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TRANS/LAZIO

guest-edited
by Claudio Salmeri

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DIRECTIONALITY/FLOW

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Volumes of text have been written on Italian presence in America. Even a quick Google search will demonstrate that, after the culture wars of the 1980s, the interest of Americanists worldwide has shifted to ethnic and diasporic studies within the Americas, which, slowly, begin to recognize the consequences of white ethnocentrism, whether Anglo, Franco or Hispano. Such studies, beyond doubt, are as important as they are valuable: rediscovering or uncovering essential moments in the histories of the Americas, they have provided voice to those long lost in the space of ineffability. And yet, studies of this nature follow the "standard" directionality of the value transfer tied to each wave of migration: from Europe to the Americas. Thus conceived "translation" is, of course, essential in the study of the American cultures. Still, bearing in mind the cultural productivity of the Americas and the demonstrable bidirectionality of the value transfer, it is just as important to dedicate some academic attention to phenomena oriented along the opposite vector: Italy, beyond doubt, has in/formed American cultures for centuries, but since the outbreak of World War II the influx of values (both intellectual and material) generated in the Americas has been responsible for the co-shaping of the Italy of today. The present volume, generously guest-edited by Claudio Salmeri of the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland, offers a multifaceted insight into how American values have been "translated into Italian" and accommodated within the cultural space of twenty-first century Italy. The volume's title, *Trans/Lazio*, is thus both a gesture in recognition of the complexity of the Italian cultural space and an attempt to accommodate theoretical premises of polysystem theory in a study of the mutual relations between

Italy and America as simultaneously donor and acceptor cultures, simultaneously distinctive and accommodating. Emphasizing these values, the present, aptly titled, issue ushers in the second decade of *RIAS*, a journal univocally dedicated to the hemispheric and transoceanic study of the Americas.

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SICILY, NOT ITALY

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Since the American continent became a part of the European imagination, it has always been seen to represent freedom. Especially after 1776, when the American democratic "experiment" giving rise to the United States, proved durable, America became a source of social and political inspiration to generations of Europeans and non-Europeans alike. Unsurprisingly, also in the Italian context, the catalog of ways in which American values have been "translated into Italian" and adapted to Italy's cultural space seems to be ever-growing. Yet, even though the cultural transfer dates back to Christopher Columbus, it is especially since the outbreak of World War II that Italy has been markedly influenced by intellectual and material values generated in the US. At some point, the fascination with the US soared to such a level that, incredibly as it may sound, one of the most iconic provinces of Italy would begin to imagine itself as the forty-ninth state of the US long before Alaska and Hawaii gained their present-day status: in Sicily, the American fascination seems never to abate.

Try to make a small talk with an Italian born (or naturalized) in Sicily and ask them who they are. In all probability, the first, spontaneous, answer will be: "I am Sicilian"—and it is only later (if at all) that your interlocutor will expand that self-identification by saying "I am Italian." Demonstrably, Sicilians have always construed themselves as a nation, manifesting strong separatist attitudes: the Sicilian Vespers, a powerful revolt against the rule of the Capetian House of Anjou, which is considered by the histo-

rians to be the precursor of modern independence efforts, broke out as early as in 1282, but it is particularly important to appreciate the crucial role Sicilians played during the Revolutions of 1848, known as the Spring of Nations. It was in the capital of Sicily, Palermo, where the hope for the independence of nations was born and it was from there that it spilled all over Europe. But even though Palermitans gave numerous examples of their dedication to freedom, as a matter of fact, Sicily—whose autonomy as a "body civic" would historically undergo numerous transformations—until the outbreak of World War II never stood a chance of full independence, always remaining under the rule of superior powers. During the war, however—the war in which Italy was part of the Axis, fighting against the Allies—Sicilians saw renewed hope to finally become a sovereign state with its own distinctive heritage, cultural traditions and language, in their unique American connection: the Sicilian-American community that had emigrated to the US at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Thanks to that, and owing to the relations between politicians and mafia bosses, during the Italian campaign of World War II Sicily became a firm foothold for the Allied forces. It is not by chance that the US military chose this Mediterranean island as a strategic location in the fight against the Axis powers. Rumor has it that mafia—in particular *Cosa nostra* and Lucky Luciano—offered help to the Seventh United States Army under the command of Lieutenant General George S. Patton and the Eighth British Army under the command of Lieutenant-General Bernard Montgomery during the invasion of Sicily (the so-called *Operation Husky*), with the view to impact the postwar status of the island as an independent state. Immediately after the Allied forces landed on the island, the separatist and independentist spirit arose again. After the armistice of Cassibile, Antonio Di Stefano, head of the newly formed Party of Reconstruction, asked for the island to be separated from the Kingdom of Italy and annexed to the United States of America, asserting that the re-establishment of Sicily had to go through an annexation to the US. The sentiment was broadly shared: for instance, the Sicilian Independence Movement—supported by a famous Sicilian bandit and robber, Salvatore Giuliano, labeled "the Robin Hood of Sicily"—also supported the idea of the separation.

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Yet, even Giuliano's strong influence proved insufficient to make the project of bringing Sicily into the Union under the forty-ninth star viable. Importantly, however, in their naïve hope that the US would aid their independence, Sicilians opened up to all things American: Sicily became an important "portal" through which cultural values from across the Atlantic would enter Italian culture and, "translated," would become domesticated. Interestingly, in Sicily the utopian American fascination is still vivid, especially among elderly people. Should you ask them, over a glass of wine, about their assessment of the modern Italian history, many of them would answer—naïvely again—that the present social and political situation in Sicily would be better if the island had become the forty-ninth state of the US after the war.

Unquestionably, this brief, somewhat personal, insight fails to do justice to the complexity of phenomena related to the presence of American values in Italy. However, to provide a more complex vision of how America got "translated" into Italian, the present issue of *RIAS* collects reflections by a number of scholars, whose articles serve to illustrate the many areas in which Italian art, cinematography, literature, and political culture adopted and adapted American discourses and made them "their own."

And so, Laura Blandino's article highlights the role of Rome as the basis for the development of a distinct art scene in the 1950s, uniting representatives of the American and Italian experiences in an innovative dialogue boosting creativity; Cristina Giorcelli's overview of the Italian fascination with US literature throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries emphasizes the powerful insights and adventurous spirit exhibited by Italian critics and publishers in different historical contexts; Stefano Luconi's article focuses on US influences on Italy from the political perspective after World War II; Giorgio Mariani's essay draws attention to the thematic similarities between the graphic novel *Tutto ricominciò con un'estate indiana* (*Indian Summer*) by Milo Manara and Hugo Pratt and Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, arguing that some of the characters of *Indian Summer* are in fact liberal reinventions of characters from *The Scarlet Letter*, essentially "spin-offs" of Hawthorne's narrative; Sostene Massimo Zangari's topic is the comedy movies of the early 1980s, which variously comment

on the Italian-American relationship; and Valeria Gennero's essay explores the meaning of untranslated "gender" in Italian culture and its relationship to "sex" in contrast to the traditional sex/gender binary, following the nature/culture opposition. Daniele Pomilio's review essay highlights the main critical contributions collected in the volume recently edited by Curreli and Delville on *Profondo Rosso*, reconsidering the cult movie by Dario Argento, and finally, John Matteson's postscript offers an insight into his exploration of Margaret Fuller's Italian episode and her role as America's leading spokesperson for the Roman Revolution.

Even though the volume does not presume to be either authoritative or exhaustive, as its guest editor I sincerely hope that the insights it offers the reader will rekindle debate dedicated both to the "translatological" vision of cultural transfer and to the American contributions to Italian life as we know it today. With these goals in mind, I am proud to present the *Trans/Lazio* issue to the readers with the goal of inspiring further studies on the Italian-American connection, both in Italy and the US, both among the IASA members and independent scholars worldwide.

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US LITERATURE AND ITALIAN CULTURE: A LONG ROMANCE

(1763–1980)

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Since the American continent was "discovered" by an Italian and later named after an Italian, it is perhaps not surprising that Italy has always entertained a special relationship with the Americas from the US in the north to Argentina in the south, to name just two of the continent's many nations to which, over the centuries and for various reasons, Italians have emigrated (while, at the same time, retaining a strong tie with their country of origin) and/or from which they have sometimes drawn inspiration for their literary writings.

I will be dealing with the Italian relationship with the United States, considering (albeit briefly, for reasons of length) its most important phases, especially over the period between 1763 and the 1980s. It should be stated right from the start that Italy has long nurtured an extraordinary empathy with this distant country, a little like the love of a tired old mother for her far-away, beautiful, and successful child. And this not only because the US was the final destination on the other side of a perilous ocean, the ultimate hope for its "tired, poor, and huddled masses," as Emma Lazarus put it. This was also because, for centuries, Italians[1] believed (contrary to the evidence, if we think of the institution of slavery) that the US was the land of freedom, *par excellence.* If this is also

1 I am using this appellation for clarity reasons, although we can properly speak of "Italians" only as of 1861, when, after having been a mosaic of different states for centuries, the unity of the country was proclaimed, even if it was completed only in 1871.

true for many, if not all, Europeans who left their own country and emigrated to "America"—as, following the British denomination/prejudice, the US was called by antonomasia—it was particularly true for Italians because of their tormented political history. It was also true for Italian intellectuals, in spite of the obvious language barrier (until after World War II, educated Italians, by and large, knew French rather than English) and in spite of the US being such a "young" (i.e., in the eyes of many, a naïve) country.

The first books about the US to be published in Italian translations were concerned with its geoeconomic and historical characteristics. In all probability (and for good reasons), the first two works to appear in Italian—as Agostino Lombardo stated in a pamphlet and in an essay which are landmarks for this overview—were descriptions of the whole American continent either from a geographical or a historical perspective (Lombardo, 1959; Lombardo, 1981). The *Gazzettiere Americano* (*American Gazetteer*), published in three volumes in Leghorn in 1763, was a description of the geography, agriculture, and climate of the entire continent. It illustrated its flora, fauna, rivers, and waterfalls, its outposts, the maps of its main cities, the traditions of its different peoples, its products, and the various European commercial interests in each of its nations. The *Gazzettiere Americano* was the translation of a book that had come out in London the previous year, and it was embellished with seventy-seven engravings that showed the awe-inspiring peculiarities of the "new" world. The second work to be translated into Italian, in 1780, was William Robertson's *Storia dell'America* (*History of America*) (1777), which provided a history of the Americas. In it the author stressed the importance of environmental factors since, in his view, they determined the course of any civilization. A few years later, in 1782—and not by chance, given the political situation in Italy—an anonymous *Storia della Rivoluzione nell'America inglese* (*History of the Revolution in English America*) came out in Venice. In 1788 Filippo Mazzei, a philosopher, essayist, and friend of Thomas Jefferson (as well as of George Washington, John Adams, James Madison, and James Monroe),[2] published his *Ricerche storiche sugli*

2 Mazzei had been involved in the American Revolutionary War as a middle man in the acquisition of guns for Virginia; he may even have contributed to the writing of the Declaration of Independence.

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Stati Uniti (*Historical Researches on the United States*) in Paris. Bearing in mind that the Italian campaigns of the French Revolutionary Army had begun in 1792, Italian intellectuals and patriots started to look to the US as the nation that had been able to free itself from "foreign" subjugation. The struggles for the Risorgimento—which would last till 1871, when the country was, finally, completely reunited—had begun. Significantly, in 1809 Carlo Botta, historian, politician, and patriot, wrote the *Storia della Guerra di Indipendenza degli Stati Uniti d'America* (*History of the War of Independence of the United States of America*) with the intent of unfolding the model for a successful revolution. In 1816 he translated the United States Constitution. Between 1835 and 1840 the two volumes of Alexis de Tocqueville's *De la démocratie en Amerique* (*Democracy in America*) had a huge impact in Italy. The Italian view of the US as the country of liberty was strengthened when two illustrious fighters for Italian independence—Piero Maroncelli in 1833 and Federico Confalonieri in 1837[3]—chose to sail to the United States once they were finally freed after having been imprisoned for ten years in Austria (Lograsso, 1928; Lograsso, 1958). Both Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–1872), the father of the Italian republic and a friend of Margaret Fuller (Giorcelli, 2001), and Carlo Cattaneo (1801–1869) referred to the political model of the United States in different ways. In his considerations regarding the possible political future for a reunited Italy, Cattaneo was inspired by and supported (unsuccessfully) the US federalist option.

The above shows how, initially, from the end of the eighteenth century, the Italian interest in the US—as far as both translations and original writings go—was largely due to the fact that it was associated with liberty and democracy. One should not forget, however, that, strictly speaking, a fascination with the American "myth" had already been promoted by its extraordinary "discovery" and touched upon in important Italian literary works of the sixteenth century. It is mentioned, for instance, in the chivalric poems *Orlando Furioso* (1532) by Ludovico Ariosto and in *Gerusalemme Liberata* (*Jerusalem Delivered*) (1575) by Torquato Tasso as well as in *Storia d'Italia* (*History of Italy*) (1561) by Francesco Guicciardini.

3 The former remained in the United States till his death, in 1846; the latter only for one year.

In 1781 Vittorio Alfieri, poet, playwright, and passionate believer in Italian independence, wrote five odes in a book entitled *L'America Libera* (*Free America*), which was eventually published only two centuries later in 1976. Here, apart from singing the praises of US liberty and democracy, Alfieri also warns against their possible shortcomings—a rare response in those times.

If the history and the political system of the US, which were also seen as the reasons for its scientific and technological progress, were constantly present in the Italian mind, the country's nature—vast, exotic, and picturesque—was no less captivating. It had first been introduced to Italy, in French, via René de Chateaubriand's two novels: *Atala* (1801) and *René* (1802). Against the background of the US' stupendous wilderness, the sad stories of the two central characters are marked by the emblematic Romantic *topoi* of impossible love and death.

Turning to US literature, the first writer to be widely translated into Italian was probably Benjamin Franklin. In 1774, in fact, an anthology of his writings came out in Milan under the title *Scelta di lettere e opuscoli del signor Beniamino Franklin* (*A Selection from Mr. Benjamin Franklin's Letters and Pamphlets*). Because of his diverse scientific inventions and because he was a patriot and a diplomat, he attracted the attention of educated Italians (Pace, 1950). A few years later, in 1797, *Il buon uomo Riccardo* (*Poor Richard's Almanack*) (1732–1758) appeared. In 1830 his *Autobiografia* (1771–1790) was also translated into Italian. In the same years, a similar success was enjoyed by several tales from Washington Irving's *Sketch-Book* (1820) that were individually translated between 1824 and 1836. Starting in 1828, almost contemporary to their publication in the US, James Fenimore Cooper's novels were published in Italian. Having spent a year and a half in Italy (from October 1828 to May 1830), Cooper loved the country to which he dedicated two volumes of travel writings entitled *Gleanings in Europe: Italy* (1838). He even set two of his novels in this country: *The Bravo*, set in Venice (1831), and *The Wing-and-Wing*, set along the Italian coast from Elba to Naples (1842). His path-finders, his "redskins," and his prairies entered thus the fantasy worlds of many an Italian youth from very early on. As of 1865 Ralph Waldo Emerson began to be translated, even if the first critical

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assessment of his philosophy had come out a decade before in 1855. Its author, Eugenio Camerini compared Emerson, amazingly enough, to Ludovico Ariosto and admired the US philosopher's "high morality that is the true foundation of the Angloamerican spirit" (Camerini, 1878: 114)[4].

The writer who for decades was considered to be the greatest US poet was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. A professor of Italian at Harvard and the translator of *The Divine Comedy*, his works began to be translated as of 1856 or 1857, and appreciative articles about them appeared soon afterwards. He was praised for being both a friend to the humble and somebody who embraced justice and charity. And when, in 1869, his *Poesie sulla Schiavitù* (*Poems on Slavery*) (1842) were translated, he became the champion of emancipation. A sign of Italians' indignation against chattel slavery (an institution which, nevertheless, did not substantially tarnish Italians' esteem of the US) was the great success enjoyed by the translations of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *La capanna dello zio Tom* (*Uncle Tom's Cabin*) in 1852 (the same year of its publication in the US). The novel was published *simultaneously* by two different Italian publishing houses and in installments by three Italian papers (in Turin, Genoa, and Venice). Certainly up to the 1950s floods of tears were shed over its pages by Italian adolescents (as the present writer can testify!). It was Stowe's "civil passion" that was particularly appreciated by Italian readers and critics, who, candidly overlooking its patronizing aspects, held the book to be an antidote to contemporary Italian literary writings' emotional extenuation, to their lack of vital inspiration. Meanwhile Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Edgar Allan Poe—in the wake of the French translations by Charles Baudelaire and Stéphan Mallarmé—were also translated into Italian. In 1884 the first Italian *Storia della letteratura americana* came out, written by Gustavo Strafforello.[5]

When the political motivations subsided because the country had achieved its independence and established its form of gover-

4 Camerini was also a compiler of dictionaries and of various other subjects. Henceforth, all translations from Italian critics will be mine.

5 In the twentieth century, the first book entirely dedicated to Emerson came out in Milan in 1905 and was written by a woman, Fanny Zampini Salazar.

nment (a monarchy, till 1946), Italian critics began to look to US literature with some degree of objectivity, underlining its merits and pointing out what they considered its drawbacks, even if these were often still seen in a fairly positive light. The first insightful critic and a good translator of US literature was Enrico Nencioni, a freelance writer who, from 1867 and for almost thirty years, wrote for the most prestigious literary journal of the time, *Nuova Antologia*. His criticism introduced Hawthorne, Emerson, and James Russell Lowell, among others, to this country. Nencioni was particularly fascinated by Walt Whitman,[6] whose poetic vitality he compared to that to be found in the Bible or in Homer. Nencioni contrasted Whitman's power with European byzantinisms, although he did not appreciate Whitman's long lists of names that he considered useless and boring. For him—using a telling metaphor—*Leaves of Grass* was more like a forest (for its "natural" energy) than a cathedral (Nencioni, 1897: 226). Thanks to Nencioni, Whitman was praised by the most notable contemporary Italian poets: Giosué Carducci (who, like Whitman, was in search of a new poetic meter), Giovanni Pascoli, and, in spite of his decadentism, Gabriele D'Annunzio. Even Marinetti and the futurists looked up to Whitman, as they saw in him the heroic prophet of anti-academism and of the Nietzschean *übermensch* (rather than the democratic poet of the common man). Nencioni was also an ardent admirer of Poe, considering his main gifts to be his "plastic" and "crystalline" style, his "deep scientific sensibility," and the "mystic tie" that unites the corporeal and the spiritual in his characters (Nencioni, 1897: 103–105). Poe's criticism was also much valued by Pascoli, especially his search for musical resonances (which also coincided with Pascoli's aims and achievements). In effect, from this point of view, Pascoli considered Poe a "maestro" (Getto, 1956: 170). He even attempted a translation of "The Raven" under the title "*Tenebre*" ("Darkness") between 1876 and 1879, though this project was never completed. Another influential critic who contributed to Whitman's success in this country was Giovanni Papini, co-founder (with Giuseppe Prezzolini) of the very important, anti-conformist literary journal *La Voce* in 1908. This review

6 In 1887 Whitman was also translated by Luigi Gamberale. In 1897 Whitman's poetry was the subject of a book by Pasquale Jannaccone.

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had, among others, the great merit of introducing William James and pragmatism to Italy.[7] Since the Italian philosophical scene of that time was dominated by the idealism of Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile, *La Voce*'s pioneering work benefited Italian philosophers of a later period.

From the beginning of the twentieth century Mark Twain also started to be translated. In 1915 *Le avventure di Huckleberry Finn* (1884) appeared in Italian.[8] Above all, it was Twain's sense of humor that was much appreciated, even though, according to a respected critic of the time, Enrico Thovez, his language was too colloquial, too idiomatic, and, therefore, too barbaric and anti-literary.

With the new century, a series of historical, economic, and political factors contributed to a new phase in the relationship between the two cultures: the US intervention in World War I, the rise of fascism in Italy, the Wall Street crash of 1929 and the subsequent New Deal, the growth in Italian emigration to the US, the beginning of US world hegemony, and the actual *direct* knowledge that Italian intellectuals started to have of the US. In the 1920s and 1930s a very good translator and a sensitive, albeit idiosyncratic, critic of American literature was Carlo Linati. In 1925 he was one of the first in Italy to write about T.S. Eliot and *The Waste Land* (1924). He was also an admirer of Eliot's criticism ("very subtle and cold") and of his "scientific, mathematical style" (Linati, 1943: 15). In addition to Eliot, Linati appreciated Ezra Pound. There was something, he wrote, "barbarous and refined, brutal and exquisite" in Pound's work (Linati, 1943: 91). He praised Pound's fine ear and his capacity to draw inspiration from writers as different as Propertius, Mallarmé, and Rimbaud. In the late 1920s Linati also commented perceptively on *Moby Dick* (which had been "rediscovered" in the US in those years). At a time of cultural provincialism and fascist autarchy, Linati introduced the likes of Thornton Wilder, William Carlos Williams, E. E. Cummings, Ernest Hemingway, Sinclair Lewis, and Gertrude Stein to the Italian public.

7 Thanks to Papini, even *Towards Democracy* (1883)—the long poem by Whitman's British friend and disciple, Edward Carpenter—was translated into Italian in 1912.

8 *Le avventure di Tom Sawyer* (1876), which has always enjoyed a great success with Italian youth, had already been translated in 1909.

Linati was also the first to translate Henry James: *L'americano* in 1934, and, with his wife, Silvia, *Ritratto di Signora* (*Portrait of a Lady*) in 1943. In this same year, he published a collection of essays entitled *Scrittori angloamericani d'oggi* (*Contemporary Anglo-American Writers*).

In 1934 the writer Mario Soldati published a book entitled *America Primo Amore* (*America First Love*), which reflected his passion for the country where he had lived for two years (and where he would have liked to remain). In the same period, another influential—albeit, at times, skeptical and patronizing—critic of US literature was Emilio Cecchi, a freelance writer and contributor to major newspapers and journals, who carried out insightful analyses of William Faulkner and in 1939, together with his daughter Giuditta, wrote a critical biography of Emily Dickinson (they also translated some of her poems). Cecchi produced intelligent studies on John Dos Passos, Willa Cather, and John Steinbeck, even if he was often perplexed by the violence and the undercurrent of hatred and protest that he found in US literature. In 1939 he wrote *America Amara* (*Bitter America*), which, as the title indicates, has little in common with the earlier work by Soldati. Here Cecchi illustrates and criticizes several crucial aspects of the US way of life that he had directly experienced during the time he spent there from 1930 to 1931 and from 1937 to 1938. Although he also complained about the widespread use of slang in US writers, he noticed "the new rhythm" that such an idiom lent to their works (Cecchi, 1939: 129). In 1947 he published an important collection of essays, *Scrittori inglesi e americani* (*English and American Writers*). A contemporary of both Soldati and Cecchi was another great critic of US literature, even if he wrote relatively little on it: the Anglicist Mario Praz, thanks to whom American literature began to be taken up by Italian academics (American literature did not yet exist as an independent discipline in the Italian university system). Praz was an admirer of Dickinson, Poe, and Hawthorne, for instance, but also of contemporary writers such as Eliot,[9] Faulkner, Dos Passos, Theodore Dreiser, and Hemingway, whose "objective style, "economy of words," and "great evocative power,"

9 In 1932 he translated *The Waste Land.*

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he praised as early as 1929 (Praz, 1951: 203). Like Cecchi, however, he too, at times, complained about the brutality and lack of "culture" he detected in US authors (Praz, 1951: 203).

In marked contrast, these "faults" in US literature were seen as virtues by the younger generation of Italian writers and intellectuals. These educated young Italians, living and writing under a fascist regime that stifled their efforts to renew Italian literature, saw these "faults" as the weapons that were needed to revitalize the bloodless Italian culture of the time, especially since—as their forerunners in the previous century had already claimed—they saw US literature as the fruit of its country's freedom and democracy. The Piedmontese novelist and poet Cesare Pavese (1908–1950) superbly translated, among other masterpieces, *Moby Dick* in 1932 and in 1938 and 1940, respectively, Gertrude Stein's *L'autobiografia di Alice B. Toklas* (1933) and *Tre esistenze* (*Three Lives*) (1909). He wrote exemplary essays on a number of US authors (even if he judged some of them—like Edgar Lee Masters[10] and Erskine Caldwell—rather too generously). As he wrote in an essay immediately after the end of World War II, "in the 1930s and 1940s […] Italy was estranged, barbarized, calcified—it was necessary to shake it, decongest it, and expose it to all the springy winds in Europe and in the world. We discovered Italy […] by looking for men and words in America" (Pavese, 1951: 247). Pavese had a deep understanding of Dos Passos and Sherwood Anderson, for instance, because he saw them expressing the truth of their "local" origins. Analogously, he hoped that Italian writers would find a serious source for inspiration in their own regional characteristics. He had confidence in the beneficial effect of the US literary impact on Italian culture because he considered the US to be "the gigantic theatre where, with more frankness than anywhere else, everybody's drama is played" (Pavese, 1951: 194–195). After the end of the war, however, Pavese was wrecked by disillusionment. He concluded that, without a fascism to oppose, US democracy would risk becoming—despite its best traditions—a form of fascism itself and thus have a negative influence on its literature (Pavese, 1951: 196). Although these

10 The first of innumerable translations (pouring out continuously till today), *L'antologia di Spoon River* came out in Italian in 1943, translated by Fernanda Pivano.

statements were written in the official newspaper of the Italian Communist Party and may, therefore, have partly been in line with the paper's ideological bent, Joseph McCarthy's infamous lists—and the blow they dealt to US democracy—would soon appear, thus demonstrating Pavese's foresight. His 1951 (posthumous) collection of essays, *La letteratura americana e altri saggi* (*American Literature and Other Essays*), became a reference book for anyone wishing to know and understand US literature.

The other Italian writer who, in the interwar period, was convinced of the exemplary lessons to be learned from US literature and who admirably translated and commented on a number of US authors (Faulkner, Hemingway, and Steinbeck, for instance) was the Sicilian Elio Vittorini (1908–1966). In 1941, at the beginning of the war, he edited *Americana*, an anthology of works by US authors translated by various Italian writers, such as Eugenio Montale, Alberto Moravia, Guido Piovene, and Vittorini himself. He also wrote the commentaries to the various sections of the book, his aim being to outline the development of US literature from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the 1930s. This goal was achieved with some excessive appreciations (Morley Callaghan, Evelyn Scott, and William Saroyan, for instance) and some important omissions (such as Edith Wharton and Sinclair Lewis). Since, like Pavese, Vittorini looked to US literature as a model for a "new" Italian literature, he endorsed the freshness and the ferocity he saw in the chosen authors. In his opinion, US literature displayed an extraordinary sincerity in its search for truth through a lucid—authentic and direct—examination and presentation of reality as it is. The anthology's first edition fell victim to the censorship of the fascist regime and was republished the following year with an introduction by Cecchi—without Vittorini's "ideological" commentaries.

After the end of World War II, the translation "industry" of American authors flourished. This trend continued throughout the 1950s for reasons that are not hard to understand: the US army had liberated the country from Nazi occupation and fascism. Indeed there was an explosion of interest (at times, indiscriminate and entirely haphazard) in US culture. Everything that came from the US (books, music, visual arts, films, plays) was avidly

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consumed and promptly appreciated, purely because it was "fashionable." Only some writers, like Italo Calvino and Giuseppe Berto, for instance, were able to profit and learn from the best that US literature was producing. Many others simply plagiarized what emerged from US publishing houses and was becoming a momentary fad, even in its country of origin. Furthermore, works were often translated even before they came out in the US and before any critical response had been formulated.[11] Since Italian editorial policies at both publishing houses and newspapers were rather erratic and unpredictable—with authors sometimes dropped by one publishing house and picked up by another—it is hard to surmise with any degree of certainty why some books were translated, while others, perhaps more valid, were not. What is certain is that the impact made (then as now) by US reviewers (especially those at *The New Yorker*) was highly noticeable in Italian choices. An important bulwark against such an indiscriminate flooding of the market was the 1954 translation of F. O. Matthiessen's *Rinascimento Americano* (*American Renaissance*) (1941). For serious writers and critics, it became the text from which to start to have an idea *from the inside* of this literature (however subjective, if not also biased towards an "exportable" vision of US democracy, it might be).[12] At any rate, in 1949 and in 1950, respectively, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tenera è la notte* (*Tender is the Night*) (1934) and *Il grande Gatsby*[13] (1925) appeared. Works by two very relevant African American authors were also published in Italian translation in 1946 and 1947, respectively: Zora Neale Hurston's *Mosé: l'uomo della montagna* (*Moses, Man of the Mountain*) (1939)[14] and Richard Wright's *Paura* (*Native Son*) (1940). In 1949 Carlo Izzo's anthology *Poesia*

11 Given the abundance of Italian translations and of publishing houses after the end of World War II, from now on this overview must, for length reasons, be even more selective.

12 According to Agostino Lombardo, Matthiessen's vision of US literature had been inspired by Francesco De Sanctis's *Storia della letteratura italiana (History of Italian Literature)*, which came out in 1870, the year that marked the end of the Papal States (Lombardo, 1959: 45).

13 This novel, however, had first been translated in 1936 as *Gatsby il magnifico.*

14 Her novel *I loro occhi guardavano Dio* (*Their Eyes Were Watching God*) (1937) had been translated into Italian in 1938.

americana contemporanea e poesia negra (*Contemporary American Poetry and Negro Poetry*)[15] came out.

From the late 1950s through the 1960s, however, Italian attitudes towards US literature gradually changed. Nonetheless, even if the US now appeared as the country of ruthless capitalism rather than as a beacon of hope, US protesters and the Beat Generation found enthusiastic followers in Italy. Significantly, even though a writer like Vittorini wrote at length—in the reputable journal *Politecnico*[16] and, later, in his *Diario pubblico* (*Public Diary*) (1957)—about the negative influence, on American culture, of Protestantism and its strenuous fight against "sin" that, through the centuries, had become a strenuous fight against everything and everyone, he still wrote appreciatively about such contemporary artists as Robert Penn Warren, Nathanael West, William S. Burroughs, and Richard Brautigan. These were the years that saw the excellent translations of Pound by Alfredo Rizzardi, of Stevens by Renato Poggioli, and of Lowell by Rolando Anzilotti, to mention just a few. In 1956, Ralph Ellison's *Uomo invisibile* (1952) came out.[17] At the end of the 1950s, Kurt Vonnegut's science fiction work started to be translated (*Le sirene del Titano* was the first novel to come out in Italian). In 1959, thanks to the widespread scandal it had caused, Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955) was published in this country. At the same time, the "classic" authors were re-translated more faithfully (Emerson, Thoreau, and Twain, for instance) and some were translated for the first time (Charles Brockden Brown, Langston Hughes,[18] and Frank Norris, among others). In the same years, an author as innovative as Philip Dick, a precursor of cyberpunk, began to be published in this country: in 1955, the year of its publication in the US, *Il disco di fiamma* (*Solar Lottery*) came out. More and more, Italian critics with a direct knowledge of the United States had the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with professional US critics and creative writers, also thanks to the Ful-

15 Notice the strange title, as if Black poetry were not included in American poetry!

16 Vittorini founded it in 1945; the review continued publication until 1947.

17 For a more complete list of the Italian translations till 2005, see Alessandro Portelli, "La letteratura afroamericana," *Acoma,* vol. 31, Winter 2005, pp. 64–68.

18 Hughes's *Not Without Laughter* (1930) was translated as *Piccola America Negra* in 1968.

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bright Program, which started its valuable mission soon after the end of World War II (in 1948). As far as criticism goes, two milestone works were published in 1956 and in 1957, respectively: Glauco Cambon's *Tematica e sviluppo della poesia americana* (which came out in the US under the title *The Inclusive Flame)* and Agostino Lombardo's *Realismo e simbolismo.* In 1956 and in 1957, respectively, Salvatore Rosati's *Storia della letteratura americana* and Carlo Izzo's *Storia della letteratura nord-americana* appeared. In the same years an invaluable job in advancing the status of US authors in this country came about thanks to the publication of the annual academic journal *Studi americani*, edited by Agostino Lombardo—the "father" of American Studies in Italy. The journal was published by the prestigious publishing house Storia e Letteratura, that, soon afterwards and for decades to come, brought out a prominent series of books of criticism on American literature. In the 1950s the Italian academic world was also appreciative of and open to the critical method and approach proposed by New Criticism. Many literary analyses by Italian scholars from various literary fields followed its lead. Thus, thanks to such illustrious supporters of its individual, independent worth (and not just as an appendix to English literature), in the 1960s Anglo-American Literature finally became a discipline in its own right in the Italian university system. The decade began with the publication of Marisa Bulgheroni's *Il nuovo romanzo americano, 1945–1959* (*The New American Novel, 1945–1959*), published in Milan by the exclusive publisher (and writer and art collector) Arturo Schwarz. Bulgheroni's scholarly overview showed how many US authors had been translated in those years: Saul Bellow,[19] Paul Bowles, James Agee, Truman Capote, John Cheever, Jack Kerouac, Norman Mailer, Carson McCullers, and Mary McCarthy, among others. Meanwhile, in the 1960s, also Thomas Pynchon and John Barth began to be translated: *V.* and *L'incanto del lotto 49* (*The Crying of Lot 49*) (1963 and 1966) as well as *L'opera galleggiante* (*The Floating Opera*) and *La fine della strada* (*The End of the Road*) (1956 and 1958). Other momentous works that appeared in Italy in those years were: in 1962, Bernard Malamud's *Il commesso* (*The Assistant*)

19 His first book to be translated into Italian in 1953 was *L'uomo in bilico* (*Dangling Man*) (1944).

(1957); in 1965, Philip Roth's *Lascarsi andare* (*Letting Go*) (1962) and Flannery O' Connor's *Il cielo è dei violenti* (*The Violent Bear It Away*) (1960); and in 1966, James Baldwin's *Gridalo forte* (*Go Tell It on the Mountain*) (1953). Concurrently, US avant-garde poetry received much attention. In addition to Eliot, Pound, and Williams, Charles Olson, Theodore Roethke, and, especially, Allen Ginsberg, the Beats, and LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), among others, were translated thanks to the recommendations of intelligent advisors at the most distinguished publishing houses (like the freelance writer and translator Fernanda Pivano). Some of these US poets had a decisive influence on experimental avant-garde Italian movements, like "Gruppo '63," which included such notables as Antonio Porta, Nanni Balestrini, Edoardo Sanguineti, Amalia Rosselli, Alfredo Giuliani, and Umberto Eco. Apart from Einaudi (which could count on an editor like Italo Calvino), two publishing houses stood out in this respect: Feltrinelli, which, by and large, looked for literarily important and ideologically (left-wing) significant texts, and Garzanti, which, by and large, looked for culturally momentous "classic" texts. Something of a scandal erupted in 1962 following Einaudi's publication of J.D. Salinger's *Il giovane Holden* (*The Catcher in the Rye*) (1951). The novel was discussed in newspapers, weekly magazines, and journals, and from every critical angle. Regardless of the widely differing judgments, the book was an enormous success with the reading public. In the same year, to prove how the sociocultural climate had changed, Feltrinelli went on to publish Henry Miller's *Tropico del Cancro* (1934) and *Tropico del Capricorno* (1939) for the first time in this country. Again in 1962 another outpouring of vociferous opinions followed the translation of John Updike's *Corri, coniglio* (*Rabbit, Run*) (1960). In 1967 and 1968, respectively—not surprisingly, given the widespread Italian youth's social and political unrest—Malcolm X's *Autobiografia* (1965) and LeRoi Jones's *Blues People* (1963) came out.

In the 1970s and well into the 1980s, many, perhaps too many, "promising" US authors were translated and widely publicized (we need only think of the clamor surrounding the publication of the translations of David Leavitt's works, enthusiastically backed by Pivano). A relatively new phenomenon was the cult following gained by some science fiction, fantasy or horror wri-

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ters such as Stephen King and Ursula K. Le Guin; the latter's *La mano sinistra delle tenebre* (*The Left Hand of Darkness*) (1969) was translated in 1984, whereas Isaac Asimov had been steadily translated since the 1970s.[20] In 1976 Sylvia Plath began to come out in Italian.[21] From the 1970s the publishing house La Tartaruga specialized in translating and re-translating works by established women writers (such as Kate Chopin and Edith Wharton, but also C. Perkins Gilman,[22] Willa Cather, and Gertrude Stein), and by such contemporaries as Grace Paley, Patricia Highsmith, and Adrienne Rich.[23] In 1980 the quarterly journal *Letterature d'America* (*Literatures of the Americas*) (with monothematic yearly issues on Spanish American, Anglo-American, and Brazilian literatures, as well as an everybody together one) was founded. In 1981 and 1982, respectively, Toni Morrison's *Canto di Salomone* (1977) and *L'isola delle illusioni* (*Tar Baby*) (1981) came out in this country. In these decades, owing to favorable public responses in their own country, or to prizes won, or to film versions, the first Native American authors were also translated (N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, Gerald Vizenor, Louise Erdrich, and Leslie Silko, for instance)[24] as well as the first Asian American writers: in 1982 Maxine Hong Kingston's *La donna guerriera* (*The Woman Warrior*) (1976) came out.[25] In their respective fields, two anthologies helped fill the gap regarding writers who had not yet been translated or had not been translated in full: 1988 saw the publication of *Il labora-*

20 For a more complete list of the Italian translations till 2005, see Salvatore Proietti, "La letteratura di fantascienza," *Acoma,* vol. 31, Winter 2005, pp. 85–87.

21 Plath's first book to come out in this country was translated by the poet Giovanni Giudici and bore the title: *Lady Lazarus e altre poesie*.

22 Her *Donne e Economia* (*Women and Economics*) (1898) had been translated in 1902.

23 Some great books by women writers of the nineteenth century have been translated only recently, among them, in 2004, Harriet Jacobs' *Vita di una ragazza schiava* (*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*) (1861). For a more complete list of the Italian translations till 2005, see Anna Scacchi, "'Contro ogni armonia è il disegno vistoso e scombinato.' Le scrittrici americane e l'editoria italiana," *Acoma,* vol. 31 (Winter 2005), pp. 21–32.

24 For a more complete list of the Italian translations till 2005, see Giorgio Mariani, "La letteratura indianoamericana," *Acoma,* vol. 31, Winter 2005, pp. 69–71.

25 For a more complete list of the Italian translations till 2005, see Manuela Vastolo, "La letteratura asiaticoamericana," *Acoma,* vol. 31, Winter 2005, pp. 72–75.

torio dei sogni. Fantascienza americana dell'Ottocento (*The Dream Laboratory. American SF of the Nineteenth Century*) by Carlo Pagetti, while, in 1989, *Scrittori ebrei americani* (*Jewish American Writers*) by Mario Materassi appeared. The most significant US authors of the nineteenth and twentieth century, however, continued to be re-translated and republished—often prefaced with insightful critical analyses—by the most prestigious publishing houses (for instance: Rizzoli, Einaudi, Mondadori, and Garzanti).

To conclude, very briefly: from the early 1990s up to the present, in the magmatic, at times disconcerting, panorama of publications and translations coming out from new, adventurous, and perhaps short-lived publishing houses, some interesting anthologies have emerged. These have included: *Sotto il quinto sole. Antologia di poesia chicana* (*Under the Fifth Sun: An Anthology of Chicano Poetry*) (1990) by Franca Bacchiega; *Il mondo Yiddish: antologia letteraria* (*The Yiddish World: A Literary Anthology*) (1995) by Elena Mortara Di Veroli and Laura Quercioli Mincer; *Voci dal silenzio. Scrittori ai margini d'America* (*Voices from the Silence: Writers at the Margins of America*) (1996) by Mario Maffi, who collected authors of Asian American ethnic origins; and *Voci di frontiera. Scritture di Latinos negli Stati Uniti* (*Frontier Voices: Writings by Latinos in the US*) (1997) again by Mario Maffi. In 1994 the biannual magazine of international North American Studies, *Acoma*, was founded. Among the established publishing houses, Marsilio stands out. In its "Frecce" series, the translations of US works are published with scholarly introductions, critical apparatuses, *and* with the English parallel text, thus granting readers the chance to refer to the original. Since the end of the last century, a number of smaller, but intellectually vibrant, publishing houses have specialized in US ethnic literatures (as in many Italian universities there has been an increase in courses dealing with ethnic minorities). For instance, Le Lettere in Florence tends to publish—although not exclusively—African American writers (James Baldwin, Nella Larsen, Paule Marshall), while books by Native American writers (Leslie Silko, Joy Hario, the Native American theater) tend to be published—although not exclusively—by Quattro Venti in Urbino. In those years, the publishing house Palomar in Bari, in its series "La vigna nascosta," has published—although

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not exclusively—several important Chicano writers (Gloria Anzaldúa, Rudolfo Anaya, Tomàs Rivera).[26]

As US politics and literature continue to be seen by many Italians as the two faces of the same coin, notwithstanding the recent political disillusionments and bewilderments, US literature still has legions of estimators (especially among innovative Italian writers and, in particular, poets).[27] And in these times of economic crisis, even though the endemic racism of the US seems to occasionally flare up again, a great number of "classic" books by foundational authors is repeatedly re-re-proposed (with new commentaries) because they are still in demand. This is true to such an extent that today one can legitimately claim that many US novels—in some cases also thanks to their film versions—from *Moby Dick,* to *Ritratto di signora, L'età dell'innocenza* (*The Age of Innocence), Le avventure di Huckleberry Finn*, *Le nevi del Kilimanjaro, Il grande Gatsby*, and *Lamento di Portnoy,* as well as the poetry of Dickinson, Eliot, Pound, Ginsberg, Plath, and the plays by Eugene O'Neill,[28] Arthur Miller,[29] and Tennessee Williams,[30] among others, have become a shared literary heritage for Italians too.

26 For a more complete list of the Italian translations till 2005, see Erminio Corti and Anna Scannavini, "La letteratura dei Latinos," *Acoma,* vol. 31, Winter 2005, pp. 80–84.

27 For instance, a group of productive, vivacious, and experimental poets (among them Marco Giovenale, Alessandro De Francesco, Antonio Loreto, and Giulio Marzaioli) are bringing forward the lessons learned from US objectivists. See *New Objectivists, Nouveaux Objectivistes, Nuovi Oggettivisti*, edited by Cristina Giorcelli and Luigi Magno, Loffredo, 2013.

28 O'Neill's *Desiderio sotto gli olmi* (*Desire Under the Elms*), published in 1924, was translated in 1945.

29 Miller's *Morte di un commesso viaggiatore* (*Death of a Salesman*), published in 1949, was translated in 1952.

30 Williams's *Un tram che si chiama desiderio* (*A Streetcar Named Desire*), published in 1947, was first played in Rome in 1949 under the direction of Luchino Visconti.

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HUGO PRATT'S AND MILO MANARA'S *INDIAN SUMMER*

An Italian "Source" for *The Scarlet Letter*

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Hugo Pratt's and Milo Manara's *Indian Summer* as a source for *The Scarlet Letter*? Let me be honest: unfortunately, I have not discovered a hitherto unknown Italian manuscript that might displace surveyor Jonathan Pue's "small package, carefully done up in a piece of ancient yellow parchment" from its legendary status (Hawthorne, 1991: 41). There is, in other words, no 'source,' no Italian story—whether published or unpublished—that served as inspiration for Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. On the other hand, Pue's papers, too, never existed, being only one of the many imaginary "newly found" manuscripts that writers—from antiquity to postmodernity—have created "in order to legitimize their work" (Farnetti, 2006: 22). In a way, the creators of the Italian graphic novel *Tutto ricominciò con un'estate indiana* (translated into English as *Indian Summer*) are playing the same sort of game. They too wish to legitimize their work —"to demonstrate its authenticity or at least dissimulate its inauthenticity" (Farnetti, 2006: 22)—by invoking, in a reversal of the usual move, the authority of the published text in order to sustain not only their own work's veracity but, perhaps most importantly, its cultural value. The graphic novel under discussion, written by Hugo Pratt (Italy's most famous graphic novelist, and arguably one of the most famous worldwide) and illustrated by Milo Manara (only slightly less known, perhaps), is extremely well-researched historically. However, it is a story invented by Pratt and not based—as he claims in his conclusion, in a rather explicit imitation of Hawthorne's discovery in "The Custom House"—

on a manuscript left behind by an Italian by the name of Cosentino. This Cosentino, according to Pratt, served as secretary of a number of Puritan ministers and, after enjoying "a special relation with Anne Hutchinson" in his old age was supposedly even involved in the Salem witchcraft trials (Pratt and Manara, 2013: 155).[1] Pratt argues that his and Manara's story is a faithful rendition of Cosentino's document, still available in the Salem library. Even though Pratt stops short of claiming that Hawthorne, too, must have perused the Cosentino manuscript, the numerous traces of *The Scarlet Letter* disseminated throughout *Indian Summer*, along with the explicit mention of Hawthorne's work in the final pages of the graphic novel, leave no doubt as to what Pratt's strategy is. He wishes the reader—or, at least, the well-read reader—to situate the story told by him and "splendidly illustrated" (Pratt's own words) by Manara, against the backdrop of Hawthorne's classic. I will return to this point in my final remarks. First, however, a few words to introduce the two authors of *Indian Summer*.

Inducted in 2005 into the Will Eisner Award Hall of Fame, and best known for his 1967 masterpiece *Una ballata del mare salato* (translated into English as *Ballad of the Salt Sea*), featuring his most famous character, Corto Maltese, Hugo Pratt dominated the Italian comic book scene for decades. He also achieved recognition abroad, especially in France and Germany, as well as in the English-speaking world. Seeing his talent recognized in the US, in particular, must have pleased him immensely, considering that American literature and culture have always held a special place in Pratt's personal and professional life. Besides Robert Louis Stevenson and Joseph Conrad, Pratt cites James Oliver Curwood, Zane Grey, James Fenimore Cooper, Herman Melville, and Jack London as major influences, along with cartoonists Lyman Young, Will Eisner, and Milton Caniff ("Hugo Pratt"). Artist and comic book writer Milo Manara also enjoys celebrity status both in Italy and abroad, especially in France, though in his case his reputation is somewhat controversial. In the summer of 2014, he made headline news, at least in Italy, due to his cover

1 All references are to the Italian edition I have used. Translations into English are mine, unless otherwise indicated. All reproductions by kind permission of the Author of the images. I wish to thank Masturah Alatas for discussing at length with me all the major points of this essay, and for her careful editing of the text.

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illustration for the upcoming first issue of Marvel Comics' *Spider-Woman* (see fig. 1). As reported in *The Guardian*, the complaint was that his drawing blatantly sexualizes Spider-Woman and reinforces the notion that "superhero comics are for horny men only" (Flood, 2014). On the other hand, many noted that Marvel must have known what they were going to get. Manara—who is famous for having collaborated not only with Pratt but with Federico Fellini and other major artists like Neil Gaiman and Alejandro Jodorowsky, among others—has a reputation for drawing women in various states of undress, and often portrays both women and men engaging in explicit sexual acts. His eroticism is both celebrated for its masterful sensuality and condemned as sexist. Having said that, I should add that the graphic novel under discussion is considered unanimously one of the best both Manara and Pratt have ever created.

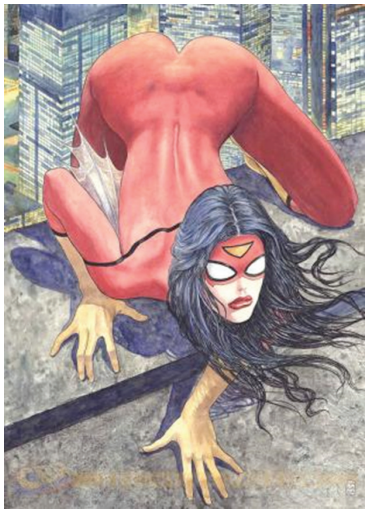

Fig. 1. Milo Manara's controversial cover for Marvel Comics' new *Spider-Woman* series.

Tutto ricominciò con un'estate indiana was originally serialized in Pratt's own magazine *Corto Maltese* between 1983 and 1985. It has been recently republished and translated into English by Dark Horse Comics in Volume 1 of *The Manara Library*, with the title *Indian Summer*, though the literal translation would have been "Everything began again with an Indian summer." Most of the story takes place in 1630s Puritan New England, and both Pratt and Manara have stated in interviews that Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* was a major influence (though, as I already noted, the graphic novel itself makes a different claim). Let me state at the outset, however, that I do not wish to suggest that *Indian Summer* may be considered in any sense an *adaptation* of Hawthorne's work. As Linda Hutcheon has noted, to count as such, an adaptation's intertextual engagements with the source text must be "extended ones, not passing allusions" (Hutcheon, 2013: 21). One might say—resorting to Noam Chomsky's well-known distinction between "rule-governed"

and "rule-changing creativity"—that an adaptation must follow a set of basic rules making the presence of the original text felt for most of the narration, as opposed to one where elements of the former are freely lifted and recombined in the new text, regardless of the original's storyline. The latter is exactly what happens with *Indian Summer*. The graphic novel tells a story so different from Hawthorne's that, hoax aside, no one would mistake it either as an adaptation nor much less as the graphic version of a "source" for *The Scarlet Letter*. However, by the same token, no careful reader of Hawthorne would miss what Hutcheon, in her discussion of adaptation as more than an "extensive, particular transcoding," identifies as "creative reinterpretation and palimpsestic intertextuality" (Hutcheon, 2013: 22). Pratt and Manara use Hawthorne's novel literally as a palimpsest—they may be said to scrape the original text off the page to write on to it a whole new story so that the previous text is perceptible, as it were, the way a faded print is when a cloth is held against the backlight.

Notwithstanding the significant and manifold differences between the two stories, I believe it can be argued that not only some of Pratt's and Manara's characters are very liberal, creative reinventions of Hawthorne's figures—they might be seen as spin-offs of Hawthorne's narrative—but in many ways *Indian Summer* is also thematically close to *The Scarlet Letter*. Both tales feature dominant, though largely cowardly and perverse, male figures, intent on subjugating courageous, resourceful, rebellious women. More generally, Pratt's and Manara's story brings to the fore two marginalized or perhaps downright repressed elements in Hawthorne's romance. The first one is, of course, the sexual one. The second is the American Indian presence.

Though I have just listed them as separate, one might wish to argue that these two aspects of Hawthorne's narrative are to a significant degree one and the same. As Tracy Fessenden, Nicholas Radel, and Magdalena Zaborowska write in their introduction to *The Puritan Origins of American Sex*, "Although far outnumbering the colonists in the environs of seventeenth-century Massachusetts Bay, Native Americans are mere shadows and ghosts in *The Scarlet Letter*, which links their presence outside

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the Christian settler community to Hester's transgressive sexuality" (Fessenden et al., 2001: 9). *Indian Summer* returns Indians (vaguely identified as belonging to Squando's tribe) to their rightful place as protagonists rather than extras of early American history, and this, I believe, should be considered as a narrative move of no small merit (see fig 2).[2]

Fig. 2. Manara's Indians

Without romanticizing them—there are several indications, for example, that Native American treatment of women could be as brutal as the colonists'—and by painting them as complex human beings, *Indian Summer* shows the actual interconnection of the white and red worlds. Though the story is largely one of Indian warfare, there are many indications that the two communities could exist in a state of balance, profitable for both, at least until the fateful Indian summer in which "everything began again."[3] However, when it comes to the way Pratt and Manara reinvent "Hester's transgressive sexuality"—not to mention how they reinterpret the Puritan clergy's persecution of Hester—I assume many would find the graphic novel disturbing and sexist, though I hope

2 Pratt spells the name "Squando" throughout the text. The reference is unmistakably to the historical Squanto. I have never seen the name spelled with a "d" anywhere else, but I assume it is Pratt's way of suggesting to Italians the English pronunciation of the word.

3 There is a nice irony in the way the Indian braves are represented in the story. They often appear as young loafers, "hanging out" in the wilderness or near the beach (see fig. 2 above), and often they remark jokingly about their "warrior" status. Pratt and Manara, in striving for historical accuracy, render the Indians fully human.

most readers would also grant that the truly admirable figures of the book are Abigail Lewis and her daughter Phillis, whom I see as creative reinventions of Hester and Pearl, respectively. But before analyzing these two figures and their sufferings in more detail, let me say something about Manara's artwork.

Imagine that one sunny day beautiful Hester would take to the woods, and, to let Hawthorne himself speak, due to "the exhilarating effect […] of breathing the wild, free atmosphere of an unredeemed, unchristianized, lawless region" (Hawthorne, 1991: 159), she were to draw up her skirts and step into a pool to freshen up a bit. Or imagine that, rather than being shipped off to Europe, in one of the novel's less felicitous moments, Pearl remained in America to develop her impish, "nymph-child" nature, roaming in the woods that were her "playmate" (Hawthorne, 1991: 161), and on a hot day she were to dip into her favorite brook to cool off. Would either of them look like the young woman drawn by Manara for the cover of one of the book's many Italian editions (see fig. 3)? The woman portrayed as she walks into the water, with bare legs and a generous décolleté is Phillis (more on her in a moment), and she may be said to typify Manara's provocative art of drawing beautiful women within eroticized contexts. In particular, what is worth noting is the relation this drawing sets up between the Indian coming out of the woods and the woman. At one level, the scene is in line with several other tables in the book, which do not simply present us with sexy women—scantily dressed or completely undressed—but also explicitly construct these beauties as objects of a male gaze. This has a somewhat unsettling effect. To the extent that the reader concentrates her vision on what the drawing constructs as the object of sexual attraction, her gaze may be considered as overlapping, more or less, with that of the onlooker in the picture, and, depending on the context, this may have disturbing implications, as we shall see shortly.[4]

4 I realize that it may be confusing to follow the by now well-established convention of using the female pronoun and possessive adjective to identify the general reader, after stating that the drawings construct women as objects of a *male* gaze. However, while I follow Laura Mulvey's well-known identification of woman as the subject-to-be-looked-at, I also wish to resist seeing the reader of Manara's drawings as exclusively male.

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Even in this case, indeed, one might say that the drawing is ambiguous in its erotic implications. The grinning Indian is visibly aroused, and considering that the novel opens with a rape scene, there is a hint that visual pleasure may be on a continuum with outright physical violence—a point that, as we shall see, is raised more than once in the novel. On the other hand, Phillis is caught in the motion of turning her pretty face around. She is aware of being watched and it is unclear from her expression whether she is alarmed or not. She may be a bit startled, but one could also say that she is at home in the woods as much as the Indian is—an interpretation that the reading of the novel supports—and that the erotic tension generated by the scene does not necessarily suggest violence but some sort of barely perceptible complicity.

Fig. 3. Milo Manara's cover for *Tutto ricominciò con un'estate indiana* (Panini Comics 2013 edition)

Most importantly, however, in terms of *Indian Summer*'s relation to *The Scarlet Letter*, I wish to suggest that in this drawing Manara—whether consciously or unconsciously I cannot tell—registers in his own, unique, particular style the way Hawthorne's narrative aligns Hester's (and—to a lesser extent—Pearl's) "freedom" to that of "the wild Indian in the woods." To my mind, this cover may be read as Manara's visualization of one of the most celebrated passages in Hawthorne's novel, where the narrator muses on Hester's mental and moral condition after years of being both "estranged" and "outlawed" from the settlers' community, precisely by resorting to a set of vivid images.

> She had wandered, without rule or guidance, in a moral wilderness, as vast, as intricate, and shadowy as the untamed forest [...]. Her intellect and heart had their home, as it were, in desert places, where she roamed as freely as the wild Indian in his woods. For years past she had looked from this estranged point of view at human institutions, and whatever priests or legislators had established; criticising all with hardly more reverence than the Indian would feel for the clerical band, the judicial robe,

> the pillory, the gallows, the fireside, or the church. The tendency of her fate and fortunes had been to set her free. The scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread. Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers—stern and wild ones—and they had made her strong, but taught her much amiss. (Hawthorne, 1991: 157)

Even though the woman Manara portrays is not Abigail (the character who bears the closest resemblance to Hester) but her daughter Phillis, the drawing reflects the way in which Pratt's script literalizes and narrativizes what Hawthorne had left at a purely symbolic level. While Hester in *The Scarlet Letter* is only metaphorically aligned with the wilderness and the world of the Indian, Pratt and Manara turn metaphor into reality by positioning not only Abigail but also the whole Lewis family on the border between white and Indian societies. Manara, moreover, elaborates the transgressive quality of Hester's sexuality in an explicitly erotic direction, though I would not consider this a violation of the original text. Manara's cover is to a large extent a legitimate transcoding of the erotic connotation of Hawthorne's "wildness" and "wilderness," which have been often commented upon by critics, and which are evident in both *The Scarlet Letter* and other stories, beginning of course with the highly sexually charged atmosphere of a tale like "Young Goodman Brown."

While thematically and historically the two narratives cover a somewhat similar territory, in terms of plot, differences between *The Scarlet Letter* and *Indian Summer* are substantial. Pratt's and Manara's story opens with the rape of a young white woman by two members of Squando's tribe, both of whom are killed by the young colonist Abner as they bathe in the sea after the violence. Abner is the son of Abigail Lewis, also known to the Indians as "the devil woman," who lives with her two sons, one daughter, and an adopted child in a house by the sea (fig. 4), after having been expelled from the nearby Puritan villages of historical Salem and fictional New Canaan. She is the Hester avatar: after the horrible sufferings inflicted on her by both the elder and the younger reverend Black—she too, like Hester, has met the Black man!—she is eventually branded with an *L* on her cheek (fig. 5), the *L* standing

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for Lilith, Adam's fabled, first rebellious wife, and forced to leave the community.[5]

Fig. 4. The Lewis' log cabin, between white and Indian villages

Fig. 5. Abigail Lewis

In a long flashback section, we discover that, while Abner is the son of Elder Black who repeatedly raped Abigail, her daughter Phillis is the child of the younger Pilgrim Black, who also abused her mother in all sorts of ways. Elijah, the elder son, is the only offspring of a true love story. Abigail conceived him after meeting a French Huguenot hunter, who disappears well before the birth of his son. Abner's revengeful killing of the Indian rapists triggers a war with the Natives that ends in the destruction of New Canaan. In the final panels, Phillis—often criticized for her loose sexual mores—in a heroic (if a touch melodramatic) display of courage and deep care for others, makes a desper-

5 As is well known, Hawthorne most likely took the surname Prynne from William Prynne, the Puritan author and political figure persecuted by Archbishop Laud, who was fire-branded with the letters *S* and *L*, as a *Seditious Libeller*.

ate run to bring a barrel of gunpowder to a house under siege, only to be shot down by an Indian. She is buried in the forest, in a common grave with the Indian Natan, a son of Squando who grew up with the Lewis children and who did his best to protect the Lewis family from his fellow tribesmen's thirst for revenge. The ending of the graphic novel thus registers the tragic falling apart of the dream of inter-ethnic understanding and cultural hybridity that the Lewis family—until the story's fateful Indian summer—in several ways embodied. At the same time, the story resists any Manichean logic, as the events cannot be contained either in a good colonists versus savage Indians plot or in its automatic reversal, whereby victimized noble Indians clash with white savages (to use a term Benjamin Franklin once employed).[6] Both groups are at once victims and aggressors, and both harbor noble as well as ignoble characters. One might argue that the greatest evil described in the narrative, and the root cause of much of the violence in the colony, lies with the hypocrisy and the two-faced attitude, especially in sexual matters, of the Puritan clergy. Yet, as we shall see, the last image of the story, carrying a kind of distorted echo of Hawthorne's romance, may be read as a call to forgive even what a reader has identified as "the Machiavellian monster" of the graphic novel (Comic Booked Guest Writer, 2016).[7] All in all, regardless of the rather different plots, *Indian Summer* shares with *The Scarlet Letter* a sense of the deep ambiguity not only of the historical and political world of colonial America, but of its connection to the more universal themes of love, passion, justice, and truth.

The Pratt and Manara character that owes most to Hawthorne's text is Abigail Lewis. Besides living in a marginal log cabin by the sea and being branded with a sign of infamy and shame, she resembles Hester also in other ways. She cares for the poor

6 See Franklin's *Narrative of the Late Massacres in Lancaster County of a Number of Indians, Friends of this Province, by Persons Unknown* (1764). One must note, however, that the opening rape scene seems to suggest that the first attacker is "the Dutchman," a blond "Indian" who is most likely a white man of Dutch origin who has "gone Native."

7 I cannot agree, however, with the notion that Pilgrim Black masterminded the assault on his niece. Other than the fact that he later enjoys it as pornographic fantasy (see below), I can find no sign of this in the graphic novel.

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and the desperate, she provides counsel to the afflicted, she raises her children with no man's help, and she is associated not only symbolically with the wild Indians—she actually lives with them for a while and constantly relies on their help. Most importantly, she is the victim of patriarchal power, as is, in many ways, her daughter Phillis, whom we may consider to be a psychologically, sexually, and emotionally developed Pearl. Besides being herself the unacknowledged daughter of a Puritan minister, who refuses to face up (very much like Dimmesdale) to his fatherly responsibilities, Phillis enjoys (like Pearl) running wild in the woods. There, also like Hester's daughter, she loves to look at her features reflected in the brook—though, to be fair, she might "flirt" with something more than her image (see fig. 6)—as well as to collect herbs, flowers, and berries (Hawthorne, 1991: 163). In short, one might well say of Phillis, too, that "the mother-forest, and these wild things which it nourished, all recognized a kindred wilderness in the human child" (Hawthorne, 1991: 161). This feeling is captured by Manara in tables infusing an almost Disneyan quality in the wild natural world surrounding Phillis, whose sensuality may be far from the *Snow White* of 1937, but less so from the *Pocahontas* of 1995.

Fig. 6. Phyllis in the woods

One may like or dislike the way in which Manara transmogrifies the sense of sexual freedom Hawthorne associates with the wilderness, but there can be hardly any question that the forest in *The Scarlet Letter* is a place of sin as much as one of erotic disclosure. It is in the woods that, in a famous chapter, Hester takes off

> the formal cap that confined her hair, and down it fell upon her shoulders, dark and rich, with at once a shadow and a light in its abundance, and imparting the charm of softness to her features. There played around her mouth, and beamed out of her eyes, a radiant and tender smile, that seemed gushing from the very heart of womanhood. A crimson flush was glowing on her cheek, that had been long so pale. Her sex, her youth, and the whole richness of her beauty, came back from what men call the irrevocable past, and clustered themselves with her maiden hope, and a happiness before unknown, within the magic circle of this hour. (Hawthorne, 1991: 159–160)

In light of the fact that women are, in *Indian Summer* as much as in *The Scarlet Letter*, always seen as subject to patriarchal authority, it is not surprising that Phillis would pursue a sense of sensual gratification in the forest, the only place where, at least momentarily, she can escape masculine control.

Phillis' self-reliant attitude is also visible in another feature she shares with Pearl. Hawthorne describes Hester's daughter as a child who, even at age three, "could have borne a fair examination in the New England Primer, or the first column of the Westminster Catechisms, although unacquainted with the outward form of either of those celebrated works" (Hawthorne, 1991: 97). Yet, when asked by Governor Bellingham who "made" her, she chooses to reply, "that she had not been made at all, but had been plucked by her mother off the bush of wild roses that grew by the prison-door" (Hawthorne, 1991: 97). Phillis confronts the religious wisdom of New Canaan with an equally bold mindset, though in her case, rather than rejecting catechism in favor of pagan lore, she invokes the Bible itself in defense of her views on sexual relations among family members. Accused of incestuous behavior, she replies, "The sacred texts are replete with incestuous persons. Anah, the descendant of Esau, was the son of his father's mother […]. So you see, even the Scrip-

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tures speak of forbidden love" (Pratta and Manara, 2013: 109).[8] Her spirited defense of her views (and implicitly of her own quite liberal sexual mores) is consistent with her Pearl-like alternation of both charming and aggressive moods: Phillis can be as sweet as she can be full of rage. Moreover, though "naughty" in ways that would have deeply shocked Hawthorne, Phillis too acutely desires her father to recognize her. She is well aware of the horribly lascivious nature of Pilgrim Black, and yet even proud Phillis, who shortly before had threatened the reverend with an axe when he had called her a sinner (a literal case of the pot calling the kettle Black!), feels pity for her biological father when an Indian arrow strikes him in the shoulder. The graphic novel may not describe the ambiguous relation that Pearl entertains with Dimmesdale with the same subtlety, but on the other hand, it forcefully throws into relief both the daughter's sense of loss and the ruthlessness of the father's denial of her.

The various intertextual allusions to Hawthorne's work I have mentioned so far must be placed against a narrative interest shared by both *Indian Summer* and *The Scarlet Letter.* Both works wish to call attention, in their own different ways, to the oppression of women in Puritan New England. This thematic angle is rather unusual in the Italian comics tradition of Western adventure, which not only has usually focused on the male hero, but also has reserved little or no room for female figures, even in ancillary roles. The centrality of this concern in *Indian Summer* is testified by the way Pratt and Manara revisit a historical figure whose story I have never seen discussed in relation to Hawthorne's work—the story of Dorothy Talbye. According to the available historical record, Talbye, originally a respected member of the Salem church, changed into a delusional, aggressive woman, who turned violent against her children and her husband, and eventually broke the neck of her daughter Difficult. At her trial, she claimed God instructed her to do so, though Winthrop, who wrote about this incident in his *Journal*, obviously thought she was under demonic possession. Interestingly enough, however, Winthrop also dutifully took note of the fact that Dorothy claimed she had to kill her

8 Here I am quoting from the published English translation for Dark Horse Comics, as quoted in Starr.

three-year-old daughter because that was the only way to spare her "from future misery" such as she herself had suffered (Winthrop, 1908: 283). There is, therefore, some historical basis for making of Talbye a sort of feminist heroine, however problematic.[9] In *Indian Summer*, she is described as a woman who "committed the crime of believing that the rights of women are equal to those of men" (Manara and Pratt, 2011: 98). It is no accident that Talbye turns out to be the only woman willing to befriend Abigail after she is ostracized for having two children out of wedlock, and in fact Abigail ends up being branded with an *L* following Talbye's trial and execution, precisely on account of being close to her. Content-wise, there can be no question that *Indian Summer* wishes to denounce the oppression and exploitation of women in early seventeenth-century New England. However, many readers might argue that Pratt's story, and especially Manara's visual rendering of the events, contradict this self-evident purpose by exploiting women's bodies both visually and conceptually.

For example, when Abigail narrates in flashback the brutal sexual assaults she suffered at the hands of the two Black men of the tale—and this applies as well to other scenes of sexual subjugation in the novel—Manara's drawings still present the woman's body in intentionally tantalizing ways. Rather than trying to hide this representational and ideological contradiction, the narrative may be said to explicitly call attention to it. One way the text does this is through the troubling character of the young Jeremiah Lewis, Abigail's adopted son. Jeremiah gets visibly excited anytime he hears a story featuring sex and violence. His response is not so much immature as bordering on the pathological, as for example when he gets aroused on hearing about the rape of Pilgrim Black's niece, or even the story of her own adoptive mother's sexual enslavement to the Blacks. Indeed, Jeremiah's sexual arousal prefigures Black's own. When the depraved minister abuses his niece, he asks her to give him the full details of her rape, thus turning tragedy into sexual fantasy. At least one reader finds

9 In *Beloved*, of course, Toni Morrison refers to a remarkably similar historical incident: that of Margaret Garner, who, in 1856 escaped from slavery in Kentucky and murdered her child when slave catchers caught up with her in Ohio.

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all this both disturbing and revealing, as it would actually expose "the true face of the reader who enjoys Manara's exact detailing of sexual violence and gratuitous slaughter" (Comic Booked Guest Writer, 2016).

However, this alignment between the reader and the lascivious reverend may be read also in a less deterministic way. Let us consider what many would find one of the most offensive and troubling tables in the novel, one in which Manara emphasizes the hypocrisy of the prelate on the one hand, while on the other he titillates the reader by exposing the subjugated female body after which Pilgrim Black lusts (fig. 7).

Fig. 7. Abigail abused by Pilgrim Black

As Jason Michelitch has intelligently noted, this and other moments in the story, "while described as abominable by the text, are depicted with a heavy dose of erotic allure" (Michelitch, 2012). Michelitch acknowledges that this is problematic, but he also goes on to add that, "There is an upfrontness to the eroticism in *Indian Summer* that borders on confrontational with the reader. It demands recognition, and it demands an effort of reading that the casual sexism of mainstream comics does not" (Michelitch, 2012). In particular, when reading a panel like the one I have just called attention to, to the extent that the reader might be excited

by the woman's nakedness, she would be sharing the depraved minister's point of view. As Michelitch concludes,

> Manara's erotic imagery implicates the reader in the abominable acts on display through arousal [...] and the combination of arousal and revulsion forces the reader to leave behind simplistic moral judgments and engage critically with the text, with questions such as: Why is this arousing when it is also abhorrent? Is it okay to be aroused by fictionalized sexual violence? Is a denial of this arousal moral, or complicit with the repression of the Puritan minister in the story, who claims to despise all sexual impulses yet acts on all of his basest whims? (Michelitch, 2012)

What makes asking these questions possible is, I think, the fact that, after all, as readers, we do not simply look at what Pilgrim Black looks at, even though the table situates the point of view of the reader behind the minister's back. As readers, we also look at someone looking, and since the gazer in the table is also an immoral, false, and violent man, we have the opportunity to question what it means to look at such representations of sex and violence.

I am aware that these are complicated and thorny issues, which in manifold ways intersect the long and multi-faceted discussion concerning the representation and appropriation of the female body in literature, the arts, and especially the cinema. In particular, the debates about eroticism and pornography that have engaged many feminist scholars over the last two or three decades have complicated Laura Mulvey's seminal insights about the construction of woman as either fetish or source of voyeuristic pleasure by focusing on the "contradictions" and "tensions" of texts formerly perceived as blatantly sexist and pornographic. This is not the place to return to these debates, nor would I be qualified to intervene in any significant way on their merits. I can only observe that *Indian Summer* is a text which, to quote Michelitch again, "forces a conversation with the reader over the uncomfortable confluence of desire and violence" (Michelitch, 2012). Given the comparative scope of this essay, however, my major concern is not to pass judgment on the sexual politics of Pratt's and Manara's graphic novel. What is more important for my purposes is to ask whether we may find any legitimacy in the authors' claim that their emphasis on sex and sexual perversion is related to, if not directly inspired by,

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the events narrated in *The Scarlet Letter*. As an insightful reader has noted, one could argue that, "the primary concern of *Indian Summer* is male ownership over females. Through physical force, religious persecution, and genuine love, every prominent female within the narrative is subject to male ownership in one form or another, in life and death" (Starr, 2012). Hence, what Shari Benstock has written about *The Scarlet Letter*—that it "focuses attention on representations of womanhood, with special emphasis on Puritan efforts to regulate female sexuality within religious, legal, and economic structures" (Benstock, 1991: 290)—could be said also of *Indian Summer*. Of course, we must also observe that, while Hawthorne constructs the Puritan "regulation" of sexuality mostly as repression, Pratt and Manara believe that public condemnation of illicit sex can be a cover-up for the most vicious exploitation of women's bodies. However, we must wonder whether, at bottom, Dimmesdale's outlook is substantially different from that of the graphic novel's lascivious ministers. As several critics have remarked, unlike Hester, Dimmesdale is utterly incapable of seeing what he and Hester did in the forest as anything other than evil. Dimmesdale's response to sin may be read as a violent rejection of his sexual impulses—a denial that constructs sex itself as something dangerous, lewd, and perverted by default. It is no accident that in the two instances in which, as Nina Baym has written, "the minister's conscious mind becomes a passive receiver for images and impulses projected from lower mental depths" (Baym, 1986: 76), his mind becomes the theater of forbidden sexual fantasies. In the night-time hallucination he experiences on the scaffold in Chapter 12, he dreams of giving scandal to the young virgins of his parish who had made a shrine for him "in their white bosoms; which, now, by the by, in their hurry and confusion, they would scantly have given time to cover with their kerchiefs" (Hawthorne, 1991: 124–125). To quote Baym again, "his suppressed sexuality turns the young women of his parish into half-clothed groupies" (Baym, 1986: 77). Later on, as he returns from the forest after meeting Hester and having entertained the possibility of rebellion, Dimmesdale feels an urge, "to do some strange, wild, wicked thing or other, with a sense that it would be at once involuntary and intentional; in spite of himself,

yet growing out of a profounder self than that which opposed the impulse" (Hawthorne, 1991: 169–170). In particular, he is seized by the desire to make a lewd proposal to a young and attractive parishioner. In short, the main difference between Dimmsedale and the Blacks lies in the fact that, while the former manages somehow to suppress his dark impulses, the latter act them out.[10] However, they do so privately, while continuing all along to enjoy among the community a reputation as virtuous men, just the way Dimmesdale does. Moreover, one could argue that, by continuing to abuse Abigail over an extended period of time, the elder and junior Black provide an objective correlative of what, in Dimmesdale's case, is a more abstract, though no less severe, reiteration of his sin due to his lack of courage in confessing it.

If one wished to insist on establishing a stronger correlation between *Indian Summer* and *The Scarlet Letter* than the one I am arguing for here, I suppose one might see the transition from Dimmesdale's mental self-torturing to sensationalist, pornographic story as obeying the needs of an inter-semiotic transposition from one sign-system to another. Personally, I think it is safer to trust Pratt and Manara themselves when they state that their story's "atmosphere" owes something to *The Scarlet Letter*, but it was also influenced by several other texts, both historical (Hubbard's *Narratives of the Indian Wars*, for example) and fictional (Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, but also the now largely, and perhaps undeservedly, forgotten frontier novels of James Curwood). The recourse to these latter sources was most probably Pratt's way of coming to terms with what, in a discussion of the 1995 filmic "adaptation" of *The Scarlet Letter*, Sacvan Bercovitch identifies as "a problem in the novel." The "problem" is that, in the novel,

10 Pratt's choice to call the villains of the story "Black" is quite likely indebted to Hawthorne's own association of Dimmsedale with the "Black Man." In *The Scarlet Letter*, the term Black Man is usually applied either to the devil or to the demonic Roger Chillingworth, but in the Chapter "A Forest Walk," both Pearl and Hester use it in reference to Dimmesdale. Indeed, Hester, implicitly referring to her forbidden sexual encounter with Dimmesdale, declares, "Once in my life I met the Black Man! [...] This scarlet letter is his mark!" (148).

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> [...] nothing *happens*. Confined as they are by their Puritan setting, Hawthorne's characters think and feel; love, hate, interpret, and speculate, but they rarely *do* anything. The film solves that problem with the customary stand-bys, sex and violence: a massacre, a wife-beating, a murder, graphic physical torture, equally graphic self-mutilation, a scalping, a suicide, an attempted rape, several even more detailed love-scenes, and (to parallel the early swimming episode)[11] a long bathing scene, featuring Demi Moore attended by her black Caribbean companion, Mituba. (Bercovitch, 1996)

Even though—let me repeat it one more time—*Indian Summer* never wished to be perceived as an adaptation of *The Scarlet Letter*, nearly all the sensationalist material mentioned by Bercovitch is also featured in Pratt's and Manara's narrative. There are minor differences, of course. There are no suicides in *Indian Summer*, for example, and indeed, for all the sexiness of many of its tables, no love scenes. We have, however, not one murder, but a whole war, with plenty of killing, scalping, and cruelty.

For all that, I would argue that Roland Joffé's movie, "freely adapted from Nathaniel Hawthorne," as the screen credits dutifully acknowledge, tells a very different kind of story from that of *Indian Summer* (Joffé, 1995). To be sure, both narratives cast, for the most part, a decidedly unfavorable light on a Puritan clergy intent on victimizing and vilifying (in different ways) both Abigail and Hester (and women in general). Yet, while as Bercovitch notes, "The movie Puritans are an incipiently progressive community under an oppressive regime, a society at odds with its own most liberal possibilities," *Indian Summer* holds no hope of a return to the pre-existing balance between white and Native communities (Bercovitch, 1996). The burning down of the Lewis household, liminally situated between white and Indian spaces, marks the end of any utopia. Joffé's film culminates in a happy ending, one in which "the flight to freedom of self-reliant individuals" is actualized as Hester, Arthur, and Pearl ride off towards the new promised land (Bercovitch, 1996). *Indian Summer* ends in tragedy. Not only is the war not over by the story's end, but in the final pages, we also witness two deaths we feel to be particularly unjust. One, as mentioned above, is that of Phillis, as she courageously

11 In which Hester peeps through the bushes at Arthur bathing in the nude.

does what others—and especially men—are afraid to attempt. The second is the murder of Natan, Squando's son, who had grown up with Elijah Lewis and continued to be his close friend and hunting partner until the war broke out, and who does his best to get the Lewis family out of harm's way. One may find these deaths more melodramatic than tragic. Phillis and Natan are no graphic-novel equivalents of Cleopatra or Oedipus, but they are not, by any means, akin to the stereotypical "good guys" played by Demi Moore and Gary Oldman in Joffé's film. Both Phillis and Natan are complex characters with good hearts who are also contradictory and self-divided, at least from the reader's perspective. Natan, like the other Indians, believes in revenge, and while he saves the lives of both Abner and Sheva Black (with whom Abner is in love), he murders and scalps Pilgrim Black before his niece's eyes. Phillis, on her part, may be disliked for her excessively liberal (some would call them "loose") sexual mores, but what makes her interesting is the fraught relation she entertains with her morally abominable father. She appears ultimately incapable of hating the man who is, after all, largely responsible for her family's ostracization.

I said earlier that both *The Scarlet Letter* and *Indian Summer* focus on the lives of women oppressed by the rigidity of patriarchal institutions. Yet I must qualify that statement by adding that Hawthorne's Hester is not simply a victim but an adulteress as well, both in the eyes of the community and in those of the author. Moreover, by refusing to disclose the name of the man she sinned with, she shares with Dimmesdale and Chillingworth a certain degree of hypocrisy. Likewise, Dimmesdale is no unreconstructed coward but a self-tortured and contradictory figure. Even Chillingworth, the most villainous character in the tale, turns out to be Pearl's benefactor and even his malice, in Hawthorne's own words, may in the end amount to a form of "golden love" (Hawthorne, 1991: 199). Pratt's and Manara's characters are not equally well rounded and subtle, but neither are they uncomplicated figures. Abigail is in no way responsible for her sexual enslavement—she is a servant and an orphan, and because of her class position (quite different from Hester's), she has no chance of escaping from the brutality heaped upon her. Like Hester, however, she keeps her secret,

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perhaps out of shame and, perhaps, also to protect her children. It is only under the tragic circumstances of all-out war that she reveals what has befallen her to the rest of the family. Even the arch-villains of the story show signs of ambiguity. The elder Black, Abigail narrates, would first beat and rape her, and force her to "confess these sins even as he committed them" (Pratt and Manara, 2013: 94). The tables that represent such violence, moreover, indicate "a fetish for sexually charged confessionals which also seems to have been passed on to his son, Reverend Black" (Starr, 2012). In short, the Blacks are no mere hypocrites: they also engage in a form of (figural) self-beating that has some resemblance to the paradoxical situation of Dimmesdale's, who, though "gnawed and tortured by some black trouble of the soul […] had achieved a brilliant popularity in his sacred office" (Hawthorne, 1991: 117). In sum, though one could easily condemn Pratt for having injected—like Joffé with his film—a good deal of sensational material in the story, and Manara for having produced "bracingly bawdy art" (Michelitch, 2012), the world of *Indian Summer* is similar to that *The Scarlet Letter* in its rejection of any simple-minded reading of both history and human relations.

In a comment on the famous first paragraph of the novel, Bercovitch argues that in Hawthorne's view "The immigrants […] were right to begin their enterprise by 'allotting a portion of the virgin soil' to a cemetery and a prison […]. Mortality and imperfection are the limitations we must confront, and the sooner the better, if we aspire to the good society" (Bercovitch, 1996). Even though it would be foolish to maintain that Pratt and Manara meant their story as an inquiry into the national origins of the United States of America, mortality and imperfection are very much a part of the tale they tell. There is an abiding sense of loss and regret pervading the entire narrative and, in particular, its bitterly ironic conclusion. A teenage militiaman shoots Natan in the back, the Indian who most cares for the Lewises, when the attackers have decided to stop for the day. Phillis, arguably the most self-reliant, perhaps even anarchic, character in the book, dies serving a community she considers bigoted, hypocritical, and corrupt. *Indian Summer* not only shares Hawthorne's pessimism regarding the future of "whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness"

(Hawthorne, 1991: 53) the founders of the colonies had imagined, but also qualifies such pessimism as rooted in the tragic falling apart of the "middle ground" best exemplified by the Lewis household, strategically positioned between New Canaan and the Indian village of Squando.[12] In Hawthorne's tale, whatever moral triumph Hester may achieve by returning to Salem and voluntarily resuming the scarlet letter can hardly redeem the "sombre" atmosphere of the "legend" told. In Pratt and Manara's story, similarly, Phillis' sacrifice is a noble display of her love of others, but brings no peace and is, ironically, useless, as she is killed only minutes before the Indians decide to retire. It is no accident, I think, that both stories end with an image of burial grounds. Hawthorne ends his tale by describing a tombstone on which appeared the semblance of an engraved escutcheon. It bore a device, a herald's wording of which may serve as a motto and brief description of our now concluded legend; so sombre is it, and relieved only by one ever-glowing point of light gloomier than the shadow: "ON A FIELD, SABLE, THE LETTER A, GULES" (Hawthorne, 1991: 201).

Pratt and Manara rewrite this imagery in interesting ways. The final drawing of the text offers us a "corroded and dark" tombstone (Manara and Pratt, 2011: 156), with only the word "Black" inscribed on it, and no date. The "gloomy" picture, however, is also in this case "relieved" by the fresh wildflowers that, mysteriously, can always be found adorning the slate. If what "gules" in *The Scarlet Letter*'s final image is a reminder of both Hester's passion and its sinful nature, in *Indian Summer*, by virtue of being the very last item mentioned in the text, the wildflowers—symbolically associated with Phillis—appear to overcome the "blackness" of the tale's most villainous creatures.

12 I use the term "middle ground" in the sense in which Richard White has theorized and employed it in his classic study of white-Indian, inter-white, and inter-Indian relations in the Great Lakes region from 1650 to 1815. The middle ground is not a "compromise between opposing interests." "A middle ground is the creation, in part through creative misunderstanding, of a set of practices, rituals, offices, and beliefs, that although comprised of elements of the group in contact, is as a whole separate from the practices and beliefs of all of those groups" (White, 2010: xii-xiii). My impression is that Pratt conceives the Lewis household as a hybrid formation, where both Native and white practices and beliefs are combined in ways that both groups would not recognize as entirely legitimate, but which serve as a sort of link between the two communities.

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One may even go so far as to claim that the authors meant to extend a kind of posthumous forgiveness, however undeserved, to such reprehensible figures as if they, too, like Hawthorne with Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, wished to see the "earthly stock of hatred and antipathy transmuted into golden love" (Hawthorne, 1991: 199).

In light of what I have been arguing in this essay, I must disagree with those who see the bizarre claim that the Cosentino manuscript would stand behind Hawthorne's romance as nothing but a way to dignify a sordid story of sex and violence. On the one hand, one must note that Pratt puts forth this notion with a considerable dose of self-irony. After registering that Hawthorne claimed that the inspiration for his story came from a manuscript he found in the Salem Custom House, Pratt goes on to add that "it is well-known that writers make up strange stories to give an air of truth to their works, and this might have been the case with the Salem custom-house manuscript. And yet the Cosentino manuscript is there, in the municipal Salem library" (Pratt and Manara, 2013: 155). By drawing attention to a writer's fakeries, Pratt is admitting his own. Still, as I have argued elsewhere apropos a Dylan Dog adaptation of *Moby-Dick*, when a mass cultural work paradoxically claims primacy vis-à-vis an older high cultural text, this outrageous proposition can be read as an allegorical way of calling into question both the border between "low" and "high" culture and the notion of originality itself (Mariani, 2013). It is as if the supposedly inferior, bastardized popular text were to enact a revenge of sorts on the unapproachable sublimity of its modernist progenitor by declaring that, in the fluid world of postmodernist mass culture, your stories no longer exist, as they have been well-nigh obliterated by the endless proliferation of appropriations, adaptations, distortions, and reinventions. Yet, just as the modernist masterpiece is fond of evoking its dependence on some humble origins (the imaginary manuscript), postmodernist mass cultural foundlings like to claim noble descent. They often have a right to do that—after all, *Indian Summer* may well be the only Italian attempt to introduce the "atmosphere" of *The Scarlet Letter* to a popular audience in ways that are, in my opinion, far superior to those of Joffé's film, and owe much to the complex, fraught, and rich genius of Nathaniel Hawthorne's masterpiece.

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THE TROUBLED PRESENCE OF THE UNITED STATES IN ITALY'S POLITICAL CULTURE

An Overview

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Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are the paramount values upon which the United States based its claim to establish itself as a sovereign nation as early as 1776. Since the mid-nineteenth century, such principles have been articulated mainly in terms of democracy and free market, to which the turn of the twentieth century added mass consumption. Their export and spread abroad have been the essence of America's manifest destiny and global mission (Stephanson, 1995; De Grazia, 2005). In particular, in the wake of the Cold War, the United States endeavored to use them as the foundations of a transatlantic community.

Marginalized at first because of her geographical position and unreliability as an ally during the two World Wars, Italy eventually won admission to that community by means of her 1949 acceptance among the founding members of the Atlantic Alliance (Del Pero, 2010). A component of the US-dominated, so-called Free World, Italy interacted with Washington's values that governed the Western bloc throughout the Cold War and continued that interplay after the crumbling of communism left the American model without any valuable challenger.

This article outlines Italy's response to US values since the end of World War II. Specifically, it examines their influence on the country's political culture.[1]

1 The expression "political culture" is meant to refer to the attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and values shaping a political system and process (Pye, 2001).

THE PREMISES

In many Italians' eyes America has long stood as a model of liberty and political freedom. This image began to take shape even before the formal birth of the United States as a sovereign nation because the representation of the colony of Pennsylvania as the embodiment of people's self-government made significant inroads into the Republic of Venice at the end of the Seven Years' War (Del Negro, 1986). Such a perception, however, gained momentum in the wake of the US independence from the British empire and the abolition of slavery after the Civil War. Against the backdrop of post-Napoleonic Restoration in Italy, numerous Italian patriots contrasted the revival of European despotism with American free institutions (Rossi, 1969). Similarly, after Italy's political unification under the house of Savoy, opponents of the monarchy—including socialists (Testi, 1976)—looked to US republicanism. Most notably, once the stigma of slavery had been removed from American statutes, Giuseppe Mazzini, an outspoken critic of the Italian monarchic government, became persuaded that the United States had risen to be the ultimate example of popular democracy (Dal Lago, 2013).

Not even fascism managed to sweep away the view that US values could serve as an apt reference for Italian politics. On the one hand, despite its overtones of anti-Americanism (Nacci, 1989), Benito Mussolin's regime itself endeavored to legitimize its own notion of corporatism among democratic countries by contending that US President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal had drawn upon *il Duce*'s concept of the corporative state (Vaudagna, 2013: 177–203). On the other hand, numerous anti-fascists turned to American democracy as the real alternative to *il Duce*'s dictatorship. For example, the mythization of US literature, as the product of a free country, became the expression of crypto-criticism of fascism and a means of promoting Italy's civic redemption (Pontuale, 2007: 117–124).

THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR II

In the early postwar years, it was a handful of former anti-Fascist exiles in the United States that took the lead in advocating

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the infusion of American political values into the restructuring of the Italian institutions. For instance, Alberto Tarchiani, who served as Italy's ambassador to Washington from 1945 to 1955 after a brief stint as minister of public works, argued that the implementation of the US version of liberalism, founded on the freedom of speech and the notion of fair elections among competing parties, would pave the way for the establishment of democracy in Italy (Lanaro, 1992: 145–146). Similarly, political scientist Mario Einaudi pointed to the New Deal as a model of democratic planning and, in particular, to the Tennessee Valley Authority as an example of grassroots democracy that could aptly inspire land reform in Italy (Mariuzzo, 2013: 357–360). Priest Luigi Sturzo, the founder of the Partito Popolare Italiano that was the predecessor of the postwar Christian Democracy (DC), returned from the United States carrying a deep appreciation for the American concepts of popular sovereignty and constituent power stipulating that the law derived its force and validity from the people rather than from the state (Sturzo, "La riforma": 203). He also held that US democracy was "one of the most grandiose phenomena in human evolution […] in modern times" (as quoted in D'Addio, 1990: 313). Likewise, the American experience strengthened the trust that Carlo Sforza, Italy's minister of foreign affairs between 1947 and 1951, placed in market economy and civil liberties as the foundations of a constitutional state (Teodori, 2003: 66–67).

Washington encouraged the spread of American political values in postwar Italy. Specifically, along with the production of the radio programs of the Voice of America, which began its broadcasts in 1942, the United States Information Services (USIS)—the federal agency that implemented the cultural and informational policies of the Department of State overseas—promoted two Italian-language picture magazines, *Nuovo Mondo* and *Mondo d'Oggi*, that aimed to channel the American world view, including the US perspectives on political institutions and systems, into a mass audience and readership in Italy (Rizzo, 1976; Bruti Liberati, 2004: 45–56, 60–64; Tobia, 2008: 53–99; I. Bernardi, 2013).

The 1946 referendum that abolished the monarchy and transformed Italy into a republic brought the nation closer to the United States as for its form of government. The Italian turn toward

the American model was further emphasized by the fact that—contrary to Great Britain, which had long considered the Savoy dynasty as the best guarantor of stability and social order—the United States advocated a republican solution for the country after the end of the war (Miller, 1986: 86–87, 95, 189–91). Still, the characteristics of the new state demonstrated that Washington's efforts to Americanize Italian politics had little impact on the nation's postwar institutional frame. While US public administration specialists actually drafted Japan's postwar constitution and imbued it with American political ideology, including the separation between church and state as well as local autonomies (Zunz, 1998: 149, 167–69), this was not the case of its Italian counterpart. The debates at Italy's Constituent Assembly, which prepared a new constitution for the country between June 1946 and December 1947, often referred to the multifaceted aspects of the US political system as possible examples (Volterra, 1980: 183–292). In particular, former Prime Minister Francesco Saverio Nitti maintained that, since "democracy is an American creation and America was the first truly democratic republic in the world," Italy should look to the US Constitution as a model for her charter (Segretariato Generale, 1970: 2868–2869). However, only the small and declining group of the Action Party, inspired by ideals of social democracy, consistently called for a presidential republic as well as the strict separation between church and state along the lines of the US precedents. Instead, by establishing a parliamentary republic—with a weak and largely symbolic president—and incorporating the 1929 Lateran Pacts between the fascist regime and the Holy See into article 7 of the charter, the Constituent Assembly took a different route (Teodori, 1992: 131–180). Most notably, it dismissed a project for the creation of a semi-federal state, making decentralized government an essential feature of the new participatory republic, which closely reflected the recommendations of a 1944 report by the Postwar Planning Committee of the US Department of State (Volterra, 1980: 223–227).

THE COLD WAR ERA

Christian Democrat Premier Alcide De Gasperi came to praise the guarantee of social equality and mobility as a valuable achieve-

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ment of the American model (De Gasperi, 1979: 387–388). Yet, his own party remained overall suspicious of the alleged materialism of US society and hardly curbed the traditional Catholic disdain for the supposedly unethical characteristics of a Protestant society. Divorce, women's emancipation, sexual freedom, the logic of profit underlying capitalism, and workers' exploitation in an unrestrained free-market economy were all corrupting germs of the American way of life that could easily spread to Italy if the latter embraced the US model (Saresella, 2001: 239–246). As late as 1959, Guido Gonella—the Christian Democratic minister of justice—could not refrain from criticizing even the symbolic meaning of American blue jeans, which he stigmatized as "a sort of moral immunizers" for hooligans (as quoted in Crainz, 2003: 76). Against the backdrop of the Cold War, the DC contributed to placing Italy within the Washington-dominated Western bloc out of expediency—namely in order to secure benefits to compete with the Communist Party (PCI) on the home front and to win concessions for their nation's postwar economic reconstruction and reinstatement to the status of a mid-sized Mediterranean power in the international arena—rather than because the leaders of the party believed in American-style free market and liberal democracy (Del Pero, 2001).

Italy received the bulk of Washington's initial help in the form of her share of the European Recovery Program, or Marshall Plan, i.e., more than 1.3 billion dollars between 1948 and 1951 (Fauri, 2010: 80). Yet, as Pietro Quaroni—the Italian ambassador to France—cynically remarked, "the main point of our policies regarding the Marshall Plan has to be to get on with the Americans, not on general principles, but exclusively in our interests" (as quoted in Mistry, 2014: 169). Indeed, De Gasperi did not use US funds to enhance the laissez faire model of American capitalism. Rather, he channeled them into state-owned companies, such as Finsider in the steel industry, or quasi-monopolistic corporations, such as automobile producer Fiat (Hoffman, 1949). While Washington encouraged private-oriented businesses, the entrenched anti-capitalistic sentiments of Italian Catholicism induced the DC to consolidate state entrepreneurialism. This approach found its paramount expression in the 1953 establishment of the Ente

Nazionale Idrocarburi, an oil and gas holding that developed from a pre-existing fascist state company. Its charismatic and shrewd CEO, Enrico Mattei, turned it into a major challenger to the international oligopoly of the primarily American, so-called "Seven Sisters" in the petroleum industry (Perrone, 2001).

The United States offered a model of progressive modernization as a formula that could curb communism, too, as Walt W. Rostow suggested, because social and economic reforms also aimed at undermining consensus for the PCI (Rostow, 1960). Inspired by the New Deal, entrepreneur Adriano Olivetti devised a blueprint for decentralized democracy and amicable industrial relations, binding management and workers by means of a productivity covenant and common interests in social progress, which he endeavored to enforce by his *Comunità* movement before his untimely death in 1960 (Cadeddu, 2012). Yet, Italy's Christian Democratic governments, especially during Mario Scelba's terms as minister of the interior (1947–1953, 1954–1955, 1960–1962), sided with the industrialists and landowners in labor disputes instead of performing the New-Deal-style role of a broker between entrepreneurs and unions (Marino, 1995: 137–151). They also chose to resort to force in order to stifle the following of communism among workers and failed to enhance the spread of mass consumption, declining to play on the increase in the availability of goods as a means to counterweigh the Soviet attraction to laborers (Ellwood, 2012: 364–365). Indeed, the DC opted for a conservative modernization that was partially resistant to the American stimuli. In particular, it advocated the retention of a strong function of the state in the economy, which conflicted with US laissez faire philosophy. It also emphasized domestic savings over consumerism. This approach especially shaped the measures that Minister of the Budget Ezio Vanoni devised in 1955, but eventually failed to implement, to promote the industrial growth and the economic development of the southern regions in the following ten years (Castagnoli, 2015: 45–48). As US ambassador Clare Boothe Luce complained in 1955, "when we created the Italian Republic, we merely clapped Thomas Jefferson's political wig on Mussolini's economic skull" (as quoted in Del Pero, 2004: 436).

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When the DC proved to be progressive, it outdid the American model based on the protection of property rights. For instance, after the police killed three peasants who had participated in the occupation of a local estate in Melissa, in the province of Crotone, in 1949, Washington urged the Italian government to speed up the passing of an agrarian reform. However, the measures that the United States had in mind were land reclamation and mechanization to increase agricultural productivity. Conversely, in 1950, stressing the social function of land ownership, Italy implemented a much more ambitious program that—despite many exceptions, restrictions, and shortcomings—provided for a limited breakup of large estates, partial expropriation of the uncultivated or ill-plowed latifundia, and the sale of the farming areas preferably to landless peasants at low cost and on long mortgages (E. Bernardi, 2006).

Washington's economic and financial assistance provided a remarkable leverage to consolidate Italy's allegiance to the Western alliance. For example, on the occasion of Italy's 1948 parliamentary elections, the Truman administration dangled the Marshall Plan aid before the Italian people in a successful effort to woo voters away from the left-wing coalition and to prevent the PCI-dominated Popular Democratic Front from winning a majority and possibly leading the country into the Soviet bloc (Miller, 1983). But the US largesse did not necessarily assure the absorption of American principles despite Washington's efforts. For instance, the Department of State extended the Fulbright-Hays program for educational exchanges to Italy in 1949 and reached out to this country's politicians, journalists, and opinion makers by means of a Foreign Leaders Program that, between 1949 and 1965, funded journeys to the United States to create a network of disseminators of American values under the pretext of promoting mutual understanding between the two nations. For this purpose, since 1954 the US embassy in Rome had also offered grants to sponsor the establishment of chairs in American history, literature, government, and economy at Italian universities so as to improve the knowledge and the perception of the United States and its political culture (Bruti Liberati, 2004: 210–215; Scott-Smith, 2008: 39–40, 50, 84; Tobia, 2008: 251–268).

Washington's endeavors found an interested group of recipients in a circle of liberal jurists and political scientists who trusted that American institutions provided Italy with the one feasible alternative to dispel the allure of communism. Clustered around the journal *il Mulino* and the eponymous publishing house, they exploited USIS subsidies between 1959 and 1967 to issue a seventeen-volume series made up by Italian-language translations of renowned books about American history. Il Mulino also published twenty anthological collections of writings by classic thinkers of democracy that included a few US figures such as Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson (Iurlano, 1983; Codignola, 2006: 121–122, 131).

The influence of these publishing enterprises, however, hardly went beyond a relatively narrow circle of intellectuals. Indeed, in the face of the deep polarization of the Italian society along the lines of allegiance toward either Washington or Moscow, the consolidation of the most ideological phase of the Cold War, from 1947 to 1963, helped freeze the spread of US political values in the country. While the PCI and its partners opposed the American philosophy as a matter of principle, the domestic repercussions of the growing international tension added to the Catholics' mental reservations in discouraging the DC and its allies from implementing a few US political paradigms. For instance, Sturzo contended in 1957 that the principle of the "alternation in power" between the two major parties that characterized the American system could not be applied to Italy because the latter nation would risk falling "under Bolshevik dominance" on the grounds of the large following of the PCI among voters (Sturzo, "Polemizzando": 232–233).

Italy's party system itself was the epitome of the nation's recalcitrance toward the exposure to the US model. Its four-bloc, multi-party structure (the DC, its laic allies, the PCI, and the neo-fascists), which confined the extreme left and the radical right to permanent opposition, was a travesty of the American vision of electoral democracy based on two major parties only, and reduced competition at the polls more or less to a farce, with the leading Catholic-inspired party apparently destined to govern the nation perpetually. A US embassy official in Rome remarked in 1948 that Italy was not even "an approximation of what an American

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considers a parliamentary democracy to be" (as quoted in Mistry, 2014: 153). Nor would it be for years to come. Although Nitti urged the Constituent Assembly to take inspiration from the US example and adopt the majority system at least for the election of the Senate (Segretariato Generale, 1970: 2999–3000), proportional representation was the rule for the vote for Parliament. The call for the "blunt American-style first-past-the-post" method did not surface again until the mid-1980s; its advocacy was then confined almost exclusively to the minuscule Radical Party, which had embraced a laissez faire economy and the promotion of civil rights, taking a leaf from the US book, even before entering the Parliament in 1976 (Teodori, 1996: 28–35). Proportional representation also caused partisan factionalism. This outcome was overtly at odds with the American consensual interpretation of politics, namely different strategies to pursue a common goal, as outlined by Richard Hofstadter's seminal study of the Progressive Era, which—not unsurprisingly—was one of the volumes translated in the Mulino's series (Hofstadter, 1960).

AFTER THE COLD WAR

It was the US victory in the Cold War and the consequent demise of communism as a viable alternative to an American order based on free market, mass consumption, and liberal democracy that gave Washington's values an additional chance in Italian political culture. At the domestic level, the collapse of the party system that had theretofore been rooted in the West-versus-East ideological conflict resulted in the dissolution of the DC and the transformation of the PCI, first into the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), then into the Democrats of the Left (DS), and eventually into the Democratic Party (PD). Media mogul Silvio Berlusconi, the leader of a new center-right coalition, pointed to US laissez faire as a source of inspiration in his ineffective attempts at terminating the surviving forms of Italy's economic statism. Ronald Reagan's philosophy of minimum government, deregulation, balanced budget, simplification of bureaucracy, and managerialism in public administration, along with the US president's appeal to emotional anticommunism, had been Berlusconi's reference since he established his own party, Forza Italia (Go Italy!), in 1994

(Stille, 2007: 11–12, 116, 331). When it came to the repeated calls to cut taxes, the Laffer Curve was Berlusconi's model (Marro, 2004). For the retreat from the welfare state, the formula was George W. Bush's compassionate conservatism (Revelli, 2011: 96). In an apparent homage to the US notion of people's sovereignty, in his successful bid for prime minister in the 2001 elections, Berlusconi took another leaf from his own interpretation of Washington's democracy and, live on television, signed his "*Contratto con gli italiani*," a five-point pledge with voters in the way of Republican Newt Gingrich's 1994 "Contract with America" (Stille, 2007: 11, 262, 281).

Paradoxically, many former communists rushed to embrace US political values in the wake of the termination of the Cold War. Massimo D'Alema, an ex-secretary of the PCI's Youth Federation who became the country's first premier of communist background in 1998, regarded "a market economy open to competition" as the main feature that would turn Italy into "a normal country" (D'Alema, 1995: 63). As Berlusconi drew upon Reagan's America, in the late 1990s D'Alema briefly cherished the milder version of neoliberalism that US Democratic President Bill Clinton elaborated to enhance economic globalization and to reappraise the welfare state stressing the beneficiaries' responsibilities (La Spina, 1999). It was only the defeat of Clinton's vice president, Al Gore, in the 2000 race for the White House, namely the loss of its point of reference in Washington, that caused Italy's left to drop such a blueprint (Felice and Mattoscio, 2005: 111–113). Walter Veltroni—D'Alema's main rival for the leadership of the DS and an ex-editor of the PCI's daily mouthpiece, *L'Unità*—was an admirer of Robert F. Kennedy. He considered the late US Democratic senator's political philosophy, especially his invitation to assess a nation's real progress and well-being on the basis of what makes life worthwhile beyond the mere figures of the gross domestic product, a "limitless heritage upon which to draw" (Veltroni, 1993: 25).

Remarkably, in 2007, in the latest refurbishment of its own name, the former PCI became the Democratic Party in the effort to place itself within a tradition of non-ideological and pragmatic progressivism that Veltroni, its first secretary, attributed to the agenda of its US counterpart of the same name. In Veltroni's view, the "harmony between the radicalism of values and the realism

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of solutions" was the quintessence of the American dream from which Europe could benefit as well (Veltroni, "Introduzione": 7). Like De Gasperi in the early postwar years, Veltroni, too, extolled US upward social mobility as a source of inspiration for Italy (Veltroni, "La nuova": 126–27). When he ran for prime minister in 2008, Veltroni even adopted the slogan "*Si può fare*," a blatant echo of then Democratic candidate for the White House Barack Obama's "Yes we can" (Alessandri, 2010: 182).

In further deference to American principles, Veltroni was not appointed secretary of the PD but chosen by the direct vote of the members as well as the sympathizers of the party in a sort of US-style primary race that also nominated him as candidate for premier in the following election (Lazar, 2008). Actually, the by-laws of the PD stipulated that all candidates for elective offices be selected by means of primaries by eligible voters (Floridia, 2009: 195–199). The founders deliberately thought of an 'American' model to make the PD into a pluralistic party that aimed at inclusiveness and would focus on citizens' claims, regardless of their political affiliation, rather than broad ideologies (Fasano, 2009: 159).

Once again, the method for the leaders' choice and the candidates' selection in post-Cold War Italy was the litmus test for the penetration of the American principles into Italian politics. In this field, the former communists took the lead again. In 1993, the PDS jumped on the bandwagon of a referendum—initially proposed by an ex-Christian Democrat, Mario Segni—to abolish proportional representation for the elections of the senators, which subsequently led to the adoption of the majority system for the selection of three quarters of the members of Parliament (Corbetta and Parisi, 1994: 145–146; Massari, 1996: 139–140). As Segni stated, the very purpose of the changes to the electoral law was to "introduce the great American democracy to Italy" (Segni, 1994: 244). In 1999 and 2000, the DS also endorsed two eventually unsuccessful referenda for the implementation of the first-past-the-post method for all the seats in the House and the Senate (Donovan, 2000: 80; Pasquino, 2001: 55–56). Similarly, in 2005, the DS agreed to hold the first primary elections in Italian history to designate Romano Prodi as the candidate for premier of the Unione—a center-left alliance it had promoted

against Berlusconi—in the elections of the following year. The choice by voters and sympathizers aimed at the legitimization of Prodi, who was not a member of any of the parties of the coalition. But a few commentators hailed the procedure as "an instance of the Americanization of Italian politics" (Pasquino, 2011: 682) or even an *americanata*, namely a US extravaganza (Anastasi et al., 2013: 210). Prodi himself, a Catholic economist, had the United States in mind when he founded a short-lived political movement of his own in 1999 in the fruitless effort to ease Italy's transition from multipartism to a two-party system. Prodi's creature, which dissolved three years later, was called Democrats; a donkey, the same symbol of the US Democratic Party, bulked large in its logo (Salvadori, 2001: 158).

A few progressive intellectuals had long called for the introduction of primary elections as the most appropriate means to reform Italian politics (Pasquino, 1997; Redazione, 1999). Yet, the US-style democratization of party life did not stick to its American model to the hilt. As for the PD, despite claims of openness in the selection process, a board of trustees could bar prospective candidates. It actually excluded Marco Pannella, the leader of the Radical Party, and former anti-corruption prosecutor Antonio Di Pietro, from the field of Veltroni's 2007 challengers (Italia, 2009: 20). Conversely, the US parties would "never dream of preventing anybody from throwing their hat into the ring" in the primaries (Ostellino, 2009: 204). On the other hand, as of early 2016, only two out of Veltroni's four successors as secretary of the PD were chosen by the people's direct vote (Seddone and Venturino, 2015: 474–475, 478).

The PD resorted to primary elections mainly to show off that it intended to reach out to the civil society and that its own decision-making process was not influenced by its leadership. Since the PD was the only party to hold primaries for the nomination of its candidate to the premiership in Italy, this procedure became its hallmark and a propaganda stunt to expose the assumed authoritarianism of all its rivals, especially in the case of Berlusconi's center-right coalition (Pasquino and Valbruzzi, 2013: 120–122). Likewise, the US antitrust tradition was repeatedly exploited to delegitimize Berlusconi after he took office in 1994

on the grounds that American legislation would have prevented a media tycoon from running the country (Perlingieri, 1994). Berlusconi, too, made a point of extolling "American democracy" for its "checks and balances" doctrine to complain that the latter had barely shaped Italian political institutions (Berlusconi, 2001: 55). His stand, however, was instrumental to his criticism of the supposed politicization of Italy's judges and ensuing endeavors to dodge indictment for his shady business deals by implementing a strict governmental control over the judiciary (Partridge, 1998: 155–157). Likewise, Berlusconi's emphasis on US liberalism was often a means to attack the PCI for its alleged statism, but generally concealed an attempt at revitalizing the conservative policies of the former DC (Orsina, 2013: 179–182).

CONCLUSION

A few commentators have contended that the Italian Republic was "made in the USA" (Caretto and Marolo, 1996), and, during the Cold War, progressives mocked Italy as "the Bulgaria of the NATO" (Ginsborg, 1990: 158). Yet, the solid alignment of the country with Washington in the Western bloc did not result in the nation's pervasive reception of US political values. The PCI rejected them and the ruling DC referred to them mainly to discredit its opponents and to jockey for position in the eyes of the electorate.

The end of the West-versus-East ideological conflict did not significantly transform the impact of the United States on Italy's political culture. While the American model stood tall and unrivaled as the only set of principles in the aftermath of the collapse of communism, the two main confronting coalitions continued primarily to pay lip service to American values and to turn them into means of partisan warfare in domestic politicking.

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ALL PATHS LEAD TO ROME

Establishing an Italian American Archive of the Visual Arts of the Late 1950s and Early 1960s

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> *In the early 1950s, Rome was a city largely populated by ghosts. Two, in particular, were haunting Rome's streets: one was Giacomo Balla and the other one was Giorgio De Chirico. We were young, we wanted something new. So, we basically ignored them.*
>
> *Lorenza Trucchi (Trucchi, 2014)*

Why is it so important to study "a city populated by ghosts"? And, if Rome was such a lifeless place, how, when, and why did the situation reverse so that Rome became such a central place for the international art scene? This paper aims to reassess the importance of this experience, both from the Italian and the American perspectives. In particular, it focuses on Rome as a place of cultural and artistic exchange and explains why it should be considered an "archive" of transatlantic experience, with one tradition influencing the other and vice versa. It will attempt to offer an explanation of the importance of such a moment by analyzing the extraordinary concentration of personalities that lived in Rome during the 1950s and the early 1960s, a condition that fostered the development of a particularly lively artistic and intellectual scene.

The reasons bringing so many people to Rome were diverse. It was not only artists who visited Rome: in fact, this paper aims to demonstrate that the Italian city played such a key role in the 1950s that critics, intellectuals and art dealers also moved there. Art dealers, in particular, were among the protagonists of the renovation of the Roman scene, offering artists a place

to gather and exchange ideas. This paper closely analyzes the history of the galleries that opened their doors to contemporary American and Italian art, such as *L'obelisco*, *La Tartaruga*, *La Salita,* and *Il Segno*, which would later become the Roman branch of Marlborough Gallery.

This paper begins by looking at the American perspective, and it will do so by following the exceptional story of photographer Milton Gendel, who sums up perfectly in his career all the features of this transatlantic exchange and is still one of the few lucid and active witness of that period. Many other artists may be considered more important or their voices more significant, but Gendel is a primary source of information on the subject.

The paper then considers the Italian point of view, analyzing the careers of the painters Afro, Toti Scialoja and Piero Dorazio as case histories. The galleries' histories will, in the end, provide a sort of *trait-d'union,* explaining when, how, and to what extent those two realities mingled. The goals of this analysis are to present a complete picture of the period, to show the connections among the different personalities animating that scene, and to highlight the importance of this moment, which should be considered a quintessential example of transatlantic influence in both cultures.

But, do all these elements together constitute enough evidence that this period can be considered an "archive" of an Italian American tradition in the visual arts? Why is the Italian American art scene of the 1950s so important? And, moreover, because very few Italian spoke English at that time and even fewer Americans were able to speak Italian, on what ground did they meet? How was it possible to create a network if they couldn't bridge the communication gap? Of course, the development of an international scene is not adequate proof that the period in question constitutes an "archive." This paper addresses all these questions. It aims to demonstrate that, though not free of contradictions and misconceptions, this period was, at the same time, very fertile for a cross-cultural experience. This paper also shows how both sides benefited from it.

A first answer is to be found in the complexity of the interplay between the different protagonists animating Rome in the 1950s. One of the first to benefit from this transatlantic experience was

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Milton Gendel, who was born in New York in 1918. Photography was one of his interests from an early age: he started to take pictures in 1930. His relationship with Italy did not start so well. In the summer of 1939 he traveled to Europe, first to Great Britain, France, Belgium, and Holland, and then to Italy. His friends and family disapproved of the last stop of his trip because of the tense political situation, to which he replied: "I highly doubt that the 200 dollars I could spend in Italy should represent a great contribution to Fascism" (Gendel, 2014).

After the summer, he returned to the United States, where he received his Bachelor of Science from Columbia University in 1940. Later, he enrolled in a Master of Arts in Fine Arts and Archeology program, studying under art historian Meyer Schapiro and with artist Robert Motherwell as a fellow student and friend. In 1942 he joined the Army and was sent to the Pacific front, serving as Corps of Engineers liaison with the Chinese army. In 1948 Gendel applied for a Fulbright scholarship, wishing to go to China. Instead, he was sent to Rome; he vividly recalls his disappointment: "We all believed Europe was over. I used to say to my friends that I was going to the province" (Gendel, 2014).

The year that saw Milton Gendel receive his scholarship was very important, in general, for the Italian-American cultural relationships. In 1948, works of abstract expressionism were shown for the first time at the Venice Biennale, where they were exhibited again in 1952. Later, in 1950, Jackson Pollock had his first Italian solo exhibition, which Peggy Guggenheim organized in Venice. A second one would follow in Rome in 1958, only two years after his death. A slow but steady revolution began: progressive, young Italian artists were instantly attracted to American art, which they had previously seen only through photographic reproduction. Ultimately, the 1950s marked a general awakening of the Italian scene to contemporary art, especially in Rome. Piet Mondrian's exhibition held at the *Galleria Nazionale d'arte Moderna* in 1956 was pioneering in this sense (Celant and Costantini, 1993: 34).

Lorenza Trucchi, a journalist and art critic, recalls the particular climate of postwar Rome: "In comparison with other Italian cities, Rome still maintained its cosmopolitan character; there was

a cultural and social fervor, and international artists and intellectuals were active here as nowhere else" (Trucchi, 2014). It is in this particularly favorable environment that Milton Gendel settled, even though at first he disliked it. In a few years, he carved out a particular role for himself: he became the interpreter for both Americans and Italians and, as such, introduced many artists. He was well known because of his collaboration, which started in 1947 with *Art News*, the journal then directed by Thomas Hess. When he moved to Italy, Hess was looking for a foreign correspondent to cover the European section of his journal. He found Gendel an excellent candidate for the position because he lived in the heart of Rome and knew so many people, mostly artists.

Furthermore, Rome in those years found itself in a particularly favorable position for artistic exchanges: World War II had halted international mobility, but this mobility resumed at the end of the conflict, and with a new vigor. In addition, Rome profited from the loss of prominence that Paris experienced at that time. Rome gained momentum in the 1950s in this period of blurred edges, of roles not yet defined; it also kept its central position thanks to American investments like those of the movie industry, which attracted directors, actors and producers as well as artists. Even if many agreed with Gendel's statement about Rome, and Europe in general, being no longer alive, many more were still attracted to the culture—especially the visual arts—as Barbara Drudi effectively highlighted:

> When one looks at the cultural relationship between Italy and the United States, he/she must be aware of the time frame he/she is dealing with: the Italian artistic scene of the 1950s is totally different from that of the following decade. In fact, despite all its war wounds and its poverty, Rome still played a prominent and acknowledged cultural role. In the 1960 the situation was completely reversed. (Miller and Drudi, 2011: 108)

Rome enjoyed this cosmopolitan status, reassessing its importance as a cultural center, even if over time it had lost its artistic leadership. What is curious is that Americans who visited Rome in the 1950s knew little or nothing about their Italian colleagues, whereas their names were widely circulating among Italians, at least among younger artists. What interested them most

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were the works of the old masters, archeology, and Renaissance and Baroque art; one of the artists who visited Rome in search of inspiration and models from the old masters' traditions was, curiously enough, Mark Rothko, among the protagonists of abstract expressionism. In the late 1950s, Rothko had just been commissioned for his first series of mural paintings, the Seagram murals, and for this purpose wanted to broaden his knowledge of painting techniques. Carla Panicali, the director of the Roman branch of the Marlborough Gallery, who had hosted him on many occasions in her house, recalled conversations between the American artist and her husband, the painter Carlo Battaglia: "they talked endlessly about Piero della Francesca and Beato Angelico, Bernini and Borromini" (Sleiter, 2007: 127).

One might argue that this statement supports the objection to the existence of an Italian American "archive." How could an "archive" form under such different conditions? In an interview granted in 1970, a few months before his suicide, Mark Rothko remarked the importance of Italian art to his work, particularly its influence on the Seagram murals composition: "After I had been at work for some time, I realized that I was much influenced subconsciously by Michelangelo's walls in the staircase of the Medicean Library in Florence. He achieved just the kind of feeling I'm after" (Fischer, 1970: 20). This paper aims to demonstrate that the Italian-American exchange was built exactly on such uncertain and trembling foundations; reading some of Gendel's articles written during that period helps understand what brought about this transatlantic dialogue:

> The foreground of the Roman art scene was dominated, it seemed, by a foursome of twenty-year- olds, a sort of collective phoenix risen from the mud and ashes of Novecento Kultur. The fall of Fascism and the Liberation, a few years earlier, had put an end to Italy's provincial isolation under Mussolini's policy of material and cultural autarchy, and Italian artists and intellectuals were again thinking of themselves in terms of a European and Atlantic context. (Miller and Drudi, 2011: 118)

The birth of such a community was fostered by political developments: not only the de- provincialization following World War II that Gendel mentioned in his article, but also the new world order emerging from the conflict. In the 1950s, the United States

was entering the Cold War; this meant that, in order to oppose Russian hegemony in Europe, they expanded their influence over countries such as Italy, where they wanted to keep a strong hold (Guilbaut, 1983: 35).

So, while Rome in the 1950s was opening to the international scene, trying to regain the status and importance it had lost during the war, American culture was engaged in international issues, which were not new to its artistic and intellectual debate. It had been framed for a long time by two key words—"national" and "international"—which, over time, had defined the shifting of the artists' aesthetics and their approach to both European art and the formation of an independent tradition. The notion of an international art scene emerged in the late nineteenth century, when American artists' presence in Europe grew significantly and, afterward, in the age of the avant-gardes, when many crossed the Atlantic. The "international" term is commonly used to refer to these periods of intense cultural exchange.

This exchange between the two cultures was deeply engrained in American visual arts tradition: painters, sculptors and architects had often traveled to Europe to improve and complete their education. In the 1920s and, even more, in the 1930s and 1940s, the opposition between "national" and "international" had stronger cultural connotations (Cooney, 1986: 71). Among the most vehement advocates of these international encounters was the art critic Clement Greenberg. He believed that, through direct confrontation with the European masterpieces, American artists could grow and enrich their own works. In his writings of the 1940s, he points out the conceptual complexity of European art already reached in the nineteenth century, which American artists needed to understand and master if they aimed to achieve significant results: "Art is under no categorical imperative to correspond point by point to the underlying tendency of his age […]. Yet it seems to me […] that the most ambitious and effective pictorial art of these times is abstract, or goes in that direction" (Greenberg 1986, 1: 97).

Greenberg's interpretation challenged the works of earlier critics who had strongly opposed any comparison between Europe and the United States, claiming a sort of "exceptionalism" for the art and culture produced by the latter. In the 1910s

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and to an even greater extent in the 1920s, the critics—especially those associated with photographer Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946) and *Seven Arts* journal, such as Van Wyck Brooks (1886–1963), Randolph Bourne (1886–1918), Waldo Frank (1889–1967), and Paul Rosenfeld (1890–1946)—had stressed the importance of finding a voice expressing the uniqueness of American experience. Wanda Corn traces the origins of this attitude: "Their true calling, rather, was to save the country from its modern evils: emotional repression (Puritanism) and relentless materialism (Pioneerism)" (Corn, 1999: 18).

In the 1930s those voices lost their preeminence, as they were, to some extent, marginalized; other intellectuals, such as Greenberg, believed that the earlier critics had ended up trapping themselves in a modernist version of nineteenth-century aristocratic traditions (Corn, 1999: 21). The cultural nationalism they boasted prevented them from a complete understanding of culture, which necessarily had to be framed within an international context. The articles Clement Greenberg wrote for *Partisan Review* and other journals in the late 1940s and, to an even greater extent, those written during the 1950s, remarked on the importance of a broader perspective; the arena where American artists had to fight was no longer national, but wider (Rubenfeld, 1997: 108).

Greenberg's essays were really popular and widely read. His opinions deeply influenced the young generation of American artists who understood the importance of transatlantic communications. Greenberg was closely connected, in particular, with the protagonists of abstract expressionism and with the intellectuals circulating in New York's Greenwich Village. His articles were often polemic, as his personal style: his fights with some fellow critics and journalists, such as Harold Rosenberg and Thomas Hess, were legendary. This contributed, of course, to his popularity, and even those, like Hess, who often disagreed with him could not ignore his strongly expressed opinions (Marquis, 2006: 72).

Greenberg suggested that American artists needed to open up to a wider, international perspective, thus mirroring a larger debate. The critic was not preaching in a desert: the Museum of Modern Art had opened in New York in 1929, and its collections focused especially on European contemporary art. Many

other similar venues were inaugurated shortly afterward, like the Museum of Non-Objective Painting (later the Solomon Guggenheim Museum) or Peggy Guggenheim's New York gallery, only to cite a few. Moreover, many European artists who had fled both world wars chose to move to the United States, thus fostering the development of an international scene. Movements such as cubism, futurism, metaphysics, Dadaism, and surrealism were well known in the United States in the 1930s. Of course, most of the artists were attracted to French art: Paris had been the undisputed protagonist of the international art scene before World War II broke out. However, the Italian artists' fascination with American art had just begun (Celant and Costantini, 1993: 69).

The younger generation of Italian painters was increasingly rejecting the canons of figurative art, still widely popular during fascism, and began to look at French informal art and, of course, at American art. In this sense, Rome in the 1950s played a fundamental role as an international cluster where Italians could meet and discuss within a broader arena. We should bear in mind that traveling was very expensive and, at that time, the Italian artists who could afford to go to the United States were few. Only three painters of the Roman scene were able to visit New York in the 1950s: Afro Libio Basaldella, Piero Dorazio, and Toti Scialoja. The houses of these painters, like Gendel's, became outposts of the community of Italian and American artists and intellectuals.

Piero Dorazio (1927–2005) was an abstract painter and was among the authors of the manifesto of Gruppo Forma 1, together with Pietro Consagra, Achille Perilli, Giulio Turcato, and Carla Accardi. In 1950, with Perilli, he opened the bookshop/art gallery *L'Age d'or* which, the following year, merged with the activities of the group of Alberto Burri, Giuseppe Capogrossi, and Ettore Colla, thus becoming *Fondazione Origine*. In 1952 he met Virginia Dortch, an American artist who had just graduated from Columbia University, was visiting Rome, and was a close friend of Clement Greenberg. Dorazio also knew Milton Gendel, who recalled Dorazio as one of his first Roman acquaintances. In 1953 he was invited Harvard University as summer lecturer. In September, after marrying Virginia, he moved to New York, where she introduced him to the painters Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock,

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Barnett Newman, Robert Motherwell, and, of course, Greenberg, who frequently visited their house in Rome in the 1950s. His presence there was remarkably important for the transatlantic community, even if he was sometimes only recalled for his many eccentricities, as Marisa Volpi noted: "I remember him. We were having dinner at some artist's house near Santa Maria Maggiore. The first thing I noticed was that he was wearing two unmatched shoes. He looked so original to me" (Volpi, 2013).

Afro Libio Basaldella (1912–1976) was among the first to visit the United States. In fact, thanks to a reference letter written by the painter Corrado Cagli, in 1950 he was able to move to New York, where he started his collaboration with the gallery of Catherine Viviano. In 1955 he became one of the most renowned Italian artists, because his works were selected by James Thrall Soby for the Museum of Modern Art exhibition *The New Decade: 22 European Painters and Sculptors*. Afro's paintings, along with those by others, were chosen because they were considered representative of the contemporary trends of abstract art in Europe. In 1957 he taught at Mills College in Oakland and, until 1968, he traveled extensively to and from the United States, where his works were highly praised.

Afro was a good friend of another Italian painter, Toti Scialoja (1914–1998), and sent him many letters detailing his experiences and his encounters in the United States. In 1957, thanks to the joint help of Afro and Milton Gendel, Scialoja had his first exhibition at Catherine Viviano's gallery. He was also able to visit New York, where he met the group of abstract expressionists. As for other artists of his generation, the end of the war had marked a change for Scialoja, which his stylistic choices mirrored: from the former, prevalent style borrowing from cubism and expressionism, he moved on to informal abstraction. His American travels reinforced the idea that his art was developing to such an extent that he could engage on an international level.

But do all these elements support the claim that Rome in the 1950s constituted a transatlantic "archive"? Not by themselves only, as Milton Gendel poignantly points out:

> It is not possible to say that an Italian American scene existed there in the 1950s. First of all, there was a problem of communication, because

> no one spoke the language of the other: in Italy, French had always been more studied and there were very few people speaking English. (Gendel, 2014)

Those very few were like magnets, centers attracting both Italian and American artists. For instance, both Dorazio's and Scialoja's wives spoke excellent English, so their houses were very popular gathering places. Of course there was Milton Gendel, whose work grew in this international atmosphere. However, what this paper argues is that the most important places were the art galleries. They not only provided the artists with a venue where they could meet, but also, in a broader sense, offered a canonization of the artists involved and those of the period, thus creating an "archive" of transatlantic experience.

One of the first galleries active on the international scene was *L'obelisco*. Established in 1946 by Gasparo del Corso and his wife Irene Brin, a writer, journalist, and correspondent for *Harper Bazaar*, it started to show works by American artists as early as 1950, when they organized an exhibition of Sebastian Matta. The exhibitions of Robert Rauschenberg (1953), Alexander Calder (1956), and Arshile Gorky (1957) were also pioneering. The galleries in those times were not only driven by commercial reasons, but they also played an important cultural role: in choosing the artists to exhibit and promote, they clearly revealed the tastes and preference of their owners who enjoyed much more freedom than, for instance, the museum directors (Camerlingo, 2010).

L'obelisco gradually lost its preeminence when, by the mid-1950s, a large number of galleries specializing in contemporary American and Italian art opened in Rome. In 1954 Plinio de Martiis inaugurated *La Tartaruga*, which originally should have been his own photographic studio but over time became one of the main centers of cross-cultural encounters. Thanks to the relationship de Martiis had with many art galleries, dealers, and museums around the world, especially in New York, he was able to exhibit the works of Conrad Marca-Relli in 1957, followed in 1958 by a collective of Afro, Capogrossi, Consagra, de Kooning, Kline, and Matta and the two first European solo exhibitions of Franz Kline and Cy Twombly, who later moved to Rome (Grossi and Santarelli, 2008).

The times were ripe, as Barbara Drudi suggests:

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> Italy was recovering economically from the postwar crisis, modern art was beginning to be accepted, and artists loved to travel. Many Americans chose to visit Rome and some even settled there. Just as Roman artists were going to the United States, many galleries were being opened in Rome dedicated to new artistic languages. (Miller and Drudi, 2011: 130)

1957 was a very important year for the transatlantic relationships; at least four new galleries opened. One of these was *La Salita*, owned by Tomaso Liverani, who collaborated with art historians Lionello Venturi and Enrico Crispolti. Venturi was renowned in the United States, where he had taught in the 1940s. Together with Bruno Zevi, who studied and then taught at Harvard University, he was among the few Italian art scholars whose works circulated in America.

1957 also saw the opening of the Rome-New York Art Foundation, in which Milton Gendel was directly involved as consultant. The gallery was directed by Frances McCann, a friend of Peggy Guggenheim, whom the photographer had met at the collector's house in Venice. Following Gendel's suggestion, she opened a gallery in Rome, where she had decided to move. The first exhibition, inaugurated in July 1957, featured the works of the most advanced Italian and American artists, such as Burri, Capogrossi, Colla, Fontana, de Kooning, Sam Francis, Franz Kline, Conrad Marca-Relli, Pollock, and Mark Tobey. The works were curated by some of the most important critics of that period: Lionello Venturi, Herbert Read, and Michel Tapié (Miller and Drudi, 2011: 131).

Other venues opened in that same year, such as Bruno Sargentini's *L'attico* and Carla Panicali's and Bruno Herliztka's *Il Segno*. This paper closes with the activity of this last gallery, which in 1962 became the Roman branch of the London Marlborough Gallery and, as such, proved to be extremely influential during the following decade. *Il Segno* was a gallery essentially devoted to graphic art. Herliztka was the husband of Carla's good friend, the painter Georgina Lattes. Carla had gotten to known them in Turin, where she had lived before moving to Rome. Together they ran the gallery, which was located in Via Capo le Case and represented many international artists. Lorenza Trucchi recalled Carla Panicali early days as an art dealer:

> She was the true engine behind it all [...]. In the end, she would give Rome a truly international gallery and I believe that, without her, certain Italian names would have never made it through [...]. In addition, she had excellent relationships with art historians, critics and artists, such as Giulio Carlo Argan, Palma Bucarelli, Cesare Brandi and Toti Scialoja. (Trucchi, 2014)

All these galleries worked on multiple levels: first of all, they offered Italian artists an occasion to experience first-hand the research of their American colleagues. Earlier, as Milton Gendel underscores, the art produced in the United States had only circulated through international exhibition catalogues and a few articles (Gendel, 2014). Second, as previously mentioned in this paper, they provided a platform, a place where artists could meet. It could be said that they gave the artists, especially Italians, the sense of being part of a larger community, of really engaging in a global and meaningful debate about culture. It has also been argued that galleries enjoyed more freedom than museums in their artistic choices, a situation that granted them a position at the forefront of the cultural scene of the time; especially in Italy, postwar art did not receive immediate acknowledgment from the national institutions. According to Lorenza Trucchi, Rome was never able to profit from this incredibly lively scene that developed in the 1950s; she defined this particular atmosphere as a "cultural encumbrance" (Trucchi, 2014). Barbara Drudi is more clear in her analysis of the cultural situation in Italy in the postwar years:

> Abstractionists and realists fought each other—through their paintings—on two clear and opposing fronts. And yet, although the PCI had considerable political power, enjoyed clear dominance in the management of public spaces (as well as in the orientation of taste), and, [...] condemned abstraction in favour of social realism, young artists were in search of other directions. They were looking to Europe and to America [...] Many young people, in fact, although sympathetic to Communism, did not want to renounce the search for "new" art, an art that could express the changed relation between modern man [...] and reality. (Miller and Drudi, 2011: 117)

Thus, what Italian artists in the 1950s were looking for were new models, which they found in the American works, especially those of abstract expressionism, which they considered liberating from the constraints of previous artistic experiences. It is ironic,

in this sense, that the country where futurism originated ended up marginalizing futurist artists like Balla and others of the historical avant-gardes with its call to destroy museums in the 1950s. Italians were attracted to the artistic freedom that Americans seemed to enjoy, whereas the latter were fascinated exactly with the deeply layered traditions from which the Italians wanted to be freed. Slowly, art dealers and figures such as Milton Gendel who allowed these encounters contributed to the construction of a transatlantic canon. Analyzing this complex network of relationships is particularly interesting now, from the perspective of an age of globalization and cross-cultural approach, as well as in the field of art history, which allows us to follow the path that generated the "archive" of this specific moment. This moment can be considered a repository of shared experiences, not only with all its contradiction, but also with its development and transformation.

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"THINGS CHANGE BUT THE AMERECANO IS HERE TO STAY"

America in Italian Popular Movies of the 1980s

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One of the most controversial events of the 1980s in Italy was the infamous Sigonella affair. A small locality in eastern Sicily, Sigonella has been home to a NATO base since 1959. On the night between October 10 and October 11, 1985, however, Sigonella came to national prominence as its small airport was turned into the site of a potentially dangerous diplomatic confrontation between Italy and the United States. Two US fighter jets had forced an Egyptian Lines Boeing to land on the base airstrip. Inside, there were four Palestinian terrorists who, a few days before, had hijacked an Italian cruise ship, the Achille Lauro, and killed one disabled Jewish-American passenger. The Americans wanted to take the Palestinians into custody and prosecute them in the US.

On board the Egyptian plane there was also Abu Abbas, an emissary of the Palestine Liberation Organization who had been sent by the organization's leader himself, Yasser Arafat, to negotiate with the hijackers. The Americans, however, had reason to believe that Abbas was in fact the mastermind behind the terrorist attack itself.

When the Boeing landed it was immediately surrounded by the airport security force, which was Italian, thus spoiling the plans of the Americans, who had sent units of their Delta Force to take possession of the plane. For the Americans, there was nothing left to do but surround the airport security, but they soon found themselves surrounded by a contingent of Italian Carabinieri.

As soon as this awkward stalemate was reached, a series of phone calls was exchanged between Washington and Rome, with US President Reagan asking Prime Minister Bettino Craxi to give up the prisoners. The latter denied the request, arguing that Rome had jurisdiction over the terrorists since the Achille Lauro was an Italian ship. Reagan gave in, the Delta Force left the airstrip, and the Boeing flew to Rome, where the four hijackers were taken into custody while Abbas was left free to board another plane, ignoring US requests for extradition.

Although a minority voiced criticism toward Craxi's lack of cooperation with its major international ally, threatening to bring down the government, the Prime Minister was able to present Italy's rigid stance as a sign of new diplomatic assertiveness and unwillingness to tolerate external interference in its own international policy—gaining the favor of opposition MPs from post-fascist MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano) as well as the Communist Party. From the great historical perspective of the decade, this minor instance of diplomatic "muscle-flexing" can be seen as the effect of a new mood of confidence and national pride that would find its crowning moment when, in 1987, Italy overtook the UK in gross domestic product, making the Mediterranean country—at least according to figures—the fourth economic power in the world after the USA, Japan, Germany, and France (Ginsborg, 1998: 12).

The minor struggle at Sigonella was part of a wider repositioning of Italy in its relationship to the superpower of the Atlantic bloc and, consequently, in the international arena. The virtual end of radical terrorism and union agitation, the spectacular economic growth, and, most of all, the growing international recognition of the "Made in Italy" brand as signifier of quality and style in the fashion, food and furniture sectors were the drivers of a new mood of confidence that found expressions in many areas of Italian society and culture. "Made in Italy," in particular, "redefined a shattered national identity away from political engagement towards rampant consumerism" (Ferrero-Regis, 2008), putting a symbolic end to the postwar era of economic reconstruction.

This paper focuses on the articulations and expressions of this "new" relationship between Italy and America as found in popular movies of that decade. Far from being conscious investigations

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into this particular theme, these movies—conceived as mere entertainment—were manifestly made to appeal to the widest possible audience and gain huge profits at the box office. They belong in the category of lowbrow products which, at a time when "serious" Italian moviemakers increasingly distanced themselves from social issues, represent an important access point to understand the mood of the times. According to Gian Piero Brunetta, one of the leading historians of Italian cinema, the comedies of the 1980s (in particular those made by the Vanzina brothers) "construct a sort of uninterrupted narration that, in hindsight, helps us understand the transformation of a country that wants to forget the [violence and gloom of the] Lead Years and is experiencing a sort of economic euphoria which translates into new forms of getting rich and new types of consumption" (Brunetta, 2007: 610). Taken together, the movies investigated in this paper testify to the new sentiment of confidence and a collateral "debunking" of the superpower: Americans could be beaten at sports, they could be outspent in conspicuous consumption, and their country could be imagined and depicted as provincial and backward.

1. ITALIAN CINEMA AT THE TURN OF THE 1980S

The latter half of the 1970s marked the start of a huge crisis in Italian cinema as the decade witnessed the start of a process whereby the national market would be increasingly dominated by products made in Hollywood. In the early 1970s, 250 movies were produced in Italy on average every year; in 1980 the number fell to 163, and the following year the number dropped to 103 (Brunetta, 2007: 435). Productions from the US managed to attract an increasingly larger share of total income: if Italian movies got 52 percent of total income in 1977, leaving 33 percent to American movies, in 1988 the situation had reversed, with Italian movies getting 28.5 percent of total income and US products getting 57.2 percent (Brunetta, 2007: 506).

There are a number of reasons behind this shift. The late 1970s saw the beginning of a new Hollywood strategy, embodied by the works of Steven Spielberg and George Lucas, that aimed to win back the international audience with high-budget, premium-quality products that competitors from other countries could

not match. Shifting its marketing strategies to highlight the cost of special effects and equating expenses with quality, Hollywood directed viewers toward higher-standard products that national industries across Europe couldn't afford to produce.

This imbalance in spending power was coupled with the passing away or emigration of the big Italian movie tycoons like Carlo Ponti and Dino De Laurentiis. Raising the money to make movies was increasingly difficult, resulting in a fragmentation of the system. If the 87 films of the 1980–1981 season were made by 67 different producers, the situation worsened in the following years: the 112 films from 1982 to 1983 involved 84 producers, while the 97 movies of the 1989–1990 season were made by 90 producers. This meant that the majority had the resources to produce only one movie (Brunetta, 2007: 491).

In order to find financing, Italian producers had to rely on the help of American distributors. According to Emanuela Martini, the increasing involvement of American distributors in the Italian movie industry meant "the slavish adaption of Italian production to the stylistic and plot directives imposed by the dominant capital" (Martini, 1978: 187). With the number of movie theaters dramatically shrinking throughout the decade—from about 8,000 to a little over 3,000—the preference would be given to products "offering a polished and superficial super-show suitable to every kind of audience" (Martini, 1978: 187).

Another blow to Italian cinema was the end of the state monopoly on TV. On the one hand, the private networks that went on the air in the latter part of the 1970s multiplied the choice of entertainment available at home, resulting in a decline in the number of moviegoers. On the other hand, TV increasingly became the site where celebrity personalities made their reputations. Therefore, in fighting for viewers, producers would increasingly rely on projects constructed around the established reputation of TV personalities and around the clichés that had brought them to fame.

Thus, it is quite ironic that movies questioning the cultural supremacy of America were made at a time when the Italian marketplace was very much influenced and shaped by American capital. Italy went from being an important player in the inter-

national market, punching above its economic weight with both auteur movies and low-budget genre films, to a cinematic wasteland colonized by American products and commercial TV. Two decades earlier the international role of Italian cinema had been recognized by French journal Cahiers du Cinema, which devoted an issue to the "swords-and-sandals" movies produced in Cinecittà; at the same time spaghetti westerns revived a genre that Hollywood had almost given up, winning viewers in the US and around the world. From the 1980s onward, instead, periodical debates about the renaissance of Italian cinema would remind of a golden age that had inexorably passed.

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2. AMERICANS ARE THE BAD GUYS

Lo chiamavano Bulldozer (*They Call Him Bulldozer*, 1978) and *Bomber* (*Bomber*, 1982) anticipate the confrontation at Sigonella. Both feature a main sequence in which Italian underdogs manage to beat the odds and overcome more powerful and experienced American opponents in the context of a sporting event. In the West, especially after the end of World War II, sports at the international level have provided the arena where nations play at war against each other in time of peace; in these two movies, sport is taken as a more or less "peaceful" means to settle scores between rival camps identified along national lines.

These movies are also later instances of the international drive of Italian cinema based on low-budget genre films. Producer Elio Scardamaglia and director Michele Lupo, who were involved in both productions, had played an important role in the international strategy of Italian cinema. They had already worked together on both swords-and-sandals movies and westerns, and this time their focus was on action comedies for families.

The hero in both movies is played by the imposing Bud Spencer, stage name of Neapolitan Carlo Pedersoli, a figure whose notoriety crossed national borders due to his appearance in several adventure movies for children in partnership with Venetian Mario Girotti, known on the big screen as Terence Hill. Although Spencer was alone in these ventures, the movies replicate many of the clichés made popular by his works with Hill: long sequences of brawls, unwilling involvement in a confrontation against

powerful and arrogant bad guys, Spenser's obsession with food, his strength and his grumpiness, and the use of musical themes to accompany the comical sequences (Carra, 2010: 43–45, 146).

In the first movie Spenser plays Bud Graziano, nicknamed "Bulldozer," a retired football player who left sports because he was disgusted by widespread game-fixing. He is unwillingly involved in an ongoing confrontation between a group of Italian kids who regularly end up in brawls and fights with a group of US soldiers stationed in Italy and led by the arrogant and rancorous Sergeant Kempfer. To avoid further scandals, it is decided to settle the issue once and for all in a match of American football, where a patched-up team of Italian amateurs is challenged to score just one touchdown against the superior US Army team. The Italians ask Graziano for help. The match, introduced by the performance of the Italian and American national anthems, reaches a crucial point when Kempfer notices how the Italians, in spite of their being amateurs and little training, have succeed in fostering a team spirit and have the potential to score the winning touchdown. To avoid defeat, Kempfer orders his team to stop playing fairly and injure the opponents on purpose. Disgusted by the foul play, Graziano enters the game, and, after getting the ball, starts running towards the goal line. Like a bulldozer, Graziano sweeps away all the American players that try to stop him and, after having brushed off Kempfer himself, scores the winning point.

Four years later, Scardamaglia hired Lupo for a copycat project filmed in the same location and based on a similar plot line. This resulted in the production of *Bomber*, where Spencer plays a retired boxer nicknamed "Bomber," who had left the sport because he was disgusted by match-fixing. Bomber helps an Italian gym manager train a young, promising amateur, Giorgione, who can take on the boxers of the US Army team and build up the reputation of the gym itself. The US trainer, Rosco Dunn, was a former boxer who some years before had beaten Bomber in a controversial match. Giorgione wins the first fight, but the Americans, with the help of the local mafia, retaliate by burning down the Italian gym and by persuading the Italian fighter to give up sports and take on the more lucrative activity of collecting bribes for a local gangster.

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Bomber persuades Giorgione to change his mind and return to train for a fight against Rosco. Introduced by national anthems, the match seems at first unbalanced towards the American Rosco, who has the upper hand. However, Bomber discovers that Giorgione's left hand has been broken, and so he decides to jump in the ring and quickly overwhelms the opponent.

Of course, as products conceived for mere entertainment, these movies don't need to be overburdened with cultural meaning. However, it is interesting to notice how the scripts cast Americans in the role of "bad guys," not just as individual characters, but as an institution—a position which, in post-World War II Italy would more traditionally be associated with the German army. In doing so, these movies are uneasy reminders of the presence of American soldiers on Italian soil after the war, and highlight the strained relationship between US troops and local populations, with Italians complaining about a sort of diplomatic immunity enjoyed by American soldiers.

The identification of Americans as villains is also achieved by exploiting a cliché commonly found in American popular narratives, i.e., the underdog overcoming a more powerful opponent against the odds. As a cultural construction, the underdog narrative appeals to Americans because it reinforces the ideal of a classless society where everyone can achieve success if he/she has the necessary qualities and determination. In these movies, instead, the model underlines Italian resourcefulness and astuteness (*l'arte di arrangiarsi*)—two of the main features on which Italian identity has been constructed after the disastrous experience in World War II (Galli Della Loggia, 2010: 25). The glorification of Italian arrangiarsi is all the more evident in *Bulldozer*, which shows Italians who are able to master a game invented in the United States and that was just in its infancy in the Mediterranean country at the time (Rizza, 2011).

3. WE SPEND LIKE AMERICANS

In his comments on the 1974 referendum that validated a recently introduced law allowing for divorce, the intellectual Pier Paolo Pasolini remarked that it would have been a gross mistake to consider the vote as a victory of progressivism. While leaders

of the Italian Communist Party celebrated a political statement that showed an unexpected open-mindedness among Italian citizens, Pasolini saw an historical cultural change marked by the middle classes' transition from conservative, religious values to a new hedonistic ideology of consumption. Therefore, the vote signaled the passing of peasant and paleoindustrial civilization in Italy and the advance of a new modernist, falsely tolerant, Americanized bourgeois culture (Pasolini, 1975: 39–40).

Pasolini would soon be proved right. Paul Ginsborg, one of the major historians on contemporary Italy, has sketched a portrait of the new entrepreneurial class that recklessly pursued business success and totally lacked any civic conscience. Its social sphere was defined by hard work and conspicuous consumption (Ginsborg, 1998: 89).

Comedians were quick to pick up on these new social trends and satirize the new bourgeois class. As discussed, in its struggle to secure the largest possible share of a shrinking number of moviegoers, Italian cinema from the late 1970s increasingly came to rely on the popularity of TV personalities, comedians in particular. As Gian Piero Brunetta brilliantly summarized, the new generation of comedians was the "Trojan horse" that helped TV to enter (and contaminate, we can add) the body of Italian cinema (Brunetta, 2007: 600). TV boards had the final say on productions and screenplays and were responsible for the "artistic regression" of the system and its marginalization in international markets (Brunetta, 2007: 600). In fact, whereas Bud Spencer movies used a visual type of comedy that could be enjoyed beyond language barriers, the material of new comedians was so deeply embedded in the Italian TV context that only well-versed TV viewers could understand and enjoy their routines, jokes, and wordplay.

In particular, the show *Drive In*, produced by the new private TV channel owned by future Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, was specifically constructed as collection of images and characters associated with America, with a background set featuring hamburger stands, Cadillacs from the 1950s, and big-breasted pin ups. Comedians in the show enacted parodies of US TV shows and satirized the superficial Americanness of new Italian social types. In fact, according to Antonio Ricci, its creator, "*Drive In* was

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born out of my fear of America and of its influence on us, on people who mostly lacked the [necessary] cultural filters" (Oliva, 2014). The same private channels devoted a large part of their air time to soap operas, sitcoms and other US shows, which introduced Italian viewers to social attitudes and styles of consumption alien to their culture.

The huge success enjoyed by *Drive In* convinced producers to finance movie projects using its actors and their impersonations. Examples of these products are *Yuppies–I giovani di successo* (1986), and its unofficial sequel *Yuppies 2* (1986), movies meant to ridicule a new elite of city professionals who had embraced a vulgar, ostentatious attitudes and a petit-bourgeois ethos.

In the transition from small to big screen, however, this offspring of *Drive In* lost all the innovative features (the focus on rhythm and the use of nonsense) that had contributed to its success. In fact, the need to insert the antics of comedians into a plot line forced directors and screenwriters to look back at the situational comedy of the Italian tradition, the *commedia all'italiana*, thus producing a "messy hybrid" of old and new (E., 1981: 63). The plot of both movies revolves around one of the most abused clichés in Italian comedic culture, the efforts by males to seduce women, usually implying acts of adultery. The four protagonists are all engaged in their own pursuit, and their stories intertwine. However, more important than the plot line is the constant reference to a context where conspicuous consumption and materialistic attitudes predominate.

In the opening sequence, for instance, the four main characters are shown in succession as they get ready for another day of work: Giacomo, the copywriter, opens a cupboard containing dozens of pairs of Tods loafers; Lorenzo, the solicitor, is served breakfast by a black butler; and Sandro, the dentist, wears a gold Rolex watch on the cuff of his shirt, a style signifier made popular by Giovanni Agnelli, owner and CEO of Fiat at the time and one of the authorities in matters of elegance and taste. Two magazines aimed at the new business elite, the *Class* and the *Capital*, also figure prominently.

Advertising informs the language of the movie, both on the level of images and on the level of language. In the sequel, *Yuppies 2*,

which was released a few months after the first movie, the narrative is often interpolated with sequences (skiers speeding down white slopes, polo players riding in front of an elegantly dressed audience, waterskiing in the bay of Montecarlo) that resemble TV commercials. As to actors' lines, characters routinely employ advertising lingo, adapting slogans from popular commercials to situations within scenes. For instance, one character uses the expression "guaranteed second-hand"—usually employed in connection with cars—when speaking about an attractive mature woman he is about to spend the night with, while the black butler's master calls him "Tartufon," the name of a chocolate cake. Other examples include expressions such as "They call me Black & Decker," the name of an electric drill which is a not-too-elegant metaphor for sexual power, or the immensely popular "try it to believe it," which was the signature slogan of Aiazzone, a furniture company. Finally, one of the plot lines involves Giacomo, an advertising professional who struggles to create a slogan for a pantyhose company. At the end the character finds the perfect line, and his story is crowned by the showing of the commercial to the client, with a sexually charged close-up on the legs and body of Margherita, the woman Giacomo has pursued since the beginning.

Yuppies watchers are transformed into the consumers of those goods that are repeatedly shown in the film and identified as signifiers of status. This shift becomes more extreme considering the fact that, being distributed by Penta Film, a company owned by Berlusconi, *Yuppies* and similar movies were also meant to be broadcasted on Berlusconi's TV channels a couple of years after the release, with some interruptions for commercials. This way, it is possible to view *Yuppies* and comedies of the same type as belonging in a project that goes beyond mere entertainment but aims to flood viewers with incentives to buy expensive goods.

There are very few direct references to American popular culture in *Yuppies*, but one of these is quite illuminating. In one scene a woman, while having sex in a bathroom during a party, exclaims, "This makes me feel like we're in *Dynasty*," the ABC drama about a wealthy Colorado family, the Carringtons, which enjoyed a significant success in Italy. *Dynasty* focuses on "business, wealth, conspicuous consumption and individualized power

struggles" (Grisprud, 2005: 88), a world that, in their own clumsy way, Italian TV and film industries tried to reproduce.

However, the effort proved to be successful with consumers. The higher disposable income in the 1980s fed a wave of consumerism that targeted individual enjoyment and care for personal appearance (Ginsborg, 1998: 163–164). This emphasis on "look" was branded "Reaganian hedonism," an expression that highlighted how Italians had finally achieved levels of consumption akin to American ones.

4. THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA

The final stage of this brief investigation into the development of Italian-American relationships in the field of Italian cinema of the early 1980s ends with a comedy focused on how Italian characters discover and appropriate the American space. For a long time, the United States has been one of the destinations of choice for Italian immigrants. Between 1890 and 1930, more than 4.5 million Italians immigrated to America (Mangione and Morreale, 1993: 131). The introduction of immigration quotas in 1924 significantly reduced the numbers, but a steady flow of Italians continued to cross the Atlantic in search of jobs and opportunity. In the collective mind, therefore, the Italian who went to America was almost exclusively identified with the immigrant. It is only after the post-World War II economic boom, which made disposable income available to a larger number of Italians, that people began to travel to the United States for leisure, professional advancement, and study rather than for the purpose of immigration.

Interestingly, while the epic of immigration to the United States has been largely ignored by Italian cinema, more recent types of crossing made it quite easily to the big screen, an example being *Vacanze in America* (*Holiday in America*, 1984). Written and directed by the Vanzina brothers, it belongs in the category of comedies conceived for reaping maximum profits during the winter holidays by casting popular TV personalities.

The school trip winds through some of the most iconic places of the country—New York, Nashville, Death Valley, Las Vegas, and California—but as the group progresses in its voyage of discov-

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ery, a feeling of disappointment slowly creeps through and ends in the realization that the Golden Land isn't that golden after all.

At the beginning of the story, some students express a sense of anticipation about the things they are going to see and experience: visions of strolls down Fifth Avenue, concerts at Madison Square Garden, parties in Manhattan lofts and, following the clichés of Italian comedies, the women they would meet and possibly seduce. However, as the plot unfolds, the characters are continuously disappointed as the America they had envisioned not only failed to materialize but, more strikingly, they find to be provincial and backward.

During their stay in New York, a group of three students, led by Peo Colombo, engages in pursuing their vision of glamorous American woman. They meet two bargirls in a night club who turn out to be of Italian ancestry. The women lead the students to their suburban home in New Jersey, an immigrant household where people speak Neapolitan dialect, wear undershirts, and worship the memory of folk singer Aurelio Fierro. Peo comments that the place "looks like a low-budget hotel in Caserta," a Southern Italian town.

The depiction of the United States as a provincial version of Italy is reinforced by another storyline, this one involving Alessio, who is attracted to Antonella, an Italian woman he meets on the plane and initially mistakes for an American. Alessio keeps bumping into Antonella during the trip. On their second accidental encounter, Alessio comments "They say America is so big. To me it looks smaller than Sabaudia [a small beach town near Rome], every time I turn the corner, I bump into you."

As enthusiasm for the trip wanes, the members of the group feel homesick, and some signifiers of Italian identity take center stage. In one of these scenes, the students are sitting disgusted in front of hamburgers; viewers are told that the group had eaten nothing but hamburgers throughout the trip. Alessio comes to rescue, telling the others that he has brought some bucatini from Italy. A lunch party is immediately organized in one hotel room, with the students relishing the taste of the familiar dish—a scene reminiscent of a classic moment in Italian cinema from Alberto Sordi's *Un americano a Roma* (1954). Later in the movie, the stu-

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dents meet a group of tourists from Torino, and the encounter turns into a rematch of the soccer championship game between Juventus, one of Torino's teams, and Roma. Reinforcing the idea of the Italian obsession with the national sport, another character in the movie makes an international phone call to listen to the radio commentary of a game in session.

The narrative of the United States as a backward country juxtaposed with Italy as progressive and modern is highlighted in a short scene dealing with racism. In this scene, two Italian students argue with a white American male in a cowboy hat. The latter objects because the students are trying to enter the hotel bar in the company of two black girls. Don Buro, the priest who acts as team leader, enters the scene and settles the argument by knocking out the cowboy. The scene is consistent with one of the most central elements in the constitution of a post-World War II national identity, the myth of the "good Italian" (*italiani brava gente*). The myth affirmed that racism was alien to Italian culture. Soon after the end of the war, international as well as Italian scholars, drawing on research that would later be disputed, consolidated the idea that Italians "ignored or sabotaged the anti-Semitic policies of the Fascist regime after 1938 or lived in open contradiction to an Italian form of apartheid in the African colonies" (Levy, 2015: 49). The myth became "fully rooted in public opinion, thanks to their aspect of acquittal and reassurance" (Guzzi, 2012: 262), with the marginalization of the role played by Italy in the Holocaust. This myth has proved durable because Italy started to become a destination for migrants from Southern Europe and elsewhere only toward the end of the 1970s, and racism didn't emerge as an everyday social issue until later.

Thus, the Italians portrayed in the movie not only discover the superiority of pasta over hamburgers, they also find themselves to more modern and progressive than the Americans in dealing with racial diversity. The movie reinforces this fact by making use of one of the main structural tools of travel narrative, the reincorporation of the travelers into their society of origin. In the last sequences of the movie the main characters are shown reaffirming their belonging in the Italian society and culture. This return sequence underlies how, after the encounter with America and its culture,

the characters still prefer Italy. The frustrated womanizer Peo Colombo manages to eventually meet an American girl who is on a school trip to Italy. Alessio starts to date an "ordinary" Italian woman from Rome, who has nothing of the cosmopolitan flair that had made Antonella attractive to him. The latter suggests going out together, but Alessio turns her down. Finally, we see Don Buro surrounded by some old men in the countryside, and while he recounts some of the wonderful things he has seen in America, he concludes by saying that nothing there could beat the fresh air of the Lazio countryside.

CONCLUSION: "THE AMERECANO IS HERE TO STAY"

"Things change, but the 'amerecano' is here to stay," said Enrico Vanzina with regard to *Un americano a Roma* (*An American in Rome*, 1954), a movie written and directed by his father Steno that satirizes the post-World War II Italian fascination with all things American. Thirty years later, he would follow in his father's footsteps parodying a new wave of that same idolization of the United States. However, this time Italy was not the humble "beggar" of the 1950s showered with the dollars of the Marshall Plan. In the mid-1980s, Italy's relationship with America was recalibrated according to a new economic, political, and cultural confidence. A disillusionment of the mythical limitless possibilities of America emerged alongside the realization that, in order to embrace the American way of life, one didn't have to cross the Atlantic. This narrative of a new Italian self-awareness and belief in the possibility of treating the United States on an equal footing developed during a period when Italian cinema was losing international market share while the Italian domestic market saw a significant increase in the presence of American films and distributors. The standoff at Sigonella wouldn't change the inexorable truth that the Italian film and TV industries were in fatal decline; the hold American products had on TV airtime and movie theatres would only increase from that point and go unchallenged for years. The "amerecano" was in Italy to stay.

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"THIS TOWN IS AGAINST GENDER"

Bending Gender in Italian Culture

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What is often expressed and understood by the term 'gender' ultimately ends up being man's attempt at self-emancipation from creation and the Creator. Man wants to be his own master, and alone—always and exclusively—to determine everything that concerns him. Yet in this way he lives in opposition to the truth, in opposition to the Creator Spirit.

Benedict XVI, 2008

So, I think, while I would prefer to believe otherwise, I guess my experience with my two and a half year old twin daughters who were not given dolls and who were given trucks, and found themselves saying to each other, look, daddy truck is carrying the baby truck, tells me something. And I think it's just something that you probably have to recognize.

Summers, 2005

In 2005, Lawrence Summers, then president of Harvard University, ended up on the front pages of major US newspapers for having asserted that the underrepresentation of women at high levels in the international scientific community was connected to the innate differences between male and female brains. Neither discrimination in the selection of the researchers nor cultural models kept women away from math and quantum physics: it was genetics. Summers' conviction that the cerebral difference

"The City Administration is against gender ideology." Italy, 2015

between the sexes is due to a predefined genetic difference from which "innate and natural abilities" are derived has stimulated a heated debate, and many have recognized in those words a display of misogyny hardly incompatible with his academic position (Bombardieri, 2005: A1).

In the wake of the controversy triggered by his claims, Summers wrote a letter of apology for the scientifically debatable contents of his speech, while Harvard recognized the need to focus more on gender discrimination. When Summers stepped down in 2006, he was replaced by Drew Gilpin Faust, the first woman president in Harvard's history. When he was first criticized for ignoring the ways in which the experience of discrimination affects the lives and choices of women, Summers referred to recent developments in behavioral genetics, underlining their impact in redefining the role of socialization in the development of personal characteristics:

> My point was simply that the field of behavioral genetics had a revolution in the last fifteen years, and the principal thrust of that revolution was the discovery that a large number of things that people thought were due to socialization weren't, and were in fact due to more intrinsic human nature, and that set of discoveries, it seemed to me, ought to influence the way one thought about other areas where there was a perception of the importance of socialization. (Summers, 2005)

Talking about sex and gender is never simple, as Summers could personally attest to, because to do so necessarily implies taking a stand on "human nature," either by endorsing or by rejecting the existence of innate intellectual or psychological characteristics. The importance of the debate about identity is particularly visible in the United States, where the cultural climate has been deeply affected by the growing awareness about issues concerning sex, gender, and identity.

In the Italian context the meaning of the term "gender" is today at the center of a rhetorical dispute, closely linked to a heated political conflict. A fundamental role is carried out by the Catholic Church, whose far-reaching role in Italian culture has contributed to a form of gender-bending that is very far from the meaning usually associated with the expression in the United States. In the influential works written by Judith Jack Halberstam, professor of English and gender studies at the University of Southern

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California, "bending gender" is a way to emphasize gender flexibility as a main feature of late postmodernism, a world where genders are no longer two—masculine and feminine—but many:

> If we could actually see these gender categories as saturated with contradictions, as discontinuous across the bodies they are supposed to describe, then we could begin to notice the odd forms of genders, the gaga genders, that have multiplied like computer viruses in late capitalist cultures. (Halberstam, 2012: 71)

The way in which Italian media has been bending gender in the wake of the attacks unleashed by Pope Benedict XVI is completely different and involves a constant manipulation of the theoretical concepts associated with sex and identity.

Until 2005 "gender" was always translated into Italian as "*genere*," but in the past few years it has become a linguistic borrowing and it is no longer translated. While "*genere*" was often considered almost a synonym of "woman-related" ("*politiche di genere*" being the official term to refer to women's issues in politics), the meaning of "gender" in its English untranslated form has been appropriated by the political right, which describes it as an "ideology" characterized by its intolerant censorship towards traditional models of femininity and masculinity. "Gender" has also been repeatedly accused of representing a form of propaganda in favor of infantile masturbation and pedophilia.

How could this happen? What is at stake in the Italian gender wars? In the following pages I will describe some of the crucial aspects of the divarication of the categories of gender described in countless scholarly works and the use of gender that has dominated the Italian political debate in recent years.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM AND THE (AMERICAN) LANGUAGE OF GENDER

It is no coincidence that Steven Pinker, a psychology professor at Harvard who is known for his skepticism regarding the social construction of identity, linked the undeniable intellectual prestige which was relished by "gender" after 1950 to the devastating political outcome of the intertwining of Herbert Spenser's social Darwinism and the eugenics movement inspired by the work of Sir Francis Galton in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Translated into racial improvement programs in numerous Western nations (including the United States, Canada and Scandinavian countries), eugenic theory was also used to justify the killing of millions of Jews in Nazi Germany. According to Pinker, the horror originated by the Holocaust, together with the accounts of lynchings and forced sterilization that took place at the heart of Western democracies, contributed to shaping a generation of academics acutely aware of the risks entailed by the attribution of some innate characteristics to an ethnic group:

> This sea change included a revolution in the treatment of human nature by scientists and scholars. Academics were swept along by the changing attitudes to race and sex, but they also helped to direct the tide by holding forth on human nature in books and magazines and by lending their expertise to government agencies. The prevailing theories of the mind were refashioned to make racism and sexism as untenable as possible. The doctrine of the Blank Slate became entrenched in intellectual life in a form that has been called the Standard Social Science Model or social constructionism. The model is now second nature to people and few are aware of the history behind it. (Pinker, 2003: 16–17)

For Pinker, who embraces the theses of evolutionary psychology underlining the relations between biology and human nature, "the politics of gender is a major reason that the application of evolution, genetics, and neuroscience to the human mind is bitterly resisted in modern intellectual life" (Pinker, 2003: 340). In the context of my essay the strengths of Pinker's approach (or its weaknesses) are beside the point; what is relevant is that he, too, recognizes the scientific centrality of the category of gender in American cultural life in academic circles. In literary studies the relevance of gender has proved decisive at least since the mid-1980s: in an influential collection of essays entitled *Critical Terms for Literary Studies* (1990), the chapter devoted to gender begins like this:

> Like Molière's bourgeois gentleman that discovered one day that all the time he thought he was only talking he was in fact speaking in prose, literary critics have recently recognized that in their most ordinary expositions of character, plot and style they speak the language of gender. (Jehlen, 1990: 263)

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In the United States, the last decade of the twentieth century represented a time of great media and academic visibility for gender theory. In the wake of the political success of feminism, gender was recognized as a category capable of illuminating the entire cultural panorama from a new vantage point. The concept of gender as different from sex was developed with the aim of revealing the instability of the meanings associated with masculinity and femininity. If gender roles are subject to change, anatomy is no longer destiny and womanhood becomes a flexible concept, which acknowledges the complexity of female experience.

The success enjoyed by the concept of gender in the US didn't reach Italy. The Italian indifference to gender has long been shared by both conservative and left-wing politicians. And feminist thought wasn't an exception either.

Italian feminism looked with little interest at the deconstruction of identity theorized by American theorists deeply influenced by French thinkers like Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault (Cavarero, 1999: 138–148). According to Adriana Cavarero, one of the most authoritative Italian philosophers, the American success of the Derridean deconstruction of subjectivity has everything to do with the peculiar social configuration of the United States:

> From a radical point of view, the self becomes an empty space where multiple identities converge, a temporary point in their swirling movement. It is above all this focus on numerous and unstable identities which explains the success of postmodern thinking in a multiethnic and multicultural context like the United States. (Cavarero, 1999: 150)

According to Cavarero, gender as a category presupposes an emphasis on the multiplicity and mobility of the traits that characterize subjectivity, and it is thus perfectly suited to interact with American values and cultural expectations.

We could also see gender as a refashioning of some of the ideas Simone de Beauvoir had already proposed in *The Second Sex* with the fortunate synthesis "one is not born, one *becomes,* a woman," thus assuming that sexual difference is discursively produced as an effect of the social. In her influential *Gender Trouble,* Judith Butler reformulated de Beauvoir's hypothesis suggesting that not only "one is not born a woman," but one *never* becomes one, since

woman is a category that does not describe an identity but rather constructs it. Identity is "produced" as an effect of the naming: building on J. L. Austin's work on performative utterances, Butler encourages us to see in the sex/gender dichotomy the effect of a system of significance that arbitrarily connects a biological variety potentially more complex to a masculine/feminine binary system (Fausto-Sterling, 1992). This binarism remains at the heart of Italian feminism, where the notion of "sexual difference" has proved far more popular and influential than "gender." As a consequence, in Italy the diffusion of literary and non-literary research characterized by a focus on gender has been very limited. This is due, on the one hand, to a limited academic presence in the field of women's studies.

Despite the international prestige enjoyed by Italian scholars like Teresa de Lauretis and Rosi Braidotti, most Italian works dealing with gender remain associated with academic output and haven't reached a wider circulation. Until 1995 gender theory in Italy has thus enjoyed limited fame, even if "*le politiche di genere*" ("gender policies") have been widely spoken of in the context of political actions promoting equal opportunities between men and women. In this case, however, the term "*genere*" (translated in Italian) is used as a synonym for "sex," in order to refer to the need to enhance women's empowerment and fight discriminations. Yet the idea that femininity and masculinity are sociocultural constructs and not innate and unalterable elements, and that it is their very pliability that makes them efficient as organizational categories of experience, remains very far from the use of the concept of "*genere*" as a synonym for "equal opportunities."

IN THE NAME OF NATURE: ITALY *AGAINST* GENDER IDEOLOGY

The calm and marginal existence of gender in Italian politics ended abruptly in the spring of 2015 when the threatening ghost of "gender theory" started to infest the front pages of the provincial papers along with the national news dailies. A petition circulated that was directed at the president of the Republic, the prime minister and the minister of education "against the ideology of gender and in favor of a healthy education." It collected more than 100,000 signatures in just a few weeks. What had happened?

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The beginning of the new and tempestuous Italian life of gender goes back to the United Nations Meeting on the Status of Women held in Beijing in 1995: "In late April 1995, in preparation for the NGO meetings in Beijing—called the prepcom—several member states, under the guidance of the Catholic Church, sought to expunge the word 'gender' from the Platform for Action and to replace it with the word 'sex'" (Butler, 2004: 182). The Catholic Church was beginning its preparations for the sex/gender wars, as Marco Politi—a leading Italian journalist and expert in Vatican politics—observed in "The Church is Getting Ready for the War of the Five Sexes," a detailed article that presciently announced many of the attacks against gender that were to come (Politi, 1995: 11).

It was in 2013 that, after years of peripheral battles, the gender war broke out at the center of Italian culture. It happened when the government presented a law project about the training of school personnel that introduced, among the educational goals, the respect for diversity and the struggle against gender stereotypes. The proposal was immediately attacked in the Catholic daily, *L'Avvenire*, in an article entitled "Gender Theory Wants to Enter the Classroom" (Ferrario, 2013). Gender theory is here personified as a menacing entity pushing its way into Italian classrooms. Its impact, according to *L'Avvenire*, would be further amplified with the approval of the law against homophobia—which the parliament had been debating in the same weeks—with devastating effects on children, as it would "effectively banish all references to traditional families from Italian schools."

After that first article a large scale attack began. It involved numerous radical Catholic associations and conservative political forces that organized anti-gender conferences and protests. A master class diploma on sexual difference and gender theory was activated at the Vatican University Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum. The class proposed to be on the alert regarding "gender theory, that—encouraged by international organizations such as the UN and the EU—is dangerously gaining momentum also in Italy, risking to determine the 'loss of feminine identity'" ("Corso," 2015).

The heated season of gender on a media level continued a few months later, in February 2014, with the diffusion of three manu-

als developed by the UNAR (National Racial Antidiscrimination Office), among them an initiative for "Educating for Diversity at School." The protests of the Catholic associations were immediate and furious. They brought a quick suspension of every ministerial initiative dedicated to teacher training with the scope of reflecting on gender stereotypes in the school context (Di Mauro, 2015: 13–14). One of the instigators of the gender attacks was Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, archbishop of Genoa and president of the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI). Bagnasco criticized the "dictatorship of gender ideology," a form of cultural hegemony based on "westernist anthropology" and encouraged by international organisms like the UN:

> This "penseé unique"—he says—has become a dictatorship, and the West wants to impose it on all the other parts of the world. But Western nations, and Europe in particular, are no longer the center of the world, so the arrogance of European culture should come to terms with this new reality. Unfortunately, some important international organizations, despite being representatives of all the countries of the world, adopt a culture, an anthropology that is westernized, and that by this point revolves around the so-called gender theory. (Muolo, 2014)

The Catholic hierarchy has identified in gender theory the cornerstone of a new Western philosophical orthodoxy bent on destroying the traditional family. The first theoretical attacks moved to a practical level in a Triest nursery school, when an educational project called "the game of respect" was accused of persuading kids to dress up in the clothes of the opposite sex and to touch their own genitals to find out about their gender identity (Neonato, 2015: 6–7). At least this is the description of the game which was given by one of the parents, Amedeo Rossetti, whose son was meant to take part in the activity (but didn't). In this way Rossetti reached an impressive popularity in the news media, and contributed to a number of anti-gender initiatives with Catholic groups mobilized against the so-called "gender porno lessons" (Tieri, 2015).

The "intolerable" aspects of the "game of respect" were described by Rossetti in an interview given to the Vatican Radio station:

> Q: What is the game of respect?
>
> A: There is a box filled with cards upon which there are drawings of various jobs. For example, housewife and househusband, male and female

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plumbers, firemen and firewomen, various jobs that show how the male gender and the female gender are absolutely the same, so much so that the figures are drawn identically. There's a game card that is called, "If he were her and she were him," where the boys and girls have to change roles and clothes. The boy must play like a girl and the girl like a boy. (Ondarza 2015)

The idea that a woman can be a plumber, have short hair or wear pants is clearly a source of outrage for Rossetti, who admits in the interview that "in theory" the exercise didn't anticipate references to sex education. The dressing up, encouraged by the teachers, regarded as a matter of fact the professional dimension: the children were encouraged to play by choosing to perform a job that was usually associated with the opposite gender (househusband or firewoman). This apparently harmless transgression was enough, however (along with the complicity of the press, which showed its preference for an unverified scandal instead of a journalistic investigation), to transform gender into an ideological threat.

The theme of dressing up and masturbation—which the children from the nursery school would have been induced to do according to a reconstruction later denied by all those involved—became for the Italian press the main characteristics of the dangerous gender theory. The Catholic anti-gender mobilization constantly refers to these aspects as adding to the accusation of encouraging homosexuality by spreading the idea that personal behavior can be freely chosen, independently from traditional models.

As a consequence, teaching young kids to recognize and avoid gender stereotypes has come to be described as the "anti-Christian project," aimed at encouraging the spread of homosexuality and the destruction of heterosexual families. It's a grotesque deformation that not only deliberately ignores the extensive scientific production of gender studies, but seems impervious to the refutations: in the case of the Trieste nursery school, as soon as the media storm calmed down, all accusations were discovered to be false.

Through the constant manipulations of facts, the struggle against gender has become a battle cry and contributed to keeping in check both the laws against homophobia and the demand for approval of gay marriage. For months, new gender threats have

been reported weekly by the press, describing a monster ready to "homosexualize" helpless children. In April 2015 in the small town of Cingoli, in the province of Macerata, the mayor wrote a letter to the principal of a local middle school, requesting an official explanation concerning a birthday party in which two teachers had worn colorful clothing and displayed "manners and behavior that appeared to support gender theory" (Giorgi, 2015). This season of anti-gender ferment culminated in a national protest held in Rome on June 20, 2015, in which the official slogan was "Let's Defend Our Children. Stop Gender in the Schools." Among the organizers was a group called "The Standing Sentries" that literally watches over gender in order to prevent its spread among younger generations. The Standing Sentries meet in Italian piazzas to warn Italians against the gender menace and stand in silence for one hour while reading a book. On their official page the guards describe gender threats as follows:

> "gender": an invented word in the new dictionary of single thought (*pensiero unico*) to eliminate the sexual differences that allow man to complete himself. Since this word was introduced in United Nations policies in the 1990s, a dangerous identity division has been officially ratified. For the inventors of "gender," "*genere*" in Italian, biological sex can be seen as independent from the identity of a subject, who could instead identify himself with his own sexual preferences regardless of biology. (Sentinelle in piedi, 2015)

Sex, gender and sexuality appear to be confused here in a manner which is as crude as it is rhetorically effective. According to The Standing Sentries, homosexuality is a dangerous virus that can be spread by the idea that personal identity is no longer seen as a natural consequence of biology. One *is born* a woman, pace Simone de Beauvoir, and if we question the idea that our anatomy is our destiny, homosexuality will *naturally* spread. Emphasizing the role of culture in shaping our behavior, gender is thus intolerable.

Apart from their confused use of concepts and categories, The Standing Sentinels' statements are interesting because they assume that, if we grant the same respect to all sexual preferences, the resulting freedom to choose will destroy traditional families, as if the freedom to choose one's sexual preferences were incompatible with heterosexuality.

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As the countless logical contradictions found in the descriptions offered by Catholic associations demonstrate, not all references to gender in the Italian political debate have to do with the social construction of identity. "Gender" is mainly considered a synonym for the promotion of homosexuality, and it is in this guise that it has been used to cast the shadow of pedophilia on educational projects about affectivity and on the parliamentary debates about stepchild adoption.

Instead of the progressive *gender-bending* practices analyzed by US scholars, what we find in the Italian context is the attempt to *bend gender*, distorting its concepts and manipulating its meaning. In September 2015 the Regional Council of Veneto outlawed all references to gender in public schools, stating that:

> In all countries where similar strategies have been applied—England and Australia being two noteworthy examples—gender has brought about a precocious sexualization among the young, resulting in a rise in sexual abuse (also among young people), in the dependence on pornography, and in premature sexual activity, with a related increase in pregnancy and abortions even before adolescence, in addition to an increase in pedophilia. (Corlazzoli, 2015)

Veneto, a region in northeastern Italy, has distinguished itself for its unrelenting attacks on gender theory. Great media attention was given to Luigi Brugnaro, who became mayor of Venice—the capital of the Veneto region—in June 2015. As soon as Brugnaro was elected, the city council sent out a notice to all Venetian kindergarten teachers, ordering them to remove all "gender" books from school libraries. The dangerous volumes that were censored and confiscated in Venice are storybooks whose main characters are marked by some form of "diversity" with respect to traditional Catholic and Italian models: disabled children, families in which people of different religions and nationalities live together, and, in some cases, even families where parents are of the same sex (De Luca, 2015).

Another northern region, Lombardy, played a leading role in the summer battles against gender. At the height of the international media storm, unleashed by the censorship of Mayor Brugnaro (Sarkar, 2015), other mayors wanted to add to the fight against the menace of gender, placing LED street signs at town

entrances declaring their aversion to "gender ideology" (see picture at the beginning of this essay).

The anti-gender rage that swept through Italy in the summer of 2015 did not fade over time: in October of 2015 the Regional Council of Lombardy carried a motion that asked to "oppose the diffusion of gender theory in schools" ("No alla teoria gender nelle scuole," 2015), and in December the same council approved the setting up of a 24-hour anti-gender hotline to receive reports of "school incidents that call into question family values" (Corica, 2015).

Scholarly attempts to explain the meaninglessness of the expression "gender ideology" by referring to the vast scientific output on the subject didn't receive any attention on the national media. The Italian Association of Women Historians had already taken a stance in 2014, sending an open letter to Stefania Giannini, the minister of education, as soon as the attacks against the Good School guidelines for Affective Development Education gained extensive media coverage. A few months later the feminist magazine *Leggendaria* published a special issue entitled *School, It's War against Gender*, which scrupulously rejected the distortions and contradictions that characterized the assault on school programs and practices designed to fight misogyny, racism, homophobia, and bullying. No matter how authoritative in their fields, the voices that cautioned readers against the manipulation of the concept of gender achieved only a very limited visibility. Even a high-profile philosopher like Michela Marzano was denied a city auditorium for the presentation of her book *Mom, Dad and Gender* (Sappino, 2015).

CONCLUSION: GENDER-BENDING OR BENDING GENDER?

The constant manipulation of the category of gender is affecting Italian culture in ways that are beyond the reach of this essay. Despite the anti-feminist bias that is clearly detectable in most references to natural and unchangeable paradigms of femininity, I want to argue that the Italian debate over gender theory can prove paradoxically effective for feminist politics because it reminds us of the revolutionary political power of a concept—gender—that in the American context has been considered for years to be almost conventional. The radicalism and enthusiasm that

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greeted gender theory the 1970s have all but disappeared, leaving in their wake a sense of unrest summarized by Halberstam, who provocatively remarks that, after a day of talks and discussions, the young students attending a prestigious feminist conference at the New School in New York City seemed to be "bored out of their skulls" (Halberstam, 2012: 4). Reacting against the brand of "anemic feminism" associated with gender theory, Halberstam has theorized the need to "occupy gender" from a queer perspective, emphasizing the flexibility and fluidity of masculinities and femininities: "In the United States we have become far too sure about the stability and separation of various forms of gender and sexual identity" (Halberstam, 2012: 81).

Genderqueer and gender-bending practices like the ones advocated by Halberstam have made gender theory sound quaint and even a bit tedious. Yet, the Italian reception of gender reminds us of the audacity and importance of a theoretical paradigm that has called into question traditional views of femininity and masculinity, foregrounding the role played by culture in shaping the system of meanings and expectations associated with biological sex.

As the Larry Summers scandal described at the beginning of my essay illustrates, in today's United States there exists a public opinion that is sensitive to the potentially misogynist dimension of discourses assigning to each sex behaviors and abilities that are both innate and different. The impact of forty years of women's studies has certainly contributed to transforming most academic disciplines, spreading the awareness of the social construction of femininity and masculinity. On the contrary, gender theory has received little recognition in the Italian cultural panorama, thus allowing for mystifications and misrepresentations that are making genuine political dialogue about the theme of sexual difference almost impossible.

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"*BELIEVE* AND TREMBLE"

A Note on Margaret Fuller's Roman Revolution

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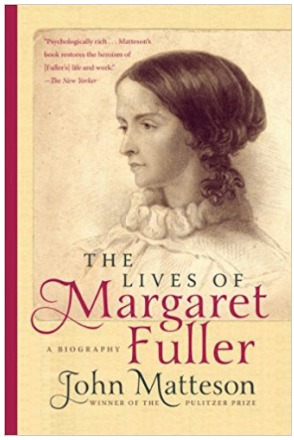

1848, Europe's year of revolutions, was also a revolutionary moment in the United States, for it witnessed the holding of the Seneca Falls Convention, the first formal gathering for the purpose of discussing the social and civil rights of women in America. A significant step on the road to Seneca Falls had taken place three years earlier when Margaret Fuller, the former editor of Emerson's literary magazine *The Dial*, published *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, an erudite and impassioned plea for female equality that had no precedent in American letters. Yet when the pioneering band of feminists gathered to ratify its Declaration of Sentiments at Seneca Falls, Fuller was thousands of miles away. The revolutionary movement to which she devoted her heart and toil that year was not the cause of American feminism, but the democratic revolution in Rome.

It was not her sympathy with the Italian freedom fighters that had lured her there. Rather, she was a journalist on assignment, sent to Europe to write essays of aesthetic and social criticism for Horace Greeley's *New-York Tribune.* That she became America's leading spokesperson for the Roman Revolution was, in some ways, an accident. Yet once she grasped the urgency of the moment and the glorious possibility that the Eternal City

might become a foothold for democracy in Europe, Fuller dived in. When the French, at the behest of the exiled Pope Pius IX, attacked the city, Fuller took charge of a hospital on the Isola Tiberina, caring for the wounded who had borne the battles. She wrote fervent columns for the *Tribune*, imploring her country to recognize the revolutionary government without delay. A difficult and problematic stylist for much of her authorial career, Fuller found her true voice in Rome. Her writings on the advent of the new order struggling to be born, infused with the tragic beauty of the moment, are the stuff of poetry: "Bodies rotten and trembling cannot long contend with swelling life. Tongue and hand cannot be permanently employed to keep down hearts [...] Soon you, all of you, shall *believe* and tremble" (Fuller, 1991: 322).

She was already, as it turned out, a confidante of the *sine qua non* of Italian revolutionaries, Giuseppe Mazzini, whom she had met at the school he had established during his exile in London for Italian boys who had suffered exploitation in the sooty metropolis. She had been present when Mazzini privately debated human rights with Thomas Carlyle, and she praised him in the *Tribune* as one who "take an interest in the cause of human freedom, who [...] look with anxious interest on the suffering nations who are preparing for a similar struggle [and] know that there can be no genuine happiness, no salvation for any, unless the same can be secured for all" (Fuller, 1991: 98). Mazzini cherished Fuller's counsel; only four days after his return to Italy in 1849, he came to her apartment and spoke with her for two hours, seeking her advice about the prospects of the revolution. To a friend, Fuller privately expressed the hope that "like the Magdalen I may at the important hour shed all the consecrated ointment on his head" (Fuller, 1988: 210).

Fuller had come to Rome with more than a grain of anti-Catholic prejudice, and she was initially disposed to see Italians as superstitious, reactionary, and incapable of sustaining political freedom. However, as she worked side by side with the revolutionaries, she came to see the progressive wing of Italian politics, more than any faction in her own country, as containing the world's best and most earnest soldiers in the fight for liberty. In her own country in 1848, the government was concluding an imperialist war

against Mexico, and its voters elected a slaveholder to the presidency for the sixth consecutive time.[1] In April 1848, she proclaimed that the spirit of the future "is more alive here at present than in America. My country is at present spoiled by prosperity, stupid with the lust of gain, soiled by crime in its willing perpetuation of Slavery. […] In Europe, amid the teachings of adversity a nobler spirit is struggling—a spirit which cheers and animates mine. I hear earnest words of pure faith and love. I see deeds of brotherhood. This is what makes *my* America" (Fuller, 1991: 230). Fuller called on Washington to send a wise and cultured ambassador to work with the revolutionary assembly. She wrote, "Another century, and I might ask to be made Ambassador myself […] but woman's day has not come yet" (Fuller, 1991: 245). But Fuller did much to make the day of woman—and the day of a free, united Italy—draw nearer.

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1 Until July 1850, the month of Fuller's death, every American president had either owned slaves or had had the last name of Adams.

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LUCIANO CURRERI E MICHEL DELVILLE, *IL GRANDE 'INCUBO CHE MI SON SCELTO.' PROVE DI AVVICINAMENTO A PROFONDO ROSSO (1975–2015)*

Piombino, Edizioni Il Foglio, 2015

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Il grande 'Incubo che mi son scelto' is a collection of essays written in three different languages by a group of international scholars to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of *Profondo Rosso*, the cult movie by Dario Argento. The book contributes to the canonization of an Italian classic long neglected by those critics who still consider horror movies a low-rated subgenre, comparable to B-movies.

Written in the informal and conversational style typical of scholars never afraid to be Argento's fans, this volume explores the innovative aspects of a thriller whose visual and sonic impact remains quite extraordinary. Daniele Comberiati recalls its generative role in establishing the new Italian thriller style that emerged in the form of fiction and comics in the 1990s. However, most contributors interestingly situate their arguments at the intersection of the American and the Italian cultures, in a time in which Tarantino's adaptation of Sergio Leone's spaghetti western has highlighted the crosscurrent dynamics that relate the Hollywood classics to their Italian remakes. A similar transnational concern has also inspired the recent recovery of Dario Argento's horror movies in both Canada and the US.

Keeping this dialogue going, the two editors of *Il grande 'Incubo che mi son scelto* (the Belgian-based Luciano Curreri and Michel Delville) offer a convincing reassessment of Argento's memorable movie within a popular genre that has a long tradition in America. Furthermore, *Profondo Rosso* can indeed claim an important literary genealogy aptly reconstructed by Michel Delville, given

Argento's declared passion for Edgar Allan Poe, the master of horror, and his sensational erotization of the female corpse, as well as for the literary genius of H. P. Lovecraft, who transformed the nineteenth-century Gothic tales into pre-Freudian narratives of disturbed personalities. Starting from this background, Michel Delville considers the movie a hyperbolic response to *Psycho*, Hitchcock's most famous thriller.

Along more autobiographical lines, Curreri historically situates *Profondo Rosso* in the mid-1970s, recalling his first appreciation of *Profondo Rosso* in the cultural context that developed a new camp and kitsch sensibility due to the wide circulation of B-movies, and the diffused sentiment of excess and provocation aroused by the political turbulence that followed the events of 1968. The modernization of the Italian society produced by those rebellious years was also associated with a revolutionary rhetoric paralleled by political violence that, according to Delville, is visually displayed in Argento's slaughters, with their gallons of blood and severed body parts that, in this historical light, may be less gratuitous and grand-guignolesque than they seem.

The attention of the feminist, gay, and student movements to marginal subjectivities and to a social perception of "otherness" in the 1970s was also one of Argento's thematic concerns. According to Marco Giori, even though in that subversive era the Italian imagination was still very heterosexual, the Roman director did not hesitate to dramatize the unexplored torments of homosexual characters as uncanny. Léopold Dubois stresses the centrality of the theme of crossdressing since *Profondo Rosso*, long before *Dressed to Kill* by Brian DePalma, features a dénouement culminating in a transgender masquerade that, by means of a skillful mirroring reflection, reveals in a few, breathless instants, the identity of the assassin in male attire. In representing the *unheimlich*, Argento's movie conveys all the transgressions and repressed turbulences that animated that decade, illuminating a crowd of ill-adjusted maniacs, neurotics, and mentally deranged types, badly damaged by domestic dysfunctions and family traumas. After all, the 1970s was the time in which the Basaglia law was approved, asylums became less-segregating institutions, and mental disease stopped being a social taboo. In his radically lurid style, Argento

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records on screen the sudden irruption of intemperance and psychopathologies in the quotidian reality and provides a compelling portrayal of home violence.

In particular, Alexandra Heller-Nicholas and Craig Martin insist on the importance of the representation of children in Argento's movie, studying it in response to William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* and Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby*. *Profondo Rosso* indeed features the innocent witness of a domestic murder, candidly depicting all the distress and vexation in a series of juvenile drawings that include the terrifying image of an assassination experienced in early childhood—pictures, which the murderer's son paints in the attempt to protect his mother from the charge of that patent crime.

One of the central themes in *Profondo Rosso* is indeed the Oedipal obsession that the Roman director adopted to recreate the psychotic model of the murderer established by Alfred Hitchcock in *Psycho*. In its violent irruption of frenzy in a defamiliarized domesticity, which Mark Duffett reads as an overt homage of Argento to Antonioni's *Blow-Up*, *Profondo Rosso* becomes a scary descent into the unconscious that stylistically radicalizes Hitchcock's penetrating exploration of psychopathologies and ill-repressed violence. Argento depicts these psychopathologies and the violence in a more visceral fashion through his graphic treatment of domestic wounds and disorderly conduct. In this respect, the homicidal mania that lurks in the twisted personality of Norman Bates in *Psycho* spectacularly erupts in a more sensational and chaotic form in Argento's movie, whose method notably followed Ingmar Bergman's in giving vent to his nightmares and personal obsessions. In *Il grande 'Incubo che mi son scelto',* Duffett argues that the "gore and splatter" style that became a distinctive cinematographic feature in the 1980s was indeed anticipated by Argento's horror movies, which expressed and liberated all the subversive energy of a rebellious decade that aimed to break the rational order and question the given ethos, and which found expression in the relentless brutality of Argento's and Mario Bava's special effects. .

The psychopathological implications of Argento's movies are also conveyed by the chromatic connotations of the very title

of *Profondo Rosso* (*Deep Red*), which actually refers to the red-blood intensity of a dark journey into a political unconscious that, in Argento's radical style, is conveyed in a destructive escalation of fright scenes.

Another relevant aspect raised in this long-due recovery of this Italian horror classic is the impact of the innovative soundtrack by the Goblins that succeeds in boosting the pathological climate. In *Profondo Rosso* Peter Hutchings juxtaposes their musical performance with jazz music embodied by Marc, the character who arrives in Turin to teach this musical genre: a genre which, as the movie's script makes clear, was historically inaugurated in whorehouses, and is quite alien to the miraculous mixture of electronic and pop sounds achieved by the Italian band.

A final bibliography on this remarkable cult movie would have been a useful complement to Curreri's and Delville's generous initiative.

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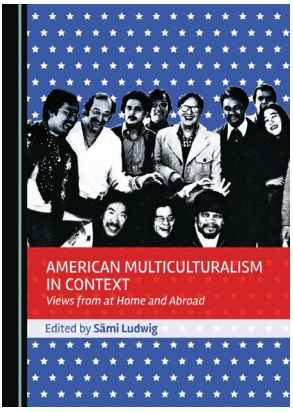
INTRODUCING: *AMERICAN MULTICULTURALISM IN CONTEXTS: VIEWS FROM HOME AND ABROAD (EDITED BY SÄMI LUDWIG)*

Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2017



Trans/Lazio
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"In March 2015, a group of experts from four continents and a wide range of disciplines met with the leading African American writer Ishmael Reed in Mulhouse, France, and Basel, Switzerland. Guided by Swiss cultural and literary theorist Sämi Ludwig, and deliberately migrating back and forth across a political border in the heart of Europe, they not only listened to Reed and discussed his work, but also looked more widely at the different meanings assigned to 'multiculturalism' in the United States, Europe, and other parts of the world. This volume brings together their reflections.

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Sämi Ludwig is a Professeur des Universités at the University of Upper Alsace Mulhouse, France. He received his education at the University of Berne, Switzerland, and has published in *REAL*, *AmerikaStudien*, *Mosaic*, the *Cambridge Companion to Toni Morrison*, *The African American Review* and *The Journal for Asian American Studies*. In his PhD thesis on intercultural communication in the work of Maxine Hong Kingston and Ishmael Reed, he outlined a theory of the metaphorical tracing of the intention constructions of the other. His second book, titled *Cognitive Realism: The Pragmatist Paradigm in American Literary Realism* focuses

on the convergences of American Realism and pragmatist theory, and was published in 2002. In addition to intercultural issues and questions of cognitive and pragmatist approaches to literature, he is also interested in the big picture of literary history and colonial American culture, and occasionally writes about poetry."

(from the book cover)

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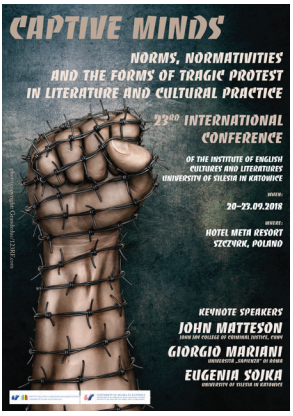
CALL FOR PAPERS: CAPTIVE MINDS

Norms, Normativities and the Forms of Tragic Protest in Literature and Cultural Practice

23rd International Conference of the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures University of Silesia in Katowice, September 20–23rd, 2018, Szczyrk, Poland



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Although generally resented and deemed unfavourable for individuals, societies and nations, Murti-Bing was a Mongolian philosopher who had succeeded in producing an organic means of transporting a "philosophy of life." This Murti-Bing "philosophy of life," which constituted the strength of the Sino-Mongolian army, was contained in pills in an extremely condensed form. A man who used these pills changed completely. He became serene and happy. The problems he had struggled with until then suddenly appeared to be superficial and unimportant. He smiled indulgently at those who continued to worry about them. Most affected were all questions pertaining to unsolvable ontological difficulties. A man who swallowed Murti-Bing pills became impervious to any metaphysical concerns. […] More and more people took the Murti-Bing cure, and their resultant calm contrasted sharply with the nervousness of their environment. […] [O]nce tormented by philosophical "insatiety," now entered the service of the new society. Instead of writing the dissonant music of former days, they composed marches and odes. Instead of painting abstractions as before, they turned out socially useful pictures. But since they could not rid themselves completely of their former personalities, they became schizophrenics.

(Czesław Miłosz, The Captive Mind)

In a world transforming faster than ever before, a Murti-Bing pill would do wonders to those who painfully discover that their

heretofore professed philosophy of life has unexpectedly become a burden: an obstacle standing in the way to "serenity and happiness." In fact, the miraculous power of the pill is simple: whatever norms gain on momentum at a given moment of time, they immediately become one's own. With serenity and happiness at stake, the choice not to take the pill is a choice between one's own "insatiable," unique self and one's peace of mind, the tranquility of life and liberty not to judge success in life by the gauge of satisfaction. In a world transforming faster than ever, in which the Murti-Bing pills are available without prescription and advertised in all official media, the refusal to blend into the woodwork for the sake of the comfort of being "impervious to any metaphysical concerns" is nothing short of a tragic choice.

Therefore, the 2018 edition of the International Conference of the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures of the University of Silesia in Katowice aims at addressing one of the most elusive, albeit simultaneously most tangible aspects of our experience of being in the world. As a foundation and a product of grand narratives, norms apply to any and every aspect of individual, communal and social life. They regulate our behaviors, determine directions in the evolution of arts and philosophical ideas, condition intra- and cross-cultural understanding, organize hierarchies. Yet—when transformed into laws—norms become appropriated by dominant discourses becoming "truths." Those in control of language always construe them as "universal" and, as such, "transparent." Those once tormented by philosophical "insatiety," sharply aware of this, face a choice: a pill-induced schizophrenia which must eventually come, or even more catastrophic consequences of the tragic protest, which are most likely to ensue. Oppressive normativity and protest have always gone hand in hand. The 2018 International Conference of the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures, in a sense, is a product of the refusal to take the Murti-Bing pill.

We invite papers representing a wide range of research traditions and methodological positions; possible approaches may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- normativity and forms of protest in literature
  - the terror of convention
  - literature as a medium of protest

– literature as a vehicle of norm
– tragedy and protest
– protester as a tragic figure
– imprimatur, conspiracy and the dangers of literature
– nonconformity and the norm
– tropes of protest

• normativity and forms of protest in philosophy
– the ethics of protest/the ethics of normativity
– the aesthetics of protest
– the ontology and epistemology of a norm
– the ethics of civil, political and religious (dis)obedience
– the metaphysics of a tragic protest
– deconstructions as a norm/deconstructions as a form of protest
– humanism, posthumanism and transforming normativity

• normativity and forms of protest in political discourses and law
– democracy and norm
– democracy and rebellion
– the legality of protests
– the EU between centripetal and centrifugal forces
– power, manipulation, justification
– legal genocide and normativity of the political doctrine
– regulating guns, regulating uteruses: normativity and protest
– the ethics of whistleblowing

• normativity and forms of protest in cultural practice
– ethnic normativies
– nationality and normativisms
– the fear of the alien and oppressive normativity
– normativism of race, class and gender
– normativism of race, class and gender
– oppressive normativism and forms of resistance
– (neo)colonial designs and local resistance movements
– the birth of 21st century neonazism
– rebellious religions/rebelions against religion
– cultures and countercultures
– rebels without a cause
– intimate rebellions

• normativity and forms of protest in fine arts, music, cinema and new media
– the semiology of the norm
– the semiology of protest
– protest and the systems of non-verbal representation
– normativity and forms of protest in popular culture

• anthroponormativity and forms of protest posthumanist protest
– biopolitics and rhetorics of oppositional consciousness
– biopower and (non-normative) sovereignties
– (tragic) forms of ecological protest
– animals and animalities
– Tsawalk and indigenous struggles against normativities

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ABSTRACTS
AND NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

LAURA BLANDINO
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Italy

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All Paths Lead to Rome.
Establishing an Italian American Archive of the Visual Arts of the late 1950s and early 1960s

This paper examines the role Rome played in the 1950s as an important outpost for the development of a distinct art scene, where the American and the Italian experience had the opportunity to blend with the artists gathering and sharing innovative ideas. It is a part of an ongoing research and it presents and sums up the early stage of the project which focuses mostly on archival sources and interviews with the central figures of this period. This paper, in particular, follows some of the members of this tran-Atlantic community, focusing in particular on the art galleries that fostered an international dialogue. Above all, this paper addresses the fundamental questions concerning whether this period could be considered as an "archive" of Italian and American art. It aims at demonstrating that, though not altogether free from contradictions and misconceptions, the period under study was very fertile in terms of the results of cross-cultural experience.

Keywords: 1950s, Rome, post-war art, Trans-Atlantic art scene, archive Trans-Atlantic experience, Milton Gendel, American Art, Italian Art.

Laura Blandino earned her PhD in Art history at the University of Torino. She studied art history at the nd she also has a master degree in American Studies. Her research focuses on American art and on the trans-Atlantic artistic and cultural exchange. She is the author of *Edward Hopper Racconto Americano* (Cartman Edizioni, Torino, 2014). She collaborates with the University of Torino, where she teaches a seminar in American art

at the Master in American studies programme. Her current research focuses on the Italian American art scene of the 1950s.

VALERIA GENNERO
University of Bergamo
Italy

"This Town Is Against Gender": Bending Gender in Italian Culture

This essay describes the misrepresentation of gender theory in Italian culture and politics, arguing that the violence of the attacks unleashed against gender in Italy constitutes a paradoxical example of the importance of a category of analysis that in today's United States has come to be represented as tame (and even tedious).

Keywords: gender studies, war against gender, gender-bending, American gender studies, Italian gender studies, approaches to gender, gender stereotypes

Valeria Gennero is Associate Professor of American Literature at the University of Bergamo. She has published widely on 20th century women's writing and on feminist literary theory. Her books include *La conquista dell'Est* (2008), a study of Pearl S. Buck's fiction and *La manomissione del genere* (2015), which analyzes recent developments in queer theory and literature. In 2013 she edited the collection of essays *Soggetti cerebrali. Le scienze umane nell'età neurocentrica*.

CRISTINA GIORCELLI
University of Rome III
Italy

US Literature and Italian Culture: A Long Romance (1763–1980)

This paper attempts to point out the powerful insights and the spirit of adventure of the US literature in the Italian culture, that were sometimes manifested by Italian critics and publishers alike, from (roughly) the end of the eighteenth century to the end of the twentieth century. Today, the great US literary masterpieces are, by and large, part of the Italian heritage, as indicated by the many translations, scholarly books and intelligent, innovative essays that keep being produced and published.

Keywords: US literature, Italian culture

Cristina Giorcelli is Professor Emeritus of American Literature at the University of Rome Three. Her fields of research are: mid- and late-nineteenth-century fiction and Modernist poetry and fiction. She is co-founder (1980) and co-director of the quarterly journal *Letterature d'America*. She has edited twelve volumes on clothing and identity (*Abito e Identità*), out of which the University of Minnesota Press has published four volumes under the title *Habits of Being*, coedited with Paula Rabinowitz. She was President of the Italian Association of American

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Studies (1989–1992) and Vice-President of the European Association for American Studies (1994–2002).

STEFANO LUCONI
University of Naples L'Orientale
Italy

The Troubled Presence of the United States in Italy's Political Culture: An Overview

This brief article examines the impact of US values on Italy's political system since the end of World War II. It argues that, during the Cold War, the allegiance of the sizeable Communist Party to the Soviet Union, on the one hand, and the Catholics' distrust of Americanism, on the other, prevented US principles from shaping the nation's republican institutions and playing a significant influence on Italian political culture, notwithstanding Washington's efforts to spread its own philosophy in the country. It also suggests that, after the end of the West-versus-East ideological conflict, the two major party coalitions paid only lip service to US values and referred to them mainly out of expediency while jockeying for position in their struggle for political power.

Keywords: Italy, political culture, US values, American model

Stefano Luconi teaches History of North America at the University of Naples L'Orientale and specializes in Italian immigration to the United States. His publications include *From Paesani to White Ethnics: The Italian Experience in Philadelphia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001) and *The Italian-American Vote in Providence, Rhode Island, 1916–1948* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004). He also edited, with Dennis Barone, *Small Towns, Big Cities: The Urban Experience of Italian Americans* (New York: American Italian Historical Association, 2010) and, with Mario Varricchio, *Lontane da casa: Donne italiane e diaspora globale* (Turin: Accademia University Press, 2015). His most recent volume is *La "nazione indispensabile": Storia degli Stati Uniti dalle origini a oggi* (Florence: Le Monnier, 2016). He serves on the editorial boards of *Forum Italicum* and *The Italian American Review* and is the book review co-editor for *Altreitalie: Rivista Internazionale di Studi sulle Migrazioni Italiane nel Mondo*.

GIORGIO MARIANI
Università "Sapienza" di Roma
Italy

Hugo Pratt's and Milo Manara's Indian Summer: An Italian "Source" for *The Scarlet Letter*

This paper examines the allusions of Milo Manara's and Hugo Pratt's graphic novel, *Tutto ricominciò con un'estate indiana* (*Indian Summer*), to Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlett Letter* in a variety of ways. In particular, this paper argues that not only some of Pratt and Manara's characters are very liberal, creative reinventions of Hawthorne's figures—they might

be seen as "spin-offs" of Hawthorne's narrative—but in many ways *Indian Summer* is also thematically close to *The Scarlet Letter*.

Keywords: *The Scarlet Letter*, *Indian Summer*, Hugo Pratt, Milo Manara, Nathaniel Hawthorne, comparative Italian American studies, literary history

Giorgio Mariani is Professor of American Literature at the Sapienza University of Rome, where he chairs the Doctoral program in Scienze del Testo. He served as President of the International American Studies Association from 2011 to 2015. He is the author, editor, and co-editor of numerous volumes on American literature and culture. His essays and reviews have appeared in journals such as *American Literary History*, *Studies in American Fiction*, *Leviathan*, *Stephen Crane Studies*, *Letterature d'America*, *Nuova Corrente*, *RIAS—The Review of International American Studies*, and others. His latest book, *Waging War on War. Peacefighting in American Literature* was published in 2015 by the University of Illinois Press.

JOHN MATTESON
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
City University of New York
USA

"*Believe* and tremble": A Note on Margaret Fuller's Roman Revolution

1848, Europe's year of revolutions, was also a revolutionary moment in the United States, for it witnessed the holding of the Seneca Falls Convention, the first formal gathering for the purpose of discussing the social and civil rights of women in America. A significant step on the road to Seneca Falls had taken place three years earlier when Margaret Fuller, the former editor of Emerson's literary magazine *The Dial*, published Woman in the Nineteenth Century, an erudite and impassioned plea for female equality that had no precedent in American letters. Yet when the pioneering band of feminists gathered to ratify its Declaration of Sentiments at Seneca Falls, Fuller was thousands of miles away. The revolutionary movement to which she devoted her heart and toil that year was not the cause of American feminism, but the democratic revolution in Rome.

Keywords: Margaret Fuller, Roman Revolution, democrracy

John Matteson is a Distinguished Professor of English in the City University of New York. He received the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for *Eden's Outcasts: The Story of Louisa May Alcott and Her Father*. He is also the author of *The Lives of Margaret Fuller*.

DANIELE POMILIO
University of Udine
Italy

Luciano Curreri e Michel Delville, *Il grande 'Incubo che mi son scelto.' Prove di avvicinamento a Profondo Rosso (1975–2015)* Piombino, Edizioni Il Foglio, 2015

The text offers a review of *Il grande "Incubo che mi son scelto,"* a collection of essays written in three different languages by a group of interna-

tional scholars to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of *Profondo Rosso*, the cult movie by Dario Argento. The book contributes to the canonization of an Italian classic long neglected by those critics who still consider horror movies a low-rated subgenre, comparable to B-movies.

Keywords: Italian popular film, representation of America, film studies, comparative Italian American studies, cultural history

Daniele Pomilio is currently completing his Laurea magistrale in Cinema, Television and Multimedia Production at the University of Rome 3. He also graduated as a cameraman at the "Istituto Rossellini" in Rome and has been active as a film editor, video-maker and film editor of a number of videoclips, short movies, commercials and video art installations mostly conceived for documentary purposes in support of the art works of Rome-based poets, musicians and visual artists.

CLAUDIO SALMERI
University of Silesia in Katowice
Poland

Sicily, Not Italy

Since the American continent became a part of the European imagination, it has always been seen to represent freedom. Especially after 1776, when the American democratic "experiment" giving rise to the United States proved durable, America became a source of social and political inspiration to generations of Europeans and non-Europeans alike. Unsurprisingly, also in the Italian context, the catalog of ways in which American values have been "translated into Italian" and adapted to Italy's cultural space seems to be ever-growing. Yet, even though the cultural transfer dates back to Christopher Columbus, it is especially since the outbreak of World War II that Italy has been markedly influenced by intellectual and material values generated in the US. At some point, the fascination with the US soared to such a level that, incredibly as it may sound, one of the most iconic provinces of Italy would begin to imagine itself as the forty-ninth state of the US long before Alaska and Hawaii gained their present-day status: in Sicily, the American fascination seems never to abate.

Keywords: Italian culture, American culture, American literature, American culture, translation, Americanization of Italian culture, the role of translation

Claudio Salmeri holds a PhD in Humanities, MA in Polish Studies, MA in Modern Languages and Literatures. Assistant Professor and researcher in Translation Studies at the Institute of Romance Languages and Translation of the University of Silesia in Katowice. His research interests are: theory and practice of literary and technical translations, didactics of English, Italian and Polish (for foreigners). Forthcoming publication: *Linguaggi settoriali nella traduzione letteraria. Il caso delle novelle ferroviarie di Stefan Grabiński*.

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SOSTENE M. ZANGARI
University of Milan
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"Things Change but the Amerecano Is Here to Stay": America in Italian Popular Movies of the 1980s

The article focuses on a number of film comedies of the early 1980s. In different ways, the movies rearticulate the relationship between Italy and the United States. In showing how Italians can beat Americans at sports, how they can indulge in conspicuous consumption and finally how even the United States are not alien to provincialism and backwardness, these movies express a new mood of confidence that was widely felt in Italian society at the time. However, these movies came at a moment when the Italian film industry was on the verge of its decline. Starting from the 1980s, in fact, American movies and distributors would colonize the Italian movie market and depress the Italian movie industry.

Keywords: Italian popular film, 1980s, representation of America, film studies, Italian comedies, Italian cinema, comparative Italian American studies, cultural history

Sostene Massimo Zangari holds a PhD in American Studies. His fields of specialization is ethnic literature and culture. He has published essays on Herman Melville, Richard Wright, Micheal Gold and James Ellory. He co-authored *Americana. Storie e culture degli Stati Uniti dalla A alla Z* (Il Saggiatore) and *Letteratura degli Stati Uniti dal 1945 a oggi* (Odoya). He currently teaches English language and literature at Liceo Classico "Omero" in Milano.

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