

**In Transfer. Perspectives on the Reception and Translation of American Literature in Italy**

*Cinzia Scarpino*

The article offers a brief survey of the history of the Italian reception and translation of 20th-century American literature, highlighting that this field of research has been, so far, only of tangential concern to either Italian “americanisti” or italianists/comparatists. The article also addresses some of the interdisciplinary challenges facing this field of research, in which diverse methodologies clash (e.g. Literary transfer theory and Polysystem theory).

**From One Civil War to Another: Uncle Tom, the American Secession and the Unity of Italy**

*Enrico Botta*

The article focuses on the reception of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* during the two decades following its first Italian translation (1852-1871). The novel represented not only an exciting and engaging text, but also a tool for interpreting many of the events and issues of the Risorgimento. In particular, until 1861 many Italians perceived Tom's enslavement and George, Eliza, and Harry's escape as an allegory of their subjection to and struggle against the Habsburgs and the Bourbons. Later, the most attentive readers interpreted the foreshadowing of the crises between North and South as a premonition of the events that were to conclude the process of national unification in 1871.

**“Our International Copyright Law”: Theory and Practice of Translation Rights in Early 20th-Century Italy**

*Anna Lanfranchi*

The essay demonstrates how the development of 19th-century international copyright frameworks represented a driving force for the growth of the Italian translation industry and for the reception of works by US authors. By combining the analysis of legal texts with the scrutiny of publishers' and literary agents' archives, this article explores Italy's gradual acceptance of the Berne Convention (1886), the bilateral treaty with the United States (1892), as well as the nature of the transnational networks channelling translation rights of US works to Italian publishing houses in the first half of the 20th century.

**Sherwood Anderson in between Ada Prospero and Cesare Pavese: Translations, Transfusions, Trajectories**

*Anna De Biasio*

The essay discusses the first two Italian translations of, respectively, *Winesburg, Ohio* and *Dark Laughter* by Sherwood Anderson, by comparing the trajectories, postures, and translations styles of Ada Prospero (*Solitudine*, 1931) and Cesare Pavese (*Riso nero*, 1932). Despite the striking homology of their positions in the intellectual field of Turin in the 1930s, through their translations and paratextual work Prospero and Pavese offered two very different images of Sherwood Anderson. Quite modest and idealistically-oriented, Prospero enhanced the crepuscular side and the Christian subtext of Anderson's work, often “domesticating” in her translation the latter's experimental use of slang. In contrast,

the exuberant and self-assured Pavese exalted Anderson's sensual vitality, opting for an intensely "foreignizing" translation style. Pavese's "version" of Anderson would prove instrumental not only to his own literary career, but also to forging a vastly influential image of American literature as a space of authenticity, freedom, and regeneration. This essay claims that despite of Pavese's narrative, Prospero gave a significant contribution to the creation of a "mito americano" in Italian culture, by consciously promoting Sherwood Anderson (among other American authors) as a literary and cultural novelty.

***Impegno nero: Italian Intellectuals and the African-American Struggle***

*Charles L. Leavitt IV*

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Italian intellectuals participated in Italy's reconstruction with an ideological commitment inspired by the African-American struggle for equal rights in the United States. Drawing on the work of authors including Italo Calvino, Giorgio Caproni, Cesare Pavese, and Elio Vittorini, this essay argues that postwar Italian intellectual *impegno* – defined as the effort to remake Italian culture and to guide Italian social reform – was united with a significant investment in the African-American cause. The author terms this tendency *impegno nero* and traces its development in the critical reception of African-American writers including W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, and Richard Wright. *Impegno nero* revived and revised the celebrated "myth of America" that had developed in Italy between the world wars. Advancing a new, postwar myth, Italian intellectuals adopted the African-American

struggle in order to reinforce their own efforts in the ongoing struggle for justice in Italy.

**The Role of Networks of Collaboration in the Dissemination of Beat Literature in Italy**

*Andrea Romanzi*

This article investigates Fernanda Pivano's work of dissemination of American counter-culture literature in Italy by focussing on the main networks of collaboration that the translator and cultural broker established with key literary figures in Italy and in the United States. Drawing on the most recent synergies between network theory and cultural sociology, this contribution aims at shedding light on the mechanisms of accumulation of social capital through the creation of professional connections, and on how the creation of strategic networks shaped the translator's agency and trajectory across the literary field, consequently affecting the reception and diffusion of Beat literature in Italy from the 1960s onwards.

**Publishing Pynchon in Italy: Paths, Protagonists, Perspectives**

*Paolo Simonetti*

The essay aims at reconstructing the processes that led to the publication and circulation of Thomas Pynchon's works in Italy from the mid-1960s to the present day, so as to shed light on the fragmented and distorted reception of Pynchon's corpus between the 1980s and the 2000s. The first section examines the organization of Bompiani publishing house in the 1960s and 1970s, as Pynchon's early Italian reception was tied to the publisher's policies. The second section

focuses on the translation of *V.* by Liana Burgess, which Pynchon himself appreciated. The last section summarizes the subsequent Italian critical reception of Pynchon, conditioned by the general reorganization of the publishing industry affecting both Europe and the United States.

**Rhetorics and Language of Afro-American Literary Criticism: Notes on the Legacy of Henry Gates's *Signifying Monkey***

*Vincenzo Maggitti*

Afro-American literature has suffered a long-lasting exclusion from the theoretical discourse that gave shape to the canon of US literature. The exclusion was based on the biased conviction that no theoretical approach was necessary to deal with a literary output characterized by its imitative attitude towards the canonical works of Western literature. This article argues that Afro-American literary theorists see imitation as an active creative process that sets Afro-American literature apart from the white Western canon by embodying African-American oral discourse into writing.

The article develops a new reading of Gates's *The Signifying Monkey* in response to the recently appeared Italian translation, highlighting how Gates's book argued for the academic relevance of black studies through a close reading of literary texts. Prompted by Gates's interdisciplinary approach, the author examines other, more recent, manifestations of the rhetorical powers exhibited in Afro-American works, covering cinema and trans-medial occurrences in contemporary black novels.

**Where She is From. Genesis and Compositional Strategies of Joan Didion's *Where I Was From***

*Sara Sullam*

Joan Didion achieved global success with *The Year of Magical Thinking* (2005), which contributed to a renewed interest in the genre of memoir. Yet Didion's shifting towards this genre can be backdated to 2003, the year in which she published *Where I Was From*. This article focuses on the genesis and the compositional strategies of Didion's 2003 work. I argue that *Where I Was From* should be considered as a watershed within Didion's corpus. In her 2003 memoir, Didion reshapes her authorial identity by moving back and forth between different literary genres, on which she grafts political and cultural discourses already present in her previous works.

**Fighting the Wars of Our Forefathers: Memory, History, and Novel in Philipp Meyer, Viet Thanh Nguyen, and Richard Flanagan**

*Antonio Scurati*

This essay argues that many recent important European narrative works (often "non-novels" that have innovated the form of the novel) stem from a yearning for a "lost feeling for History". These works are all written by novelists born at least two decades after the end of WWII, the tragic-epic focus of the century portrayed in their writings. Focusing on what he calls the "Novel of Post-History", Scurati extends his analysis to extra-European literatures in English, comparing Anglo-American and Australian writers, with a specific emphasis on Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Sympathizer* (2015) and Philipp Meyer's *The Son* (2013).

**Epic, War, Peace: On Antonio Scurati's  
"Fighting the Wars of Our Forefathers"***Giorgio Mariani*

The narrative impasse described by Antonio Scurati, whereby a generation of writers feel they can no longer fight "the wars of their forefathers", is strangely analogous to the fracture between the world of the epic and the world of the novel described by the young Lukács in his *Theory of the Novel*. Yet, notwithstanding the nostalgia and disenchantment pervading his reflections, Scurati's invocation of a narrative capable of redeeming the past and the present, and of projecting us into a more hopeful future, registers a need for epic narratives, where the destiny of the individual and that of a larger community may be, if not identical, at least strongly intertwined.

**An Epic of Extras: A Response to Antonio Scurati's "Fighting the Wars of Our Forefathers"***Giacomo Traina*

This response to Antonio Scurati's essay addresses in particular the section about Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Sympathizer* (2015). Nguyen's novel, Scurati argues, is akin to other post memorial narratives produced by Western authors, which deal with the memory of "the wars of their forefathers." The article questions Scurati's view of Nguyen's depiction of the Vietnam War as a thing of the past, by pointing out how, from the perspective of the Vietnamese diaspora that Nguyen addresses in the novel, the war is in fact still fought in memory.