaufmann remarks:

Déjà vu is to the individual what [non-contemporaneous] ideological formations are to the collective: memories of positions and orientations that were promised but have not yet come to be, ciphers of orientations that have yet to be fulfilled. They serve as the outstanding debts of personal and cultural history . . .” (36)

Bringing into contention narrative forms and the modes of temporalizing that underwrite them, *America Is in the Heart* returns necessity to contingency, synthesis to heterogeneity, and “complete action” to incomplete action, thereby allowing “various years in general [to] beat in the one which is just being counted and prevails.”

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The “Land of the Free”? The United States in the Eyes of Italian American Radicals

STEFANO LUCONI

This short essay examines how Italian American radicals perceived American institutions and political environment between the late nineteenth century and the mid nineteen-twenties. It argues that, after an early fascination with the United States, whose liberties seemed to offer a fitting context for the establishment of a socialist society, disillusionment eventually set in and even made some of the subversives receptive to nationalistic feelings.

To many Italians, America had been a promised land since William Penn’s successors promoted Pennsylvania as the epitome of religious tolerance and self-government to attract settlers from the Venetian Republic in the eighteenth century (Del Negro). The image of the United States as a free nation gained momentum following independence from Great Britain and, more especially, after the emancipation of the slaves in the wake of the Civil War because it had been precisely the legality of human bondage that had previously stood out as detrimental to the ideological appeal of the country (Gemme 31-32). As Gianfausto Rosoli has remarked, a long tradition rooted in the enlightenment and the Risorgimento in Italy made America seem “an absolute model of liberty” in the eyes of the Italians (223).

The identification of the United States with freedom was so entrenched that it also lured a few Italian anarchists and socialists into making their way across the Atlantic and pursuing an American dream of their own at the turn of the twentieth century. In the decades of mass immigration from Italy, between the

early eighteen-eighties and the outbreak of World War I, most newcomers arrived for economic reasons. Nonetheless, the United States stood out as a land of opportunity not only for the unskilled laborers endeavoring to improve their standard of living in a thriving industrial society, but also for the political radicals who intended to propound the demise of capitalism and to establish a workers' paradise on Earth. American Republicanism, as opposed to Italy's monarchic institutions, seemed ideally suited to make the United States a more attractive setting than their native land (Testi).

Karl Marx warned in the late eighteen-sixties that the United States had undergone such a fast centralization of capitalistic power after the Civil War that the era of the "Great Republic" as "the Promised Land for emigrant laborers" had seen its own demise (847). Yet, his words fell on deaf ears among many of his supporters in Italy. Consequently, few agreed with Socialist leader Napoleone Colajanni, when he maintained that "the times of Washington and Franklin, of Madison, Jefferson, etc. have faded away" and that, therefore, the United States was far from being a workers' potential paradise in the early twentieth century (323).

On the contrary, the radical press in Italy continued to cherish the myth of the United States as a place where the class struggle was still viable and potentially effective. In this perspective, according to the Milan-based Socialist fortnightly newspaper *Critica Sociale*, the land that represented the most advanced "stage of organized capitalism" was also the milieu in which a Socialist revolution was most likely to succeed (Massimo 109). As a result, Giacinto Menotti Serrati, after moving to the United States in 1902 to become the editor of *Il Proletario*, the most authoritative mouthpiece of Italian American revolutionary socialism, contended that "in no other country than this should the Socialist Party thrive and reach great achievements" (qtd. in Rosada 149). It was not a matter of chance, therefore, that just two years later, the Socialist-turned-Anarchist Carlo Tresca, when facing the alternative between exile in Switzerland or in the United States, chose the latter on the assumption that America was still "the land of the free" (*The Autobiography* 64). Again in 1904, after spending some time in Canada, another political émigré, Arturo Giovannitti, settled in the United States, because it seemed to him a more suitable environment for propounding his own ideals of humanitarian socialism among workers (Vecoli, "Arturo Giovannitti" 63). Referring to the attraction that the American institutions had exerted on him, he argued that he had "learnt upon the knees of my father and mother to worship the name of a republic with tears in my eyes since I was a child" and, therefore, upon settling in the United States, he "really thought" that he had reached "a better and freer land than my country" (Giovannitti 331). Italian socialists, including leaders such as Filippo Turati, even envisaged the establishment of rural colonies in North America as a viable means of diffusing their propaganda in a receptive milieu such as the countryside and, thereby, preventing militancy from being confined to industrial urban centers only (Dore 183-85).

Against this backdrop, Italian radicals also conceived the United States as either a temporary or a lasting haven from the repression of the post-unification governments of Italy. Indeed, the first significant exodus of anarchists and socialists to America followed on the heels of Prime Minister Francesco Crispi's 1894 quelling of the Sicilian *fasci* as well as the reactionary policies of his successor, Antonio Starabba di Rudinì, who dissolved the Chamber of Deputies in 1897 and declared a state of siege in most large cities the following year (Cartosio).

Furthermore, in the eyes of some radicals the United States was, to all intents and purposes, an effective school of political extremism for Left-wingers. While Benito Mussolini was still a socialist activist, he distrusted Tresca's credentials as a fully-fledged radical. But, upon learning that Tresca was moving to the United States, Mussolini expressed his conviction that "America, powerful America, will make you [Tresca] a true revolutionary comrade" (Tresca, *The Autobiography* 68). Ettore Ciccotti, a translator of Karl Marx's works and a Socialist member of the Italian Parliament in the early twentieth century, even made a point of encouraging workers to move to the United States. In 1912 he published an article in *Avanti!*, the Milan-based Socialist daily organ, in which he contended that the Italian labor movement would benefit from the temporary resettlement of workers in the United States. Contrary to his comrades who held that expatriation to America was tantamount to a denial of class consciousness, a rejection of militancy, and an apolitical stand in general, Ciccotti advocated emigration especially to the United States. He was confident that returning workers would import American ideas that would enrich the class struggle in Italy thanks to the strategies in fighting capitalism they had learned in the United States. In his opinion, as late as 1912, America was still a source of progressivism in the field of politics and labor (Degl'Innocenti 206).

It was, in fact, in 1912, that the Socialist Party of America reached the apex of its electoral strength when its presidential candidate, Eugene V. Debs, gained six percent of the popular vote in the race for the White House (Kipnis 420). It is not surprising, therefore, that when the Socialist Party registered a decline in votes in the subsequent elections, the Italian radicals' enthusiasm for the United States waned.

Ciccotti was an emigrant himself. He had spent some time in Switzerland between 1898 and 1899 in the wake of di Rudinì's crackdown on radicals, while he was on the run from the Italian police, but he never set foot on American soil (Manganaro Favaretto). His concept of the United States resulted from hearsay and did not tie in with the ensuing vision of his comrades who had firsthand knowledge of America. As a matter of fact, by the time *Avanti!* had published Ciccotti's article in 1912 few Italian anarchists and socialists who had settled in the United States shared his optimism about the political opportunities of the American environment. The actual experience of life and work in the United States usually led to a feeling of disenchantment. Many radicals disembarked from Europe to breathe American freedom, but they ended up being stifled by what they perceived as the American police state. They also witnessed the daily, grinding,

exploitation of workers within a capitalistic regime that was uncompromising in the claims made by wage earners.

If Ciccotti urged Italian workers to leave for the United States in 1912, this was not the case of anarcho-syndicalist Edmondo Rossoni. In the same year, writing from San Francisco, he warned the readers of *L'Internazionale*—the organ of the Chamber of Labor in Parma—that the United States was a “free country” merely in theory. As he put it, “Slavery was abolished on paper . . . ! Only for Blacks, however, not for the wretched ‘company of the dead’ of white emigrants” (qtd. in Tinquino 45). Similarly, *Il Proletario* contended in 1920 that white industrial workers were the present-day American slaves (“Un appello”).

Other radicals shared Rossoni’s feelings. In 1908, the Chicago-based and Socialist-oriented weekly *La Parola dei Socialisti* reiterated that curbs on the access of radical newspapers to the postal service and a number of anti-union rulings by federal and state courts had turned the United States into a travesty of the land of freedom (“A proposito di libertà americana”; “Libertà americana”; “Le nostre libertà”). In the same year, anarchist Michele—alias Ludovico—Caminita published a pamphlet that he ironically entitled *Free Country!* The booklet stressed the “bitter disillusionment” awaiting those who disembarked in front of the Statue of Liberty and expected to enjoy the benefits of Republicanism and “equality” among men as spelled out in the United States Declaration of Independence (qtd. in Marazzi 179). Another fellow anarchist Nicola Sacco acknowledged that his own direct experience of the American “republic in operation” had made him “recover from his juvenile and unconscious fondness for the republic in the abstract” (10). His comrade Bartolomeo Vanzetti argued that he had arrived in the United States “at the age of twenty . . . and something of a dreamer,” but by living in this country he had eventually realized “all the brutalities of life, all the injustices, and all the corruption in which humanity struggles, tragically” (18). Vanzetti’s words echoed what an anonymous Italian immigrant from Buffalo had written in the Socialist newspaper *La Fiaccola* in 1909: “What disillusionment . . . Everywhere I see injustice and inequality. . . . this country is worse than Europe” (qtd. in Yans-McLaughlin 89). In the same year, Armando Pellizzari, an organizer for the United Mine Workers of America, similarly argued in *Il Proletario* that “our enchanted dreams from across the ocean become disillusionments as soon as we set foot upon this land” (qtd. in Guglielmo 142).

As such statements demonstrate, downright reality dispelled any rosy scenario Italian radicals may have conceived before moving to the United States. The passing of legislation impairing the freedom of speech and expression during World War I to quell dissent against the country’s participation in the military conflict further undermined the socialists’ and anarchists’ American dream (Vezzosi 170-71). One can reasonably suggest that the Red Scare—namely the crusade of the Wilson administration against the extreme Left in 1919 and 1920, to which both Vanzetti and Sacco were to fall victim a few years later—marked a point of no return for the Italian radicals’ disillusionment with the United States. In

1920, sixteen years after landing at Ellis Island, Tresca gave expression to his disenchantment. In an article published in *Guardia Rossa*, he stated that “the land of Jefferson and Lincoln has but chains, prisons, and torture for whosoever thinks, feels, aspires for a tomorrow of justice, fraternity, liberty” (Tresca, “Il terrore”). In the same year, *Il Proletario* pointed out that “capitalistic America is a real Calvary for the immigrant masses that are forced to seek unthankful hospitality here under the talons of brutal entrepreneurs who are thirsty for gold and violence” (“Al pubblico italiano”). Similarly, in 1924, commenting on the conviction of Sacco and Vanzetti, Socialist and labor leader Gioacchino Artoni observed that, after living in the United States for three decades, he had learned that “this great Republic, too, encapsulates the germ of a tyranny that is as heinous and murderous as a monarchy” (180).

In the face of the federal repression of radicalism in the early postwar years, other nations replaced the United States as models in the eyes of Italian American subversives. In 1920, for instance, *Il Proletario*, looked to the struggle of the German working class and Soviet Russia as sources of inspiration (“Carlo Liebknecht”; “La bandiera rossa”). Tresca, too, briefly fell under the spell of Bolshevism before turning into a staunch anti-Communist at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (Fedele 47, 89, 144; Di Berardo 271-80). *Il Proletario* even urged the United States to get inspiration from Italy, where railroad workers on strike secured a seven-hour workday and higher salaries in 1920 (“Per il 1° Maggio 1920”).

Previous studies have pointed to the radicals’ personal plight in their adoptive country as a major contribution to the smashing of their American dream (Vecoli, “Free Country”). Indeed, besides being subjected to repeated police harassment and brutality, Caminita and Tresca were arrested and threatened with deportation several times, while both Sacco and Vanzetti were tried and sentenced to the death penalty following an extremely controversial trial and highly arguable judicial process (Bencivenni 123; Di Berardo 42, 114, 135, 195-99; Tibaldo). Such harsh forms of mistreatment in the case of the former and grave miscarriage of justice in the case of the latter were obviously inconsistent with the notion of political liberty and democratic principles. As a result, they helped dispel the perception of the United States as the “land of the free” in the eyes of the Italian radical newcomers. Referring to the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, a cartoon on the front page of *Il Martello*, Tresca’s newspaper, epitomized that mood graphically when it depicted an electric chair with a vulture perched on the seatback above a caption reading “the Statue of Liberty in Massachusetts” (“La tragedia è terminata”). On the same occasion, another anarchist weekly, *L’Adunata dei Refrattari*, contended that America’s allegedly free republican institutions had revealed “a heart as hard as anthracite” and “hands covered in blood” (“L’Anarchia”).

Yet it can be reasonably argued that another factor played a major influence on the Italian radicals’ disenchantment with the United States notwithstanding their initial dreams. As a multi-ethnic and multi-racial society, America eventually turned out to be a living proof of the limits of class solidarity. With very few

exceptions, notably the successful walkout of multi-ethnic textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in 1912 (Topp 92-134), Italian immigrants witnessed in the course of many other strikes an ethnic split in the proletariat that pitted the United States-born cohort of Anglo-Saxon extraction against the newcomers from southern and eastern Europe.

The experience of Tresca, one of the leading labor agitators of Italian origin in the United States, is a case in point. The first walkout he organized, a strike against the John B. Stetson Company in Philadelphia in 1905, was unsuccessful because the native skilled hatters of Anglo-Saxon origin, who belonged to the conservative American Federation of Labor, refused to join forces with their unskilled Italian and Jewish coworkers and did not leave the plant (Pernicone 28; Di Berardo 40-41). Likewise, Tresca's efforts to stimulate a replica of the Lawrence textile-workers' strike in 1912 resulted in failure there seven years later after the United States-born employees of the wool industries broke ranks with the immigrant labor force and returned to work, encouraging Portuguese, Greek and Turkish scabs to follow them, while all the other nationality groups endeavored in vain to continue the walkout (Vecoli, "Anthony Capraro"). Not even was Paterson, New Jersey, an exception. This town enjoyed a reputation as "the holy city (the Mecca) of anarchism" (Mombello 7) because it was home to numerous radicals including Gaetano Bresci, who enhanced the fame of the place by going back to Italy and killing King Humbert I in 1900 (Shone 200-01). Yet, in July 1913, a seven-month walkout by the silk workers came to a disastrous end when the United States-born and English-speaking ribbon weavers' representatives left the strike committee controlled by recent immigrants and negotiated a separate agreement with the mill owners (Golin). Tresca was so shocked by such an action that he concluded that class solidarity was almost non-existent in the United States and that the native workers' contempt for their foreign-born comrades seriously undermined the strength and moral fabric of the American labor movement (Di Berardo 91-92).

To Italian wage earners, disrespect was synonymous with ethnic bigotry. Caminita resented being called a "damned dago" (qtd. in Marazzi 186), a derogatory term for Italian Americans. Rossoni observed that "Impoverished Italians are the garbage . . . of American social life and are victims of two-sided exploitation: the more common one by capitalism and the one particular to the fact that they are Italians" ("Per una più grande vita").

Discrimination affected Italian immigrants not only in the workplace but within the labor movement as well. Marginalization in the unions was another aspect of the lack of interethnic class solidarity that newcomers from Italy endured in the United States. As Rossoni argued, when an Italian worker joined a local of an American union, "he was more tolerated than anything else and in every class considered as the last spoke in the wheel" ("Per una Camera del Lavoro").

While Tresca and Giovannitti stuck to radicalism, other Italian immigrant subversives yielded to nationalism and, in some cases, to the appeal of fascism

after they endured ethnic prejudice on the part of their own comrades who were not of Italian extraction in the United States. Rossoni went back to Italy and rose to the position of Mussolini's minister of Agriculture and a member of the Grand Council of Fascism (Cordova). Others—as in Caminita's case—stayed in the United States, but they became enthusiastic supporters of the *Duce* (Royal Consul General). As a result, their actual experience in America not only shattered many radicals' belief in the United States as the "land of the free," it also impinged negatively on their radicalism and faith in class solidarity.

There were obviously exceptions to this trend. For instance, in the coal fields of southern Colorado the United Mine Workers of America welcomed Italian immigrants, who joined forces with fellow strikers of different ethnic extraction, including African Americans, in the walkout that took place between 1903 and 1904 (Notarianni; Brier and Fasce). Sharing labor militancy with members of other national minorities sometimes also encouraged the Americanization of Italian newcomers (Barrett). Italian American workers even adopted the patriotic rhetoric of liberty that had underlain the United States entry into World War I to call for better wages and to condemn violence against strikers in the early postwar years (Fasce 130-31). Yet, scholarly emphasis on the latter dynamics (Cannistraro and Meyer) should not distract attention from the other—albeit non idealistic—outcome of the radicals' pursuit of the American dream.

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Empathy in the Work of Richard Wright

PERRI GIOVANNUCCI

Richard Wright is known for his unflinching portrayals of the violence underlying American racism. To fight against racism, “using words as weapons . . . as one would use a club,” was his avowed intention. In the “Ethics of Living Jim Crow,” Wright describes graphically the painful experiences of his coming of age in the Deep South prior to the Civil Rights era. His was an upbringing defined by violence. Wright speaks of the lynch mobs, mutilations, and beatings that punctuated the oppression of Southern blacks and the threat of such violence to any member of the black community who, in any way, transgressed from the roles assigned to them. But violence, however traumatic, was not the only lesson which shaped the consciousness of the young Wright. On the contrary, he was impressed as much by acts of empathy as by those of cruelty. An enduringly powerful aspect of Wright’s work is, in fact, his own considerable capacity for empathy—his ability to feel it, to portray it and evoke it for his readers.

It should be noted, however, that Wright’s empathy is not sentimental. Indeed the distinction between *empathy* and the related value, *sympathy*, was a central concern for him. His understanding of the distinction concurs with recent studies that essentially view sympathy as an experience in which one regards another, usually a victim, with moralizing pity, or as David Depew puts it: “a smarmy sense of pity and superiority” (qtd. in Greiner). In empathy, on the other hand, “we feel what we believe to be the emotions of others” (Keen 5). Empa-

thy requires one to step metaphorically into another person's shoes, a condition which seeks to avoid the mere assumption of other people's feelings in order to acquire personal kudos in the name of sympathy. As Keen points out, a reader may empathize with terrible villains in a text, without attributing them pity or pardon and yet achieve a constructive, humanistic consciousness. That goal is clearly at the heart of Wright's novel, *Native Son*, conceived with the intention of sweeping sympathy aside and opting for a powerful employment of empathy.

As an author, Wright drew upon his own feelings of both empathy and sympathy, to produce insightful characterizations. He was fascinated by contemporary studies in sociology and psychology and recounts that his writing was at first, "more an attempt at understanding than self-expression." As he matured artistically, however, he feared that his sympathetic depictions had had an unexpected consequence that had certainly not figured in his intentions. His first book, the collection of short stories called *Uncle Tom's Children*, had been a critical success. Its title implied that Wright's generation, unlike the stereotypical "Tom" character portrayed by Harriet Beecher Stowe, would not be passive victims but would fight the violence and injustice they came up against. The book drew widespread praise, including that of Eleanor Roosevelt, who commended it in her column for the *New York World-Telegram*. But as readers piled up in eager expectation, Wright felt he had made "an awfully naïve mistake." His humanizing portrayals did indeed touch people, but they also seemed to offer a merely cathartic experience of dramatic tragedy:

I found that I had written a book which even bankers' daughters could read and weep over and feel good about. I swore to myself that if I ever wrote another book, no one would weep over it; that it would be so hard and deep that they would have to face it without the consolation of tears. ("Born")

Wright feared that the sympathy aroused by *Uncle Tom's Children* was merely self-indulgence on the part of its readers; tears took the place of outrage and defused the call to action against racism. His concern was justified. One reviewer, for example, claimed that the success of the work was, in itself, a cause to refute its thesis:

Freedom, despite Mr. Wright's evidence to the contrary, is not really dead in America. His own recent history as a writer must prove that. (qtd. in Rowley 142)

Such a response was not what Wright had anticipated. But his subsequent novel, *Native Son*, was designed to produce an entirely different effect. He would show his readers, particularly his white readers, that racism was not merely a question of the idea of nemesis formulated by the whites in connection with the blacks in the Southern States, but that it had overarching implications for the nation as a whole. This time the scene would not be Dixie, but the heart of the industrial North. *Native Son*, in fact, was set in Chicago, "the pivot of the Eastern, Western,

Northern, and Southern poles of the nation.” Wright conceived *Native Son* not only as an indictment of racism but as an analysis of the capitalistic American system which nurtured it. Industrial Chicago had been the cradle of Wright’s own ‘Internationalist’ consciousness, acquired through his membership of the John Reed Club and the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPU-SA). In Chicago, Wright observed first and second generations of black migrants from the rural South, like himself, being transformed into an urban proletariat. The mode of production may have been different, Wright found, but the exploitation and disenfranchisement of African Americans was very much the same.

However, just as *Native Son* steers clear of any saccharine notion of sympathy, it also avoids the danger of becoming a sterile ideological tract. The protagonist, Bigger Thomas, is a character created in empathy with the global proletariat, the oppressed masses. But Wright did not intend him to be a working-class hero. Far from it. Instead of depicting him in terms of heroics or dogma, he chooses to focus on the negative implications of Bigger’s subconscious. Bigger’s propensity to simply “blot out” disturbing or confusing thoughts, to repress problems rather than think them out, contributes above all else to his tragic fate. This aspect of the novel, Bigger’s refusal to process his internal conflicts, reflects the author’s interest in psychology. An important Freudian reference resides in the “Medusa’s head” image that haunts Bigger after he murders Mary and decapitates her in an attempt to dispose of her body. The decapitation of Mary, though gruesome, lends itself perfectly to the Freudian concept of sexual guilt and angst, here applied to the realities of racism faced by Bigger. He is assumed by the white characters to have raped Mary, and though he didn’t, he knows that no court or lynch mob will believe him. Such a sexual transgression, even if consensual on the part of the white woman, would lead to the death and mutilation—that is, castration—of the unfortunate black man so accused by white vigilantes. The “Medusa’s head” image invokes the fear of castration, but here in a *literal* rather than a symbolic sense. Freud called it an “apotropaic,” a talisman to ward off the crisis of consciousness. Thus the image has a further extension in Bigger’s predicament. It also encapsulates his refusal to integrate his inner life with his actual material conditions. If he had been able to bring to bear upon his condition the powers of analytical thought, Wright suggests, the story might have turned out differently for him—and for his victims. Thus *Native Son* exhorts one to think critically as the first necessary step on the road to social justice. To *think*, Wright suggests, is inherently to *act*.

Significantly, Bigger’s tendency to “blot out” his thoughts and feelings is less a crisis of class consciousness than one of empathy. That consciousness, “indeed having a self at all—depends upon [one’s] ability to humanize objects, including the object that is [one]self” (Greiner). A large part of his tragedy is his unwillingness to accept friendship, love, and camaraderie. Bigger’s relationship with his “gang” is maintained through intimidation. He is ashamed of his family because he perceives their poverty as weakness. He views his girlfriend Bessie as a mere

sex object. He feels only a sense of debasement and anger when Mary and Jan, however ineptly, try to treat him as a comrade, rather than as a servant. In short, he does not empathize. When Jan, the young white communist fiancé of Mary, whom he meets on his first night as the Dalton family chauffeur, gives him some party pamphlets he accepts them reluctantly. Had he accepted Jan's overture, Bigger might have discovered a language to analyze his oppression, and perhaps begin to free himself. Instead, he keeps the pamphlets, calculatedly stacked in a neat pile but unread, in order to implicate Jan in the murder of Mary Dalton. Bigger has already killed the young white woman, albeit without premeditation. He tries unsuccessfully to burn her body in the basement incinerator of her swank family home but is discovered, hunted down, convicted and ultimately, executed. (A first night on the job could not have gone worse.)

It is only when Bigger's spirits are at their lowest ebb that he begins a transformation in consciousness — not in regard to class but his own humanity. Incarcerated and facing a trial whose verdict — despite the determined defense presented by his principled lawyer — is a foregone conclusion, Bigger begins to analyze his own feelings and thoughts. The transformation is represented when he is visited in his jail cell by the other characters. In a deliberately surreal scene, his cell becomes crowded as one after the other they enter: the local preacher; the defense lawyer; the prosecutor; Mary Dalton's fiancé, Jan; Henry Dalton and his wife; Bigger's mother, his sister Vera and brother Buddy; his "gang," Gus, G. H., and Jack. Though he categorically rejects the preacher's advice to turn to religion, Bigger is moved by Jan's compassion and, especially, by the grief which his family feels over his predicament:

He had lived and acted on the assumption that he was alone, and now he saw that he had not been. What he had done made others suffer. No matter how much he would long for them to forget him, they would not be able to. His family was a part of him, not only in blood, but in spirit (345).

In the world of the novel, jail is an opportunity forced upon Bigger to think about his life. Symbolically, the interior of the cell represents his psyche as he calls to mind those who have affected him and whom he has affected. As Bigger processes his feelings, he searches within himself for the meaning of his life and death. In failing to find it, he arrives, however, at a deeper insight which rescues him from alienation. Bigger recognizes that he longs for the company of someone who understands him and in whom he can confide. For Bigger, who has never felt close to anyone, the longing for a confidant is a revelation. Indeed, he has accessed his "ability to humanize objects, including the object which is [him]self" (Greiner). The person he seeks is Max, precisely because Max had gotten him to talk about himself during his counsel, and in Bigger's words, though Max knew he was a murderer, "[he] treated me like a man" (495). Max had regarded him with empathy, precisely at a time when Bigger — having renounced the sense of power which his crimes falsely led him to experience — was able to receive it, and

more importantly, to *reciprocate* it. It is with irony and pathos, then, that Bigger comes finally to express and embrace his own feelings. He does so when Max visits him for the last time, on the eve of his execution.

The young man's coming to consciousness is—for him—tragically too little, too late. But it offers a strange kind of hope. It is an impersonal one; a hope for humanity rather than for the protagonist. Wright's portrayal of Bigger's inner landscape, in any event, should not be subsumed in the idea of "internal(ized) racism." The latter concept, once prevalent in literary theory, has often overshadowed material considerations about the *source* of such oppression—the importance of which one might stress by calling it, somewhat absurdly, *external* racism. Wright was above all a materialist writer and thinker, even when he pursued more abstract conventions such as psychology or existentialism to make manifest his themes. Though he had broken with the Communists, his views remained basically Marxist. His concern with how oppression impacts the psychology of the oppressed does not endorse the facile judgment of "blaming the victim" inherent in racism. Rather, it is an expression of empathy which would become the cornerstone of the author's own post-communist internationalism.

That "internal racism" has little to do with Bigger's experience is clear from Wright's trenchant portrayal of Northern oppression. He contextualizes the emotional reality of the oppressed within the concrete world of industrial capitalism. Bigger came into his job as chauffeur to the rich white real-estate entrepreneur, Henry Dalton, through the community "relief" agency. The paltry welfare payments which the Thomas family received were contingent upon Bigger accepting the job. It was an act of charity offered by Dalton, Mary's father, who had taken a spurious interest in the plight of impoverished black youth. The opportunity might have led to a better life for Bigger and his family. It seemed to be the vehicle of upward mobility; the American Dream proposes that if one buckles down to good honest work, he will eventually rise to the middle class. But Wright rents the veil of this cherished old myth. Dalton, a respected businessman and philanthropist in his community, is also a slumlord to whom black people like the desperately poor Thomas family pay high rents for their cramped, rat-infested, ghetto kitchenettes. Moreover, Dalton and the other Chicago slumlords form a cartel. They exact exorbitant rents because they themselves have created a housing shortage for African Americans. The South Side neighborhood is the only area where they will accept black tenants; conversely, they rent better, more affordable housing to whites in the rest of the city. The Thomas' situation recalls the confined spaces which Wright himself had shared with his own family in Chicago. More broadly, it reflects the social reality of the South Side then experienced by African Americans. Wright typically encountered young men who shared the same circumstances as Bigger, his fictional protagonist. At the South Side Boys' Club, Wright observed firsthand the effects of environment and, in his words, surveyed numerous versions of "Bigger Thomas":

Here I felt for the first time that the rich folk who were paying my wages did not really give a good goddamn about Bigger, that their kindness was prompted at bottom by a selfish motive. They were paying me to distract Bigger with ping-pong, checkers, swimming, marbles, and baseball in order that he might not roam the streets and harm the valuable white property which adjoined the Black Belt. I am not condemning boys' clubs and ping-pong as such; but these little stopgaps were utterly inadequate to fill up the centuries-long chasm of emptiness which American civilization had created in these Biggers. ("Born")

In *Native Son* Wright shows, with bitter irony and with humanism, but without sentimentality, how Bigger's *lumpen proletarian* environment has predetermined his ending up in jail and his execution. Bigger moves through his young life, reacting to things not of his own making. He does, of course, have the power to choose, though options are few and the difference between them is negligible. The choices he does make are consistently bad. He accepts dire consequences in exchange for the momentary thrill of power he feels in merely exerting his will. Tragically, he finds that his unintentional murder of Mary gives him the most potent sense of empowerment he has ever felt. His deliberate, brutal rape and murder of Bessie Mears, his young black girlfriend, seems to him anti-climactic by comparison. His dominant sentiment is one of misplaced self-fulfillment. The portrayal is understood in the cold light of materialism. In Marxist terms, his feeling is akin to false consciousness. That Bigger's perceived self-fulfillment after the murders is, indeed, *misplaced* is clear through the author's use of empathy. It is the latter which gives a subtle nuance to the story, though the subtlety has been missed by many readers. Bigger's actions are certainly not intended to be seen, as by Jackson, to "legitim[ize] violence as a liberating tool." It certainly didn't liberate Bessie—except from life—and she, after all, was oppressed by racism as much as Bigger. Nor does the novel itself posit "[t]he advocacy of violence as an imperative step in the formation of a self-conscious identity for African-American subjects" (Jackson). Just as *Native Son* is not propaganda for communism, neither is it a militant call to arms. It is a radical, humanist call to empathize with the living reality of racial oppression.

Wright's use of empathy does not let his characters (or his readers) off the hook for the responsibilities they incur. For example Dalton, Mary's father, is not the villain of the piece but neither is he inculpable. The real-estate king is immoral in terms of societal analysis. The establishment of which he is part daily paves the way to prison and the electric chair for the poor and disenfranchised, especially black men. Yet Dalton is also, in a way, to be pitied. He has lost his beloved daughter and must witness the decline of his blind and ailing wife. But yet again, Dalton is not without blame in Mary's death. Hubristically, he has made her murder possible. He has constructed the environment in which "Bigger was born," and arranged the fateful meeting of Mary and her killer. In other words, he is responsible for exploiting the penury of people like Bigger's family who, in turn, provide him with the wherewithal whereby he can afford to make

the apparently philanthropic gesture of plucking up a destitute young man and lodging him under his own ample roof as a pampered household servant. Dalton may see himself as a victim of his own good intentions, but he reveals his agency when he interviews Bigger:

“All right, now,” said Mr. Dalton. “Let’s see what you’ve got here. You live at 3721 Indiana Avenue?”

“Yessuh.”

Mr. Dalton paused, frowned, and looked up at the ceiling.

“What kind of a building is that over there?”

“You mean where I live, suh?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, it’s just an old building.”

“Where do you pay rent?”

“Down on Thirty-first Street.”

“To the South Side Real Estate Company?”

“Yessuh.”

Bigger wondered what all these questions could mean; he had heard that Mr. Dalton owned the South Side Real Estate Company, but he was not sure.

“How much rent do you pay?”

“Eight dollars a week.”

“For how many rooms?”

“We just got one, suh.”

“I see...”. (54-55)

It is significant of the slumlord’s negligence that Dalton must pause in order to call to mind the building in question. He has likely never seen it for himself, though he would have known that it was rundown and overcrowded. Like Bigger, Dalton too has the ability to “blot out” disturbing thoughts. He also allows himself the privilege of remaining ignorant of the Thomases’ poverty. Yet were the family to fall behind in their rent, the apparatus of eviction would automatically come into effect, and the Thomases would find themselves in the position of many of the poor during the Depression: out on the street. In fact, after Bigger’s indictment, the Thomas family is asked to move from their Indiana Avenue kitchenette. When Dalton learns of this from Bigger’s mother, he promises he will “tell them not to make you move” (349). He also mentions that he has just sent a dozen ping-pong tables to the South Side Boys’ Club.

Apart from its compelling storyline, *Native Son* is thought-provoking because of its synthesis of materialism and psychoanalysis, two of Wright’s main areas of interest. Notably, in his depiction of Dalton’s own tangential implication in Mary’s murder, Wright revises a basic Marxist tenet—that capitalism contains the seeds of its own destruction. In this case, white racism itself has generated the death of Mary who, as Bigger knows, is not only considered the flower of her generation, but the representation of all that her society cherishes—“a white girl they loved and regarded as their symbol of beauty” (188). Furthermore, with the death of Mary, Dalton’s only child, the real-estate king will have no heir to whom

to pass on his fortune, his business, or his name. Dalton is bereft in many ways; his wife may be literally blind, but he has been blind-sided by his own apparently sincere belief in the myths of capitalism. Blindness is a recurring theme in the novel, not least for its psychoanalytic associations with castration (like the “Medusa’s head” image), but importantly as a rhetorical externalization of “turning a blind eye.” Wright thus accomplishes in *Native Son* the aim he had set himself after what was to his mind, the too complacent reception of *Uncle Tom’s Children*. He does not jerk the tears of readers but shakes them into a stark realization that the violence—inherent and actual—of white racism would inevitably turn upon its progenitors.

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3. Radicalism, Emancipation, and Revolution

The Columbiad: Slavery, Imperialism and the Founding Fathers’ “State of Fantasy”

ENRICO BOTTA

Fate in his eye and empire on his arm
Joel Barlow, *The Columbiad* V. 594

I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that
the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks
believe in Greek exceptionalism
President Obama (qtd. in Kirchick)

The epic poem *The Columbiad*—a seminal text on American civilization, published by Joel Barlow in 1807—narrates the birth and growth of the United States, defines its history and ideology, and delineates its imperialistic ambitions and objectives. The text thus gives voice to the Founding Fathers’ “state of fantasy,” that is—in Donald Pease’s words—“the dominant structure of desire out of which U.S. citizens imagined their national identity” (Pease, *New American Exceptionalism* 1-2). Pease’s idea of a state of fantasy as an instrument that policymakers use to authorize and legitimate their policies elucidates the encompassing and trans-historical “Janus-face of American exceptionalism” (Pease, *New American Exceptionalism* 141). This theory has characterized the country since its founding phase and was expressed in imaginative terms in epic literature.

By concentrating on Book VIII of *The Columbiad*, this essay focuses on the section wherein Atlas (the Guardian Genius of Africa) and Hesper (the Genius of America) discuss slavery and emancipation in the United States in the light of American empire-building and exceptionalism. The article thus aims at backdating the idea of “state of fantasy” to the end of the eighteenth century in order to interpret the friction between the imperialistic identity of the new country and attempts at social and political emancipation. Barlow’s text is a case in point since epic literature represents a primary tool for considering the foundation and definition of the United States as an ongoing process strictly interconnected with the country’s cultural, political, and economic expansion. The fact remains, however, that expansion entails violence, suppression, and failed attempts at emancipation.

The patriotic texts written between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century—of which the most representative works are Timothy Dwight’s *The Conquest of Canaan* (1785) and Joel Barlow’s *The Columbiad* (1807)—defined in literary terms the principles of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” However, they also celebrated the transnational and expansionistic dimension of the new country by re-elaborating the classical theory of the *translatio studii et imperii*. By combining new American themes and values and old European forms and styles, the New World epos aimed at recounting the foundation and aspirations of the United States in imperialistic terms.

The American poet and politician Joel Barlow (1754-1812) was a member of the “Connecticut Wits,” a group of intellectuals that was based in Yale University and that flourished in the seventeen-eighties and seventeen-nineties.¹ Like many other American poets of the Early Republic, Barlow aspired to write a great epos in order to consecrate their ancestors’ undertakings and ensure a heroic past to the nation by emulating the works of Homer and Virgil. He claimed that if epic represented the apex of the European literary tradition, an American epos would assert the cultural development of the United States and lay the foundation for its future expansion. In an attempt to place Barlow and his works within the context of American (epic) poetry, Roy Harvey Pearce writes:

Barlow was not alone in his time in wanting an American epic. But he is the only poet (or would-be poet) before Whitman who had enough conviction and ability to run the risks involved in striving to use traditional means and forms to break away from tradition itself (Pearce 68-69).

In 1807 Barlow published *The Columbiad*, which is an enlarged and revised edition in ten books of his earlier philosophical poem *The Vision of Columbus* (1787).²

1 The “Connecticut Wits” were conservative federalists who attacked their political opponents in satirical verses. They also tried to write a distinctive American epic poem and Timothy Dwight’s *The Conquest of Canaan* (1785) is commonly considered as the first attempt in this direction.

2 In the Preface, Barlow asserts, “*The Columbiad* is a patriotic poem [whose] subject is national and historical” (Barlow 375). Compared with the philosophical dimension of *The Vision of*

By giving a panoramic account of American history—from the appearance of the first natives to the vision of a global world led by the United States—*The Columbiad* is a patriotic epic poem in support of Jeffersonian democratic idealism. In the text, Barlow sets out to prove that the discovery of America has been beneficial to mankind and that American history is a crucial stage in human progress toward a world of peace and harmony. The poem, in fact, hinges on the attempt by Hesper—the guardian spirit of the West and Barlow’s literary *alter ego*—to console Columbus, by then old, sick and imprisoned. Hesper attains this by means of two strategies: by giving Columbus a lofty vision of the New World he had discovered, and by describing to him the history of the Western world up to the early nineteenth century. According to the author, the poetic object of the action aims to relieve Columbus’s afflicted soul by showing him how his efforts, although not recognized by his contemporaries, have not been in vain: indeed, he is shown to have paved the way to civilization and mankind’s happiness. On the other hand, the real object of the poem is more far-reaching and, in Barlow’s opinion, concerns the attempt to instill the love of freedom of thought and remove the passion for violence and war by concentrating on “the future progress of society and the civilization of states” (Barlow 382).³

In Book VIII, after talking about the victorious battles of the American Revolution, and before envisaging the constitution of a global empire led by the United States, the text relates how Atlas, the genius of Africa, “denounces to Hesper the crimes of his people in the slavery of the Africans” (Barlow 672). Hesper and Atlas are two classical and mythological Titans who link ideologically and culturally the epic history of the United States with the heroic achievements of the earlier European civilizations.

In the European tradition, Hesperia represents the West, in which Aeneas, instructed by Apollo, will found the second Troy; in *The Columbiad*, Hesperia becomes the symbol of the shift of cultural and imperial power to the American shores. Following the thesis of the *translatio studii et imperii*, Hesper, the son of the

Columbus, *The Columbiad* shows Barlow’s new literary purpose to write an epic text which is evident in the very title. In fact, it evokes Homer’s and Virgil’s epics, the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*. The initial eight-line invocation to “Almighty Freedom” (l. 23) is a further example of the epic intention of *The Columbiad*: while it is a significant re-elaboration of the classical *topos*, an epic invocation is completely absent in *The Vision of Columbus*.

³ According to the text, morality, a good form of government and the hope for permanent peace must be based on the republican principles represented by the new American nation. Barlow recognized that the values of peace, progress, and freedom, which had been expressed in the Declaration of Independence, contrasted with those described and exalted in the epics of the past. In particular, war—a key theme of the epic tradition—was conceived as the symbol of the tyrannies of the Old World by a nation whose identity hinged on the virtues of agriculture, commerce and democracy. This notwithstanding, Barlow was convinced that the future of his country was tied to military conflicts. As suggested by Giorgio Mariani, *The Columbiad* takes into consideration war episodes and the characters involved, thereby reacting against a widespread tendency of eighteenth and nineteenth century American culture to bypass or remove war and violence from literary texts (Mariani 70).

Sun, becomes the guardian of the western continent. Barlow's Atlas—the guardian genius of Africa—is shaped on the brother African Titan Adamastor. Adamastor is “a personification of the Cape of Good Hope and the guardian of the Southern gateway of Africa” in Camões's *The Lusiads* (*Os Lusíadas*)—a text Barlow read in the English translation of William Mickle (Quint 128). Both Adamastor and Atlas foretell the extermination of a race, but—as noted by Steven Blakemore—if the former condemns Portuguese imperialism, the latter reflects on the deep contradiction within the American republic represented by the practice of slavery (233).

Book VIII is wedged between the celebration of the American heroes of the War of Independence and the optimistic celebration of an international and everlasting peace. In that passage, *The Columbiad* introduces a new theme and considers how slavery could represent the greatest threat to the future of the republic. These are Atlas's first condemnatory words:

Enslave my tribes! what, half mankind imban?,
Then read, expound, enforce the rights of man! (VIII. 223-24)
... Enslave my tribes! and think, with dumb disdain
To scape this arm and prove my vengeance vain! (VIII. 245-46)

Atlas declares that the concept of freedom in the Republic and the practice of slavery cannot coexist, and, as Adamastor did, he forecasts that disaster will ensue as a result of that practice in America: Africa takes its vengeance when Americans find themselves the prisoners and slaves of Barbary pirates. If the new American nation does not forego slaveholding—Atlas goes on—a cataclysm will punish it and its inhabitants:

Nor shall these pangs atone the nation's crime;
Far heavier vengeance, in the march of time,
Attends them still; if still they dare debase
And hold inthrall'd the millions of my race;
A vengeance that shall shake the world's deep frame,
That heaven abhors and hell might shrink to name. (VIII. 271-76)

Nature itself rises up in hatred against the American institution of slavery. As an intellectual of the Enlightenment age, however, Barlow distances himself and his readers from the curse of the Titan and his dire prophecy:

Fathers and friends, I know the boding fears
Of angry genii and of rending spheres
Assail not souls like yours; whom science bright
Thro shadowy nature leads with surer light. (VIII. 309-12)

Barlow is conscious that he himself and “You [the reader] scorn the Titan's threat” (VIII. 319), but—as suggested by David Quint in his *Epic and Empire*—he is “anxious about the continuity of a kind of classical epic awe in a modern era increasingly skeptical toward poetic fictions, [and] vest[s] that awe in personifications

of the victimized” (130). In an age of reason and science, “Barlow’s Atlas launches another epic curse on the part of the victims of history, promising retribution on their oppressors” (130).

If the spirit of Enlightenment sought to dominate nature and, as part of nature, other human beings, nature might take a tremendous revenge. From this perspective, Atlas’s prophetic curse calls into question the United States leadership in a world empire. The Titan recommends ending slavery:

Complete their triumph, fix their firm abode,
Purge all privations from your liberal code,
Restore their souls to men, give earth repose
And save your sons from slavery, wars and woes. (VIII. 391-94)

According to Richard Buel, Barlow believed that the United States had to purge itself of the crime of slavery by eliminating both slaves and masters, if it wanted to prevent its republican experiment from failing. In addition, abolition would establish a solid foundation for the emerging empire of liberty (Buel 291):

Based on its rock of right your empire lies,
On walls of wisdom let the fabric rise;
Preserve your principles, their force unfold,
Let nations prove them and let kings behold. (VIII. 395-98)

In the last books of *The Columbiad*, the poet envisions a world globalized by the unification of all languages (or English as an international language), the establishment of a general congress with representatives of all the nations (a congress which inevitably calls to mind the United Nations), and the achievement of universal peace. Furthermore, Barlow seems to foresee the cultural, political, and economic development of the Western and Eastern hemispheres as dependent on free trade in goods and ideas (globalization). Art, science, and technology will promote freedom, democracy and commerce, and will define the ideological, commercial, and political coordinates of the new country, but also of a world that the author already envisages as a union of confederations.

Since, in the poet’s view, the principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence would provide the foundations of this transnational project, the United States would play the main role in its realization. Obviously, Barlow’s utopian world rests on shadowy notions and misunderstandings, violence and oppression, conquerors and the conquered. The poet shares Atlas’ views and describes slavery as a barbaric and uncivil practice contrasting with the democratic principles of the New World. For all that, it supports the establishment of a United States imperialistic “state of fantasy” and considers the exploitation of Africans — as well as the conquest of other civilizations — an essential tool for its achievement.

Despite the fact that the United States had established its political independence by waging war against the British Empire, the Founding Fathers immediately began to imagine the potential value of a mighty empire in the New World.

In the early days, the colonies and, later, the Republic had to expand because their objective was the construction of a continental empire in North America. In line with the theory of the *translatio studii et imperii*, the idea of a United States empire was supported by the belief that “civilization was moving westward, and that the United States would be the next (and perhaps last) great incarnation of civilization” (Streeby 96). United States empire-builders viewed themselves as the heirs of the Roman, the British, and the Spanish empires, but also differentiated the newborn republic by considering that “exceptional American conditions would prevent the United States from sharing the fate of other empires . . .” (Streeby 96).⁴

As an Early Republic politician and man of letters, Joel Barlow synthesized how the dominant political elite theorized such an imperialistic image of the United States. As a national narrative, *The Columbiad* not only defined the United States cultural and ideological identity, and its global role in a trans-national and trans-historical perspective, but it also outlined the foundation of a United States empire. From its very first experiments, the New World epos aimed at delineating the multilayered and continuous attempts of American civilization to define itself through the further conquest of other civilizations, and to conquer other civilizations through the further definition of itself. By forecasting the history of the United States as the global and definitive empire, *The Columbiad*, both in form and ideologically, re-elaborated the previous western epic models, outlining the national aspirations and the international authority of the United States in imperialistic terms.⁵

In line with the Founding Fathers’ imperialistic ideology, these patriotic texts expressed the belief that the new country would not only imitate the development of the European nations, but would even actually surpass it. Yet, the large-scale structure of epic narratives—the level on which they delineate the birth and expansion of the United States—overtakes and somehow explodes United States exceptionality doctrines.

From both a literary and ideological point of view, the American exceptionality celebrated by these works of art in defining and describing the foundations and ambitions of the country echoed the various exceptionalities which had characterized Homer’s Greeks, Virgil’s Romans, Dante’s Italians, or Camões’s Portuguese:⁶

4 As argued by Amy Kaplan, an American studies critique of United States empire can make evident “how U.S. interventions have worked from the perspective of comparative imperialisms, in relation to other historical changes and movements across the globe” (Kaplan, “Violent Belongings” 6). American imperialism is thus not only the economic, military, and cultural influence of the United States on foreign countries, but also the strategy of obtaining and ruling colonies, which has already characterized the European empires.

5 In *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, Kaplan states “imperialism has been simultaneously formative and disavowed in the foundational discourse of America studies” (Kaplan, “Left Alone” 5).

6 In the process, the United States epos found its originality—neither in the whole acceptance, nor in its complete rejection, but—in the ambition to modify and amplify the classical and European tradition by re-elaborating its constitutive elements.

the United States imperial ambition was “normalized” within a broader framework. Furthermore, by re-considering the darkest episodes in United States history—such as slavery or the Indian removal programs—epic literature narrated the development of the American civilization in analytical, and often critical, terms.

From this perspective, the originality of Barlow’s project emerges within a transatlantic literary framework. As suggested by David Quint, *The Columbiad* has to be considered in relation to the dichotomy between the “imperial” epic and the “republican” epic. The former is the linear and uninterrupted narrative of the winners’ history that justifies the empire and conquest. The latter is the suspended and episodic narrative of the losers that exalts their resistance to imperialist intentions (Quint 126-27). *The Columbiad* finds its place in an intermediate position inside Quint’s dichotomy: while it shares the ideology of Republican epics, it continues to have the linear teleological structure of imperial texts. In an attempt to find a place within the European epic tradition, Barlow compares himself in the Preface to Homer and Virgil—who are praised for their style but criticized for their morality—and also to Lucanus—who, on the contrary, is praised for his morality but criticized for his style. While attempting to emulate the classic models, Barlow thought they should be re-dimensioned from a moral point of view. As regards the works of Homer, Virgil, and Lucanus, Barlow claims that the theme of *The Columbiad* is much more important and imposing. To the author’s mind, the poem could be considered the founding text of the new American national and cultural identity.⁷

Barlow manipulated the models of the past and, for the first time in the Western literary tradition, constructed an epic in which the Americans, initially subjugated, rebel against the invaders and emerge triumphant. Thus, *The Columbiad* narrates the development of the United States and delineates its imperialistic aspirations. Although in the text the author presents benignly the country’s history, ideology and objectives, yet, he has to see beyond them on behalf of the empire enterprise. United States imperialism—according to Pease—is “a complex and interdependent relationship with hegemonic as well as counterhegemonic modalities of coercion and resistance,” which has contributed to define a “monocultural image of the national identity predicated on the active suppression of the specificity of race, class, and gender relations” (Pease, “New Perspectives” 23).⁸ Since the days of the early republic, imperialism has been producing

7 This aim is reached through the two structural objects of the poem, which are, according to Barlow: “the *poetical* object”—that is “the fictitious design of the action”—and “the *moral* object”—that is “the real design of the poem” (Barlow 377). In the Preface, Barlow constantly stresses the importance of the moral sphere of its poem in relation to the Western epic tradition.

8 Kaplan interweaves the “domestic” and the “foreign” dimensions of American history in order to demonstrate how imperialism—from the United States-Mexico War of 1848 to the World War I—has profoundly influenced and shaped American social relations and cultural productions (Kaplan, *Anarchy of Empire*).

ideological, cultural, as well as political, social, and economic deadlocks that the United States is still trying to break. Atlas's dream of the Africans' emancipation was engrained in the very principles of the Declaration of Independence; at the same time, the Titan's aspiration had to be domesticated, if not repressed, by a republic which aspired to transform itself into an empire shaped, for the most part, on European models.

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African American Radicals and Revolutionary Cuba from 1959 until the Black Power Years

ALBERTO BENVENUTI

This paper offers a concise examination of the political and cultural exchanges between various African American radicals and Fidel Castro's Cuba in the sixties and seventies.

The relations between the radical wing of the black freedom movement and revolutionary Cuba arose at a crucial time for non-white people in the United States and around the world. On the one hand, the civil rights protests were gaining momentum as a consequence of the success of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and of the nation-wide reactions to the Little Rock crisis; on the other hand, the 1955 Bandung Conference marked the beginning of the non-alignment movement, which profoundly affected African Americans. Many historians have already shown that in the aftermath of the Second world war, the black freedom movement in the United States and the decolonization process in the Third World were strictly tied up with "the rise of the dark races" that W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey and Hubert Harrison had predicted decades before (Borstelmann; Plummer; Bush). Following the path of this historiography, the relations between African Americans and revolutionary Cuba need to be studied within the historical context of decolonization.

Even though the wars of independence in the Third World attracted much attention among African Americans, Castro's rebels did not immediately arouse the interest of black Americans during the years of the guerrilla war in the Sierra

Maestra (1956-58), where they were fighting against the United States-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista. This was probably due to the fact that since the end of the thirties Colonel Batista, who was a mulatto, had been reported by the popular and influential black newspaper *New York Amsterdam News* as a civil rights champion, and his presidency in the fifties was considered an important achievement for the Afro-Cuban population (“Discrimination”; “Cuban President”). Despite this initial lack of interest, when Castro’s rebels defeated the Batista army, the black press in the United States welcomed his revolution, and revolutionary Cuba soon became an inspiration for many African Americans. This came about for at least four reasons. The first one is that the revolutionaries included whites, blacks and mulattos and they promoted racial integration. The Afro-Cuban Juan Almeida Bosque, for example, was one of the foremost generals of the rebel army. The second one is that many African Americans considered the Cuban revolution as a war of independence from the interference of the United States. As a matter of fact, Fidel Castro had immediately stated that revolutionary Cuba refuted its political and economical dependence on the United States. The third reason is that only two months after the revolution, the Cuban leader publicly announced that one of the principal aims of the new government was to eradicate segregation and racism from Cuban society.¹ Finally, the Cuban revolution was a Third World revolution and Castro’s Cuba was aligned with the movements of the Afro-Asian countries that had emerged after the Bandung Conference (Castro 118).

In January 1959, only a few days after the success of the revolution, black congressman Adam Clayton Powell—who at the time supported Fidel Castro—flew to Havana to discuss with the Cuban leader the future relations between the United States and Cuba and about the killings of *batistianos*, which were attracting adverse publicity from the mainstream American press (“Adam Powell”). Powell, who was positively impressed by Castro during their meetings, was assured by the latter that the revolution was nationalist-oriented and non-communist and that the Cubans wanted to maintain good relations with Washington. Powell’s encounters with Castro did not, however, result in the success of the attempt made by the black congressman to organize a meeting between the *líder máximo* and president Dwight Eisenhower (Powell 196).

Despite the fact that the black press unanimously welcomed the Cuban revolution, at the beginning of 1960 several civil rights leaders distanced themselves from the Castro government. Indeed, even though McCarthyism was over, a critical attitude toward United States foreign policy was often associated with “un-Americanism”, and several black organizations—such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)—shared Washington’s claim that Castro was a pro-Soviet Communist (Lissner; Cruse, “Cuba”). In this sense, the case of the African American former heavy weight boxing champion

¹ Racial segregation in Cuba was not institutionalized as it was in the South of the United States, however there were forms of racial segregations in some public areas and in the job sector before the revolution. De la Fuente 18.

Joe Louis was a case in point. In December 1959 Louis met with Castro in Havana to attend the celebration of the first anniversary of the revolution. As a result of that meeting, Louis became instrumental in a campaign to promote African American tourism in Cuba and the Cuban government planned to spend 287 thousand dollars on advertisement in the African American press (“Racial Integration”; “Register Joe”). When Louis returned to the United States, he was strongly criticized by the mainstream press which accused the former boxing champion of backing a communist government (“Joe Louis”; “Louis Works”). As a consequence of the media campaign against him, Louis decided to break his agreement with the Cuban government.

The prudent stance adopted by many civil rights leaders was not shared by black radicals in the North and East Coast urban areas, who continued to praise Fidel Castro, Ernesto Guevara and the revolution. In Harlem, for example, pro-Cuba sentiments were particularly widespread among African American nationalists and several of them joined a multiracial organization called the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC), which had its headquarters in Manhattan (Mealy). Despite the fact that the initial goal of the committee was not radical—its activists wanted “to speak the truth about the revolution” and to promote a “good neighbor policy” toward Cuba—the FPCC was immediately considered by United States institutions and media as a communist inspired organization (Fair Play; “How the Fair Play”).

In order to establish good relations with the FPCC, in the summer of 1960 Castro invited some black delegates to attend the July 26 celebrations. Among those who accepted the invitation were several important black radicals who later inspired the ideology of the Black Power Movement such as Robert Williams, Harold Cruse, John Henrik Clarke, LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) and Julian Mayfield. When the delegates arrived in Havana, they were welcomed by Castro and Juan Almeida Bosque and during the event they shared the stage with the Cuban leader. After their Cuban trip, they were even more convinced that the revolution was promoting racial equality and became vocal in the defense of the Cuban government (Cruse, “The American Negro”; Jones).

In September 1960 the fifteenth United Nations General Assembly functioned as the “stage” for the historic meeting between Fidel Castro and the Nation of Islam rising star Malcolm X. When Castro and the Cuban delegation arrived in Manhattan on September 18, several Mid-town hotels refused to offer them accommodation because they did not want to host a delegation from a “hostile” country. After hours of tension—which included Castro’s threat to camp in Central Park—the Cubans gladly accepted the invitation of Malcolm X to stay at the Theresa hotel in Harlem. On his arrival in the black ghetto, Castro was welcomed by thousands of people who felt that they were more fairly represented by him, a Third World leader, than by their own government. Moments after his arrival at the Theresa, Fidel received Malcolm X in his room (Frankel). During the half hour long meeting, the two leaders discussed the black struggle in the United

States, the Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba (who was under arrest after winning the Congolese elections in May 1960) and Castro's intention to focus his speech at the General Assembly on decolonization and the Third World (Matthews; Gleijeses). The meeting between Castro and the most prominent leader of the black militants had a highly symbolical meaning and ratified the alliance between black radicalism and revolutionary Cuba.

Some months later, in April 1961, in response to the United States-sponsored invasion of the Bay of Pigs, a group of thirty African American intellectuals and activists—sponsored by the FPCC—wrote a document entitled “A Declaration of Conscience by Afro-Americans” (“Declaration”). The authors (among them W. E. B. Du Bois) denounced the government of the United States for adopting a neo-colonial attitude toward Cuba and a paternalistic attitude toward the Third World in general. They argued that the political and social forces which were reluctant to recognize civil and human rights for black Americans were the same forces that had supported the proposed invasion of the island.

One of the most illuminating examples of the kind of dynamics operating between black radicalism and revolutionary Cuba in the early sixties was embodied by Robert Williams. In October 1961 Williams, a former NAACP activist and self-defense advocate, decided to go into exile in Cuba after being (wrongly) accused of kidnapping a white couple in Monroe, North Carolina (Williams, *Negroes*). At the time of his arrival in Cuba, Williams was already renowned on the island and he was welcomed by both Castro and Ernesto Guevara. The Cuban government also allowed Williams to broadcast on a radio station (Radio Free Dixie) and to publish a newsletter (*The Crusader*), which became two important channels for the diffusion of black internationalism across the United States. Despite the fact that Williams maintained good relations with Castro and Guevara, many Cuban communists ostracized his work. The communists—who were gaining influence within the Cuban government as a consequence of the alliance between Cuba and the Soviet Union—feared that Williams, who was a non-communist black revolutionary, would inspire separatist sentiments among Afro-Cubans, in particular in the Oriente province, which had a numerous black population. Moreover, the Cuban communists believed that the only possible revolution was a communist proletarian (and multiracial) revolution: with the defeat of capitalism—they argued—racial problems would disappear (Cohen). The ideological incompatibility between Williams' revolutionary and separatist approach and the Cuban communists was the main reason why Williams left Cuba and moved to China in 1966.

Most of the black radicals who supported the Cuban revolution in the sixties praised Guevara's *foquismo* and considered a guerrilla strategy as a possible response to daily racial oppression (Williams, “USA”; Williams, “USA” part II). Guevara, as some historians have argued, was sympathetic to African American radical ideologies and he also gave his personal support to the struggle of Malcolm X during his 1964 trip to New York, when he represented Cuba in the Gen-

eral Assembly (X 102). Hence, when Guevara left Cuba in 1965, African American militants lost their most enthusiastic supporter within the Castro government: from that time on, only those who declared themselves socialists or communists had relations with Cuba (with the important exception of Stokely Carmichael in 1967).

During the Black Power Movement, the African American organization that established the most significant relations with Cuba was the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP). The BPP was a radical Marxist organization which was inspired by the Cuban revolution and Guevara's *foquismo*. Huey P. Newton, co-founder with Bobby Seale of the BPP, wrote in his autobiography: "For Castro guerrilla warfare was a good form of propaganda. Walking armed through Richmond was our propaganda" (*Revolutionary Suicide* 153). For many Black Panthers Cuba symbolized a perfect example of how a socialist system could succeed in offering equal opportunities to all its citizens (Newton, "Message of Solidarity"). Socialist Cuba also became a safe place for those panthers who wanted to escape from the illegal activities of John Edgar Hoover's Counter Intelligence Program, and starting from 1967-68 dozens of BPP members went into exile in Cuba. Among the African Americans in exile in Cuba there were some of the most prominent leaders of the Black Power Movement such as Eldridge Cleaver, Huey P. Newton and Assata Shakur. Cleaver came to Cuba in 1968 to avoid arrest and spent eight months on the island. His story is particularly interesting because, as the Minister of Information of the BPP, he had high expectations from the alliance with the Cuban government: he hoped that the Cubans would organize a military camp for the training of African American revolutionaries. The project failed because the Cubans decided not to transform their political support for the African American liberation struggle into a military one (in particular because of the international implications of such a choice) (Cleaver, "On Exile"; Cleaver "Slow Boat"; Reitan 91-94). Huey P. Newton went into exile in Cuba in 1974 after being charged with the murder of a prostitute in Oakland. Even though Newton withdrew himself from public life in the town of Santa Clara, he continued to lead the BPP through his daily telephone conversations with the new leader of the organization Elaine Brown (Walker; Brent 222-40). Assata Shakur, a former BPP militant and Black Liberation Army member, also escaped from prison in 1979 and reached Cuba five years later, in 1984, when she was given political asylum by the Castro government (Shakur 266-74).

During the Black Power struggle, other activists went to Cuba as official guests of Fidel Castro. This was the case of the Black Power advocate Stokely Carmichael, who was the only non-communist African American to receive an official invitation by the Cuban government after 1965. In July 1967 Carmichael attended the Organization of Latin American Solidarity Conference, an international meeting which celebrated Guevara and praised Guevara's activities as a source of inspiration for Third World revolutionaries—and also for Black Power advocates ("Envia"; Meluzá). Finally, the communist party member and black freedom fighter

Angela Davis toured the island after being released from jail in 1972 to demonstrate her solidarity with the revolution. Her trip to Cuba, where the previous year hundreds of thousands of people had supported the “Free Angela Davis” campaign, was a huge success and helped to consecrate Davis as one of the most prominent figures of the black freedom movement worldwide (“Ofrecen”; Pita).

CONCLUSION

As this short paper has shown, many black radicals in the early sixties considered the Cuban revolution as a Third World revolution which fought against United States “imperialism” on the American continent. On the one hand, these black militants embraced ethnic *nationalism* at home, but on the other hand, they also supported Third World *internationalism* abroad. John Henrik Clarke called this group of black intellectuals “new Afro-American nationalists.” Some historians have argued that the Black Power protests took their inspiration from the ideologies of early black (inter)nationalists such as Robert Williams, Harold Cruse, LeRoi Jones and Malcolm X, and that the movement grew alongside the civil rights struggle (Woodard; Joseph). Following the path of this historiography, I would argue that the 1959 Cuban revolution was crucial in the development of several internationalist ideologies—e.g. socialism, third-world-ism, anti-imperialism—which characterized, influenced and determined the growth of the Black Power movement at the beginning of the sixties.

If we consider a brief outline of African American relations with revolutionary Cuba, it is undeniable that these relations led to important consequences for both sides. Fidel Castro, by endorsing the African American protest, focused the attention of the Third World on the Achilles’ heel of the United States—racial discrimination—and achieved an important propaganda victory at a time when the Cold War was primarily a war of propaganda. This was particularly evident during the United Nations General Assemblies of 1960 and 1964, when Fidel Castro and Ernesto Guevara accused the United States of discriminating against their African American citizens. As a result of his alliance with black-American radicalism, Castro also strengthened his position among Afro-Cubans, who considered the *líder máximo* not only as the liberator of Cuba, but also as an advocate of black people’s rights worldwide. In addition, the alliance with black America and the striking difference between the United States regime of racial segregation and the Cuban trans-racial society, enabled Castro to promote a positive image of Cuba in the Third World, which certainly had an impact on Cuba’s relations with several African countries.

For many African Americans, the Cuban revolution proved that the racial problem could be solved by top-down decisions which even if they did not immediately end racial discrimination, at least ensured equal rights for all American citizens. The alliance with Cuba also enabled many black radicals to internation-

alize their struggle by linking the African American quest for human rights to the worldwide struggle of the “dark races” against imperialism and colonialism. Thanks to their alliance with the Cuban government, several black Americans (e.g. Eldridge Cleaver, Robert Williams, and Stokely Carmichael) met and collaborated with Third World leaders: Cuba represented, for some of them, a “bridge” between Africa and Asia. Moreover, the relations between African Americans and Cuba attracted the attention of the Third World to United States racial problems and exerted pressure on the civil rights agendas of several American presidents. (e.g. Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson). Finally, for dozens of African Americans Cuba provided a safe haven from COINTELPRO at a time when the illegal activities of Hoover’s organization were a major cause of the undermining of most of the black power organizations.

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Dave Dellinger's Political Legacy to Occupy Wall Street

CRISTINA SCATAMACCHIA

Recently historians have shown a growing interest in a small group of Christian radical pacifists, who became conscientious objectors during World War II, opposed the Cold War and participated in the civil rights movement as well as in the movement against the war in Vietnam (Tracy; Bennett; Mollin). These longtime nonviolent activists were a small but significant minority, because they kept political dissent alive in the forties and fifties when liberal consensus prevailed, bridging the gap between the Old Left and the New Left. Dave Dellinger was one of these activists and, as a leader of the antiwar movement, he played a crucial role in its evolution. He continued to be politically active throughout the eighties and nineties when dissent was virtually non-existent in American society, until his death in 2004 at the age of eighty-eight. His lifelong commitment eased the transition to Occupy Wall Street and provided ongoing continuity among radical movements.

This paper outlines and evaluates the influence that Dellinger exerted upon subsequent generations of protestors, from the New Left to Occupy Wall Street. In the latter case, it was an indirect influence because Dellinger died before the beginning of the movement in 2011 and many young activists did not know who he was, even though they pursued the same political goals and strategies. In fact Dellinger was an influential champion of twentieth-century radicalism and is still revered by older activists, who have created a website, as well as an Essay

Contest and an annual “David Dellinger Lecture on Nonviolence” to honor his memory and keep it alive (*Official Dave Dellinger Website*; “Announcing”). But, as his biographer Andrew E. Hunt has pointed out, he was a rather obscure public figure, except during a brief period of national celebrity thanks to his role in the 1969 Chicago Conspiracy Trial (279). After his “fifteen minutes of fame” he was forgotten by the general public and continued to labor in obscurity for the rest of his life (Dellinger 414).

However, while most activists of Occupy Wall Street did not know who Dellinger was, a few of them did know him, admired his long-standing activism and were aware of the striking similarity between his political standpoint and their own forms of protest. In 2012 some of these young militants started posting on the web favorable comments about him: for example, Michael Albert considered Dellinger as “someone whose work is worth revisiting today” and another activist wrote that “David Dellinger was one of my heroes” (Albert; “Nonviolence, Peace, and War”). They urged their friends to read up on his life and his writings.” As a result, Dellinger, along with Gandhi, Thoreau and Muste, became a source of inspiration for some of Occupy Wall Street protestors, but his influence upon the movement continued to be mostly indirect, because those who eventually came to admire him represented a very small minority. Therefore, although it cannot be claimed that Dellinger exerted a direct influence on Occupy Wall Street, neither can it be denied that he anticipated, inspired and, in some cases, personally influenced the young activists of the new wave of protest.

The trajectory of Dellinger’s life runs parallel to that of Occupy Wall Street. From its inception in September 2011 the movement succeeded in attracting the attention of the media by launching a series of anti-establishment demonstrations that consolidated the idea of ninety-nine percent versus one percent, but was subsequently unable to articulate a concrete program for reform (Stiglitz; Greenberg 46-48). The activists’ belief in participatory democracy, which was a central element of Dellinger’s political legacy to the movement, prevented them from building infrastructures for decision making and strategies for sustaining momentum (Tufekci). As a result, a year after the protestors were removed from Zuccotti Park, Occupy Wall Street reemerged as a series of advocacy groups— such as Occupy Sandy, Strike Debt, Occupy Our Homes and Occupy Farms—that are still trying to effect change in a pragmatic and incremental way. But the media no longer provide coverage of their activity and the young activists are continuing their work out of the public eye. Therefore, although Dellinger’s political legacy is not without contradictions, it also represents an outstanding and courageous example of a man who spent most of his life “speaking truth to power” in an attempt to expand “the boundaries of freedom” in the United States.

David (Dave) Dellinger was born in Wakefield, Massachusetts, in 1915, into an upper-class Republican family. When he was a teenager, he became aware that he was living a life of privilege and began to feel empathy for the poor and the oppressed. His family belonged to the Congregational Church, but he did not like

organized religion. However, he started reading the Bible on his own account and became a Christian, albeit an unconventional one, who never joined any church and was attracted by the way of life of the early disciples of Jesus, who shared their belongings and rejected any form of violence (Dellinger 446-50). He also greatly admired Saint Francis of Assisi, who had renounced his heritage as the son of a merchant and had chosen to live in self-imposed poverty. Dellinger was inspired to follow a similar path.

In 1932 he enrolled at Yale University and was involved with Dwight Hall, the Yale Christian Association where students engaged in community service in the poor neighborhoods of New Haven. During this time Dellinger read Richard Gregg's *The Power of Nonviolence*, which expounded Gandhi's teachings, and he became a pacifist. After he graduated *magna cum laude* in economics in 1936, he won a fellowship to continue his studies at Oxford University. But after a year he returned to the United States because he was not interested in a graduate degree that would open doors to a successful professional career. He wanted, instead, to improve his "understanding of life" and to this end he resumed his service at Dwight Hall until 1939, when he enrolled at Union Theological Seminary in New York City (Dellinger 23). He did not wish to become a professional minister and was not particularly interested in theology. His aim was "to explore, study and understand" the Christian faith, focusing on the Old Testament Prophets, the Christian Gospels and several historical movements and groups—some non-violent like the Quakers, others heretical—that were in line with his own views.

While studying at Union, Dellinger and four other students moved out of the Seminary and went to live in an apartment in Harlem, where they engaged in social work. In 1940 they transferred to a black neighborhood in Newark, New Jersey, where they were joined by other students and volunteers. They were all pacifists and called their community the Newark Christian Colony, but it became known as the Newark Ashram (after Gandhi's Ashram) (Hunt 40-42). Later on Dellinger outlined his reasons for the creation of this experimental communal living: "I believed in a community of dedicated persons who wanted to gain insight and strength from one another" and had "associations with their poor, racially oppressed neighbors" (Dellinger 61). His search for a communal lifestyle was part of a larger search for a "beloved community" that, according to historian Staughton Lynd, has been a recurring element of the American radical tradition from the early nineteenth century on, influencing pacifist, anarchist, libertarian and socialist groups (Lynd). Dellinger himself would pursue this search for most of his life, taking part in several experiments in communal living.

At the Newark Ashram Dellinger and his friends rejected any form of hierarchy among themselves as well as in their relationship with their African American neighbors, who were encouraged to participate as equals in the decisions that affected their daily lives. In many ways the Newark Ashram foreshadowed the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP) created in the black ghettos in 1963 by the university organization Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).

Dellinger was aware that: “In many ways, ERAP was the Sixties version of the community organizing project that I had been part of in Newark in the late Thirties and early Forties” (200). A comparison can also be made with Occupy Sandy, the relief effort created in 2012 by members of Organize Wall Street to assist the victims of Hurricane Sandy. Working in partnership with local organizations, these activists focused on community service, mutual aid and long-term rebuilding of neighborhoods.

When World War II broke out in Europe, United States Congress introduced the draft in 1940 but Dellinger, being a pacifist, opposed not only the draft but the war itself. He could have been granted legal conscientious objection status because he was a divinity student, but he had to register for the draft (73). On principle Dellinger, along with seven other students of the Seminary, refused to do so and was sentenced to three years in jail. These eight divinity students were not the only pacifists who made such a radical decision. They were part of a small group of Christian war opponents, who belonged to organizations like the War Resisters League and preferred to go to prison rather than register for the draft; and during their detention several of them, including Dellinger, organized courageous protests against racial discrimination (Wittner, *Rebels* 72-83; Hunt 75-83). However, they represented a tiny minority among the conscientious objectors, most of whom enrolled in the armed forces albeit applying for non combatant military roles or for work in the Civilian Public Service camps (Hunt 73-74).

The forties were not the only time that Dellinger was imprisoned. During his life he was arrested on many other occasions, so that when he wrote his autobiography in 1993 he entitled it *From Yale to Jail*, stating that he had learned more valuable things in prison than at university (65). When he was taken into custody during World War II, his pacifism underwent a radicalization: his Christian and Gandhian beliefs were aligned with anarchism. Influenced by Thoreau, he became a nonviolent revolutionary and advocated civil disobedience as a means of opposing not only war, militarism and conscription, but also social and racial injustice within American society. He declared: “You cannot be truly nonviolent if you are not revolutionary” and, from then on, he did not like to be labeled a peace activist because “there can be no peace without justice and therefore I’m really a justice-and-peace activist” (458). Convinced as he was that the only viable answer to society’s evils was non-violent direct action, he wrote: “We must fight against institutions but not against people . . . The only way . . . is to combine an uncompromising war upon evil institutions with unending kindness and love for every individual—including the individuals who defend existing institutions” (140-42). Similarly, he stated elsewhere that he followed Christ’s injunction that we should love our enemies and pray for them (26). However his radicalism became increasingly secularized, and although he continued to be deeply spiritual, he very seldom referred to his Christian faith: “Ordinarily I don’t use words like ‘heaven’ (or ‘God,’ which in some cases can be even more confusing) because I’m

afraid that people will misunderstand me . . . I don't care about the words . . . What's behind them is what counts" (87).

A constant in Dellinger's life was that he always endeavored to put his ideas into action. On the one hand, he joined forces with other pacifists who had been war opponents like him, and together they founded a series of committees—such as the Committee for Nonviolent Revolution, the Peacemakers and the Committee for Nonviolent Action—that staged antinuclear demonstrations. These groups, each of which “generally grew out of an earlier one,” cooperated with the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE), the major antinuclear organization of the fifties that opposed the arms race and atomic tests (Dellinger 152). But while SANE was liberal, Dellinger and his friends were radical, they protested against the Cold War, criticized both the United States and the Soviet Union, promoted unilateral disarmament and pondered a Third Camp political alternative (Wittner, *Struggle*).

At the same time, looking for an alternative lifestyle, Dellinger went to live in a commune. Along with his own family and three other families, he bought twenty acres of land and created a communal farm near the village of Glen Gardner, in New Jersey (Hunt 91-92). It was called “the intentional community of Glen Gardner” (later renamed “St. Francis Acres”) because it was part of a series of experiments in communal living, the “intentional communities,” which pacifists organized in those years as an alternative lifestyle to centralized and hierarchical institutions (Cornell). For twenty-one years, from 1947 to 1968, he lived and worked there with his large family: his wife, Elizabeth Peterson (whom he had married during World War II), his five children and a foster child. Subsequently he made this remark about their lifestyle: “We were premature hippies.” Besides farming their land, the members of the Glen Gardner community operated a printing press, publishing pacifist and radical books (Hunt 92). This activity became their main source of income, but their earnings were always minimal. As a result, Dellinger lived essentially on the breadline, and this situation was to continue all his life, even after he abandoned the commune, forcing him to ask repeatedly for financial assistance first from his father and then from friends and supporters.

Having a printing press at his disposal, Dellinger launched and edited, without being paid, a series of pacifist magazines that had a short life and a very limited circulation. But there was a turning point in 1956 when he participated in the creation of *Liberation*. This magazine—which he edited along with A. J. Muste, Bayard Rustin and other pacifists—lasted for more than twenty years and became an influential radical publication (Dellinger 149). The ideological line of *Liberation* reflected the ideas that Dellinger and the other editors had matured in the previous decade. Their radicalism was non sectarian: they criticized liberalism as well as Marxism, envisaging a new social order based upon decentralized, non-violent, cooperative societies. They also opposed electoral politics, favoring grassroots organizations, communitarian experiments and social movements without leaders, that did not erect hierarchical barriers between their members and resorted to a decision-making process based upon consensus.

Dellinger, in particular, believed that “horizontal” movements and communities were able to promote social change from the bottom up. His living experiences—first at Newark and then at Glen Gardner—were attempts to bring about the “here and now” his ideal of a decentralized and anarchist society, and represented examples of what Wini Breines has called “prefigurative politics” with reference to movements of the sixties like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Thus, Dellinger foreshadowed and put into practice a basic concept of the New Left: participatory democracy (Dellinger 6; Breines; Carson). A few decades later many of his long held beliefs would reemerge once again during the occupation of Zuccotti Park and be shared by the activists of the Occupy Wall Street Movement, who adopted the same non-violent strategy, decision-making processes based on consensus and the concept of leaderless movements (Cornell). Another analogy with these protest movements was Dellinger’s awareness of the importance of communication and his founding of many little magazines; even toward the end of his life he co-edited and contributed to yet another publication, *Toward Freedom*. During the Cold War the role of these little magazines was to provide activists with a forum for discussion of their ideas and comparison of their personal experiences. In the sixties the alternative press played a similar role, whereas the activists of Occupy Wall Street relied mainly on the Internet, although they also started a magazine when they occupied Zuccotti Park.

Moreover, Occupy Wall Street’s criticism of economic inequalities resembled in many ways Dellinger’s opposition to racial and economic injustices. Along with his pacifist friends at *Liberation*, he supported the civil rights movement from the very beginning and took part in several protests against segregation. At the same time he played a crucial role in the development of the movement against the war in Vietnam. In fact, according to Dellinger, “the anti-Vietnam War movement did not start in a vacuum. It was the offspring of previous movements for justice and peace” (Dellinger 189). However, when President Johnson began the escalation of the war in 1965, there was a split between the liberals and the radicals within the antiwar movement. Dellinger sided with the young radical students, who eventually prevailed; and in the second half of the sixties, although he had always been in favor of leaderless social movements, he became a national leader in the antiwar coalition and one of the organizers of the most important antiwar demonstrations. Thus he was “cast in the role of being an older brother” of the young antiwar protestors, bridging a gap between different generations of dissenters (189). His ideas underwent further radicalization: while continuing to profess non-violence, he called for more combative tactics and worked for the growth of a “militant, grassroots, antiwar and prodemocracy movement” that would compel Congress and the executive branch to end the war in Vietnam (190). At the same time, he expressed solidarity with armed liberation struggles abroad and revolutionary movements within the United States that resorted to violence in self-defense, including the Black Panther Party. But

his attempt to reconcile “Gandhi and guerrilla” gave rise to negative reactions in many of the pacifist activists with whom he had worked side by side in the previous decades.

A direct consequence of Dellinger’s antiwar activism was his indictment in the Chicago Conspiracy Trial, the most famous and controversial of the political trials of the period, that began in September 1969 and lasted for five months. After the protests and disorder that had taken place in Chicago during the 1968 National Convention of the Democratic Party, the government charged eight leaders of the protest movement with “conspiracy to incite a riot” and “crossing state lines to incite a riot.” Besides Dellinger, the other defendants were Black Panther Bobby Seale, yippies Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman, student leaders Tom Hayden and Rennie Davis, academics Lee Weiner and John Froines. While the media followed the event closely, the defendants—especially Dellinger—decided to counter-attack the government’s indictment and to disrupt courtroom procedures with the aim of putting the government itself “on trial” (“Official Transcripts”). As a result, Dellinger became a celebrity.

The Chicago Trial was a turning point both for him and for the protest movement which increasingly rejected non-violence. Whilst sectarianism prevailed, the New Left entered a period of profound crisis and Dellinger himself went through a period of crisis. In 1968 he and his family sold Glen Gardner after receiving a bomb in the mail. They felt that it was no longer safe to live in such a remote spot and moved to an apartment in Brooklyn. But Dellinger’s new celebrity created tensions with his wife, who separated from him for a few years, until their reconciliation. In the meantime the magazine he edited, *Liberation*, ceased publication and his launching of a new radical publication, *Seven Days*, was a failure.

In search of a new direction Dellinger, along with his wife, moved to Vermont in 1980 and spent the last twenty-four years of his life there. Although he was sixty-five years old, he did not intend to retire or to give up his political activism. Along with other non-violent activists—some of whom were his longtime pacifist friends—he resumed the struggle for nuclear disarmament and during the Reagan administration he took part in demonstrations against the arms race. In the eighties and nineties he also helped organize protests against United States policies in Central America, military interventions in Eastern Europe and the first Gulf War (Epstein). But in contrast to the Vietnam antiwar demonstrations that had attracted hundreds of thousands of people, these protests involved only a few activists and were largely ignored by the American public. As time went by, Dellinger himself was forgotten by the general public and only a small circle of pacifist friends continued to be close to him until his death in 2004. However, he remained optimistic: he was happy to be no longer in the public eye and claimed that the latest protest actions were as important as the great mobilizations of the late sixties and seventies, because they kept alive the American tradition of “speaking truth to power,” just as had previously happened in the fifties when

only a minority of pacifists had opposed the arms race and nuclear tests. In 1993 he wrote that the fifties was “a time for sowing seeds,” while the sixties was “harvest time” adding that “of course, some new seeds were sowed in the sixties that haven’t come to full fruition yet” (152). Thus Dellinger continued “to sow seeds” in the last two decades of his life, when dissent was once again at a low point in the United States, in the expectation of a new “harvest time.” His activism contributed to keeping radical dissent alive in America and constituted his political legacy to Occupy Wall Street.

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4. Writing Nature: Representations of Wildness & Liberty in the New World

Science, Engagement, Estrangement: Remarks on Kim Stanley Robinson's Californian Ecotopia*

GIULIA IANNUZZI

It is sometimes possible for science fiction literature to act as a bridge between disciplines, and offer valuable reflections on the strategies available to a structural *interdisciplinarity* as well as on how this fascinating (and often elusive) concept can work in the practice of cultural production and reflection. The need to work outside the rigid framework of disciplinary divisions seems to me to be one of the most interesting challenges for academics today, whether it be for the hard sciences to encourage a dialog with the public and participate in decision-making processes regarding research and development at an institutional if not political level, or for the humanities to define their own role in contemporary society.

Interestingly enough, the overlap between science fiction studies and Ecocriticism—two fields equally concerned with interdisciplinary issues—, is currently much more limited than might be expected. The pages that follow

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contain some reflections upon the present and potential state of this dialog, and offer some comments on Kim Stanley Robinson's *Three Californias Trilogy* and in particular, on the final novel, *Pacific Edge*, as a case in point.

As the name suggests, science fiction can draw on a repertoire of images, concepts and ideas taken from all branches of science. Biology, botany, ecology, ethology, and genetics have figured among the principal objects of science fiction invention, narration, and critical reflection since its inception. Genre narratives have often focused specifically on the interaction between man and the environment, on non-human life forms and non-anthropocentric points of view, and many works of science fiction take the form of *thought experiments*, functioning as warnings about human habits, and creating an effect of *cognitive estrangement* (Suvin) that invites readers to escape from their more habitual (and usually invisible) frames of mind.¹

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, science fiction has helped to construct many of the rhetorical *topoi* and themes we use to discuss environmental issues. Numerous authors have played a role in developing our linguistic and imaginary repertoire about ecology, sometimes anticipating the success of works of scientific popularization (one good example is Harry Harrison's novel *Make Room! Make Room!*, which explored the consequences of uncontrolled growth in the Earth's population just two years before the publication of Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*, 1968). Environmentalism, and concern about man's exploitation of nature and natural resources, have been the central motives of many science fiction narratives, with mounting interest and awareness from the sixties onwards, when depictions of reduced ecologies are to be found in novels such as Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965) and Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974) (cf. Heise "Reduced Ecologies"). Alongside this theme is the role played by ecology in the depiction of the colonization of other planets, terraforming (Pak "Terraforming"), climate change and disaster narratives concerned with eco-catastrophes and ruined-Earth scenarios (Canavan and Robinson; Stableford; Nicholls, Clute, and Langford; Murphy "The Non-Alibi" 264-66). In this case as in many others, however, the research theme cannot be separated from the issue of its critical visibility: in fact, the relationship between science fiction and ecology has only just started to be a specific object of study in recent years, with essays and collections appearing from the years two thousand on, devoted to selected authors and to surveying the presence of ecology in the science fiction of previous decades, in dialog with the field of Ecocriticism, and the gradual development of the latter from the nineties on.²

1 On the definition of science fiction, and its conventions and tropes, see the seminal work by Suvin (1978), and the historical and pragmatic approaches represented by Rieder; J. Gunn, Barr, and Candelaria. For works of reference on science fiction history and sub-genres see Bould et al.; James and Mendlesohn; Latham; Roberts; Seed.

2 While the term *eco-criticism* was coined in 1978 (Rueckert), it was only in the early nineties that Ecocriticism was codified and began to develop as a specific critical field. In the late eight-

It is no coincidence that in recent years, the field of science fiction studies has seen the awakening of a new interest in the global perspective and in the study and understanding of a “global science fiction,”³ reflecting parallel trends in Ecocriticism, which has itself experienced a shift in place-attachment from a locally-focused conception to a global or, at least, a more transnational one, and which has developed significant interconnections with post-colonial studies and world literature; the field of animal studies provides a significant point of contact between the two fields of study, under the banner of the representation of the non-human, and the invitation to a non-anthropocentric or post-humanist paradigm of reality (see Buell, Heise, and Thornber 426-28, 430-33; cf. Heise “World Literature”).

What makes the works of Kim Stanley Robinson particularly stimulating as regards these problems is that, in his writing, the relationship between literary creation and scientific elements goes beyond a mere communality of themes and images: it goes without saying that the presence of scientific and technological elements as parts of the narrative invention in a novel can be interesting in itself, and can have a role, for example, in the popularization of scientific ideas, but simply translating themes from the hard sciences into literature does not fully exploit the potential of literature as a form of (and tool for) knowledge. Ongoing shifts in our model of reality are not only prepared and executed inside science departments and laboratories: they are also a consequence of complex paradigm changes, of shifts in our vision of the world, in language and metaphor, and in rhetorical strategies, where literature plays a part of its own: areas of common ground between literature and sciences can also be found at the level of critical thought and epistemology.⁴

ies, numerous special issues appeared of journals of humanities studies, and in 1992, the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) was founded. The mid-late nineties saw the appearance of seminal critical works such as Buell’s *Environmental Imagination* (Buell, Heise and Thornber). Sub-genres and literary tropes identified and analyzed by Ecocriticism in relation to non-science fiction literature—such as the ideas of Eden, the wilderness, and pastoral idyll—have been used successfully in the reading of many science fiction narratives and in the genre’s general tendencies. See for example the entries of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* cited in the present essay, Baratta esp. 2-3, Stratton esp. 5.

3 Of great interest are the special issues on global science fiction and the different national science fiction traditions featured during the two thousands by *Science Fiction Studies* (undoubtedly one of the most important scholarly journals of science fiction at the international level), the recent launch of a collection devoted to *World Science Fiction Studies* by the academic publisher Peter Lang (announced in May 2014), and an increased trend on the part of Clute, Langford, and Nicholls’ *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* toward a global perspective, with the inclusion of numerous entries on non-English speaking countries and authors.

4 On disciplinary divisions of knowledge see Kagan; on science fiction as a bridge between the “two cultures” see Westfahl and Slusser; from the vast bibliography of literature and science studies, I would like to single out a useful contribution in Italian by Ceserani. For further readings on literature and science see the on-line *Bibliography of the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts* and the reviews section of the *The British Society for Literature and Science* website. For interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks, a useful starting-point is G. Gunn’s “Interdisciplinary Studies.”

In the case of Robinson's *Three Californias Trilogy*, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle finds a literary application: the observer—the text's implied author—is fully conscious of being part of the system observed, in the sense that he not only creates the fictional reality of the novels as refined thought experiments, but he knowingly (and meta-narratively) places himself in relation to the questions posed by the narratives (hence the *engagement* in the title of the present contribution).

Of course, while Robinson's trilogy undoubtedly makes an important contribution to the debate on North American identity, it is also relevant to the topic of the present volume. In addressing Robinson's novels, I shall be looking at the relationships they construct between different kinds of debates—literature, sciences (including ecology) and politics—and the specific reflections they stimulate as regards a collective national identity in relation to various specific man-environment relationships. The decision to focus on the *Three Californias Trilogy* (or *Orange County Trilogy*) and not on Robinson's other works is partly motivated by my own research interests and partly by the need to set a reasonable limit on the essay in terms of length and range of topics.

Robinson's *Orange County Trilogy*, made up of *The Wild Shore*, *The Gold Coast* and *Pacific Edge*, was published between 1984 and 1990. The eighties are usually remembered in science fiction history for the appearance of the cyberpunk sub-genre, but the decade witnessed other important tendencies as well, from a rebirth of hard science fiction (Stephen Baxter, Alastair Reynolds or Robert James Sawyer), to the increasing importance of an eco-centric strain, with the *CoEvolution Quarterly*,⁵ the sequels of *Ecotopia* by Ernest Callenbach, and, indeed, Robinson's *Orange County Trilogy*. Just a few years later, Robinson would be definitively acclaimed as one of the most interesting contemporary science fiction authors with the publication of his *Mars Trilogy* (1992-1996).⁶

Robinson's literary creations can be read as a contemporary offshoot of that category of science fiction best described in Suvin's seminal work, in which the aspect of thought experiment, of fantastic extrapolation and projection, is based

5 *The CoEvolution Quarterly* which developed from the *Whole Earth Catalog* ran from 1974 to 1985 and published works by many science fiction writers; Pak "Goal."

6 Robinson's most successful works in terms of critical reception are *Red*, *Green* and *Blue Mars*, which are the works usually included in science fiction companions (e.g. Seed 544-55), in studies on science fiction with specific ecological interests (e.g. Murphy "The Non-Alibi") or utopian interests (e.g. Jameson 393-416); they are among the principal objects of investigation in essays and collections specifically dedicated to Robinson's work, along with the *Science in the Capital Trilogy*—*Forty Signs of Rain* (2004), *Fifty Degrees Below* (2005), *Sixty Days and Counting* (2007) (see Yaszek and Davis; Burling). Many of Robinson's works have won important science fiction awards; to give just a few examples: the Locus Award won by *The Wild Shore*, the John W. Campbell Memorial Award won by *Pacific Edge*; *Green Mars* won the Hugo and the Locus awards, and *Blue Mars* the Nebula and the Locus awards. Among the numerous critical readings of the *Three Californias*, I would recommend Abbott; Moylan "Witness," and Csicsery-Ronay "Possible Mountains," to which I refer the reader for (differing) in-depth readings of the trilogy, impossible here.

on a clear critical engagement with the author's factual and historical context; in other words, that vein of science fiction most significantly connected to the utopian tradition, at once the worthy ancestor, sister and offspring of science fiction (Freedman; Jameson; Moylan *Demand*; Parrinder). It is no coincidence that Robinson holds a PhD in literature obtained under the supervision of Frederick Jameson (cf. Davis and Yaszek 190, 193-94; Foote 54-55).

In *The Wild Shore*, an "after-the-fall" narrative, with a well-established tradition of precedents in the genre,⁷ the United States has regressed after a nuclear bombing and the protagonist lives in a small community on the coast near San Clemente, surviving by fishing and cultivating small plots of land. He and his friends gradually come to realize that the United States is being deliberately kept in a barbaric state by the new world powers as a way of taking their revenge against the once overly powerful country. Thanks to the process of keeping a diary, the young protagonist and homodiegetic narrator develops a new awareness of both the country's situation and his own identity. The narration is enriched by a critical reflection on the relationship between man and his environment that is not merely a physical one, but one that is also crucial to the identity-building process. The novel depicts what we can properly call a *science fiction post-atomic pastoral*, offering a science fictional version of a coming-of-age story, in which the description of the experience of the wilderness draws clearly and consciously on an extended and powerful American literary tradition.

The Gold Coast, Robinson's second California, presents a car and industry-oriented dystopia directly extrapolated from the author's own life in the seventies: "during my childhood I had seen Orange County's agricultural landscape torn out and replaced by freeways and buildings. Science fiction was the first literature I had read that spoke to that feeling of 'future shock' or 'landscape PTSD.' . . . *The Gold Coast* felt like I was writing my life and times" (Csicsery-Ronay "Pacific Overture").

This dystopia or, ironically, utopia "since it satisfies most material needs and operates on the ostensibly rational human principles of self-interest, maximization of pleasure, and growth" (Csicsery-Ronay, "Possible Mountains" 168), is the closest to the author's actual experience and is certainly the most immediately plausible of the three scenarios. Once again, the plot revolves round a young protagonist, Jim, struggling to make sense of his existence. In the course of the narration he experiences what it is like to be an eco-terrorist (but the terrorists' actions will turn out to have been contrived by those very arms manufacturers whom Jim had thought were the target of the attacks) and a rebel archaeologist, who literally *digs out* the past, bringing to light the remains of a past civilization,

7 As his literary points of reference for *The Wild Shore*, Robinson has mentioned George Stewart's *Earth Abides* (1949) and Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle For Leibowitz* (1960), along with *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, his direct source of inspiration for the initial scene of the grave-digging. See Csicsery-Ronay "Pacific Overture." For an overview of the theme: Pringle, Nicholls, and Langford; Nicholls, Clute, and Langford.

from under the concrete surface of parking lots and malls in order to understand the historical implications of the present situation.

A rare occurrence in contemporary fiction, *Pacific Edge* presents us with an ecotopia: as the narrator says, paraphrasing Marcuse: “one of the worst signs of our danger is we can’t imagine the route from here to utopia” (148). There is a dual narrative frame in which a second narrator, a character in his own right but also an alter-ego of the author, reflects on the difficulties inherent in the utopian literary genre.

The ecotopia described in the main plot details the everyday life of the protagonist but also the concomitant economic and legal system which plays a key role in the construction of the fictional world: Robinson’s thought experiment persuades the reader that really—as one of the character says—“legislation is a revolutionary power, boy, though it’s seldom seen as such” (56). There are advanced regulations governing economic activities, buildings, use of natural resources, and, significantly, the control of water, all of which enable the State to contain economic growth. Interestingly, the creation and adoption of neologisms in the novel—coined in analogy to existing terms as compounds or blended forms, or with new uses of English words (such as *waterscape*, *cloudgel*, *light-charged*, *thermocrete*, *thermostat* used as an intransitive verb, *iceberg* used as a verb)—is concentrated on natural resources and their practical derivatives and applications in human activities, mirroring linguistically the critical reflection on the relationship between the human community and its environment which is dealt with on one level of the narration (Slotkin).

The depiction of California’s natural environment and people’s relationship with it has its roots in American Transcendentalism, as well as in realism and in a focus on the small-scale dimensions typical of Zen Buddhism, part of a distinct Californian underground culture substratum.⁸ Orange County really is Robinson’s own Yoknapatawpha County (Foote 52), and is in fact one of the actual protagonists (if not the main one) of the trilogy; indeed, the author has been quoted as saying that he considers himself “a Californian writer,” who values the heritage of fellows such as “Snyder, Rexroth, Le Guin, and Muir” (Csicsery-Ronay “Pacific Overture,” cf. “The Boom Interview”; interestingly, Robinson was appointed Muir Environmental Fellow in 2011 by the John Muir College, University College San Diego; see “Muir Environmental Fellows”; Abbott).

Kevin, the protagonist of *Pacific Edge*, who has just been elected to the town council of El Modena, is fighting against the project to build a new development on Rattlesnake Hill, the last entirely wild hill near the town, and a clear example of the above-mentioned small-scale focus of the narration.

Kevin and some friends discuss the Rattlesnake Hill problem while on an excursion outside El Modena. In the course of the excursion, the environment

⁸ D. T. Suzuki and Gary Snyder “helped to shape the distinctively Californian ecological movement from which many currents of the global counterculture have emerged.” Csicsery-Ronay “Possible Mountains” 150; cf. Davis and Yaszek 191.

itself becomes an integral part of the characters' critical reflections as much as of Robinson's artistic recreation of it:

They listened to the wind, and watched the stars pop into existence in a rich blue sky. On such a fine night it was a shame to get into the tents, so they only shifted into their sleeping bags, and lay on the groundpads watching the sky. The snow patches scattered among the rocks shone as if lit from within. It seemed possible to feel them melt, then rush into the ground beneath them, to fall down the slope into Le Conte Canyon and seep a slow path to the sea, in invisible underground Columbias . . .

Suddenly it was clear to him that Sally had had a reason to bring them up here to have this talk; that this place itself was part of the discourse, part of what she wanted to say. The university of the wilderness. The spine of California, the hidden source of the south wealth. This hard, wild place . . . (106, 109)

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Women's Ways to Nature: Steinbeck's (Mock)Pastoral Diptych of Gardening (& Childless) Wives in *The Long Valley*

PAOLA LORETO

I hold that a writer who does not passionately believe
in the perfectibility of man has no dedication
nor any membership in literature.

John Steinbeck, Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, 1962

The pastoral diptych that opens John Steinbeck's volume of short stories *The Long Valley* (1938) retells the shaping of a distinctly American response to an equally distinctly American landscape. The mocking allusions to the myth of *westering*¹ and frontier life invite a reflection on the contemporary degeneration of the pastoral encounter of man and wilderness, and suggest a future direction through a revision of the same impulse. The premises of Steinbeck's reflection go back to the first aporia in the transcendentalists' vision of the supposedly harmonious and functional relation of man to nature. In 1846, while approaching the top of Mount Katahdin, Thoreau experienced the insuperable difficulty of making Emerson's idealistic moments of the merging of the Soul with the Not-Me apply

¹ Steinbeck uses this word to define the "group-man" impulse of pushing westward in search of new chances of settlement in "The Leader of the People" (*The Long Valley* 224-25).

to a Nature that was in fact saying to man that this was not a place where he had been invited, nor was it intended for him as a space for habitation. While exploring wilder spaces in search of a confirmation of Nature's eloquence as a "book of Revelation," as it used to be in the pristine Puritan tradition, he came up against the insurmountable obstacle of the untenable position of the transcendentalist anthropocentric view. Faced with the radical otherness and autonomy of nature, he recognized, at the same time, a common plane on which a mountain top and our own bodies may co-exist:

It was Matter, vast, terrific,—not this Mother Earth we have heard of . . . the home, this, of Necessity and Fate . . . a force not bound to be kind to man . . . I stand in awe of my body, this matter to which I am bound has become so strange to me . . . What is this Titan that has possession of me? . . . Think of our life in nature . . . the *solid* earth! the *actual* world! the *common sense*! *Contact! Contact! Who are we? where are we?* (Thoreau 94-95)

Thirty years later, John Muir—an early advocate of the wilderness preservation movement in the United States—would overcome the impasse by advancing Thoreau's intuition that nature was *not* separate from the soul—as Emerson would have had it—to its obvious, and liberating, consequences: nature was not made for humans alone; what the earth does, even though it doesn't appear as benevolent to human eyes, is right (qtd. in Scheese 28). Thus, he gave Emerson's panentheism—the belief that God is at the same time immanent and transcendent (and benevolent)—a biocentric turn.

Muir had learned to know *wild* nature and love it for what it is by immersing himself in it, as he did, for months, in his famous "first summer in the Sierra" (the summer of 1869 in California's Sierra Nevada). His "hard pastoral" had begun earlier in the spring, and taught him to joyously embrace the *whole* of Nature: its most abrasive aspects, as well as its most sublime. In this way, he came to experience a momentary loss of consciousness of his separate existence, and a momentary blending with the landscape. He became "part and parcel of nature" (*Thousand-Mile Walk* 183), and the catalyst of the ecocentric vocation of American panentheism. Instead of assuming, as Emerson did, that man was divine, he saw that man was Nature, and that Nature was sacred. Yes, we may be in awe of our own body, as Thoreau had realized, with terror, on Mount Katahdin, but that's 'gorgeous.' This remark would have been endorsed by Whitman, who in turn had initiated a revision of Emerson's use of the word "Nature," which freely and consciously oscillated between the common and the philosophical imports of the term expounded by the sage of Concord in the introductory chapter to his seminal essay.² Whitman chose the commonsensical but correctly moved into it "our

² "Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul. Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which Philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this name, NATURE. In enumerating the values of nature and casting up their sum, I shall use the word in both senses;—in its common and in its philosophical import. In inquiries so general as our

own body," as one of the "essences unchanged by man; space, the air, the river, the leaf." He was thus able to adhere, better than his master, to the material half of the symbol. *He* was, in fact, the real poet of the two, and the bard that America, and Emerson, were awaiting.

Steinbeck's diptych of the gardening housewives in *The Long Valley* seems to restage the coming of age of an American biocentric consciousness. Elisa Allen is portrayed as the heir of the happy ecocentrism of John Muir. She comes first, as if Steinbeck had wanted to endorse that achieved maturity. Mary Teller, on the contrary, is portrayed as being still prey to a delusion of anthropocentric control. She comes second, as the memento of an adolescent, regressive, impulse. Elisa's position in the world is the healthier and embodies Steinbeck's vision of (and hopes for) what we would call in current theoretical terms a posthuman American consciousness, a relocation of the human within an ecocentric perspective purged of man's "fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy, inherited from humanism" (Wolfe xv).³ Prior to Steinbeck's writings of the thirties, this consciousness had been developing in the thoughts and works of Walt Whitman, John Muir, Jack London, William James and Robinson Jeffers.⁴

Steinbeck's early expression of an ecocentric worldview has already been pointed out, especially in the unimpeachable and eloquent formulations of the *Sea of Cortez*, where the writer and marine biology amateur articulated his theory of the "is-thinking" and of the "phalanx" or "group-man." What I am interested in exploring, for my part, is rather the reasons for Steinbeck's evident desire—or need—to portray two women who face each other in symmetrical poses as in the two matching tablets of a diptych. While *The Long Valley* is undeniably rich in female portraits, and in the portrayal of husband-and-wife relationships, Elisa's and Mary's portraits stand out as two sides of one conception: they seem to have been produced one after the other, if not conjointly,⁵ and to corroborate each other in the formulation of a correct relation of humans to their environment.

present one, the inaccuracy is not material; no confusion of thought will occur. Nature, in the common sense, refers to essences unchanged by man; space, the air, the river, the leaf. Art is applied to the mixture of his will with the same things, as in a house, a canal, a statue, a picture. But his operations taken together are so insignificant, a little chipping, baking, patching, and washing, that in an impression so grand as that of the world on the human mind, they do not vary the result." (Emerson 8).

3 The debate over the many interpretations of the posthuman is ongoing and fervent. I refer to positions such as those of Cary Wolfe, who conceives of posthumanism as "an intensification of humanism" (xv), and of Roberto Marchesini, who distinguishes between transhumanism, hyperhumanism, and a posthumanism that aims at rethinking identity in dialogical, relational and reciprocally hospitable terms.

4 According to Del Ivan Janik, this "posthumanism" was prefigured in D. H. Lawrence's "otherness," Aldous Huxley's "perennial philosophy," Robinson Jeffers's "inhumanism," and Gary Snyder's program of "reinhabitation." (qtd. in Rice 31).

5 They practically were: in his Introduction to the 1995 Penguin edition, John H. Timmerman writes that "The Chrysanthemums" was written between the late fall 1933 and late February

The opening two short stories of *The Long Valley* have also previously been compared. They are two stories centered on the vicissitudes of two young housewives from the Salinas Valley, both childless and devoted to gardening. They have been brilliantly investigated as satires of the degeneration of the mythic frontier life and of the idea of *westering* (Busch), and—also brilliantly but a little reductively—as studies of the psychology and sexuality of strong women who strive to express themselves within the limited possibilities open to them in a man’s world (Mitchell). Various hypotheses about Steinbeck’s representation of the figure of the artist in Mary have been advanced (a particularly severe one by Arthur L. Simpson) but remain, I think, unresolved. What I will try to argue is that in depicting two opposite female figures representing *eros* and frigidity, fertility and barrenness, in the opening diptych of *The Long Valley*, Steinbeck was exploring a way out of the decadence of the *ideal* of *westering* in his times by envisaging the idea of a civilizing art; an art that should return to its roots in the territory by going back again to the earth, the body, and a holistic view of life. Both Elisa’s and Mary’s ways of being in the world have a lot to do, in fact, with their need to express their creative powers.

In his perceptive and detailed study of Steinbeck’s satire of the cultural degeneration of the frontier myth, Christopher S. Busch makes a comparison not so much between the characters of Elisa and Mary, as between the settings and the characters inside the two stories, in order to demonstrate their dualistic quality. Within this useful perspective, “The White Quail” emerges as a modern, suburban, and mock frontier, where Mary Teller figures as a diminished yeoman attempting to create a perfect garden in the post-frontier West (apparently a borderland between a wilderness and a Crèvecoeurian “middle region,” 83), and Harry figures as a diminished hunter. If “The White Quail” portrays the loss of the physical capability and expansionist vision of the West’s pioneers, “The Chrysanthemums” represents the degeneration of the idea of *westering*. The antitype, or degenerate, type, in this tale, is not the married couple (settler and hunter), but the tinker who comes to the Allens’ farm from the road on an old, canvas-topped spring-wagon resembling a prairie schooner, and crosses Elisa’s existence as an alluring, illusionary meteor of mythical *westering*. Hence a contrast is built not only between original types and modern antitypes, but also between modern antitypes and modern attempts to re-embodiment the original type;

1934, “The White Quail” between late May and early June 1934 (xvii). According to Roy S. Simmonds, the first incomplete draft in the manuscript in the Pascal Covici-John Steinbeck Collection at the Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin fixes the date on which Steinbeck began to work on the story as Wednesday, January 31st, 1934 (104). A further complication is the existence of two published versions that seem to have proceeded along separate paths, for a while undisturbed, as William R. Osborne has noted: the first appeared in *Harper’s Magazine* in 1937, the second in the collection *The Long Valley* the following year. Elizabeth E. McMahan reports that Steinbeck indicated that the *Long Valley* text should be considered the correct version. McMahan and William V. Miller have also pointed out that it was Steinbeck who revised the version for *The Long Valley*.

in other words, Elisa Allen herself. In Busch's interpretation, Elisa stands out as the imperfect but able heir of the American *westerling* legacy, because of her connection to the land through the tending of her life-affirming garden, and because of her fascination with the pioneers' spirit of freedom and adventure, which is what makes her vulnerable to the tinker's materialistic and manipulative behavior. In fact, she is the authentic heir behind the mock-heir. The tinker emerges as the inevitable result of a wilderness that had been transformed into myth when it ended with the closing of the frontier and that had, in any case, been earlier damaged by the reversion of the pioneers' drive from spiritual to material concerns. Elisa, however, is the result of the realization of American literati that if the wilderness had to end (or had never existed), it could be replaced by a conscious cultivation of *wildness*: an interior craving for an unlimited and unknown space, finally freed from greed.

Marilyn H. Mitchell likens Elisa's and Mary's situations, from which, however, she sees their personalities evolve differently. Both women struggle with society's view of what constitutes masculinity and femininity, and both, as a result, develop confused, bisexual identities reminiscent of D. H. Lawrence's female characters, with which Steinbeck was familiar. But while Mary reacts to her sexual frustration with frigidity and an autoerotic response, Elisa demonstrates a healthy sensuality.

What I find noteworthy, in Mitchell's reading, is that she intuits Mary's etherealized, subservient role in respect of the portrayal of Elisa's earthly, human beauty, and she remarks on the different styles in which, for the effect of efficacy, the characters are depicted and the stories told. What makes the diptych particularly valuable in the collection, I believe, is precisely the fact that the complementary nature of the two characterizations is emphasized by the difference in the narrative styles of the two stories. This difference is functional in the rendering of the heroines' opposite ways of inhabiting their world, the apparently bucolic setting of the Salinas Valley. A large part of the aesthetic success of the diptych lies precisely in the flexibility of style to content—by which I mean Steinbeck's ecocentric position—and to authorial position—by which I mean Steinbeck's attitude toward his two female protagonists. Moreover, the aesthetic effect of his stylistic diversity provides not only variation, but also the incremental efficacy whereby the author delivers his message.

Elisa's humanity does need a warm, three-dimensional embodiment, as Mitchell suggests, while Mary needs to be "a virtual caricature of the selfish, castrating female who inspires animosity" (156), although I think that there is more to her than that. In the same way, Elisa's humanity does need a naturalistic depiction for her own, earthly portrayal, and a fabulous, ethereal delineation for Mary's as a defining contrast—although I would rather use the terms "realistic" and "allegorical." The fact is that it is reality that colors the portrait of Elisa Allen and that ultimately reveals Steinbeck's position in respect of his two heroines. Steinbeck participates in Elisa's emotions, while he diagnoses Mary's neurosis.

He feels with Elisa and reasons about Mary. His symbols are polysemous in “The Chrysanthemums,” and monosemous in “The White Quail.” We’re sure that both the garden and the white quail are Mary—because she tells us so. We can never be sure what the chrysanthemums stand for, although we can take it in trust that they are at least a gift from the earth’s biota, Elisa herself (with her own life-affirming gift), and her hypothetical children. If we accept that Steinbeck’s stylistic choices are a means of injecting reality into his framework, and we consider that these stories are also—perhaps *mainly*—about art, we can suppose that the diptych is Steinbeck’s way of probing the relation of art to reality. Shades of meaning, and subtle differences, become essential. For Mary, nature ultimately means reality; but it is a reality that she is compulsively trying to control by barring chaos, sorrow and death—in other words, life—from her experience. For Elisa, nature means life. Hers is a life that she embraces totally, with all its errors, pain inflicted or imagined, imperfect relationships, and endings. Mary’s garden is a place of beauty without life, while Elisa’s garden is a place of beauty throbbing with life. Mary is in quest of immortal, statuary beauty. Elisa is cultivating living beauty in its myriad, transient forms.⁶

The diptych device—which is an antithetical metaphor, where differences are accentuated over analogies in order to reveal new properties—is a powerful aesthetic tool, unleashing new meanings each time it is operated. If Mary is defined in conventional feminine terms as “pretty,” Elisa has an “eager and mature and handsome” face, which denotes masculine strength and sense of purpose. If Mary’s orgasmic response is elicited by the sight of the white quail, which she equates with her own purity, Elisa’s is elicited by the illusion of sharing her life-affirming power with the tinker. If Mary uses nature as a means of self-expression, Elisa is a fount whereby nature can express itself. Mary denies that certain aspects of nature *are* nature in order to defend her aesthetic ideal (notable is this respect are the dog she obliges her husband to give up and the cat she wants him to kill because they threaten her garden and its privileged plumed guests); Elisa acknowledges the whole of nature as a biotic system to whose survival she contributes as one of its elements. Her “planting hands” work in harmony with the earth. Her fingers “never make a mistake. They’re with the plant. . . . They know” (8). In sum, Mary and Elisa face each other as portraits of the *egocentric* versus the *ecocentric* artist.

Arthur L. Simpson maintains that “The White Quail” portrays the humanly destructive effects of “a subordination of life to an art which takes its sole value and reason for being as a unique expression of the artist’s private vision.” (11) Mary aspires to be the Romantic, isolated artist who objectifies herself by projecting her personality onto her garden and the white quail, thus completing a movement “out of life and into art” (14). If we assume this to be true, then in the person

⁶ This is why Mary’s perfection is in fact a perversion of the natural order: the artificial alteration of the natural process of survival of the fittest that must guarantee the immutability of the order on things by art(ifice) (Meyer 13).

of Mary, Steinbeck is exposing the dangers of artistic aspiration at the expense of life, and the diptych device leads us to think that Elisa is the alternative model he is proposing. One tablet represents an art that comes from the artist's mind, isolates him/her, idealizes reality and kills life. The other, an art that is generated in experience, is an act of sharing which perhaps romanticizes but never forgets reality, and nurtures life. It is an art that comes from things and breeds things, like Emerson's poetic language in "Nature," and like Elisa's "gift with things": the "planters' hands" she has inherited from her mother, that can stick anything in the ground and make it grow, because they know "how to do it." (3)

Steinbeck's exploration of a regenerated conception of art in *The Long Valley* diptych is an attempt to emancipate American culture from its degenerative turn. An art that nourishes a shared sense of harmony between man and his environment is the renewed promise of a democratic and civilizing ideal. As in classical civilizations, it reflects a conception of beauty that belongs to the polis and is daily perceivable by all its inhabitants. For Elisa, beauty belongs to her everyday work with the earth and with the land. Her collective unconscious tells her that it is truth and that it is also good, in a way that has been lost to Mary, but it is also a reminder of a unique American tradition. Steinbeck's *Long Valley* front diptych resumes the American Renaissance proto-pragmatic view of art as the way to practical, concrete knowledge, a journey of discovery that serves life through an uninterrupted relation with experience. *This* American art is knowing and doing, or knowing by doing. It doesn't know what it will find, but when it does find something, it plants a new element there and "adorns nature with a new thing," (Emerson 450) each time reality stirs imagination inside an individual. In this sense, Steinbeck's art is expressive in the most original and fruitful way that American literature has known since the writings of Emerson, Whitman, Dickinson and their heirs.

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“Here, am I, in the midst of this immense forest”: Irish Immigrants in the American Wilderness

PAOLA ANNA NARDI

In 1823 the Irish American author James McHenry published his first novel with the intriguing title *The Wilderness or Braddock's Time: A Tale of the West*. “A writer of agreeable songs and lyrics and several popular novels” (Oberholtzer 213), James McHenry is now a nearly forgotten author, “a melancholy evidence that best sellers a century ago [are] as now often tawdry things” (Warfel 68). There has been no sustained scholarship done on him let alone on this single work and Robert E. Blanc’s *James McHenry (1785-1845): Playwright and Novelist*, the only book-length study devoted to this author, was published in 1939 and received few and unfavorable reviews on the part of contemporary critics: “unhappily Dr. Blanc’s textbook clichés in the midst of frequently repeated banal phrases do not support the conclusion that McHenry ‘is not an altogether negligible figure’” (Warfel 68). Recently James McHenry has been recognized as “the first Irish historical novelist” (Cahalan 45) and in the overview of the author included in the volume on *Nineteenth-Century American Fiction Writers* Maureen Ann Sullivan asserts that “McHenry’s contribution to literature should not be forgotten since he was the first American fiction writer to explore . . . Irish legendary themes” (186). Charles Fanning, the most prominent scholar in Irish American literature devotes almost an entire chapter to James McHenry, “the first Irish immigrant to make a strong bid toward earning his American living in belles lettres” (43) and a “pioneer in the definition of Irishness for an American audience” (43) since *The Wilderness*,

his first novel. More recently, this work has been selected for one of the projects in digital humanities at Stanford University: the text encoded “was prepared to be fully searchable for research purposes including concordance, keyword, quote, and ‘hypothetical’ searches” (*Project Description*).

More valuable for some of its cultural rather than literary elements, this novel is particularly relevant for two reasons: it is the first novel to describe the Irish experience in the American West and it deals with the Irish Presbyterians of Scottish descent leaving Northern Ireland, a group not often represented in Irish American literature which has tended to focus on the Irish Catholic tradition.

In his novel McHenry recounts the fictional experiences of the main character Charles Adderly and the Frazier Family, “the first Ulster Protestant immigrant family in American fiction” (Fanning 44), including historical figures in the invented plot such as George Washington and General Braddock. Through a series of thrilling, complicated and sometimes highly improbable adventures, an Irish Protestant immigrant family moves from County Derry in Ulster to Philadelphia and then to a farm by the Ohio River initially as prisoners of the Indians and then as free settlers living in peace with all the tribes around them. Charles Adderly arrives at the Frazier’s farm as the leader of the first expedition of the Ohio Company after a dangerous and exciting journey along the Ohio river, and falls in love with the Frazier’s adopted daughter, Maria. Because of their common Ulster Protestant origins, the Frazier family heartily welcomes Charles who has managed to become a prominent and wealthy merchant in Philadelphia, his adopted town. After several battles between the French and the English each helped by different Indian tribes, with a long section devoted to the English defeat at the Battle of Braddocks’ Field, the Fraziers and Charles decide to move back to Philadelphia where Charles and Maria finally get married.

My essay will show the transference of Irish immigrants’ traditional love of land to an intense relationship with nature and the landscape around them when they take their chances in the New World. A close analysis of the novel will show that after the crossing of the Atlantic the initial pastoral reverence for an idyllic Ireland gives way to an aggressively colonial attitude toward the American wilderness, their new home, on the part of Frazer and his countrymen. At the same time this objectification of nature solely “valued in terms of its usefulness to [humankind]” (Garrard 18) contrasts with the respect for nature on the part of the American Natives with whom the Irish immigrants come in contact when invading their land. The Natives’ respect for their homeland can be found in the words of the Natives as reported by James McHenry who anticipates Aldo Leopold’s theory of a “land ethic” as formulated at the end his *A Sand County Almanac* according to which “human beings are neither more nor less than citizens” (Garrard 72) on the Earth: “A land ethic changes the role of *Homo Sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such” (Leopold 204).

As regards the representations of nature, and of human beings in nature, the novel is noteworthy in that it depicts a significant variety of relationships between human beings and the world around them. It shifts from a Neoclassical pastoral approach to a more anthropocentric perspective on nature which will be one of the emerging attitudes of the pioneers in their expansion in the American West. Furthermore, Indian cultures and their different “constructions of nature” (Garrard 39) testifies to a third attitude toward the land: the ecocritical glance. It is interesting that these contrasting perspectives are contemporaneous: the variations are not due to the passing of time but to spatial variations as regards the cultures described.

“One bright morning in April, 1723” (8) Gilbert together with his wife Nelly sails from London Derry with a sorrowful heart and the idea of leaving Ireland for just seven years, the time to “make his fortune” (7) in America and become “rich enough to return home, and live the remainder of his days like a gentleman” (7). The entire story is marked by a tone of melancholy that starts as soon as the couple takes their last look at their native country “gazing at the fast retiring promontory of Inishowen, which was the last vestige of dear Ireland to be seen” (8). “Dear” and “sweet” are the most recurrent adjectives referring to Ireland which is always a source of heartrending grief every time it is mentioned. In spite of all “its poverty” (7) Irish immigrants always dream of going back. One of the most revealing descriptions in terms of the relationship to Irish nature takes place more than twenty years after Nelly and Gilbert’s departure from Europe. The Frazier family meets for the first time Charles Adderly, the future husband of their adopted child, and Nelly evokes for him the last images of Ireland still clearly impressed on her mind.

Nelly’s recollections of Ireland as portrayed by McHenry are decidedly shaped by the European pastoral tradition considered by Lawrence Buell an “unavoidable ground-condition” (Buell 32) of Western thought: “pastoralism is a species of cultural equipment, . . . part of the conceptual apparatus of all persons with western educations” (Buell 32).

“Alas, [cried Nelly] bonny Manghrygowan will ne’er be out of my head although all the Irish in America were to settle beside us. Its bonny green meadows, and its Hawthorn hedges, wi’ their sweet smelling blossoms, and its soft dimplin’ burns, wi’ the yellow primroses, an’ speckled daisies on their banks, an’ the sweet pretty larks, an’ the thrushes, an’ the lads an the lasses, an’ the sports of a summer evening, an’ the jokes an’ mirth of a long winter’s night—ah! I cannot think o’ them without a sore heart for I’ll ne’er see them again! (106)

What Terry Gifford defines as the first use of the term pastoral is a historical poetic form that has its roots in classical authors like the Greek Theocritus and the Roman Virgil. Their poems talk about country life and the carefree life of shepherds in beautiful, simple and dreamlike landscapes, though they maintain contact “with the working year and the real social conditions of country life” and invariably present “a tension with other kinds of experience” (Williams 16, 18).

The Wilderness cannot be defined as pastoral in genre but it contains passages and descriptions that adopt the pastoral mode. Talking about pastoral in relation to James McHenry entails a reference to the version of pastoral, sometimes denominated Neoclassical, “that was promoted by French theorists in the second half of the seventeenth century and imported into England at the beginning of the eighteenth century” (Patterson 193). The Neoclassical tradition is an idealized form of pastoral from which all signs of contemporary hardship are banished in favor of delightful Arcadian images of rural life: in the Golden Age of the Neoclassicists, pastoral is relocated “under the sign of the *“fête campêtre . . . Sweet, docile and untroubling, it was unmistakably a gentleman’s version of pastoral”* (Patterson 206).

A convinced and conservative disciple of Pope (Oberholtzer 218),¹ the foremost exponent of Augustan pastoral poetry, James McHenry adopts Pope’s version of pastoral and his suggestion that pastoral should be rendered delightful using some illusions: “and this consists in exposing the best side only of a shepherd’s life, and concealing its miseries” (Pope 6).

In Nelly’s recollection of Ireland all miseries have been excluded and the illusion is made complete through the use of several pastoral conventions. Hunger, poverty, destitution summed up in the elegant expression “want of funds” (7) at the beginning of the book are completely absent and the natural landscape makes Ireland “bonny,” attractive and beautiful. The setting is gentle and welcoming with no sign of danger, time seems suspended in a perpetual summer and work is never mentioned. Human beings fit perfectly into the natural rhythm of the changing seasons: they are busy in outdoor leisure activities during summer and winter holds no threat. Far from being connected with starvation, dampness and death the long winter nights are recollected in terms of “jokes and mirth.” A sense of security pervades the entire scene.

Contemporary deep? Committed? Ecologists see in the natural philosophers of the Period of Enlightenment (among others Bacon, Descartes and Newton) the basis for a new practical philosophy that promotes reason as a means for humanity to achieve “total mastery over nature” (Garrard 62). Once human beings become “the lords and possessors of nature” (Descartes 49), the natural world is reduced to pure resources, or in Heidegger’s terms “enframed” with all beings as “mere instruments of our will” (Garrard 62): “Thus when man, investigating, observing, ensnares nature as an area of his own conceiving, he has already been claimed by a way of revealing that challenges him to approach nature as an object of research, until even the object disappears into the objectlessness of standing-reserve” (Heidegger 9).

McHenry’s Irish immigrants arrive in the New World equipped with the approach toward nature promoted by the Enlightenment and the Augustan’s pastoral enthusiasm for landscape gardening and improvement of nature through

¹ In his book Robert Blanc shows that McHenry’s “subject’s theories stemmed largely from the classicists of the eighteenth century” and calls him “a classicist living in the Romantic period” (Halline 474).

a radical transformation and subjugation of the environment. The Irish natural landscape is a tamed one that differs from the New World wilderness. Green meadows, bushes and small trees, colorful and harmless flowers, weak and fragile rivulets as well as personified birds represent a nature of beauty, softness and delicacy that contrasts with the vastness, the obscurity and the overwhelming power of a kind of nature indifferent to human beings and impossible to limit and transform. Irish immigrants define the American wilderness as a place where

there was then nothing to be seen but an unceasing and monotonous continuation of gloomy, thick, and, in many places, impenetrable forests, covering vast and awful mountains and wild and gloomy glens and valleys; concealing lonely rivers and impassable swamps; and yielding inaccessible retreats to numerous races of wild animals and beasts of prey, and human savages. (43)

The Wilderness is viewed with ambivalence by the Judeo-Christian tradition in that it is both “the environment of evil, a kind of hell” (Nash 15) but also “the environment in which to find and draw close to God, . . . a sanctuary from a sinful and persecuting society” (Nash 16). For Irish settlers, however, it almost invariably coincides with an unwelcoming, dangerous, unmapped and unintelligible territory to be transformed.

Implicit in the idealized, artificial representations of the Ireland of neoclassical sensibility, is the anthropocentric perspective on nature of Gilbert Frazier who fully intends to put into practice his intention to disentangle and transform the American wilderness through his intelligence and toil: “His farm advanced yearly in improvement, and its produce in value; for being long the only cultivator of the soil for many day’s journey around him, and living convenient to a navigable river, . . . he could always without difficulty, make a ready and profitable sale of his surplus produce” (24). His relation to the wilderness is conceived in terms of “management of a farm” (11), “habits of industry” (19) and economic gain so that nature is not appreciated in itself but only as a reservoir for human goals and achievement.

It is precisely Frazier’s attitude toward the American wilderness that persuaded James McHenry’s editor to republish the novel after twenty-five years. In the preface *The Wilderness* is defined as “an American work, abounding in incidents connected with the early settlement of the Great West” (i). The new edition is meant to be a tribute to the efforts of the pioneers of the past “the fruits of which have displayed themselves in the well-tilled farms and splendid cities, teeming with millions of intelligent and happy people, that cover the whole West”(i).

Only when the Irish settlers have transformed the wilderness into a pastoral setting and the landscape of the New World has been remodeled on the landscape of Ireland can they feel that the United States is their “home”: “it was now that Gilbert began, in the midst of the desert, that course of industry which, in a short time created a smiling and comfortable farm round him, and which, in a few years, attached him so much to the place, that he abandoned all thoughts of

ever leaving it" (23). Seen from a distance Gilbert Frazier's house is a "neat and prosperous looking farm, with its warm fences, its orchards, its meadow-ground, and its fields of maize, and its stacks of grain, surrounding a large, substantial log-dwelling house, of comfortable appearance" (90-91). It is an unexpected sight in the "midst of a barbarous and pathless wilderness" (87) that takes Charles Ad-derly by surprise and fills him with "home-felt comfort" (9). Charles attempts to achieve on a larger scale what Frazier had achieved for his and his family's survival: the possession of the land and the subjugation of wild space.

This craving for land is what makes Irish, and in general, European settlers come into conflict with the Indian Natives and with their completely different attitude toward the land and the Earth. In the several speeches of Indian Chiefs reported in the novel, some of which James McHenry claims to have "taken nearly verbatim from Washington's Journal" (II: 195), there is a recollection of a peaceful and prosperous past in which Indian tribes lived in harmony in a natural world given to them by the Great Spirit: "There was a time . . . when we lived in peace, where our fathers had lived, for more than a hundred generations, and every man hunted the deer and the buffalo, without danger from the encroachments and attacks of strangers" (II: 195). The Indians' boundless sense of gratitude for the Great Spirit who made the landscape around them and "gave it to their fathers, and to their sons for hunting ground" (49) probably has its origins in the Indians' awareness of being totally dependent on the generosity of the Great Spirit: "What are we without [the great spirit]? Were it not for him, we should have neither deer, nor buffalo, nor bear's flesh to eat, nor air to breathe, nor water to drink" (63). The land is given to them as a gift and is not associated with the idea of conquest.

What emerges from the speeches of the Indian chiefs reported in the novel is that the idea of a land to be conquered and possessed coincides with the arrival of the white man on the American continent. While talking to Charles, Chief Shingiss wonders why French and English fight over a land that is not theirs: "Brother! I will speak freely, your people and the French dislike each other, and many of us dislike you both. Your two nations disagree about this country which belongs to neither of you. . . . Is it not strange that your white nations should quarrel more fiercely about our property than we ourselves?" (49). Being granted the land by the Great Spirit to ensure their survival, Indians are not obsessed with property and they readily consent to white people settling in their territories as long as, Chief Shingiss continues, "you trade fairly, and behave peaceably, and make no attempt to engross our land" (50). But both French and English have a different attitude toward property which the Natives cannot fathom. For the Europeans the land is not given by the Great Spirit but is there to be occupied through violence and murder; the white invaders are indifferent to ancestral customs and "make pretensions" (II: 195) on Indian land according to an economic and anthropocentric ideology that does not entail the need to survive:

These oppressors are proud—they think to grasp the whole earth.—They robbed and murdered our fathers, and took more land from them than they can use. That land they

unjustly hold to this day; yet they are not satisfied . . . they say that the mere treading upon our ground makes it theirs, and they think that wherever we see the prints of their feet we should abandon the country (II: 196).

Despite all the attempts to share the land in peace by the end of the novel the council of the old Indian chiefs realizes that it is no longer possible for them to affirm in front of the Europeans that “this is our land and not yours” (II: 196). They now realize that they are doomed to be exiled from the country “the Great Being above [had] allowed . . . to be a place of residence for us” (II: 197).

What becomes evident through the events narrated in the story is that the Irish immigrants feel lost in the wild, unknown, untrammelled nature of the New World. Their sense of extraneousness is in stark contrast to the American Natives’ sense of being at one with the wilderness around them. Irish immigrants can consider the United States as their new home only when they have made it a copy of what they have left behind on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. This process of transformation and control over nature is achieved in the novel through the adoption of a neoclassical pastoral overview of nature.

In her provocative book *Pastoral and Ideology* Annabel Patterson reveals “how writers, artists and intellectuals of all persuasions have used pastoral for a range of [manifold] functions and intentions” (7). Throughout the centuries authors have reinterpreted the pastoral in terms of their ideological values. In particular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, authors used pastoral conventions to celebrate the great estates of the landed gentry, thus turning pastoral into a political tool. According to contemporary critics the neoclassical pastorals of artificial, labor-free and delightful portraits of country life created a false ideology “that served to endorse a comfortable status quo for the landowning class” (Gifford 7). More specifically Roger Sales argues that this “literary form came to be used to prevent the questioning of the power structures that underpinned land ownership and, indeed, the complete fabric of society” (Gifford 8).

Influenced by neoclassical pastoral poetry that idealizes English country life and its social and economic relations McHenry seems to use Neoclassical pastoral conventions to validate Irish immigrants’ appropriation of the land in the New World. The landowners in Pope’s “An Epistle to Bathurst” and “An Epistle to Burlington” are guardians of stability and the social orders and actively participate “in the construction of an Arcadia for the future” (Gifford 35). Similarly, Gilbert Fraziers is an active agent in the transformation of a country “which, in the recollection of many yet living, was long the scene of want, hunger, desolation, terror, and savage warfare” (McHenry 6) into a place of peace, stability and prosperity. This is what entitles him to the possession of the land he has so bravely and unflinchingly contributed to transform and shape into an idyllic, care-free facsimile of the Irish countryside.

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They held each other like in High School dances
 in the fifties;
 I recalled when I worked in the woods
 and the bars of Madras, Oregon.
 That short-haired joy and roughness—
 America—your stupidity.
 I could almost love you again.

We left-onto the freeway shoulders—
 under the tough old stars—
 In the shadow of bluffs
 I came back to myself,
 To the real work, to
 “*What is to be done.*” (Snyder, *Reader* 466)

Snyder's obvious suggestion is that, in order to do *what is to be done*, what needs to be done, we must first reassess our position within a specific setting and return to an awareness of ourselves and our lives within said setting. Taking that as a starting point, our readings of environmentally based literature (or what we call in some cases *nature writing*) must struggle with those very same contradictions. Certainly “the real work” requires a return to a consideration of one's place in the ecosystem, but how does that jibe with a return to one's self, positioning, as it might appear to do, the anthropocentric against the ecocentric? Snyder's work, along with writers such as Terry Tempest Williams, Leslie Marmon Silko, and N. Scott Momaday, to name but a few, suggests that contemporary “nature writing” is not merely a shift away from an anthropocentric perspective guided by a human will to change. Rather, their representations of a bio- or ecocentric world is a resurfacing of the streams that seem to have long been neglected in North American writing. Possibly, the anthropocentric tendencies could in part be said to have been determined by that so-called American “pioneering spirit,” its ideology of individual self-determination in a self-made world where *independence* denies the terms of *inter-dependence* that define ecocentrism. This, in the end, is what pits in violent historical contrast, American and Aboriginal (Native American) lives.

Our contemporary concerns about the environment, and our interest in more communal, interdependent and collaborative traditions, in other words what Native American cultures tend to be, have led to an increased interest also in how those values are represented. Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and *Gardens in the Dunes*, N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, and Terry Tempest Williams' *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert*, are representative of voices in the landscape of American literature that speak to a counter-perspective that, as Williams suggests, “reveals the backside of the heart” (Williams 195). That is the direction we are required to take in approaching any representation of wildness. It is a direction inclusive of deep physical, physiological, and existential connections rather than nostalgic ones, connections that we might contemplate in asking if such a possibility even exists. Placing Gary Snyder's own use and interpre-

tations of Eastern Philosophies and Native American cultures alongside a small selection of Native American writing, this paper will address some aspects of a North American (United States) sense of self-determination and independence that continues to hold sway today.

Although earlier times and cultures might have had a better, more intimate understanding of the workings of wild landscapes, that knowledge was progressively squandered with the privatization of the commons as migrations toward settled, urban environments increased. Henry David Thoreau's oft-misquoted dictum "in Wildness is the preservation of the world" (Thoreau), which for Jack Turner defines the mis-understanding of the distinctions and the tensions between "wilderness as property and wildness as quality" (J. Turner 81), finally re-emerges in a contemporary American context with Gary Snyder's *The Practice of the Wild*. In that collection of essays, and specifically in "The Etiquette of Freedom," the finer distinctions between wild, wildness, and wilderness are teased out and brought to bear on our present state of being in the world (Snyder, *Practice* 4).

The title of Snyder's essay suggests an approach, a conduct, a relationship *with* and *for* freedom that requires thoughtfulness and consideration. As such, given our assumptions regarding freedom and the sense of entitlement that we feel, inclusive of a tradition inclusive of warfare supposedly representative of the struggle for it, the terms by which we define the term require review and processing. That is exactly what Snyder's *Etiquette* undertakes.

The set-up for this exploration is an episode witnessed by Snyder during a visit he and a friend paid to Louie, an elderly Native American man. The friend, an expert on native California languages, tells Louie that he has found another *Nisenan* speaker, a language reduced to a very small number of speakers. Contrary to the expected excitement at the news, Louie's response is less than interested: "I know her from way back. . . . She wouldn't want to come over here. I don't think I should see her. Besides, her family and mine never did get along" (4). This exchange suggests that a construct such as language is less important than the unspoken understanding or "compact" established within an ecosystem, a system in which the Native American kinship tradition is fully identified.

The recounted episode becomes the essay's first instance of a round-about definition of freedom not usually recognized: its emancipatory potential from anthropocentric constructs. The very ambiguity of the terms by which we constitute a relationship, not to say a belief in freedom, leads Snyder to contemplate its depth of meaning. While his etymological exploration is comparative in nature, he most definitely situates it on *American* ground:

Wild and free. An American dream phrase loosing images: a long-maned stallion racing across the grasslands, a V of Canada Geese high and honking, a squirrel chattering and leaping limb to limb overhead in an oak. It also sounds like an ad for a Harley Davidson. Both words, profoundly political and sensitive as they are, have become consumer baubles. (5)

Constructing his argument by braiding Native American anecdotes, stories, history and practices, his own understanding and practice of Asian Taoist and Buddhist Dharma, with his North American cultural approaches to the natural environment, Snyder's essay illustrates how we have constructed language to suggest humans' distance from the *natural* world.

An apt symbolic figure to illustrate the possibility of retracing our paths back along the forgotten byways of local knowledges and environmental interdependence, the "lost" conquistador Alvar Núñez, also cited by other writers such as Rebecca Solnit and Barry Lopez, is an indication that it might somehow still be possible to "gain a compassionate heart, a taste for self-sufficiency and simplicity, and a knack for healing" (13). The Spaniard's wanderings on the continent resulted in his regaining of a sense of ecocentric self by letting down his defenses, by holding himself open to what he did not know. Others, hardened by their cultural certainties, could only establish an in-sane or a less-than-sane (meaning unhealthy) relationship with what they encountered.

Jack Turner again, along these same lines, reconstitutes Thoreau's phrase "in Wildness is the preservation of the world" to emphasize that it is about the creation of free self-willed, and self determinate things with the harmonious order of the cosmos" (J. Turner 82). What, then, might we have when faced with the contrasting concepts of property vs. quality? If we look at writing that has emerged out of what might be considered "the American experience," writing that describes being in a diverse and astounding landscape, we notice that it is in full contradiction with the values that have made formed that other America, the America of manifest destiny, of slavery, of expansionism and imperialism. Whether we read Walt Whitman, Robinson Jeffers, Mary Oliver, Leslie Marmon Silko, or Scott Momaday, we find that the issue of property is moot, non-existent, while quality of life, experience, community and freedom are pervasive and all important.

WALT WHITMAN, "SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD"

1

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.
Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am good-fortune,
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing,
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,
Strong and content I travel the open road. (Whitman 1)

ROBINSON JEFFERS, "SHINE, REPUBLIC"

The quality of these trees, green height; of the sky, shining; of water, a clear flow; of the rock, hardness.

And reticence: each is noble in its quality. The love of freedom has been the quality of western man.

...

And you, America, that passion made you. You were not born to prosperity, you were born to love freedom. You did not say “en masse,” you said “independence.” But we cannot have all the luxuries and freedom also.

Freedom is poor and laborious; that torch is not safe but hungry, and often requires blood for its fuel. (Jeffers 503)

The freedom that for Jeffers “often requires blood” has quite another meaning for Native American writers. Not only was their freedom lost so that others could claim it as part of their national ideology, but today the gap between the American notion of freedom and what others within the nation are allowed remains more than evident. Leslie Marmon Silko and N. Scott Momaday, likely two of the best known Native American writers, express their experience of freedom in similar but disparate terms. The American Dream is Native America’s American nightmare, the legacy of the nation’s struggle for freedom, the *pursuit of happiness* defined by private property, ownership, and individualism free of responsibility to others, is a pursuit foreign to Native America. Silko:

As a person of mixed ancestry growing up in the United States in the late 1950s, I knew all of the cruel epithets that might be hurled at others; the knowledge was a sort of solace that I was not alone in my feelings of unease, of not quite belonging to the group that clearly mattered most in the United States (Silko, *Fences* 102).

And Momaday, in remembering his grandmother and the stories of his Kiowa nation and its traditions, writes *The Way to Rainy Mountain* as a sort of comparative memory to revive that which might be too easily forgotten by others:

Although my grandmother lived out her long life in the shadow of Rainy Mountain, the immense landscape of the continental interior lay like memory in her blood. She could tell of the Crows, whom she had never seen, and of the Black Hills, where she had never been. I wanted to see in reality what she had seen more perfectly in the mind’s eye, and traveled fifteen hundred miles to begin my pilgrimage. (Momaday 7)

The work of these two writers expresses the belief of the interconnectedness of all things, of the “reciprocal relationship humans have with their environment,” and what some North American aboriginal cultures refer to as “Earth’s Blanket” (N. Turner 19). In accordance with this, freedom is understood as the possibility to express the overall, whole potential of the ecosystem, in other words *local knowledge* as a manifestation and expression of the whole interactive ecosystem.

The shift from anthro- to ecocentric could be said to represent a shift in perspective toward a more inclusive sense of freedom. That it might also signify a freedom relieved of the inheritance of *manifest destiny* has yet to be determined. Accepting the fact that the undercurrent of American culture as expressed by its Aboriginal population has always been ecocentric might also reshape the effect of hegemonic alterations of it and a reinterpretation of writers like Whitman.

The bard's "good fortune" is contained not in property but in the quality of his own self, not in property but the "open road." In the end, it is his *story* that seems to form freedom's overriding trait, the manner in which *quality* is transmitted. Story and history (lower case h, that is to say unofficial history) emerge as equals and not as property of any one person or author. And, while Native American stories might be told by individuals they are inclusive of community history and are not solely the teller's.

In *The Earth's Blanket*, Nancy Turner reports that anthropologists have identified an "ethic of reciprocity" in First Nations cultures:

The linkage between humans, animals and the spirit world which so characterized the First Nations societies created a complex ethical framework which reinforced the notion of mutual dependency. Humans were not seen as dominant but played a complementary and often subordinate role in the larger ecological system. A key feature here was the concept of reciprocity and the belief that respectful human attitudes towards the resources helped to ensure the availability of future supply. Such an ethic encourages responsible use and supports an imperative of restraint. (235)

Such an ethic constitutes the threads of the *Earth's Blanket*, corresponding to what many Native/First Nations writers report. It is *story* that forms part of Native ceremony, where "the linkage is told and retold in stories" and emphasizes "people's relationships with each other, across families, clans, communities and generations, as well as with other relatives—the animals, fish, trees and all the other elements of creation" (231). It is what leads Leslie Marmon Silko to declare that "within one story there are many other stories coming together" and that it through storytelling that "you know you belong" (Silko, *Yellow 3*). And it is the sort of relation that leads Momaday to represent this extended kinship as freedom:

The skyline in all directions is close at hand, the high wall of the woods and deep cleavages of shade. There is a perfect freedom in the mountains, but it belongs to the eagle and the elk, the badger and the bear. The Kiowa reckoned their stature by the distance they could see, and they were bend and blind in the wilderness. (Momaday 7)

What is required of us today is "the real work" of story telling as an expression of history and its continuation and conditioning of the present toward the preservation of culture. The conditions we have created through the exploitation of resources and cultures demand this more human remedy of us. In the North American context, what was once called the disappearing race did not disappear despite repeated attempts to cause it to do so. Although secreted and distanced, its cultures and values have survived and offer us a valuable and viable example for everyone's survival. What other need would there be for Native American writers to write and publish their work, if not as an offering of a different, saner view of what the "real work" might be for the greater culture. Their critical gift is a great opportunity to participate in storytelling as an integrative and healing practice.

It is hard to say whether the quincentenary celebrations of 1992 marked a turning point in acknowledging what back during that year came to be recalled as “five hundred years of occupation.” The continued veneration of Columbus and the “discovery” would seem to contradict such an assumption. And there are many other events and incidents that could be said to have marked potential turning points in our attitudes toward Native America, from Pine Ridge in 1973, to the Peace and Reconciliation process currently active in Canada (Reconciliation Canada). It was however the 500th remembrance of 1492, and its yearly repetition on October 12th, that brought and continues to bring the contradictions rooted in North American society to the fore.

Among the conferences, publications, declarations, and confrontations of 1992 a little book, the transcript of a lecture by Barry Lopez, entitled *The Rediscovery of North America* (1992), outlines a perspective of opportunity. Lopez does not pull any punches in recounting how our relationship to the continent that some aboriginal groups called Turtle Island was initiated. Through a review of what constitutes North American geography, cultures, place names, flora and fauna, Lopez points to the processes of *imposition* that we have overlayed on the continent and its inhabitants, all of its inhabitants, as a result of the “discovery.” He re-imagines how we might start afresh, by stepping back to a condition of initial approach during which we might marvel at what the continent offered (and continues to offer) and how we might step upon it with a new attitude, new eyes, a softer step: “We must turn to each other, and sense that this is possible” (58).

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Signs Written upon the Water: On Some Representations of the Great Lakes as Inland Seas

RICHARD KIDDER

The title of the paper is taken from a recent work by the Canadian Anashinaabe scholar, Karl S. Hele, *Lines Drawn Upon the Water: First Nations and the Great Lakes Borders and Borderlands* (Hele xiii–xvii). In this collection of essays edited by Hele the authors explore the legal and cultural issues stemming from the establishment on the Great Lakes of two very recent, from the authors' points of view, political entities, Canada and the United States of America. The work concentrates largely on historical and legal questions concerning treaties, borders, and movement across borders. Because no natural or cultural impediments to the freedom of movement preceded the foundation of the United States or of Canada, questions of nation and of state come to the fore in Hele's book. The essays deal primarily with demographic materials, but the historical and cultural aspects of the arguments are of primary importance to those interested in literary and cultural relations among the many peoples of the Great Lakes Basin. The divisions that are emphasized reveal the ways that determine their dependence on historical contingencies as imaginary though seemingly necessary constructions (Anderson 83 ff.).

The stimulus to write this paper proceeded from the days, and now the years, following the earthquake and the tsunami of the 11th of March, 2011, off the coast of the prefecture of Fukushima, Japan. The shock wave caused by that earthquake overwhelmed the protective retaining wall between the sea and the four nuclear reactors managed by the Tokyo Electrical Power Company (TEPCO), destroying in one fell swoop the cooling and backup cooling capacities of the nuclear reactors.

The short and long term effects are in the news every day: a 20 km square exclusion area due to radiation has now become what was the evacuated zone, emptied of inhabitants just as it was when the cooling systems went on the blink. Hundreds of human settlements (156,000 people are displaced) are off-limits because of radiation; agriculture from the area cannot be sold; fishery products in the areas adjacent to the reactors are banned, and the ban has recently been extended by Korea to include fisheries contiguous to Fukushima. Because of the kind of damage done to the reactors and the geological configuration of the land upon which the reactors were built, about three hundred tons of highly radioactive groundwater flows into the Pacific Ocean every day.

What does any of this have to do with American Studies and with the Great Lakes? The answer is that there are more than thirty nuclear reactors in the Great Lakes Basin, many of which are on the shores of the lakes: most of them are of the same type and of the same vintage as the Westinghouse cooled-water reactor at Fukushima: in other words, they are built close to the lakes in order to use the water to cool their radioactive cores. The lakes contain approximately twenty-one percent of the world's drinking water, and the waters serve thirty-five million people. Thus a very complex set of circumstances, at once cultural, technological, and economic, have determined in Japan a situation that, just as on the Great Lakes, seems to go well beyond any of those particular determining factors.

It may also be argued that the current state of affairs, both in Japan and on the Great Lakes is but the culmination of a long process of extrapolating the tenets of Judeo-Christian attitudes toward the natural world, or "the Baconian creed that scientific knowledge means technological power over nature" (L. White 1203). In this view, natural philosophy in the nineteenth century accomplished the final steps which led to the dominance of the Baconian model of the wedding of the theoretical and of the empirical sciences in order to produce the modern version of technology. The birth of technology in the contemporary sense paradoxically is contemporaneous to the first use of the term 'ecology.' The historian of science responsible for describing this state of affairs, Lynn White Jr. is very clear regarding the advantages derived from such a world view: "By the end of the 15th century the technological superiority of Europe was such that its small, mutually hostile nations could spill out over all the rest of the world, conquering, looting, and colonizing" (L. White 1204). This paper thus emphasizes the necessity of considering the cultural and political histories of the lands and waters of the Great Lakes in terms of the purposes to which the Great Lakes Basin was put by the colonizing powers from the times of Verrazzano, Cartier, and Champlain down to the present. It also underlines the degree to which the political boundaries of nations, provinces and states zig-zag, meander, and cut through geological spaces that know no such divisions. It would thus seem rather short-sighted to consider the area in terms of a national literature.

In 1975, as an example, the journalist and author John G. Fuller in *We Almost Lost Detroit* described the near meltdown in 1966 of the nuclear reactor Enrico

Fermi Plant 1 located only a few miles downriver from Detroit: the plant is built on the Detroit River which empties into Lake Erie, which flows into Lake Ontario over the Niagara Falls, and then into the Saint Lawrence River, now called the St. Lawrence Seaway, and into the Atlantic Ocean. A meltdown of the Enrico Fermi reactor would thus have devastated a large part of the Great Lakes Basin and would have affected two sovereign countries and numerous provinces and states. This is certainly not a very heartening prospect, yet it brings into strong relief the tensions between James Fenimore Cooper's idea of Lake Ontario as a pristine body of water as he describes it in *The Pathfinder* and Margaret Fuller's vacation ideal of the Great Lakes in *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843* which stand in contrast to the present state of things that have undergone, since the middle of the nineteenth century, the changes that Lynn White has described so effectively. The question of course, following the example of the critic and historian Bonnie Costello in her commentary on Robert Frost's "Oven Bird" (Costello 19-21), is what to do with a diminished thing?

In part the question has to do with the capacity of belief and of unbelief on the part of those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. On the 11th of March, the day after the earthquake and the ensuing incident, when I asked a friend, a nuclear physicist, what was happening at Fukushima, if there were indeed reason to worry about a meltdown or about continuing problems with radiation, she assured me that the technologies involved precluded any danger to the environment (meaning fish, plants, humans and other animals), and that everything should be entrusted to the scientists who understood the problems involved. Clearly, this is a question of belief. Belief that may be shaken, belief that may stand rock solid, but belief, nonetheless, in short, a religious question. As White insists, the problems that have been created by science and technology can not be solved by the very ideologies that have created them.

As authors such as Dave Dempsey insist (see Dempsey 195 ff.), the Great Lakes are part of a complex hydrological system that extends for approximately two thousand miles from the Gaspé and the mouth of the St. Lawrence River to Chicago, passing through lakes Ontario, Erie, Huron, Superior, and Michigan. And since the system contains around twenty-one percent of the available drinking water in the world it is necessary that it be safeguarded in spite of our culture's commitment not only to science, but to resolving the problems that science has created with more science.

It may well be important to understand the beliefs, listen to and know the stories (Chamberlin 1-3, 77-78) of those who have lived within the bounds of the two hydrological basins that constitute the Great Lakes and what is presently called the St. Lawrence River. This means being attentive to stories of the Anashinaabe, the Potawatomie, the Odawa, the Mic Mac, the Huron, and the Haudensee, peoples that well precede the presence of Europeans on the North American continent; as well as listening to the stories told by those first explorers, such as Giovanni di Verrazzano (1485-1528), Jacques Cartier (1491-1557), Samuel de Champlain (1574-1635)

and many others who believed that the way to the riches of the East, the shortest sea path to China and to India lay not to the north, nor the south, but through the middle of the lands that seemed forever to emerge west of the New Found Land.

Thus, Champlain expatiates in numerous passages describing his travels on the North American continent, in New France, on the lands lying beyond the mouth the St. Lawrence River, the imagined path to the riches of Cathay, la Nouvelle France as a land of plenty, a land that must well have seemed an inexhaustible cornucopia of wildlife, fish, water, and arable land:

The next day we parted, and we continued our journey along the shore of this lake of the Attigouantans, in which there are a great number of islands; and we made about 45 leagues, keeping along the shore of the lake. It is very large, being nearly four hundred leagues¹ in length from east to west and fifty leagues wide, and because of its great size I named it the Freshwater Sea. It abounds in many kinds of excellent fish, both those we have and those we have not, and principally in trout which are of monstrous size; I have seen some that were as much as four and a half feet long, and the smallest one sees are two and a half feet. Also pike of like size, and a certain kind of sturgeon, a very large fish and marvellously good to eat . . . Then afterwards we crossed the bay which forms one of the extremities of the lake, and made about seven leagues until, on the first of August, we reached the country of the Attigouantan, at a village called Otoucha, where we found a great change in the country, this part being very fine, mostly cleared, with many hills and numerous streams which make it an agreeable district. I went to look at their Indian corn which at that time was far advanced for the season. (Champlain 237-39)

The descriptions of the landscape, of the richness of the hunting and agriculture, follow on the original purpose of the journey which was to find the shortest route to the East:

This is why many princes have striven to facilitate commerce with the peoples of the East, in the hope that this route might prove shorter and less dangerous . . . But as he [Mons] had made a report to the king of the fertility of the soil, and I had made one upon the means of discovering the passage to China with the inconvenience of the northern icebergs, or the heat of the torrid zone through which our seamen, with incredible labours and perils, pass twice in going and twice in returning, his Majesty commanded the Sieur de Monts to prepare a fresh expedition and again to send men to continue what he had begun. [note 1, ed.: "Monts' report to the King was no doubt verbal, as was probably Champlain's upon the new route to China. Champlain had in mind, of course, a route by way of the source of the St. Lawrence, which he understood from the Indians was connected far to the westward with salt water. He is now showing the connection between the Acadian attempts of 1604-7 and the foundation of Quebec in 1608, and is giving the reasons for re-starting the settlement in the interior rather than upon the coast of Acadia]. (Champlain 227-29)

Champlain prefaces his comments with a cursory run-down of the attempts of John and Sebastian Cabot, Gaspar Corte-Real, Martin Frobisher, Humphrey Gil-

¹ A league is approximately 5.55 kilometers, thus 400 leagues is about 2220 kilometers.

bert, and Jacques Cartier, to find a route to Cathay; it was Cartier who stopped at the site of Hochelaga, today's Montréal, stymied by the rapids on the Saint Lawrence. These would not prove to be an impediment to Champlain as he continued his explorations upon the Great Lakes.

The struggle for control of the region would become the lynch-pin to the control of the North American continent. During and long after the time that both the French and the British gave up trying to find a route to the East through the Great Lakes, the tribes of the Council of the Three Fires, the Anashinaabe, the Potawatamie and the Oddawa, tried to establish a working relationship with the colonial invaders. Theirs was an effort not only to hold off the belligerent forces of the Europeans, but also somehow to stem the flow of other peoples displaced by the European invaders from the Eastern coasts of the continent, notably the Iroquois and their allies, the vicissitudes of which struggles are described by Richard White in his *The Middle Ground* (50 ff. and 223 ff.). White's "middle ground" was the site where Indians and European invaders and traders met in a mutually beneficial arrangement, beneficial for reasons of trade as well as of political alliances. This middle ground held sway even through Pontiac's war following the Treaty of Paris in 1763, and up to Tecumseh's alliance with the British and his eventual defeat during the War of 1812 according to White.

Yet both of these attempts on the parts of Pontiac and Tecumseh to wrest back the Northwest Territory from the incursions of settlers, entrepreneurs, madmen, civil and military authorities, were inspired by a faith in the regeneration of their Ottawa, Ojibwe and Shawnee cultures. Especially prominent in this respect is the role played by Tecumseh's brother, Tenskwatawa, the leader of a religious movement whose purpose was to re-invigorate the peoples living in the Old Northwest in order that they might resist and repulse the European and Yankee invaders.

The theme of regeneration remains strangely enough one of the rather consistent staples of the Yankee literary representations of the lands and waters associated with the Great Lakes: from James Fenimore Cooper's *The Oak Openings*, or *the Bee Hunter*, to Margaret Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843*, and to F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, various types of regenerative transformations occur on the historical as well as on the fictional scene, as if to actuate the belief underlying Champlain's enthusiastic incursion into the North American Continent, or Pontiac's and Tecumseh's ill-starred hopes for restoring to its former state the geographical area bounded by the Great Lakes to the north and the Ohio River to the south. There thus would seem to be an inter-cultural and trans-historical confluence of the thematics mediated by the landscape and the waters themselves.

In what is considered by many to be the Great American Novel, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, the moment at which the transformation of James Gatz into Jay Gatsby takes place on the waters of Lake Superior as recounted to the narrator of the tale, Nick Carraway:

Contemporary legends such as the 'underground pipeline to Canada' attached themselves to him, and there was one persistent story that he didn't live in a house at all,

but in a boat that looked like a house and was moved secretly up and down the Long Island shore. Just why these inventions were a source of satisfaction to James Gatz of North Dakota isn't easy to say.

James Gatz—that was really, or at least legally, his name. He had changed it at the age of seventeen and at the specific moment that witnessed the beginning of his career—when he saw Dan Cody's yacht drop anchor over the most insidious flat on Lake Superior. It was James Gatz who had been loafing along the beach that afternoon in a torn green jersey and a pair of canvas pants, but it was already Jay Gatsby who borrowed a rowboat, pulled out to the *Tuolomee* and informed Cody that a wind might catch him and break him up in half an hour. (Fitzgerald 62-63)

Of course it may be just a coincidence that Fitzgerald locates his fable of transformation and regeneration on the Great Lakes, as it may be another coincidence that Nick Adams, in his attempt to return to himself, to come alive again, does so on the shores of Lake Superior at the Big Two-Hearted River.

The contemporary writer, Jim Harrison, native to the Great Lakes area, generally situates the action of his novels in the northern part of Michigan, either the Upper Peninsula or the northern part of the lower peninsula. In *Returning to Earth*, the sequel to *True North*, the story is told in four parts by four narrators, including the central figure himself, of the inevitable demise of the central character, Donald, Ojibway, doomed by Lou Gehrig's disease, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. Donald knows he is going to die, but he wants to be buried in sacred ground. One problem with this is that the sacred ground in which he wants to be buried lies across the political border, the border between Canada and the United States. So it is necessary to think up some means by which Donald and family and friends can get to Canada, fooling the border guards.

At breakfast with a forkful of egg and fried potatoes halfway to my mouth the hammer dropped.

"What you intend to do is illegal," she said.

"I know it." I wanted to say something smart like "No shit, Sherlock."

"You could get in serious trouble, all of you."

"I think of death as beyond paltry legalities. Donald should die in the way he chooses. I simply don't care what happens afterward." The idea of civil authorities interfering knotted my stomach and I pushed my plate away.

... You have to register a death both here and in Canada and you can't just bury anyone where you might wish but since Donald's an enrolled member of the tribe he's called a First Citizen in Canada and the civil law thus becomes a bit mushy. First Citizens have different rights." (Harrison 118-19)

But the trip with Donald across the Canadian Soo (Sault Ste. Marie) goes smoothly, if not to say very easily and:

When we whizzed through Canadian customs with the agent saying, "Good luck fishing" my mind altered his line and began to view the world in black and white despite the bluish-green water of eastern Lake Superior to the left and the high, green forested hills on the right with the conifers a dense green and the hardwoods not totally leafed out this far north, their pale green normally my favorite color. (Harrison 139)

It is springtime, and although the time of regeneration, it seems that the sign of triumphal rebirth will be carried out by the native hero and his friends, who through an act of civil disobedience succeed in burying Donald on the Canadian side of the Soo.

Lake Superior figures in many works of United States literature, from Hemingway to Erdrich, in Underground Railroad stories, and in general in works that tend to represent the North as a place of haven, of release. The Ojibway writer, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft (her English name), Bamewawagezhikaquay (her Ojibway name), and which translates into contemporary English as Woman of the Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky, left a handful of poems, many of which have been attributed to her American husband, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, explorer, ethnological linguist *avant-la-lettre*. Together they make one of the more problematic and fascinating pairs in Great Lakes history and in North American letters. Jane Schoolcraft contributed much of the narrative framework as well as the specific stories to her husband's work upon which Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Hiawatha* was based, and her highly personal poetry reflects her own sense of Lake Superior's sea-like, regenerative powers:

LINES WRITTEN AT CASTLE ISLAND, LAKE SUPERIOR

Here in my native inland sea
From pain and sickness would I flee
and from its shores and island bright
Gather a store of sweet delight.
Lone island of the saltless sea!
How wide, how sweet, how fresh and free
How all transporting—is the view
Of rocks and skies and waters blue
Uniting, as a song's sweet strains
To tell, here nature only reigns.
Ah, nature! here forever sway
Far from the haunts of men away
For here, there are no sordid fears,
No crimes, no misery, no tears
No pride of wealth; the heart to fill,
No laws to treat my people ill. (Schoolcraft 92)

Schoolcraft in her poem touches on the hard existence of laws, laws imposed by outsiders that disrupt the wellness of her being: the conventionally romantic juxtaposition and contrast of law and nature, of freedom and constriction, of health and sickness, poverty and wealth, resolve not in terms of a mythic nation-state, but unite in the song dedicated to a specific people in a specific place. The possibility of personal regeneration as well as that of the larger group to which she belongs, is given by and through the natural setting.

The frequent recurrence of the theme of regeneration may well be due to the dominant preoccupations of the writers cited here. The distance between Jane

Schoolcraft, F. S. Fitzgerald and Jim Harrison is temporal and social at the least. It may be argued that the three of them rely on the lakes and the lake system to provide a kind of natural and representational backdrop in which the theme of regeneration may be explored. This kind of thematics of regeneration is at once conventional in terms of the representations of lakes and rivers, of fresh waters, found throughout the literatures of the world. Yet it seems to be tied to the very specific and frequently repeated desires found in the earliest and in the latest peoples who have inhabited the area.

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“Schooled by the Inhuman Sea”: Maritime Imagination and the Discourses of Emancipation in Herman Melville’s *Clarel*

PAOLO SIMONETTI

“...the prairie was to John Marr a reminder of ocean.”
Herman Melville (*Published Poems* 197)

On the 4th of June 1839, the twenty-year-old Herman Melville signed on board the merchant ship *St. Lawrence* as a deck hand for a trip to Liverpool: his family fortunes were so disastrous that he may well have felt in a mood not dissimilar to Ishmael’s in the famous incipit of *Moby-Dick*. The sea might have been Herman’s “substitute for pistol and ball” (*Moby-Dick* 3), but most importantly, it eventually launched his career as a writer, providing him with a “mighty theme” (*Moby-Dick* 456) and inspiring his major literary works. In a period when America was not ready for cultural and religious relativity, Melville had the unique possibility of living for weeks with a tribe of natives in the Marquesas; from this experience, as Hershel Parker states, he “gained a permanent, instinctive sense of cultural relativity, whether Polynesian, Christian, Muslim, the Greek and Roman of myth and history” (xxiii). No wonder that he would thenceforth regard the sea as a personal as well as national myth of equality, freedom and emancipation.

In 1856, seventeen years after his first passage, an ill and disillusioned Melville entrusted the manuscript of his last novel, *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (1857) to his brother Allan and embarked on a journey to the Middle East; after

his return he completely abandoned fiction and thought of himself as a poet. From then on, except for *Billy Budd, Sailor*, written at the end of his life and published posthumously, he wrote exclusively verses. If the first sea voyages made Melville a famous novelist, the disappointing journey to the Middle East, and then the Civil War, made him a poet.

Through its eighteen thousand verses divided in four parts, *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land* (1876) chronicles the journey of a group of pilgrims traveling from Jerusalem to Bethlehem and back. Melville used the ancient *topos* of the pilgrimage in order to meditate on contemporary religious, social and political issues, as well as to reflect in a meta-fictional vein on his own literary career. In *Clarel* his early autobiographical sea-narratives and his later philosophical meditations come together in a significant and original way.

The aim of this essay is to read *Clarel* as Melville's most mature reflection on issues related to democracy and emancipation in the United States. Most importantly, I argue that Melville significantly structured *Clarel* as a sailor's narrative, originally adapting the popular devices of sea-writing to versification in order to bridge the gap between his early fiction and his later poetry. Finally, considering Melville's lifelong engagement with autobiographical narratives and maritime references, I propose to read *Clarel* as the author's poetic pilgrimage to offset the excessive autobiographical impulse of his early fiction, in order to gain an artistic, as well as a personal, emancipation.

Besides its obvious commercial importance, the sea in America is inevitably linked with the Atlantic slave trade. Melville's writing career as a novelist—from 1846 to 1857—coincided with years of mounting social and political tension, especially with regard to the “peculiar institution” of the slave trade. Questions related to democracy and freedom, slavery and emancipation, have been a constant underlying preoccupation throughout Melville's writing. In 1849 he visited Paris and was appalled by the prospect of rebellious masses; the Year of Revolution impressed Melville so much that he inserted into the dense plot of *Mardi* (1849) a bitter commentary on the violent outcome of democratic revolutions; significantly enough, the allegorical novel overtly reveals Melville's anti-slavery attitudes, when a character states that “Humanity cries out against this vast enormity”; and though “not one man knows a prudent remedy,” Melville admonishes his contemporaries: “Blame not, then, the North; and wisely judge the South” (*Mardi* 534). When *Typee* (1846) and *Omoo* (1847) were published, they were criticized because of Melville's harshly explicit descriptions of the missionaries' treatments of natives in the name of an alleged process of civilization. Moreover, many critics have been aware that *Moby-Dick* is, among other things, an allegory about a multiracial nation that has lost its way, so that at least one critic saw Melville's whole career as “an ongoing inquiry into the tangled relations of race, sea-faring and modern society” (Benesch 72).

The outbreak of the Civil War confirmed Melville's worst fears and provided him with a sustained poetic theme. In fact, he was less concerned about the

war than about the problems of Reconstruction and the reconciliation between North and South. *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* was published in 1866; probably the very next year Melville began working on *Clarel*, a long narrative poem the writing process of which was a pilgrimage in itself, as the full title intimates.

When *Clarel* was published on June, 3rd 1876, it passed completely unnoticed. America was celebrating the one-hundredth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence as an occasion for writers to discuss national political and historical issues. A Centennial Exposition was held in Philadelphia, attended by ten million visitors. Among them was an unenthusiastic Herman Melville, who in a letter to his cousin casually mentioned his visit: "By the way, I was there yesterday—went & returned same day; you will be much impressed with it; it is immense—a sort of tremendous Vanity Fair" (*Correspondence* 447). Not surprisingly, the fair did not impress the writer of *Clarel*; the poem is mostly an "un-Centennial production" (Buell 139) and it stands apart from any patriotic celebration. Marrs describes it as "a poetic Declaration of Dependence" (103), while for Hershel Parker *Clarel* is Melville's "skeptical testament about the state of the country . . . , a counterdemonstration against public self-congratulation" (Parker xxv). Carolyn Karcher even goes so far as to state that *Clarel* "writes the epitaph of Melville's democratic faith" (Karcher 287). If in *Mardi*, as Walter E. Bezanson argues, Melville "had warned of dangers confronting a democracy in which he felt a stake, in *Clarel* he stood hostile to the whole spirit of the age" (607).

One of *Clarel's* recurrent themes is a postwar meditation on the national destiny in light of the ill-fated democratic revolutions of the nineteenth century. Emancipation is a recurrent motif in the poem, especially in part four, called "Bethlehem," where the characters, more than in any other part, engage in long debates over the past, present, and future of democracy. But before focusing on the peculiar character of Ungar, who explicitly introduces the discourses of race and slavery, it is important to assess another crucial theme of the poem, the one linked to the maritime imagination.

The few reviewers who wrote about *Clarel* when it was published basically agreed that it "should have been written in prose" (Higgins and Parker 585). Those who actually read the poem compared it to Melville's early sea-narratives: the anonymous reviewer of *Lippincott's Magazine* acknowledged "some good images and metaphors, especially those drawn from Mr. Melville's old sea-life" (Higgins and Parker 539), and he described the pilgrims' journey "as fanciful in its incidents and personages as those former voyages to the island of the Pacific or Southern seas" (539). Such a comparison was more accurate than one may imagine at first sight, because the text justifies it in several ways.

I argue that *Clarel* has many things in common with a sailor's narrative. In her work on first-person nonfictional narratives by antebellum American seamen, Hester Blum states that "the structure of sea writing is circular, as the narratives end, naturally enough, where they begin: in port" (14). So it is with *Clarel*, as the narrator remarks at the end of his journey: "At last, Jerusalem! 'Twas thence /

They started—thither they return, / Rounding the waste circumference” (IV.29 11-13, 482). Moreover, Blum goes on, “sailors are concerned with describing the places and people they encounter only to a secondary degree; the main impetus of their narratives is to describe the local culture of the ship, as well as its material demands” (13). Likewise, characters in *Clarel* converse about religion, science, politics, and personal histories, while the places they see acquire meaning only insofar as they trigger the conversation and provide the speakers with visual and symbolic counterparts. Lastly, in a sea-narrative the impetus for the youth’s choice to go to sea “lies in hearing or reading tales of maritime adventure,” but during the journey “the novice seaman finds that his romantic ideas of seeing the world from a ship are betrayed” (Blum 13); at the beginning of his pilgrimage the student Clarel reveals a similar state of mind, when he states: “Needs be my soul, / Purged by the desert’s subtle air / From bookish vapors . . . Come likewise now to consciousness” (I.1 66-70, 5).

Besides, though the only actual sea that the pilgrims encounter on their journey is the Dead Sea, *Clarel* is full of maritime references. The ocean is persistently used as an analogy for the wilderness, the desert is described in maritime terms, and the sea symbolism is a recurring metaphor sustained throughout the book. Bezanson singles out more than one hundred thirty nautical words in the poem and he states that “the consistency with which this analogy unrolls throughout the narrative is astonishing, and at first, grotesque” (583). “The effect of such abundant sea references,” concludes Bezanson, “is to create the fragments at least of a second voyage—by sea, to parallel the one by land” (586).

Rolfe, considered by critics as Melville’s alter-ego in the poem, is an ex-mariner, while Agath, a crucial character who appears in part three, is an old timeoneer, like his author “schooled by the inhuman sea.” However, all characters are castaways of some kind, outcasts from society, *isolatoes*, alienated from their country or disenchanting by politics or religion. “Wreck, ho!—the wreck” (IV.1 187, 388) Agath cries out when he first sights Jerusalem, as if it was a sunken ship; and the pilgrims come to the convent at Bethlehem like “shipwrecked men adrift” (IV.7 1, 406). According to Bezanson, Melville uses the sea imagery “to complement and extend the meanings of the wilderness image” (586), but, obviously, there is more to it than that. In *Clarel* the many references to the sea are often more or less explicitly tied up with a bitter criticism of democracy and emancipation.

In his works Melville often describes the ship at sea as a microcosm, a utopian space cutting across the boundaries of race and class. If American society is a ship led by a madman and headed for disaster, than Clarel and his fellow travelers are its castaways. The crew of the *Pequod* survived, and fled to the desert. They came to the Holy Land in search of atonement, to regain their faith, to escape the injustice of the world—in one way or another, to find freedom. “As places of freedom and solitude,” Auden famously wrote, “the sea and the desert are symbolically the same” (18-19).

At the beginning of the poem, the student Clarel “broods alone” in an old, dark, claustrophobic hotel room in Jerusalem, that is “Much like a tomb new-cut in stone” (I.1 1-3, 3). There is a strong contrast between his present mood and that of the day before, when he was at sea: “Not thus it was but yesterday / Off Jaffa on the clear blue sea; / Nor thus, my heart, it was with thee / Landing amid the shouts and spray” (I.1 27-30, 4). This is the first of the poem’s many sea images, and it is linked to the joy of exploration and discovery, the innocence of youth, and nostalgia for past freedom. The sea is in sharp contrast to the present situation of physical and symbolical barrenness, where there is no water.

Throughout the poem the sea is a powerful image—always vigorous, though sometimes violent and merciless—but only *in absentia*: it is only recalled, narrated in a story, evoked as a symbol or compared to something else. On the contrary, when the characters arrive on its shores, the sea is not much different from the desert: it is, literally, dead. Melville described the Dead Sea in his journal as follows: “foam on beach & pebbles like slaver of mad dog—smarting bitter of the water,—carried the bitter in my mouth all day—bitterness of life—thought of all bitter things—Bitter is it to be poor & bitter, to be reviled, & Oh bitter are these waters of Death, thought I” (*Journals* 83). And the narrator uses even harsher terms when he describes “the liquid waste” (*Clarel* II.29 29, 231; II.39 40, 258) in the poem’s second part, called “The Wilderness.” More than the sea, what is deadly is the absence of the sea: the Siddim Plain is seen as the sea-bed of a withdrawn ocean, and the Dead Sea is first represented through negations: “No gravel bright nor shell was seen, / Nor kelpy growth nor coralline” (II.29 23-24, 231).

Most significantly, in *Clarel* the Dead Sea is linked with the disastrous outcome of violent political revolutions. As Melville knew, this is the site of the biblical Sodom and Gomorrah, which aligned with other cities of the plain to rebel against Elamite rule, and waged war in the Vale of Siddim, until they were defeated by Elam’s king, and were eventually destroyed by Divine Intervention for their sins. It is no coincidence that the key figure in the second part is Mortmain, a Swede who served as a revolutionary leader in Paris and who has given up all hope of social reform. He moves to the edge of the Dead Sea and tastes its bitter waters in defiance. His gesture is a prelude to his ritual descent toward political, philosophical, and religious despair—the “bitterness of life” described by Melville in his journal. Directly addressing the sea in a long monologue, he says: “Nay, nay, thou sea, / ‘Twas not all carnal harlotry, / But sins refined, crimes of the spirit, / Helped earn that doom ye here inherit” (II.36 42-44, 250). Then, among the crimes inherited by the sea, he lists: “Black slaver steering by a star, / ‘Tis thou—and all like thee in state. / Who knew the world, yet varnished it; / Who traded on the coast of crime / Though landing not” (II.36 76-80, 251). Of course, this is an explicit reference to the slave trade, and not the only one to be found in the poem. The sea is dead also because it bears the mark of the terrible crime of slavery.

Keeping in mind the strong opposites of slavery and emancipation, maritime imagery and aridity, descriptions that make up the poem’s subtext, we can

now focus on Ungar—the predominant figure in part four—one of Melville’s representative American figures and, arguably, his most striking and original character. Described in the poem as “A wandering Ishmael from the West” (IV.10 186, 419), Ungar is a contradictory figure, constructed as “an amalgam of virtually every exploitative incident in American expansionist history” (Barca 26): he is a soldier descended in part from an Anglo-Catholic family that arrived in Maryland with the first settlers; Cherokee blood runs through his veins—he has “An Anglo brain, but Indian heart” (IV.5 140, 403); he is a Confederate veteran who after the defeat of the South moved to the Middle East and fought as a mercenary for the Ottoman empire. Yet, though slavery was common among the Cherokees even prior to European contact—and more than seven percent of Cherokee families owned slaves up to the eighteen-sixties—, Ungar hates slavery: “spite the prejudice of kin / And custom, he with friends could be / Outspoken in his heart’s belief / That holding slaves was aye a grief— / The system an iniquity / In those who plant it and begin” (IV.5 145-150, 403).

Though not explicitly linked with the sea, the narrator introduces Ungar just after Agath has finished telling the pilgrims a story about an unnamed barren, volcanic island which still haunts him, very similar to the ones described by Melville in “The Encantadas.” The reader has the uncanny feeling that Ungar springs directly from such an oxymoron: an arid and hellish island in the midst of the abundance of the Pacific. According to Bezanson, Ungar is linked to Agath and Mortmain, representing “the final phase of the monomaniac sequence” of characters (633), but he is also “very close to Melville’s own sensibility” (634).

In his harsh criticism of the “Dark Ages of Democracy” (IV.21 138, 460), Ungar describes democracy in terms similar to Mortmain’s (and Melville’s), as an “eternal hacking” (IV.19 118, 452), a “Harlot on horseback” (IV.19 135, 452), and the “Arch strumpet of an impious age” (IV.19 138, 452). He laments the debasement of democracy in contemporary America and warns against the dangers of demagoguery and populism, envisioning “Myriads playing pygmy parts— / Debased into equality” (IV.21 127-128, 460). Rolfe had already predicted that “men / Get tired at last of being free—” (II.26 123-124, 222). As we know, Melville’s distrust of the mob tempered his faith in democracy, but if Ungar literally embodies American political and ethnical controversies, the nation’s history of oppression and at the same time its yearning for freedom and emancipation, then through his character Melville struck a crucial chord in the nation’s history, forecasting the future struggles for civil rights and the racial issues of the twentieth century.

After having engaged in endless debates and countered the contrasting opinions of his fellow travelers, at the end of his *Via Crucis* Clarel is fatally drowning in the sea-desert of his doubts. Instead of finding an answer, the youth ends up in a situation of martyrdom and passion, his future more uncertain than before his pilgrimage—just like the question of the emancipation of the ex-slaves after the Civil War. The poem ends with the narrator’s paternal exhortation to Clarel, “like a swimmer rising from the deep” (IV.35 30, 499): “Emerge thou mayst from the

last whelming sea, / And prove that death but routs life into victory" (IV.35 33-34, 499). If we take into account the Latin origins of the word "emancipation"—"ex manu capere"—we understand that in *Clarel* the hand is not only that of the freed slave, but also of the drowning castaway who desperately calls for help. Like a compassionate father, the narrator exhorts the pilgrim to hold out his hand, so that he could still find victory, and defeat death. Despite its dark implications and possible distortions, Melville seems to imply, only emancipation can hold out hope for the future.

In much the same way, banished from the sea of his youth, relegated to a small office during his stints as a customs inspector, and self-exiled to his study at home, Melville began his own literary pilgrimage in the desert, as a different (and yet, as Auden points out, "symbolically the same") substitute for pistol and ball: in this sense, all the pilgrims of *Clarel* are impersonations of their author, and the desert, like the sea in his earlier works, is an objective correlative of his own "moral landscape." In this sense, it is important, as Bezanson first noted, that the poem's last lines echo Melville's family motto "Denique Coelum": Heaven at Last. Not only is the nation's freedom and the slaves' emancipation at stake in the poem, or poetry's emancipation from the progress and degradation of contemporary prose, but Melville's own emancipation as well; with a secure job as customs inspector, he was finally free from the necessity of selling his works in order to pay the bills.

Clarel signaled Melville's emancipation from the publishing industry as well, since the poem was published privately, thanks to a generous gift from his uncle Peter Gansevoort. Most importantly, *Clarel* represents Melville's narrative emancipation from the sea-prose of his past—a choice that proved disastrous for "the man who lived among the cannibals," in that it definitively sank his reputation; but such is the price of emancipation: his poem and his pilgrimage set him free, at last.

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5. The Universalism
of American Freedom
and its Boundaries:
Nationalism,
Internationalism,
Transnationalism

The Controversial Concept of Emancipation in the Nation-Building Process: The American Civil War and Italian Unification

CRISTINA BON

INTRODUCTION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COMPARISON FOR THE HISTORY OF NATION-BUILDING PROCESSES

By referring both to the American Civil War and Italian Unification, the title of my paper implies a comparative perspective and so I would like to start by explaining briefly the reasons why nowadays a historian should adopt a comparative approach in the study of a nation-building process.

According to recent essays on the comparative approach, the goal of comparative history is “[to discover] more profound historical connections” and understand change over time (Haupt and Kocka 24).

In other words, the significance of comparison lies chiefly in the fact that, by analyzing a similar issue in two different contexts, and considering all the points that they have in common and those which distinguish them, it is possible to reach a better understanding of the issue itself. To reiterate, a comparative analysis makes it possible to consider issues that have a worldwide significance and to single out the specific characteristics that make that issue a national or, in some cases, even a local one.

In the past few decades, the comparative approach has frequently come under attack as paying too much attention to the nation-state as a unit of analysis. Consequently, historians have tried to develop other types of approaches, such

as *entangled* and *transfer* history, which try to go beyond the national standpoint by looking also at the interrelationships between regions, towns or institutions. As opposed to the classic transnational researches, *transfer* historical studies pay particular attention to the role played by intermediaries (such as booksellers, publishers or universities) as well as the cultural media in creating connections and the initiation of mutual spheres of influence between different societies. On the other hand, *entangled* history looks at problems and questions relating to specific objects of study, such as works, disciplines, institutions and legal systems (Haupt and Kocka 31-33).¹

Nonetheless, in spite of all the attempts to relativize the meaning of the nation-state in historical studies that concentrate on the nineteenth and twentieth century, the nation-state represents an inevitable point of reference. As is well-known, the concept of the nation-state in the European and North Western Atlantic World, which developed from a process dating back to the sixteenth century, reached its climax in the nineteenth century, at a time when nationalist ideologies were just emerging.

Thus, a comparative analysis at the national level can still be extremely significant within the context of the nation-building process. It should be mentioned, however, that serious comparative studies in the nation-building process in general, and with reference to the Italian and United States case studies in particular, are few and far between.

On the basis of the principal studies to date, this paper aims to discuss the issue of emancipation in connection with two contemporaneous examples of that process: the American Civil War and Italian unification. By looking specifically at these two case studies, it is possible to reflect upon the meanings adduced to the concept of emancipation in two very different nation-building processes. The importance of Emancipation in both contexts and the use that the respective social and political elites made of that issue give us a greater insight into a more general understanding of nation-building in Europe and in the North Western Atlantic World; thus, in this respect, the study of the emancipation issue can help also to understand the peculiar features that contributed to the nation-building process of the United States in the Civil War Era.

THE CIVIL WAR AS A NATIONAL MOVEMENT

According to Michael Bernath, the idea of including the American Civil War among the nineteenth century national movements should be that of seeing what this “experience can teach us about the workings of nationalism itself” (Bernath 4). In fact, it is only very recently that the American Civil War has found

¹ Among the seminal studies of the transfer history we can mention Espagne and Werner; see also Espagne. Among the champions of the entangled history see Werner and Zimmermann; Zimmermann et al.

its legitimate place among the nineteenth century nation-building processes in Europe and the wider world.

The first scholar to look at the Civil War in this sense was David Potter. In two seminal essays, both published in 1968, he affirmed that the Civil War represented an event during which a convergence of nationalism and liberalism took place in America and he goes on to say that “the Civil War, more perhaps than any event in Europe, fused the two great forces of the Nineteenth century—liberalism and nationalism . . . so thoroughly that their potential separateness was lost from view” (Potter, “The Civil War in the History” 298; cf. also Potter, “Civil War” 135-45). It took more than twenty years for Potter’s thesis to become accepted. Finally, beginning in the nineties, historians have developed a particular interest in the Civil War as a nation-building process and have placed it within a broader perspective. European and, in particular, Italian scholars such as Tiziano Bonazzi, have also acknowledged that the victory of the North in the Civil War was a turning point in the affirmation and spread of liberal nationalism in the Western World, and particularly in Europe (Bonazzi).

By placing the nineteenth-century American political experience, especially the Civil War, within the broader development of national movements in Europe, historical studies such as those by Liah Greenfeld (1994), Thomas Bender (2006) and Lloyd Kramer (2011) have prompted scholars to consider that the United States as a case study has been far less exceptional. In a recent article on nationalism published in the *Journal of the Civil War Era*, Micheal Bernath affirmed that “it is time for Civil War historians to fully engage in wider debates surrounding the rise of nationalism in the modern world” (Bernath 4).² Yet to compare the American Civil War with the European national movements is tantamount to admitting that the Federal Union founded at the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention in 1787 was, in fact, a Federal-State devoid of a sense of nationality and that the idea of an American people bound by a sacred constitutional pact was a purely academic idea constructed on an “invented tradition” in the course of the nineteenth century.³

This, however, does not mean that we should deny the peculiar aspects of American nation-building. On the contrary, with particular reference to the years

2 In this essay, Bernath has given an account of the current historical literature that looks at the Civil War in a transnational perspective. The essay is also retrievable on *The Journal of the Civil War Era*. Web. 20 Apr. 2015. A great contribution to the internationalization of the Civil War Era nationalism has been recently given by Doyle, *Nations Divided* 23 (see also Doyle and Pamplona; Doyle, *Secession and The Cause*).

3 The idea of nations as “imagined communities” has been introduced by the seminal work of Anderson. Though admitting the idea of nation is a cultural product, other authors, like Don Doyle, do not believe that it was just a creation made and propagated by the political as well as the cultural elites in order to sustain their political goals; rather the concept of nation would be shaped by all the public and private practices of ordinary men and women who were part of the general social, economic and political changes undergone by the nineteenth century Western Atlantic World. See Doyle, *Nations Divided*.

of the conflict between the Union and the Confederacy, the American nation-building process took a radically different path compared to that of the European liberal movements. Thus, by using a comparative perspective, it is possible to show the reasons that made American nation-building a distinctive and exceptional process, without falling into the trap of “United States exceptionalism.”

The Civil War revolved around two parallel ideas of an American nation and, consequently, two ideas of a nation-building process.

The first idea dated back to the Convention of 1787, which created a federal system that was far from being the “Perfect Union” proclaimed by the Constitution. In point of fact, since the idea of a nation-state implies, first of all, a community of people organized on a definite territory, the American Republic, from the very start, did not match up to the strict definition of a nation-state. In practice, in Don Doyle’s words “if a nation is a people who occupy a common territory and share some elements of national cohesion (common language, ethnicity, religion, customs, or history), then the British colonies in North America simply failed to qualify on almost every count” (Doyle, *Nations Divided* 18).

In this respect, the United States were a state without a well-defined western border until the end of the nineteenth century, and western expansion became, in fact, the basis of sectional division with regard to the question of slavery. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the American political establishment was shaken by a series of sectional conflicts among the states concerning the extension of the slave system in the territories—conflicts which eventually led Abraham Lincoln to call the American Nation “a house divided against itself.”⁴ Thus, within the federal context, we can see that the first half of the nineteenth century was characterized by extensive political negotiations that aimed at constructing a unified nation.

In the midst of the Congressional battle over what might seem like little more than a series of institutional and legal concerns, a new movement for nationhood and independence began to emerge within the American Federation: it was the movement for Southern Unity and Independence, arising from the Crisis of 1850—following the Mexican-American War—which eventually led to the foundation of the Confederate States of America in 1861. At the core of the movement for southern independence lay the defense of slavery. Therefore, whether we consider the American nation building at a federal level or whether we focus specifically on the southern movement for independence, the American nation-building process is undoubtedly linked to the problem of slavery and the question of emancipation, both of which were widely discussed at both federal and state levels, North and South of the Mason-Dixon Line.⁵

4 From Lincoln’s “House Divided” Speech, given at Springfield on June 16th, 1858. See Cuomo and Holzer 105-13.

5 We should, in fact, keep in mind that, as a consequence of the Nat Turner rebellion, between 1832 and 1833, even the possibility of a whole-scale emancipation of African American slaves was seriously discussed in the southern states and became a central issue in Virginia legisla-

Within the Atlantic context, the relation between nation-building and the slave system operating in the United States, is in itself an exceptional fact. As Paul Quigley has perceptively noted, the “Americans were right ... that their specific circumstances were distinctive. The exceptionalism of American nationalism derived in large part from the tensions between lofty national ideals and actual practices” (Quigley 48). At the core of this tension was the issue of slavery, which drastically contravened the principle of “democratic citizenship” that the American Revolution had supposedly proclaimed.

As previously mentioned, the American nation-building experience can also be considered within the context of the wider process of the formation of the nineteenth-century liberal nation-states in Western Europe. It should be remembered, however, that the construction of the European liberal idea of a nation-state was based on a twofold objective: on the one hand, the political self-determination of nations—or groups of individuals who shared ethnic, linguistic and cultural roots—and, on the other hand, the affirmation of the civil and political liberties necessary for the full development of national sovereignty. It is precisely from this standpoint that, as a consequence of the wide variety of ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups within federal borders, the American model was unable to define its ideal of nationhood in ethnic terms; on the contrary, it proposed the idea of a civic nation bound to the values of legal equality and freedom for the white people (Doyle, *Nations Divided* xiv, 16).⁶ As a result, although during the antebellum period political leaders in the Southern States attempted to construct a nationalist ideology for the South, the fact remains that even the sectional conflict over slavery was ultimately based on an idea of a “civic-nation” that was still to be defined. The issue of emancipation in America, consequently, became increasingly more complex and controversial than was the case in Europe. In fact, many of the most prominent European democratic nationalists including Giuseppe Mazzini, Daniel O’Connell, Lajos Kossuth and Adam Mickiewicz, up to the leading exponents of the Greek Revolution against the Ottoman Empire,⁷ regarded the problem of slavery and emancipation not only as a

ture, where it continued to be a controversial problem until the outbreak of the Civil War, to the point of influencing the democratic development of the State of Virginia.

6 However, it should be noted that the development of civic nationalism was also extremely important in reinforcing so called Anglo-conformism, an ideology diffused in nineteenth-century United States according to which the main characteristics of American society were akin to those of Anglo-Saxon ethnicity. For this reason Anglo-Saxon social and political traditions became the norm for immigrants to the United States who, as a consequence, were deprived of their native cultural heritage. Many scholars, most importantly Robert Park and Milton Gordon, have attempted to outline a model of assimilation based on the Anglo-conformist ideology. See Gordon 82-85. For a general introduction to the Anglo-conformity perspective see Kaufman, in particular 19-36.

7 Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-72), was an Italian patriot and politician. He supported the creation of a united and independent Italian Republic. In general, he stood for the universal cause of freedom for all the people from every kind of oppression. Daniel O’Connell (1775-1847) was an

moral issue, but also as an effective metaphor for supporting nationalistic struggles in the defense of the oppressed. Considering slavery as an intolerable form of oppression that impeded mankind's march toward progress, they embraced the abolitionist struggle as a case in point for the independence of European national minorities. Thus, as studies by Robin Blackburn and others have made clear, "the struggle against slavery and the struggle for citizenship rights were related to one another, and both these struggles, in turn, were related to the definition of modern nationality in the Euro-American world"⁸ (Dal Lago, "We Cherished" 295).

At this point, looking particularly at the United States system, it is interesting to note that the southern radicals based their demand for the independence of the peoples in the Southern States on the basis of their primordial origins and their opposition to the dictates of an oppressive federal government. Nonetheless, the fact remains that the defense of slavery remained at the very core of their proposals. This was, obviously, diametrically opposed to the aspirations of European nationalists.

If the defense of slavery from attacks from the federal government was the main reason to promote southern nationalism, this was certainly, in Paul Quigley's words "a weak basis for securing unity within the South or securing legitimacy as a genuine nation on the world stage." In his opinion, a free white society in the Southern States would, necessarily, have to rest on a "mud-sill" class, a class of people legally and economically dependent on a superior ruling class. From this standpoint, neither a legal nor an economic emancipation of the slaves could even be envisaged. Hence, again to quote Quigley, "slavery . . . complicated the parallels secessionists drew between themselves and European nationalists" (Quigley 74).

One of the peculiar characteristics of the American Civil War Era was thus represented by the way the problem of emancipation was addressed by the political forces in relation to the nation-building process. For this reason, a reflection on the emancipation issue in comparative terms can be particularly enlightening in defining the similarities and differences between the American Civil War and the European struggles for national causes.

Irish political leader who fought for the political equality of Irish Catholics within the United Kingdom. Lajos Kossuth (1802-94) was the most prominent leader of the movement for the extension of civil and political rights in Hungary, as well as for the emancipation of Hungary from the Habsburg Empire. Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855) was a Polish national poet. He was exiled after the anti-Russian upheavals of 1830-31 and embraced Mazzini's concept of martyrdom.

⁸ During the nineteenth century the connections between anti-slavery movements and radical democratic movements literally crossed the Atlantic Ocean, creating a transnational and transatlantic movement for freedom. Cf. Blackburn. It may be noticed, though, that some abolitionists denied the concept of national self-determination. See McDaniel 113-36.

In the past few years, a type of dialectic between legal and economic emancipation within the boundaries of a nation-building process comparable to the one related to the American Civil War has been studied by some scholars within the Italian context, with specific reference to the Italian *Mezzogiorno* and to the role played by its agrarian elites in the struggle for Italian unification.

In this respect, one of the most significant contributions is that of Enrico Dal Lago (and especially his book *Agrarian Elites*, 2005), who has paid specific attention to the comparison between the American South and the Italian *Mezzogiorno* in the period comprised between 1815 and 1861.⁹ Dal Lago's works form part of a broader literature focused upon the idea of the "South" in a comparative global perspective and have opened the way to perceptive insights.

The Southern question, as a problem concerning the American as well as the Italian nation-building process, is at the basis of Don Doyle's *Nations Divided*, according to which in both countries the issue of "southernness" became the counterweight by which national values were measured," up to the point that "for northerners in both countries, southerners served as foils for models of civic virtue, rebels who refused to conform to national ideals."¹⁰ Likewise, in her comparison between the American Civil War and the Italian Risorgimento, Susanna Delfino has highlighted the fact that the idea of "southern backwardness" became a common feature of both the Kingdom of Italy and the nineteenth Century United States (see Delfino 105-06).

These studies represent excellent examples of the historical comparative approach to the analysis of the United States and the Italian nation-building process and pay specific attention to the issues arising from the political relationship between the American federal and Italian monarchical governments and their respective southern ruling classes—American slaveholders and Southern Italian landowners.

By going more deeply into the two case studies—the American South and the Italian *Mezzogiorno*—we can see that, in economic terms, both regions were essentially agricultural regions at the periphery of a capitalist world economy,

⁹ Some suggestions about United States and Italian case studies are included in modern studies on nationalist movements, as well as transnational studies that are useful for a comparative analysis. Apart from the works of David Potter, Raimondo Luraghi, Luigi Salvadori, important suggestions can be derived from the works of Paul Quigley (2012), Timothy Roberts (2009), Ian Tyrrell (2007), Thomas Bender (2006), and Carl Guarneri (1997). And yet, in 2012, Bernath, in his aforementioned article on nationalism in the *Journal of the Civil War Era* argued that there are not many studies that compare the American Civil War with other national movements. In the past few years, however, there have been some important exceptions. Comparative studies between the American and Italian nation-building processes have been published by scholars such as Susanna Delfino, Don Doyle and Enrico Dal Lago, whose works are cited in the course of this essay.

¹⁰ See the preface by Anastatia Sims in Doyle, *Nations Divided*, in particular x.

which at that time was dominated by Britain and the Northern United States (cf. Wallerstein 25-29; cf. also Salvemini 5-10). Like all the semi-peripheral and peripheral regions in the European world-economy, both the American South and the Italian *Mezzogiorno* developed a system of staple crop production, centralized in large agricultural units and with the need of a large agricultural labor force.¹¹

The specific nature of the two economic systems led to the adoption of particular models of labor relations. While the antebellum American South embraced the legal enslavement of African Americans, the Italian *Mezzogiorno* witnessed the rise of forms of economic and psychological subjection of the peasants who were, in theory, free citizens but, in practice, were almost exclusively denied access to active civil and political life.¹²

These two agrarian economic systems were controlled by comparable agrarian elites. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, largely as a result of the impact of the market revolution in the American South and of the commercial revolution in the *Mezzogiorno*,¹³ American planters had increased their economic leverage in the South, while, in the same period, a new class of southern Italian landowners emerged from the abolition of feudalism and made its fortunes with the production and sale of commercial crops. In both cases, the ambitions of these new economic elites were largely at odds with the policies of their respective central governments: on the one hand, the United States southern elites became involved in a political conflict over the extension of slavery to the newly defined territories, one that would have had a direct impact on the ensuing balance of power between free and slave states in the federal government. On the other hand, southern Italian landowners, who mostly grew commercial crops in the peripheral region of the Bourbon Kingdom, agitated for greater political autonomy within the highly centralized Bourbon administrative government. As

11 However, it must be noticed that “on Southern Italian latifondi, production of cash crops for sale was less common than on American plantations.” See Dal Lago, *Agrarian Elites* 37.

12 It could be contended that while the slaves were denied any civic status whatsoever, Italian southern peasants—albeit subject to a process of strong subordination—had freedom of movement as evidenced by the phenomenon of their migrations. Nevertheless, as far as the issue of labor relations is concerned, the Italian *Mezzogiorno* is certainly comparable to the American South. In the period under consideration, both the two case studies can be considered as part of the broader context of the agrarian peripheries of the Atlantic economic system. By looking at these peripheries it is possible to trace a continuum of economic systems characterized by varying degrees of freedom and the lack thereof in labor relations according to the specific place and time. See Dal Lago, *American Slavery* 119-21. For an overview upon the many issues and approaches adopted by contemporary studies which aim at comparing the American South and the “other Souths” see Kolchin 74-115. Among the various themes tackled by comparative historians of the “other Souths,” the issue of slavery is certainly one of the most important. In contemporary studies, Kolchin argues that “despite significant interpretative disagreements, many scholars have recognized that southern slavery is best understood in the context of slavery and other forms of unfree labor elsewhere in the modern world” (78-79).

13 For a discussion of the commercial revolution, as to say the participation of the southern Italian goods in the trades generated by the industrial revolution, and the consequent diversification of the Italian *Mezzogiorno* in three types of agricultural areas, see Salvemini 10-20.

in the case of the United States, therefore, the Italian *Mezzogiorno* faced problems in the core-periphery relationship, which were grounded in the emergence of provincial elites “whose rise to power was linked to the commercial revolution and to the abolition of the feudal system, [and] agitated for stronger political participation” (Dal Lago, *Agrarian Elites* 206).

The requests of the southern Italian landed bourgeoisie for more political autonomy and representation can be placed within the broader context of the concomitant nineteenth-century struggles in Italy for liberal forms of government. However, notwithstanding their avowed aim to achieve democratization, these struggles were still based on the need to preserve an economic system based on the exploitation of a labor class made up of peasants who, although in the eyes of the law were equal citizens, were not entitled to economic emancipation.

In the American South too there was a movement toward the democratization of institutions and of systems of political representation. Nonetheless, as Dal Lago points out, this idea of democracy was an idea of white male democracy, a paternalistic type of democracy that justified “the exploitation of racially discriminated” people (cf. Dal Lago, *Agrarian Elites* 216-18) who did not benefit from either legal or economic emancipation; this was the only form of democracy compatible with slavery. It is within this context therefore, that the two case studies are comparable.

Within the broader context of the American and Italian nation-building process from the early eighteenth-fifties to the early eighteenth-sixties, the comparison between the respective movements for independence also yields some interesting elements for reflection on the issue of emancipation in line with what I have adduced earlier: on the one hand, emancipation in relation to freedom for the workforce—freedom from disenfranchisement in the case of American slaves, and freedom from economic exploitation in the case of southern Italy’s peasants; on the other, emancipation as independence from political oppression from a central government—the federal government in the United States, and the Bourbon Kingdom in the Italian south.

In Italy, beginning with the Revolts of 1848 and then the 1859 War against Austria, the movement led by the elites of the *Mezzogiorno* for the achievement of provincial self-government became part of a larger nation-building project. The agrarian elites saw in the prospect of Italian national unification, dependent on the abolition of the Bourbon Kingdom, a means whereby they could achieve their objectives. In this respect, the movement led by the *Mezzogiorno* bourgeoisie closely resembles the struggle of the southern States of the United States for unity, which aimed at preserving the southern economic system through a sectional conflict that ultimately ended with the official secession of the southern states from the Union and the creation of the Confederate States of America. Thus, particularly after the 1846-48 Mexican War, the southern question became part of a broader American national issue that focused on uniting the free North and the slave South.

Both the Italian and the American nation-building processes were led by elites that supported a world-wide type of liberalism, one which connected economic progress with a type of political freedom based on individual liberties and representative systems. These last two elements were the two tenets of an ideology of “progressive nationalism” that, represented as it was by the Republican Party in the United States, was obviously at odds with the presence of slavery in the South. In this regard, the representatives of the United States southern interests could not be accommodated within a liberal project geared toward the progress of mankind. Indeed, in Dal Lago’s words: “In the politics of progressive nationalism, antislavery represented the struggle for civil liberties that liberal nationalists in Europe waged against absolute monarchy” (Dal Lago, “Lincoln” 85-86).

Thus, although in the first half of the nineteenth century the republican governments of the American South were certainly far more advanced in terms of democratic institutions compared with the monarchical regime of the Italian *Mezzogiorno*, the existence of slavery and the concomitant need to preserve the inequality inherent in the racial status-quo prevented the United States southern elites from taking full advantage of the ideology of liberalism to advance their struggle for independence from the Union.

On the other hand, although “southern Italian political radicalism could contemplate, at its best, the creation of a truly democratic society,” at the same time “the southern . . . Italian elites that subscribed to either the democratic or the moderate liberal programs of reform were more forthright than politicians in the American South in advancing ideas that advocated maintaining a certain degree of social status quo” (Dal Lago, *Agrarian Elites* 236).

THE CIVIL WAR BREAKPOINT

Before the outbreak of the Civil War, the status quo in the American South was accepted by the majority of northern politicians. At the start of the war, even the Republican Party could be considered a moderate political organization with minimal radical elements, an organization that was mainly oriented toward the achievement of national progress through the development of a system based on an economy of free labor. It was precisely this idea of economic progress, however, that rendered the continuation of slavery as an economic tool absolutely unacceptable for the Republicans, even though most of them were not even abolitionists. They certainly expressed a hope for the eventual extinction of slavery, but their principal concern was to gain control of the federal government by provisionally confining slavery to the southern states.

This viewpoint, mainly oriented toward national progress in general to be achieved through economic development and the establishing of political liberties, is clearly comparable to a similar one shared by Italian nationalists who, for

the most part, were moderate liberals who aspired to constructing a unified Italy under a monarchical and constitutional government.

Even if we take into account the many differences between the Italian and the American contexts—especially in relation to their respective institutional structures—we can still see the American Civil War and Italian unification as nationalistic movements inspired by moderate liberal principles. Nonetheless, the similarities between the two “wars” end here for the simple reason that the two conflicts later diverged. And it is precisely the issue of emancipation that lies at the heart of this divergence.

In other words, while the American Civil War started as a nation-building process based on republican principles akin to those of the moderate liberals in Italy, it became radicalized after slave emancipation became a foreseeable reality following Lincoln’s 1863 Emancipation Proclamation and the subsequent 1865 Thirteenth Amendment, which freed slaves throughout the United States and held out to them hope for future economic emancipation. Conversely, in Italy, even the most radical and democratic movements made compromises over an essentially moderate project of unification under a monarchical and constitutional form of government. Yet, even though significant and radical, Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation and the ensuing Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Constitutional Amendments must be considered in the light of the eventual overthrow of African American rights that characterized the end of Reconstruction in the United States. The fact remains, that even though, soon after the War, Radical Republicans endeavored to create the preconditions for a model of black male American citizenship that ensured the same rights as white male American citizenship as regarded property, dignity, and equality before the law, these radical proposals ended abruptly with the compromise of 1877, which returned political power to the southern elites that were comprised, almost exclusively, of former slave-owners.

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“We may be caught in the trap of a garrison state”*: Harold D. Lasswell, the American Middle Class and the Political Legitimacy of the National Security State

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The cases of Edward Snowden and Bradley Manning were the first in recent years to attract attention to the government practice of labeling “secret” things that the public should know. Considered a fugitive by American authorities, Snowden, who has been granted temporary asylum in Russia, declared that his leak of secret documents about surveillance programs was “to inform the public as to that which is done in their name and that which is done against them” (Greenwald, MacAskill, and Poitras). Charged with passing classified information to Wikileaks and sentenced to thirty-five years in prison, Manning submitted a request for pardon to Obama, stating that he understood that he had violated the law and regretted if his actions had harmed the United States, but—he continued—“you have to pay a heavy price to live in a free society”.¹ Whatever anyone may think of Snowden and Manning, Obama himself recognized that their cases warranted a re-opening of a public and academic debate about the extent of the power of the National Security State, national security, and its impact on individual freedom and democracy. Debate that has driven the Congress to enact the (controversial) Freedom Act on June 2nd, 2015.

This debate began after 9/11 when the war on terror gave rise to a new process of state reorganization: the Patriot Act and the institution of the Department of

* Lasswell, “Prevention” 108.

¹ Manning’s official statement, qtd. in Courson and Smith.

Homeland Security increased the concentration of political and administrative functions by putting in place methods of coordination between the FBI, the CIA and federal government and between federal government and state politics, and led to more coercive control not only of immigration, but also of the civil liberties and privacy of Americans (Saldin; Baritono and Vezzosi). The fact is, however, that questions related to national security—as historians have shown—are not a new phenomenon, but one that emerged, for the most part, on the eve of World War II and at the beginning of the Cold War with the approval of the National Security Act of 1947.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor and the subsequent involvement of the United States in the World War II redefined the way most Americans thought about the responsibility of the government toward its citizens. The fact that America could be directly attacked established the concept of national security as the standard according to which future foreign policy decisions should be made. The Cold War reinforced the preoccupation with national security. American leaders worked, in the first place, to reconstruct Western Europe as an effective counterweight to the Soviet bloc and then they turned their attention to other areas of the world, as they had done during the Korean War. These concerns led to the formation of the National Security State: a more centralized and powerful federal apparatus for the management of foreign policy.

The National Security Act created the National Military Establishment, which became the Department of Defense in 1949, the National Security Council, and the Central Intelligence Agency. The National Security Agency was formally established in 1952. This and other institutions increased the defense budget and created new instruments for peacetime intelligence, new mechanisms for civilian-military dialog and cooperation between the various branches of the Military. These institutional transformations altered not only the structural face of the federal government, but also impinged on the bureaucracy and the quality of its personnel, paving the way for what President Eisenhower called a “military-industrial complex” and what Charles Wright Mills denounced as “the power elite” (Mills) of professionals in foreign and military affairs who were both academic experts and prominent figures from corporate boards and financial institutions.

Historians have singled out different aspects of this process. Michael Hogan framed the political debate on the National Security Act within a binary ideological system—the struggle between internationalism and isolationism, militarism and anti-militarism, centralization or decentralization. On the one hand, the Democratic administration and coalition were committed to the State having a positive role in promoting both social security and national security. Insofar as the Democrats considered the United States the global defender of democracy, they balanced their commitment to the New Deal with postwar international responsibility. On the other hand, the Conservative coalition invoked the old traditions of isolationism and anti-statism in order to oppose the growing bureaucracy associated with the social and national security policy. Without calling

such arguments into question, Douglas T. Stuart reconstructed the positive role that academics and policy experts played in the Roosevelt and Truman administrations by arguing that the long debate culminating in the National Security Act was not so much a struggle between two competing ideologies as a dialog about how best to adjust American values of democracy and freedom to the demands of national security.

From this perspective, it is relevant to consider the reflections of Harold D. Lasswell, the social scientist who first alerted Americans to the perils of a garrison state, a State in which every aspect of social and political life was controlled by what he called “specialists of violence.” Spokesman for the new field of Political Science launched by his mentor Charles Merriam at the University of Chicago, Lasswell studied propaganda, mass communication and public opinion, advocating the “behavioral revolution” that superseded the traditional study of government (Rogow; McDougal and Reisman).

Although Lasswell was not involved in the formulation of security policies, his writings were very influential. By the beginning of the forties his definition of the garrison state was being widely circulated. In his scientific essays and public speeches he recognized the international role of the United States and the concomitant necessities of national security, but also suggested adjustments that—to his way of thinking—would avoid the formation of a garrison state and, instead, strengthen the supremacy of civilians over the Military, favor the freedom of the press and information and uphold social security. Viewed from this perspective, what emerges from his writings was the question of the political legitimacy of the National Security State, a legitimacy that—as we will see—Lasswell based on the consensus of the American middle class.

THE MAKING OF A GREAT MIDDLE CLASS

Before considering Lasswell’s writings on the garrison state, however, it is important to briefly outline how he defined the “great” American middle class (Battistini). During the thirties, faced with the threat represented by the rise of communism and violent forms of nationalism such as Fascism and Nazism, he argued that the future of democracy depended on the political attitude of the middle class. In “Psychology of Hitlerism” (1933), he showed that in Europe, particularly in Germany and Italy, the economic depression and the resulting working class activism had materially and psychologically impoverished middle-income groups. Their subsequent insecurities had prompted them to embrace symbols of nationalism and racism as a way to counter their social and political decline. Lasswell wondered whether this drastic reaction on the part of the European middle classes could be avoided in the United States.

Looking at America in “The Moral Vocation” (1935) he argued that middle-income groups—skilled workers, farmers, professional people, business men, civil

servants and private officials—could not act together because they lacked a sense of communal identity. They were divided, without loyalty to a common body of political symbols. What the middle class needed was therefore not only a consistent policy, but also an invigorating “myth of its historic mission” (128-29). Lasswell suggested that some of the measures proposed by the Roosevelt administration increased the loyalty of middle-income groups to democracy by reducing social insecurity, favoring free economic competition, and stabilizing economic development. Nevertheless, the behavior of the middle-income groups depended on the role that American political leaders, intellectuals and social scientists could play in inducing in middle-income groups a sense of identity as a “great” middle class.

According to Lasswell, what distinguished “Americans of middle income” was the fact that they had made the most sacrifices in pursuing their studies, buckling down to hard work and upholding a sense of moral duty. The importance of such sacrifices was demonstrated in the “re-moralization of society,” namely in opposing both fascist attitudes and communist propaganda by recapturing the initiative in the struggle for “social justice” (“Moral Vocation” 130-31). He felt that the American middle class should turn to the federal government and lead national policy in favor of “job security” and “moderation of income” but that this should be done without ignoring the value of *laissez-faire*. This renewed “Americanism” would secure democracy not only in the United States, but worldwide. At the eve of the World War II, his political goal was therefore to shape the middle class as a social and political unit that would define the consensual framework of American politics (*Democracy through Public Opinion* 132-39).

THE WORLDWIDE RISE OF THE GARRISON STATE

At the time that Lasswell was developing his reflections on the American middle class, he was also elaborating the concept of the “garrison state” as a theoretical construct that defined a worldwide trend that resulted from war and the expectation of war, and so was connected with historical events (Fox; Friedberg). The first historical event in question was the Japanese invasion of China. In “Sino-Japanese Crisis” (1937), Lasswell not only stated that the specialists in violence of both states might exert a determining influence on political and social life but he also argued that, if the crisis spread, the Soviet Union would become involved and such an involvement would have an impact on the internal struggle between the civilian leadership of the Communist Party and the military leadership of the Red Army. In war—he argued—the generals would win and establish the supremacy of military methods upon a social life already governmentalized by the abolishment of the free market and private enterprise. In his opinion, because of the interconnected relationship of world affairs, “garrison states in Asia and Europe would compromise the security and undermine the prestige of civilian institutions in every nation” (643-44).

Lasswell concluded that what America had experienced was “a change in the line of historical evolution.” Working on the theories of Comte and Spencer who saw history as a political and social progress from a military phase, based on force, toward an industrial condition, based on contract and consent, he envisaged an inversion of the sequence. Nineteenth-century Europe and North America defined “the scene of a revolution” that increasingly underplayed military skills: “the people joined the network of economic activity” and “the form of civilian state.” But, from the twentieth century—because of growing colonial rivalries, the outbreak of the World War I and the advance of Communism and various forms of nationalism—America had been veering toward counter-tendencies: “the expansion of the market was taking place in a world where the expectation of violence cast a shadow on the future of human relations” (4-6). Such counter-tendencies explained the worldwide rise of the garrison state.

Lasswell analyzed this theoretical construct on the eve of the World War II, just before the attack on Pearl Harbor. In “The Garrison State” (1941), he singled out the modern conditions that influenced the rise of a garrison state. Firstly, the new instruments of warfare, in particular the air force, made it possible to maintain high the level of fear in large populations. Secondly, because of the introduction of new technologies in the field of administrative organization and public relations, the specialists in violence included in their training a large degree of expertise that was traditionally considered the domain of civilian life. As a result, the socialization of danger and the subordination of civilian knowledge to military expertise made possible a total mobilization of society. The garrison state would be characterized by an energetic attempt to incorporate the population into the destiny of the nation: the duty to obey, to serve the state and to work for the nation would become the cardinal virtues of society. Moreover, the military elite would undermine the fundamental institutions of civilian states: democratic procedures would disappear, rival political parties would be suppressed, free communication and information would be abolished. Finally, government would be centralized, all social activities would be governmentalized, and free association would disappear (455-65).

In relation to the United States, Lasswell did not consider this theoretical construct to be a given: “It might be probable, . . . but not inevitable” (456). This was why he argued that the potential displacement of the civilian state should not be ignored. His aim was to stimulate scientists—in particular social and political scientists employed by the federal government—to address their scientific work to the factors conditioning the survival of American democracy (467-68). While Lasswell recognized the need for peacetime intelligence, military leadership and economic and scientific advances in the perfecting of military armament, he posed, nonetheless, the following questions: what democratic values could be preserved, and how? How would it be possible to civilize the military elite and overcome centralization of the government? To answer such questions, he turned to the American middle class.

Between the end of the thirties and the World War II, Lasswell continued his reflections on the garrison state by co-relating the needs of the middle class and the requirements of national security. This relationship appeared for the first time in “The Relation of Skill Politics to Class Politics and National Politics” (1937). The essay analyzed the economic and social policies of the New Deal and how such policies needed common symbols of identification in order to unify the American middle class through mass communication and democratic propaganda: “under the stress of prolonged war”—he predicted—“the specialists on violence might predominate,” but—he suggested—the “philosophy and program of positive, rather than negative, liberalism” could bypass such a peril and protect democracy “with a minimum of violence” (298-313).

Lasswell continued to consider these questions in “Continental Security” (1938), published also as a pamphlet for use in the classroom. He argued that the United States could not remain isolated, but should assume the global task of protecting individual freedom and social justice by harmonizing both of them in security. In his opinion, the United States could win such a challenge only if “all American citizens of middle income [were] aroused to great political activity, [and] if they reach[ed] a much more adequate political consciousness than they ever attained in Europe” (438). In this regard, Lasswell can be numbered among the intellectuals who contributed to President Roosevelt’s effort to dispel the national mood of isolationism. The American middle class should understand that the survival of American democracy and abundance depended on the success of internationalism (Ninkovich 113-30).

At the beginning of the forties, the question of middle class consciousness was still unresolved. Lasswell asserted that, although the middle-income groups were numerically preponderant, they were disorganized and hostile toward one another, whereas workers seemed to be united in their conviction of the validity of Marxist and Communist ideals. This explains why he was directly engaged in mass communication. In “The Communications Front” (1942), one of his many public speeches and pamphlets hinging on democratic propaganda, Lasswell found in the four freedoms of President Roosevelt the effective symbols of identity not only for the American middle class: freedom of speech and of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear would unite people in the struggle for the achievement of peace and democracy (762-65).

From this perspective, in the radio roundtable of July 1943 entitled “War and the Middle Class,” Lasswell explained that the American middle class would not only strengthen the war effort for democracy, but would also mitigate the effect of political and administrative centralization imposed by the creation of new federal agencies for military planning. The middle class would constitute “a balance between central and local government, a balance between what the government does and what is done privately” (18-19). By mobilizing the middle class,

the United States could replicate the military efficiency of European and Asian garrison states without encroaching on its democratic values. Lasswell therefore posed two interrelated issues for the later debate on the national security policy of the Truman administration: the necessity of balancing national security with both individual freedom and social security.

THE POLITICAL LEGITIMACY OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY STATE

After the end of the war, in view of the chronic expectation of war that characterized relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, Lasswell participated in the public and academic debate on the bipolarization of world order and a growing sense of international insecurity. More than once, he stated that “the dominant crisis of our time is not socialism versus capitalism” (“Universal Peril” 325) but “socialism and capitalism versus garrison state” (“The Prospects” 900). Lasswell recognized the increasing importance of national security, but he also argued that the allocation of a substantial portion of federal resources to preparation against war strengthened “the hand of government in industry, in politics, in science and education, and in every corner of American life” (“Prevention” 108-09).

The power of Congress, State and local legislatures and courts would decline in proportion to the increased executive power of government; public opinion would be weakened because less and less information would be allowed to pass through the media; the privacy of individuals would be less and less protected; the increased foreign policy demands and subsequent costs would undermine the two foundation stones of domestic policy: high levels of employment and an improved standard of living. Lasswell therefore concluded that Americans would never take the road of “peace at any price,” but would accept only “peace at any reasonable price” (“Prevention” 108). This was the central point of his *National Security and Individual Freedom* (1950), published after the National Security Act was amended in 1949.

In the first part of the book, Lasswell analyzed all the arguments he had already advanced to define the garrison state: the trend toward a more centralized government and the resulting decline in the power of Congress; the governmentalization of society and the increasingly influential role of military professionals to the detriment of political parties, civilian officials, business groups, labor unions and civic associations; the censorship of information available to the public; the increase in police intervention and surveillance (FBI). In his opinion, all such institutional and political changes led to the crippling of a free society. His intention was not to stand against the Truman administration, but rather to “search for policies by which we can reasonably hope to attain a high level of national security without at the same time making an unnecessary sacrifice of individual freedom” (*National Security* 22).

To this end, Lasswell suggested some modifications of the National Security Act: he advocated including three civilian members in the National Security Council and making them responsible for reviewing the effect of security measures on individual liberties and for ensuring a more effective flow to the public of information related to national security; establishing committees in Congress to improve information and make it available to the public. Most importantly, Lasswell urged Americans to give greater support to the President and Congress as representatives of the civilian point of view. He exhorted the thousands of community organizations and policy associations existing at every level of national life—including political parties, business groups and unions—to set up councils on civil liberties and freedom of the press at a local level. In his opinion, “informing the public is not enough. The public must act” (*National Security* 180). And it is with this message that he appealed to the American middle class.

Lasswell stressed that an effective consensus of opinion on the part of the middle class had been increasing since the World War II. By quoting sociological and public opinion studies (Holcombe; Centers), he contended that society was becoming more urban: most Americans were going into industry and becoming wage earners, and urban middle-income groups were more influential in establishing the mood of the whole nation. In his opinion, such a great middle class—consisting of both skilled workers and white collar workers—prevented the crystallization of public opinion into two sharply contrasting creeds—communism or socialism and conservatism—and therefore frustrated any attempt either to radicalize social reforms or to vigorously oppose social security, public housing and education and labor legislation. Such a consensus, in his view, would mean that the government could be held responsible for preventing a drop in the level of the standard of living (*National Security* 72-73, 112-13).

In conclusion, at the beginning of the Cold War, Lasswell believed that the rise of a garrison state could be prevented only if the words “national security” could be embedded into the national consciousness of the middle-income groups: “because of their strategic political position, they are not out of tune with the nation as a whole” (*National Security* 112-13). From this perspective, the National Security State needed political legitimacy based upon the consensus of the great American middle class. And such a consensus depended on both the degree of individual freedom and the standard of living. Without a proper balance between security policies and civil liberties, censorship and public information, defense expenditures and social programs, middle-income groups could become antagonistic toward each other and skilled workers could embrace conflicting ideals, and the resulting social tensions and political contradictions could end up in a lack of consensus. What emerges from Lasswell’s reflections is not only an understanding of the precarious equilibrium of the consensual framework of

American society and politics after the World War II,² but also the fact that it still holds good today. Recognizing this precarious equilibrium allows us to see what would otherwise be covered up, namely that the renewed tensions and contradictions that mark the National Security State (its de-legitimacy) are linked to the longstanding decline of the welfare state and the current economic crisis. Now as then, as the terrorist attacks in Paris on January 2015 also show, the queries relating to national security cut across the problems that arise from the sustainability (and the legitimacy) of the liberal democratic ideal resulting from the experiences of the New Deal and the European welfare states. The increasing polarization of wealth and the (social and political) impoverishment of labor could not be concealed behind the issue of national security. If the “social contract” stipulated between the State and the middle class during the last century has been broken under the pressure of globalization (Sassen), new burning questions emerge: what will become of the nexus between the middle class and liberal democracy that has shaped the Atlantic world since the end of World War II and has become the default ideology around much of the world after the fall of communism in Eastern Europe (Fukuyama)? Will the twenty first century be the century of a new middle class or of the poor working masses (Therborn)? Or might we be caught in the trap of a garrison state? History can widen horizons: the current queries related to national security should be analyzed not in the ideological, national-restricted terms of “statism” and “anti-statism,” but in the historical transnational trend of the success of neo-liberalism and the concomitant downfall of the middle class, not only in the United States and Europe but across the globe.

² During the sixties and seventies, American social scientists—such as Harold Lasswell and Daniel Bell—would face the drastic upset of this precarious equilibrium by the emerging “anti-systemic movements” on class, race and gender issues (Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein). See Cento.

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The Revolution of Rising Entitlements: Daniel Bell and the Logic of Segregation in the Post-Industrial State

MICHELE CENTO

The creation of boundaries shapes every power relationship. Without a strong boundary between those who hold power and those who do not, the political fabric of society is torn apart. In other words, boundaries play a central role in contemporary societies because they cope with the emergence of distinctions in apparently inclusive and egalitarian social spheres. These distinctions are necessary to preserve a hierarchical order in social systems that seek to abolish mechanisms of formal exclusion: “the existence of hell is denied, but then better and worse places in heaven must be distinguished” (Luhmann 269). Insofar as it allows the continuous reproduction of power structures in society, creating boundaries is a political act that singles out and ranks apparently equal individuals in a social hierarchy. Yet, this social boundary, like any other boundary, needs to be legitimated in order to discourage any attempt at subverting it. From this standpoint, sociological studies have historically provided a legitimizing discourse to the creation of these intra-social boundaries.

According to Patricia Hill Collins, until the “disruption of the sociological business as usual in the 1960s and 1970s,” most of the American sociological works shared an “overarching logic of segregation.” Within it, “everyone has one place, places have meaning only in relation to one another, and every place has its rank.” Thus, “working-class men, women and African Americans may appear to go willingly to their assigned places, especially when hegemonic ideologies

naturalize these identities” (Collins 577). In other words, the logic of segregation naturalizes social hierarchies of class, race and gender: it is a sociological device that scientifically shapes and legitimizes the boundaries of distinction in American society.

The aim of this paper is to shed light on how the logic of segregation affected the thought of the contemporary American sociologist Daniel Bell in three different phases of his intellectual journey: in the fifties when he was influenced by the structural-functionalist paradigm, then in the sixties, when he outlined the theory of post-industrial society and, finally, in the seventies, when the rise of a strong demand for social rights prompted him to deal with the paradoxes of the welfare state and the break-up of the American social order.

SYSTEMATIC SEGREGATION

“We no longer know what holds a society together” (Bell, “America’s Un-Marxist” 215). With these words, in 1949 Bell began to question the very nature of social ties and started wondering about how a social order could be established. These kinds of concerns marked Bell’s thinking for about thirty years and, at the same time, revealed two of the most important drives behind his early sociological work. In the first place, he was concerned about the inclusion of the working class, which in the past was denied access to the full benefits of citizenship, fueling a sense of alienation among blue collar workers that resulted in a fierce class struggle. Ways in which to defuse this social unrest and subordinate the specific interests of the antagonistic social groups to the universal values of an inclusive mass society was the other focus of Bell’s attention. This was a central problem for structural-functionalist sociology, which was the dominating branch of American social sciences thanks to the works of Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton. In the long run, wondering about what holds a society together entails reflecting on how to avoid the emergence of conflicting forces in the social sphere. To this extent, it is more than a merely traditional sociological issue. It is, rather, a political issue which questions the very nature of social ties in order to analyze the conditions in which it is possible to build a hierarchical order on the basis of a group of free and equal individuals. The structural-functionalist response highlighted a view of society as a pluralistic and balanced social system, in which roles and norms organize and govern free individuals within a peaceful social complex. This view implied a redefinition of individual freedom, that was more than just the freedom of consumerism: it was above all the freedom to follow the social norms embodied by the role. Such a freedom relied on the existence of a broadly based consensus about the ultimate values underlying the social structure.

The admittance to American society of people who had formerly been excluded, entailed, however, their acceptance of those values and their own collocation within a structure of normative roles. To put it in Pierre Bourdieu’s terms,

white male blue collar workers who crossed over from exclusion to admittance were at the same time taking on a habitus, that is a set of practical dispositions connected to the role and designed to constantly reproduce the established social order (Bourdieu 8-9). That being said, the American social system promised its existing and potential members a progressive upgrading in the social hierarchy, according to the principles of performance and achievement. The dynamics of society were geared toward integrating anyone who shared its values and accepted its modus operandi. Nonetheless it was a logic of segregation, as Bell shows in *The End of Ideology*, the most famous of his books, insofar as it was permeated by the basic tenets of the Parsonian theory of social stratification (Parsons). Analyzing the break-up of family capitalism, Bell highlighted the growing importance of technical skill over property in determining an individual's position on the social ladder.

Such a shift implied a strong social mobility that was increasingly dependent on acquired principles rather than on ones that had been ascribed. Furthermore, it entailed the decline of the class structure and the rise of a predominantly middle class society, that was open to anyone who shared the values of work ethic and achievement in the interests of society as a whole (Bell, *The End of Ideology* 39-46). Thus, by depicting the American postwar working class—and its union leaders—as a cooperative and affluent group, Bell could maintain that blue collar workers had become part of the middle-class (Bell, “Next American”), in what consequently appeared to be a political maneuver to legitimize a consensual social sphere by concealing the actual hierarchies within it (Battistini).

The theory of social stratification embodied by *The End of Ideology* revealed how the functionalist logic of segregation works, by assuming that “societies insure that the most important positions are filled by the most qualified persons” (Davis and Moore 40). Since in the postwar United States women were confined to the role of housewives (Baritono) and African Americans occupied the lowest ranks in the social hierarchy, it is easy to deduce who the targets of this systematic logic of segregation were.

POST-INDUSTRIAL SEGREGATION

Even before a new and heterodox generation of sociologists began to undermine the functionalist paradigm, the social movements of the sixties not only challenged the logic of segregation within American social institutions but also revealed how this same logic compromised sociological progress. Blacks, ethnic minorities, students and women—the so-called anti-systemic movements (Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein)—realized that their own freedom lay outside the boundaries established by white male liberals belonging to the middle-upper classes, such as, in fact, Bell or Parsons, and that reestablishing their freedom would require a renewal of their struggle. Since sociological categories such as

consensus, equilibrium, pluralism were turning out to be obsolete, American society could no longer be depicted as a tranquil entity impacted by different functional groups that were different among themselves but who nevertheless shared the same set of fundamental values.

In 1982 the sociologist Michael Burawoy criticized the Parsonian structural functionalism because it ignored “the new historical forces unleashed on its own doorstep” (Burawoy S4). To be fair, in the early sixties Bell recognized that any functionalist view of contemporary society was by then untenable. In 1962 Bell outlined the hallmarks of the theory of post-industrial society: a society that represented a higher stage in the progressive evolution of social dynamics, but also reflected the deep-seated contradictions of the period. In other words, instead of a unified system, Bell felt that in a post-industrial society the mutual adjustment between the different Parsonian subsystems was being substituted for the disjunction of three different spheres: social structure, polity and culture (Bell, “Disjunction”). In other words, the anti-institutional impulses that stemmed from the social movements of the sixties were being concentrated within the cultural sphere. This uneasy configuration endangered the political unity of society and Bell kept on wondering how society could cohere without some form of internal order. Posited in a different context, this dilemma involved a new logic of segregation, that is a logic of institutional segregation, because integration could no longer be answered by the auto-normative structure of the social system, but required what Otto Kirchheimer called a “quest of sovereignty.” This quest prompted Bell to focus on the role played by the political system in developing and governing the principal trends of post-industrial society.

In the first place, instead of the production of goods, post-industrial society was organized around theoretical knowledge as to “the purpose of social control and the directing of innovation and change; and this in turn gives rise to new social relationships and new structures which have to be managed politically” (Bell, *Coming of Post-Industrial* 20). In the second place, post-industrial society was in Bell’s terms a “communal society,” wherein public mechanisms rather than market demands became the allocator of goods which “multiplies the definition of rights—the rights of children, of students, of the poor, of minorities—and translates them into claims of the community” (Bell, *Coming of Post-Industrial* 59).

These two considerations were interrelated insofar as the furtherance of awareness in different fields and specifically in social science studies, was necessary in order to propose a social policy capable of coping with the rising demand for social rights. Since the State was the missing factor in postwar American thought (King and Stears), the specific needs of post-industrial society demanded not only that polity would become “the true control system of society,” but would also lead to a rethinking of the specific organization of the public. Bell maintained that the chaos in the American administrative structure had to be resolved and he demanded on the part of the government stronger coordination of the various public and private agencies that revolved around the government

executive. At the same time, Bell was aware that the lax functioning of the machinery of government reflected the specific evolution of American political history. As a matter of fact, he was not advocating a Weber-type State that monopolized politics, but was calling for a more institutionalized integration between governmental structures such as independent commissions, universities, non-profit making organizations and enterprises. The actual interplay between them represented what I would call “the post-industrial state,” or, to use Bell’s terms, “a scientific-administrative complex” which represents an institutionalized interaction between political actors located between state and society (Bell, *Coming of Post-Industrial* 246).

The post-industrial state rejected any view of sovereignty as a specific hallmark of the state, but envisaged power as extending over a wider social sphere. In Bell’s opinion, a coordinated and broader based political structure, with ramifications at the core of society, helped to keep in check the problem of societal order, constantly threatened by the anti-systemic movements. In other words, Bell was keen to highlight the fact that the new role assigned to commissions, research centers, and other social actors was essential to convey to the government that the expertise of the social sciences was capable of transmitting the impressive changes of a future-oriented society, as, indeed, post-industrial society was. Furthermore, by its very nature, this loose and polycentric institutional arrangement would be useful in diffusing social unrest. Bell feared that the “politicization” of society would fuel social turmoil. He remarked that “market disperses responsibility” whereas the political center is visible, the question of who gains and who loses is clear, and the state budget becomes a battlefield (Bell, *Coming of Post-Industrial* 118). These unintentional consequences depended on the increase in social demands (health, education, welfare, social services) that became entitlements for the population. Yet, faced with this “Revolution of Rising Entitlements,” Bell wondered: “since there may not be enough money to satisfy all or even most of the claims, how do we decide what to do first?” (Bell, *Coming of Post-Industrial* 159). Because of the disintegration of ultimate values, the lack of a coordinated political norm to manage the public budget constituted the source of social strains in the post-industrial age. In order to mitigate such social strains, it was necessary to disperse the anger and the demands of the “poor people’s movements” (Fox-Piven and Cloward, *Poor People’s*) by deploying the public, private and hybrid political structures collocated at different levels of government. In short, the post-industrial State was betraying its comprehensive promises and was moving toward a path of privatization of the social services that reactivated the logic of segregation within the American welfare system itself. This path became obvious in the seventies and necessitated efforts to reestablish social harmony.

In the early seventies, Bell discovered the sources of the antinomic cultural impulses in the structural transformations of the capitalist ethos. They were the “cultural contradictions of capitalism.” This latter stemmed from the decline of the Puritan ethic which revolved around a work ethic that considered achievement and reward as inextricably linked. It embodied the old Malthusian injunctions for “prudence,” abstinence and the need for hard work in a world of scarcity. When scarcity was substituted for a new material abundance in Gilded Age capitalism, a hedonistic ethic emerged that celebrated endless accumulation, unleashed acquisitive impulses and, subsequently, severed the link between work and rewards. Unbridled appetites were the characteristic feature of Hobbesian man in the state of nature. The specter of a deadly conflict reemerged in American society, insofar as the cultural contradictions of capitalism had instilled in the American people the conviction that they were entitled to material luxury, prompting blacks, minorities and poor people to cast their private desires into the public budget (Bell, *Cultural Contradictions* 23-25).

According to Bell, in order to resolve the contradictions between the public and private spheres it was necessary to elaborate fiscal sociology, a discipline that studied the management of state revenues and expenditures, emphasizing the impacts of economic and social policies on social groups. In 1918 Joseph Schumpeter laid the foundation of fiscal sociology, warning that “the fiscal capacity of the state has its limits and if the people demands higher and higher public expenditures the fiscal state can collapse” (Schumpeter 199). Bell maintained that this limit was reached in the seventies, when the mounting pressures coming from several sections of society overburdened the administration (Bell, *Cultural Contradictions* 235). This situation produced a political stalemate and the upsurge of new tensions. In Bell’s opinion, reducing the administrative overload and restoring the normal operation of the political machinery required a rethinking of the “philosophy” of public expenditure. This was “the arena for the register of political forces in the society,” but, according to Bell, it was also a political maneuver to coordinate and legitimate social power relationships (Bell, *Cultural Contradictions* 221). In order to achieve this end, the public budget was to be thought of in terms of a public household, as German and Austrian sociological economists in the twenties called it. Bell admitted to preferring the term ‘public household’ to other more neutral terms because it emphasized the sociological connotations of communal living. Drawing on Aristotle’s politics, the household was depicted by Bell as the equivalent of the *oikos*, the basic unit of ancient Greek society which catered for the residential and economic needs of an extended family. Such a household depended on a hierarchical order that had to be preserved in order to meet the needs of each member and foster a shared image of the common good. By projecting this image on to contemporary society, Bell was assuming that the public household was expected to sat-

isfy the basic needs of individuals but not their private aspirations (Bell, *Cultural Contradictions* 221).

The separation between needs and aspirations implied the necessity of reducing State commitment to social welfare. Needs were defined on the basis of biological necessities, aspirations were defined as claims based not on meritocratic principles but on ascribed features such as color or gender. This was the logic of the quota act, fiercely criticized by Bell, because it didn't promote the equality of opportunities but the equality of results, thus undermining the already slackened tie between achievement and reward (Bell, *Cultural Contradictions* 265). This reduction of the impact of welfare on the public household was designed not only to obviate the fiscal crisis of the state, described by James O'Connor in 1973, but also to address the cultural contradictions of capitalism and reinstate a "public philosophy" that would lead the administration to pinpoint the legitimate demands of social provisions and, at the same time, to re-dimension the demands themselves. The restoring of the public household required a shared public interest in order to legitimately classify and justify social claims on the state budget. It is no wonder that Bell and the neoconservative social scientists conglomerated at an early stage round a journal named the *Public Interest* that aimed to assess conscientiously the "public policy" of the Johnson administration (Bell and Kristol). From 1967 the journal, edited by Bell and Irving Kristol, launched an attack on the misleading idea of inclusion conveyed by those Great Society programs based on "the ascriptive nature of sex and color" (Vaïsse 50-80; Bell, *Coming of Post-Industrial* 466). These programs were molding an "unfair" inclusion, which was seeking to make people equal rather than treat them equally (Bell, *Cultural Contradictions* 259). Setting a "limit to social policies" became one of the main goals of *The Public Interest* (Glazer), insofar as a fair inclusion depended on the principle that blacks or women should be "treated as individuals (and to achieve equality on that basis) rather than as a category" (Bell, *Cultural Contradictions* 197).

The new arrangement of post-industrial governance and the new vision of inclusion came together as a way to rethink the basic assumptions of the American welfare state. Bell called for the enactment of what he called a "market for the social purposes," that implied a reconfiguration of traditionally private institutions for public ends (Bell, *Winding Passage* 226). It was a recipe designed to ease the administrative overload by privatizing the welfare state and, also, to "regulate" the dependent poor (Fox-Piven and Cloward, *Regulating*) by throwing them back into the market. In this way, subjects that were once entitled to social aid as members of a specifically disadvantaged group would be treated as abstract individuals who received public funding in order to buy services in the market (Cento). As Bell put it, "if there is a new emphasis today, it is a retreat from the older visions of a centralized public ownership . . . The government's primary role, in the older conception, was to provide public goods . . . Now [it] is to set standards and provide resources, and the recipients can buy their own housing and pay for their own health care" (Bell, *Cultural Contradictions* 276). The translation of

group claims into individual/consumer demands involved the deactivation of the subversive threat posed by the anti-systemic movements. It deprived them of the subversive connotations embodied in being part of the “other America.” Furthermore, it incorporated disadvantaged people not by giving them full citizenship, as Thomas Marshall pointed out, but by undermining it. Thus, it forced recipients of welfare aid to merit it, as a meritocratic/individualistic philosophy required. We can see in Bell’s arguments a reversal of the movement from contract to status envisioned by Marshall. In the fifties an inclusive society and the status of full citizenship were promised to white male blue collar workers and, to some extent, to blacks—but not to women who were bound to follow their peculiar “mystique” (Friedan). In the seventies, the reorganization of welfare and a more restrictive and meritocratic view of citizenship aimed at drawing up new racial, gender and class boundaries in order to classify and discipline individuals by qualifying some of them as “undeserving subjects.” Summing up the transformations that occurred after the seventies, Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon observe that the welfare state had been trapped by a contract vs. charity dichotomy. In other words there are some who get back what they put in and others who get something back without putting anything in. This latter category, therefore, became the target of social stigma, while the language of social rights and social citizenship disappeared. By naturalizing historical and socially created differences and reinstating a new work ethic, Bell re-imposed the logic of segregation that was at the very core of the American welfare state. “Social justice—Michael Katz remarked—[was] subordinated to the market price” (Katz 1).

CONCLUSIONS: THE CREDENTIALS OF SEGREGATION

The attempt to restore a meritocratic ethic didn’t foster social mobility and equity, but, in the famous words of Bell, the establishment of a “credentials society” (Bell, *On Meritocracy* 34). In a society built around knowledge and science, universities and high schools were responsible for proving the merits of an individual by issuing credentials under the guise of diplomas, thereby perpetuating the pre-existing boundaries within society. As Bourdieu put it, “the act of scholastic classification is always an act of ordination.” Thus, a credentials society resembled the “court society” depicted by Norbert Elias, insofar as it separated “a clearly limited set of people . . . from the common run of mortals by a difference of essence” (Bourdieu 21). In the fifties, Bell maintained that the primacy of knowledge over property as the basis of social power meant the rise of an open mass society. Yet, certified knowledge introduced new hierarchical principles between those who were socially able to undertake an educational path and who were not. Identifying knowledge as the main resource of social power, Bell’s sociological discourse legitimized a measure of distinction that created intra-social boundaries within a formally egalitarian and inclusive society. Thus, formal exclusion disappeared,

but different degrees of inclusion were applied to a society that no longer had an “outside.” Since knowledge was an acquisitive resource, it appeared to be an unquestionable hierarchical device to organize a society that aspired to be “beyond barbarism” (Luhmann).

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Languages of Freedom in a Coca-Cola* Communist Country

CARLA KONTA

INTRODUCTION¹

After Tito's anti-western and anti-American speech at the first Non-Aligned Conference—held in Belgrade at the beginning of September 1961—American ambassador George Kennan sent a sternly worded telegram to the Department of State declaring that “we must reflect carefully on its implications for our treatment of conference and, in more long-term, our attitude toward role of Yugoslavs at this juncture” (Kennan). Foy D. Kohler, who at the time was the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, responded in no uncertain terms to Kennan's proposals arguing that, beside assisting Yugoslavia “to build a firm secure base of national independence” and to “bring the US maximum benefit from [its] significant role . . . as an independent socialist state outside the Soviet bloc,” it would be imperative for United States interests “to exert an influence upon Yugoslavia's present and future leadership for the evolution of Yugoslav political, economic, and social institutions along more democratically representative

* I borrowed this term from the title of Vučetić's book *Koka-kola socijalizam* [Coca-Cola Socialism] in which she explores the Americanization of the Yugoslav “way to socialism” after its *revolution* versus the West in the first half of the fifties.

¹ The translations from Serbo-Croatian are mine.

and humanistic lines with increasing ties to the West.” By attaining the goal of “a more definite shift to liberal and humanistic socialism” (Kohler), American public and cultural diplomacy would take on the specific role of enticing the Yugoslav ‘grey zone’ to the West. From the early fifties onwards, the Department of State and the United States Information Agency (USIA) began to contemplate a long-term policy which aimed at exerting cultural and political influence on Tito and Yugoslav public opinion by means of new communication channels in public diplomacy. Some of these measures were highly successful in reaching large audiences and ensuring maximum impact. Particularly successful in this regard was a periodical entitled *Pregled* [Horizons]—published in Serbo-Croatian and distributed by the United States Information Center of Belgrade—that between 1965 and 1966 was distributed monthly to some thirty-two thousand Yugoslav citizens (*Operations Memorandum*); and the broadcasts of the *Voice of America* which, according to a 1961 survey, was followed weekly by sixty-nine percent of all Yugoslav radio listeners (*Yugoslav Reactions*). Therefore, when the time came to justify and explain to the Yugoslav public why the African American Civil Rights struggle was taking place in the ‘freest country’ of the world, those communication channels became of crucial importance.

AMERICAN VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE NETWORKS IN YUGOSLAVIA DURING THE COLD WAR

After the Tito-Stalin split of 1948, doors were opened for the creation of a Yugo-American partnership (Jakovina) and Yugoslavia came to the fore in the international arena by reason of its form of leadership in the Non-Aligned movement and its socialist self-management. Although it remained one of the “socialist powers” in the world, Yugoslavia started to mirror many western cultural and social models: jazz, rock music and films, the use of household appliances and the culinary arts, urban architecture, advertising and American supermarkets, to name just a few. However, as Sabina Mihelj has shown, “this did not mean that Yugoslav culture became thoroughly ‘Westernized’ [because] Yugoslav cultural producers and policymakers were trying to establish a ‘third way’ between state-controlled models of cultural production followed in the East, and the market-led approach favored in the West” (7).

In the historical climate of the time, United States public and cultural diplomatic activities assumed the role of creating American ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ networks among Yugoslav citizens and leaders. From 1945 and especially in the fifties, the USIA initiated the United States Information Services (USIS) in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Novi Sad (then in Ljubljana, Skopje and Sarajevo in the seventies). These American information centers housed a public library and reading-room that provided American journals and specialized periodicals, lectures, exhibits, concerts and English lessons. Together with the State Department, USIA also organized a Cultural Presentation Program which provided the arrival

in Yugoslavia of American artists, choirs, jazz, blues and classical music performers, vanguard theater groups, and painters, sportsmen, and academic lecturers. By broadcasting the *Voice of America* (VOA) the United States government reached thousands of Yugoslav citizens. Furthermore, the American pavilions at the Zagreb and Belgrade International Trade Fairs further enhanced the idea of American wealth, knowledge and technological know-how. What is more, the Cultural Exchange Program, provided by public funding such as the Fulbright and Leader's Exchange Program or by private American foundations, generated intense interest and impact on the part of Yugoslav politicians, academics and university students by introducing an alternative and insidious *forma mentis*.

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN ISSUE AS REPORTED BY THE YUGOSLAV VOICE OF AMERICA

Since the early fifties the advancement of African Americans was proposed by the USIA as a top priority issue described in terms of freedom and emancipation "as an effective means of combatting Communist propaganda and demonstrating the progress of the American Negro in a democratic society" (Morton). In Yugoslavia these USIA bulletins were intended to deconstruct the anti-American stories that had become so popular in the Yugoslav mainstream press in the late forties (Savić; "Dobici") by taking their cue from Soviet anti-Americanism; nonetheless because of the Yugo-American partnership in the early fifties these anti-American narrations partly vanished from Yugoslavia's public discourse. When, in the wake of the *Brown vs. Board of Education*² verdict, the African American desegregation movement exploded, it spilled over, almost immediately, from United States national boundaries. For example, the Yugoslav press was actively interested in this matter and expressed sympathy for segregated African Americans: indeed the most important newspaper of Yugoslavia, "Borba" [The Struggle], defined it as an "anachronistic and painful phenomenon" ("Kukluksklanovski apostol" 4).

As far as the American side was concerned, the VOA program had paid a lot of attention to the issues of African American people even before 1954. One of the transmissions broadcast in May 1950 entitled "Outstanding Negroes of the United States" paid a heartfelt tribute to their contribution to United States society: "Of the hundreds of national and racial groups which compose the people of the United States, few have contributed more to the enrichment of the country than the Negro. Almost every field of endeavor is represented among the Negro men and women of achievement and their names . . . have become household words throughout the land" (1). In the same transmission the VOA outlined the huge contribution of African Americans to American education, science, sports, music and social welfare. Personalities such as Booker T. Washington, Mary McLeod Bethune, scientist George Washington Carver, New York State Representative

² The United States Supreme Court decision ended the system of segregation in schools in 1954.

Clayton Powell Jr., Langston Hughes and Richard Wright in literature, then jazz and blues artists, were named as worthy symbols of the American nation (1-10). The VOA broadcasts gave voice to the Negro theater in Harlem and Brooklyn, New York City (*Reports on the Arts* n. 46) while Jazz Notes figured regularly as one of the features of the VOA broadcast “Arts in the U.S.A.” (*Reports on the Arts* n. 66). Each month, *Negroes in the News* reported on African American achievements in United States society. This radio program provided information on topics such as “William Gordon wins Nieman Fellowship for study at Harvard University” (*Negroes in the News* n. 10), or “Negroes in training awarded over \$ 330,000 by National Medical Fellowship” (*Negroes in the News* n. 10), or “Blind honors student wins Root-Tilden scholarship for law study at N.Y.U.” (*Negroes in the News* n. 11). It also reported on a regular basis the success of African American artists in the motion picture industry, such as “Dorothy Dandridge—popular night club singer selected for starring role in . . . *See How They Run*” (*Negroes in the News* n. 15).

These and similar articles aimed specifically at convincing the Yugoslav public that the African American community had begun to be integrated into society, in the fields of education, banking and the business sector, as well as in public and civil services, and the arts. In January 1953 the VOA started to endorse the American initiative of the “Negro History Week,” held from February 8th till February 15th throughout the United States. “During this week—the VOA communicated—programs sponsored by churches, schools, colleges, community agencies and study groups, will emphasize the theme ‘Negro History and Human Relations.’ . . . An objective study [that] reveals not only the progress of the Negro in the United States, but reflects the spirit of American democratic ideals in action” (*Negroes in the News* n. 23) the broadcast concluded. To reinforce the ideals of American democracy and equality, the VOA provided stories about courageous African American men and women. As regards women, “The National Council of Negro Women—stated its director Dorothy Ferebee—is proud to add its influence and resources to those of other women striving to achieve that equality of status which will permit women the world over to exercise their true influence in the quest for universal peace” (*Negroes in the News* n. 28).

Besides providing information about American cultural trends, the broadcasts on “Negro” culture were intended to fight the assertions of communist propaganda that Americans were “cultural barbarians,” and that materialistic capitalism could only produce commodities instead of highbrow culture. These initiatives helped the United States government in its global propaganda campaign against the Soviet Union and its communist allies, who widely reported and successfully exploited the racial tension and violence that accompanied the rise of the Civil Rights movements in the United States—especially after the *Brown vs. Board of Education* verdict and the Little Rock events—as a blatant example of hypocrisy on the part of a nation that claimed to be a leader in the free world (Von Eschen 92-95).

As Mary Dudziak pointed out in her *Cold War Civil Rights*, “from 1946 throughout the mid-1960s, the federal government engaged in a sustained effort to tell a particular story about race and American democracy: a story of the triumph of good over evil, a story of U.S. moral superiority” (13).

As the most significant channel of the American propaganda program in Yugoslavia, *Pregled* (a Yugoslav variant of the Soviet *Amerika*) began publication in 1959 with a circulation of twelve thousand copies. By 1961 circulation rose to thirty thousand copies (*Inspection Report* 23) and became the most popular source of information on the American way of life in politics, economics, welfare, technology, science and education. Its role in forming Yugoslav public opinion on the African American struggle was invaluable: it attested to the fact that democracy in America was leading to social justice even though the struggle was hard, and it confirmed the fact that democratic change, however slow and painful, was superior to the Soviet’s dictatorial approach. The key figure that African American emancipation pointed to was Abraham Lincoln. He was “The Emancipator” par excellence (Wish, “Linkoln i prava” 14), the man who had the courage to perpetuate the American Revolution and give freedom to the slaves. Speeches on the African-American struggle were often introduced by citing Lincoln’s famous Gettysburg speech of 1863: “our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal” (Wish, “Linkoln—Emancipator” 8). While explaining the African American battle for liberty and equality in America, *Pregled* articles usually highlighted the idea that the American Revolution was still going on, as demonstrated by this speech by President Johnson:

We are the children of the Revolution . . . The history of America is a history of a revolution still going on today. This revolution has conquered this continent and expanded democracy . . . Our achievements have raised hopes and aspirations of people all over the world for a better life. Our political ideas have helped ‘freedom’ to become a shared symbol of people gathering in every part of the world (“Lindon Bejns Džonson” 23).

Another aim of those articles was to explain the historical reasons for African American inequality: usually such stories started with the arrival of the first Dutch ship in Jamestown (Virginia) in 1619 that led to the “happy ending” of the Proclamation of Emancipation in 1863 (Sutherland 22). The fourteenth and fifteenth amendments were portrayed as the continuation of this story, but in the late nineteenth century the Supreme Court reversed the Proclamation with the verdict of the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case (1896) which established the rule “separate but equal.” Nonetheless, the *Pregled* articles related a better turn of events in the twentieth century with the foundation of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and the National Urban League Supreme Court victories, with the New Deal and Roosevelt’s Black Cabinet, during the

World War II, and, finally, with the Supreme Court verdict in the *Brown vs. Board of Education* case in 1954 (“Stalna borba” 32-36).

From time to time *Pregled* provided evidence of how the advancement of African Americans was becoming a reality in American contemporary society, of how they were entering government services and of how desegregation was being implemented in airports, schools, public restrooms, restaurants, hotels, and around public fountains. There were quotations by Roy Wilkins, the secretary of NAACP, affirming that “in the field of civil rights, the black position is evolving so completely, that he can only make progress toward full equality” (“Građanska prava” 34). The segregationist community of the United States was—according to the articles of *Pregled*—made up of a small and gradually declining minority. The integrationists included the younger generation and educated people, even in the Deep South. In the civil rights struggle, good news was coming from the United States: the protests, the sit-ins, and the occupation of public, segregated places, the victories in the courts of the NAACP were becoming widespread all over the country (“Položaj crnaca” 48-52; “Predlog zakona” 26).

In this Cold War narrative two other figures played a key role in affirming the truth and faithfulness of the American fight for democracy and equality: Martin Luther King Jr. and John F. Kennedy (Schlesinger 37). Both of them were seen as symbols of the fight for freedom, and strong and determined enemies of racial inequality. The events of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in August 1963 which culminated in Martin Luther King’s famous “I have a dream” speech, were covered by *Pregled*. Stories about the efforts of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the National Women’s Committee on Civil Rights (NWCCR) were eagerly followed in order to show that racial equality would soon be achieved (Smith 39).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

As scholarly research shows, from the early fifties on, the United States State Department became increasingly concerned that domestic racial relations could have a negative impact “on the dozens of countries on the verge of independence from Western colonial powers”; the new nations’ view of racism in the United States would be a strong reason for them to ally themselves with the Soviet Union rather than with America (Monson 107-08; Borstelmann; Krenn). On the other hand, as Plummer demonstrated, the worldwide demands for decolonization put new pressures for change in race relations in America and African American involvement in international affairs (5-20), while the NAACP and its leaders exerted their power in order to take their human rights agenda before the United Nations (Anderson). Undoing the negative impact of domestic racial relations became part of Washington’s foreign policy agenda; by sending ambassadors for jazz (Heywood et al., ch. 7) and African American sportsmen abroad (Damion),

American policy makers intended to overcome hostile international responses to the violent repression of the national civil rights struggle.

An examination of *Pregled* and an analysis of VOA broadcasting in Yugoslavia brings to light evidence of this agenda. Even though the Yugoslav regime never took advantage officially of the problem of United States racial relations (at least not after 1950), for the USIS centers in Yugoslavia this issue was seen as a major blot on United States society and a litmus test for the sincerity of America's intention to establish civil rights for all its citizens.

As Radina Vučetić has pointed out, the "Coca-Cola" communist country of Yugoslavia took advantage of western cultural infiltration and of foreign information services to show its form of "liberal socialism" to the world, but only in the case they weren't pushing for explicit political change (291-304; 397-412). Nonetheless, throughout the fifties and the sixties the Yugoslav Central Committee continued to complain about the American information services ("Inostrane informativne ustanove" 33-35), while other prominent Yugoslav organizations defined these services as "antisocialist" (*Stenografske beleške* 10/2). Nonetheless, because of its Non-Aligned position, the Yugoslav policy makers deemed that it was impossible to restrict the dissemination of "foreign propaganda" without Yugoslavia losing international prestige as an "open community" (*Informacija*).

It is very difficult to assess to what extent the United States presentation of the African American desegregation struggle was successful in convincing its public, due to the absence of any United States or Yugoslav contemporary surveys on the issue. However, one survey report might be helpful in decoding the impact of these messages: in 1961 thirty Yugoslav refugees in Germany were asked to name the negative aspects of American life; the most common answers were "gangsterism" and "absence of social welfare provisions," but no mention was made of the racial question (*Yugoslav Refugee Attitudes*).

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Asian American Transnational Literature and United States American Cold War History

JELENA ŠESNIĆ

In observing some of the developments in late twentieth- and early twenty-first century United States American fiction, the reader notes increased attention paid to certain twentieth-century conflicts that were a direct result of the Cold War (Gray 141). Any study of the history of the Cold War demonstrates that the political situation in Europe was contained by the strategies of the American and Soviet superpowers and so we have to look elsewhere for evidence of a military conflict as an extension of their policies. This can be found on the Asian battlefield of the Cold War starting with the Korean War and culminating in the even more infamous Vietnam War. This article will argue that it is thanks to the revisionary attitude that some Asian American authors have adopted in their writings as regards certain episodes of the historical position of the United States during the Cold War, and especially contemporary representations of the Korean War—which, as Daniel Kim argues, has “traditionally received short shrift in American literary and cultural studies” (550)—that parts of the United States Cold War involvement can be rewritten. I will be concentrating on two recent novels by Asian American authors: Susan Choi’s *The Foreign Student* (1998) and Chang-rae Lee’s *The Surrendered* (2010). Both authors, not surprisingly, are of Korean descent.

A perspective which emerges as part of what Jodi Kim (237) calls “an Asian American critique—itself an offshoot of a new Americanist theoretical agenda”—resolutely addresses one of the key issues in contemporary American

cultural studies; namely the imbalance between the presentation of historical events and the reality of those events as retained in the collective, cultural memory. This imbalance will be dealt with in the present paper by investigating contemporary Asian American literature especially in relation to its representations of Cold War conflicts and the Asian wars. An eye-opening study by Jodi Kim, *Ends of Empire* (2010), provides a cultural history of the Cold War as it was played out on Asian battlefields. She traces the roots of United States of America engagement in Asia to as far back as the late nineteenth century when United States imperial designs expanded beyond American borders and reached all the way to the Philippines (1899-1902). In its ambition and scope it was an unprecedented United States expansionist enterprise which was to epitomize all subsequent United States Asian ventures.

Now let us move fast forward to another episode in the Asian wars which, according to Jodi Kim, are subsumed and consequently occluded by the Cold War paradigm—the Korean War being a case in point. Several facts will corroborate this contention. Given the fact that the Korean War, fought from 1950-53 but never officially terminated, unfortunately followed hard on the heels of the undisputed allied victory in the World War II while anticipating the subsequent stage of United States involvement in South East Asia, it has slipped into a historical recess, so to speak, from where it only occasionally re-emerges. As Kim notes, its standard presentation in United States historiography is one that is almost dismissive, being referred to as “the small-scale” conflict and “the forgotten war” (J. Kim 143; D. Kim 550); this appellation is unwarranted on many counts. In the first place, although the number of United States casualties, estimated at around 34,000, comes nowhere near the death toll in Vietnam, neither is it a number to be lightly dismissed; secondly, the number of Chinese casualties which was 147,000, is as nothing compared to the number of the Korean victims (estimated conservatively at 2.5 million [Robinson 114]). Additionally, in the assessment of the war’s impact we have to take into account the involvement of several major actors, the United States on the one hand, and the USSR and Red China, on the other. So it would seem that in this war the scene was all but set for the beginning of yet another global conflict. Nonetheless, until a fairly recent show of interest on the part of first- and second-generation Asian Americans—specifically Korean American authors, the war figured only sporadically in United States literary and cultural accounts (I concede that an exception could be made in the case of the hugely popular United States TV series *M*A*S*H* [1972-1983], based on the 1968 feature film *MASH*—based, in turn, on the eponymous novel by Richard Hooker which recounts in a lighthearted vein the work of American army surgeons in South Korea during the Korean War). I would argue, however, that the television series was, in fact, inspired by a reading of the Vietnam War, for which the Korean War is used as a backdrop.

With these broadly stated facts in mind, in the remainder of the paper I will focus on Choi’s and Lee’s significant and creatively ambitious attempts to re-

trieve the significance of the Korean War for American mainstream literature and culture and to trans-nationalize it in the process by involving in the texts themselves and, more specifically, in the publication and circulation of the texts both United States American and “other” (Asian, Korean) subjects who rarely get a chance to tell their own story. The two Asian American writers featured in my analysis have both gained national stature notwithstanding their “ethnic” themes, as testified by their status and the critical acclaim which their novels have been accorded. Both Choi and Lee endeavor to insert the devastating war in Korea into the United States cultural and historical memory since by so doing, not only do they revive a national historical record but they also retrieve the role that the Asian scene, broadly speaking, had had to play in it (Nguyen 144).

THE KOREAN CIVIL WAR: CONTAINMENT OF COMMUNISM AND THE MISSIONARY COMPLEX

As Jodi Kim provocatively claims, what generates the cultural production of Asian Americans during the Cold War is a process of triangulation, with the United States as the colonizer (imperialist), racially distinct minorities as “internal colonies” and (Asian) populations abroad as neo-colonies (16). Arguably, both Chang-rae Lee’s and Susan Choi’s novels wish to revive this triangulated scene as a condition of their emergence, since they dwell on segments of Asian history, consider the implications of the United States’ imperialistic involvement in it, and they do so by presenting for the most part Asian/Korean American characters. It is precisely such an orientation which ensures that their novels figure as another instance of United States multicultural, ethnic fiction while opening up a transnational, triangulated perspective (D. Kim 551). Since both Lee’s *Surrendered* and Choi’s *The Foreign Student* dramatize the conditions of emergence for Koreans in America, we must concur with Jodi Kim’s observation that the Asian American subject or modality doesn’t arise solely from national conditions but is “an imperialist transnational project” (16). For both Choi and Lee, the task is to outline the implications entailed in such a project spawned by the Korean War and its aftermath.

One aspect of the transnational aspect is the temporal duality that pervades Choi’s novel, as well as her characters, insofar as the plot is divided spatially between the past represented by the war in Korea and the present in the United States, where the protagonist (Chang Ahn/Chuck) is safely ensconced as a student on a college campus in the Southern states. On the temporal plane, there is not just the already mentioned duality between the war in the past which persists in the protagonist’s traumatic present and the current narrative,—but there is also a constant blurring of temporal boundaries due to the exigencies of trauma that disrupt the neat time lines. The Korean War is not just summed up in narrative form in the large sections of the novel that relate Chang Ahn’s experiences of war and war-related suffering, but it continues to pervade the sections

that relate to his American existence. The strategy of doubling is not confined to matters of time but is also reflected in the way Chang experiences the Tennessee landscape, which resembles that of Korea (Choi 53).

In this brief examination of the novel, I would like to point to another feature that goes some way toward explaining the somewhat enigmatic attitude to the war in the United States cultural imagination. American military engagement in Korea is, at first, not seen as a war, nor is it understood in all its complexity, least of all by Americans: this is evident from the erratic American military tactics (Choi 63-65). Their initially superficial, but subsequently fatal misreading of the situation on the ground only stokes the fires of the civil war that was tearing the country apart and that was not confined only to the fateful thirty-eighth parallel, the provisional line of demarcation between North and South Korea. This misreading continues on a slightly different level in the reception that the Korean scholarship student Chang, now renamed Chuck, receives as he tours United States Southern Episcopal churches and recounts the story that the congregation expects from him. His country, Korea, seems “dim, impoverished, and unredeemable” (Choi 39) to these concerned United States citizens, whose peacetime interests and politics would, in the wake of the war, subject the south of the divided country and its people to a massive missionary, educational and rebuilding program. For Crystal Parikh, there are clear parallels to be inferred between the domestic (United States) South and its international counterpart in the south of Korea after the civil war (53).

Susan Choi’s take on the war, before Chang is finally able to leave Korea, is unusual in the face of Chang’s morally problematic stance—that of the American side-kick and collaborator who refuses to take sides even when his ambivalence is ultimately punished when he nearly succumbs to brutal treatment in one of the southern, anti-communist detention camps. This is ironic in view of Chang’s strategic deployment of his cultural and linguistic credentials in the service of the American military administration imposed on Southern Korea. It is part of Susan Choi’s narrative strategy to complicate the historical account of the war as part of the containment plot professed by Truman’s administration (Truman), by casting it in a more tortuous shape. The war that we see emerging in Chuck’s disturbing flashbacks is a civil war obliterating strictly military and geographic boundaries, rendering ideological goals suspect and ordinary rules of engagement obsolete (D. Kim 551). Within this context, Choi clearly refuses to demonize only the communist side.

Once in the States on a student visa, Chang/Chuck is arguably disingenuous in his decision to exploit the so-called “missionary stance” toward Korea by, firstly, securing the scholarship that will get him out of the country and secondly, by playing up to his audiences’ expectations of his own and his country’s “orientalism” (Choi 41, 44). It is interesting that such a remodeling happens against the backdrop of the American South (specifically Tennessee, the main setting of the American section of the action) doubling for Korea but being used by Chuck, as

suggested by Daniel Kim (551, 552), in a process of translation that is simultaneously an exercise in a decolonizing project. According to Crystal Parikh (53) in her subtle analysis, it is precisely the pre-Civil Rights American South that provides such an opportunity to the psychologically-overtaxed protagonist by placing his new identity image between the two racial positions present in the South at the time, white and black. His progressive, if subtle, racial assimilation develops against the backdrop of the white, upper-class, all-male student body on the one hand and a group of African American menials on the other. Choi first places Chang on the axis of the black/white model, but is obliged later on in the story to add an Asian American, pan-ethnic modality, as we follow Chang traveling north to Chicago and finding temporary refuge in the city's Little Tokyo. This, however, proves to be a short lived and tenuous form of identification since he soon finds himself back in the South, where he undergoes another powerful lesson taught by American national pedagogy, that of the successful closure of the interracial romance that flowers between Chang and Katherine (D. Kim 562; Parikh 48). The two make an interesting couple in the sense that they are atypical—he as a traumatized outsider, an unwilling hero, a halting speaker of English, an Asian (once almost fatally mistaken for a Chinese, hence communist spy [Choi 278]) in a South that recognizes only black and white; she—a wayward Southern belle who, nevertheless, continues to be a member of the Southern upper class. Only as an individual, and moreover, only by internalizing the ideas of emotional transcendence received from an American woman, albeit a socially rebellious one, is Chang able, as a foreign student, to escape the ravages of the conflict and to subvert the workings of American orientalism. It is interesting that while early on in the story the narrative was invested with the task of presenting the major historical, social and political perspectives of the conflict, it progressively veers toward a more personalized take on the Korean War, as Chang's actual present in the States is repeatedly fractured by intrusive memories of the past.

KOREA, ORIGINS OF THE GLOBAL CONFLICT, AND THE SPECTER OF HIROSHIMA

If we recall Jodi Kim's pertinent sketch of the way the United States Cold War neo-imperialist designs generated the Asian American diaspora, then we could argue that Asia, from America's perspective, and acted upon by America in a series of military interventions on a larger or smaller scale, becomes a stage where the forgotten, even repressed origin of at least one global conflict (that of World War II) has occurred. This brings into existence an entirely new post-war dispensation which we can see at work in Chang-rae Lee's *The Surrendered*. Lee's novel is, on one level at least, a story of the devastating impact of World War II, where he subtly brings together the pre-history of that war—which he unequivocally places as having its origins in Asia (specifically by way of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria)—and its progress toward the ensuing Korean War in a single

tangle of human suffering and horrifying loss of life. (The idea of this human suffering is reinforced by references to the carnage of the battle of Solferino, the most bloody of the battles leading up to the Unification of Italy and one that goes far beyond its specifically Italian scope. The references to Solferino, resurfacing from the past, tie together plotlines otherwise subsisting in the different temporal zones inhabited by the various characters.) Within this canvas, Lee brings us back to the occluded origins of twentieth-century global conflict in Asia, devastating not only while it lasted, but also in its aftermath, in terms of its impact on all the surviving characters of the novel aptly designated as “the surrendered” of the novel’s title.

The metaphor of concatenation might best approximate what went on in Asia during the era of the Cold War, ushered in by President Truman’s National Security Act of 1947 (J. Kim 17), and, more significantly, if somewhat earlier, by the catastrophic outcome of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan. In short, while in Europe the Cold War was waged mostly by way of deterrence—occasionally interrupted by short-lived revolutions in Eastern Europe (most notably the uprising in East Berlin in 1953, the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and of Poland in 1981),—in Asia this global conflict has from its bloody start in the Korean War taken on a much more sinister aspect. It is entirely justified, in line with this “buried” history of twentieth-century conflicts in Asia, that Lee’s novel features China in the thirties as one of the breeding grounds for the imminent World War II, the Korean War in the fifties as its continuation, and the violent civil unrest in the United States and terrorist activity in Europe (more specifically Italy) in the seventies as their traumatic reflections.

Going through the reviews of Lee’s novel, one is struck by the almost total disregard on the part of both American and British critics in the mainstream press and literary magazines (Churchwell; Rafferty; Wood) of the background provided by the two world wars in the novel. The critics’ insistence—in my view misguided—on the narrative’s finer points which might be welcome in another context, reflects a general obliviousness to the causes and the course of the Korean War, a war that took both Soviets and Americans almost by surprise while allowing China to assert its newly gained leverage. I would also argue that Lee himself was—intentionally or not—somewhat ambivalent when, while discussing in an interview the main interests of his novel, he failed to highlight the unresolved traumatic kernel of his narrative; in other words the Korean War both as the conclusion of the previous global reshuffling and the starting point of a new, post-World War II layout (Chacón). Even if he refrained from writing a thesis novel, one could argue that the thesis that seems to be proposed by the novel, the re-inscription of the Korean War as a template for the United States global interventionism during the Cold War, was well worth the risk.

Still, something of a similar nature was obviously on Lee’s mind since he shows how episodes from the World War II in Asia overlap with those from the Cold War creating a continuum. (Thus it is clear that for Lee the complications

in Korea were just an extension of a great upheaval that it is impossible to break down into single, compact units: everything is linked to everything else.) This connectivity is appropriately reflected in the novel's palimpsest structure, which takes us from Manchuria in the thirties when it fell under Japanese military rule, to the post-war United States, Korea in the war years, (including a typical Korean orphanage after the war), then to the States in the eighties, and finally to the characters' final destination of modern day Solferino, Italy. These war-scarred places relate principally to the three main characters: the Korean American June Singer, who was adopted into an American family as a war orphan; Hector Brennan, an erstwhile American GI in Korea, and Sylvie Tanner, a missionary's wife in war-wrecked Korea, who worked in the very orphanage that June is placed in while awaiting adoption. The novel effectively traces the entanglements of their life stories as they were dictated by the inexorability of the Korean War, but it also highlights how they are unwittingly embroiled in issues that go far beyond Korea. Hiroshima and Solferino play an important, if subordinate, part in deciphering certain historical tendencies that are dealt with after a considerable lapse of time, as is demonstrated in Kim's study, which takes a clear-sighted view of the human, economic, political, and social toll exacted by the containment of Communism in Asia as practiced by a series of American administrations in the twentieth century. Let me briefly expatiate on my main contentions. As far as the characters in the novel go, one of Hector's principal motivations for joining the army was the atomic destruction wrought on Hiroshima (and later Nagasaki.) To this extent Hector's role in the narrative is almost predetermined by that historical tragedy. For another of the novel's protagonists, Sylvie Tanner, Solferino is a traumatic knot that ties her tragic and blighted life to the gruesome end her parents had met with in Manchuria at the hands of the Japanese. She thus feels the urge, transposed onto the other two protagonists, June and Hector, to understand the meaning of Solferino, that in the novel stands for the carnage of war and so prefigures every other incident of a similar nature. Following the novel's logic, Solferino is not only a place of historical singularity but also a horrible template to be repeated, unfortunately and with astonishing frequency world wide ever since. As if requiring a ritual (or, rather, traumatic) re-enactment, it was Solferino and what it stood for that impelled Sylvie's parents to come to China where they are ultimately destroyed and their daughter ravaged and scarred for life. The only other event that exceeds the historical and traumatic enormity of the Battle of Solferino in the novel is, as I have already mentioned, Hiroshima. But then, for anything else to match, let alone exceed Hiroshima, that would indeed be the end of everything. In the meantime, Lee's novel reminds us of what the characters' are forced to recall during their final visit to Solferino's chapel of skulls. The realization of the unusual doubling of Solferino and Korea, is unequivocal in Sylvie's words: "... I forget what's happened all around us here. The enormity of it. The cause of all this" (Lee 143). She makes it clear that in order to understand the present, we have to remember the past. The same screening strategy, the similar

process of occlusion is at work with the specter of Hiroshima, as we have seen. Lee's novel is a very singular contribution to recent Asian American literary production and reminds its American and global readers of the things and causes we should be remembering for the sake of our future.

The emergence of Asian American authors—whose family immigration trajectory bare traces of Cold War exigencies and demonstrate how the Asian diaspora to the States is a direct result of United States Cold War pressures—means that a new rewriting of United States Cold War history in Asia has become possible. Writers like Choi and Lee recuperate for their United States and global audiences scenes and episodes from “forgotten wars,” engaging, in the process, in the production of a trans-nationalized text (D. Kim 551), creating palimpsest structures, and prompting a serious reconsideration of United States Cold War history.

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6. Fantasy, Popular Culture, and Dissent

Twilight of the Grrrls: Stephenie Meyer's Rehash of the Feminine Mystique

ALICE CASARINI

Even in the current, post-millennial scenario, the path toward gender equality is still a long and winding road, and a disturbing amount of evidence in the daily news continues to remind us how far women have yet to walk to fight the patriarchal *Weltanschauung* that persists in most corners of the planet, be it in the form of blatant abuse, in subtler forms of discrimination, or, in particularly disheartening cases, in the resurrection of archaic chauvinistic beliefs pronounced by public figures who have had a regrettably profound influence on entire generations of young women. In the allegedly illuminated turn-of-the-millennium United States, a single pen-woman managed to wield her quill in such a determined fashion that her literary production alone represents one of the worst setbacks ever for feminism and for the victories achieved by the Suffragettes, the Women's Liberation Front, and the millions of women who stood up for gender equality over the past century. In her four-volume *Twilight* saga, forty-year-old fiction writer Stephenie Meyer devoted literally thousands of pages to the depiction of a female character who is entirely subservient to the male figures in her life. Under the cover of a whimsical, temperamental façade and the lure of paranormal romance, her alter-ego heroine Bella Swan (and her cinematic version portrayed by lackluster actress Kristen Stewart) ultimately turns out to be not just a marionette in her creator's toy theater, but also the ultimate puppet in the hands of her male pipers to whose tune she is ready to dance whenever they pull her strings.

In spite of its disarmingly coy depiction of women (or perhaps for that very reason), the *Twilight* saga is one of the most successful literary and cinematic enterprises of the past decade, comprising four books published between 2005 and 2008 and five movies that came out between 2008 and 2013, with translations into some forty languages and revenues running into the millions all over the world. The story focuses on the female protagonist Bella Swan, combining a classic coming-of-age approach with a supernatural twist, since Bella is involved in a love triangle with a vampire and a werewolf and oscillates between the two until she is finally united with her bloodsucking betrothed. Given that the novels are written by a seemingly independent woman and are narrated from Bella's own point of view, one would expect an empowered and empowering protagonist, yet Meyer goes out of her way to negate Bella's agency and to regress to an idea of femininity that not only ignores all of the recent advances toward gender equality, but actually reverts to the archetype of the damsel in distress which feminists have always fought to abolish.

Meyer quickly dismissed feminist criticism on her website, maintaining that Bella's frail persona is only due to her being human in a world populated by supernatural creatures and that the entire saga actually focuses on the girl's own choices (Meyer, "The Story"). And indeed, the juxtaposition of a single female heroine and two male protagonists may fool readers into believing that Bella is in control of her life and that her eventual union with her beloved vampire Edward Cullen is the fruit of her own agency. Nevertheless, countless instances in both the books and the movies point to a depiction of Bella's character as the ultimate victim, unable to get her act together unless a dominant male counterpart instructs her on how to proceed, or, more often than not, literally puts her back on her feet (since she is extremely accident-prone) or physically drags her to "the side-lines of the action" (Eddo-Lodge) as he fights her battles for her.

From the very start, Bella is introduced as a sort of porcelain doll whose fragile, ivory-skinned, figure needs to be saved from her own lack of coordination: in a lame and politically incorrect attempt at self-irony, she describes herself as "being so clumsy that I'm almost disabled" (Meyer, *Twilight* 118). Reni Eddo-Lodge highlights the fact that Bella's "victimhood [is] exploited and fetishized. Much of the physical interaction between Bella and her male counterparts reveals a loss of control- or rather, a willing relinquishment" (Eddo-Lodge). Bella is also inscribed in the age-old cult of domesticity: when she is not daydreaming about her boyfriends, she is doing her schoolwork, performing household chores, or cooking for her divorced father. Even though she is capable of such "manly" feats as driving a pick-up truck through the rainy woods of Washington state, Bella is all too ready to give up her autonomy and hand her life over to any male character willing to protect her: "her ability to submit to the will of others around her is astonishing. Stephenie Meyer has placed her protagonist firmly in the kitchen. A significant proportion of the series idolizes Bella as the perfect woman child-fragile, frail and weak, in need of constant watch and protection" (Eddo-Lodge).

Throughout the saga, Bella reveals not just her inability to stand up to her male counterparts, but also her intimate pleasure in surrendering to external decisions, which she depicts as inevitable from the very start: “I didn’t know if there ever was a choice, really. I was already in too deep. Now that I knew—if I knew—I could do nothing about my frightening secret. Because when I thought of him, of his voice, his hypnotic eyes, the magnetic force of his personality, I wanted nothing more than to be with him right now” (Meyer, *Twilight* 139). As her obsession with Edward skyrockets, her willpower plummets: “His mouth was on mine then, and I couldn’t fight him. Not because he was so many thousand times stronger than me, but because my will crumbled into dust the second our lips met” (Meyer, *New Moon* 512). Her acknowledgement of her own meta-delusion and of her dependence on the constructs she herself recognizes as chimeras even betrays a certain self-satisfaction: “I was addicted to the sound of my delusions. It made things worse if I went too long without them” (Meyer, *New Moon* 352).

Meyer herself appears to be prone to puerile daydreaming as she dismisses the construction of Bella’s character as a weak girl by providing a decidedly pathetic justification on her official website:

There are those who think Bella is a wuss. There are those who think my stories are misogynistic—the damsel in distress must be rescued by strong hero. To the first accusation, I can only say that we all handle grief in our own way. Bella’s way is no less valid than any other to my mind. Detractors of her reaction don’t always take into account that I’m talking about true love here, rather than high school infatuation. I emphatically reject the second accusation. I am all about girl power—look at Alice and Jane if you doubt that. I am not anti-female, I am anti-human. (Meyer, “The Story”)

And yet Meyer’s predilection for the supernatural clearly backfires, or rather, is instrumental in the promotion of an idealized image of femininity that is simply a rehash of what Betty Friedan termed “feminine mystique” in her prominent book of the same title (1963). The feminine mystique refers to the false notion that re-emerged in post-World War II America and contended that women’s role in society is exclusively based on their housekeeping skills and on the ability to please their husbands and raise their children. The mystique represented a fabricated idea of womanhood that criticized the aberrant “masculinity” of women who aimed at having a career or at fulfilling their individual potential, thus going against their pre-ordained role, which was reasserted through a constant stream of images portraying them as homemakers and nurturers.

While constituting an ideal poster girl for the feminine mystique itself, Bella never shows a figment of what Friedan had defined as “the problem that has no name,” the all-feminine unhappiness generated by the pigeonholing process. Rather than expressing dissatisfaction with her utter dependence on male characters and yearning for something more than her role as a homemaker and a future wife and mother, Bella is happy to let her life revolve entirely around Edward and surrendering to his ability to protect her. Left on her own, as Eddo-Lodge ob-

serves, “Bella flounders helplessly, absorbing blame that isn’t hers to claim, until a male character makes a decision that she dutifully follows” (Eddo-Lodge). When Edward leaves town to save her from the perils that his own fangs might lead to, Bella ceases to function and the first-person narration is literally interrupted for several months, with actual blank pages in the book for the months from October to January (Meyer, *New Moon*, ch. 4). To give Meyer credit, this strategy does prove effective, yet its impact is undermined by Bella’s repeated attempts to cheat death by jumping off a cliff or riding a motorbike at breakneck speed, knowing that Edward will sense that she is in danger and will rush to her rescue.

The timeworn dichotomy between the impotent damsel in distress and the almighty male hero that shot back into the foreground in post-9/11 America, is cogently illustrated in Susan Faludi’s *The Terror Dream*. In a revival of a John Wayne-type machismo, America posited the resurrection of male heroism as the only hope for the possibility of recovery, implicitly blaming women’s liberation as a process that had “feminized” American men and made them incapable of resisting terrorist attacks. This process clearly evokes the fifties rhetoric of containment that aimed at pushing “blond bombshells” back into the kitchen, as illustrated in Elaine Tyler May’s *Homeward Bound* (1988). The promotion of male heroism as the ultimate response to terrorism required the construction of heroic figures to whom ordinary citizens could, legitimately, look up, as Donald Rumsfeld stated on the day after 9/11: “America will need more heroes” (qtd. in Faludi 46). *Time* magazine provided a literal interpretation of Rumsfeld’s statement with a cover story headlined “Rudy Giuliani: Tower of Strength,” presenting Person of the Year mayor Giuliani as “a mighty superhero at the edge of the observation deck of a Manhattan skyscraper, as if poised to make a Superman swoop on Metropolis” (*Time*, 31 Dec. 2001-7 Jan. 2002 issue, qtd. in Faludi 9).

The *Twilight* saga immediately posits Edward as the heroic savior: in one of the early scenes in both the first novel and the first movie, he rescues Bella from a rogue car with his supernatural speed and strength. The film explicitly highlights Edward’s über-masculinity: while the camera lingers on the huge indentation left in the car door by his fist, Edward squats to help Bella up, literally watching over her—an activity in which he delights throughout the saga, since he believes it is his mission to monitor her every waking and sleeping moment. As illustrated by a popular, satirical meme that circulated through social networks in 2013, Bella is more than happy to surrender to his constant watch and let him handle her like a puppeteer, feeling honored when she hears him say he watches her sleep every night: “‘You spied on me?’ But somehow I couldn’t infuse my voice with the proper outrage. I was flattered” (Meyer, *Twilight* 166). While Bella’s subservience is already fully fledged in the novels, the cinematic adaptations also suffer from Kristen Stewart’s deadpan histrionics. Her limited range of facial expressions and body language only favors the displacement of agency from her character onto others, as opposed to the much more convincing performances of other, less poker-faced young actresses such as Emma Wat-

son, who portrayed the *Harry Potter* saga's witty and versatile heroine Hermione Granger.

The effects of Stewart's lack of communicative skills and Bella's own proclivity for subjugation are emphasized by the obvious connection between vampirism and eroticism, which underpins the dominant role of the male predator and the submissive role of the female prey. Edward's perpetual youth and alluring vernal charm is counterbalanced by his mind-reading skills and by the centuries of experience he has had the opportunity to accumulate, which legitimize his conviction that he is the one "who knows best" and the natural leader in relationships. The vampire bite itself has often been compared to penetration, with fangs seen as phallic symbols and the victim's dripping blood perceived as the loss of virginity. The *Twilight* saga also perpetuates the idea of the vampire venom coursing through the blood of the female victim, suggesting the idea of both the impregnation and colonization of the woman, as Bella herself affirms:

It wasn't a rational desire. I was sure that—about two seconds after someone actually bit me and the venom started burning through my veins—I really wouldn't care anymore who had done it. So it shouldn't make a difference. It was hard to define, even to myself, why it mattered. There was just something about him being the one to make the choice—to want to keep me enough that he wouldn't just allow me to be changed, he would act to keep me. It was childish, but I liked the idea that his lips would be the last good thing I would feel. Even more embarrassingly, something I would never say aloud, I wanted his venom to poison my system. It would make me belong to him in a tangible, quantifiable way. (Meyer, *Eclipse* 288)

This idea of a pristine entity that can only come fully into being when conquered by a male predator ties in with Jessica Valenti's essay *The Purity Myth*, whose original cover bears a striking similarity to those of the *Twilight* saga, and especially to the flower against a black background on the cover of *New Moon*. *The Purity Myth* focuses on the insidious belief that a woman's primary value is sexual and that her body is a mere commodity at the disposal of men. Virginity is idolized as "a stand-in for women's morality, [suggesting] that women can't be moral actors. Instead, [they]'re defined by what [they] don't do—[their] ethics are the ethics of passivity" (Valenti 24-25). Valenti highlights the dangers of perpetuating "the notion that to be desirable, women need to be un-adults—young, naive, and impressionable" (65), "not autonomous adults, but perpetual children whose sexuality is strictly defined and owned, like that of traditional wives-in-training" (67) by wiser, stronger, more moral men. As previously illustrated, Bella is happy to let her protective fiancé take everything into his own hands and let her be turned into a vampire as soon as she comes of age, thus arresting her own youth for eternity.

The concepts of male heroism, female submission, and the virginity myth all coalesce in the climax of the relationship between Edward and Bella, which occurs in *Breaking Dawn* (2008). Edward has protected Bella from his own sexuality for three and a half books, in spite of her more than willingness to consummate

their love, for her only wish was to be with him forevermore. To comply with his role as the male figure who controls and defines his lady's sexuality, Edward blackmails Bella into marrying him and takes her on their honeymoon to a private island off the Brazilian coast, where he finally exerts his *ius primae noctis*. The movie *Breaking Dawn Part 1* (Condon 2011) visually enhances the book's depiction of their first act of sexual intercourse as the ultimate confirmation of Bella's complete submission: Edward occupies a dominant position, with the camera and lighting underlining his manly muscles, and Bella literally yields to him, as is highlighted by the soundtrack, *Sleeping At Last* "Turning Page":

Your love is my turning page
Only the sweetest words remain
Every kiss is a cursive line
Every touch is a redefining phrase
I surrender who I've been for who you are
Nothing makes me stronger than your fragile heart
If I had only felt how it feels to be yours
I would have known what I've been living for (*Sleeping At Last's*, "Turning Page," in Condon, *Breaking Dawn Part 1*)

The idea of "a redefining phrase" and the lines "I surrender who I've been for who you are" and "I would have known what I've been living for" highlight Bella's desire to belong to Edward both as a woman and as a future vampire; the verb "turning" befittingly refers both to the idea of turning the page and starting a new life and to the process through which one is "sired" and becomes a vampire, which occurs to Bella later on in the book and in the movie.

Even though the newlyweds' first night together is meant to finally express the fullness of their love, on the following morning the destructive power of Edward's aggressive lovemaking becomes fully evident in the ransacked room and Bella's extensive bruising. Not long after, she also realizes she is pregnant, yet it soon becomes evident that the hybrid creature growing in her womb is too strong for her and is literally consuming her. When the fastest pregnancy ever depicted in fiction is about to end, a couple of weeks later, once again it is Edward who decides that the only way to save Bella is to perform a Caesarean section and to turn her into a vampire as soon as her child has been delivered. With a demonstration of restraint at the sight of blood unbelievable in a vampire who had gone crazy over a paper cut in the second book (Meyer, *New Moon* 17), Edward performs the C-section himself and pulls out his blood-covered daughter. He then fruitlessly tries to bite the now unconscious Bella, but ends up having to thrust an enormous syringe filled with his own venom right into her heart, once again echoing images of penetration and colonization. After a due pause for suspense, Bella is magically brought back to life. Or rather, un-life, for she has finally been turned into a vampire.

Meyer leaves no hope for the representation of womanhood, not even in the vampire form. Bella only manages to become a vampire when Edwards decides

there is no other way to save her life, and even though he is proud of her new abilities (she is seen arm-wrestling and using mental shields), he considers them a product of his own Pygmalion skills and does not miss a chance to drive this home. Even in the bedroom, where Bella finally seems to have earned herself a dominant role, Edward ends up by literally stripping her of her power to act alone: when she protests that she still remembers how to undress, he claims that he is able to do it much better (Condon 2012).

It is interesting to recall that as far back as 1949, Simone de Beauvoir had already defined the psychology of female submissiveness in terms that might well have been referring to Bella: “She chooses to desire her enslavement so ardently that it will seem to her the expression of her liberty; she will try to rise above her situation as an inessential object by fully accepting it; through her flesh, her feelings, her behavior, she will enthrone him as supreme value and reality: she will humble herself to nothingness before him” (De Beauvoir 1953, qtd. in Eddo-Lodge).

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Food, Narrative, and Fantasy in David Leavitt's *The Body of Jonah Boyd*

SERENA FUSCO

FOOD AS SYSTEM OF SIGNS AND FANTASY

The aim of this essay is to analyze food as a system of signs, narrative fantasy, and metanarrative element in the novel *The Body of Jonah Boyd* (2004) by David Leavitt. In this first part, I shall illustrate some implications of, and strategies for reading food practices as a system of signs and/or cultural narratives; then I shall move on to argue that this signification can be related to an idea of fantasy—a imaginary relation between individual subjects and a given form of reality—a power-charged relationship that can be conservative or subversive, emancipatory or oppressive, adaptive or transformative. In the second part, I shall use the relationship between food, signification, and fantasy as a critical tool for reading Leavitt's novel, one that features food and its rituals as a code through which fantasies and fictions shape reality—taking, in turn, the form of (meta)literary, combinative clues to be deciphered.

In the preface to Massimo Montanari's *Food is Culture* (2004), Albert Sonnenfeld maintains that

a meal constitutes a syntax, the sequence of modified nouns coordinating main dishes . . . with complementary or accompanying dishes . . . Sauces, spices or flavorings ful-

fill further adjectival or adverbial functions. So a meal may be diagrammed or parsed, with various syntactical choices dictated by historical, social, and political factors. (Sonnenfeld ix)

An increasingly expanding body of work on food as a cultural code and object of cultural investigation exists nowadays.¹ Roland Barthes suggested a semiotic approach to food as early as 1964. For Barthes, food is one system of signs among others—such as images, advertisements, printed books, street signals, fashion, and more. In “Deciphering a Meal” (1972), anthropologist Mary Douglas also treats food practices as an integral part of a complex system of signs and signification. The ways ethnic groups relate to food bespeak, among other things, cultural belonging and social status within that culture. Identifying with a culture is stated and reinstated through daily nutrition rituals such as, for instance, the tripartition of meals in some cultures. Cultural belonging is also stated and reinstated in the organization of the calendar year according to festivities, with each festival being marked by its own structure of meals and special foods (see Douglas 62, 69). Conversely, some food representations emphasize the grim, even antisocial aspects of nutrition, thereby suggesting that, if food can hold human groups together and convey positive connotations—affection, care, intimacy, reconciliation etc.—it can also be associated with individual disempowerment and even reveal the violent, destructive side of cultural belonging. For instance, Sau-ling Wong has pointed to food-related themes and “quasi-cannibalistic images with overtones of sacrifice” (Wong 31) as a recurring motif in Asian American literature. Wong reads this motif “in context,” combining a cultural explanation with a socioeconomic one. One cannot simply ascribe the grim quality of Asian American food practices to strange or exotic “ethnic” cultural traditions: the emphasis on eating as an act that can entail devouring your own kind is to be read in the context of a deprivation of economic resources and pressure exercised on the immigrant community on the part of “more diffuse and potent societal forces, such as the structural enclosure of minorities or stratification of the labor market by race and gender” (Wong 39). Carole M. Counihan has analyzed how the relation to food can also be gender-inflected. Investigating how food orchestrates mother-daughter bonds in a Florentine family relocated in the United States, Counihan maintains that, in the case of women, food practices can both favor and limit the possibility of emancipation from the family circle. Counihan’s analysis constructs different possible relations, mediated by food, between the realm of the family and a much broader socio-cultural, intercultural context.

What I find especially significant is her conclusion whereby in the relationship between individuals and communities, food can work as both “tie and rup-

¹ Providing a comprehensive outline of the expanding discipline of Food Studies—both in its historical and most recent developments—is a task that cannot be attained within the limited scope and space of this essay. For a work that offers a general purview of scholarly approaches to food through a Cultural Studies perspective, see Counihan and Van Esterik.

ture” (Counihan 156). While meanings associated with food are deeply embedded in cultural discourses, in food-related daily cultural practices, but also in literary or filmic discourse, food itself can be mobilized and become a signifier for many non-food related signifieds. Elspeth Probyn maintains that food “moves about all the time. It constantly shifts registers . . . it is the most common and elusive of matters” (Probyn 63). Unveiling food as a rhetorical system at work in literature is predicated on the possibility of a metonymical relation between food-signs and other signs:

Literature allows us a very privileged view into . . . foodways, which are often moulded into specific story-telling threads and lead us into an exploration of character and society. In so doing, food, cooking and eating . . . cease to be simply themes, but . . . develop into fully functional parts of the narrative which “help define” the nature of “the writing.” (Piatti-Farnell 3-4)

In other words, food habits and practices—eating or not eating certain foods, cooking methods, places where and occasions when to consume food, etc.—can work as flexible markers of identification and/or restrain or facilitate the positioning of an individual within pre-existing frames of discourse and/or sociocultural realities. As I shall presently maintain, *The Body of Jonah Boyd* employs food signs as literary clues and intertwines them with a metaliterary reflection. Making sense of those clues will enable Denny, the novel’s narrator, to win a dual victory. At a (meta)narrative level, Denny’s voice will emerge as the most powerful in the text; socially speaking, she will finally act out her fantasy of being part of the suburban middle-class she had been skeptically skirting for most of her life.

To sum up: 1) food practices and signs may have the function of reinforcing the solidity of families, communities, and their socio-cultural practices; 2) or, on the contrary, they can be used as critical tools for undermining/questioning narratives of belonging; 3) food as a system of signs does not operate in isolation; to the contrary, it interacts with other system of signs, and in literature it can acquire (as it does in Leavitt) a metaliterary value. Within the context of these premises, I suggest that it may be possible to conceive of the experience of food as “fantasy” and I intend to deal with this issue in the following pages.

In *States of Fantasy*, Jacqueline Rose maintains that one of the functions of fantasy is to suture, albeit temporarily, the rifts in a collectivity. Rose sums up the workings of fantasy as the psychological grasp that the modern nation engenders in the psyches of its citizens in order to smooth out its inevitable, deep-seated contradictions. Rose draws on Freud to suggest that “fantasy is not . . . antagonistic to social reality; it is its precondition or psychic glue. . . . Fantasy surely ceases to be a private matter if it fuels, or at least plays a part in, the forging of the collective will” (3). Fantasy entails elements of disruption and preservation, of overcoming boundaries and staying within them: “If fantasy can be the ground for license and pleasure . . . it can just as well surface as fierce blockading protectiveness, walls up all around our inner and outer, psychic and historical, selves”

(Rose 4). Donald E. Pease draws on Rose when he suggests that it is fantasy which provides the necessary “reality effect” to a political entity such as the State: “State fantasies incite an operative imagination endowed with the power to solicit the citizens’ desire to believe in the reality of its productions” (Pease 4). Interestingly, through a logic of disavowal, the subject of the fantasy experiences the gaps into the reality effect of a not-so-seamless collectivity not as proof of the impossibility of a synthesis—but, instead, as sources of attachment, spurs to a repeated investment. Both Rose and Pease underline and imply that fantasy is what makes the identification of an individual with a given order of discourse possible and impossible at the same time. Fantasy smoothes out contradictions, while at the same time putting the subject through a reiterated and incomplete relationship with (what is defined as) reality—by virtue of the fact that “reality” is not fully realizable. Fantasy is what keeps subjects investing in a “wholesome” reality.²

I have already suggested that food themes and imagery can provide a terrain for reabsorbing the most problematic, contradictory aspects of (cultural) identification; or, conversely, that they can accompany an exacerbation of the contradictions in the process of identification and make them concrete through violent images of grim eating, fasting, decomposition, or even cannibalism. In Leavitt’s work, food is analogous to fantasy to the extent that it forms a subtext accompanying and reinforcing the contending, ambivalent ways in which desire and imagination—substantiated as narrative and fiction—grapple with, and remake the world.

THE BODY OF JONAH BOYD: FOOD AS CLUES, METANARRATIVE, AND FANTASY

Leavitt employs food as imagery, symbolic repertoire, and as an element mobilizing the plot in several works. Fiorenzo Iuliano has recently explored the use of food in Leavitt’s novella *The Wooden Anniversary*. Iuliano demonstrates how Italian—more specifically, Tuscan—cooking constitutes the fantasy sustaining the temporary, perhaps even illusory reconstruction of a harmonic expatriate American community in Tuscany, one composed of characters who (unsuccessfully) attempt to leave past traumatic experiences behind.

Published in 2004 and set in the late sixties, *The Body of Jonah Boyd* centers on the Wrights, a white, middle-class, liberal American family with several skeletons in the cupboard, and on a fateful Thanksgiving that will change the life of Ben, the youngest of the Wright children, and of Denny, the narrator of the novel. Judith “Denny” Denham is a secretary having an affair with her boss Ernest Wright,

² Several essays in a recent collection (Nyman and Gallardo-Torrano 2007) mention the role of food as a unifying or, alternatively, pluralizing fantasy in selected postcolonial literary texts that revolve around conflicts of culture and identity. The historical contingency, hence fundamental mobility of food as a system of signs, forms an indispensable background to this scholarly effort.

a psychology professor at the fictional University of Wellspring, California. Denny is also friend, unpaid domestic help, four-hand piano partner, and surrogate daughter to Nancy, Ernest's domineering wife. On a Thanksgiving, Nancy's friend Anne and her husband, the novelist Jonah Boyd, pay a visit. The disappearance of Boyd's notebooks, containing the only copy of his unfinished novel, is eventually revealed to be a scheme thought up by Anne to teach her husband a lesson. Anne enlists fifteen-year-old Ben, an aspiring writer, as an accomplice. Ben eventually reworks Boyd's stolen work into his first novel; after this initial act of plagiarism, he continues to write and manages to become an authentically competent and successful author. In the end, Denny uncovers the mystery of the notebooks and marries Ben, who dies of cancer shortly after. Finally, she settles into the Wright's house, Nancy's pride and joy, which becomes her rightful inheritance.

In many ways, the novel resembles a detective story, centered round discovering clues to the enigma of the lost notebooks. Food serves as one of the links in the orchestration of the various plot patterns that, at the end of the novel, will metanarratively converge in a reflection on the power of narrative and fantasy to create, validate, and suture alternate forms/versions of reality. Food is used as a system, a series of clues—or, to paraphrase Rose, a psychic glue—to make sense of the events and link them narratively.³ In this sense, it is metonymically linked to the metaliterary element of the lost notebooks and Ben's act of plagiarism.⁴ Significantly, Jonah Boyd's lost notebooks were fruitlessly searched for in the very trash can where the carcass of the Thanksgiving turkey will end up, in a way symbolically taking their place:

The turkey carcass . . . lay bony and denuded on its platter . . . Perhaps Nancy would boil it for broth, before throwing it into the trash she had earlier searched so patiently and so fruitlessly [for the notebooks]. In any case, she would get rid of it. No one wanted to look at the thing anymore. (Leavitt 107)⁵

(Considering this passage in the general economy of the novel, it should be remarked that the association between food and literature takes on decidedly cannibalistic overtones, as it is also mediated by the association between Boyd's

3 On the metaliterary and metanarrative potential of detective fiction see Waugh, 82-86. The recurrence of food themes in detective, mystery, and crime fiction has been noted both in scholarly work and the media in general. According to Angelica Michelis, "[f]ood and the rituals that surround its preparation and consumption have often played a role in crime fiction . . . Food and eating . . . like clues in detective and crime fiction are never meaningful in themselves but always refer to something other" (Michelis 144, 155).

4 The novel is clearly a fictional response on the part of Leavitt to the accusation of plagiarism brought against him by Stephen Spender—an accusation that, following a successful lawsuit, resulted in Leavitt's novel *While England Sleeps* (1993) being withdrawn and eventually revised before being reissued (see Olson).

5 All references are to the 2005 Bloomsbury edition of the novel. Page numbers will henceforth be included parenthetically in the text.

writing and his *body*, confirmed in the final scene of the novel—see below—and by the fact that the novelist’s last name is actually an anagram for “body”).

Denny had made her entrance as a “supplementary” member of the Wright family on the occasion of a previous Thanksgiving dinner. Food rituals and consumption are instrumental in defining Denny’s character as well as her (misrecognized) central position in the community. She forthrightly described herself as fat—yet her fatness does not make her unattractive to men; on the contrary, it allows her to occupy the space of independence and partial invisibility that suits both her needs and those of her lovers: “Affairs with married men . . . suited my character” (18). “One of the married men . . . when his wife found a love letter he had written to me, insisted that it was for another woman—a more conventionally ‘pretty’ woman” (17). Denny’s sensuous relationship with food, and the body that goes with it, mark her as an outsider in gender, class, and educational terms, yet one who, in the long run, exploits this liminal position to her own ends. The scene of the first meeting between Denny (twenty-eight at the time) and Ben (thirteen) is accompanied by the presence of food as a way of opening up possibilities, a realm of fantasy, and a narrative clue to be eventually made sense of. The scene takes place in a beauty parlor,⁶ where Ben has accompanied Nancy. They order sandwiches for lunch and, in her confusion, Denny eats half of the sandwich ordered by Ben. At the end of the novel, when the two eventually get married, Ben reworks this scene as a symbolic anticipation of their conjugal union: “Well, doesn’t that prove that we were meant for each other . . . ? For what was that dividing of the sandwich, if not a foreshadowing of the champagne toast at the wedding, the bride and groom sipping from the same glass?” (211).⁷

Unlike Denny, Ben is presented from the start as a “picky eater” (4), with a paranoid need for orchestrating the components of what enters his body:

if any of the foods on his plate touched any other . . . he would refuse to eat altogether. His eating habits were a source of great distress for Nancy, who seemed incapable of getting her son’s meals arranged properly, and eventually had to buy a special plate divided into sections to keep him from starving himself. (4)

6 As already remarked, Denny does not subscribe to the conventional female beauty standards of her culture and historical time. She claims to have gone to the beauty parlor quite casually and only because spurred on by a colleague (18). This scene marks her, from the very beginning, as an ambiguous outsider to the middle-class world of which Nancy is a committed female incarnation.

7 Food consumption also turns out to be a clue in the case of Ernest’s murder. Ernest is eventually shot by a jealous student, Phil Perry, whose main characteristic is to be scrawny, yet to eat a lot (86). The disparity between Phil’s physical appearance and his eating habits seems, retrospectively, to indicate that something—like an intestinal parasite of jealousy—had been consuming him from within.

Ben's paranoid relation to food resurfaces in several parts of the novel. In his case, food appears to be a structure of signification upon which to exercise a controlling intervention. Rhetorically speaking, for all that he is such a picky eater, Ben will go as far as absorbing and digesting Boyd himself, feeding on his body-of-work in a symbolically cannibalistic act.

The two main characters, Denny and Ben, are polarized yet complementary in investing in a fantasy and relying upon each other to imbue that fantasy with a reality effect. The whole novel can be interpreted as the final denouement of Denny's fantasy as openly shared with the reader from the start:

[Ernest] didn't want to leave [Nancy] for me, and I didn't want to marry him. I adored . . . both. And so we proceeded fairly harmoniously, although I would be dishonest if I did not admit to sometimes experiencing a sense of emptiness . . . akin to what one feels when one arrives home alone after a Thanksgiving dinner. For there *was* one thing I would have liked . . . and that was to have a bed of my own at that house. . . . Not a bed I would sleep in every night . . . : I still treasured my independence. Yet was it too much to hope that someday my role in the family might be legitimized? (34-35)

A passage in the second half of the novel perfectly illustrates the suture/excess structure relating narrative, fantasy, and food. A "supplementary" act of food consumption works as an event that may or may not open a totally new narrative path, creating an excess of meaning that may or may not be reabsorbed. Several years after the disappearance of the notebooks, Ben and Denny get together again for dinner at the faculty club, where food is "expensive and bad" (120). Ben claims to believe in a cosmic reason not only for the disappearance of the notebooks, but for any major event occurring ("[l]ike in novels," 126). After a depressing dinner ("salmon filets and heartless little vegetables . . . : the sort of meal after which you have to go out and get yourself a cheeseburger", 125), Denny goes alone for a burger and reflects on Ben's idea. This second moment of food consumption opens up a realm of fantasy and tension with(in) narrative control:

The necessary cheeseburger arrived. I took a bite. And now, as if to illustrate the very matters Ben had spoken of, the waiter who had served us at the faculty club stepped through the door . . . So perhaps this was serendipity, and the waiter and I were destined to fall in love. Or perhaps . . . when I finished my cheeseburger, he would follow me out to the parking lot and strangle me. Or perhaps nothing would happen—coincidence within which no pattern could be discerned . . . We did not speak, and after I paid my bill, I drove home without incident. (127-28)

Denny will have her fantasy fulfilled both in narrative terms—she is the ultimate narrator of the novel and she is the one, it is revealed, finally and substantially editing Ben's work for posterity—and in terms of plot—she survives both Ben and his parents and, as Ben's widow, she inherits the Wright's house. Denny has, finally, her role in the family thoroughly legitimized: she replaces Nancy as lady of the house. This will be, to a certain extent, her reward for interpreting the

clues to Ben's act of plagiarism and then for covering it up. Once in full control and rightfully settled in the house, Denny performs a final act of consumption: in the novel's finale she becomes the sole keeper of Ben's secret when she sets fire to the notebooks that are still hidden in an unused barbecue pit in the garden—"the body of evidence, the body of the work, the body of Jonah Boyd" (215). The "carcass" that, like the Thanksgiving turkey, has been repeatedly scraped, and that no one wants to look at anymore, serves, retrospectively, as a memento of the intermittent, renewing powers of fantasy, and the possibility of unpredictable twists in any storyline. By contrast, Denny's final act of food consumption, taking place on the Thanksgiving night following Ben's death and preceding the pyre erected for the notebooks, is an anticlimactic one: alone, she eats "part of a turkey breast, and some potatoes reheated in the microwave" (215), as if attempting to expel—albeit temporarily—the unexpected and the extravagant from the storyline. To conclude, in *The Body of Jonah Boyd* food appears as one of the systems of signs orchestrating narrative expectations, as well as a major channel through which characters—especially Denny and Ben—negotiate their desires to validate a fantasy and transform it into an alternate reality via the combined powers of narrative and fiction. Food as fantasy can serve both to perpetuate a certain version of reality, or a certain chain of signification—or to call them into question by exaggerating their contradictions and teasing out of them a further space of signification that could open up new avenues of thought. To a certain extent, food practices suggest that far from rivaling each other, reality and fantasy supplement each other in an endless cycle of reproduction—and that eating a cheeseburger on the heels of a plate of unappetizing salmon may be a consequential completion of the meal, an unpredictable choice, or both.

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Philip K. Dick's Suburban Jeremiad

SALVATORE PROIETTI

THE FLUID FIFTIES

Better known as a science-fiction writer, Philip K. Dick was during the fifties also the author of numerous mimetic novels, mostly published posthumously, set in the years of the rise of suburban communities in the West.¹ In scholarship, references are largely aimed at detecting autobiographical traces or hints of later characters, types, situations (e.g., Butler; Robinson). The aim of this essay is to show how these novels address and foreground one of the overall concerns running through much of Dick's work: the theme of community-building. Present in a number of his science fiction novels, in these mimetic, "realist" works this theme becomes the central focus.

The son of migrants to California during the Depression, after spending his formative years in Berkeley, Dick was among the settlers of suburbs like Marin County. In his later years, he stressed the role of fifties culture in the develop-

¹ This essay is part of an ongoing project on Philip K. Dick's fiction: see the bibliography in my "Dialoghi." I am grateful to Cristina Bon and Matteo Battistini for organizing a most stimulating panel on Cold War culture, and to Darko Suvin and David Ketterer for their reading and comments. For biographical information, I rely on Sutin's *Divine Invasions*. In the case of Dick's posthumously published novels, the year provided in parenthesis refers to the completion dates as researched by Sutin.

ment of his artistic and political awareness, as in this December 1979 entry in the notebooks he called *Exegesis*:

This counterculture did not arise *ex nihilo* . . . What were its origins? Consider the 50s. The concept of “unamerican” held power. I was involved in fighting that; the spirit (counterculture) of the 60s evolved *successfully* out of the (basically) losing efforts by us “progressives” of the 1950s—we who signed the Stockholm Peace Proposal, and the “Save the Rosenbergs,” etc.—losing, desperate efforts. *Very* unpopular & *very* unsupported. Berkeley was one of our few centers; this takes me back to *Eye in the Sky*, etc. (*Exegesis* 471-72)

In this reconstruction of his roots as a very eccentric figure of the sixties counterculture (Proietti), Dick seems to subscribe to the model of the “long 1950s” (Booker), whose *durée* he extends both forward and backward. A complementary quote is the opening of *Confessions of a Crap Artist*, published in 1975 but written in 1959:

I am made out of water. You wouldn't know it, because I have it bound in. My friends are made out of water, too. All of them. The problem for us is that not only do we have to walk around without being absorbed by the ground, but we also have to earn our livings. Actually there's even a greater problem. We don't feel at home anywhere we go. Why is that?

The answer is World War Two. (Dick, *Confessions* 1)

In the narrator's overwhelming sense of anomie, the War is the origin of a disturbing feeling of fluidity and rootlessness. As Tony Tanner wrote in his classic *City of Words*, the main tension in many post-war American writers involves two specular threats: a rigid, crystallizing and paralyzing form of identity, and a total lack of any identity whatsoever. Embodied in an array of oppressive forces and ensuing in disruptive, fragmented narratives of schizophrenia, hallucination, and reality-breakdown, which bear comparison with the postmodern fiction of Thomas Pynchon and especially William S. Burroughs, the first threat, has been a crucial focus for scholars, starting with Suvin. These fifties novels show how relevant the second threat was as well. In Dick's highly polyphonic fictional worlds, the early fifties left their mark as the memory of a time of troubled healing after a traumatic collective experience.²

GETTING ALONG AFTER THE BOMB

Recurring throughout Dick's science fiction, in different forms, images of the Cold War are central at least until the mid-sixties, as part of a very complex constellation, which is not limited to a purely “negative” critique. If war scenarios

² For Bakhtinian approaches to Dick's language and ideologies, see Freedman; Proietti.

allow him to deconstruct dominant ideologies, the frequent presence of the suburbs—both on contemporary Earth and on other worlds—is a *pars construens* that should not be underestimated. I intend to concentrate in the next few paragraphs on this presence in Dick’s science fiction, before moving on to an overview of his mimetic novels, as evidence of the pervasiveness of his fascination with suburban settings.³

In the satiric *Eye in the Sky* (1957), several visitors at a nuclear facility in Belmont, California, are involved in an accident and caught up in a series of hallucinatory “fantasy-worlds” which literalize the ideological obsessions of four characters: first a racist fundamentalist; then a prude who gradually “abolishe[s]” (145) everything she considers unclean, and a “paranoiac, with delusions of conspiracy and persecution” (194), whose epitome is her own house turned into a predatory living creature; finally, an ostensible right-winger who dreams of a farcical Communist America.

The main viewpoint is provided by Jack Hamilton, a technician in the weapons industry, who is being fired because of his wife’s Leftist activism, and who lives in a “two-bedroom modern ranch-style house” (34). The reference clearly echoes Frank Lloyd Wright’s ideal of a housing system capable of attaining a happy fusion between rural and urban landscapes (Carosso 63-65)—an ideal re-imagined here on a smaller scale in the suburban dwelling. No matter how scathing the satire on military technology and the downside of suburban homes, a hopeful ending is envisaged, the fulfilment of a dream which involves both technology and suburban life: “I’m going to have to find something that doesn’t involve classified material. Something that doesn’t bring in national defense... Maybe I’ll be a plumber. Or a TV repairman; that’s more along my line,” says protagonist Jack Hamilton, and his wife reminds him that he “wanted to be a big name in high fidelity” (Dick, *Eye* 29). The couple and an African American friend (i.e. three characters embodying “other” non-paranoid viewpoints) plan their future in the same area, “st[anding] on a rise of uncleared ground, critically studying the small corrugated-iron shed that Hamilton and Laws had leased,” with crates of equipment for a hi-fi business (252). This might be a new fantasy for the main viewpoint character, but it is still a democratic fantasy which is not over at the end of the novel.

³ The enduring strength of this ideal might be best shown by one of Dick’s (typically rambling) notes for a possible new novel, written in May 1981, less than a year before his untimely death; in the social upward mobility in post-World War II California Dick seems to find a connection to both Stendhal’s realism and the visionary possibility of a Dantesque ascent to (earthly) paradise: “What I need to do is study a modern person . . . and trace that person rising through the triune realms from say his high school years to his first marriage, divorce. Without ever referring to the Middle Ages or Dante I will show him rising analogically to Julien Sorel’s rise in society in terms of wealth and influence; this however, is *spiritual* rising, through the vertical realms, in Berkeley in the 40s and 50s (?) And then (perhaps) a crisis, disaster and Fall. (Why? Why not just have it as in Dante?) Successive levels of spiritual enlightenment: ‘the *Commedia* revisited’ with no theology. All merely secular: aesthetics, politics, his job. . . . Best method: fairly short time period (e.g., 1948-51). Unity of time and space. From last year in high school to first job to marriage and divorce” (*Exegesis* 742-43).

In *Time Out of Joint* (1959), Earth has assembled a fake fifties suburb to allow a key figure in the military defense system to work out his calculations for counteractions against Lunar missile attacks—and slowly the fake reality breaks down. Underneath the future war, all of America's wars seem to be lurking: alongside contemporary allusions, the Civil War is evoked in the mention of a new best-seller, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (8). And in *Time Out of Joint* what is happening is indeed a civil war, in which the protagonist eventually chooses the other side—but the little pastoral scenario of the fake suburb is not questioned. His best friend chooses to stay in "Old Town," and his final thoughts are about his lost family and neighbors.

In *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), Dick's alternate-history novel about a post-World War II America dominated by Germany and Japan, the cult-book for all those who oppose the regime is an alternate-history novel in which the United States have won the War. In the ending, one of the characters meets the novelist Hawthorne Abendsen, who lives an ordinary life in an ordinary suburban home (Dick, *Man* 184), and remarks to him: "So you gave up the High Castle and moved back into town" (186). In Dick's America, the oppositional intellectual no longer needs high castles and ivory towers, nor does he feel the need to rise above popular literature and everyday life.

Even on Mars the suburban ideal manages to survive. The frontier myth has been cruelly betrayed in *Martian Time-Slip* (1964), and the communities of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1964) can only survive the harshness of everyday life thanks to a drug-induced simulated world (a Barbie-like fantasy of illusory domesticity). Still, both novels end with the protagonists, after their devastating contacts with evil and entropic forces, being ready and willing to assume their role in a sparsely inhabited community.

Similarly, after the nuclear disaster of *Dr. Bloodmoney* (1965), in a world which now includes a number of new mutant entities, the ending is about the reconstruction of a sense of community in suburban California, somewhere in the Berkeley area: "how we got along after the bomb," says the subtitle of the novel. Many things have changed for good, and yet the pastoral innocence of the suburb maintains an enduring strength: "The business of the day had begun. All around . . . the city was awakening, back once more into its regular life" (Dick, *Dr. Bloodmoney* 290). In this novel, Fredric Jameson writes, as in "all of Dick's obligatory happy endings," the final, hopeful vision of a post-catastrophe community points at "some genuinely Jeffersonian commonwealth" (42), whose agents are artisans and self-employed businesspeople.

In Dick's work, the suburban community is a site of necessary integration after an experience of societal and psychic destruction and dissolution, an ideal of reconstruction that maintains its role for some time. In Sacvan Bercovitch's terms, "join[ing] lament and celebration" (Bercovitch 11) for this new version of the Western settlement, in science-fictional and real suburbs Dick found a source for his own American jeremiad.

Dick's earliest surviving novel, *Gather Yourselves Together* (1950), set in nascent Maoist China—with a group of characters left behind by a nationalized American company and waiting to return home—is already about the building of a sense of cohesion, superseding both a sense of displacement (5-7) and various kinds of intellectual and interpersonal clashes, among the stranded employees. However, their idyllic micro-community, repeatedly called a “paradise,” or an “Eden” (e.g., 255), can only last for the duration of their week-long wait.

From then on, all of Dick's mimetic novels discuss the building of enduring communities in the Western United States, by people who can still remember the Depression and World War II. Either in new sections of San Francisco, Oakland, and Los Angeles, or in burgeoning small towns in more distant areas, these new social groups include women and African Americans striving to establish a place of their own in the world of small business. Dark social comedies influenced by both Modernism and the “proletarian” tradition, these novels are miniature collective portraits focusing on class mobility and dreams of emancipation, and highlighting the hopes and anxieties of a part of America Dick himself belonged to. In emphasizing race, gender, and class conflicts, the suburb is presented as a microcosmic analog of the United States as it strives to fulfill the nation's longings after the trauma of World War II, against the distant background of the Korean War.

According to his third wife Anne Rubenstein's memoir, Dick described one of these works, *The Man Whose Teeth Were Exactly Alike*, as “a novel about the proletarian world from the inside. Most books about the proletarian world are written by middle class writers. He considered himself a lower class proletarian writer” (A. Dick 63). Dick's stance *vis-à-vis* the fifties has little to do with Adorno-derived models of a peaceful decade of acquiescence and control, in which the suburbs epitomizes a monolithic dystopia of unchallenged “consumerism” and conformism. On the contrary, his novels, told from the standpoint of representatives of an upwardly mobile but highly insecure lower-middle class, foreground resisting points of view: ideologies have cracks, and do not necessarily lead to full consensus. As a result, Dick's fifties are a decade of dissatisfaction, or, as Bruno Cartosio writes, of unease. On the one hand, his plots display an undercurrent of violence (Carratello), gender conflicts (Palmer 67-84), and social fears (Thorpe). Nevertheless, he presents the suburbs as a setting in which old prejudices can be ultimately superseded, new needs precariously accommodated and aspirations for personal independence realized, especially in the fields of technology and communications, not yet dominated by big business.

Throughout his novels, political awareness is quite high, with references to oppositional culture that range from reactions to the pervasive presence of McCarthy, to mentions of Henry Wallace and intellectuals like David Riesman and C. Wright Mills, as well as allusions to William H. White's organization-man, Richard Hofstadter's paranoid politics, and popular music.

Memories of the New Deal liberal-progressive tradition are very strong in the protagonist of *Voices from the Street* (1953), a television-store salesman with intellectual ambitions. His meetings with Fascist anti-Semites and religious cult-leaders make him feel he has lost his innocence. Doubt-ridden as he is, he denies being part of a generation in revolt: “We’re not rebels—we’re traitors” (*Voices* 238). In a newborn community in the outskirts of Oakland, however, building a collective future is still possible, and a new innocence might be at hand: “A whole bunch of things to get done” (301).

Race conflicts come into the picture in *Mary and the Giant* (1955), revolving around the arrival of a newcomer, who opens a record store, in the country town of Pacific Park, at the outermost limit of commuter travel. Here, it is hard to avoid dealing with African American businessmen, and segregation, although it still exists, is not as strong as elsewhere. Southern California is offering “boundless possibilities” (Dick, *Mary* 32) to blacks as well, a jazz musician says. Despite the fact that many characters display racism and homophobia, the community drives even them into new relations, and a crucial, successful love story is interracial. In this part of America, the power balance is beginning to shift away from WASP supremacy.

An act of dissent starts the action in *The Broken Bubble* (1956), set in San Francisco, when a radio programmer refuses to air an ad for a used-car lot whose sign reads “Cars that work for people that work” (Dick, *Bubble* 50). His action summons up memories of sabotage (25), the possibility of monkey-wrenching in the emerging world of information. In Dick’s small-scale communities, the cultural media are an arena for struggle, to be defended against ruthless capitalists, and are vehicles for both traditional humanistic values and new forms of expression, especially a new music which recapitulates the social mosaic of new residents: “it’s everything mixed together, Western and Negro jump and sweet sentimental... a mishmash” (147). For the woman protagonist, the epiphany of freedom is a car ride on the freeway:

To her this sense of the city, this view of it, was disturbing and at the same time exhilarating. To be here, on the edge of the city... to be camped just outside, not in it but beside it, close enough to enter if she wanted, far enough out so that she was away; she was free, on her own, not bound or contained by it. (168)

Even in *Puttering About in a Small Land* (1957), a “black comedy of relationships breaking down” (Butler 27), whose characters (especially a couple who emigrated West in 1944 and are still obsessed with pre-War conflicts), are all largely negative, a radio-repair shop manages at last to embody the hope of a future in California.

The whole Northwest, accessible by means of car drives that allow for a domestic and sentimental life, appears as a single gigantic suburban sprawl in *In Milton Lumky Territory* (1958), the story of a salesman traveling across small towns in the states of California, Idaho, and Washington. In the final interior monologue, he is watching a television show that appears less Cold War propaganda

than pulp-era storytelling, and that affords the protagonist relief from the pressures of dominant ideologies:

The program had to do with action aboard submarines, and he went in to look at it with her. They sat together on the couch, facing the television set. In the peacefulness of the living room he basked and relaxed and half-dozed. The adventures beneath the water, the submarine fighting for its life against dim sea monsters and Soviet atomic mines, and, later on, the cowboys and spacemen and detectives and all the endless thrilling noisy western adventures, retreated from him. He heard his wife in the kitchen and he was aware of the child beside him, and that brought him his happiness. (Dick, *Lumky* 213)

Unlike standard nuclear-family scenarios, at the end of *Lumky* the couple are partners in operating their store as well. Increasingly, women's claims to a place in the workforce are shown as inevitable, and catalyze frequent crises of the masculine role (from competitions over jobs to squabbles concerning contraception).

Women's social assertiveness is crucial in *Confessions of a Crap Artist* (1959), framed by the narration of Jack Isidore—a character combining Twain's Huck Finn, with his racist surface, and Faulkner's Benjy—a simple mind capable of casting an estranging gaze at middle-class cruelties,—in different parts of the San Francisco area. His job as a “tire-regroover” (Dick, *Confessions* 4) is real, though, and puts him in the position of spokesman for a community that finds hope in the acknowledgment of its own limitations. In his concluding words, Jack admits: “on the basis of past choices, it seems pretty evident that my judgment is not of the best” (171). In this highly ironic *Künstlerroman*, the fictional “artist,” an avid reader of popular nonfiction and recycler of used technologies (hence the title), is in an ideal position to set an example for better, still possible, choices to come.

And it is after devastating conflicts involving two neighbors of non-WASP origin (a Jewish real-estate agent and an Italian advertiser) and their wives that *The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike* (1960) presents a scenario of possible redemption. Mutual cruelties include racism and marital rape. A farcical attempt to create buyers' interest in the stagnant suburb by faking the finding of Neanderthal remains leads to the discovery of a coalminer family called “chuppers” (Dick, *Teeth* 225) who are malformed from drinking contaminated water. A community in danger of trapping itself in unrealizable dreams for the future rediscovers the unerasable harsh realities of the past, but the realtor risks all his money to save the community by buying the water company and having the water system cleaned.

Dick's final attempt at realism, *Humpty Dumpty in Oakland* (1960), describes the struggles of the protagonist to maintain the integrity of a car-repair business that is threatened by big business and violence, with new hopes opening up in Marin County for a music store, along with a new interracial relation. For one last time, although these dreams of lower-class freedom in the early fifties are

precarious and retrospectively doomed to fail, Dick clearly suggests that, at least for a while, new openings had emerged in the early history of the Californian suburbs.

In one of his last novels, *A Scanner Darkly* (1977), a semi-autobiographical, thinly disguised future version of the drug subculture of the early seventies, a return to the suburban scenario evokes an image of utter powerlessness and paralyzing repetition:

Life in Anaheim, California, was a commercial for itself, endlessly replayed. Nothing changed; it just spread farther and farther in the form of neon ooze. What there was always more of had been congealed into permanence long ago, as if the automatic factory that cranked out these objects had jammed in the *on* position. (Dick, *Scanner* 31)

The suburban ideal has been betrayed, and Dick's long fifties, with all their hopes and aspirations, are sadly and definitively over.

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