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anglistica

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American Poets and Politics

New poetry by

Eliot Katz
Carter Revard
Haunani-Kay Trask

Essays on

Herman Melville
George Sterling
The 1960s
Lois-Ann Yamanaka
Multimedia of Salerno

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The radical reconfiguration over the last three decades of critical studies and what constitutes 'knowlege', whereby 'theory' and writing, literature and the 'social', poetics and politics have crossed each other's path, has led to an irreversible interrogation of previous autonomies. It would be simple to reduce this trajectory to a superficial social history that commences around 1968 and develops, above all, through the writings, both theoretical and literary, of new historical subjects distinguished by gender, ethnicity and minority status. However, these are also symptoms of an altogether deeper current that, to use the unfashionable concept of egemonia, *draws our attention to the limits and crisis, both intellectual and institutional, of a particular historical-cultural formation and its subsequent arrangement of disciplines in the western academy. The confident nineteenth-century positivism and/or idealism that cultivated and established the present day divisions and distinctions of the social sciences and humanities (and the critical and historical sense of such terms are themselves to be investigated) is exhausted. Confronted by nervous retrenchment into orthodox backwaters or else the continual adjustment of the inherited discipline in order to continue to converse with change, the initial* dispositif *is now clearly in crisis.*

Yet crisis is, of course, the very basis of criticism. This is to suggest a theoretical modality that is neither conservative nor merely accommodating. But if positivism and idealism are no longer able to mirror the world in their languages, if the confidence of a subjective objectivity orbiting around the universal I/eye (humanism) is justly afflicted by doubt, then critical work, whether in literature or anthropology, becomes an altogether more exposed, more vulnerable, undertaking. Whatever the response to such a situation, which, of course, requires recognition as a critical situation and not something to be brushed under the carpet, it becomes clear that a local response, for example restricted to the field of 'English literature', cannot be divorced from a wider comprehension of the crisis-criticism of the humanities and its particular tutelage of 'knowledge'. It is in this direction that the new series of Anglistica *proposes to travel, drawing critical strength, above all, from an interdisciplinary approach that has historically developed within the vicinity of English literary studies, that of cultural studies. But, precisely because it is interdisciplinary, existing between and beyond existing disciplines, neither cultural studies nor the critical perspective proposed for this journal can claim the authority of an intellectual orthodoxy nor the institutional recognition of a disciplinary regime. Being vulnerable is an uncomfortable, but necessary, position to occupy; the only comfort it provides is the perpetual aperture, the opening, through which an intellectual challenge can continue on its way.*

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(editors for this issue: Donatella Izzo and Gordon Poole)

EDITORIAL

"American Poets and Politics": this somewhat generic title covers a variety of contributions from, and about, poets sharing what might be termed an "alternative" view both of poetry and society. Oppositional even when not overtly political, such poetry is self-consciously positioned at the intersection between formal experiment and social or political concerns: rooted in both personal and historical experience, it engages, with varying degrees of directness or indirection, issues of gender, ethnicity, race and class struggle. Contributions span the whole geographical and political area of the United States, over a period ranging from the 1850's to the late 1990's. And to stress our interest in present-day concerns, this issue includes, along with critical essays, poetry and prose by contemporary authors, all of whom we especially wish to thank for generously donating their work.

The title Gordon Poole and I chose for the first section — "Poems in Their Times and Places" — highlights a trait shared by all contributions featured therein: an attempt to capture, and explicitly represent, the locally and historically grounded as well as personal quality of poetry, by 'placing' it and carefully teasing out its biographical and/or communal resonances and connections. The overall effect of the overt use of chronological and geographical detail by all three authors is to foreground the way these poems anti-lyrically stem at the intersection of the private with the communal, where personal recollection meets family history, social and political history, or possibly just History.

The son of the only survivor of a whole family of Hungarian Jews exterminated in a gas chamber at Auschwitz, Eliot Katz has expressed his awareness of such interconnectedness over and over in his work — most cogently in his long poetic conversation with his mother, "Liberation Recalled". A talented reader and performer of his own work, Katz follows in the American democratic and militant tradition of Whitman and Ginsberg, whose long-line oratorical style and reliance on the American idiom he recalls, as well as their blend of philosophical vision and

political protest, highly-educated literary influence and populist simplicity, formal elaboration and directness of address. The poem we are publishing, an overt homage to Allen Ginsberg, is a fair instance of the sense of "historical urgency" (as he terms it elsewhere) of poetry in Eliot Katz's view. With its voice conveying visions and desires as well as ruptures, rejections and dissatisfactions, with its ability to stir up consciences and create new awareness, poetry is one of the conditions — if certainly not the only one — that make change possible.

The son of an Osage father, raised on a reservation in a poor mixed-blood family, later an Oxford and Yale graduate, a scholar and university professor of both medieval English and American Indian literature, Carter Revard would seem to strike a different note in his poetry — one both more personal and evidently literary, and less explicitly political. What he calls in one of his collections the "prose cocoons" constantly accompanying his poems, however, tell a partly different story. In tracing Revard's poems back to their times and places, they undercut the effect of balance, transcendence and universality of traditional poetic diction, calling attention instead to the daily, down-to-earth quality of the potential connection between the poet's personal experience and the shared experience of his audience. Simultaneously, the biographical and family context established by the prose frames is an openly ethnic one: by frequently recalling a background of extreme poverty on the Osage reservation, but also of nurture and sustenance through communal love and values, the "prose cocoons" show how firmly the poems are rooted not just in European literary tradition, but in Native tradition and experience. Such an experience is not just one of communion with nature and its sounds (constantly echoing in Revard's poetry), but one of poverty, class and race discrimination, and unequal relations between majority and minority, imperial power and small nation. Thus, the sweet song of the wine-throated hummingbird in the poem we are publishing, while carrying romantic and Melvillean associations, can become contrapuntal to the shrill sounds of police and ambulance sirens, and its audience be expanded to include highly-connoted listeners from Guatemalan forests or Afro-American ghettoes.

The poems by Haunani-Kay Trask are as rooted in local specification as Revard's and as explicitly political as Katz's. A leader (with her sister Mililani) of Ka Lahui — the largest group in the current movement for Hawaiian sovereignty — and former representative of the Hawaiian nation at the U.N., Haunani-Kay Trask is a prominent and controversial public figure in Hawai'i, a powerful advocate for the de-colonization of the native mind, as well as a scholar, a feminist theorist, and a poet. Like the 14 poems we are presenting here (for the most part previously unpublished), her collection *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* (1994) — the first book of poems by a native Hawaiian ever published in North America — stems from the native experience of dispossession in their own ancestral lands, desecration of their own sacred places, denial of their own language and traditions, vilification of their identity into the commercialized postcard image of the reified native, and outnumbering by tourists in their own country. Trask's poems are extremely lyrical, steeped in minute natural images, spare and intense in diction, in a way comparable to Dickinson's. However, the historical facts of colonization, extermination by epidemics, dispossession by the missionary companies (who still control much of the country's land and politics) are constantly there. Trask's poems often come accompanied by notes recalling historical circumstances, as well as explaining references to local objects and places and the meaning of Hawaiian words. Hawaiian is used lavishly in these poems, not just as a means of referring to local realities, but as a locus of linguistic resistance *within* English — the language of mastery and colonization, here made to comply to different sounds and rhythms and denied universal power. Although it is dismembered and dispersed, the Hawaiian language, through its power of naming, claims anew its own possession of the land.

Hawai'i is also the setting of Lois-Ann Yamanaka's *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* (1993), a collection of poems in different women's voices building up a narrative of the problematic quality of female identity and development in a multiethnic environment. Yamanaka's widely acclaimed and controversial first book is analyzed in Candace Fujikane's brilliant

essay with reference to the complex pattern of race and power relations in Hawai'i and the ways these are cut across by the axis of gender.

Having started with Fujikane, I'll now proceed backwards in introducing the other individual contributions making up the second section of this issue. Marco Nieli's wide-ranging essay on the "poetics of otherness" in the radical and protest poetry of the American '60's traces the different modes of formal expression of a shared dissatisfaction with the *status quo* coupled with increasing disaffiliation from official politics. The emergence of a variety of new and hitherto unrepresented political subjects brought along a new request for poetic "otherness" and "openness," variously expressed as satirical thrust, autobiographical investigation into the deep layers of subjectivity, or heretical use of myth, not as ordering and controlling pattern after the Modernist fashion, but as a generative source of new perception and experience.

Sergio Jovele's contribution reclaims and gives new critical currency to an almost forgotten poet, George Sterling, a well-known figure in the literary world of San Francisco at the beginning of the century, a friend of Ambrose Bierce, Jack London, and Upton Sinclair. Despite his prevalent critical labelling as a late romantic individualist, Sterling — such is Jovele's contention — displayed a sustained interest in politics throughout his career; this developed into a specific commitment to the socialist cause, reflected in Sterling's remarkable poetry. As Jovele demonstrates by painstaking analysis of the implications of the poet's stylistic choices, the classical forms of Sterling's poetry never ceased expressing his critical view of society and his keen political awareness.

The canonical writer *par excellence* of the American literary pantheon, Herman Melville, until recent years, has seldom been critically associated with overt political concerns; his poetry, in particular, has been largely underrated, compared to the critical emphasis on his novels and tales. Gordon Poole's reading of the *Burgundy Club Sketches*, therefore, is a highly original one, as it focuses on aspects of this composite text that have been virtually ignored by both readers and critics, and brings out the implications of its treatment of some episodes in the Italian

Risorgimento as Melville's meditation on political oppression and revolutionary violence.

Our issue closes with a contribution from Sergio Iagulli of *Multimedia* (Salerno), who, together with his wife Raffaella, have made poetic otherness their major concern. Through traveling poetry festivals and readings, as well as a courageous publishing venture, they are seeking to make known throughout Italy a number of rebellious or "alternative" poets, often of ethnic origins, many of whom are from the United States of America.

Donatella Izzo

POEMS IN THEIR TIME AND PLACE

Eliot Katz

AT THE END OF THE CENTURY
– written for Allen Ginsberg at his 70th birthday

Ah century that has embraced me these past 39 years, that has set before my eyes so much tumult and catastrophe, that has taken too many of my friends and ravaged the calendar with my mother's mother's blood, that has wormed a hole

from earth's core through ozone layer to the sun, I have but one wish for you: Die my century! why wait? early to bed with you! Take early retirement, take your granite eyes, your fully paid tombstone, your electrified casket, your four billion odes to death,

burn your damn books those dastardly lies, lay your plutonium shroud over leftover legacy, let's be done with you. Artists around here in all watercolors have prefigured many paths to follow – choose one: no-warning aneurism during peaceful sleep, drunken

liver rot, kidney explosion at top of donor wait list, youthful breast cancer, no-holds-barred immune system surrender, sudden leap off college dormitory roof – if you don't like local Jersey methods, why not blow your brains out

like Russia's Mayakovsky, you betrayed his dreams as much as anyone's, over & over & over, so go ahead, straight to your grave, die my century! it's your time, the signs all there, all 500 TV channels are screaming bloody random murder,

– Lester Leaps In now

playing on my CD, these the jazz rhythms A.G. had in mind while writing angelic Howl, while swinging for the century's fences, ah Allen's 70th birthday last week, maybe the books are worth

saving from the bonfire, maybe some 20th century visions to carry, some ways to connect – maybe, my century, you never intended to fuck us up? maybe never intended to walk into the bar wearing the death mask? Whatever your intentions, you're through!

Die my century, we're growing impatient, no need to prolong this multiperspectival agony, leave now so rebirth may arrive soon, too many cannot afford to wait – Goldie's kidneys can't take it much longer, you've already killed her, what more do you want?

for her, there was too much apartheid far & near, too many youth shot, too many communities allowed to go broke, too many pharmaceutical giants allowed to roughshod concrete boots through city's historic gardens – for Mark, too many fathers

dying ridiculous wars, too many mothers scrambling for shelter, too many hungry children deserving songs of their own – audrey's landlord never let her pick up her clothes, robbery by the propertied class plain and simple, an old-fashioned crime

your courts never learned to solve – what good were you? your patriarchal capitalisms grew immeasurable tumors, you threw out socialized medicine before inventing an alternate cure, Ethan lept off the balcony & nobody knows why, too many too manys,

cover that body, cover that experimental beard, hide that loud music, cover cover cover blood blood blood cover – now I've got this throbbing headache, like a hammer at the back of the head banging from the inside, could be sinus

infection, how am i supposed to be sure when no doctor will see anyone for days – southern black churches are burning, Woodbridge's fiery oil storage tanks at this very moment spewing huge toxic clouds, hawks drop Mid-East bombs on infant ribs,

FBI looks up the wrong files, Vietnam's lessons & veterans remain locked outside our nation's checkbook memory, celebrities endorse sexy underwear sewn by starved Guatamala teens, Nigeria is hanging its writers, Philadelphia prefers to lethally inject –

how beautiful Lester's rhythms of earthly engagement, dead friends' divine energies digging those sounds, they lived spread out & diverse, they lived this century as well as died it, they rode the universe's internationalist intergenerational bus along

your potholed highways & loved out loud many of your bumpy struggles, – My beloved pillowcase century! After yr breathing has slowed, we who endure will send our compassionate imaginations ahead, will keep our coalitions together with tough new thread,

our desire for change will survive the most callous assassins, so send yr SS back to their self-made hells, toss torturers East & West back into their flesh-eating ditches – let go yr thousand demons & yr one gods, merciful death & even more merciful rebirth,

we will encounter a future, the fourway mirror will forgive, emancipatory eyedrops will relieve the ache, after the sliding back & the spiraling forth, the planet & the plan, after the redwood keyboard & the meditative sprint, the bacbacbac back back

bacbacbac – sometime next century our sketches will come to life...

Eliot Katz
June 1996

Tribute/Remembrances for Paterson Museum 6/8/97

Allen Ginsberg was easily the most visionary American poet of our time. His poems were filled with keen perceptiveness, radiant poetic imagination, remarkable formal inventiveness, a unique mixture of humor and information, and an energetic yearning for healthier human possibilities. In both his poetry and his life, Allen showed four decades of young people that we did not have to accept the deadwood of exploitation and hypocrisy; we could dig through the status quo to change it. Allen raised our consciousness, made us laugh, and set an inspiring lifelong example of how to combine a literary life with progressive social

commitment, spiritual compassion, and personal integrity. He has left a poetic and political legacy that will stand as challenge and inspiration for generations to come.

Allen spent countless hours nurturing and supporting younger poets: offering helpful suggestions about manuscripts, assisting small press journals, sitting for hours after poetry readings to answer questions, suggesting reading lists, sending poems that he liked to publishers. I met Allen briefly in 1976 in New Brunswick, before a reading he was scheduled to give one fall night. I had recently read "Howl" and Whitman's "Song of Myself" for the first time and decided to try writing poetry. Late afternoon, Allen pulled up in a taxi to Kevin Hayes' apartment, across the street from where Danny Shot and I were sitting on our Guilden Street front porch. Allen had come early that day to collect his father's manuscript boxes stored at the Rutgers library. Danny and I helped Allen unload the boxes and drove him back to NYC after the reading. A few weeks later, I sent Allen samples of my earliest poems to which he generously responded, taking about ten lines of my verse and suggesting deletions/clarifications which might make the poem better. He also suggested reading Williams, Reznikoff & Pound.

Allen probably would have remembered our meeting at Naropa Institute in the summer of 1980, when I took his course on William Blake and did a one-month poetry apprenticeship with him. I typed his difficult-to-read manuscripts & received incredibly helpful suggestions about my early poems.

Although my work at the time wasn't very good, I think Allen appreciated my political activist inclinations. The politics in Allen's work from "Howl" & "America" through "Wichita Vortex Sutra" to the late 1970s "Plutonian Ode" had been a large part of what attracted me to his poetry, of what made his poetry seem especially relevant and urgent. As his apprentice for a month, in addition to getting great literary advice, I also got a chance to see up close Allen's principled commitment to opposing injustice & his extraordinary desire to help young people work to create a better world: a more peaceful, tolerant & democratic future. One day, while I was reading a letter to Allen from a formerly imprisoned East Bloc writer, a

young Boulder peace activist came in to drop off photocopies of a poem Allen had written for an upcoming rally against draft registration, which the U.S. government was then reintroducing for the first time since the Vietnam War. Just a few weeks earlier, these young peace activists had asked Allen for a poem they could use on their poster to promote the demonstration. Allen decided to write a new one especially for them and upon request penned an amazing topical pacifist poem called "Verses Written for Student Antidraft Registration Rally 1980". The poem redefined bravery: "The warrior never goes to War/ ...only helpless Draftees fight afraid... / The warrior knows his own sad & tender heart, which is not the heart of most newspapers / Which is not the heart of most Television—This kind of sadness doesn't sell popcorn". With humor and imagination, this poem described an uncommon courage, actually the sort of personal and political courage that Allen displayed throughout his life.

Conventional mythology says that 1960s radicals became more conservative as they got older. Allen's life and work help put the lie to that myth. Allen just got sharper & better able to explain his groundbreaking ideas and observations in clear, concise, cogent, energetic language that was difficult for any open-minded person to refute. Throughout the 17 years that I knew Allen as generous teacher and friend, his progressive social commitment never wavered. He understood that political issues were often complex, that it wasn't always easy to say one side was right & the other wrong. He liked to tell me heartrending stories gleaned from his international friends and travels. I remember once in 1990 at Manhattan's Kiev Restaurant soon after Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution, Allen told me this story that was developing in Prague's literary scene. Some Czech writers were strongly repudiating a formerly-celebrated publisher renowned for willingness to put out books challenging the former regime as well as books by some beat generation writers. After that regime was toppled, files were found which revealed that liberal publisher had once passed activists' names to the Czech secret police. The reason: his son had been in desperate need of a life-saving organ transplant & the operation was withheld until a few

names were handed over. Allen expressed compassion for both the writers and the publisher on that one.

When political injustices were evident, Allen was always there to speak up. He was clear in his principles, a prophetic poet giving body to Human Error in the tradition of William Blake and carrying on Walt Whitman's democratic vision for America. While opposing authoritarian Soviet-style alternatives, Allen spoke out against the greedy Western Big Business militaristic modes of poverty-inducing international-bullying exploitation usually ignored or trivialized by America's mainstream press. Allen's x-ray eyes always saw through "official" explanations used to rationalize or deny harmful government policy. Allen refused to be conned into accepting Cold War dualities: in Shelleyan terms, Allen was the Unacknowledged Democratic Conscience of Cold War America.

Over the last 15 years, I saw Allen on average about every few months, sometimes over coffee or dinner after one of his Manhattan readings. Often he would spend some time dissecting corporate media's version of the days' events. I remember one long conversation deconstructing George Bush's ridiculous and contradictory explanations for starting the Gulf War. Last year, at his E. 12th Street kitchen table, he showed me a pile of Orwellian-sounding FBI files, the bureau's clumsy mean-spirited attempts to circumscribe Allen's perceptiveness and persistence through the years.

From his outspokenness against Eisenhower-era political and sexual repression to his protests against the Vietnam War, from his willingness to sit on Rocky Flats railroad tracks to stop the manufacture of plutonium to his outspokenness against censorship East & West, Allen always put his body and his poetry on the line. He was out front on so many issues: I still find myself reading news stories with the urge to ask Allen next time I see him what did he think of that rendition of reality. Throughout the 1980s and 90s, the years I knew him, Allen remained steadfast in his support for young writers and activists, often on unheralded grassroots projects. A few of the projects I worked on to which Allen lent support included: a New Brunswick anti-apartheid arts campaign, an anti-Gulf War reading at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, and an effort in the late 1980s to build a new national student activist group. At a conference at Rutgers in 1988, called National Student Convention '88, which brought together 700 student activists from around the country, and with Abbie Hoffman in the audience, Allen gave an inspired reading & advised student activists to make sure they learned to separate their disagreement with government policies from any anger they might feel toward their parents. Unfortunately, not all of the activists at the conference had come to the reading. Some were busy in another room burning their cafeteria meal tickets.

Of course, Allen was also generous with young poets, including NJ poets, on literary matters. He helped Danny Shot and I start Long Shot magazine, by donating encouragement and part of his fee from an early 1980s Rutgers reading. He also contributed new work to about half of the 19 issues of Long Shot that have come out so far, including a recent "politics issue" that I guest-edited with the permanent editorial staff. For the last 15 years, Allen periodically sent my work, along with the work of other young poets, to editors and publishers. He wrote an introduction to my first book of poems in 1990 and offered to write the intro for my next in order to help convince a publisher to take it. I'll always be incredibly grateful for his support, generosity and friendship. Like everyone here in Paterson today & millions throughout the world, I celebrate his life and I miss him terribly.

Lucky for the planet, his words live on.

Carter Revard

Bellagio Time

In November 1996, after Stella and I had been given the rare grace of a month in Bellagio by the Rockefeller Foundation people, so I could work on poems and essays, on certain days she might forget her laptop to view an Alp or museum, or go hear an opera in one of the nearby towns. Being naturally a virtuous and hardworking person I kept my nose at the grindstone, and sitting in that room, looking out at the Paradisal view of gardens terracing down to Bellagio by the azure lake under sunlit mountains beyond, I thought it was time to celebrate some of the other beings who had been lately keeping me awake at night. Earlier that year, I had been reading Alexander Skutch's *The Life of the Hummingbird*, about the "courtship or singing assembly" found in many species (reminds me of the medieval Puy in Flanders and England especially – Juliet Vale's *Edward III and Chivalry* I think has accounts of this). Then in November, winding up that month's work at Bellagio, I was going through computer files of summer correspondence and again read what Skutch (p. 61) says: "Some of the hermits and the green violet-ears sing tirelessly all day long, with such intensity that they appear to be highly efficient machines for transmuting nectar into squeaks. Some of these all-day singers interrupt their recitals only long enough to wet their throats with nectar from the nearest flowers and to chase trespassers. They spend about as much of the day at their singing stations as an incubating female of their kind does on her eggs". Creating new hummingbirds is more wonderful than composing squeaksongs, but evidently neither happens without the other: could be that's why Muses matter. It seems also that it is not always the male who sings: "the rufous

hermit of South America sticks out his long white tongue toward the female, who warbles sweetly while watching him display before her". Sounds like Amneris and Aida with Radames ("Ritorna Vincitor!"). But I was most enchanted by Skutch's praise of "the exquisite little gem of the Guatemalan mountains, the wine-throated hummingbird, whose sweetly varied outpouring continues for the better part of a minute. If only it were a little more forceful, it might win for its author a place among the world's renowned songsters". (Ah, Emily!) I wondered whether a CD, "Songs of the Winethroated Hummingbird" would make the humpback whale move over – or maybe we could arrange a duet, humpback whale and winethroated hummingbird.

So of course I had been hoping to write about this, and one November morning, with Stella off to Lugano to dip her toes in Switzerland, and I having nothing more beautiful to look at than Como in its grey silken negligee of rain and mist, with the mountains sliding ermine stoles of cloud over their décolletage, there was time to tap into the silicon's sapphire and gold lightning this Fabergé plot for the whales and hummingbirds to hatch. I should add that it owes considerable also to the pleasure of hearing music presented by Bill Kraft and Joan Huang, and by Isabel and Du, and of talking with them, during that particular week at Bellagio; and when a little later, in Naples, I hand-copied the poem, some phrases reformed themselves after a grand meal at Sica's with Gordon and Renata and other friends.

SONGS OF THE WINE-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD

(with thanks to Alexander Skutch's
The Life of the Hummingbird)

Down in the sapphire ocean
the Humpback whales are singing,
maybe about the wonders there,
how light changes as they descend so that
their silver day becomes
a sable night,

or about those whippersnapper bottlenoses blowing
great shimmering bubbles then piercing like
spears the silver-quivering
bag of a rising bubble – even as high within
its green radiance of Guatemalan forest
a wine-throated
hummingbird's "sweetly varied outpouring
continues for the better part
of a minute"
– ah, if only
the whales and dolphins swam
in that green light and heard
those tiny singers in their sea of leaves,
such arias they'd interchange,
La Ci Darem La Mano from a great dark whale,
Un Bel Di from high in the frangipani – and then,
imagine the duets,
O Terra Addio at the top
of a dolphin's range, in the center of
a rubythroat's fioriture –
of course
they sing together only
in human words, never I guess in any
but English ones in fact –
in these, if anywhere. Can you hear,
dear reader, how
they sing, you above all who from Africa
brought banjoes and picked up saxophones
then sang the blues all out
of slaveship holds to Harlem, you from every
ocean and continent who understand the songs
of police and ambulance sirens, who record the stars
or white noise from the first Big Bang, is it beyond
imagining how the humpback and
the hummingbird might come out
through parted curtains at the San Carlo for a last
encore? What are sounds,
and what are songs, that we can make them,

that we have ears to hear,
that on these tiny waves
of air, of water, even of magnetism, we have made
the smaller ripples that we call Meaning
when sounds are words – or which, rising
like Aphrodite from the foam
of dance and song and love, come through as Music? Deep
in the blue Antarctic seas, high
in the green Guatemalan jungle, here
in these cracked English words,
can you hear them sing,
the hummingbirds, the humpback whales,
a neutron star, a human soul?

Buck Creek: March 28, 1942

I wrote that "hummingbird" poem sitting in the Villa Serbelloni, one November day in 1996, a long way in time and space from my Buck Creek days. Yet those days were alive within me, where I sat looking over cypress and olives to the lake, and down at men mowing and trimming and snipping roses or thyme in the tranquil gardens just below my windows there. Watching them made me think of the way my grandfather Aleck Camp used to work around the Buck Creek house and barns and fields. He had died of a heart attack in March of 1942, and the loss was heavy, not just hard emotionally but also practically, because he was a handy man – the place was falling apart, everything would need fixing, and he was the one who always put things back together, found the baling wire or piece of leather or metal that made things work again. For the last few months of that winter he would take me out with him to milk the cows, and as we walked out to the barn in the cold darkness, me carrying the swinging kerosene lantern, something was different: he might pause to catch his breath, and as we got to the barn and I was herding the Jersey cow in and slipping the rope over her horns and pouring the feed into her pan so she would stand while he milked her, he might be holding a hand over his chest and frowning. He knew

the angina was tightening down on him, so he was training me to do the chores before it could take him.

March 1942 was a stormy month – toward the middle, a tornado hit the small town of Pryor, over east of us, and wiped out much of it, so we watched the skies and any hanging clouds carefully, all that month. Quite a few days were cold and blustery, others hot and oppressive. On March 25, for the birthday of my twin sister and me, a birthday cake was to be baked, but our mother had come down with a bad cold or flu, so Grandpa Aleck had baked the cake with her calling directions. It was a two-layer cake, and both layers "fell", so instead of being fluffy and light, the cake was heavy and sirupy under its white soft frosting with that strong vanilla flavor. That was exactly how I liked cake, and we finished off that cake the same day, not a crumb left next morning. And for the weekend, my folks said I could go up and stay over Friday and Saturday with my buddy Walter Parks and his family. The Parkses lived a couple of miles to our north, up among the blackjacks on the gravel road to Bowring. So on the Friday after school I rode up there with Walter and his folks, particularly happy because I got to ride in the back next to his sister Janey Belle, with whom I was wildly but secretly in love.

Friday was a warm day, so bright that the tiny buds on the trees seemed to be opening right in front of us. As we headed up the long hill out of our valley, I seem to remember, there was just the faint hint of redbud bloom beginning over at the foot of the hills, behind the thickets of wild plum already putting out white blossoms. When we got to the Parks's house, their cousin Sammy Fields was there waiting with an invitation to come over, after dinner, to go fishing in their big pond for bass and perch. We ate, then as twilight was falling we went along the rocky rutted dirt road to the pond, and as the moon rose we spread out along the banks and threw out our lines and sat completely quiet, waiting for a bite. It was a balmy evening, almost warm, no breeze to ruffle the moonlit pond, only the clutter and gronk of bullfrogs around us, until a great horned owl hooted loudly behind us and nearly scared us silly. We looked and saw him sitting on a dead willow stub where he had flown silently up and perched, but he flew off immediately when our voices broke the

quiet below. It began to blow then, and turn cooler, and pretty soon we were getting chilly, and it was hard to tell whether our floats were bobbing from a nibble or from the waves. So we gave up fishing and headed back to the Parks's house.

We had caught a fair mess of fish, which we took back and cleaned and put away for next day's lunch, but I never got to eat them, because just after a dawn breakfast the next morning, my Uncle Bert and brother Antwine came driving into the Parks's yard in our blue 1940 Plymouth. Antwine came over and told me we had to get back home, but he would not say why. I saw Uncle Bert talking to Walter's dad, and they looked very serious. So I got my things and climbed in the car's back seat, and Uncle Bert, saying nothing, started homeward. He drove very fast and did not turn his head or say anything. I could not figure out what this was all about. Finally, when Uncle Bert not only came down the long hill without braking, but floorboarded it once we got to the level county road toward our meadow and house, I said loudly: "What the hell you driving so fast for?"

Uncle Bert turned his head sideways, then almost back toward me, keeping the car straight ahead at sixty miles an hour over that hissing gravel, and said to me, "Mikey, poor old Grandpa, I'm afraid he's gone". So we said nothing more till we turned from the road onto the highway, turned from the highway into our lane, and pulled up in front of our garage. We got out, went in through the back door and saw Mom in the kitchen holding my eight-month-old youngest brother, and the other kids in the dining room as we passed through, and then we came into the big living room where Uncle Arthur was standing and Grandpa lay on his back on the bed at the back of the room. He was fully dressed, and his eyes were closed, and he looked asleep, with his mouth open. Nobody said anything, so I walked over and stood beside the bed, and reached out to push his whiskery jaw up and close his mouth, but it was rigid and would not close.

Uncle Bert had found him out behind the garage, lying down near the woodpile from which he had been going to bring in some wood for the fire to warm the house. The cold front had come through and it was down in the forties or so. When Grandpa did not come in with the wood, and Uncle Bert was in the

kitchen frying the bacon and eggs, and could not see him coming back or puttering around anywhere, he finally moved the big skillet off the fire and went out to look for him. When he found him, he called my mother and Antwine and Uncle Arthur to help carry him in. There was no sign of life at all, and they could not evoke any, so after a while they had remembered somebody must go and bring me back from the Parks's house.

I was a long time trying to write something for Grandpa. Nothing worked at all well from 1948 through 1956, while I was getting my degrees at Tulsa, at Oxford, and at Yale. Finally when I got my first teaching job at Amherst College, and discovered how to put Oklahoma sounds into the lines (as I mentioned in talking about the Coyote sonnet), I began to find some ways to write about Buck Creek, at first mostly the place and the creatures, the birds and snakes and all. A piece of what emerged in 1957-60 found a place in "Homework at Oxford", which ended up in *An Eagle Nation*. Other pieces, begun during the 1960's, grew and split and coalesced in various ways until about 1968 I put them into "My Right Hand Don't Leave Me No More".

That title is a quotation which I found (so far as I recall) in a newspaper column written by the great Jimmy Cannon, writing about the great Joe Louis. The column must have been written not long before the last fight of Joe Louis, when he came back out of retirement to fight Rocky Marciano. Everybody knew Louis had got too old and slow to fight this young and incredibly tough guy, and the fight went exactly as predicted: Marciano pounded away and Louis finally went down. A day or two before the fight, Jimmy Cannon had written of speaking with Louis as he finished training. Cannon said something like, "How's it going, Joe?" and Louis answered simply, "My right hand don't leave me no more". That seemed to me a revelation. For the first time I thought I could see how it felt to have that kind of quickness, that kind of power: you don't have to "throw" the punch, it just "leaves" you. I have had that kind of feeling only for very minor things, like hitting a return of slam in a ping-pong game, where your hand goes out and catches the bullet and hits it back almost before you even "know" that slammed ball is coming at you.

So when I watched the movies of the Marciano-Louis fight, and saw Louis unable to "let it go", to hit Marciano even when Marciano was right in front of him, I remembered seeing the movies of the Louis-Galento fight, some ten years earlier – when Galento, a powerful and fearless mass of muscles, grabbed and fouled and held and pounded Louis for a couple of rounds or so, and knocked him down near the end of a round. Louis bounced up off the floor at once, as if embarrassed and angry, and Galento looked a little surprised and concerned. He looked even more apprehensive at the start of the next round, because it was clear from the whole body-language that Louis was coming after him this round, and for the first time Galento was holding his gloves and watching Louis as if to ward off what was coming. But Galento was one brave bull and he charged in anyhow. Louis had set himself, and you couldn't see the punch start, you just saw when it landed square on Galento's chin, jarring him staggering back across the ring almost into the ropes.

That was how Louis had been in the days when he was the man who beat Max Schmeling, and whoever else they put in the ring with him. So he was the man that everybody who had a few drinks would naturally want to be compared with, to the advantage of the man drinking of course. And that was where my grandfather came in, because maybe once in two or three months he would have an extra few drinks and being a man who stood maybe five feet six and weighed a hundred and fifty or so, with each drink his fighting weight went up and by the time he was well into the bottle he was at least two hundred pounds and as he explained to the world he could whip Joe Louis, Jack Dempsey, and John L. Sullivan, maybe all at once. Even I was maybe six or seven, I had a few doubts about the truth of these claims, but by the time I was ten or so I had decided that there were better ways of making a fool of yourself than getting drunk and acting like that. What was hard to believe was that a man who never lied, more sensible and well-behaved and kindly than anybody I knew, could in a saloon or a living room speak total nonsense and solemnly hold it to be self-evident truth. A few years later when I first read that chapter which Mark Twain cut from *Huckleberry Finn* – the one in which the Mississippi raft-men do their

drunken boasting – I recognized that this sort of behavior was a way of life in the backwoods, and that my grandfather was doing exactly what his grandfathers, and all those before him back to the beer-halls of Beowulf, had been doing.

One good thing, though. Loud drunk or quiet sober, Grandpa was good to us kids, never mean, never harsh. My mother was in charge of discipline, and generally took an easy line; my Osage stepfather Addison would never lift a finger to any of us, and would speak only in the most diffident of ways; so Grandpa was the last resort, and would threaten to use a hickory switch if necessary, but the number of times I recall his using it I could count on the fingers of one hand. My cousin Roy, who lived with us for a couple of years, tells of a time when he was riding Grandpa's saddle horse down to where there were plum trees, and stood up in the saddle to pick some, and suddenly the horse started jumping, and Roy hung on for dear life, and stayed with him as he bucked and ran frantically up toward the house, and tried to rein him in but couldn't, and the horse ran heedless into the barbed wire fence next to our motor-house, and gashed himself bloody though it didn't cripple him. My grandfather had been out in the yard, and saw the horse with Roy yelling on its back come storming up through the meadow and run into the fence, and Grandpa ran out and stooped through the fence and grabbed the reins and pulled Roy off and gave him a hard swat on his backside with his free hand, and led the horse around to the barn to get some liniment and ointment and doctor it, and said he would come back and take that hickory switch to Roy for doing such a mean and stupid thing. But when Grandpa went to take the saddle off he found a yellowjacket that had got under and stung and stung, and when he came back to the house after the horse was doctored he showed Roy the dead wasp and looked at him and shook his head and said not a word, because Roy would know that was his apology for jumping to a wrong conclusion.

So finally, in the early 1960's when we had moved to St. Louis, and I was again able to go back and visit my folks in Buck Creek, I drove through Bartlesville and instead of going directly west and on out to the horseless ranch, I took a two-block detour

and drove by what had used to be one of my grandfather's favorite drinking places, the Green Lantern Saloon. It had gone out of business, and being right next to the railway station, it had been converted to the Trailways/Greyhound Bus Depot. Instead of the jaded jollity of the saloonkeeper, and the edgy defiance of some drinkers, the quiet despair of others, the noisy bluster of a few down the bar, there was now the wary glance of the ticket-seller, the mostly weary and beaten-down manner of the travelers, cheering up suddenly as their home folks drove up and jumped out of a car to welcome them, or perking up as the bus pulled in that would trundle them away to Tulsa or Dallas or Denver or Kansas City.

MY RIGHT HAND DON'T LEAVE ME NO MORE

(Joe Louis to Jimmy Cannon, before the Marciano fight.)

When you were drunk, you could always whip Joe Louis –
Lucky he never stopped by Bartlesville
On a Saturday night in the Green Lantern Saloon
Or he'd've been forced to let you knock him out.
I think he'd've done it – not even the local bullies
Would take advantage when you were fighting drunk.
And sober, you were so goddamned meek and truthful
You once outfaced the big fat deputy star
Who came to take our bootlegging uncle away.
Uncle Woody was holding his breath up in the attic –
The sheriff believed he'd been around our place
But thought he'd hid out somewheres back in the hills.
The laws all knew that you never told a lie,
So when they'd searched, this one came out and asked,
"Now Alex, is your boy anywheres around here?"
"Wellsir", you said, straightfaced, "he *was* around".

One time though, I didn't think you'd make it.
Out in the chipstrewn yard beside my window
I saw you face the drunk with his butcher knife.
He raised it over your deprecating hands

And weary eyes, that held its point with meekness.
I saw him halt and scowl, then stumble closer:
"Old man, your time has come. You hear, old man?"
One thing you did kept his knife from slashing –
You did not meet his eyes. I saw him turn
Bewildered eyes to me, and you took the knife
From his passive hands, heard drunken apologies,
Then brought him into the house and had a drink with him.
You dealt with time that way, and better ways.
You fixed the broken farm. It was your hands drove
The shining nail, squeaking under the hammer, into
Its massive gatepost's new-peeled oaken bulk.
I marvelled how those huge things yielded to you
Under scrapegong blows of the hammer's bluesteel arc
In the grip of your hands –
I thought your hands that held off shame and poverty
From all of us could keep off death himself,
My grandfather, but I was gone when he came
And did not help. You died bringing in wood for the fire.

Haunani-Kay Trask

Smiling Corpses

Smiling corpses
of the Democratic Party

wander through an undulating
sea of money, thin waves
of lethargic green.

Moist statues rise up
wipe their lidded eyes
begin stalking.

In the sky, broken clouds
crawl off the sun.

Below, from the banana spires,
rotten steam,

a fragrance
of devouring.

Lahaina, 1995

This is not Marti's Cuba.
No warriors await
the call to freedom's

arms. Here, drifting trash
clogs the shores, coating
the lost minds

of burnt red tourists
staining the sand
with acrid oils.

The natives don't
horde small fortunes
for revolution's
duty. They sit,

observing the parade, or
jump to join the passing

fleet of noisy cars
waving at their destiny
a musical good-bye

suffused with the sweet
intention to smile

and be happy.

Before Dawn Leaves Forever

Before dawn leaves forever
let us embrace
over half-open horizons
rose glinting the tall grasses.

Above the stars and spilt violet
let us offer ourselves,
again.

Where the wide surf
rolls across islands
let us follow, trembling
into blue light.

Out of the elegies
of love, let us enter
summer's last sun.

The Mist of My Heart

The mist of my heart
travels to Waimānalo

embracing there
the salt of the sea.

Two koa'e birds
entwine their long tails

secretly.

Returning

Honi of rain and cloud
dawn light,
blue movement. *Ti, 'ulu, mai'a*

steaming. Sweetfern
Ko'olau, chiseled by sun

humming undersongs:
'ohe, maile, tiare.

Slow-hipped Kāne'ohe,
wet-scented lover

chanting
us in.

Gods of My Ancestors

I sing of time before,
ka wā mamua
true, love-struck
engraved in song,
in moon-woven palms
along luminous falls.

I sing of the far green sea
ka moauli
undulating
our great gods ascending.

I sing of *mana*
the many-flanked Ko'olau
in darkest blue dawn;
the fierce foliage
of Kāne abundant;

'ohe, 'ulu, kalo
'ama'u

I sing of Pele
she who fires islands:
hāpu'u, lehua, 'ōlapa

I sing of Akua
Papa-hānau-moku
dense lava mother
swept by storm.

I sing of Hawai'i
'āina aloha

my high dark land
in flames.

Born in Fire

Born in fire
you came through
the mountainous dead

to find sandalwood
forests, skeins of fern
the plump *pulu*
of the *hapu'u*.

Flickering *lehua*
guided you here.
Stay, now, within

the trembling breast
of Pele, steaming her
breath into the trees

drawing your fires
to her craterous womb

consuming your passionate heat.

who would find the midnight rainbow

for Damien

who would find the midnight
rainbow, *lei* of Pana'ewa?

who would follow
Hōpoe's forest,
shimmering with Hina?

who would seek the woman
of Kīlauea, smoldering
in her caldera?

who would *oli*
in the bosom of Pele
wreathed in flame?

Night is a Sharkskin Drum

Night is a sharkskin drum
sounding our bodies black
and gold.

All is aflame
the uplands a shush
of wind.

From Halema'uma'u
our fiery Akua comes:

E, Pele e,

E, Pele e,

E, Pele e.

Hi'iaka Chanting

Glistening tree snails
miraculous light gleaming
'ōapa leaves

in Pele's uplands.
Elegant *hāpu'u*, translucent
as her eyes. And

our flitting *'i'iwi*
nimble beak sipping
love's *lehua*

buds. Winter moss
sponging the earth. Hypnotic
mist. Hi'iaka chanting

on the wind.
Step lightly, dancer.
Look up, look up.

Nāmakaokaha'i

Born from the chest
of Haumea, *mo'o*
woman of *kuapā*,
lizard-tongued goddess
of Hawai'i:
Nāmakaokaha'i,
sister of thunder
and shark –
Kānehekili,
Kūhaimoana –
elder of Pele,
Pelehonuamea.

Kinolau on the wind,
in the yellowing *ti,*
sounds of Akua
awaking in the dawn:

Nā-maka-o-ka-ha'i,
eyes flecked with fire,
summoning her family

from across the seas.

Sharks in the shallows,
upheaval in the heavens.

From the red rising mist
of Kahiki, the Woman of the Pit:

Pele, Pele'aihonua,
travelling the uplands,

devouring the foreigner.

Tourist

The flourishing hand
of greed, a predatory

face without dreams.
In the marketplace,

glittering knives of money,
murdering the trees.

Pūowaina: Flag Day

for Lākea and Mililani

Bring ginger, yellow
and white, broken stalks
with glossy leaves.

Bring *leihulu*,
palapalai, pīkake. Bring
kapa, beaten fine

as skin. Bring
the children
to chant

for the dead,
then stand
with the *lāhui*

and spit on
America's
flag.

Kona Kai'opua

Across a fathomless horizon,
koa voyaging canoes

plumed Kanaloa,
provocative summer clouds

gilded by the god:
blue pearl, green
olivine. In the Kona

noon, a lone *nai'a* –
sea-sleek *kinolau*
of divinity.

Between coastal *heiau*
castrated *niu*, shorn

of fruit and flower,
fawning. From the ancestral
shore, tlack-tlack

of lava stones, massaged
by tidal seas: eternal
kanikau for long

forgotten *ali'i*, entombed
beneath grandiose hotels
mocked

by crass amusements
Japanese machines
and the common greed

of vulgar Americans.

Glossary

ʻāina aloha	beloved land
Akua	god, supernatural, divine
aliʻi	chief
ʻamaʻu	all species of an endemic genus of fern; one of the forms of the pig god, Kamapuaʻa
Halemaʻumaʻu	fire pit in Kīlauea crater, island of Hawaiʻi; one of the many places where the volcano deity, Pele, lives; literally, ʻamaʻu fern house
hāpuʻu	endemic tree fern of the Hawaiian archipelago found in abundance in forests at Kīlauea volcano
Haumea	earth mother goddess; another form of Papa; considered the mother of Pele and Nāmakaokahaʻi
heiau	temple of worship; many temples existed in traditional Hawaiʻi, including large, elaborate temples for human sacrifice
Hiʻiaka	deity of the forest on the island of Hawaiʻi; one of the sisters of Pele
Hina	goddess of the moon
honi	kiss; traditional greeting where noses are pressed in affection
Hōpoe	beloved friend of Hiʻiaka whose emblem is the flowering lehua tree of Hawaiʻi island; literally, fully developed as a lehua flower
ʻiʻiwi	scarlet Hawaiian honey creeper
Kahiki	Tahiti; place where Hawaiians return upon death
kalo	taro; the staple of the Hawaiian people, in its divine manifestation, the parent of the Hawaiian people

ka moauli	dark blue sea; that is, the sea furthest from shore
Kanaloa	major Hawaiian male deity of the Pacific Ocean
Kāne	major Hawaiian male deity of the land; Kāne appeared in many manifestations, including breadfruit and banana
Kānehekili	god of thunder
Kāneʻohe	land division on the windward side of Oʻahu island known for wetlands, the majestic Koʻolau mountains, and a large, calm bay; literally, the bamboo of the god, Kāne; or alternately, bamboo husband
kanikau	dirge, lamentation, chant of mourning, to wail
kapa	cloth made from pounded bark; clothes
ka wā mamua	the past; literally, the time before
Kīlauea	active volcanic crater on the island of Hawaiʻi, said to be the home of Pele, goddess of the volcano
kinolau	many forms taken by a god, such as the ti leaf as a form of the moʻo (lizard) god
koa	large native forest tree, with crescent leaves, fine red wood formerly used for canoes, now for furniture, calabashes, and ukulele
koaʻe	white-tailed tropic bird which soars the high cliffs
Kona	place on the island of Hawaiʻi; also, the dry, leeward side of any of the Hawaiian islands
Kona Kaiʻōpua	poetic name for Kona; kaiʻōpua refers to the billowy clouds above the vast reefless sea of Kona
Koʻolau	windward sides of the Hawaiian Islands
kuapā	wall of a fishpond
Kūhaimoana	largest and most celebrated of Hawaiian shark gods
Lāhaina	place on the island of Maui; once a whaling town, now a popular tourist haven despoiled with trinket shops, hotels, and foreigners

lāhui	people, nation
lehua	a bright red fuzzy flower of the ʻōhiʻa tree; also the tree itself; symbol of the island of Hawaiʻi
lei	a wreath worn around the neck, usually of flowers, leaves or shells
leihulu	feather lei, formerly worn by royalty; a beloved child or person
maiʻa	banana
maile	a native twining shrub with fragrant shiny leaves used for decoration and lei
mana	divine power
moʻo	lizard; reptile of any kind; water spirit
naiʻa	porpoise
Nāmakaokahaʻi	elder moʻo sister of Pele
niu	the coconut palm, a male symbol
ʻohe	all kinds of bamboo; flute
ʻōlapa	several native species of forest trees with green leaves that flutter like aspen leaves; dancer as contrasted with the chanter; dance accompanied by chanting and drumming on a gourd drum
oli	chant that is not danced to, especially with prolonged phrases chanted in one breath
palapalai	different types of native fern, one to four feet high
Papahānaumoku	the most prominent earth mother figure, literally, she who births islands and who, with her husband, Wākea – sky father – created the Hawaiian people
Panaʻewa	famous place on the Hilo side of Hawaiʻi island
Pele	goddess of the volcano who may appear as a young woman, also the fire of the volcano itself; younger sister of Nāmakaokahaʻi

Peleʻaihonua	Pele who eats the land
Pelehonuamea	another name for Pele, goddess of the earth
pīkake	the Arabian jasmine introduced to Hawaiʻi from India; very fragrant small white flowers often used for lei and other decoration
pulu	a glossy yellow wool on the base of tree-fern stalks
Pūowaina	hill on Oʻahu island where the American National Cemetery of the Pacific is located; literally, the hill of sacrifice. Also known as Punchbowl.
ti	a woody plant in the lily family with long bright green leaves or multi-colored leaves, used to make lei and for other adornments
tiare	Tahitian gardenia
ʻulu	breadfruit
Waimānalo	district on the windward side of Oʻahu island famous for long beaches with fine white sand

ARTICLES

Gordon Poole

Melville and the Revolution in Italy

Melville's *Burgundy Club Sketches*, and especially the two poems "At the Hostelry" and "Naples in the Time of Bomba", in spite of a superficial appearance of thematic disorderliness, are rather strictly unified by a single theme: the oppression of political regimes and the counter-violence of revolutionary movements. A seemingly motley collection of prose and verse, this unfinished work stands out among Melville's longer creations as the only one dedicated wholly to a political subject.

Wholly – not just mainly. The central character of the *Sketches* is "Major John Gentian, Dean of the Burgundy Club", a Civil War veteran who lost an arm in that conflict. Jack Gentian had Revolutionary War heroes among his ancestors. He wears the Badge of the Society of Cincinnati and identifies patriotically with the founding revolutionary ideals of the United States. Section I of "At the Hostelry", the first of the two poems in the Sketches, deals with Garibaldi's leadership of the military defeat of the armies of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, as well as with the statesmanship of Cavour and the political and social accomplishments of the new Italy. Garibaldi is again the subject of the final numbered section of "At the Hostelry" (VIII in my edition) and in the "sequel". Of course, political oppression and popular rebellion are the explicit subject throughout "Naples in the Time of Bomba".

Hence, the only section of the two conjoined poems that would seem to stand apart, thematically, from the rest is the long discussion of the picturesque, articulated over the six central

sections of "At the Hostelry".[1] The text itself, however, invites the reader to seek for a unifying principle: "[N]or all the piece esteem / A medley mad of each extreme".[2] The prose headnote to Section II of "At the Hostelry" does give the appearance of a sharp break with the political discussion in Section I: "Effecting a counterturn, the Marquis evokes ... an inconclusive debate as to the exact import" of the term *picturesque*. Actually, as I hope to show, the political discussion continues uninterrupted, the topic being only nominally the definition of *picturesque*. In the poem, the term explicitly has no one definition but refers merely to the subjects that given artists find worthy of depiction. Melville reads the paintings politically. The real question posed is whether the new social order, rigidly and oppressively utilitarian, has decreed an end to art, a general leveling implying the destruction of any natural or man-made objects an artist could find it worthwhile to represent. It was with the triumph of utilitarian, industrial society that painting began to withdraw from realistic depiction into a progressively more abstract, non-representational practice, leaving realism increasingly to the new art of photography. In the words of Jan Steen, whom I believe comes closest to being Melville's mouthpiece in "Naples in the Time of Bomba":[3]

[1] This seeming shift in theme led William H. Shurr, *The Mystery of Iniquity: Melville as Poet, 1857-1891* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1972), 216, to the conclusion that "this introductory canto has little to do with the rest of 'At the Hostelry'."

[2] "Naples in the Time of Bomba", in Gordon Poole, ed., *"At the Hostelry" and "Naples in the Time of Bomba"* (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1989), vv. 729-730. Further quotations from the poem and from "Hostelry" refer to this edition.

[3] William Shurr, missing the ironic cast to Steen's remarks in the following verses, mistakenly takes him for a utilitarian and then Swanevelt for Melville's mouthpiece (Shurr, *Mystery*, 210). William Bysshe Stein, instead, sees that the Benthamite taste is being ridiculed here (*The Poetry of Melville's Late Years* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1970], 232). Stein rightly sees the Marquis de Grandvin as a "Dionysian priest" (ibid., 229); however, as will be clear in these pages, I do not agree with Stein when he identifies the Marquis de Grandvin as Melville's voice and, hence, with his Dionysian reading of "Hostelry" and "Bomba" as "an apotheosis of the rose and the wine" (ibid., 270). Conviviality is part of Melville, but he cannot be reduced to that. In his later years, he shunned the clubs (see William B. Dillingham, *Melville and His Circle: The Last Years* [Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1996], 1-14).

"Adieu, rosettes and point-de-vise!"
All garnish strenuous time refuse;
In peacocks' tails put out the eyes!
Utility reigns – Ah, well-a-way! –
And bustles along in Bentham's shoes.
For the Picturesque – suffice, suffice
The picture that fetches a picturesque price!
(vv. 120-126)

At this point, other guests of the symposium, "[l]ess jovial ones" (v. 127) than Jan Steen, ask for a definition of *picturesque*, before facing the political problem posed by Steen and, of course, by the lone toper, the Marquis de Grandvin's humble interpreter, in the upper room of Delmonico's restaurant, where he is visited by the shades of long dead painters:

Less jovial ones propound at start
Your Picturesque in what inheres?
"In nature point, in life, in art
Where the essential thing appears.
First settle that, we'll then take up
Your prior question".
(vv. 127-131)

What follows, however, under the guise of defining *picturesque* is Melvillean ekphrasis, a series of pictures in words.[4] If the less jovial ones think to avoid or put off the political implications of the discussion, they are mistaken, for the pictures, taken all together, construct a consistent social critique, and it is this that confers unity on the poem and links it closely to "Bomba".

[4] On ekphrasis in Melville, see Douglas Robillard, *Melville and the Visual Arts: Ionian Form, Venetian Tint* (Kent, Ohio, and London, England: The Kent State University Press, 1997). See also Dennis Berthold, "Dürer 'At the Hostelry': Melville's Misogynist Iconography", *Melville Society Extracts* 95 (December 1993), 1-8; and by the same author "Melville and Dutch Genre Painting", in Christopher Sten, ed., *Savage Eye: Melville and the Visual Arts* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1996), 218-245.

The first three examples are scenes of political oppression (Section II). Virile, swarthy Spagnoletto, solicited or rather provoked by Fra Lippo Lippi, evokes his own painted representations of cruel religious and civil intolerance, as well as Giotto's depiction of the Last Judgment:

> "The Picturesque? – Have ye not seen
> My Flaying of St. Bartholomew –
> My Laurence on the gridiron lean?
> There's Picturesque; and done as well
> As old Giotto's *Damned in Hell*
> At Pisa in the Campo Santa".
> (vv. 148-153)

He is at once hooted by the "juniors", Melville's ironic reference to a category of callow youths, or "bachelors", for which he seems to have preserved at length considerable contempt, as could readily be shown by references to several of his works.[5]

Lippi himself suggests Guido Reni's *Herod's Massacre* as a choice example of the picturesque, followed by Herman Swanevelt, who cites "great Leonardo's head / Of snaky Medusa, – so as well / Grace and the Picturesque may dwell / With Terror" (vv. 171-174). For his own part, Swanevelt proposes idyllic, less threatening subjects – "Some scene select, set off serene / With any tranquil thing you please – / A crumbling tower, a shepherd piping" (vv. 177-179) – and looks to Claude Lorrain for support. The latter nods inanely but, lost in Arcady, makes no answer. It seems clear that the artists are lining up in two categories, call them "pessimists" (or realists) and "optimists", and that the text, multi-voiced and traversed by contrasting ironies, gives a clear edge to the realist painters who unevasively face and represent the evils of political power.

The brief Section III follows, locating the one-man symposium in Delmonico's restaurant in New York City, where

[5] Including the "gay bachelor" in *Moby-Dick* (Chapter 115), which awakens Ahab's scathing aside, "How wondrous familiar is a fool!". See vv. 537 seq, quoted below, and the relative note 11.

the company of phantom artists is being conjured up by the wine, the Marquis de Grandvin:

> In upper chamber did we sit
> The dolts below never dreaming it.
> The cloth was drawn – we left alone,
> No solemn lackeys looking on.
> In wine's meridian, halcyon noon,
> Beatitude excludes elation.
> (vv. 212-217)

If the Marquis can be taken as a symbol not only of wine itself[6] but also of conviviality,[7] it must be noted here that the wine is real but the conviviality is purely imagined. The winebibber is alone at his communion, unlike that other "winebibber" who had his disciples with him.[8]

In Section IV Franz Hals, the realist, contrasts with Van Dyke, "the practiced courtier of Kings" (v. 224), who is easily lured to England "[r]iches to get at St. James's" (v. 227). Van Dyke "in silken dress / Not smoother than his courteousness" (vv. 231-232) is clearly a proto-utilitarian, in it for the money, whereas Hals's values are the "hearth ... Old friends – old vintages" (vv. 229-230). To the political evils depicted in Section II, here are added examples of social and economic oppression. Tintoretto, like Spagnoletto characterized for his strength, in contrast to Van Dyke's foppishness, cites "Rome's squalid Ghetto" and the lazaretto in Algiers, and "many a grimy, slimy

[6] Merton W. Sealts, Jr., *Pursuing Melville: 1840-1980* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 87; followed by Robert A. Sandberg, "'The Adjustment of Screens': Putative Narrators, Authors, and Editors in Melville's Unfinished *Burgundy Club* Book", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 31 (Fall 1989), 433-434.

[7] Dillingham, *Melville*, 15-16. This had already been suggested by Shurr, *Mystery*, 1972, 207.

[8] Stein, *Poetry*, 229, suggested that the opening verses of "At the Hostelry" might be read as a "parodic imitation of the Offertory": "Candid eyes in open faces / Clear, not keen, no narrowing line: / Hither turn your favoring graces / Now the cloth is drawn for wine". He noted also that the "upper chamber" (v. 284) recalls the "upper room" (Luke 22:12) where the Last Supper was celebrated.

lair" (vv. 265-267). Brouwer, well into his cups, twits another fop, Carlo Dolce:

> "*Grime* mark and *slime*! – Squirm not, *Sweet Charles*",
> Slyly, in tone mellifluous
> Addressing Carlo Dolce thus,
> Fidgety in shy fellowship,
> Fastidious even to finger-tip,
> And dainty prim.
> (vv. 271-276)

And Brouwer points out the obvious: that "In Art the sty / Is quite inodorous" and that he doesn't paint smells (vv. 276-278), comparing his own realism with that of Huysum and Teniers, explicitly mentioning the latter's grimy taverns filled with peasant low-life:

> "Hey, Teniers? Give us boors at inns,
> Mud floor – dark settles – jugs – old bins,
> Under rafters foul with fume that blinks
> From logs too soggy much to blaze
> Which yet diffuse an umberish haze
> That beautifies the grime, methinks".
> (vv. 282-287)

In Section V, Van der Velde's example of the picturesque is a sea battle, i.e., war. His attitude toward his marine past is nostalgic and complex. The picture he conjures of the *Dunderberg* broken up on a beach in Zealand is captivating and recalls other fond references to wooden ships in Melville's works:

> "Saw her ribbed shadow on the sand.
> Ay – picturesque! But naught atones
> For heroic navies, Pan's own ribs and knees,
> But a story now that storied made the seas!"
> (vv. 313-316)

Pan, a key mythological reference in Melville's works, is a problematic figure, one source of the Christian representation of

the devil, as Melville well knew. If the close relationship between "At the Hostelry" and "Naples in the Time of Bomba" allows us to refer Pan's role in the second work back to the first, he connotes violence (through false etymologies Melville accepted), including the revolutionary violence of "Pandemonium's red parade". In *Clarel*, too, Pan is "the goat-god here / Capped with the red cap in the twist / of Proudhon and the Communist" (I, xli, 137 seq.).[9] Van der Velde's yearning for the olden days does not change the implication: the warships were murderous instruments of Pan.

An earthy Gerard Douw follows this up with a positive example, a domestic scene of pots, pans and provender, complete with Phillis plucking a pheasant, a reaffirmation of the value of the "hearth" that Franz Hals had opposed to Van Dyke's commercialism in Section IV. Douw's fireplace realism is at once trumped by Peter Paul Rubens, who would abstract the scene from everyday reality, turning Phillis into Venus, the pheasant into her swan, "Then in suffused warm rosy weather / Sublime them in sun-cloud together" (vv. 350-351). Presented ironically as "Hatted in rich felt, spick and span, / Right comely in equipment free, / With court-air of Lord Chamberlain" (vv. 353-355), he, like Van Dyke, commercializes his painting to suit the wishes of a donor. He turns for support to another dandy, Paolo of Verona, "Like to a Golden Pheasant he" (v. 364), who invites him to Venice. "We're Cyprus wine", he says; and one recalls that Cyprus and Cyprian, for Melville, denote prostitution – in this case, the pandering of art to Mammon. The picture Paolo offers caps this little crescendo of sycophancy: a merry Carnival scene with a host "Handsome as Caesar Borgia" (v. 388). At this point, he is attacked by an angry Spagnoletto, who draws a realistic picture of the tyranny and terror of Borgia's regime:

> "I'll lend you hints. And let His Grace
> Be launching, ay, the loving-cup
> Among the princes in the hall
> At Sinigaglia: You recall?

[9] See also Melville, "Naples in the Time of Bomba", vv. 337-365.

I mean those gudgeons whom his smile
Flattered to sup, ere yet awhile,
In Hades with Domitian's lords.
Let sunny frankness charm his air,
His raiment lace with silver cords,
Trick forth the '*Christian statesman*' there.
And, mind ye, don't forget the pall;
Suggest it – how politeness ended:
Let lurk in shade or rearward wall
Three bravoes by the arras splendid".
(vv. 392-405)

Paolo of Verona is unflappable, however, and turns Borgia into a classical Comus, Roman god of revelry, with cavaliers, dames and a Maltese knight clasping his "Bella Donna". Contrary to his unproblematic intentions and whether or not Melville means to allude to deadly nightshade by using the Italian for "lovely lady",[10] the scene lacks only one character, a skeleton with a scythe, to become a typical *memento mori*. Indeed, Jan Steen, intervening again, at once supplies this sobering touch, while smoking a skull-bone pipe. He vitiates the whole question of defining the picturesque: "All's picturesque beneath the sun; / I mean, all's picture; death and life" (vv. 432-433). The question of the picturesque is a red herring; greater subjects are at issue here. Jan rejects the "satin-glossed and flossy-fine" of the flatterers trafficking in their artistic skill in favor of a composite attitude, perhaps identifiable as Melville's own, which soberly realizes that pleasure is fleeting while treasuring conviviality:

the life that's *wine* and *brine*,
The mingled brew; the thing as spanned
By Jan who kept the Leyden tavern
And every rollicker fellowly scanned –
And, under his vineyard, lo, a cavern!

[10] So Stein suggests (*Poetry*, 42).

But jolly is Jan, and never in picture
Sins against sinners by Pharisee stricture.
Jan o' the Inn, 'tis he, for ruth,
Dashes with fun art's canvas of truth.
(vv. 440-448)

In these lines the author's own voice is closer to the surface than in many of his pages. Even Arcadian Watteau criticizes Paolo of Verona for the class nature of his art, all patrician luxury and the tom-foolery of "Ladies and lords in mimic dress / Playing at shepherd and shepherdess / By founts that sing *The sweet o' the year*!" (vv. 467-468). One notes that Melville's irony strikes the effete artists of the court, not the realists, however dour and somber.

At this point Paolo, probably tipsy, suddenly sheds his silly optimism and turns maudlin, realizing that utilitarianism, the hallmark of the new Italy, will spell the end of the luxurious Venice of his time. The party winds down in Section VII and, in Section VIII, the poem finally comes around to the second question posed at the outset: "Shall coming time enhance / Through favoring influence, or abate / Character picturesquely great – / That rumored age whose scouts advance?" (vv. 538-540). Can a woolen-shirted Garibaldi of today have the heroic status of a Cid Campeador, coated in mail? No answer is furnished, of course, but merely to pose the question in these terms is to cast strong doubts on the role of the artist in modern, industrial, bourgeois society. As subsequent verses make clear once again, these artists are ghosts, and the only surcease from the intrusive demands of the market economy, mechanized travel, and electric communication is the grave, the "Inn of Inns:"

The Inn with greens above the door:
There the mahogany's waxed how bright,
And, under chins such napkins white.
Never comes the mart's intrusive roar,
Nor heard the shriek that starts the train,

Nor teasing telegraph clicks again,
No news is cried and hurry is no more –
For us, whose lagging cobs delay
To win that tavern free from cumber,
Old lads, in saddle shall we slumber?[11]

The question is taken up and further developed in "A Sequel" by a "don" of the club, who openly and sarcastically asserts the overpowering weight of the new economy, "millennium of the busy bee", in crushing all forms of picturesque, including the heroism of any future aspiring Garibaldi: "How would he fare in such a Prime? / By Jove, sir, not so bravely, see! / Never he'd quit his trading trips, / Perchance, would fag in trade at desk, / Or, slopped in slimy slippery sludge, / Lifelong on Staten Island drudge" (vv. 629-634). The utopian, Transcendentalist optimism of another callow youth – "a cultured wight / Lucid with transcendental light" – that the present Iron Age will be followed inevitably by a Golden one, meets with the elder club-man's scorn: "Delving days, Sir, heave in sight – / Digging days, Sir; and, sweet youth, / They'll set on edge the sugary tooth: / A treadmill – Paradise they plight" (vv. 643-646).[12]

This critique of bourgeois, industrial society, for which the apparent discussion of artistic problems, given its confessed inconclusiveness, provided no more than a pretext, prepares the way for Jack Gentian's experience of Naples, in the course of which he, too, as we shall see, is haunted by phantoms from the past, no less than the toper at Delmonico's. His role as mock popular hero in Section I of "Naples in the Time of Bomba" parodies Garibaldi's:

[11] Vv. 556-565. Strange that none of the literature on "Hostelry" seems to have caught the graveyard humor in these lines.

[12] The passage recalls Melville's meeting in Florence with "a singular young man who speaks 6 or 8 languages. He presented me with a flower, and talked like one to whom the world was delightful. May it prove so" (Herman Melville, *Journal of a Visit to Europe and the Levant: October 11, 1856 - May 6, 1857*, Howard C. Horsford, ed. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955], 220).

But I, Jack Gentian, what reck I,
The popular hero, object sole
Of this ovation! – I aver
No viceroy, king, nor emperor,
Panjandrum Grand, conquistador –
Not Caesar's self in car aloft
Triumphal on the Sacred Way,
No, nor young Bacchus through glad Asia borne,
Pelted with grapes, exulted so
As I in hackney-landau here
Jolting and jouncing thro' the waves
Of confluent commoners who in glee
Good natured passed before my prow.
(vv. 56-68)

The fleeting honors accorded to the "hero" in his landau contrast with the use of the military to enforce the will of the Bourbon monarch – a power challenged but stronger and less dependent on public fancy:

A pageant, ay, of hectoring arms!
Nor less queer apprehensions peep.
For, spite bravado, see, they squint
Sidelong, in vulpine craven sort,
On either flank at louring brows
Of rag-tag who before their sortie
Divide in way how all unlike
Their parting late before my wheels!
(vv. 109-116)

Sections I through IV contrast an oppressed populace, struggling to hold on to its *gioia di vivere*, with the armed apparitions of state might, such as the vulgar soldiery tramping through the streets and the cannons of the Angevin Keep trained on the plebeian quarters of the city rather than on the sea approach (vv. 84-86). Even this apparatus of state violence, as Melville knew when he was writing, was destined to be overthrown four years later. Typical of the contrast between existential blitheness and

social suffering in Sections I-IV is the appearance of a street acrobat, standing on his head, "Reversed in stature, legs aloft, / And hobbling jigs on hands for heels – / Gazed up with blood-shot brow that told / The tension of that nimble play – / Gazed up as martyred Peter might" (vv. 28-32).[13] Still more poignantly, in Section III Jack is sexually tempted by the singing and the sight of a boy[14] near a wine shop but is restrained by his awareness of the dangers posed by the repressive social climate:

> Who sings? Behold him under bush
> Of vintner's ivy nigh a porch,
> His rag-fair raiment botched and darned
> But face much like a Delphic coin's
> New disinterred with clinging soil.
> Tarnished Apollo! – But let pass.
> Best here be heedful, yes, and chary,
> Sentiment nowadays waxeth wary,
> And idle the ever-cooked *Alas.*
> (vv. 200-208)[15]

Nevertheless, although with hindsight Melville knew that the Naples regime would be toppled, hopes for a Golden Age paled before the sight of Vesuvius on the other side of the Bay, a permanent reminder of the natural limits placed on human happiness and the scope of social engineering in the interest of reform (Section V):

[13] Saint Peter is believed to have been crucified upside down, at his own request.

[14] Strangely, Shurr seems to take him for some sort of wino, a "battered derelict" (*The Mystery of Iniquity*, 219): he offers no explanation of the episode.

[15] Especially considering that Jack Gentian is an authorial projection whose tour of Naples resembles Melville's own in February 1857, one is struck by the fact that the homoeroticism of these lines goes unmentioned in critical literature, even by Melville scholars interested in the role of sexuality in his works. All the more so since examination of the original manuscripts reveals that following the above-quoted lines, two pages of text were suppressed (Section III is the shortest one of the poem). Stein, instead, interprets the singer as a panderer, pimping for the "dulcet Donna" (*Poetry*, 254), but it is certainly the "tarnished Apollo", and not the "mellower graces" (v. 195) of the mature woman, that awakens Jack's desire.

> What Mohawk of a mountain lours!
> A scalp-lock of Tartarean smoke
> Thin streaming forth from tawny brow,
> One heel on painted Pompeii set,
> And one on Hercules' whelmed town!
>
> The Siren's seat for pleasurists lies
> Betwixt two threatening bombardiers,
> Their mortars loaded, linstocks lit –
> Vesuvius yonder – Bomba here.
> Events may Bomba's batteries spike:
> But how with thee, sulphureous Hill
> Whose vent far hellward reaches down!
> (vv. 272-283)

The implication of these lines, with the all-American comparison of Vesuvius to a Mohawk Indian, is that the optimistic aspirations of democratic revolutions to peace and justice founder on deep-rooted natural propensities, lurking not only in subterranean beds of magma but, symbolically, in the depths of the human heart.

From Section VI on, the emphasis shifts from state violence and the oppression of the populace to include references to the revolutionary response such violence awakens at intervals in the course of human history. In the midst of one of several scenes of merriment, an acrobat arrives like a divine messenger: "like Mercury dropped from heaven, / Precipitate there a tumbler flew, / Alighting on winged feet" (vv. 337-339), singing significant verses:

> "Over mines, by vines
> That take hot flavor
> From Vesuvius –
> Hark, in vintage
> Sounds the tabor!
>
> "In brimstone-colored
> Tights or breeches

There the Wag-Fiend
Dancing teaches.

....

"Which wine drinking,
Drowning thinking,
Every night-fall,
Heard in Strada,
Hiss the doves
And coos the adder!"

(vv. 342-365)

The lines sung by this street-singer accompany a dance "in hornpipe of the gamesome kid", meaning Pan, an ominous Pan whose breeches are of the color of brimstone and whose message is infernal. The poem, guardedly, tells a revolutionary tale. Wine, flavored by Vesuvius, the "sulphureous Hill / Whose vent far hellward reaches down!" (vv. 281-282), inflames the spirits of the masses, drawing symbolically on deep, instinctual drives to violence. Their actions are manipulated by Pan's revolutionary choreography; the dance he teaches is certainly the carmagnole (named explicitly in v. 468). Established order is overturned: doves hiss,[16] snakes coo (vv. 364-365).[17]

Political violence is further exemplified by historical reference to Queen Joanna of Naples in the following Section VII. She is twining a cord of silk and gold to throttle her husband Andrea, but while she coos reassuringly, there is "Eve's serpent twined / In that same sleek and shimmering cord" (vv. 392-393). A further historical reference, this time to ancient Rome, offers still another case of disorder and injustice in the exercise of political power: Agrippina was "the truest woman ever wed" but

[16] Previous additions have "kiss" here, but context, as well as a close examination of the original manuscript, bears my reading out.

[17] The political implications of the lines are guaranteed by the allusion to Matthew 10:16: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves".

was exiled by Emperor Tiberius to Pandataria (today called Ventotene) to die of poverty and deprivation.

A third, extended reference in the same section is to the 1647 revolt led by Masaniello, famous still today in the annals of Neapolitan folk history, in which Melville (anachronistically) has two painters, Salvator Rosa and Aniello Falcone[18] take active part, along with a mob of generally unsavory revolutionaries, "banded all / In league as violent as the sway / Of feudal claims and foreign lords / Whose grinding heel provoked the spark / That fired the populace into flame" (vv. 450-456). Masaniello's hold on some semblance of power was hardly less fleeting than Jack Gentian's glory ride through a Neapolitan lane:

The darling of the mob; nine days
Their great Apollo; then, in pomp
Of Pandemonium's red parade,
His curled head Gorgoned on the pike,
And jerked aloft for God to see.
A portent. Yes, and typed the years
Red after-years, and whirl of error
When Freedom linkt with Furies raved
In Carmagnole and cannibal hymn,
Mad song and dance before the ark
From France imported with *The Terror*!
To match the poison, mock the clime,
Hell's cornucopia crammed with crime!

(vv. 460-472)

The violence of the oppressors causes but, in Melville's view, does not justify the violence of the oppressed. Although young, attractive, solar, Masaniello is explicitly invoked as a "portent", the word used for the insurrectionary John Brown in Melville's poem by the same name. Handsome Masaniello is a harbinger and forewarning of more enduring, more violent revolutionary movements, specifically the French Revolution and, of course,

[18] Neither of these painters shows up at the Delmonico symposium.

the *Risorgimento*.[19] Melville alludes here to the fierce political struggles in the city and kingdom of Naples toward the end of the 18th century, leading to the French inspired creation of the short-lived Parthenopean Republic and its destruction, abetted by England. His reading of history is clearly contentious, however, for the importers of the French Revolutionary ideals of Liberty, Fraternity and Equality, were aristocratic idealists, not given to state terror. They were opposed by a blood-thirsty mob of riffraff, led by the reactionary Cardinal Ruffo; a number of well-born Republicans, such as Admiral Annibale Caracciolo and *Donna* Eleonora Pimentel Fonseca were executed.

Melville's point, however, is more general, less concerned with getting historical detail straight or assigning specific blame. Rightly or wrongly, he feels that revolution can only mean disorder; it unleashes man's deep-seated urges to mayhem and violence.

Not that Melville is ranged on the side of state power, which he would seem to see as often violent and unjust in both its monarchical and democratic or republican varieties. He despises the lackeys of the Neapolitan regime, both clerical and lay, such as the "Jesuit grave, genteelly sleek / In dapper small-clothes and fine hose / Of sable silk, and shovel-hat, / Hard by a doctor of the law, / In sables, too, with parchment cheek; / A useful man to lawless power, / Expert to legalize the wrong" (vv. 541-547). But he is even more fearful of the revolutionists, all the more violent because of their lack of political legitimacy and authority.

What, then, of the third way, the idealists? In Melville's view, they are doomed to be crushed. At the sudden appearance of more armed troops, cowing the sullen civilians, and led by a ludicrous drum-major, "A braggadocio Bourbon-Draco!" (v. 636), a young

[19] Melville's attitude, late in life, to revolution can perhaps be gathered from the following remarks in *Billy Budd*: "[T]he bluejackets, to be numbered by thousands, ran up with huzzahs the British colors with the union and cross wiped out; by that cancellation transmuting the flag of founded law and freedom defined, into the enemy's red meteor of unbridled and unbounded revolt. Reasonable discontent growing out of practical grievances in the fleet had been ignited into irrational combustion as by live cinders blown across the Channel from France in flames" (*Billy Budd, Sailor*, Chapter 3).

street entertainer alludes to them ironically in his song. He is warned by a motherly woman of the populace to mind his tongue, or he might be thrown into the "egg". The Naples regime imprisoned its critics in a huge castle in full view of the whole town, the still-standing *Castel dell'Ovo* (Egg Castle), a monument to the futility and risks of even verbal protest:

> *Castel dell'Ovo* here was meant,
> The oval fortress on the bay,
> Hiving its captives in sea-cells;
> Nor patriots only, plotters deemed,
> But talkers, rhymesters, every kind
> Of indiscreetly innocent mind.
> (vv. 667-672)

The subject is taken up again in the poem "Pausilippo", originally part of "Naples in the Time of Bomba" but later pulled and published separately. There the figure of Silvio Pellico, stricken in purse, mind and body, has only formally survived political oppression. Of course, his presence as a busker in Naples is totally anachronistic; nor was he a victim of the Naples regime but of the Austrians. Once again, Melville is not especially interested in getting all the historical facts right; other inaccuracies could be pointed out in the poem.

Then comes an extraordinary scene: the anti-governmental murmurings of the populace after the parade has gone by are quelled by a tiny religious procession, the holy communion being carried by a priest and acolytes to the bedside of someone who was dying: "So thin a thing as a wafer ... proves of far more efficacy in bringing a semi-insurgent populace to their knees than all the bombs, bayonets, and fusillades of the despot of Naples" (headnote XI):

> A hush falls; and the people drop
> Stilly and instantaneous all
> As plumps the apple ripe from twig
> And cushions motionless in sod.
> My charioteer reins short – transfixed;

The very mountebanks, they kneel;
And idlers, all along and far,
Bow over as the *host* moves on –
Bow over, and for time remain
Like to Pompeian masquers caught
With fluttering garb in act of flight,
For ages glued in deadly drift.
(vv. 709-720)

At this point, the poem comes round again to Garibaldi, whence it had begun at the start of "At the Hostelry". He, after all, was the exception, a successful revolutionary, having knocked Bomba's son, King Francis II, from his throne. Already in *Mardi* (Ch. 161) Melville touched upon the 1848 revolutions that had left no European capital unscathed:

> With the utmost delight, these tidings were welcomed by many; yet others heard them with boding concern.... Those, too, there were, who rejoiced that the kings were cast down; but mourned that the people themselves stood not firmer. A victory, turned to no wise and enduring account, said they, is no victory at all. Some victories revert to the vanquished.

Revolution in Europe is compared to an eruption – "all Porpheero's volcanoes are bursting". Here we can see an early manifestation of the ideas and imagery Melville would use, many years later, in "At the Hostelry" and "Naples in the Time of Bomba":

... the Red Shirt proved signal apt
Of danger ahead to Bomba's son,
And presently freedom's thunder clapt,
And lo, he fell from toppling throne –
Fell down, like Dagon on his face,
And ah, the unfeeling populace!
("Naples in the Time of Bomba", vv. 736-741)

The ironic treatment of post-revolutionary Italy with which "At the Hostelry" both opened and closed conditions one's reading

of these lines. The populace are unfeeling not simply because, as was to be expected, they show no regrets over King Francis's loss (not at the time, at least) but also because they show no distress at having been expropriated once again, exchanging one tyranny for another, the Bourbons for "Despotic *Biz*", the "treadmill". Garibaldi won the battles, but Cavour won the peace:

But he the hero was a sword
Whereto at whiles Cavour was guard.
The point described a fiery arc,
A swerve of wrist ordained the mark.
Wise statesmanship, a ruling star
Made peace itself subserve the war
("At the Hostelry", vv. 45-50)

If Garibaldi is a sword, the wrist that moves it is Cavour's. In any case, one recalls, and "At the Hostelry" mentions (vv. 17-18), that Garibaldi rode into Naples, not on a white horse but in a railway car, the typical symbol of industrialism. Some few years after unification, before withdrawing from politics, Garibaldi, from the parliamentary benches of the Left, poignantly but rather ineffectually blasted the government, which had – he said – enthralled the South with a reign of terror worse than the Bourbons. Although I do not suggest that Melville necessarily knew this fact of Italian domestic politics, in the weird close to the poem the dead liberator is depicted as a phantom, heroic but politically impotent, whose figure recedes from memory, a disquieting symbol of how hard it is for the people to take power and create a truly democratic government:

But Garibaldi: – Naples' host
Uncovers to her deliverer's ghost,
While down time's aisle, mid clarions clear
Pale glory walks by valor's bier.
(vv. 741-744)

Sergio Jovele

George Sterling: from Socialism to Scepticism

Little has been written about the adoptive Californian George Sterling (1869-1926), a poet of considerable fame in life and a half-forgotten provincial phenomenon in death. What critical literature does exist is largely centred upon limited aspects of his personality, poetry and thought. Most notably, George Sterling is remembered as a leading bohemian figure, for his literary associations, for his poetic quest for beauty in archaic verses. These aspects are true beyond doubt, yet they seem to simplify the poet's personality excessively and to neglect the philosophy and politics that were at the heart of Sterling's thought and work.

In this essay, I intend to discuss Sterling's overtly political poetry and shall do so by taking into consideration, for obvious limits of space, only a small number of the relevant works. I shall analyse them in the light of his socialist ideals and of his increasing pessimism, especially in the years leading up to his death.

From East to West

George Sterling was born in Sag Harbor, Long Island, to well-off parents. When he was seventeen his parents converted from Episcopalianism to Roman Catholicism. The new faith was taken up with obsessive fervour by the Sterlings, so much so that George was sent to a Catholic school to study for the priesthood. At St. Charles College he was put under the guidance of Father John Bannister Tabb. There is little doubt that Father Tabb's

passion for the Romantics, Dante, Petrarch and the classics left a mark on the personality and, later, on the poetic style of Sterling. In 1890 he left his religious studies unfinished and moved to California to work in his uncle's estate agent business.

Together with his friend Roosevelt Johnson, Sterling introduced himself into the literary and political world of San Francisco. Among their acquaintances were the older California poet Joacquin Miller and Ambrose Bierce, writer and columnist. From the beginning of his poetic production, Sterling sought the advice of Bierce, and a profound mentor-pupil relationship developed. This relationship faded in the years leading up to Bierce's disappearance in Mexico in 1913, when Jack London and Upton Sinclair seem to have had a greater impact on the poet's personality.

Sterling remained actively involved in the cultural life of San Francisco until his death by suicide in 1926 but became increasingly frustrated by the lack of interest the East Coast editors and publishers continued to show towards his poetry on account of its old-fashioned style. In November 1926, afflicted by ill health, alcoholism and waning popularity, Sterling swallowed cyanide in his room at the Bohemian Club of San Francisco.

The Role of Ambrose Bierce

What I propose to do here is to question the importance of Bierce's influence over Sterling's politics and aesthetics. I do not intend to challenge the fact that Bierce left a mark on Sterling's poetry but whether it is true that, as Thomas E. Benediktsson writes, "Bierce's influence made it impossible for him to believe in the perfectibility of men".[1] I shall try and demonstrate that this is not the case for Sterling, at least up until World War I.

The first documented signs of Sterling's political interest come through Bierce's letters of the beginning of the century. On December 16, 1901 Bierce began the run of anti-socialist

[1] Thomas E. Benediktsson, *George Sterling* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 26.

propaganda that would continue throughout his long correspondence with Sterling:

> Of course I deplore your tendency to dalliance with the demagogic muse. I hope you will not set your feet on the dirty paths – leading nowhere – of social and political "reform".... I hope you will not follow *** in making a sale of your poet's birthright for a mess of "popularity". If you do I shall have to part company with you....[2]

The above passage gives a clear indication of Bierce's generalised condemnation of any progressive social criticism. Later in the same letter Bierce provides a more direct reply to Sterling's ideas: "Let the 'poor' alone – they are oppressed by nobody but God. Nobody hates them, nobody despises. 'The rich' love them a deal more than they love one another".[3] Bierce returns to these same matters in a letter dated March 15, 1902, in which he not only urges Sterling to forget about the poor, political reform and socialism but expresses eloquently his own vision of humanity:

> Don't fiddle-faddle with such infinitesimal and tiresome trivialities as (for example) the immemorable squabbles of "rich" and "poor".... Let [the poor] cheat and pick pockets and cut throats to the satisfaction of their base instinct, but do thou regard them not.... Yes, circumstances made the "rich" what they are. And circumstances make the "poor" what they are.... As a rule, the wealthy man of to-day was a poor devil yesterday; the poor devils of to-day have an equal chance to be rich tomorrow – or they would if they had equal brains and providence. The system that gives them the chance is not an oppressive system....[4]

[2] Ambrose Bierce, *The Letters of Ambrose Bierce*, edited by Bertha Clark Pope, with a Memoir by George Sterling (San Francisco: The Book Club of California, 1922), 49, letter dated December 16, 1901. It seems likely that the name omitted is that of Jack London, Sterling's closest friend.

[3] Ibid., 50.

[4] Ibid., 51, letter dated March 15, 1902.

It is clear now that Bierce was a determinist; human kind is shaped by external circumstances. For Bierce humanity has developed following a Darwinist pattern and the competitiveness of the capitalist system is for him a "blessing to the race by gradually weeding out the incompetent and their progeny".[5] The capitalist system is the inevitable product of nature.

What about Sterling's poetic production in the period contemporary with and immediately after his correspondence with Bierce? In his poetry, did he heed Bierce's anti-socialist admonishments? Did Sterling's verses concern themselves uniquely with "unearthly matters", as his mentor's aesthetics required? I would generally answer negatively to both questions, for even when Sterling wrote of suns and planets – as he did in his most acclaimed work *The Testimony of the Suns*,[6] published in 1904 – his poetic astrological considerations were in reality a song about humanity. It is true that Sterling often followed Bierce's stylistic advice and accepted many of his corrections, but such direct influence did not go beyond prosody. This, however, I may not be able to prove conclusively in the present essay, given the limits of space. At the same time, I trust that the political character of Sterling's poetry, especially its keen socialist thrust, will emerge clearly.

The Years of the Carmel Artist Colony

The poem "Of America" can provide a good introduction to Sterling's political work and thought, for it marks the beginning of a politically active period in the poet's life. The poem, written on January 1st, 1908, was published in the 1909 volume *A Wine of Wizardry and Other Poems*. In 1907 Sterling had moved from San Francisco to Carmel, where in the middle of a pine grove he built his own cottage. Soon after, most of the artist community of San Francisco followed Sterling's example; they settled in the woods

[5] Ibid.

[6] George Sterling, *The Testimony of the Suns and Other Poems* (San Francisco: A. M. Robertson, 1904).

surrounding the poet's cottage creating a close community that is now remembered as the Carmel Artist Colony.

The political character of Sterling's community is confirmed by several accounts to be found in the memoirs of various "Carmelites". For instance, Mary Austin writes of evenings spent around the campfire talking of sexual freedom and social revolution.[7] One is scarcely surprised at Bierce's sceptical reaction, as expressed in a letter to Sterling dated December 11, 1908:

> Your account of the movement to free the oppressed and downtrodden ... tickled me in my lonesome rib. Surely no colony of reformers ever engaged in a more characteristic crusade against the established order and intolerable conditions.... I feel sure that whenever you Socialers shall have found a way [for] the earth [to] stop... you will accomplish all the reforms that you have at heart.[8]

Retiring into a close community away from the toil and exploitation of the working class is probably in itself not an orthodox choice for a socialist. Yet, I would see the Carmel community, in the tradition of the utopian socialists, as a place where artists could produce their work free from the pressures of the capitalist society. It is true that the Carmel Artist Colony became a place where self-indulgence often had the better over political motives, but this happened years after its foundation. The important fact remains that during the years spent in Carmel and in those immediately after, Sterling produced a remarkable number of poems expressing his vision of society, history and progress. There, Sterling was in the company of other socialists and often received the visits of Upton Sinclair and Jack London.

"Of America", which the general unavailability of Sterling's works obliges us to quote here almost in its entirety, is a poem in blank verse divided into two longer stanzas, respectively of

[7] Mary Austin, *Literary America: The Mary Austin Letters*, Selected and Edited by T. M. Pearce (Greenwood Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979), 55.

[8] Bierce, *Letters*, 152, letter dated December 11, 1908.

twenty-four and twenty-two lines, and a closing stanza of four lines:

Cry some, in seeming wisdom of the hour:
"Not Babylon, nor Karnak in her pomp,
Knew fairer paths to doom than thou. Thy skies
Are gentleness. Incessantly the fates
Hold thee in kindest scrutiny. Thy feet
Tread sunward, God being wroth with thee at last,
Allotting thee no more His sterner ways
And cleanly times of war. For now He grants
The recompense of battle – pleasant years,
And such reward as age discerns. Grown soft,
Thy hands reach out for mercenary joys;
Thy heart desires dishonorable loves
And baser dreams. Yearly the golden chain
Is weightier at thy wrists, and fostered Pow'rs
Plan in their dusk of tyranny thy tomb;
And in that shadow Mammon's eyes grow fierce,
And half thy sons adore him. Now the land
Grows vile, and all thy statehood is a mart....
So passed the elder empires. So thy might –
O thou too blesséd in immediate wealth! –
Ebbs with the day, till night behold thy doom,
Nor feels the menace of that lethal time
When sinks the day-star of senescent realms,
Slow-westering in splendors of decay".

Let men arraign thy worth: yet Man has found
Till now no ampler heavens than thine, nor years
Made safe for purer purpose to the race.
Our fathers builded well, and tho' our walls,
To children of the fairer days to come,
Be seen the least foundation of the plinth
Wherefrom, assoiled, our sons to be shall rear
That final Temple to confront the skies,
Nathless, to each his own, to every age
Its war: their dust is equal at the last!

And thou, thou hast the daylight still in dow'r;
The dews are young upon thy leafy crown;
We love thee for thy youth, believing still
That nobler mornings wait thy sovereign eyes;
That Time, in expiation, yet shall crown
The sordid years with Brotherhood, and we
Walk sane at last, nor strive as wolves or swine
Each for his glut, and heedless each of all.
We trust thy Fates, nor dread the hidden years,
Beholding radiance about thy brow –
Beautiful light, whose rays reveal thy strength,
And yet shall consecrate that strength to Man.

Thus hope we, though the vatic past appal,
And Wisdom whisper but dismay; so trust,
Being as voyagers whose mist-held eyne
See not the Star, yet know the Star abides.[9]

Stylistically, this poem conforms to most of Sterling's poetic production, down to his customary iambic pentameter. What is rather peculiar to this poem, though, is the repeated use of enjambement, in contrast to his usual preference for end-stopped lines. All this being said, I propose to examine the three stanzas, overlooking those stylistic features without any direct bearing on our reading.

With the first line Sterling sets himself apart from the "cry" that occupies the whole of the first stanza. Not that he disagrees with the explicit social criticism, but he distances himself from the pessimists. In fact, in the last four lines of the poem, he expresses his "hope" despite the "wisdom" of the initial "cry". In other words, he shares the analysis of society expressed in the first stanza but then disagrees as to the gloominess of human prospects.

In the second stanza, speaking in the first person and without quotation marks, Sterling stands aloof from those who are not

[9] George Sterling, *A Wine of Wizardry and Other Poems* (San Francisco: A. M. Robertson, 1909), 60-62.

focusing directly on the state of things as they are: "let men arraign". He is more concerned with the vision of the "Brotherhood" that lies beyond this stage of civilisation. Unlike Bierce and many other contemporaries, he does not consider capitalism as the highest state of civilisation and the end of history but only as a transitory stage. He also expresses his belief, in this case similar to Marx's, that to achieve socialism society must first go through the moil and oppression of capitalism. The connection between the fairer world of "brotherhood" and capitalism comes out clearly in the lines leading to the end of the second stanza. Here, Sterling tells us that it is only in the course of "Time" that the "sordid" years shall lead to "Brotherhood". At the same time, these lines betray Sterling's distance from a strict Marxian vision of history. Indeed, Sterling does not go so far as to recognise the crucial, revolutionary force of the working class in the fight for the fairer world. For the poet, "Time" is something of an automatic force operating independently from any conscious human intervention.

In the initial lines of the second stanza, as so often in his poems, Sterling is amazed at the achievements of technological progress which, if rightly used, could alleviate the toils of humanity: "And yet shall consecrate that strength to Man". The line reflects a belief, becoming more common at that time, not only among Marxists, that indeed technological progress was a powerful force but would only be beneficial to mankind if properly used.

Coming back now to the "cry" of the opening stanza, with its lines of condemnation of a certain America, I would like to start by drawing attention to the deadly, catastrophic tone of these twenty-four lines, conveyed by words such as "tomb" or "doom". The physical and moral decadence of the America that is here attacked is in sharp contrast with the optimism to which Sterling gives voice in the following verses, hence the separation I have focused on earlier. At the heart of these lines is a condemnation of the slavish nature of the pleasures of this America and the consequences this behaviour will have on the future. Sterling, however, is not talking of America as a generalised entity, as a uniform mass of people bearing equal

responsibility. In line seventeen he specifies that "half thy sons adore him [Mammon]" and again in lines ten and eleven, the poet addresses those whose hands have "Grown soft", which we can interpret as the result of the toils they have been spared. Although a straightforward reference to society's class division is not present anywhere in the poem, there is sufficient ground to suggest Sterling's awareness of the actual existence of such a division. His address to America as a whole is a rhetorical stratagem to talk to those who have the nation in their grip.

The poem is important and significant for two reasons. Firstly, Sterling introduces political considerations – e.g. on technology, the perfectibility of human nature – that will be expanded in works to come. Secondly, by the way the lines are structured - with the division between voices and tones marked by the two main stanzas – we can see the poem as a reply to those with whom Sterling shared a certain vision of the *things-as-they-are* but not that of the *things-as-they-will-be*. From this point of view Sterling responds to the complacent attitude of those, like Bierce, who considered capitalist society as the highest possible stage of human civilisation. For Sterling as for the revolutionary socialists, capitalism is only a transitory stage in human history but, unlike the Marxists, he does not appear to recognise the fundamental part to be played by the working class in bringing about the change.

The political character we find in "Of America" will be more widely present in later collections like *The Caged Eagle and Other Poems*, in which Sterling expressed political considerations alongside reflections upon the nature of progress. Ultimately, he theorised his own politics in the prose essay *Pleasure and Pain!*

The Outbreak of War

The year 1914 represented a turning point in the poet's life. This is the year in which Sterling's Carmel experience drew to a close. With the end of the Carmel period came also Sterling's divorce from his wife Carrie who, for years, had devotedly

tolerated Sterling's many extra-marital relationships. Four years later Carrie committed suicide.

In this same year Sterling's frustration towards the publishers and editors of the East Coast, due to their persistent disinterest in his poetry, became more acute than ever before. In an attempt to have greater impact on this reluctant publishing world, Sterling decided to travel to New York. His permanence on the East Coast had no consequence insofar as the cold reception of his poetry went. There, however, Sterling spent time with his friend and comrade Upton Sinclair and with him joined the picket-line outside the Standard Oil Building to protest against the violent repression of a miners' strike in Colorado.

Sterling did not resist long in such a hostile land and, comforted by the thought of a friendly environment, appreciative of his art, he returned to San Francisco. There he had another volume of poetry published, *Beyond the Breakers and Other Poems*.[10]

The beginning of World War I came as a blow to the quiet personality of Sterling who, deeply shaken by the brutality of the conflict, started to dedicate a growing number of poems to themes of war and peace. Already in 1914, Sterling included a pacifist poem entitled "Christmas Under Arms"[11] in the collection *Beyond the Breakers and Other Poems*. Not only is the poem a clear condemnation of the absurdity of war, but also the expression of Sterling's growing political awareness. The opening stanza leaves little doubt that Sterling is seeking to address the common man:

> By the star that led kings to His feet in the night of His birth,
> Put ye no trust in kings nor the mighty ones of the earth!
> Put ye no trust in prayer nor abase ye unto the Past –
> By the star of the mind alone shall your sons see clear at last!

The poem is made out of seven stanzas of four lines and one of eight lines. One stylistic aspect is however most striking, and that

[10] George Sterling, *Beyond the Breakers and Other Poems* (San Francisco: A. M. Robertson, 1914).

[11] Ibid., 43-46.

is the irregularity of the foot throughout the poem. Normally, Sterling is rather a purist in his adherence to traditional poetic diction, which makes the stylistic choice of this particular poem the more remarkable. Such a shift towards the tradition of *ballads* and popular poetry might be seen as Sterling's attempt to address a broader readership. I believe there is here sufficient ground to sense Sterling's anxiety over the distance that existed between his poetic language and the expectations of those he wished to address.

Leaving such stylistic matters aside, I would like to draw attention to the poet's call to the common man and his warning not to be fooled by religion and the "mighty ones of the earth". The class division, clearer than in "Of America", between "ye" and the "mighty ones", given the context, bears relevant socialistic connotations. Furthermore, Sterling's urging not to "trust" "kings" or religion, to leave the humiliation of the past behind and follow the "star of the mind" seems to be a call to the common man to gain control over his life, to free himself collectively from the constrictions of religion and society. Such a reading is supported by the third line, most notably by the invitation not to be tempted by the passive, self-indulgent act of praying. Here, again, there is the hope that reason will prevail over the darkness of the present. In the second stanza the verses seem to call on the conscience of the people to whom the first stanza is addressed:

> Who are we that we make us a feast, or say of the years, "They are ours!"
> As the lost might revel in Hell and bind their fore-heads with flowers?
> Wherefore now are we glad, when the nations toil in their night,
> Seeking them battle-music and engines grievous to smite?

The political character of this poem rests mainly in Sterling's distancing himself from the horrors of war and from those who are responsible for them. Not only is he making his anti-war point, but he is inviting the reader, the common people, to do the same. Sterling's political stance is the more important if set into an historical context that saw most socialists, in the belligerent

countries, in favour of war. The poet's denunciation of the "kings" and the "mighty ones" continues in the third stanza:

> A thousand masters are ours, and the weight of a thousand chains;
> We cease not this side death to seek new bondage and pains.
> Him that forgeth the shackles, him we acknowledge as lord,
> And darker over the burdened world falls the shadow of the sword.

Speaking of "masters" and of those who are under the "weight" of the "chains" as two distinct entities not only reinforces the message of the first stanza but also introduces a class division that is completely independent of nationalism. The real enemy here seems to be the "thousand masters", not a nation. Dividing the world into two classes, according to *internationalistic* terms, shows a fundamentally socialist-orientated attitude. War is the result of the clashing aims of the "masters" alone and, consequently, should not be subscribed to by the common people. The very act of challenging obedience to the ruling class and identifying the latter as the cause of war is a sign of Sterling's awareness of the class issue as central to history. For Sterling, it does not appear to be a matter of enlightened or oppressive "masters", for "masters" are in themselves unacceptable. This principle is reinforced in lines three and four, through the continuity between the birth of a master and the shadow of swords. What is expressed here is not a message of restraint over the forces of liberation but one of warning against the *crowning* of new "masters". If all masters are inherently oppressors we cannot but conclude that an equal society – classless, if you will – is the only way forward.

In the fourth stanza, Sterling says that there seems to be no difference between one cannon and another, no such thing as aggressor and defender:

> Cannon arraigneth cannon, and fort is answer to fort,
> Death sits silent and masked by the cliffs and dunes of the port;
> They gird themselves in the East to the day when their battleships go forth;

> And there comes no pause in the thunder of the forges of war in the North.
> Whither, O Man! say whither may the steel-girth highway lead!
> We have made of the past a shambles red and a place where vultures feed.
> Nay! must it ever be thus with the hope and promise of Life –
> Ever the agony, ever the waste and the hatred and blindness of strife?

The universal nature of the horrors of war is emphasised by the way such horrors appear to spread across the world – as we shall also see in the following stanza – bringing equal death and destruction. Again in these lines, as in the second stanza, Sterling wonders about the nature of progress and humanity. His questions, however, are now more generally addressed to "Man". Here he is not talking to the whole of mankind but rather to those same people – earlier referred to as "ye" – who hold no responsibility for the destructive force of war, thus attempting to awaken them to awareness of the horrors that are going on around them.

Considerations similar to those expressed in the previous lines are also at the heart of the fifth stanza:

> Which way we look is night, and the wind of a great unrest
> Moans on our high-built towers, and passes on to the West.
> Vague in the gloom before us move shadows vaster than man,
> And doubts lay hold on the human host and rumors trouble our van.

The opening line of this stanza confirms that Sterling's horror of the tragedy of war transcends national boundaries. It is not by taking one side or the other that one may serve the good of mankind, but simply by opposing war altogether. Sterling's anti-war position is even more remarkable if compared to his change of attitude towards war – to which I shall return further on – expressed in later poems and, most notably, after the United States intervention in the war in 1917. His present stance was in clear contrast with that assumed by most socialist parties around

the world which, by supporting intervention, brought about a crisis in international socialism.

The poem ends with Sterling's declaration that only "Love and Peace" will grant a purpose to progress:

> Have we builded but for the flame, and sown that Death may reap?
> Shall give our morning to murder and our noon to eternal sleep?
> Answer, Thou who we dream dost abide in the gloom apart! –
> There is no answer, O Man! except in the silence of thy heart!
>
> With thee alone is the answer, and the answer is "Love and Peace!"
> Except the message be heard, the bountiful years shall cease;
> Except the message be honored, a curse shall come to the lands
> Where thou waitest on Christmas morning with a sheathless sword in thy hands!

Faced with the tragedy of war, Sterling questions the very worth of human progress if such progress turns into a means of destruction. It is noticeable that, unlike what is often said, Sterling's is not the attitude of a romantic who opposes all technology and progress in the name of an undefinable idyllic past. On the contrary, he never questions the potential force of technological and scientific progress. His frustration is only with the misuse of such technology. He regards his own era as a new dawn bearing great possibilities for the improvement of society. It is exactly because of this hope that he cares to warn humanity. In other words, Sterling is not at all resigned to a future of oppression and destruction but believes in the possibility of a better world built on "Love and Peace!"

Challenging the Establishment

In 1915 Sterling received a commission to mark the opening of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. He wrote a long poem to which he gave the title *Ode on the Opening of the Panama-Pacific*

International Exposition, made of five numbered parts. The work was first published in a small volume in 1915,[12] and later in the 1916 collection *The Caged Eagle and Other Poems*.[13]

An important aspect of these poems is the openly critical message on the social system. The strength and relevance of the criticism is further enhanced by the celebratory occasion for which it had been written. The whole poem is in fact an open questioning of the worth of technological progress in a society built on exploitation and greed. Formally, in this poem as in "Christmas Under Arms", Sterling preferred the use of the irregular verses typical of popular poetry and *ballads* to that of romantic prosody. Given the length of the poem – two-hundred and sixty verses – I shall be forced to bring into the present essay only those verses most relevant to the discussion. Therefore, I propose to move directly to the third and central part of the poem, seventy-five verses, in which Sterling addresses questions that lie at the heart of the whole work, namely the misuse of technological progress and the unequal social system.

Here he foregrounds his awareness of the class division at the basis of capitalism and of the mechanics that generate it. Sterling is not simply anguished by the widespread presence of poverty and suffering; he is altogether opposed to the very system that he holds directly responsible for these conditions. The following lines, coming after a reflection on the nature of past civilisations, their rises and falls, are significant in this regard:

> And dimly and in few the vision stands
> Of that new City built not on the sands;
> And distant still the sunlight of that Day.
> For walked the Babylonian again
> Within our streets, once more should he behold
> The immeasurable Care,
> That ancient curse of poverty and gold, –

[12] George Sterling, *Ode On the Opening of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition* (San Francisco, 1915).

[13] George Sterling, *The Caged Eagle and Other Poems* (San Francisco: A. M. Robertson, 1916), 87-101.

The selfsame twins of luxury and pain, –
The olden madness of division where
The poor beg work, and beg for it in vain,
And children slave, and stones are given for bread,
While Mammon lolls on cushions of his fat,
Whose glut not all the toil of men can sate.
Amid the tumult and the hate,
None hears the distant menace of the tread
Of one whose hands hold darkness and the dust, –
Whose reign is soon or late, –
Whose hunger with the monarch's pomp is fed, –
Who giveth kingdoms to the moth and rust,
Till o'er the glory, fleeting as breath,
"Lo! I am come!" the Desolation saith.[14]

For Sterling, one man's poverty is not an isolated accident due to his own lack of ability, as Bierce told him in his above-quoted letter of 1902. The inevitability, if so it can be defined, of such social conditions rests only in the economic system created by mankind which is, therefore, changeable.

Let us focus more strictly on the class issues contained in the above verses, starting by the association between "poverty and gold", "luxury and pain". The repetition of this association indicates that Sterling was conscious of the labour exploitation that is at the centre of a socialist critique of capitalist society. In his own eloquent words, "luxury and pain" are "selfsame twins", they are one and the same for without "pain" there would be no "luxury", without "poverty" there would be no "gold". That "poverty" and "luxury" are the expression of a deeper class division is then confirmed in the fourth-to-last verse of the section, where Sterling again links the poor and the "monarch". He gives a more concrete tone to his denunciation by talking of child labour and of the "stones" that are given as remuneration. This is a confirmation of Sterling's understanding of capitalist economics, at the basis of which is the exploitation of the labour force in order to generate surplus value for the few "Mammons"

[14] Ibid., 96-97.

of the "competitive system". Inner to the same mechanics is also the alienation of the working class, namely the worker's loss of control over the products of his or her labour as well as over his or her labour itself. This is also expressed in his denunciation of the absurdity of unemployment: "the poor beg work, and beg for it in vain".

One thing appears quite starkly from the verses we are concentrating on, and that is the poet's disbelief in the imminence of the occurrence of any revolutionary change. On what grounds he bases this idea is hard to tell. One possible explanation can be found in the historical conditions in and around 1915 that saw the savagery of World War I and the decision taken by the Second International, under the influence of Karl Kautsky's *revolutionary fatalism*, to support national governments, which had devastating effects on the international labour movement.

Moving beyond Sterling's doubts about the proximity of social change, I would like to focus on the lines "None hears the distant menace of the tread / Of one whose hands hold darkness and the dust". The political relevance of these two lines lies above all in Sterling's belief that the present unfair economic system will – whether "soon or late" – come to an end. Although in these verses Sterling does not provide any open reference to the working class as the revolutionary subject of such change, he does express the belief that the unfair nature of the system will itself somehow force a change. This passage connects with the lines in which Sterling first asks what force brought down the civilisations of "Pharaohs" and "Kings" and then identifies it in that "they built on self alone!".[15] I believe the connection to be significant, for he recognises that those societies were founded on the greedy exploitation of others as is the capitalist society: all of these were "built on self alone!" However, Sterling does not go so far as to recognise that such change is the fruit of a class struggle, of the conscious revolutionary role of the working class, but rather hints at an historical dynamic in which human agency is not dealt with.

[15] Ibid., 95-96.

The beginning of part IV of the poem is again centred upon Sterling's conviction of the vanity of progress "if love of man for man be not [its] end". Already after a few verses Sterling's political message becomes clearer and specifically addressed against the system:

And poor men hunger on the wasteful street,
And children toil and tire,
And girls go downward to the Social Ill,
And life's design of madness lies complete,
That Greed and Luxury may have their fill!
O dark and cruel State,
Whose towers are altars unto self alone, –
Whose streets with tears are wet,
And half thy councils given unto hate!
Shall Time not hurl thy temples stone from stone,
And o'er the ruin set
A fairer city than the years have known?
Out of thy darkness do we find us dreams,
And on the future gleams
The vision of thy ramparts built anew.[16]

A new element, striking for its explicitness, emerges from these lines in the form of a direct attack on the institutions serving the exploitative system. Associating the fundamental institutions of the nation with "greed", "hate" and "tears" confirms, yet again, that oppression and even prostitution is not due to the conduct of isolated individuals; it is rather the direct product of a strong established system that is in a symbiotic relation with the political institutions and their representatives – "councils". The capitalist system is inherently oppressive and designed, in all its mechanisms and formal institutions, to perpetuate itself. The limits of the parliamentary democracy to which Sterling refers are repeated through the invocation to "Time [to] hurl thy temples stone from stone". "Time" is here, as in previous lines, a force of change; it does not simply bring destruction but also

[16] Ibid., 99.

paves the way to "ramparts built anew" according to "dreams" of brotherhood. At the same time, as we have said earlier, the force of "Time" seems to act automatically, independently of human agency.

In part V, Sterling returns to the question of institutions with a cry for a fairer "State:"

O fairer day that waits,
The splendor of whose dawn we shall not see,
When selfish bonds of family and clan
Melt in the higher love that yet shall be!
O State without a master or a slave,
Whose law of light we crave
Ere morning widen on a world set free![17]

The poet repeats here his scepticism that the occurrence of the change he craves can be hoped for in the near future. More important is, in my view, Sterling's definition of his ideal "State", clearly a classless society. Even more striking is the near-certainty that social institutions such as the family will disappear, to give way to a greater, universal solidarity between individuals – an idea that had been suggested in Engels's *The Origins of Family, Private Property and the State*.

One last consideration I would like to put forward before concluding this section regards the final verses of the poem:

We know the reign of Night shall end at last,
And all the ancient evil lie undone.
O armies of the sun,
Your war is on the darkness and its tears!
Across the gulf of years
We hear your song and see your banners shine.
Know that we too would share your toils divine,
On self and madness hastening their end.[18]

[17] Ibid., 100.
[18] Ibid., 100-101.

Together with the certainty that the "reign of Night shall end" there is the certainty that its end is yet to come. Sterling makes it clear that the change will be the fruit of a "war", of a struggle which will need solidarity and organisation, or, in his words, an "army". This, in my view, shows that he has an understanding not only of the socialist project of society but also of the path to be followed to achieve it. It is to be remarked, however, that this is the first time Sterling provides any direct reference to a human participation in the process of change, which here replaces the belief in the abstract and inevitable force of "Time" expressed earlier. But, even in this case, there is no straightforward identification of the working class as the "army of the sun".

The Caged Eagle and Other Poems also contains, in the poem "Moloch",[19] an open condemnation of poor working conditions and the exploitation of child-labour. Sterling returned to the use of metrically regular verses – in this case he has preferred iambic tetrameters – in a poem that in any case appears accessible and easily readable, with no use of the wild imagery or archaisms of some of his work. The twenty-eight lines of the poem, divided into seven quatrains, describe a scene worthy of Dante's *Inferno*, building up the reader's expectation for a sudden revelation which arrives in the last line. Sterling opens the poem with the description of the place in which he finds himself:

I said, "The dark has come too soon".
I gazed across the marshy waste
To where, by vapors half-effaced,
Sank the southwestern, slender moon.

The vapors brooded on the land,
Too big to sink, too foul to float,
Upcast like poison from the throat
Of one great chimney near at hand.

[19] Ibid., 68-69.

I said, "Within those roaring walls,
What engines gleam, what toils await?
There strength and power serve their fate,
And there a Titan's hammer falls.

"And surely there the fire reveals
What giants at their service bend, –
What thewed endurances attend
The sleepless shuttles and the wheels...."

In meadow-dews and irised flame
Stirred as the lucid morning broke,
And from those portals, black with smoke,
A thousand weary children came!

The condemnation of the use of child-labour and, more generally, of the conditions to which workers have to submit is not just spoken openly but also left for the reader to feel. Sterling centres the whole poem on the growing expectation of the unfolding of a superhuman place and on the shocking appearance of children in the last line. Within this contrast lies Sterling's own horror at the absurdity of child-labour and appalling work conditions.

In regard to the volume containing the above-discussed poem, Benediktsson writes: "If anything, *the Caged Eagle and Other Poems* ... reinforces the impression that Sterling's muse, beset by the double nemesis of genteel tradition and Imagist critics, was in eclipse. Many of the poems betray their popular magazine destinations".[20] If it is true that Sterling attempted to reach a different and wider readership, a reason can indeed be found in the particular political commitment of that period. His desire to reach a wider audience for the political poems included in the *Caged Eagle and Other Poems* should not be reduced to a *craving* for fame. His was a deep and well articulated interest in the conditions of the working class, rooted in his understanding of capitalist economics, not a simple, brotherly attitude towards fellow human

[20] Benediktsson, *Sterling*, 122.

beings. In his essay, Benediktsson suggests that Sterling might have been influenced by Tolstoy's Catholic socialism, basing his assumption on a letter the poet wrote to Upton Sinclair.[21] Yet, between Sterling's political poetry and Tolstoy's ideology there seems to be a fundamental difference: where the former expressed a thoroughly materialistic outlook on humanity, the latter sought change first and foremost in the individual's spirit. If for Sterling there was a clear moral difference between the oppressed and the oppressor, for Tolstoy's each individual held a share of responsibility over an unjust society.

The Disillusionment of War

As the war raged on, so grew Sterling's dismay. In 1917 - the year in which the United States declared war on Germany - he published a whole collection of war poems entitled *The Binding of the Beast and Other War Verse*.[22] The tone of the verses was radically different from that of pacifist poems such as "Christmas Under Arms". The call for peace, for a distancing of the people from their masters expressed in verses written no more than three years earlier is here absent. The 1917 poems were the expression of Sterling's frustration and anger towards Germany which, in the poet's view, appeared to have transcended all imaginable evil. The poet's utter disgust before Germany – accused of all sorts of horrors in the course of its occupation of Belgium – reflected the feelings of the whole nation. Indeed, as a result of the American propaganda, which saw its highest expression in Wilson's address to Congress, the whole nation joined in to support the United States intervention in defence of "democracy [and to] bring peace and safety to all nations".[23]

[21] Ibid., 84.

[22] George Sterling, *The Binding of the Beast and Other War Verse* (San Francisco: A. M. Robertson, 1917).

[23] Woodrow Wilson, "Address to Joint Session of the two Houses of Congress", April 2, 1917. Quoted in: James Joll, *Europe Since 1870, An International History* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 209.

It seems likely that another important reason for Sterling's present shift towards scepticism was the death in 1916 of his long-standing friend Jack London. According to Joseph Noel's *Footloose in Arcadia*,[24] the first meeting between the two literati took place, much to Bierce's disapproval, in 1901. Since then, they established a deep intellectual, political and – as Joan London timidly suggests[25] – maybe even sexual relationship, only brought to an end by London's death.

Sterling's angry and disillusioned approach to war can already be detected in the titles of the individual poems, most of which bear names such as "To Germany" or "Germany in Belgium". No longer does he condemn war in universal terms, calling on the people of the world not to "trust" masters and kings of whatever nationality. If, in "Christmas Under Arms", Sterling came out for the innocence of the common people, in the *Binding of the Beast and Other War Verse* he addresses a nation as a whole, making no difference between masters, people or kings. Stylistically, there is here a return to the most traditional prosody, to the sonnet and the iambic pentameter of his earlier verses. The tone of the whole collection can be typified by the sonnet "Germany in Belgium:"[26]

One after one the veils are torn aside,
Till now we see, as from a sunlit place,
That this is Hell we fight, and not a race.
Lo! these are they that in their lust and pride
Purpose to be our human light and guide!
But these are they from whom Man's humbled face
Is blackened before Heaven with disgrace,
And with their blazon of dishonor dyed.

[24] Joseph Noel, *Footlose in Arcadia: A Personal Record of Jack London, George Sterling and Ambrose Bierce* (New York: Carrick and Evans, 1940).

[25] Joan Hedrick, *Solitary Comrade: Jack London and His Work* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

[26] Ibid., 45.

Say not we are blood-brothers to this Thing
That slays for very cruelty and spite,
Heaping with babes his altar unto Mars! –
This Birth for which polluted Earth might swing
With errant orbit into utter night,
And hide her visage from the sickened stars.

Throughout the whole collection, Sterling accepts war as a necessity, as a lesser evil than Germany. Germany is "Hell ... and not a race". Clearly, within these verses is the feeling that the evil perpetrated by Germany casts doubts over the whole of humanity, challenging the humanistic optimism Sterling had previously believed in. A like idea is expressed in another sonnet with the same title, "Germany in Belgium":[27]

Mankind had dreamed its paltry dream of Hell,
And Satan gloating on a race undone.
Then through our mist of visions drave the Hun,
And on the world a blacker shadow fell.
So shall the fact deride, the truth dispel,
The flimsy web that childish minds have spun,
Till Horror bare her shambles to the sun,
And that be told we whisper as we tell.

God, when we pictured Hell, You must have smiled.
Look down and see: abomination piled
Upon abomination! Flood on flood
Of tears outwrung from innocence and age!
What spite of fiends is in the Teuton rage!
What venoms of the Pit are in their blood!

Within these lines is Sterling's consternation before the evident hatred generated by the conflict, which seems to undermine his hopeful vision of mankind and its future. From this consideration we can derive the poet's forceful expression of belligerence towards Germany, the one nation responsible – at

[27] Ibid., 44.

least in the poet's eyes – for the start of war. Only by regarding Germany as somehow different from the rest of humanity could he preserve a certain, however faint, hope in his fellow men. Contradictory as it may be, Sterling's love for peace, his strong *desire* to hope in humanity is at the heart of this collection. The growing involvement of his own nation in the war, with all the destruction and death, did not allow him the same sort of detached call for peace in the name of universal solidarity against the "masters" which he had uttered a few years earlier. The emotional involvement of the whole nation swept him along and, taking into consideration the historical context and his own personality, it may not be too surprising that in the end Sterling preferred intervention to isolationism.

Conclusion: Socialism Versus Bierce

The open political commitment of a considerable part of his earlier poems faded with the years, turning into a blend of general interest in human nature, political ideas and philosophical concepts (themselves an interesting combination of hedonistic and Schopenhauerian principles) which was expressed in works such as *Lilith: A Dramatic Poem*[28] and later theorised in the essay *Pleasure and Pain!*[29] However, Sterling never renounced his socialist ideals, although it is true that towards his last years his politics lost some of their original coherence. It would be a mistake to underestimate the role played by socialist politics in Sterling's life and work.

Attributing Bierce with the power to undermine Sterling's socialist ideology by turning the latter's belief in humanity into utter scepticism is, in my view, a misinterpretation. I hope I have succeeded in showing the firm socialist basis of at least part of

[28] George Sterling, *Lilith: A Dramatic Poem* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1926).

[29] George Sterling, "Pleasure and Pain!", *Resources of American Literary Study*, University of Maryland, Richmond, vol. III, n. 2 (Autumn 1973).

Sterling's work. It is true that Bierce provided the younger poet with the primary stimulus to write poetry and he helped him with stylistics in his first works, but this should not lead us to believe that Bierce could have kept him from becoming a socialist. Furthermore, those elements not directly connected with socialism that entered Sterling's thought in the years before his death were not – in all likelihood – drawn from Bierce.

It is my hope that the political evidence emerging from this essay may help to identify in Sterling an originality of thought greater than that so far recognised. There is little doubt that what has been said here needs further investigation through the analysis of a larger portion of Sterling's work. For this reason the present essay can only be considered as a first step towards a different reading of Sterling's poetry in the attempt to move away from those interpretations that see the poet as a wild, west-coast Bohemian, off on a romantic, utterly personal trip into a bygone century.

Marco Nieli

Between Symbol and Protest
The Poetics of Otherness in the American Sixties

In order to retrace the progressive disaffiliation of poets and intellectuals from official politics in the American Sixties, we should take the date of President Kennedy's assassination in Dallas, November 22, 1963, as a point of non-return. The official courting of culture inaugurated by Kennedy at the beginning of the decade culminated with Robert Frost's reading at the President's inauguration ceremony in 1961 and coincided with a short but intense period of optimistic expectations and liberal fervour. Nonetheless, Kennedy's undeclared war with Vietnam was the first step towards general disappointment and the opening of a new phase of social conflict. Soon enough, the Berkeley campus confrontations in 1963-64 and the radical evolution of the Free Speech Movement thereafter served to show that the Democratic Party's support among Afro-Americans and students, built in the South, was already deteriorating in the metropolitan ghettos and universities of the North.

Notwithstanding Johnson's Civil Rights Law and his programs of social reform, the protest against what Henry Miller excoriated as the "Air-Conditioned Nightmare" grew manifestly in the following years. The escalation in Vietnam was the catalyst for all kinds of critique against a society that was felt to deny individual freedom and social justice to all. Intellectuals, poets and artists were suddenly compelled to take sides either with the "Movement" or with the Establishment: a neutral or "ivory tower" position was no longer viable.

As a sign of the new times, one of the most promising poets of the so-called "confessional" group, Robert Lowell, who had

done time for conscientious objection against the draft, refused in the middle of the Sixties to read his poems at the White House. Although his best poems, like "For the Union Dead", were not openly political in their subject, the sense of nostalgic indignation against the decay of the country is a recurring concern in much of his poetry:

> The stone statues of the abstract Union Soldier
> Grow slimmer and younger each year –
> Wasp-waisted, they doze over muskets
> And muse through their sideburns…
>
> Shaw's father wanted no monument
> Except the ditch,
> Where his son's body was thrown
> And lost with his "niggers".
>
> …
> When I crouch to my television set,
> the drained faces of Negro school-children rise like balloons.[1]

In Lowell's view, the establishment exalts the past grandeur of American democracy to hide the betrayal of the ideals which inspired it - first of all the legal equality of all races sanctioned by the Civil war. Colonel Shaw's sacrifice, shared with his black troops, is covered by a shoddy veil of rhetoric, in order to conceal the actual condition of "niggers" in the U. S. "For the Union Dead" is still quite traditional in its Romantic linearity, and yet its prominently subjective mood and sense of moral outrage mark a major break with the impersonality and ideological conformism of the typical poetry of the New Critics. Although Lowell would never have taken politics as his central theme, one of the most vivid images of him from the Sixties is in Norman Mailer's *The Armies of the Night*. In this novel Lowell appears as a fascinating though somewhat outmoded

[1] Robert Lowell, "For the Union Dead", in *Selected Poems* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976-1989), 136-137.

homme de lettres, taking part in the anti-Vietnam demonstration in Washington in October 1967, together with a much younger generation of protesters.[2]

Apart from the truism that poetic discourse is in itself political, inasmuch as it always conveys a sense of existential or moral protest against the current state of things, some poems outspokenly make reference to political subjects as their central theme. The proliferation of such "political" poems in the mid-Sixties provides enough evidence as to how the individual "howl" can become articulated protest under the pressure of historical events. The development of many a Beat poet like Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Diane Di Prima, LeRoi Jones and Gary Snyder shows how this is possible. Racial discrimination, mass murder legalized, the sudden visibility of the poor, all demand that poets and intellectuals take their stand in some way or other in denouncing the prevailing public horror.

Generally speaking, we are used to thinking of political poetry as asserting the "otherness" of utopian thinking; the "other" is the new, the advancement of a new type of man and society, that finally discloses the real meaning of history, sealing it with a "the end". This is the way modernist thought works and the traditional Left, even in its Neo-Marxist embodiments, fully subscribes to that point of view. The centralizing effects of such a paradigm on revolutionary practice are well-known; what it brings about in poetry could be described as the search for a comprehensive structure, capable of reducing to unity the heterogeneous patterns of desire expressed through language. As Jerome Rothenberg points out in his "Revolutionary Propositions" (1966), "the political revolutionary sees the breakdown in communication as further evidence of the malaise of the old order & dedicates himself to the re-establishment of a

[2] Lowell's unease with the human and political tone of the scene is well evident in Mailer's words: "He detested tumult – obviously. And therefore saw everything which was hopeless in a rife situation: the dank middle-class depths of the audience, the strident squalor of the mike, the absurdity of talent gathered to raise money – for what, dear God? who could finally know what this March might convey, or worse, purvey, and worst of all – to be associated now with Mailer's butcher boy attack". Norman Mailer, *The Armies of the Night* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1968), 51.

closed system he (or those he speaks for) can control. The demand for closure extends to the work of the poet".[3]

On the contrary, it's easy to prove that the kind of decentralized articulation looked for by the new political subjects emerging in the Sixties (students, Afro-Americans, gays, women) corresponds to a relatively new demand for "openness" expressed in poetry by the most radical experimenters of the decade. Due to the many differences in the poetics of the period, the concept of "openness", first introduced by the Black Mountain poets in the early Fifties,[4] is a very difficult one and does not allow for a general definition. Nonetheless, we can assume as common traits of such poetics: 1) the search for a special kind of order, based on fragmentariness and discontinuity, rather than on linearity and local unity; 2) the insistence on a procedure which prefers process to the final product; 3) the reference to some kind of immanent cosmology in contrast to the modernist bias towards transcendence of form; 4) the request for participation from the reader.[5]

Applied to the political sphere as configured in the pluralistic scene of the Sixties, such strategies appear more adequate than others to represent the multiplication of the desiring subject and the

[3] Jerome Rothenberg, *Pre-faces & Other Writings* (New York: New Directions, 1981), 67.

[4] See, for example, the essay "Projective Verse" by Charles Olson, in David Allen, ed., *The New American Poetry* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), 362-395 and by the same author, *Selected Writings* (New York: New Directions, 1966). Robert Duncan's theoretical writings are collected in the volume *Fictive Certainties* (New York: New Directions, 1980). Useful anthologies are also Ekbert Faas, *Towards a New American Poetics* (Santa Barbara, Cal.: Black Sparrow Press, 1978) and, in Italy, Annalisa Goldoni and Marina Morbiducci, eds., *Black Mountain: poesia & poetica* (Roma: La Goliardica, 1987).

[5] For a more complete analysis of the Postmodern poetics, a point of reference could be C. Altieri, especially *Enlarging the Temple: New Directions in American Poetry During the 1960s* (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press and Associated University Press, 1979). Other more recent works are: Marjorie Perloff, *The Poetics of Indeterminacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Lazlo Géfin, *Ideogram. Modern American Poetry* (Milton Keynes, England: The Open University Press, 1982); Michael Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Mid-Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); J. Conte, *Unending Design: The Forms of Postmodern Poetry* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

displacements of language into the figures of "otherness". As Rothenberg emphasizes, the "otherness" sought for is not only intrinsic to the political dimension of the subject but is also meant as "otherness" from the political sphere itself, that is to say the "other" represented by poetry and its symbolisms:

> The confrontation between poet & political revolutionary moves towards a showdown that the poet seems fated to lose. But their lasting union would signal a turning of history & the reconstitution of Man in Eden.
>
> *Note.* The sign of the Communal Paradise will be that all the languages now spoken by Men will have been made obsolete. This is the prophecy of Apollinaire.[6]

The myth of a "continuous revolution", which from the field of politics extends to the domain of poetics, finds here its most coherent formulation, supported by an historically documented exchange between militant groups and artistic avant-gardes without precedents in the 20th century.[7] The central novelty in the Sixties' weaving of poetics with politics seems indeed to be the conviction that no economic or socio-political change can really amount to something without a corresponding change in the structure of perception and of language itself.[8]

[6] Rothenberg, *Pre-faces*, 67.

[7] On this subject, Jerry Rubin's *Do It!* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970) is surely the most complete witness, since his *yippies* represent the missing link between political groups like the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and the more creative hippies. See also Jerome Rothenberg, *Symposium of the Whole: An Ethnopoetics Reader* (with Diane Rothenberg) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

[8] Paul Breslin's interesting critique of the Sixties' "psycho-political" configuration is based on the argument that the poetics emphasizing spontaneity, experience and naturalness are regressive and dogmatic in their refusal of civilization. According to Breslin, "much of what has been praised for its "openness to experience" has been every bit as narrowly "closed", in its own way, as the poetry it replaced". It could be replied to this that the problem dealt with in the poetry of the period is not that of throwing over the forms of culture and civilization, as establishing a healthy dialectics between them and the opposite polarity of wilderness and unconscious. (Paul Breslin, *The Psycho-Political Muse: American Poetry since the Fifties* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

A direct consequence of this postulate is that the criteria adopted to critically judge poems of protest from our period should be re-configured upon a plurality of patterns, both political *and* poetic.[9] As we will try to show, it is indeed the balance between these two factors that determines the quality of such poems, and not their adhesion to historical truth, their political rhetoric or their correspondence to some abstract idea of craft. The ways in which such a balance can be achieved vary according to the individual poetics, but a helpful distinction can be advanced among three major modes: the satirical, the autobiographical and the mythological.

I. Satires.

One of the most effective ways to avoid the pitfall of political rhetoric is the adoption of a satirical point of view, which introduces some distance from the seriousness of the theme. In Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti, comic descriptions of characters, sarcastic effects, and a visionary taste for the grotesque and the apocalyptic aim at estranging the reader from the public arena and its absurdities. If the economic or political systems pretend to be *the only* viable reality, the distance introduced by satire can be an effective antidote to the many ills of a "one-dimensional" world. Ridiculing the epistemological pretensions of the naive realism of the established culture implies that this world is not the best possible and that others can be conceived (as mere potentialities in our imagination, or also as real possibilities to be won through social change). For example, in Ginsberg's vision, the alternative to the horrors of war are

[9] In this sense, Shaw's negative judgement about the "poetry of protest" from the Sixties appears to clamorously miss the point. It is easy to prove, indeed, that his parameters are external to the works he examines, deriving for the most part from New Critical standards: "Everywhere we see egos asserted, truths debased, reason abandoned and craft ignored". On the contrary, the extraordinary convergence between poetics and politics requires a philosophical redefinition of such concepts as "ego", "truth", "reason" and "craft". Cfr. Robert Shaw, "The Poetry of Protest", in R. Shaw, ed., *American Poetry Since 1960: Some Critical Perspectives* (Chester Springs, Ca.: Dufour Editions, Inc., 1974), 45.

Buddhist kindness and compassion expressed through Whitmanian "adhesiveness" and sexual contact:

> Be kind to the politician weeping in the galleries
> Of Whitehall, Kremlin, White House
> Louvre and Phoenix City
> Aged, large nosed, angry, nervously dialing
> The bald voice box connected to
> Electrodes underground converging thru
> Wires vaster than a kitten's eye can see
> ...
> Sick, dissatisfied, unloved, the bulky
> Foreheads of Captain Premier President
> Sir Comrade Fear![10]

The hypnotic effect produced by the recurring anaphor "Be kind..." is very far from other poets' more caustic tones, yet it contributes to an atmosphere of nostalgic irony, aroused by the Buddhist understanding of the basic nature of mind. The poet's intention is evidently not moral condemnation or political demonizing. Instead, the poem induces us to reflect on the mental attitude that gives rise to war and hatred, in order to prevent us from repeating the same mistakes. If the arrogance of power is the projection of the assertive egos of lonely, repressed, dehumanized individuals, then we too should change our frame of mind before claiming to change the world.

Humour often accompanies prophetic invective or the apocalyptic mood in Ginsberg's poetry. It is sometimes hard to tell how far the sublime is undercut by irony, and in the course of a poem the former register can readily yield to the latter, as in the following passage:

> No more fear of tenderness, much delight in weeping ecstasy
> In singing, laughter rises that confounds
>
> Staring Idiot mayors

[10] Allen Ginsberg, "Who Be Kind To", in *Collected Poems, 1947-1980* (New York: Penguin, 1987), 359-360.

And stony politicians eyeing
, Thy breast,
O Man of America, be born!

Truth breaks through!
How big is the prick of the President?
How big is Cardinal Vietnam?
How little the prince of the FBI, unmarried all these years?
How big are all the Public Figures?
What kind of flesh hangs, hidden behind their Images?[11]

This is certainly not a great piece of literature, and some critics will surely turn up their noses. Nonetheless, there is recorded evidence that such comic passages could be really effective on a warmed-up audience. Besides, we should not forget that much of the poetry from the Sixties was written under the pressure of historical actuality, and intended for public occasions such as readings, political manifestations, "be-ins", etc. This is not meant to insinuate any lacks in craftsmanship, since spontaneity does not exclude revision, as a naive idea of Beat poetics would have us believe. It is only that, even in its revised and, so to say, final version, a poem by Ginsberg always tries to reproduce the process of its composition and the recording of what is happening right now constitutes a new happening in itself. Instead of crystallizing the event into a closed rhetorical system or, worse, into some abstract formal pattern, the poet chooses to dialogue freely with actuality, establishing an open, dynamic correspondence between objective realities and subjective states.[12]

[11] Allen Ginsberg, "Wichita Vortex Sutra", in *Collected Poems*, 395-396.

[12] A further proof of the soundness of this perspective can be found in such poems as "Grant Park: August 28, 1968", composed on occasion of the Democratic Convention in Chicago, 1968: "Miserable picnic, Police State or Garden of Eden? / in the building walled against the sky / magicians exchange images, Money vote / and handshakes- / The teargas drifted up to the Vice / President naked in the bathroom / -naked on the toilet taking a shit weeping? / who wants to be President of the / Garden of Eden?" Cfr. Allen Ginsberg, "Grant Park: August 28, 1968", in *Collected Poems*, 507.

Another very interesting case of political satire from the Sixties is the poetry of Lawrence Ferlinghetti, whose name is known in the annals of the Beat generation for his anarchist militancy and cultural activism. The more caustic side to his poems seems to come, as Ginsberg explains, "out of Prevert and Cendrars and a few other poets", in other words from "French loose verse" adapted to jazz improvisation and to the "American style". Although during the Sixties Ferlinghetti's writing evolves manifestly from social satire to pacifist-ecologist protest, the Dickinsonian "slantness" of his style prevents him from falling into the traps of political rhetoric in any case. Indeed, the brilliant quality of his best poems seems indeed more indebted to the Surrealist experiment, through the New York School, than to the militant language of any group or movement, even from the New Left. Here's an example of socio-political satire, which may sound somewhat cynical, if we do not take into account its idealistic background:

Underwear is all we have between us
You have seen the three-color pictures
With crotches encircled
To show the areas of extra strength
And three-way stretch
Promising full freedom of action
Don't be deceived
It's all based on the two-party system
Which doesn't allow much freedom of choice
The way things are set up
America in its Underwear
Struggles thru the night
Underwear controls everything in the end[13]

The subject might seem trivial but it should be recalled that traditionally triviality plays a central role in the satirical mode. A

[13] Lawrence Ferlinghetti, "Underwear", from *Starting from San Francisco* (1961), in *These Are My Rivers – New and Selected Poems, 1955-1993* (New York: New Directions, 1993), 130-131.

careful reading reveals that the apparent lightness of the joke hides a deeper moral truth: as a symbol of American consumerism, underwear alludés indeed to the levelling of all differences (personal as well as political) in a false sense of identity. If politics, like underpants, has become a cheap commodity, bought and sold on the free market of illusions, we should give it up in its institutionalized forms and start again from our most immediate needs.[14]

Ferlinghetti's Surrealist humour and French *gaga* can give way to the most whipping and aggressive tones, when the occasion requires it. One such occasion was the election of Nixon to the Presidency of the U. S. in 1968 and his decision to go on with the Vietnam War, notwithstanding the opening of peace negotiations in Paris. In the following years, the protest against the government's official policies reached its climax, and the repression ordered by Nixon was very hard indeed. As a direct response to that climate, the long poem *Tyrannus Nix?* (1969) pushes sarcasm to the outermost consequences of open insult and invective:

> Nixon Nixon bush league President this is a populist hymn to you and yours and I begin with your face and come back to your face For 'our face is noble and tragic like the mask of a tyrant' And the mask an actor wears is apt to become his face
> Nixon Nixon I saw your childhood home on TV I saw your childhood face It was the same face the face of adult America the face we chose for America the space-race face the race face the face that sunk a thousand sampans…[15]

[14] Another example of successful satire by Ferlinghetti is the well-known "Tentative Description of a Dinner to Promote the Impeachment of President Eisenhower" (1958), which anticipates the corrosive tones widely used by the poet in the next decade: "And after it became obvious that the Voice of America was really the Deaf Ear of America and that the President was unable to hear the underprivileged natives of the world shouting No Contamination Without Representation in the strange rain from which there was no escape – except Peace / … / … The President himself came in / Took one look around and said / We Resign". Lawrence Ferlinghetti, "Tentative Description of a Dinner to Promote the Impeachment of President Eisenhower", in *A Controversy of Poets: An Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry* (New York: Anchor Books, 1965), 111-112.

It is a typical trait of Ferlinghetti's poems to adapt quotations from classical works to the peculiar exigencies of his own historical moment: the reference to Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* sounds here particularly corrosive in the contrast between Helen's beauty and Nixon's grey mask. Defined as a "populist hymn" in Vachel Lindsay's way, and elsewhere as a "political-satirical tirade", *Tyrannus Nix?* consists of long-breath lines in the Whitmanian tradition revitalized by Ginsberg. Almost all of them start with the vocative "Nixon O Nixon", recalling the structure of a biblical lamentation or a Buddhist Sutra. However, as we have already seen in Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti's Jeremiad condemns a policy without denying the humanity of the man in power; indeed, it expresses compassionate feelings towards the mental condition that has generated greed, hatred and war:

> You might yet learn to unmask your Self you might yet move the magic moloch mountain with its misplaced Eye the Lotus might yet open and open into the very stoned heart of light The void of serenity might yet prove not too strange for the mind of man We are daily faced with the Miraculous And the air is electric with hate And the air is electric with love and we are charged with loving You too.[16]

An orthodox militant might see this as a dangerous indulgence in the criminal responsibilities of a cold bureaucrat and the system he represents. As with Ginsberg's sanctifying the Moloch and Corso's love declaration to the Bomb, doubts and perplexities were actually raised in the more traditional sectors of the New Left concerning Ferlinghetti's poem. Free expression of one's subjective states and feelings has always been considered by the traditional Left as elusive of group or party discipline. Yet in the

[15] Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *Tyrannus Nix?* (New York: New Directions, 1969), 1-2.
[16] Ibid., 73-74.

Beats' way of looking at politics there's something more at stake than breaking a deep-rooted taboo. At the core of their political re-visionism and militant heresies is the epistemological demand of re-defining reality, and consequently, questioning the primacy of the "objective" experience over other kinds. Actually there is no danger here of acquiescence in the horrors of society, since Ferlinghetti's Buddhist anarcho-pacifist stand is no less uncompromising than that of any militant group espousing a rhetoric of violence in response to those horrors.

Several contemporary philosophers and sociologists have credited American youthful counterculture with the political merit of rejoining the subjective with the objective planes of knowledge.[17] In the Beats' view, if we assume as a political priority the necessity of deconstructing the mechanisms of power inside ourselves, instead of just thinking of how to take it, some past mistakes might be avoided in the future. "The reconstitution of Man in Eden", "the Communal Paradise", brought about by the union between poet and revolutionary, might turn out to be a more reasonable aim than any authoritative or totalitarian folly. This extension of the political sphere to the subjective and creative dimension of the individual is perhaps the most lasting contribution of the "poetry of protest" from the Sixties to our own present age.

II. Autobiographies

Among the many ways in which poems of protest can be made effective, without indulging in the stereotypes of political

[17] See, for example, Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959) and *Love's Body* (New York: Random House, 1966) for a comprehensive post-Freudian critique of Western rationalism, grounded according to Brown on the primacy of history and the reality principle over the pre-genital "polymorphism" of unconscious. In his *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), Theodore Roszak develops a sociological analysis of the objections raised by the Sixties' counter-culture against the technocratic supremacy of the "object".

propaganda and flattening poetic discourse on the presumed "objectivity" of things, is the adoption of an autobiographical frame. Of course, not all poems interweaving the events of one's life with public concerns are necessarily *good* poems, but autobiographies can be a helpful corrective against the mere reporting of facts. Since the news media already perform the "objective" task of recording the actual events and circumstances (often deforming them through their ideological lenses), poetry must introduce some subjective distance between the world and oneself. At its best, autobiography can help to denounce the technocratic "myth of objective consciousness" and reintroduce perceptions of one's dignity and value as a human being.

Yet, looking closer at the poetic use of autobiography in the Sixties, we recognize that the traditional ways of experiencing (and representing) subjectivity are no longer viable. Marcuse's Marxist-Freudian definitions of personality, dialectics and rationality already seemed obsolete to those sectors of the youthful counter-culture which were most exploring the wider implications of personal identity through the use of drugs, sexual freedom and creativity. The reference being now Norman O. Brown's sense of "mystical participation" and "dyonisian consciousness", poets left behind them the old "confessional" modes to investigate the many layers of subjectivity. Traditional humanistic (and psychological) concerns about the centrality of the person (the ego) were replaced by heretical searches for the hidden threads of the "Great Subculture which goes back as far perhaps as the late Paleolithic".[18] As a consequence of this meaningful shift, "confessional" efforts to integrate unconscious contents into a coherent psychic frame called "ego" gave way to experiences of schizo-morphic frenzy, pre-genital eroticism and mystical voyages of self-discovery. The sense of precarious linearity we still find in Lowell's poems yielded to the ideas of collage, "projectivity", and assembling in the poems by Allen Ginsberg, Robert Bly, Gary Snyder, Denise Levertov and others. A

[18] Gary Snyder, "Passage to More than India", in *Earth House Hold* (New York: New Directions, 1969), 105.

passage from "Political Poem" by the Afro-American LeRoi Jones (later Amiri Imamu Baraka) will help to clear the point:

> Luxury, then, is a way of
> Being ignorant, comfortably
> An approach to the open market
> Of least information. Where theories
> Can thrive, under heavy tarpaulins
> Without being cracked by ideas.
>
> (I have not seen the earth for years
> and think now possibly "dirt" is
> negative, positive, but clearly
> social. I cannot plant a seed, cannot
> recognize the root with clearer dent
> than indifference. Though I eat
> and shit as a natural man. (Getting up
> from the desk to secure a turkey sandwich
> and answer the phone: the poem undone
> undone by my station, by my station,
> and the bad words from Newark.) Raised up
> to the breech, we seek to fill for this
> crumbling century. The darkness of love,
> in whose sweating memory all error is forced.[19]

The elusive and nervous diction of this poem from LeRoi Jones' "transitional" period evidently owes something to the mysticism of Black rhythms and yet we can also trace a genealogy to the white poetics of "projective verse". Irregularity of punctuation (with open-ended and double parentheses), repetitions and digressions, syntactic twistings and a general sense of indeterminacy contribute to render the poet's existential turmoil, suspended between revolt and social critique. Beat experimentalism seems here just at the

[19] LeRoi Jones, "Political Poem", in William Harris, ed., *The LeRoi Jones /Amiri Baraka Reader* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1991), 73-74.

point of yielding to ideology, but the coexistence of the private and public dimensions prevents the poem from turning into a piece of Black nationalist propaganda. However, even in his most militant phase, LeRoi Jones is never flat or pathetic but always open to a vast range of emotional nuances: from anger and outrage to brilliant irony and humour. The fundamentalist bias of so much Black Power poetry is tempered in him thanks to his mixing with the Greenwich Village avant-garde, although this does not mean that his poetry is less uncompromising from a political point of view. Nonetheless, the demands of white experimentalism are mediated by the folk background of Black culture, expressed above all through the peculiarities of the rhythms. At its best, Black folklore and sense of community, though hardly recovered, can allow a more spontaneous passage from the individual voice to the instances of the group; at its worst, it can be the vehicle for an assertive view of cultural identity and racial supremacy. In any case, Baraka's adhesion to Third World Marxism in 1974 confirmed the open character of his writing and the multicultural breadth of his engagement.

As further proof of the pluralistic articulation of cultural policies in the Sixties, we witness the emerging of a feminist militant movement the social composition of which is based, at least in its beginning, on members of the white middle-class. Again the weaving of poetics with politics is evident, since many of these feminist poets oscillate between the assertion of a strong political identity (often reproducing the models of their male counterparts) and the exploration of women's specificity in the fields of sexuality, art and mythology. The different patterns adopted by women in autobiographical poems show the variety of theories and practices concerning women's liberation in a society dominated by sexist and masculine powers. Whereas, for example, poets like Adrienne Rich or Denise Levertov choose a more direct and essential way to express their radical stand (often indulging in political rhetoric), Di Prima's view of femininity seems more inclusively open to the richness of possibilities represented by being a woman:

i am a woman and my poems
are woman's: easy to say
this. The female is ductile
and
(stroke after stroke)
built for masochistic
calm. The deadened nerve
is part of it:
awakened sex, dead retina
fish eyes; at hair's root
minimal feeling

and pelvic architecture functional
assailed inside & out
(bring forth) the cunt gets wide
and relatively sloppy
bring forth men children only
female
is
ductile[20]

This obviously understated poem should induce us to read it in two ways: it can sound like a sarcastic repetition of male stereotypes or, taken seriously, as a fierce assessment of woman's biological and psychological difference from man. There is no use in privileging one reading over the other, since the general indeterminacy of the poem allows us to accept them both. Worth stressing is Di Prima's formal choice in favour of an "open" syntax, where blank spaces express female receptivity and irresolution, obviousness implies ambiguity, and parentheses offer an ironic counterpoint to the main discourse. The political issue of women's liberation is shifted by Di Prima to the ground of the search for a new style of living, rather than to merely laying claim to the roles traditionally denied to women. In this perspective, free

[20] Diane Di Prima, "The Practice of Magical Evocation", in *Pieces of a Song, Selected Poems* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1973), 20.

sexuality, mystical *jouissance* and the full exploration of one's creative potentialities appear as the only reasonable premises for social change:

Left to themselves people
Grow their hair.
Left to themselves they
Take off their shoes.
Left to themselves they make love
Sleep easily
Share blankets, dope & children
They are not lazy or afraid
They plant seeds, they smile, they
Speak to one another. The word
Coming into its own: touch of love
On the brain, the ear.

We return with the sea, the tides
We return as often as leaves, as numerous
As grass, gentle, insistent, we remember
The way
Our babes toddle barefoot thru the cities of the universe.[21]

An almost "taoist" sense of non-interference with the people's ways seems to be implied in these lines, and yet passive resistance is an acknowledged political strategy widely experimented in the Sixties. The final metaphor of regenerating grass recalls Whitman's open, democratic project, grounded on the full recognition of individual differences and the free contribution of everybody to the communitarian utopia to be built. Rejecting dogmatism and rigidity in the name of a more comprehensive definition of democracy, Di Prima appears to be in line with the poetic genealogy inaugurated by *Leaves of Grass*, and pursued by the Beats and the Black Mountain poets starting from the middle of the century. Based on the continuous reshaping of the forms of language as well as on the creative

[21] Diane Di Prima, "Revolutionary Letter 4", in *Pieces of a Song*, 80.

interaction between poet and political revolutionary, such tradition emphasizes participation over closure, co-operation over authoritarianism, and radical immanence over transcendence. In the variegated panorama of the poetry of protest from the Sixties, the actualization of Whitman's "democratic vistas" with its prophetic insights marks a meaningful element of continuity in American (literary) history. As Rothenberg reminds us, "the poet sees the breakdown in communication as a condition of health, as an opening-up of the closed world of the old order. He carries the revolution of language & form into the new society of the political revolutionaries".[22] The many ways in which the subterranean signs of this "underground" utopia still haunt our political unconscious are still to be detected.

III. Mythologies

The most "unforgivable" heresy introduced by the American poetry of protest is perhaps the use of mythology, not just as a set of given contents, but as a pattern to organize the perception of reality and the very form of language. Interpreted as a generative source of experience, as a "field" of potentialities informing the historical data, the "mythological mind" transfigures actual events through a resonance with archetypal depths. Seen in the context of a global criticism of the whole "Judeo-Christian-Capitalist-Marxist" civilization, myth can perform a strategic function in determining how we *look at* the world, and consequently, how we *act in* the world. Not all poems written in this mode are necessarily good ones, yet they should be judged

[22] Jerome Rothenberg, "Revolutionary Propositions", in *Pre-faces*, 67. In order to understand the American weaving of poetic and political utopia in the course of the centuries, see, by the same author, *America: A Prophecy* (with George Quasha) (New York: Random House, 1973) and Sherman Paul, *The Lost America of Love: Rereading Robert Creeley, Edward Dorn and Robert Duncan* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981).

according to their own intrinsic merits and not on the base of historicist or scientific standards.[23]

The examples can be numerous here, from Beat poets such as Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder and Diane Di Prima to the Deep Image Group (Jerome Rothenberg and Robert Kelly, among others). Yet the most representative of all is, for many reasons, the Californian poet Robert Duncan. His production stretches over a long period of American literary history (from the early 40s to the late 80s), when the modernist sensitivity in poetry was replaced by the new revolutionary conception of Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams and Hilda Doolittle. The new poetics of "projectivity" and "field composition", conceived by Charles Olson in the 50s and worked out by Duncan, was verified empirically during the next decade in the confrontation with the urgent political issues of the moment. Duncan's *Bending the Bow* (1968), which can be considered one of the highest poetic achievements of the Sixties, is a crucial testimony of this process. The book opens with the denunciation of a war, the chief cause of which is a fault in perceiving one's own boundaries as a human being:

> We enter again and again the last days of our own history, for everywhere living productive forms in the evolution of forms fail, weaken, or grow monstrous, destroying the terms of their existence. We do not mean an empire; a war then, as if to hold all China or the ancient sea at bay, breaks out at a boundary we name *ours*. It is a boundary beyond our understanding. Now, where other nations before us have floundered, we flounder. To defend a form that our very defence corrupts.[24]

[23] Prejudices against the presumed "distortion" of facts caused by a mytho-poetic imagery are indeed very common in the critical literature concerning such poetry. Moreover, since the approach to myth by many a Beat or Black Mountain poet is syncretic, ranging from Amerindian Shamanism to Eastern cults, it's often difficult to recognize the single mythologemues and trace them back to their origins. Some effort should be made in this direction, though, if we really want to deepen our knowledge about such a big corpus of poetry.

[24] Robert Duncan, "Introduction – The War", in *Bending the Bow* (New York: New Directions, 1968), I.

It is very interesting to notice that Duncan's attitude towards the Vietnam War is not one of uncompromising pacifism, since his Heraclitean vision emphasizes *polemos* and conflict as manifestations of cosmic inter-relatedness and harmony (*logos*). His polemic in *Bending the Bow* is rather addressed to the contemporary distortion of war, brought about by the technocratic manipulation of individual will and the imperialistic imposition of one's own "boundaries". A military defeat would be preferable, in this perspective, inasmuch as it would mean a final "givin-in of the ego".

The collection is a typical example of Duncan's poetics, since the serial sequences ("Passages" and "Structure of the Rime") are formally organized in open-ended progressions, continuing in other books (for instance the "Passages" series goes on in *Ground Work I - Before the War* [1984]). An epigraph by the Emperor Julian underlines the concepts of "opening" and irregularity: "For the even is bounded, but the uneven is without bounds and there is no way through or out of it". The very strong and almost severe commitment of the poems against official American policies (inside and outside the country) is inspired, among other sources, by Sacco and Vanzetti's theory of anarchist communitarism, resulting from the spontaneous organization of individual wills. The historical urgency of the moment is rendered by Duncan through a sublime and sometimes prolix emphasis on the mythological transvaluation of facts and characters:

not men but heads of the hydra

his false faces in which
authority lies

hired minds of private interests

over us

here: Kerr (behind him, heads of the Bank of America
the Tribune,
heads of usury, heads of war)

the worm's mouthpiece spreads

what it wishes its own

false news: 1) that the students broke into Sproul's office, vandalizing, creating disorder; 2) that the Free Speech Movement has no wide support, only an irresponsible minority going on strike[25]

The episode reported is the occupation of the Berkeley campus in 1964 by the students protesting for free speech: in a few months the protest spread throughout the country and the fight for civil rights gave way to the socio-political demands of the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and Black Power. Duncan's rendering of the event juxtaposes a flatly factual chronicle with visionary insight, grotesque and sublime at the same time, of the true essence of the economic and political structure. Seen as embodiments of a transpersonal principle ("*Evil* "referred to the root of *up*, *over*" / simulacra of law that wld over-rule / the Law man's inner nature seeks") or as masks of a Cosmic Drama directed from elsewhere, the actual characters lose their psychological or historical dimension and acquire the depth of tragedy. Obviously this kind of poetry goes back to Blake's, in which the literalness of the "mere political event" is abolished, to the extent that "it comes reveald as an eternal sentence".

The objections raised by critics to Duncan's mythological approach show that there is a gap between the traditional idea of engagement in literature and the heretical approach of the newer generations. Especially Marxist critics have accused his poetry of being too vague and indeterminate, failing to acknowledge the historical complexity of war, even of indulging in mystical reveries which are seen as fuzzily unfocused and unscientific.[26]

[25] Robert Duncan, "The Multiversity – Passages 21", in *Bending the Bow*, 70.

[26] Among the many contributions, Mersman's chapter on Duncan in his *Out of the Vietnam Vortex* concentrates on the subjective value of the poet's "private *mythos*, shaped by the circumstances of the poet's life and time" and finds it inadequate to express the complexity of war. His conclusion is that, notwithstanding a certain "remoteness and grandeur", "it is unlikely that any modern war can ever again meet the conditions of community and free volition that would justify it – and so Duncan's reservations are in a way academic" (James Mersman, *Out of the Vietnam Vortex: A Study of Poets and Poetry Against the War* [Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of

Be that as it may, it should be recognized that Duncan's experience of myth is not a literal revival of a traditionalist view. It is rather the continuous reshaping of the generative power of myth through repetitions and variations: "myth gives life-form, and men living in myth live in its history, in its living changes and permutations, not its petrifactions". The history of this century offers ample proof that a distorted use of mythology can generate totalitarian monsters, and in this sense Marxist suspicions against it are comprehensible. On the other hand, it would be irresponsible to give up *en bloc* the best of our poetic experimentation, without properly distinguishing between the regressive aspects of some reactionary imagery and the innovative insights offered by avant-garde search. Let's consider, for example, Duncan's treatment of the Mithraic cult, traditionally linked to a militarist ideology in our modern view:

"*The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem?*"
Then America, the secret union of all states of Man,
Waits, hidden and challenging, in the hearts of the Viet Cong.
"*The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth*",
Whitman says - the libertarians of the spirit, the
Devotées of Man's commonality.
Solidarius: *sol*derd this army having its sodality
In the common life, bearing the coin or paid in the coin
Solidum, gold emblem of the Sun
Tho we fight underground
From the heart's volition, the body's inward sun,
The blood's natural

Kansas, 1974], 202). Likewise, Peter Michelson's "materialist" criticism of Duncan's *Grand Collage* sees it as unbalanced in favour of the devotional element, to the detriment of the historical-dialectic (Peter Michelson, "A Materialist Critique of Duncan's Grand Collage", in *Boundary 2. A Journal of Postmodern Literature* 8, no. 2 [Winter 1980], 21-43). In both cases, the mistrust of myth as an alternative way to know and describe the world is evident.

Uprising against tyranny
And from the first it has been communism, the true
Poverty of the Spirituals the heart desired;
I too removed therefrom by habit.[27]

It would be a mistake to discard such a passage as an "inevitable shortcoming" or worse, as the pure reflection of a "private *muthos*, shaped by the circumstances of the poet's life and time".[28] In its Whitmanian re-vision of the ancient lore, the above quoted passage shows to what measure myth can thrive in "its living changes and permutations", according to Duncan. Giving up a literal and nostalgic reading of the Mithraic tradition means indeed rejecting its "petrifaction" in favour of its utopian actualization introduced by the etymology *Sol-solidum-solidaritas*. In this perspective, political cohesion is necessarily non-hierarchical and co-operative ("communal"), since it is grounded on the spontaneous contribution of individual differences to the universal design of evolution. The "unorthodox" bent of Duncan's utopia, shows clearly in his identification of Communism and Spiritualist heresy, two crucial knots in Western history.

Moreover, the formal choices adopted in the "Passages", emphasizing discontinuity, fragmentation and participation correspond to the radical "opening" of Duncan's idea of composition. Rhetoric itself, read in the light of its Greek root (*reo* = to flow), takes on a positive connotation in this context as synonymous with fluency and process. In rejecting the traditional form of politics, grounded on the primacy of history over myth (of the rational over the unconscious mind), Duncan shows us in what sense form *is always* in itself political. His answer to the charge of escapism addressed to his poems is very meaningful in this regard: "Working in words I am an escapist; as if I could step out of my clothes and move naked as the wind in a world of words. But I want every part of the actual world involved in my escape".[29] Not just a simple giving up of the

[27] Robert Duncan, "Passages 26: The Soldiers", in *Bending the Bow*, 113-114.
[28] Mersman, *Vietnam Vortex*, 177.
[29] Robert Duncan, "Introduction – The War", in *Bending the Bow*, V.

dilemmas represented by social and historical dynamics, but an attempt to read them in the light of their inclusion in the cosmic process of evolution, as embodied by the transmuting powers of poetry and myth. On this ground, the dichotomy between the "actual" world and the fictive data of our imagination is overcome, giving way to exchange procedures and contamination among the different layers of our experience. The place where this happens is writing, which Duncan very ambitiously conceives of as homologic to reality itself. Creative form, faithfully reproducing the "symposium of the whole" of political utopia, helps us to read reality as "an area of relations", in which "all the old excluded orders must be included":

> The female, the proletariat, the foreign; the animal and vegetative; the unconscious and the unknown; the criminal and failure – all that has been outcast and vagabond must be admitted in the creation of what we consider we are. [30]

If one admits that poetry should not be just a decorative appendix to what we consider as the "actual world", then the disruptive novelty of such a statement should not pass unobserved. It shows in what measure poetry can contribute to shape our vision of reality, and even more, how it can help us to change it for the better.

IV

It is a deep-rooted conviction that political poems should have the function of informing us about what is going on in society and denouncing its contradictions. This is certainly a sound perspective, yet it can be a partial one in many aspects. Not always what we recognize as useful or ideologically correct can respond to the demanding criteria of formal experiment and, more in general, of good poetry. Something of the peculiarity of

[30] Robert Duncan, "Rites of Participation", in Clayton Eshleman, ed., *A Caterpillar Anthology* (New York: Anchor Books, 1971), 24.

poetical speech gets lost, if we presume that political poems should just record the events, as media already do, or making propaganda to any alternative program, as assemblies can do even better. On the contrary, the poetry produced in the U. S. in a most dramatic decade of its history shows us that the convergence between the poet and the "political revolutionary" can amount to a real change in both social and cultural terms. Instead of reproducing the flat stereotypes of a scientistic dogma or the philosophical *impasses* of the Western humanistic tradition, poetry can introduce some visionary distance from the literal cogency of facts and, in so doing, help us to reconfigure our perception of what is "real". The avant-garde production from the Sixties is perhaps the best evidence of how this can happen practically. First announced by the Fifties' "breakdown in communication", the poetry of the following decade did indeed establish a fruitful interaction with the pluralistic demands emerging in the political field, sometimes resisting the "demand for closure" expressed by the latter. At its best, the collaboration between poets and militant groups was constructive for both, as the example of the Beats goes to show. Reproducing in its formal patterns the decentralized utopia sought for in political revolution, poetry at once anticipates and records the socio-historical changes that mark our time. As we have tried to demonstrate, the best poems of protest from the period are to be seen as different responses to the requirements of the new poetic context, where the subject is provided by historical actuality and the rhetoric needed to treat it by the poet's "slant" view. If this balance, always precarious, can be reached in history only for short moments, it is not a reason for poets not to get on with it all the more.

Candace Fujikane*

Reimagining Development and the Local in Lois-Ann Yamanaka's *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre*

> *A reflection on "development" has to take into account those things which have stood in opposition to it, those irreducible differences which in the final analysis may be the only way out of the present development bind. In examining historiography, criminality, epidemics and popular movements, one has only begun to reflect upon those crucial moments when the state, or the historian, or whoever occupies the site of the dominant centres, performs a cutting operation; remembering/furthering that which it deems meaningful for its concept of development, and forgetting/suppressing the dissonant, disorderly, irrational, archaic, and subversive.*
>
> Reynaldo Ileto, "Outlines of a Non-Linear Emplotment of Philippine History"

I'd like to open up this essay by evoking ambivalent memories of growing up local Japanese on Maui. In 1976, I was in the third grade at Kahului Elementary School. It was the year of the

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bicentennial, and our teachers tried to instill within us a pride in the fact that we were all Americans and could claim and celebrate as our own the American revolution for freedom from British tyranny. Yet this land upon which we based our identities as "Americans" was inscribed with Hawaiian heiau and burial sites, as well as with the Hawaiian stories generated by these and other sacred sites–stories about the Night Marchers, the White Lady of Makamaka'ole, the mo'o of Ma-alaea and Makena.[1] Even the new subdivision in Pukalani my family had just moved into was haunted by Hawaiian ghosts, Kalialinui Gulch rumored as a site for Hawaiian burials. Looking back, I can map out other traces of contradictions that shaped my own understanding of land and local identity at that time–stories I had heard about Hawaiian struggles in the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana (PKO), conflicts between Wayne Nishiki's anti-development politics[2] and the construction and tourism industries, and the resistance to development that later had more direct effects on my family when my stepfather, a construction worker for Associated Steel, was laid off during lulls in the construction industry. These stories of Hawaiian spirits, however, reached back further into the past than the ghost stories of obake told in my Japanese / Filipino family,[3] and they were compelling reminders that there was a longer Hawaiian history to the land than the claims made by my own

[1] The Night Marchers are Hawaiian gods and spirits who travel in a procession on sacred nights to visit sacred places, or to guide a dying relative to the spirit world (Martha Beckwith, *Hawaiian Mythology* [Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 1940, 1970]). The White Lady of Makamaka'ole is rumored by local people to be a Maui ghost who would warn people in a Hawaiian village of floods and would lead them to safety. The mo'o deities are enormous reptiles who are said to inhabit inland fishponds (ibid.). Two hills near Ma-alaea Bay are mo'o, and the hill at Makena is the tail of a mo'o.

[2] A very controversial political figure, Wayne Nishiki was a Maui mayoral candidate in 1976 who campaigned for "self-sufficiency" and an immediate zoning freeze on Maui to prevent lands from being rezoned for resort development.

[3] I am local Japanese; my stepfather and half-brothers are local Japanese / Filipino. I do not claim to understand what it means to be Filipino, but I want to point to the ways in which there are important divisions between ethnic groups at the same time as there are problematic stereotypes about the ways racial groups are segregated. "Obake" is a Japanese noun or adjective for "ghost, spirit".

immigrant-descended family. Native Hawaiians were also engaged in efforts to reclaim that land, as evidenced by the persistent struggles of the PKO against the U.S. Navy's bombing of the island of Kaho'olawe, which had been used for target practice since WWII. These stories of indigenous and immigrant place and displacement, woven together by narratives of development, brought me to an uneasy understanding of what it means to be a non-Hawaiian local in Hawai'i.

I want to unravel some of these contradictory impressions that speak to us about the complexities of local identity. For many people in Hawai'i, local identity is based on having a history on this land and a commitment to the peoples and cultures of this place. With the important gains made by the sovereignty movement, however, locals who claim Hawai'i as *home* often do not understand Native Hawaiian nationalists who claim Hawai'i as *homeland*, and as non-Hawaiian locals, we need to ask ourselves what our commitment to Hawai'i and its peoples really means. While many people support the state's plans for continued economic development based on tourism and foreign investment, others share concerns regarding overdevelopment and its devastating effects. Opposition to the state's definition of "development", then, forms common ground upon which non-Hawaiians can support Hawaiian struggles for self-determination.

Ideologies of development–whether in the form of blueprints for state economic development, colonial accounts of "underdeveloped" nations or political movements, or definitions of the aesthetic "maturity" or "immaturity" of art produced in different cultures–play an important role in the ways we imagine and construct local identity, and we need to reexamine the narratives undergirding these ideas of development. Narratives, the verbal forms we use to explain abstract ideas, are stories we tell to explain our understanding of the world, and as such stories, narratives of development can tell us much about the investments we have in recording events in a particular way.[4] In the quote I

[4] For discussions of developmental narratives, see David Lloyd, "Violence and the Constitution of the Novel", *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial*

take as my epigraph, Reynaldo Ileto explains that narratives of development can be made to serve different purposes, depending on the motives of those who construct these narratives: they can be used either to maintain existing structures of power or to help us to envision alternative forms of political organization. For example, these narratives can support "economic" development that benefits a few at the expense of large segments of the population, or "community" development that improves economic and living conditions for a broader range of peoples, particularly those who are most in need. We need to reexamine these narratives of development if we are to reassess the continuing significance of local identity in relation to Hawaiian struggles to regain control over the economic future of Hawai'i.

Accounts of development have proved to be particularly dangerous for minority or colonized peoples, who are often assigned to the infantilized, "immature" end of a developmental narrative that privileges the "maturity" of the dominant or colonizing group. Such narratives of development have often been utilized in "civilizing" missions serving colonial purposes, and colonized peoples are expected to forsake their own cultures and histories in order to conform to the colonizer's definition of "maturity". Consequently, peoples familiar with histories of imperialism are often skeptical of developmental narratives. Ileto writes:

> Most sensitive thinkers today regard the concept of "development" not as universal but as historically conditioned, arising from social, economic, and ideological trends in eighteenth-century Europe. The idea of progress–the belief that growth of knowledge, capabilities and material production make human existence better–placed science at the summit of knowledge. It gave birth to high imperialism, as the West identified progress with civilization and set out to dominate the rest of the world.[5]

Moment (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); Shelley Sunn Wong, "Unnaming the Same: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*", *Writing Self, Writing Nation*, eds. Elaine Kim, Norma Alarcón (Berkeley: Third World Woman Press, 1994); and Lisa Lowe, "Decolonization, Displacement, Disidentification: Writing and the Question of History", *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

Although Ileto's work is specifically focused on developmental narratives that underlie Philippine historiography, we can see how his arguments can help us to analyze historical representations of Hawai'i as "underdeveloped" that were used to justify American intervention into Hawaiian governance. In 1898, the year Hawai'i was "annexed" as an American territory, Spain signed the Treaty of Paris and ceded other nation-territories to the United States without the consent of those governed, and in political cartoons of that period, a paternalistic Uncle Sam scolds the recalcitrant "children" under his tutelage: Queen Lili'uokalani from Hawai'i, Emilio Aguinaldo from the Philippines, and two little boys representative of Cuba and Puerto Rico.[6] These cartoons illustrate the belief that Hawaii's infantile monarchy and other "underdeveloped" nations required the political guardianship of the United States in order to "grow into" the "maturity" of American democracy.

A hundred years later, Hawai'i continues to be feminized as an object of foreign desire,[7] or infantilized in postcards as a playground for illustrations of Hawaiian children known as the "Dole Kids", evocative, not ironically for those familiar with the history of Hawai'i, of American businessman Sanford Dole's role as president of the provisional government that seized

[5] Reynaldo Ileto, "Outlines of a Non-Linear Emplotment of Philippine History", *Reflections on Development in Southeast Asia*, ed. Lim Teak Ghee (Brookfield, Vermont: ASEAN Economic Research Unit, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies—Ashgate Publishing, 1998), 130.

[6] See Dalrymple, "School Begins", *Puck* (Bishop Museum Archives, 1899); Grant E. Hamilton, "A Pair of Kids", *Judge* (July 10) (Bishop Museum Archives, 1897); Grant E. Hamilton, "Hawaii: 'Please Ma'am, May I Come In?' to 'Miss Columbia's Schoolhouse'", *Judge* (n.d.)(Bishop Museum Archives).

[7] For a discussion of the feminization of Hawai'i, see "Lovely Hula Hands: Corporate Tourism and the Prostitution of Hawaiian Culture", in Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1994). See also Lilikala-Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires: Pehea La-E Pono Ai? How Shall We Live in Harmony?* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum, 1992).

control of Hawai'i after illegally overthrowing Queen Lili'uokalani.[8] These infantiziling representations are tactically used to justify continued U.S. military occupation of this "strategic" site in the Pacific, even as economic development dependent on tourism yields disastrous results for many residents of Hawai'i. In 1992, the state's economy ranked by some accounts as the worst in the nation.[9] Must narratives of development occur at such a high price, or are there other ways of imagining development? Who produces these narratives of development, and to what ends?

Given these problems of economic development that people in Hawai'i continue to face, we need to reexamine

[8] There were different historical conditions leading to the illegal overthrow of Queen Lili'uokalani. With the arrival in Hawai'i of British Captain James Cook in 1778, European introduced diseases had a devastating effect on the indigenous Hawaiian population. By 1802, the population in Hawai'i had decreased by one half from one million, and by 1890, the population had collapsed to less than 40,000 (*He Alo A He Alo (Face to Face): Hawaiian Voices on Sovereignty*, ed. American Friends Service Committee [Honolulu: American Friends Service Committee—Hawai'i Area Office, 1993]). The 1848 Mahele, or "Land Division", transformed a communal system of land use to a private land tenure system and was used by foreigners (primarily Americans) to seize possession of one quarter of the land in Hawai'i and to lease another quarter of the land. In 1887, American members of the "Missionary Party" forced King Kalakaua to sign what was later known as the "Bayonet Constitution", a document that restricted the rights of the sovereign and limited the rights of the indigenous peoples. In 1893, Queen Lili'uokalani, sought to promulgate a new constitution that would restore the rights of the crown and the voting rights of Native Hawaiians. Thirteen white Americans organized the "Committee of Public Safety", which enlisted the support of the American Minister John L. Stevens. Although the Queen signed a statement abandoning her plans to announce the new constitution, the Committee of Public Safety requested that Stevens land troops "to protect American lives and property", and it established its own "provisional government". To protect the Hawaiian people, the Queen yielded *under protest* until a full investigation into the overthrow could be conducted by the United States. After receiving the results of the Blount investigative report, President Grover Cleveland demanded the resignation of the provisional government's President, Sanford B. Dole, and the restoration of Queen Lili'uokalani to her throne, but the U. S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee maintained a pro-annexationist position. In 1898, under the McKinley administration, Hawai'i was annexed to the United States.

[9] Jonathan Y. Okamura, "Why there are No Asian Americans in Hawai'i: The Continuing Significance of Local Identity", *Social Process* (1994), 168.

conceptualizations of "the local"–which encompasses peoples, communities, histories, cultures, places–the ways ideas of the local function in changing historical and economic conditions, as well as the ways they have the potential to mobilize changes in those conditions. I do not mean to suggest that the local is in any way homogeneous or monolithic since "local" means different things to different people, and this essay is necessarily my own exploration of what local means to me.[10]

As a part of this analysis, I'd like to turn to Eric Yamamoto's analysis of the significance the term acquired in relationship to development in Hawai'i so that we can link the emergence of local identity in community control struggles of the 1970s with its potential for supporting current struggles in the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. In his article, "The Significance of

[10] For definitions of "local", see Eric Yamamoto, "The Significance of Local", 1979 (reprinted in *Social Process in Hawai'i: A Reader*, ed. Peter Manicas [San Francisco: McGraw Hill, 1993]); Jonathan Okamura, "Why there are No Asian Americans in Hawai'i: The Continuing Significance of Local Identity" (ibid.); and Jeff Chang, "Local Knowledge(s): Notes on Race Relations, Panethnicity and History in Hawai'i", *Amerasia Journal* 22 (1996), 2. Yamamoto writes: "Salient aspects of the approaches in the literature to local are on different conceptual levels. The label refers to distinguishing Hawai'i people from mainlanders, to a blending and sharing of ethnic cultures, to a community value-orientation, and to an emerging multi-culture in reaction to an oppressive dominant culture. The dimensions of local handled by the literature appear to be identification, values, culture, and societal change. Integrating these dimensions produces a general picture of Localism in Hawai'i. It is a composite of ethnic culture, emerging in reaction to domination by Western institutions and culture, composed of people of Hawai'i with community value-orientations. Although this picture provides a general understanding of Localism in Hawai'i, it does not take into consideration the intricate mapping of 'What is local to whom'. This mapping is a task open for future study" (141-142). According to the 1990 U.S. Census, Hawaii's population of 1.1 million includes Whites (33.4%), Japanese (22.3%), Filipinos (15.2%), Native Hawaiians (12.5%), Chinese (6.2%), African Americans (2.5%), Koreans (2.2%), Samoans (1.4%), and Vietnamese (0.5%). Hawai'i State Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, *The State of Hawai'i Date Book 1992*, Honolulu: D.B.E.D.T., 1993 (Jonathan Y. Okamura, "The Illusion of Paradise: Privileging Multiculturalism in Hawai'i". Conference paper to be published in ed. D. C. Gladney, *Making Majorities: Composing the Nation in Japan, China, Korea, Fiji, Malaysia, Turkey and the United States* [Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994]).

Local" (1979), Yamamoto prefaces his arguments by pointing out that sociologist Andrew W. Lind locates the emergence of the term "local" in the Massie trial of 1931, when Hawai'i-born residents of Hawai'i were allied in opposition to continental power represented by military servicemen.[11] Yamamoto's own analysis, however, focuses on the way the term gained a particular force after 1965, when many people in Hawai'i came to perceive the local as a "symbol of self-determination":

> Changes in social structure, the sense of loss of community, a decline in the quality of life, and the accompanying concern, worry, and desperation, have given rise to a movement by people self-defined as belonging to Hawai'i (local people) towards regaining control of Hawai'i and its economic, political, and cultural future. ("The Significance of Local",142)

Community control struggles in the 1970s at Kalama Valley, Waiāhole-Waikāne Valleys, and Ota Camp were sites of resistance from which people in Hawai'i sought to challenge their forced eviction from lands slated for development. Newspaper photographs of locals in front of the Waiāhole Poi Factory with arms linked in a human blockade across Kamehameha Highway against police-enforced eviction provided people in Hawai'i with visually powerful images of local strength and unity.[12]

[11] See Andrew W. Lind, cited in personal communication to Eric Yamamoto, "From 'Japanee' to Local: Community Change and the Redefinition of Sansei Identity in Hawaii", unpublished senior thesis (Honolulu, 1974). In the Massie Trial, five young men who were racially identified as Hawaiian, Chinese and Japanese, were charged with raping Thalia Massie, the wife of a Naval lieutenant stationed at Pearl Harbor. One of the men, Joe Kahahawai, was lynched by Massie and his mother-in-law, Grace Hubbard Bell Fortescue. It was later believed that Thalia Massie had been raped by another military officer. Massie and Fortescue were convicted of murder, but their sentence was commuted from ten years to one hour by the governor of the territory, Lawrence M. Judd. Kahahawai came to represent for many of the white residents of Hawai'i all "local boys", and the white residents' indignation at the threat posed to white womanhood made visible to Hawaii's non-white local residents similarities between racism in Hawai'i and the American South.

[12] For a discussion of these community control struggles, see Davianna McGregor, "Hawaiians: Organizing in the 1970s", *Amerasia Journal* 7 (1980), 2;

More recently, however, the idea of the local seems to have lost the cohesiveness and urgency generated by those struggles against development. Jonathan Okamura, who has written extensively on local identity in Hawai'i, observes that although "Palaka Power" local advocacy[13] at the 1978 State Constitutional Convention signified a desire to promote Local interests, "it never developed into an organized social movement",[14] and we need to consider this argument in light of the ways that concerns for indigenous rights have, by contrast, led to a strong Hawaiian sovereignty movement. Increasingly, the local seems to serve less as a catalyst for change than as a device for maintaining racial hierarchies in Hawai'i. In his essay, "The Illusion of Paradise: Privileging Multiculturalism in Hawai'i", Okamura writes, "As Haoles (whites), Chinese and Japanese continue to maintain their dominant positions in the social stratification order in Hawai'i, less viable avenues and means for both individual and group mobility are available for subordinate ethnic minorities", which include Native Hawaiian, Filipino, and Samoan groups ("The Illusion of Paradise", 8). Thus, while people in Hawai'i involved in community struggles of the 1970s were successful in allying themselves on the basis of shared working-class interests, class and racial privilege have come to divide racial groups located at different points in the stratification Okamura describes. Moreover, many locals have

Haunani-Kay Trask, "The Birth of the Modern Hawaiian Movement: Kalama Valley, O'ahu", *Hawaiian Journal of History*, 21 (1987-1988); James Geschwender, "Lessons from Waiahole-Waikane", *Social Process*, 28 (1980-1981) (reprinted in *Social Process in Hawai'i: A Reader*). For photographs, see *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 5 January 1977: A1 and *The Honolulu Advertiser*, 4 January 1977: A-4.

[13] Okamura writes of the Palaka Power movement, "In the late 1970s, such an effort [to regain control of political and economic forces in the islands from external sources] was described as *Palaka* Power, named for the durable cloth used to make the work clothes of plantation laboreres, stevedores, and other working-class people in Hawai'i" ("Why there are No Asian Americans in Hawai'i"). "Palaka" is a Hawaiian word for a checkered coarse work shirt worn by males, known then in English as a "frock" (Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert, *Hawaiian Dictionary* [Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986]).

[14] Ibid., 175.

come to support the very interests of capital and urban development that those early community struggles opposed, while others perceive no alternatives to the tourism and development industries that employ them, and we need to confront our own differing degrees of complicity with current systems of economic power. Because of these and other historical changes, it would be difficult to return to the class-based strategies that were successful in the 1970s, particularly since we need to recognize the primacy of Hawaiian struggles and the important distinctions between indigenous and immigrant peoples. Many people in Hawai'i, however, do share concerns over issues of economic control that are important to the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, suggesting possibilities for increased local support for Hawaiian sovereignty.

In order for non-Hawaiian locals to envision alternatives to overdevelopment, we need to reimagine developmental narratives themselves, the forms they take and the functions they serve. In calling for a more self-critical look at our usage of developmental narratives, I am not arguing for a nostalgic return to a romanticized, preindustrial past. Instead, I want to question the ways in which developmental narratives are produced and reproduced. A critical approach to development should attend carefully to people or ideas excluded from narratives of development, to memories that evoke the forgotten, the suppressed, in Ileto's words, the "dissonant, disorderly, irrational, archaic, and subversive", in order to recuperate other sites of resistance, other conceptions of development that can offer us alternatives to exclusionary scripts of progress. Such an approach asks us to question our own assumptions about developmental narratives and to devise strategies that will challenge those assumptions.

As a point of entry into these questions about development, I want to begin with an examination of Lois-Ann Yamanaka's collection of poetic novellas, *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre*,[15] which has been phenomenal both for the critical acclaim it has received and the controversy it has generated in

[15] Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1993. Hereafter cited as *SN*.

Hawai'i and on the continent. As a text widely taught at the University of Hawai'i, the collection demands our attention for the ways it can be used to bring about change in popular conceptions of local identity. In my own English courses, I ask students to analyze the collection's critique of the patriarchal and developmental ideologies that undergird local identity. The collection enables us to question the epistemological grounding for discourses of development; in other words, it asks us how we know what we know about being local and how narratives of development help to define the local. While we cannot escape from these developmental narratives that structure our perceptions of the world, we can be critical of the purposes for which these narratives are used, and we can strategically make use of the currents of movement inherent in developmental narratives to mobilize social change. Yamanaka's text, I argue, usefully deploys and simultaneously dismantles developmental versions of local and feminist narratives. In analyzing the usefulness of Yamanaka's text, however, my students and I also attend to the messy ambivalences of the local and the fact that *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* has also been highly controversial for its local Japanese representations of local Filipinos and Hawaiians. Since local Japanese in Hawai'i occupy a relatively privileged position in relation to those groups, interrogating the collection's representations of ethnic stereotypes can help us to locate power struggles often concealed by popular definitions of the local.

To map out the consequences different developmental narratives have for various peoples in Hawai'i, I extend my analysis of *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* to consider how a reexamination of narratives of development can help non-Hawaiian locals to understand the current movement to establish a Native Hawaiian nation. Although *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* focuses on gendered narratives of development in local communities, the collection can help us to be more self-critical as we analyze other developmental narratives that shape local perceptions of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement.

"You Guys Ain't Developed Yet": Narrative "Development" in Lois-Ann Yamanaka's Poetic Novellas

> *It is difficult to quote these poems partially. All are organized into a tight, coherent emotional pattern. Advice: Take two Advil, read from page one to 141* ***in that order*** *and you will be taken on an inexplicable, but emotional journey.*
>
> review of *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* in the *International Examiner*

Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre engages questions of development through a gendered exploration of the narratives we use to define local identity. In claiming that identity, we often find that we must contend with developmental narratives that seek to erase gender, race, and class differences between locals for the sake of cultural unity. Reclaiming local culture, then, is not liberatory in and of itself, and for women, such an act involves a struggle against masculine constructions of local identity. Ideas about development, for example, take on gendered dimensions for the adolescent speakers in the collection whose bodies and sexualities are regulated by narratives of what constitutes a "normative" local feminine body, patriarchal narratives that seek to contain and control unruly feminine bodies. Adolescent girls are enlisted in the disciplining of their own bodies through publicly circulated narratives of orderly physical development mapped out in such "guidebooks" as Judy Blume's novel, *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*,[16] a book in circulation during the time frame in which events in Yamanaka's collection occur.

Although the collection is divided into four "Parts" that chronicle different movements in the collection, Yamanaka describes *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* as a "series of poetic novellas" ("Author's Note"). These poetic novellas are poems clustered in ways that provide us with narrative cohesion, and I identify eight poetic novellas narrated in the first- and

[16] New York: Dell, 1970.

second- person voices by twelve-year old speakers who tell us of their experiences of sexual and verbal abuse, violence and love, poverty and self-discovery. Some of the speakers are specifically named, such as "Kala" and "Lucy", while other speakers are identified as local character "types", for example, abrasive and powerful "Tita" (Hawaiian slang for "sister") or innocent "Girlie". Other speakers are not named at all, and in these poetic novellas, speakers are delineated by their relationships with other characters. The first poetic novella in the collection centers on a speaker named "Kala" and is comprised of the following poems: "Kala Gave Me Anykine Advice Especially About Filipinos When I Moved to Pahala", "Kala: Sitting on Our Bikes by the Catholic Church", "Kala: Captain of the Volleyball Team", "Kala: Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre", and "Kala: Grad Party". While this poetic novella begins with a poem describing rape as an act that Kala does not understand, it ends with a poem in which Kala herself is raped.

Since developmental narratives have often been used in the service of colonial and patriarchal ideologies, what I find to be very peculiar about Yamanaka's text is this developmental narrative structure she uses to repudiate these gendered "lessons". In addition to the development narrative that drives each poetic novella, it is possible to identify an overarching developmental trajectory that brings together the different voices and "Parts" in the collection in a way that can seem to suggest the maturation of a central character. It is possible to read the collection as achieving a resolution through a developmental narrative that unifies its different speakers by holding up the final speaker/writer Lucy as a model figure of local feminist resistance, the end product of a developmental narrative that privileges a local girl's reclamation of writing in Pidgin. The problem with such a reading, however, is that it challenges masculine narratives of local identity only to resurrect a developmental model of feminist individualism in its place, a model that diminishes the other speakers in the collection who do not find liberation in written self-representation. Instead, my own reading of the text recognizes the importance of the various

speakers and the multiple narrative strategies they use as Yamanaka negotiates the problems raised by ideas of "development".

We can map out this developmental trajectory of the "Parts" in the collection, but before doing so, I would like to begin by attending closely to the way that the first poetic novella centering on Kala sets the gendered stakes for the collection. That poetic novella provides us with a starting point in Part One as it catalogues gendered instructions passed on from adolescent girls to their friends. As this first section fleshes out narratives that construct "local woman", it also asks us to question the purposes served by these "lessons". In the opening poem, "Kala Gave Me Anykine Advice Especially About Filipinos When I Moved to Pahala", the speaker cites Kala's prohibitions: "No whistle in the dark / or you call the Filipino man / from the old folks home across your house . . . . / [H]e going drag you to his house, / tie you to the vinyl chair, / the one he sit on outside all day, / and smile at you with his yellow teeth / and cut off your bi-lot with the cane knife. / He going fry um in Crisco for dinner" (*SN*, 15). The specter of the Filipino man cutting off and eating a girl's vagina is a residual product of history: the fact that the Filipino man lives in "an old folks home" alludes to a history of bachelor camps of Filipino plantation laborers and the vilification of Filipino men as sexual threats. Kala tries to reconcile the image of a woman's body being eaten figured forth in metaphors of cunnilingus with stereotypes of Filipino men, and her advice exemplifies women's collusion with the racist stereotypes recycled in their "education".

Critics have argued that Yamanaka perpetuates racist stereotypes of Filipinos and Hawaiians, and this is a very important problem to which I will return. Here, I'd like to offer a reading of the first poem that unravels the poem's concern with collaborations between the patriarchal and racist systems of power. The threat the stereotype of the elderly Filipino man poses is strategically undermined by several details the naive speaker unknowingly buries in the poem. The fact that the Filipino man lives in a retirement home already ironizes the physical threat he poses, but what is more materially alarming

are the two actual rapes that occur at the heart of the poem. The speaker continues: "And no wear tight jeans or / Felix going follow you home with his blue Valiant. . . . / Kala said he rape our classmate Abby already / and our classmate Nancy" (*SN*, 16). Here, the poem reveals that the stereotype of the old Filipino man is used to divert attention away from Felix and the real instances of rape that take place in the poem, and in light of this function the stereotype is made to serve, it becomes significant that Felix's father is a cop: Felix is further protected by the law. Although I will later discuss the implications of the ways audiences racially identify Felix as Filipino and Jimmyboy as Hawaiian, these characters are not racially marked by Yamanaka, and by the end of the Kala series, it is Jimmyboy, not Felix, who rapes Kala.

The rapes are further submerged in the text by the young speaker's preoccupation with the word, "cremation". She tells her listener: "[Kala told me] no tell nobody the words she tell me. / Nobody. Especially the word she told me today. / Okay. Okay. The word is *cremation*. / The graveyard man he sew all the holes / on your body shut with dental floss, Kala said; / your eyes, your nose, your mouth, / your belly button, your okole hole, / and yeah, even your bi-lot so the gas / cannot escape when he shove you in the brick oven" (*SN*, 16). To the child narrator, what is even more horrific than rape or the stereotype of the old Filipino man is the idea of being entombed in her own body; by sewing shut the orifices in her body, the patriarchal "graveyard man" silences her voice, her sexuality, and her desires. Indeed, the speaker's fear of being sewn shut frames the collection by calling our attention to local patriarchal prohibitions that seek to sew women's bodies shut for them.

If we try to locate a trajectory moving from Part One to Part Four, we can read the poem "Parts" in Part Two as marking a turning point at which the speaker tries to see for herself who she is. In contrast to the ways the mother's voice simultaneously cuts the girl's body into patterned pieces and attempts to sew shut her sexuality for her, the fourteen year-old friend who speaks at the end of this poem describes the girl's decision to use a needle to undo those seams, to "cut" herself *open*, to see what

is inside of herself (*SN*, 75). The poems in Part Three can then be read as an extension of this moment of self-discovery as other girls figuratively cut themselves open and begin to look at themselves and each other in different ways. In "Glass", for example, the speaker, a young girl abused by her mother, finds a small glass floater, "light blue and cool in the shade of the naupaka bushes. / I hold um gentle in my hands. / I no can even see my fingers. / I see the clouds, the sky moving. / I see my eyes" (*SN*, 107). Here, the speaker discovers herself as a subject gazing before a shifting backdrop of limitless possibilities. Part Four then gains particular weight as the final section of the collection detailing a young girl's revisions of Pidgin's patriarchal idioms. It is in "Empty Heart" that Lucy tells her lover WillyJoe, "One day / I going write / about you" (*SN*, 130), and in the last poem, "Name Me Is", Lucy names herself in a language of her own as she concludes, "I IS. / Ain't *nobody* / tell me / otherwise" (*SN*, 140).

If a local or feminist reading seeks to find a resolution in writing as an act of local women's resistance, it can find that resolution in the *illusion* suggested by the text of linear movement toward a single writer/speaker, Lucy. One assumption my students make is that the first speaker in the collection *is* Lucy, and we can try to identify the investments that motivate such a reading. Although Lucy could be the first speaker in the collection, we can ask the question, does she need to be? To argue that Kala's listener and Lucy are the same character bespeaks a problematic need to unify the text's multiple speakers to secure a convenient resolution at the end of the collection, and the multiple young women are conflated by a developmental narrative into a single protagonist who comes to writing. The collection, however, counters important identifications with critical moments of disidentification: familial details, names, events, and circumstances are repeated with a difference for each character. We see the disembodied voices refracted, kaleidoscoped, and generic names like "Tita" and "Girlie" call our attention to the ways in which many girls in the book share oppressive conditions and yet devise different strategies for surviving them.

Writing does not have to be the only form of self-representation we use to narrate ourselves and our histories. While many of the characters do write–blood writings on sidewalks, name carvings in the flesh, kiawe charcoal obituaries on garage walls–the collection also presents us with characters who choose other modes of self-representation, and such narrative strategies map out for us the pressures each speaker faces and the narrative forms she sees available to her. A character like Kala, for example, can only close her eyes to signify her refusal (*SN*, 24, 27), and although this can seem like a futile act of resistance, it is important for the reader to know that she does not accept the conditions forced upon her. Instead of identifying speakers who do not represent themselves in writing as "underdeveloped", we need to be attentive to the different forms narratives take, otherwise, we, too, can come to homogenize women's voices and experiences.

Developmental narratives do serve an important function: they often work as catalysts for change. In Hawai'i, Hawaiians have suffered from the genocidal devastation brought about by American colonization, and other examples of violence include the banning of the Hawaiian language from public schools (1896-1986) and the destruction of land and Hawaiian historical and ceremonial sites. Local experiences of marginalization do not compare with Hawaiian experiences of genocide, and this is a point that cannot be overemphasized; for locals, the devaluation of Hawai'i Creole English, or "Pidgin", through the state's establishment of English standard schools (1920-1949), urban development and its erasure of plantation camps, rural and low-incoming housing communities, and other blocks of history from local popular memory have resulted in different kinds of losses. Against these historical ruptures, we often use developmental narratives to construct linear histories that help to promote community solidarity and to consolidate and mobilize resistance to American colonialism and continental standards within our different communities. Given the political usefulness of developmental narratives, however, these narratives often become cemented in ways that cannot sustain the fluid movements of political struggle, and I find that Yamanaka is

attentive to the multiplicity of women's voices and histories that exceed beyond the scope of local and feminist developmental narratives.

What I'd like to emphasize here is that Yamanaka responds on multiple registers to various political pressures. I argue that Yamanaka's text implements a *doubled strategy*: while the ordering of the "parts" of the collection provides the reader with a politically mobilizing developmental narrative moving toward local women's self-representation in a language of our own, the text's presentation of its multiple speakers refuses our desire for the promise of resolution held out at the end of developmental narratives. In other words, Yamanaka's poetic novellas move us towards local women's reclamation of writing even as that single developmental movement is splintered open to reveal the multiple strategies of self-representation used by the different speakers in the text. In rereading Yamanaka's seemingly linear narrative, my arguments here will consider two moments at which the poems offer us multiple sites of different kinds of movement. First, I consider the ways a speaker like Tita forestalls the linear movement in the collection through the powerful excesses she produces, extravagant excesses that cannot be contained by narratives of unified progression. Second, I argue that Pidgin offers no easy resolution at the end of the collection, despite the power of Lucy's final assertion, "I IS".

Tita, like many of the other speakers, is complicitous with the continental and patriarchal standards that oppress her. Her character is particularly compelling, however, for while she represents the desire for assimilation, emphasizing that her listener is a failed example of femininity because, as Tita tells her, "you just dunno how for please", her listener takes pleasure in listening to the transgressive power of Tita's voice. At different moments in her narrative, Tita demands, "You was there, eh? / Well, you seen this then? / Why you always gotta act dumb? / Eh, what's your trip? / Just like you *like* hear me talk" (*SN*, 32). While the lessons in the text seek to contain the local feminine body within the restraints of "standard" English, Pidgin enables Tita's voice to bring her bodily excesses back into that

text. In "Tita: On Fat", these bodily excesses become the sign of a hungry body, a desiring body, and Tita's body proliferates uncontrollably beyond the thin bodily outline constructed to confine her. In order to recuperate her body within a developmental narrative, Tita tells her listener, "Eh, what you trying for say? / That I one fat cow? Well, fuck you. / I ain't fat. I just more mature than you guys. / You guys ain't developed yet. / I bet you never even get your rags yet. / All you guys a bunch of small shit Japs" (*SN*, 38), the kind of "Jap", Tita emphasizes, she is not (*SN*, 31). Ironically, Tita uses her own developmental narrative to infantilize her listener: "development" is a rhetorical device she uses to transform excess into "maturity". Yet 'fat' resists development, and Tita's flesh refuses to be assimilated to standards that attempt to homogenize gendered and cultural identity. By the end of the poem, Tita tells her listener, "I dunno, I too fuckin' fat. / Eh, no say I not fat, / when I *know* you think I fat, / 'cause that only makes me *mo* / fuckin' mad" (*SN*, 40). And it is precisely Tita's excesses–her Pidgin, her rage, her 'fat'–her irreducible differences that make her such a powerful character who colludes with and resists developmental narratives that demand assimilation.

Lucy's own reclamation of Pidgin does not present an easy answer to her struggle to define herself. She continues to push at the limits of a language that does not give her words to describe her own body, a language that gives her no immediately viable name for her vagina. Lucy's description of her vagina as "over there" (*SN*, 129) underscores the ways that she reclaims Pidgin only to find that in the world of the collection, Pidgin disfigures the vagina as a "crack" (*SN*, 72), a sign of lack or damage, or a "cho-cho" (*SN*, 82), a Japanese term for "butterfly" popularized by Puccini's "Cio-Cio-San" in his libretto *Madama Butterfly* and recirculated by American servicemen stationed in Hawai'i during WWII in reference to Asian prostitutes.[17] That Lucy does not choose any of these words and refers to her vagina as an absence suggests the need for sustained struggle at the site of Pidgin itself.

[17] I'd like to thank my mother, Eloise Yamashita Saranillio, for explaining to me her understanding of the etymology of the word, "cho-cho".

To further that struggle, Lucy and WillyJoe work toward constructing a new language out of Pidgin. In "Name Me Is", Lucy describes her desire: "I touch his shoulder blades, light / fingers first. They broad and brownsmooth, / feeling good, good, see / him shiver when I heat / the sparkler tip red / and ribbon it in the black night, / (He know what I want to do) / bring it down on his skin, burn / the first line" (*SN*, 137). Lucy begins literally to construct a language of her own, the word 'brownsmooth' being neither of Pidgin nor of "standard" English. What is important here is that the collection ends with Lucy and WillyJoe's struggle against the conceptual limits of Pidgin, a language that registers political struggles that emerge along the divisive lines that cut across the local.

Multiple Sites of the Local and Questions of Power

A desire to read *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* as a developmental narrative culminating in a resolution is further interrupted by the unresolved racial divisions evoked by the collection. Here, I want to split open my analysis to consider other assessments of the collection. While I have offered a reading of Yamanaka's powerful local feminist critique of the developmental narratives we use to claim certain identities, critics argue that her racially privileged local Japanese representations of Filipino and Hawaiian ethnic groups reinforce racist stereotypes of those groups. Rodney Morales, a professor in the University of Hawai'i English Department, argues in his article, "Literature in Hawai'i: A Contentious Multiculturalism",[18] that "[a] major concern is whether the author's strengths.... are enough to counter her penchant to cast certain ethnic groups (again at-risk groups) one-dimensionally. While the jury may still be out on this one, one has to be wary of *patterns* of representations of an oppressed group by one that is more dominant". Although the text presents stereotypes of different

[18] In Michael Haas, ed., *Multicultural Hawai'i: The Fabric of a Multiethnic Society* (forthcoming).

ethnic groups, some representations are more damaging than others, and Filipino/a and Hawaiian communities are most vulnerable to stereotypes of violence because of discriminatory practices in Hawai'i that we cannot ignore.

The collection has elicited powerful responses from different communities, and these responses allow us to unravel these communities' concerns over the material effects that literature can have on peoples' lives. It is crucial that we give equal weight both to the collection's gendered critique and to the ways that the collection's critique occurs at the expense of racial groups. These gender-based and race-based analytical frameworks come to compete with each other: as some narrative strategies work to expose certain operations of power, they sometimes conceal or reproduce others.[19] These critical frameworks impinge upon each other, become inextricable, and our analyses must engage these multiple frameworks and concerns if we are to understand the complexity of the ways we live at the intersections racial, gendered, and class differences. To dismiss either framework invalidates important reader responses in ways that maintain existing conditions of oppression, whether they are gendered or racial. As I will illustrate here, the collection has become the focal point for issues of concern to different communities: the competing claims of literary ambiguity and social responsibility; the need to balance stereotypes with characters who actively critique their own objectification; the representation of disadvantaged local Filipino and Hawaiian ethnic groups by authors from relatively privileged local Japanese and Chinese ethnic groups; the historical problem of the underrepresentation of Filipino/a publications in Hawai'i, which raises questions about the literary standards we use in defining the criteria for publication; and conditions of racism and discrimination that Filipinos and Hawaiians confront in Hawai'i.

I'd like to begin by looking at the criticisms that different

[19] While the critiques are based on ethnic divisions, I refer to "race-based" analytical frameworks to foreground the ways in which different ethnic groups are racialized differently.

communities have generated in response to the collection. On January 7, 1994, *The Hawaii Herald: Hawaii's Japanese American Journal* featured an article on Yamanaka's poetry and a reprinting of the poems "Kala Gave Me Anykine Advice Especially About Filipinos When I Moved to Pahala" and "Boss of the Food". The publication of the first poem offended many in the local Filipino/a and Japanese communities, and in March of that year, Bennette Evangelista responded with an article in *The Fil-Am Courier* evaluating the poem and the controversy surrounding it. Looking back at that article she had written, Evangelista later wrote, "the poem evoked racial tensions and perpetuated stereotypes about Hawaii's Filipinos that are better off buried. My article tried to be fair, even as I sought academic opinions on why artistic freedom should be treasured and held sacred. I personally thought this one crossed the boundary of decency. A lot of *Fil-Am Courier* readers agreed".[20] In the article, Evangelista interviewed Belinda Aquino, Director of the Center for Philippine Studies at the University of Hawai'i, and Nestor Garcia, a public relations executive, who both found the representations of Filipinos in the poem offensive, but they also agreed that art cannot and should not be censored. Garcia and Theresa Danao, a medical doctor, recast the question as one of editorial responsibility and whether or not the poems should have appeared in a newspaper intended for general audiences. As Danao argues, "I have no problems with poems like this in the context of art. I think it was very well-written. But I think it was a mistake to print it in a publication like *The Hawaii Herald*".

Other critics argue that the collection perpetuates racist stereotypes of Hawaiians. At the 1996 Association for Asian American Studies regional conference on "The Pacific Diaspora: Indigenous and Immigrant Communities" held in Honolulu, Leialoha Apo Perkins presented a paper entitled "The Presence and Non-Presence of Hawaiians in Asian American Narratives, Poetry, and Criticism--and the Non-Presence of Hawaiians in

[20] Bennette M. Evangelista, "Confessions of a Writer", *The Fil-Am Courier* (November 15-30, 1994), 9.

Publishing". Apo Perkins , a professor of Hawaiian and English Literature at the University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu, points out that the name "Kala" in the opening series in the collection suggests that it is a Hawaiian girl who lives in a violent and abusive family and is the object of rape. She also cites textual evidence supporting a reading of Jimmyboy, the rapist, as a Hawaiian character. The actual violence that does occur in the collection, she argues, is inflicted on and by Hawaiian characters, and both Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians, particularly local Asians, must be held accountable for their representations of Hawaiians.

The controversy provoked by the collection arises out of its ambiguity: since characters are not always racially identified, the collection can be read as *both* a perpetuation of stereotypes and a critique of those stereotypes. Ambiguity itself can be a valuable narrative strategy that represents the indeterminacy of our lives, and it can teach us about ourselves and the ways that we construct meaning from texts, but ambiguity can also lead to interpretations that work against the author's intentions. In her article, Evangelista also interviewed Karleen Chinen, editor of *The Hawaii Herald,* who explained that the poems had been published in hopes of challenging stereotypes, and instead, they came to illustrate a more fundamental problem regarding the gap between the intentions of artists and the interpretations generated by audiences: "This [controversy] reflects a need to narrow that gap by having the literary community explain their art. I believe poems such as these may be a first step in the right direction for all Asian Americans. But the poem by itself may be judged wrongly. It has to be accompanied by an interview so its context can be explained".[21]

We can take an analysis of the ambiguity of the text even further by thinking about the ways the collection aims to deliver a social critique of the processes by which patriarchal and racist narratives are circulated in local communities: in the context of these concerns, what are the effects of narrative ambiguity? To

[21] Bennette M. Evangelista, "Killing Us Softly With These Words", *The Fil-Am Courier* (March 1994), 6.

map out these effects, we can return to the poem "Kala Gave Me Anykine Advice Especially About Filipinos When I Moved to Pahala". For many people, the poem is too successful in recreating the stereotype of the elderly Filipino man, and the stereotype itself takes on a life of its own that overpowers the critique. What is perhaps even more disturbing, however, is that the title of the poem makes it possible to identify the "real" rapist Felix as Filipino, and what ends up happening is that the stereotype of the old Filipino man is replaced by the "reality" of young Filipino rapist, which is itself a pervasive stereotype that has even more damaging consequences for Filipino communities. If we identify Felix as Filipino, the collection's affirmation of the young Filipino rapist as "the real" upholds the very mechanisms of power it seeks to critique. It is important that Felix and Jimmyboy are not racially identified, and this particular ambiguity can enable us to question our own construction of racial identities for the characters. But because readers can and do imagine racial identities for these characters, ambiguous representations can actually *reinforce* entrenched stereotypes. The price of the collection's narrative ambiguity is one that its particular social critique cannot afford at this time: identifications of Felix as Filipino and Jimmyboy as Hawaiian can have the devastating effect of exacerbating discriminatory conditions for Filipino/a and Hawaiian communities struggling against racism in Hawai'i.

Ironically, the collection's feminist critique also raises problems regarding its representations of Filipinas in the text. Darlene Ebanez, in "Kala Gave Me Anykine Advice Especially About Filipinos When I Moved to Pahala", whose Filipina identity is suggested by her surname, reclaims her body and her desires through masturbation but is disfigured in gossip as a sexually monstrous madwoman: "No sleep with your hair wet, / Kala said, or you going be like Darlene Ebanez / who run around her house nak-ed / and nobody can stop her when she like that. / She take her two fingers / and put um up her bi-lot. / That what you not supposed to do, Kala said, / the Bible said so that's why" (*SN*, 15-16). Masturbation gives women the power to control their own pleasure, which threatens a patriarchal privileging of

the penis as a signifier for power, and Darlene Ebanez provokes masculine anxieties about replacement and displacement. None of the speakers in the collection are clearly identified as Filipina, however, which reduces the complexity of this critique, and the significance of the fact that Darlene is Filipina is not clearly explained.

The ambiguity of the collection's critique is further complicated by the way Yamanaka limits the perspectives presented in the collection to those of the naive twelve-year-old speakers. Although readers can see what the young characters cannot, the Filipino/a characters do not effectively challenge the stereotypes themselves. In the poem, "Kala: Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre", the Filipino men do speak, but they are not heard. Kala, preoccupied with her own position at the x-rated movie, imagines that she is the subject of their discussion: "All the old man sit in the last row. / I smell the tobacco they spit on the floor. / They laugh when I walk past / and say some words in Filipino. / I know they talking about me" (*SN*, 22). The poem reveals that although Filipino characters speak, Kala cannot understand what they are saying. Because of the inadequate structures of knowledge produced and reproduced in local communities, the Filipino/a characters are not heard. In criticizing racism in non-Filipino/a communities, Yamanaka does not presume to speak "for" Filipinos, but because the Filipino/a characters are not presented with an interiority, the audience and the adolescent characters are not forced to confront the problem of racism that the text raises. While the characters do observe contradictions between their own lives and the gendered standards that oppress them as local girls, they do not see the contradictions between racist stereotypes of Filipino/as and "real" Filipino/a characters.

These are serious problems raised by *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre*, and while this essay focuses on that text, Yamanaka's subsequent novels, *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* [22] and *Blu's Hanging* [23] have also been criticized for

[22] New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996.
[23] New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997.

presenting increasingly disturbing representations of Filipinos. The problems posed by Yamanaka's texts are intensified by an interlocking problem involving the need for Hawai'i publications, which have been dominated by local Japanese and Chinese writers and editors, to provide more literary space for Filipino/a and Hawaiian writers. Criticisms have been most recently directed toward Bamboo Ridge Press, founded in 1978 by Eric Chock and Darrell Lum. While the press has played a foundational role in providing Hawaii's writers with a space to share their work, it has recently been the subject of criticism for publishing a disproportionately small number of writings by Filipino/as and Hawaiians. Although others address that controversy in greater detail elsewhere,[24] here we can reexamine the criteria that publishers in Hawai'i use to determine the aesthetic value of a work. In his account of the history of Bamboo Ridge Press, "The Neocolonialization of Bamboo Ridge: Repositioning Bamboo Ridge and Local Literature in the 1990s", Chock makes several highly problematic arguments about contemporary Hawaiian literature, but he ends the essay with an important self-critical point: "It is the job of editors to select what they see fit; we want to be open to diversity, but we'd like to publish only the best of that diversity. We also want to be open to suggestions. Perhaps we need your essays to educate us on our aesthetics, because, ultimately, the aesthetics of the editors define a magazine".[25] The category of the aesthetic–our conceptions of what is "beautiful" or "ugly", "good" or "bad"–is always political. As I've tried to illustrate in my arguments about *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre*, we need to be attentive to narrative forms or voices that are not recognizable to us. It is our ignorance regarding other cultural narrative traditions and forms–for example, Hawaiian mo'olelo–that makes it possible

[24] See Rodney Morales, "Literature in Hawai'i: A Contentious Multiculturalism", in ed. Michael Haas, *Multicultural Hawai'i: The Fabric of a Multiethnical Society* (forthcoming); and Eric Chock, "The Neocolonialization of Bamboo Ridge: Repositioning Bamboo Ridge and Local Literature in the 1990s", *Bamboo Ridge: The Hawai'i Writers' Quarterly*, 69 (Spring 1996).

[25] Ibid., 25.

for us to misunderstand these narratives as examples of "underdeveloped" or "bad" writing. These problems remind us that we need to reexamine the developmental narratives we use to define aesthetic criteria if we are to learn from the narrative forms Hawai'i writers generate out of the historical and cultural specificities of this place.

My exploration of community responses to *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* places more responsibility on artists and critics than was believed necessary in the past, and this is a result of changing historical conditions that have increased the responsibilities involved in claiming a local identity. It is crucial, however, for all of us to acknowledge ongoing gendered, racial and class struggles within local communities and the competing analytical frameworks that we use to assess these struggles. *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* offers us strategies for reimagining developmental narratives underpinning gendered definitions of the local at the same time the collection alerts us to the ways that even the usefulness of the local must be constantly interrogated, its operations of power carefully recorded and contested.

The Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement: Redefining the Stakes for the Local

Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre does not directly address problems of economic development, but it does illustrate the ways we find the narrative structure of development to be very seductive. These narratives permeate our lives, and we can return to issues of economic development by considering the ways developmental narratives are used to maintain existing political and economic structures. For example, opponents of Hawaiian sovereignty employ a developmental narrative in a common, ill-informed argument that there is too much "in-fighting" among Hawaiians, and Hawaiians will never achieve sovereignty because they can never agree. This demand for a single, unitary voice from Hawaiians, however, reproduces colonial ideologies that seek to homogenize Hawaiians as a

people and criminalize the multiple voices that make up any strong political movement. As Kia'āina Mililani Trask, governor of the Native nation Ka Lāhui Hawai'i, has argued:

> There's a negative stereotype that has always floated around... Hawaiians can't get together; Hawaiians are always bickering and fighting. That is in part the case because we believe in diversity of opinion in a democracy. In a democracy, you expect to have a lot of opinions. You expect to hear a great debate. Now in fascist nations, everyone is silent, and they all march to the beat of the same drummer. So when we reflect upon the disunity, remember that the other side of the coin is great diversity. The second thing is this: if we are going to come up with a solution, something that is realistic and practical in Hawai'i, it is going to be fashioned by Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians. It is going to be something that we're all going to have to participate in.[26]

Trask speaks to the problems inherent in the demand that Hawaiians march in unity down a linear path to nationhood; such a demand ignores the fact that different Hawaiian activists fight on several battle fronts at any one moment, whether they are educating people in Hawaiian communities about sovereignty, or negotiating with state or federal governments or with the United Nations for recognition of a Hawaiian Nation, and such a process needs time for research and debate. Nationalist movements do not necessarily develop along a linear trajectory, but instead, move according to peoples' needs and the strategies of resistance they generate, and we need to be aware of the ways developmental narratives are used to obstruct the work of the sovereignty movement.[27]

[26] Mililani Trask, *Ho'okupu a Ka Lāhui Hawai'i: State Plebescite vs. Hawaiian Initiative for Self-Determination* (retelevised April 1, 1996).

[27] There are over forty official Hawaiian sovereignty groups working to achieve self-determination. For example, Ka Lāhui envisions the Hawaiian Nation as a "nation-within-a-nation", a self-governing body similar to that of over 550 Native American nations that currently exist within the United States. This vision of sovereignty is shared by the fourteen sovereignty groups that make up Ka Pākaukau, although that coalition views nation-within-a-nation status as a transitional step

Trask also points to the need for non-Hawaiians to support the sovereignty movement. Assertions of local identity, however, often blatantly oppose Hawaiian struggles for self-determination. As Okamura argues:

> Despite its liberal rhetoric of tolerance, acceptance, and equality of opportunity, multiculturalism in Hawai'i represents an argument for the stability and continuation of the status quo rather than for substantial change in the current structure of race and ethnic relations. This conservative orientation is quite evident in majoritarian responses to the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. . . .that depict the sovereignty movement as a dangerous threat to ethnic harmony. A recent editorial on sovereignty in one of the Honolulu daily newspapers begins with a glowing tribute to the Hawai'i multicultural model: "Every person who lives in these Islands has experienced the 'aloha spirit', that warm feeling that comes from being part of a special place".[28] The editorial then issues a warning that if not handled "wisely", the sovereignty issue "could destroy our spirit of aloha and divide Hawai'i along racial lines".[29]

toward the total independence sought by such groups as the Institute for the Advancement of Hawaiian Affairs and the Nation of Hawai'i. At issue for many sovereignty activists are very specific land claims involving two Native Hawaiian public land trusts: 1.8 million acres of ceded lands--1.2 million acres as mandated by Section 5(f) of the Hawai'i Admission Act (1959) and 231,000 acres occupied by the U.S. military (*Ka Lāhui Hawai'i: The Sovereign Nation of Hawai'i. A Compilation of Legal Materials for Workshops on the Hawaiian Nation*, [Hilo: Ka Lāhui Hawai'i, 1993]) that comprise Government lands, and 400,000 acres of Crown lands (Ka Lāhui O'ahu Office)--illegally seized by the Provisional Government during the overthrow in 1893, ceded to the U.S. at the time of annexation, and returned to the state in the Hawai'i Admission Act; and 203,500 acres of Hawaiian Home Lands administered by the state Department of Hawaiian Home Lands. In the *Native Hawaiian Rights Handbook* (Melody Kapilialoha MacKenzie, ed. [Honolulu: Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation, 1991]), Melody Kapilialoha MacKenzie explains the "trust" status of ceded lands. At the 1978 Constitutional Convention, members of the Hawaiian Affairs Committee reexamined section 5(f) of the Admission

[28] "Hawaiian Self-Rule", *Honolulu Advertiser* (April 24, 1994), A-3.

[29] "The Illusion of Paradise", 21.

In the developmental narrative operating in the editorial, the sovereignty movement is an outdated anachronism that threatens our "enlightened" "spirit of aloha". As Okamura argues, however, to ignore Hawaiian struggles for the sake of local unity only exacerbates racial divisions that already exist. Sovereignty leaders make it clear that what is at stake for the sovereignty movement is self-determination for Hawaiians as a nation that will enable them to combat the genocidal effects of American imperialism, which include unemployment, poverty, homelessness, high rates of illiteracy and incarceration, and the poorest health conditions in the United States.[30]

We can think about the ways that the term "local" emerged in order to account for peoples in Hawai'i who are not "Native", and that its roots lie in a recognition of that crucial distinction between immigrant and indigenous groups. We can ask the question, how can non-Hawaiians claim a local identity and a commitment to the peoples of this place without supporting indigenous struggles in Hawai'i? There are political responsibilities to claiming any identity, and although other locals may define the stakes behind claiming a local identity differently, my own personal position is that in the context of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, the only way the idea of the local can continue to be used responsibly and meaningfully is if we educate ourselves about the Hawaiian sovereignty movement and support Hawaiian nationalist efforts to regain self-determination. I am not saying that whether or not one is local depends on one's support of sovereignty; I am more concerned about the ways local identity is often used as a means of self-legitimation at the expense of peoples who face ongoing political struggles in Hawai'i. We cannot ignore the injustices that Hawaiians have suffered; to do so and to claim a local identity is to promote non-Hawaiian self-interests at the expense of Hawaiians in a way that empties the local of any meaning. And although Hawaiians alone can determine the objectives and strategies for the sovereignty movement, we need to organize support for the movement in our

[30] Mililani Trask, "Interview". *He Alo A He Alo (Face to Face): Hawaiian Voices on Sovereignty* (1993).

own non-Hawaiian communities. We have to work on educating our own local communities about our own racism. As Haunani-Kay Trask, Director of the Center for Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai'i, argues, there are important differences between immigrant and indigenous peoples: "Immigrants to Hawai'i, including both *haole* (white) and Asians, cannot truly understand this cultural value of *mālama 'Āina* even when they feel some affection for Hawai'i. Two thousand years of practicing a careful husbandry of the land and regarding it as a mother can never be and should never be claimed by recent arrivals to any Native shores. Such a claim amounts to an arrogation of Native status".[31]

In redefining the stakes behind claiming a local identity, I have focused on political conflicts in Hawai'i, but ultimately, an analysis that acknowledges antagonisms can lead to stronger political alliances. These narratives of conflict remind us that maintaining the usefulness of the local involves political responsibility and ongoing struggle. A reexamination of developmental narratives that undergird local identity, representations of the sovereignty movement, and the economic future of Hawai'i is crucial if people in Hawai'i are to envision a Hawaiian Nation that is an alternative to present structures of American governance, an alternative that just might challenge what Ileto refers to as the "present development bind".

Glossary of Hawaiian words

aloha	Love, affection, compassion, mercy, sympathy, pity, kindness, sentiment, grace, charity
heiau	Pre-Christian place of worship
mo'o	Lizard, reptile of any kind, dragon, serpent; water spirit
mo'olelo	Story, tale, myth, history, tradition, literature, legend, journal, log, yarn, fable essay, chronicle, record, article
ōkole	Anus, buttocks (less polite than lemu)

(Source: Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert, *Hawaiian Dictionary* [Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986])

[31] Ibid., 248.

DIALOGUE
DEBATE
DISSENT

Raffaella Marzano e Sergio Iagulli

La poesia "contro". Voci dell'altra America

Gli autori sono i promotori di un'organizzazione culturale, con sede a Salerno, attiva fin dagli inizi degli anni '80, che attualmente ha nella Multimedia Edizioni, nel progetto di Casa della poesia, *e negli eventi internazionali sulla poesia e la scrittura, i suoi elementi di maggiore forza e prestigio. Hanno pubblicato in Italia Jack Hirschman, Sarah Menefee, Etel Adnan, Piri Thomas, Paul Laraque, Carter Revard, Ingrid Wendt, Ralph Salisbury e stanno per pubblicare Meridel Le Sueur e Bob Kaufman. Alcuni di questi, nel corso di viaggi promozionali in Italia organizzati da Multimedia, sono stati ospiti del nostro Istituto, dove hanno tenuto dei* reading *appassionanti. Perciò ci è sembrato appropriato chiedere ai responsabili, come sigillo al presente numero di "Anglistica" dedicato alle "poetiche dell'alterità", un intervento, una sorta di rendiconto della loro ormai pluriennale ricerca.*

Il tema di quella che si può definire "poesia d'impegno" negli Stati Uniti è uno di quelli di maggiore ampiezza del nascente progetto di *Casa della poesia* ed è anche stato il filo conduttore della nostra casa editrice, che è partita proprio con una collana denominata "Altre Americhe". Si tratta quindi di uno dei temi principali della nostra ricerca come editori, come promotori culturali ed organizzatori di eventi letterari internazionali (gli *Incontri Internazionali di Poesia*, *Lo spirito dei luoghi* e *Verba Volant*).

Abbiamo attraversato una sorta di fiume in piena, grazie alla conoscenza diretta e personale di poeti e scrittori che ci hanno fornito le coordinate per navigare senza perderci, avendo come riferimento costante la qualità dell'espressione poetica. Le nostre guide, all'inizio di quest'avventura, sono stati poeti come Jack Hirschman, Etel Adnan, Paul Laraque, Piri Thomas, Sarah Menefee, ecc. Addentrandoci in questa ricerca, noi cresciuti nel mito e nella disillusione del movimento beat, abbiamo immedia-

tamente avuto l'impressione che ci fosse, a seguito e a superamento di quell'esperienza, un mondo in grand'effervescenza e in continuo sviluppo, un laboratorio permanente, un workshop continuo. Questa condizione non poteva non entusiasmare chi vive in paesi dove la cultura, e in maniera specifica la ricerca poetica, vive una situazione di mortificante stagnazione, sia produttiva che propositiva. Ci sembrava che tutte le contraddizioni, le tensioni, gli scontri, le problematicità, le lotte, le difficili integrazioni, le emarginazioni, la violenza, presenti negli Stati Uniti, diventassero corpo di una cultura, solo a volte sotterranea, che riusciva a fare di tutto ciò espressione e strumento di comunicazione.

Ci siamo quindi messi al lavoro (l'idea iniziale era quella di approntare un'antologia dal titolo *UPRISINGS. Poesie dell'Altra America*) per raccogliere una quantità rilevante di poesie, d'impianto interetnico, da presentare al pubblico italiano, utilizzando alcune delle voci più significative di quella che noi andavamo ad identificare come "nuova poesia americana". Questa ricerca voleva presentare una linea poetica che rompesse con gli schemi abituali del fare poesia, non solo con le stanche scritture accademiche, ma anche con quelle che abitualmente sono considerate le "avanguardie". Il taglio individuato per dare corpo a quest'impostazione teorica era l'individuazione di una scrittura poetica che avesse come riferimento quasi costante (se non esclusivo), la lettura, la strada, la gente, la politica, le situazioni. Una poesia di denuncia e di riflessione sul nostro tempo, sui nostri problemi, sulla miseria, sulla fame, sui microcosmi di emarginazione, sui problemi dell'essere estranei in un mondo estraneo. Poesie lette per strada, nei caffè, nelle manifestazioni, durante le occupazioni, nelle marce, nelle *conventions*, nei concerti, nelle librerie, alla radio, poesie che conquistano spazio sui giornali, nei video, in eventi musicali. Poesie che invadono lo spazio, che conquistano luoghi nuovi e inusuali; poeti che rivestono un ruolo attivo nei movimenti di emancipazione sociale.

In questa ricerca un ampio spazio era occupato dai poeti californiani per due ordini di ragioni: una essenzialmente pratica, essendo la California il luogo da dove si è sviluppata la nostra ricerca; l'altra in quanto è proprio in quest'area geografica che c'era sembrato di cogliere il cuore di questo "fare poesia". Pian piano però il nostro occhio (e il nostro orecchio) è andato spaziando in lungo e in largo nell'immenso territorio americano. Poeti nativi americani insieme a poeti d'origine ispanica, orientale, afroamericana, caraibica, italiana. Il tentativo era quello di dare un'immagine del complesso agglomerato di lingue, linguaggi, istanze, tensioni, aneliti. E anche di guardare con interesse a quella società della mestiza, cui fa riferimento Vasconcelos, intesa come valore assoluto di crescita culturale planetaria.

Gli Stati Uniti, sono diventati il nostro laboratorio, il contenitore delle evoluzioni culturali di varie aree geografiche, attraverso le diaspore di varie aree del mondo. Quest'irruzione culturale ha prodotto e sta producendo una straordinaria rivoluzione nella lingua e nel linguaggio, introducendo neologismi, intrusioni, scambi, nuovi ritmi, sviluppando ed evolvendo la lingua (e la letteratura) sia nei paesi di provenienza di questi poeti, che nell'impero americano.

Alla fine quella che doveva essere una ricerca editoriale, è esplosa tra le nostre mani, assumendo un'ampiezza ed una vastità inaspettate. Il nostro interesse e la nostra attenzione aumentavano man mano che procedevamo in quest'avventura. Ogni incontro, rimandava ad altri incontri, sempre più avvincenti, sempre intravedendo ulteriori e nuove possibilità. Abbiamo incontrato il mondo di lingua ispanica (portoricani e *nuyoricans*, messicani, centroamericani), la diaspora araba, gli straordinari scrittori caraibici (di lingua inglese, spagnola, francese), ci siamo quindi immersi in quell'immenso magma poetico della scrittura afroamericana partendo da Bob Kaufman, Amiri Baraka (già Le Roi Jones), via via attraverso Wanda Coleman, Jaine Cortez, Sonia Sanchez, Alice Walker, ecc. Ci siamo scontrati con quel vero e proprio fenomeno letterario che è la *native writing* (con scrittori come Norman Scott Momaday, Simon Ortiz, Leslie Silko, Carter Revard, ecc.).

La nostra attenzione è stata attirata anche da tutta quella produzione multimediale così diffusa e prepotente negli Stati Uniti, a volte anche in ambiti culturali più marginali: video, cd-audio, audiocassette, cd-rom, riviste, giornali, fanzine, fogli, ecc.

Insieme ai poeti più giovani, alcuni sconosciuti anche al pubblico degli esperti, e agli emergenti, che erano il corpo principale della nostra ricerca, abbiamo incontrato anche poeti affermati e riconosciuti, ci siamo impegnati a cercare di ricostruire dei percorsi culturali che venissero da più lontano. Compaiono quindi in questa nostra ricerca anche alcune grandi voci (Meridel Le Sueur, Bob Kaufman, Amiri Baraka, Allen Ginsberg, Tom McGrath, gli stessi Jack Hirschman, Piri Thomas, ecc.) che sono riconoscibili come riferimenti attivi di questa area di ricerca.

Vorremmo soffermarci un istante su uno di questi riferimenti culturali a noi molto caro. Un incontro molto importante per noi, una sorta di fulminazione, anche per una ricostruzione storica dei percorsi culturali che andiamo analizzando, è stata la "scoperta" di Meridel Le Sueur, che purtroppo non abbiamo fatto in tempo a incontrare di persona (Meridel è morta nel 1996 a 96 anni), ma alla quale abbiamo dedicato alcuni incontri e sulla cui opera stiamo lavorando da tempo per far conoscere al pubblico italiano una delle voci più straordinarie di questo secolo negli Stati Uniti. Meridel è la "pasionaria" americana, una donna che ha attraversato all'opposizione tutto questo secolo di sangue. Una donna che ha condotto tutte le battaglie per la libertà e l'eguaglianza negli Stati Uniti. Meridel ha vissuto in quell'ambiente culturale e politico che ha prodotto la comune anarchica di Emma Goldman, la rivista "The New Masses", condivisa con John Reed, Dos Passos, Steinbeck. Lei, a differenza di altri, non si è fermata, non ha avuto ripensamenti, ha continuato la sua opera di denuncia e di lotta fino agli ultimi anni della sua vita (memorabile il poemetto Doan Keat, inviato in segno di "solidarietà" alle donne vietnamite durante la guerra). L'opera e la vita di questa straordinaria donna sono un riferimento costante del nostro lavoro e della nostra ricerca.

Nell'organizzare questi materiali, insieme a tanti altri provenienti da varie parti del mondo, nasce il progetto di *Casa della poesia*. Nasce dall'esigenza di organizzare uno spazio d'informazione, produzione e promozione della poesia a livello internazionale, di proporre un quadro strutturale che dia alle energie sin qui dispiegate ed agli entusiasmi suscitati, ma anche ai numerosi materiali raccolti, una "casa" che possa farsi punto di riferimento costante e certo.

Questo progetto fa tesoro dell'esperienza fatta sul campo della scrittura creativa negli Stati Uniti. Da lì, nasce la nostra attenzione per una poesia che faccia dell'oralità un elemento pregnante della ricerca e per tutto ciò che avvicina la poesia alla gente. È proprio da questa poesia letta nei bar, nei *reading*, negli scioperi, pubblicata sui giornali non specializzati, che prendiamo spunto per ricollocare la produzione poetica all'interno di circuiti e meccanismi estranei a quelli accademici e delle multinazionali editoriali, per riaffermare l'esigenza di una poesia indispensabile al vivere. Quello che perseguiamo è l'utopia di una poesia necessaria, qualcosa che abbia a che fare col pane e con l'acqua, col vento e la pioggia, con l'amore e con la lotta (per dirla come Roque Dalton); in estrema sintesi: una poesia che abbia intimamente a che fare con la vita.

Un aspetto molto interessante per docenti, studenti, ricercatori, e per il pubblico delle nostre iniziative, è l'organizzazione, nel progetto di *Casa della poesia*, della sezione (in audio e in video) "le voci della poesia". Ad un certo punto del nostro percorso è diventato indispensabile raccogliere insieme ai libri, riviste, una serie di materiali audio e video per dare la possibilità di "ascoltare" la poesia. La testimonianza e la "voce dei poeti" sono un patrimonio che va salvaguardato e conservato gelosamente. Dalla semplice voce del poeta, alla poesia insieme alla musica (popolare, jazz, percussiva, salsa, classica). Un continuo e paritetico interscambio che non vede la musica come accompagnamento, sottofondo, base. L'interrelazione con la musica è da considerarsi sia come recupero di memoria etnica, che tappeto ritmico, scansione, tempo. È anche invasione d'altri generi, l'avvicinarsi a linguaggi e luoghi diversi, imporre la straordinaria forza della poesia in altri ambiti e utilizzarli come veicoli. I rapporti poi tra musicalità e poesia sono più che evidenti e le relazioni tra poesia e musica, soprattutto in ambito nordamericano (si pensi al rapporto con la musica jazz), sono ormai una tradizione. Pertanto, quanti volessero ascoltare "le voci della poesia" americana, possono far riferimento a questo settore del progetto di *Casa della poesia*. Si possono già ascoltare e in alcuni

casi vedere (si tratta di materiali che spesso utilizziamo nel corso dei nostri eventi pubblici), straordinari performer come Jack Hirschman, Piri Thomas, Wanda Coleman, Marisela Norte, Opal Palmer Adisa, Michelle T. Clinton, Nikky Finney, Tom McGrath, Amiri Baraka, Meridel Le Sueur, Vincent Ferrini, Jaine Cortez, l'intero straordinario "United States of Poetry", e tanti altri, in un intreccio e continuum spumeggiante, brillante, mai stanco, mai noioso, in cui l'arma dello humor e dell'impegno politico si fondono per aprire le coscienze, per segnalare, per denunciare, per partecipare. Ecco probabilmente l'essenza di questa ricerca: poesia come partecipazione.

REVIEW ESSAYS

Etel Adnan, *Viaggio al Monte Tamalpais*, tr. Raffaella Marzano (Salerno: Multimedia Edizioni, 1993), ISBN 88-86203-00-4, £15,000. Original edition: *Journey to Mount Tamalpais*. An Essay. Drawings by the author (Sausalito, California: The Post-Apollo Press, 1986), ISBN: 0-942996-01-1, $10.95.

Reviewed by Gordon Poole

Generally we are taught that it is safest to leave references to the authors (as living human beings) out of interpretations of their works, even – paradoxically as this may sound – when those works are autobiographical or, in any case, first person. Otherwise unprofitable confusions may arise as the author becomes identified with the narrative voice or voices of the text, and the opinions, feelings and experiences of these narrative *personae* are projected back onto the author her/himself.

But I cannot do so with Etel Adnan; my copy of *Journey to Mount Tamalpais* bears her dedication: "To Gordon, a fine afternoon when the mountain remained veiled, with affection, Etel". It was in the summer of 1992, together with my States-side nephew and an Italian colleague in American literature who chanced to be in Berkeley, that I visited Etel Adnan at her home in Sausalito, not far from the base of the mountain. The next year she toured Italy on a promotion trip organized by her Italian editors, Sergio Iagulli and Raffaella Marzano. At the Istituto Universitario Orientale she met with my students in an intellectually stimulating and emotionally moving session, in which she read some of her poems.

I am incapable of leaving these things out of the picture, whatever incoherence that entails. So, at the risk of committing biographical fallacies, I might as well go the whole way and tell you something more about this extraordinary, warm, sensitive person. She is considered to be one of the most important Arabian writers of the diaspora. She was born in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1925 of a Greek mother and a Syrian father. She was educated in a Catholic school in Lebanon, and then studied at the Sorbonne, Berkeley and Harvard. She taught philosophy in California from 1957 to 1972. She returned to Beirut, but in 1979 the civil war forced her into exile again, first in Paris, then once more in California, where she has lived ever since.

In the present climate of exasperated, often vicious nationalisms and localisms, I am tempted to pose the provocatively impossible question: What is her national identity? She has never written in what I understand is her main mother tongue, Arabic; her first book, *Sitt Marie Rose*, a powerful novel about a woman in the Lebanese civil war, was written in French (Paris: Des

Femmes, 1978). Most of her subsequent work, poetry and prose, is in English, a language she speaks perfectly, even beautifully, but with somewhat of an accent.

A better question is this: in a time when only desperate, deprived people (e.g., the economically and politically afflicted populaces of former Yugoslavia or the culturally handicapped followers of certain *leghe*) cling to the nineteenth-century myths of ethnicity, nationalism and sect in order to define who they are or strive to think of themselves as, what has Adnan's book about a California mountain to teach us regarding the construction of identity?

The answer is in the book's basic metaphorical structure: "The mountain looks at us. One day I withstood its judgement, and became one with it" (p. 19). The mountain is a truly objective correlative for her identity. Yet identity is neither a given nor a once-and-for-all-time construct but a process: "I am 'making' the mountain as people make a painting" (p. 11). She is treating her life as a work of art, but with none of the decadentism that a similar project might imply. She is constructing her identity through her perceptions and her reproductions of these perceptions – in her case, perceiving Mount Tamalpais and drawing it or writing about it.

The book is a discursive chronicle of this day-by-day, feminine building of an identity. No sooner have I written this sentence than I would almost like to erase it! Perhaps I should say instead (emulating – as I realize upon rereading – Gertrude Stein): there is her perceiving and her responding to the mountain, and to what all it signifies, and there is also her writing and drawing, and their daily enriching and unfolding of the becoming that is her identity. Better?

To her trade as a writer she brings a sensitive, womanly openness to self-involvement in her object. Her book is about a mountain somewhat in the sense that Thoreau's is about a pond, both being forms of self-writing ("autography" one critic called *Walden*) – nor is the association gratuitous, for among the sources, whether direct or indirect, of this highly original book *Walden* must certainly be reckoned. Just as echoes of Whitman sometimes pattern her poetic prose, as in the following passage recalling fires that, as often happens, threatened the habitats of northern California:

> The mountain is hidden away by steam, not by fog.
> It is rushing toward Kentfield and San Rafael. It is an animal risen from the sea. A sea-creature landed, earth-bound, earth-oriented, maddened by its solidity!
> The worked around has the darkness of battle-ships, leaveless [sic] trees are spearbearers, armor bearers, swords and pikes, the mountain looks at us with tears coming down its slopes.
> O impermanence! What a lovely word and a sad feeling. What a fight with termination, with lives that fall into death like cliffs.
> O Sundays which are like vessels in a storm, with nothing before and nothing after! (p. 13)

A nuance of Etel's identity, then, is certainly American, a wittingly undertaken acculturation with values – Emersonian, Thoreauvian, Whitmanian – that are geographically and culturally far from the Middle East. Ethnicity and nation are still certainly potent sources of identity, even for members of the growing international or, more accurately, supernational and transnational social classes to be found all over the planet, especially in "G7" countries. So Adnan's Middle-Eastern culture has been constantly recast and leavened by living, working, writing, and studying in Europe and, at greater length, in America.

American is also her condition of exile, or emigrant (I am not sure how she considers her position – maybe as immigrant American). In spite of the three-and-a-half centuries of history behind them, Americans are uncertain about national identity, national values, always railing against anti-Americanism, going on about what it means to be an American, with an insistence unknown in most other countries, certainly in Europe. I think most Americans feel somewhat like immigrants, weirdly out of socket, ill at ease, short on roots, even the once blazoned WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants), my minority, almost an endangered species, who could be considered, paradoxically, the most hyphenated of all ethnic groups, more than Afro-Americans, Italo-Americans, etc., none of whom are so insecure as to require all of four words to be identified.

However, as in much post-colonial literature and sociology, Adnan's adventurous and poetic struggle for identity is no blind, nihilistic leap into the melting pot but the continual result of ongoing, adult negotiation with the dominant culture. Adnan is a Lebanese intellectual, whose roots and present connections go well beyond California, the Bay Area, etc. Her identity is what she has made out of what has happened to her, in various countries, languages, cultural engagements, contingent situations, and, above all, her dealing with all of this. So much is clear to me. But why a mountain, one might ask?

It would be reductive, unfair to *Journey to Mount Tamalpais* to throw off an answer to that question, for the book itself is the open-ended, never definitive but only possible answer. Just as I am reluctant to cull quotations from the text, although it is an eminently quotable book, because by doing so I am isolating and embalming moments of a process, whereas here context, the surrounding organic tissue of text, is important.

Instead, stepping back from the text once again into biography (and autobiography), I would tell you that when Etel Adnan came to Naples, she asked me how Neapolitans related to Mount Vesuvius, which she found a very imposing, disquieting presence. I told her what I thought, that Neapolitans lived with it in a composite attitude of fear and forgetfulness, without romanticism, no Byronic love of the wilds, no "pathetic fallacy", scarce sense of the picturesque. Until very recently, local authorities had done little in terms of civil protection, drills for survival in case of an eruption, evacuation plans, and the like. People have even been allowed to fatalistically build their homes near the volcano, on its very flanks.

In any case, beyond its iconic role on the picture postcards, I felt that Neapolitans had never turned Vesuvius, as they readily could have, and as Melville did in *Naples in the Time of Bomba*, into a symbol of something, for instance for death, for uncaring or malicious nature. Leopardi had done the latter in "La Ginestra", one of his best known and best poems, but he was not a Neapolitan. In the literature of Naples I doubted that there was even much interest in Vesuvius. The 1880 song, "Funiculì funiculà", by G. Turco and L. Denza, about the funicular ascent of the volcano, is a most insouciant ditty, with no hint of possible peril or symbolic depth. For the rest, Vesuvius is within the Neapolitan mind but not to be dealt with – perhaps (as professor and editor, Pino Ferraro of Filema Edizioni, has said) like a god that is not to be named.

Certainly natural phenomena – landscapes, typical panoramas, smells, fauna and flora – are part of the stuff out of which an Italian or any European identity is constructed. However, the nature of most of Europe, especially southern Europe, is culturally defined, crissed and crossed by the vestiges of centuries of civilizations, stratified with ruins and buried artifacts, cultivated (in the sense of tilled, etc.), *nulle terre sans seigneur*. When you "read" a European landscape, you are interpreting an historical document, just as when you "read" a European city (except the ones that have been leveled in war). I strongly suspect that Middle-Eastern landscapes are similarly historical.

Neither urban nor rural landscapes in America can – with due exceptions, of course – be easily read in this way. The American way of reading nature is not to see history in it but to interpret it romantically, theologically (Protestant theology), especially as you go further west. As Whitman has it, grass is a remembrancer dropped by God, with his monogram stitched somewhere in a corner. It is true that nineteenth-century American painting was learnt in Italy; but when the artists returned home and applied themselves to American landscapes, they found no history, no ruins, no evidence of previous civilization (i.e., they elided the history of Native Americans, preserving them only as wayfarers in nature, as walk-ons in the *theatrum mundi*, as mute, sullen observers of passing railroad trains, ignoring the stupendous evidence of their reverence for the environment). The American artists found only nature and, transcendentally, God, its Author.

There is something Germanic in this: in Lutheran theology, when Christ ascended to Heaven and sat on the right hand of the Father, he not only acquired omnipotence but ubiquity as well; he entered into nature, partially redeeming the non-human world from the primaeval curse which had struck not only Adam but nature as well. The Lutheran's deity is present in nature, consubstantially, and of this the Lutheran Eucharist is a very special realization. Emerson's teaching, with its critically reread Puritan, Calvinistic sources, is somewhat different from Lutheranism and the consubstantiationalist relation between vehicle and tenor (in

metaphors), between sign and meaning, between body and spirit, between wafer and Christ. It is proto-symbolist and deals with the close, metaphysical relationships linking nature, soul, language, and the Over-Soul (the indwelling divinity). In any case, in both consubstantiation and Calvinist symbolism, the *natura naturata* offers a direct, providentially guaranteed reference to the *natura naturans* which is divine.

Back to Etel Adnan: when she saw Mount Tamalpais, she fell in love with it (or with her, for both pronouns are used throughout the text): "I ... discovered that Tamalpais was at the very center of my being" (p. 10). The experience is fresh and original, yet the voice of Emerson is in the background: "Standing on Mount Tamalpais I am in the rhythms of the world. Everything seems right as it is. I am in harmony with the stars, for the better or the worst. I know. I know. I know" (p. 13).

She knows, of course, that the mountain, too, has been touched by history, named, even worshipped:

> The Indian called the Mountain Tamal-Pa, 'The One close to the Sea'. The Spaniard called it Mal-Pais, 'Bad Country'! The difference between the native and the conqueror is readable in these two different perceptions of the same reality. Let us be the Indian and let be! What is close to the sea shall remain close to the sea (pp. 15-17).

The syndrome of the conqueror, the suppressed guilt over conquest, the incapacity to fully internalize the conquistatorial foundation myth of the frontiersman, the claims (in U.S. courts and other legitimate sees) laid by the nowadays survivors of ancient peoples, make it hard for Americans to accept history. To do so would force them into dealing with the dark, brutal, racist essence of the American colonial and imperialistic experience, of a genocidal frontier democracy, giving up the perennial optimism of a never passing, ever smiling present. This is why a Cassandra-like prophet like Noam Chomsky is so hard for Americans to brook, so seldom published by the mainstream, so seldom aired on radio and television, which would reduce reasoned discourse to sound-bites. His recent book, *Year 501: The Conquest Continues*[1] scathingly interprets present-day U. S. foreign policy in the light of this unexamined history.

So there is something quite American here, too, in Adnan's reading of the mountain. She has, as she says, been wafted to California by a breeze "from Athens and Baghdad, to the Bay, by the Pacific Route, its longest journey ... followed by my home-made furies, errynies [correctly 'erinyes'], and such potent creatures ... I fell in love with the immense blue eyes of the Pacific ... the ocean led me to the mountain" (p. 9). She, too, opting for the Indians' concrete, natural naming of the mountain, is

[1] London: Verso – New Left Books, 1993; Italian translation by Gamberetti Editori.

fleeing from history, as a victim, embracing the mythical promise of a magnificent, feminine, chthonic outgrowth, fleeing from history to the innocence of an ideologically decreed lack of history, as most Americans have done and do.

She senses this and talks about it in the book. As in Leopardi's "La Ginestra", there are two stylistic registers interacting, vaguely structuring the text. One is lyrical, as we have noted; but the other is realistic. And in one of these realistic moments she recalls a Native American, a Pawnee by the name of Patrick Shields:

> He had been back from the Korean War and only one day later they found him in San Francisco in a flea-bag and shook him out of a drunken sleep to tell him that he had beaten a woman nearly to death. There was some doubt about the testimony of witnesses. All he replied was: "If you say I did it I must have done it". He got 12 years in San Quentin. One day he walked away from the prison and swam across the wintry mud flats of the Bay to Corte Madera, then went to Tamalpais. Three days later he came down, entered the first house he saw and surrendered. When I asked him what the mountain had told him he replied: "She told me that it was not the woman I had killed, it was America" (p. 26).

I find it appalling, extraordinary that Shields should have done these things and that she – Adnan – should have talked to him, and extraordinary her sensitivity that relates the story of this escaped prisoner to me, and at the same time I am blocked by a cultural gap between me and Shields (I wonder, has he a Pawnee name?) that keeps me from fully understanding what has happened here, what my U. S. institutions have done here. As a politicized person I ask (I don't ask Adnan, I ask): What should have been done? and should not? and should be?

So the book is anything but a passive surrender to rampant Americanism. Adnan's negotiation, her mountain, once "belonging" to local Native Americans, somehow conditions acculturation with a questioning that probes, poetically, innocently perhaps, but piercingly, into some of the same psycho-sociological areas that politically militant Americans like Chomsky deal with in harsher but no less viable terms.

The Italian edition, like the original, is enriched by reproductions of drawings by the author.

SUMMARIES

Gordon Poole

Melville and the Revolution in Italy

The author takes a new look at Melville's *Burgundy Sketches*, especially the two poems, *At the Hostelry* and *Naples in the Time of Bomba,* interpreting the two as a composite but unitary work. *Bomba* is clearly a political poem, on this critical literature is agreed; but Poole claims that, in spite of a misleading appearance of dealing with painting and interpretations of the picturesque, *At the Hostelry* is no less centered on politics, and that it is this common theme that welds the two poems.

Sergio Jovele

George Sterling: from Socialism to Scepticism

Born on the East Coast of the United States, the poet George Sterling was to become the symbol and pride of the literary world of San Francisco. Since his death in 1926, however, his personality has been overshadowed by more famous writers, associates of the poet, whose influence undermined Sterling's own artistic and philosophical autonomy. By focusing on the political character of some of his poetic works, this essay attempts to analyse Sterling's poetry independently from the figure of Ambrose Bierce, commonly regarded as the most influential presence in the poet's life. Taking into due consideration historical and biographical events, the essay follows Sterling's political formation and development from the socialistic poems of 1908, through the anti-war verses of 1914 and the condemnation of the capitalist exploitation of technological progress in 1915, to the anti-German, disillusioned and bitter sonnets of 1917.

Marco Nieli

Between Symbol and Protest.
The Poetics of Otherness in the American Sixties

The essay deals with the disaffiliation of American poetic intelligentsia from the establishment's official policies in the Sixties, starting from Kennedy's assassination in 1963 and the Vietnam

escalation. The poetics of the open form and "projectiveness" were quickly adapted by avantgarde poets to the new political context, based on a demand for radical pluralism and decentralization. In order to avoid the traps of political rhetoric, poetic writing had to face the problem of opening itself up to the "other," represented by the creative field and its utopia. Some subjective distance from the "actual" data of history becomes necessary and is provided by such perspectives as the satirical, the autobiographical and the mythological modes. The analysis of some texts by Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti, LeRoi Jones, D. Di Prima and R. Duncan shows that the best poetic results are achieved when the balance between political protest and symbolic resonance is most successful. The union between the poet and the political revolutionary, already prefigured by Whitman, is indeed the central myth of the Sixties, reshaping both politics and poetics on the basis of their reciprocal contamination.

Candace Fujikane

Reimagining Development and the Local in Lois-Ann Yamanaka's *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre*

This essay examines narratives of development and their role in understanding political movements in Hawai'i. Developmental narratives were used in the past to represent Hawai'i as "underdeveloped" in order to justify American colonial "guardianship", and these narratives continue to undergird the ways that people in Hawai'i imagine Hawai'i's political and economic future. In its critical approach to development, this essay attends to the people and ideas excluded from popular narratives of development, to narratives that evoke the "dissonant, disorderly, irrational, archaic, and subversive", in order to locate alternatives to exclusionary scripts of progress. Lois-Ann Yamanaka's collection of poetic novellas, *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre*, which has been both highly acclaimed and deeply controversial, provides one point of entry into questioning the epistemological grounding for discourses of development. The essay extends this analysis to consider the ways that Native Hawaiian visions of a Hawaiian Nation provide important alternatives to American ideologies of economic development.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Candace Fujikane is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Hawai'i. She teaches courses on the literatures of Hawai'i, Asian American literatures, and feminist/nationalist critical theories and practices. She is currently working on a book manuscript entitled *Archipelagoes of Resistance: Political Movements and the Literatures of Hawai'i*, and she is co-editing a special Hawai'i issue of *Amerasia Journal*, published by the Asian American Studies Center at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Donatella Izzo teaches English and American Literature at Istituto Universitario Orientale. She has edited volumes on literary theory, published books on Henry James and F.S. Fitzgerald, and contributed essays on Melville, James and other novelists of the nineteenth and twentieth century to several Italian and international journals and volumes. She is currently completing a full-length study of the textual and ideological implications of the representation of woman in H.James's short fiction.

Sergio Jovele graduated from the Istituto Universitario Orientale in 1996 with a degree thesis, entitled *George Sterling: California Sonnetteer*, focusing on the influence of Arthur Schopenhauer on the California poet George Sterling. Copies of the same are held at the Bancroft Library, U.C. Berkeley, and at the Harrison Memorial Library, Carmel-by-the-Sea, California. Presently, he resides in the United Kingdom where he covers current British political, environmental and migratory issues and Northern Irish politics for the pacifist magazine *Guerre e Pace*.

Eliot Katz. A 41-year old poet and activist from New Brunswick, New Jersey, Eliot Katz is the author of two collections, *Thieves at Work* and *Space and Other Poems for Love, Laughs, and Social Transformation* (1990), which included an introduction by Allen Ginsberg. He recently

guest-edited a special issue of *Long Shot* (19, 1997) entirely devoted to protest and political poetry.

Raffaella Marzano and **Sergio Iagulli** are the promoters of a cultural organization, based in Salerno, that has been active since the 1980s. Its present force and prestige comes from the publications as Multimedia Edizioni, a project called "The House of Poetry", and international "events" on poetry and other writing. In Italy Multimedia has published Jack Hirschman, Sarah Menefee, Etel Adnan, Piri Thomas, Paul Laraque, Carter Revard, Ingrid Wendt, and Ralph Salisbury, and is about to bring out Meridel Le Sueur and Bob Kaufman.

Marco Nieli, a graduate of the Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples, earned his doctorate in American Literature in 1997. His main area of interest is American Postmodern poetics, with particular reference to the Beat and Black Mountain avantgarde. His articles on Charles Olson, Allen Ginsberg and Robert Duncan have appeared in various Italian periodicals and collective books. His Ph.D. dissertation deals with the psychoanalytical interpretation of history in Duncan. A book of his own poetry, *Suenos I-IV*, has just been published by the Dedalus Press, Naples.

Gordon Poole teaches Anglo-American Language and Literature at the I.U.O. His interests and publications range far and large in American and Italian literature. A member of the Melville Society and contributor to the *Melville Society Extracts*, he has written widely on Melville, including the 1989 edition of *At the Hostelry and Naples in the Time of Bomba,* with introduction, notes and critical apparatus, and an Italian verse translation of *Bomba* (1995), which he presented at the Melville Society Meeting in Volos in the summer of 1997.

Carter Revard's poems and essays, informed by native American themes and influences, have been widely published and praised. A mixed-blood Osage and a Gourd Dancer, raised on a Pawhuska,

Oklahoma reservation, Revard served as board member of the American Indian Center of Mid-America in St. Louis (1986-1997). He has taught English and American Indian Literature since 1956 at various universities, and retired last year. Poetry: *Ponca War Dancers* (1980), *Cowboys and Indians, Christmas Shopping* (1992), and *An Eagle Nation* (1993). A collection of essays, *Family Matters, Tribal Affairs*, comes out this year.

Haunani-Kay Trask. Indigenous nationalist, political organizer, poet, and professor of Hawaiian Studies, Haunani-Kay Trask is Director of the Center for Hawaiian Studies, University of Hawai'i, Manoa. Author of three books, including a book of poetry *Light in the Crevice Never Seen,* and a collection of essays, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*, Professor Trask co-produced the award-winning documentary *Act of War: The Overthrow of the Hawaiian Nation* in 1993. Currently a member of Ka Lahui Hawai'i, the largest sovereignty initiative in Hawai'i, she has represented her nation at the United Nations in Geneva, and at various gatherings throughout the Pacific and the Americas.

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Examples:
Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986), 19.
Ibid.

Ibid., 23.
Jean Louis Comolli, "Machines of the Visible", in Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath, eds., *The Cinematic Apparatus* (London: Macmillan, 1980).
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Galbraith Miller Crump, *The Mystical Design of "Paradise Lost"* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1975).
Emile Benveniste, "La nature des pronoms", in *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).
Perry Anderson, "Components of the National Culture", *New Left Review* 50 (July-August 1968), 44.
John Hollander, *Melodious Guile. Fictive Pattern in Poetic Language* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 73 (hereafter cited as MG).
P. D. Brett, S. W. Johnson and C. R. T. Bach, *Mastering String Quartets* (San Francisco: Amati Press, 1989), 32.
Maria Stella, "Il poeta e la lettura del cuore", in *La figlia che piange: saggi su poesia e metapoesia*, a cura di Agostino Lombardo (Roma: Bulzoni, 1995), 169-180.