

## Transnational Modernity and the Italian Reinvention of Walt Whitman, 1870–1945



A 1913 reprint of the 1887 Italian edition of Whitman's poems, selected and translated by Luigi Gamberale (Milano: Società Editrice Sonzogno).

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# Transnational Modernity and the Italian Reinvention of Walt Whitman, 1870–1945

Caterina Bernardini

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### Alle mie figlie Celeste e Sibilla, amore infinito



Essences of the people's beautiful selves,
Violins whose strings quiver
With long, soft, delicate harmonies—
Even when touched by the world's rough fingers,
Even when touched by Grief's cold fingers—
Think of the day when you, sleeping in your graves,
Shall be awakened by the thunder of your own voices
And by the strong, cool winds of your own music:
For in the fertile soil of the years
Your voices will blossom and become thunder,
Your music will become winds that purify and create.

→ EMANUEL CARNEVALI

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#### INTRODUCTION

"Once we begin to read literature as 'the home of nonstandard space and time,' then it becomes much easier to unearth these buried networks of intellectual alliance and moral kinship that stretch across continents and through the fabric of time itself."

—WAI CHEE DIMOCK, Through Other Continents

IN THE SAME YEARS of the last two decades of the nineteenth century during which hundreds of thousands of Italian people, dissatisfied with the economic crisis and lack of opportunities in the chaotic, newly unified Italy, were leaving for the United States in search of a better future, a book of poetry arrived in Italy from that same land. Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* was a book full of oddities and imperfections, Italian literati thought at first. But, nonetheless, it had an enormous expressive power: a power that struck them profoundly and that would inspire generations of new poets. This study gauges the effects that Whitman's book had in Italy in the period from 1870 to 1945: the reactions it provoked, the aesthetic and political agendas it came to sponsor, the creative responses it facilitated. But it also investigates the contexts and causes of this success, the lives, backgrounds, beliefs, and imaginations of the people who encountered it. By doing so, it ultimately chronicles the evolution of a literature intent at regenerating itself and moving toward modernity.

While this book focuses primarily on the Italian literary scene, the history of the reception that I retrace here is not presented in national isolation, but constantly evaluated in relation to—and direct collaboration with—other cultures that were also intent, in those same years, on reading and re-elaborating Whitman. In adopting this perspective, I follow the groundbreaking call of Walter Grünzweig's 1988 article "Collaborators in the Great Cause of Liberty and Fellowship: Whitmania as an Intercultural Phenomenon," which brilliantly proved and illuminated that the phenomenon of Whitman's reception "needs to be comprehended as a highly interactive, dynamic process occurring between individuals of different

cultures.... Even studies investigating Whitman's reception in one culture," Grünzweig argued, "should keep an eye out for the intercultural context at large," a call that I gladly and naturally responded to, as an Italian scholar of Whitman studies, American literature, and comparative literature, with an expertise in translation studies and multilingual skills to draw upon.

The need for the methodological shift in Whitman reception studies described by Grünzweig importantly resonates also with a larger, increasing shift that has been recently taking place in literary studies: a shift toward a heightened understanding and appreciation of the intercultural, transnational, and cosmopolitan nature of literature. If Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's assertion that "national literature is now a rather unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand" was perhaps too optimistic when he made it in the 1820s,<sup>2</sup> transnational and world literature now assumes more and more relevance in our globalized and multicultural world, as shown by recent influential studies such as John Pizer's The Idea of World Literature and David Damrosch's How to Read World Literature and World Literature in Theory, to name just a few. In the past decade or so, scholars have concentrated on showing the intrinsic relations of national literatures with each other and the circulation of an ever-expanding literary heritage that crosses borders and is capable of reverberating across space and time. The concept of world literature is certainly not without limits, and many have been its contested, problematic aspects: Emily Apter has discussed, for example, the crucial question of "untranslatabilty," 3 while Zhang Longxi has warned emerging world literature scholars of the risk of remaining Eurocentric in their perspective. <sup>4</sup> Transnational approaches are indeed not easy to apply and often frustrating to work with: the field of investigation is vast, and conscious and repeated efforts to look beyond a geopolitically and linguistically circumscribed culture (Grünzweig's idea of "keeping an eye out"), in engaging, ethically sound, and productive ways, are constantly needed. But the interaction of these approaches with reception studies seems to me to have been particularly rewarding in the case of Whitman's reception in Italy—an Italy seen in constant mediation between and comparison with other cultures. Notwithstanding how tempting and how much easier it may be to do so, understanding the Italian reception of Whitman as a nationally isolated phenomenon would not only be overly simplicistic and reductive, it would be fully misleading.

My work on the (trans) Italian reception is preceded by excellent studies from which I both drew immense inspiration and gathered troves of valuable information. The reception of *Leaves of Grass* in various national cultures around the world has been explored by monographs that describe, respectively, the English, South American, French, German, and Polish responses to Whitman: Harold Blodgett's *Walt Whitman in England;* Fernando Alegría's *Walt Whitman en Hispanoamérica;* Betsy Erkkila's *Walt Whitman Among the French;* Walter Grünzweig's *Constructing the German Walt Whitman;* and Marta Skwara's *Polski Whitman: O Funkcjonowaniu Poety Obcego w Kulturze Narodowej.* I have also benefitted from M. Wynn Thomas's book *Transatlantic Connections: Whitman U.S., Whitman U.K.,* the second section of which explores the reception of Whitman in the United Kingdom, and from two collections of essays, *Walt Whitman in Europe Today,* edited by Roger Asselineau and William White, and *Walt Whitman and the World,* edited by Gay Wilson Allen and Ed Folsom.<sup>5</sup>

While the general tendency of many of these studies has been to maintain a substantially national emphasis, Grünzweig's book dedicated to Whitman's German reception innovatively unearths various intercultural processes at work within the German reception and brings attention to the work that still needs to be done with reference to the "multicultural network of relationships among the Whitmanites from several countries." And Erkkila's intriguing epilogue about "Whitman's circumnavigation, from America to France, from France back to America again" prompts future scholars to investigate Whitman's reception as part of "an international community of art." This idea is also at the core of M. Wynn Thomas's 2005 study, which calls for what Thomas sees as a necessary postnationalist "transition in Whitman studies [...] to consider [Whitman] in a wider perspective of comparison and response [...] in the context of transatlantic studies."

A recent book that has offered a panoramic perspective on Whitman's reception across multiple countries is Delphine Rumeau's Fortunes de Walt Whitman: Enjeux d'une réception transatlantique. Rumeau's book explores the intercultural dynamics and international nature of the reception of Whitman, focusing especially on a series of debates that Whitman's work has stimulated in various, often interconnected cultural scenes and literary movements and also showing how the extra-American reception

of Whitman had a remarkable impact on the American one. Rumeau's book is a courageous scholarly enterprise and an enormously useful volume for helping scholars gain a general understanding of the numerous agents, events, agendas, and alliances that animated Whitman's planetary reception. But the book also suffers from a tendency to build rigid conclusions based on traditional compartmentalizations of styles and schools of thoughts, generalized divisions (whether applied to single writers, entire movements, or entire countries) that often reinforce a sense of borders, of closure, and of dangerous categorization. For example, Rumeau assesses that Whitman represents "a father in America, a brother in Europe" and that only in India and Ireland did Whitman's work represent a model of linguistic and cultural independence and political and literary national identity<sup>10</sup> (while the same is definitely true for Italy, too, and likely other nations as well). The rare appearance of women writers and critics in Rumeau's book is also disappointing, especially considering the spatial and temporal capacity of its scope, together with the sweeping assessments often made about entire, incredibly diverse continents, where Whitman's presence and weight is estimated to be practically nonexistent. Rumeau treats the Italian scene minimally and often somewhat reductively—frequently concluding that little of consequence occurred—and she gives no relevance to the crucial context of the Italian Risorgimento during which Whitman's reception in Italy began.

As for previous research specifically about Whitman's Italian reception, a series of articles, dissertations, and books should be mentioned and acknowledged, as they have greatly contributed to this study and pointed my research toward what remained to be done. In 1943, Rea McCain published "Walt Whitman in Italy," a fascinating article that offers a brief but crucial overview of the main agents and events of the very first years of Whitman's Italian reception and that is also useful in informing its readers about the influence of American intellectuals who had spent some time in Italy and who had contributed to the spread of knowledge there about the American poet. Dome years later, Glauco Cambon's article "Walt Whitman in Italia" offered an excursus of the main critical and translating interventions that brought Whitman to the knowledge and appreciation of Italian readers. The first thesis ever written in Italy about this topic, Mariolina Meliadò Freeth's "Walt Whitman nella cultura italiana, 1872–1903," notwisthand-

ing some incongruities and textual inaccuracies, is a thorough and useful study and offers a very useful final bibliography.<sup>13</sup> While it unfortunately only focuses on the period between 1872 and 1903 (not only a short time frame, but also a rather odd one, considering that Gamberale's unabridged translation came out in 1907), Meliadò Freeth's thesis remains illuminating in treating the creative impact of Whitman's work on writers like Giosuè Carducci, Gabriele D'Annunzio, and Giovanni Pascoli, and I often refer to her study in various chapters. Given the merit of the study, Meliadò Freeth was also invited to publish a short article that provides an overview of the reception, expanded to the time of Cesare Pavese in the 1940s, followed by an annotated bibliography of the main relevant critical publications, entitled "La fortuna di Walt Whitman in Italia," in the same year. 14 Later, Meliadó Freeth wrote "Walt Whitman in Italy," a brief (three page) but very useful recapitulation of the main events and agents of Whitman's Italian reception, for Roger Asselineau and William White's volume, Walt Whitman in Europe Today.

Charles Grippi's 1971 unpublished PhD dissertation, "The Literary Reputation of Walt Whitman in Italy," thoroughly examines and discusses the previously mentioned Italian scholarship and literary criticism dedicated to Whitman, but only partially and superficially considers the creative responses of Italian writers and often shows a lack of knowledge of the production of the writers it discusses—all of whom are firmly canonical figures in Italian literature. 15 Grippi's study remains fundamentally built upon Meliadò Freeth's work, although Grippi offers a more detailed historical background, especially with reference to the Italian Risorgimento, and expands the discussion to the futurists' re-elaboration of Whitman and to Cesare Pavese. Grazia Sotis's 1987 published dissertation, entitled Walt Whitman in Italia: La traduzione Gamberale e la traduzione Giachino di Leaves of Grass, is strictly dedicated to a comparison and contextualization (mostly with a translation studies and philological approach) of Gamberale's and Giachino's translations. Roger Asselineau's "Whitman in Italy," in Allen and Folsom's Walt Whitman and the World, is a short summa of the existing critical contributions about the Italian reception and a brief discussion of the main creative responses to Whitman by Italian poets. Two theses also offer a solid overview and summary of the reception but do not make any substantial new discoveries: one by Marisa Cecchetti (1971) and

the other by Simona Rizzacasa (1997). Within the following chapters I also cite a few essays that treat specific aspects, moments, or figures of the Italian reception (such as my 2015 essay on Dino Campana and Whitman and Marina Camboni's 2016 essay on the reception of Whitman within Italian futurism).

When reading this previous research, I noticed a substantial lack of attention to women writers, critics, and readers, who were either completely absent from the picture or only briefly cited. An evaluation of the closeness of their creative work to Whitman's was never executed. The tendency of most of these studies is, in fact, to concentrate on canonical male writers such as Giosuè Carducci and Gabriele D'Annunzio. Thus, bringing cases like those of Ada Negri, Sibilla Aleramo, Margherita Haskard, and Mina Loy to light and giving them proper relevance to Whitman has been one of my main objectives. The same is true for cases of male writers, such as Dino Campana, Emanuel Carnevali, and Piero Jahier, who had not been treated or were only briefly mentioned in that context, perhaps because they were often excluded from the main accounts of canonical Italian literature. My study also differentiates itself from the aforementioned scholarship by its grounding in archival studies: much attention and time has been dedicated to investigating the lives, correspondence, journals, annotations, manuscript drafts, private libraries, and archival materials—when existing—of the writers, critics, and translators whose work I examined. This was a laborious process that took me all around Italy over a number of summers: from the small town of Agnone in the Molise region, up to Lake Garda, from Bologna to Florence to Rome and back, several times. Through this work I made a series of noteworthy discoveries and was able to clarify questions that had remained open or obscure, as I will describe in detail in the relevant chapters following. My comparative, transnational approach, not a feature of any of the previous studies, also contributes to offer a much fuller picture of how the Italian reception came into being and how it can be compared to—and, in fact, is inseparable from—Whitman's reception in other countries. I look for intertextual connections by reading literary texts in the original languages, and I provide translations and comparative evaluations.

My practice here is to provide, in endnotes, original passages from creative works but not from reviews, correspondence, or criticism. I priv-

ilege the creative texts because I frequently discuss the phonic, rhythmic, and lexical qualities of their original language versions. I usually provide my own translations of literary passages, but occasionally I rely on those done by others when I find them adequate. When using the title of a poem, article, or book written in a non-English language, I offer my literal English translation of the title in parentheses (maintaining the same italicization or quotation marks I used for the original). The English title I offer should thus not be taken to signal the existence of a corresponding published English translation of the text being discussed. In fact, attempting to note and differentiate between works that were or were not published in English risks falling into unsound scholarly practice. This is not only because most often I retranslate or translate texts de novo myself, but also because establishing and indicating whether a certain text (or version of a text) was translated, and in what editorial form, would be immensely arduous, given the often profound processes of readaption inherent to both literary translation and editorial intervention. In some cases, it would also force me to choose subjectively from among a series of existing English translations of the same text. Providing literal translations of titles in parenthesis is thus meant as both a cautious but also an equalizing citational gesture. It should also be noted that the original punctuation and capitalization of non-English titles of works mentioned in this book have been adapted to conform to the standards of the Chicago Manual of Style. Periods in multipart titles have thus been changed to colons or semicolons, with the words following capitalized. The scope of the investigation is mainly literary: I do not take into extensive consideration the reinvention of Whitman's work in the visual arts or in the musical or cinematic spheres. This is fitting both because it is necessary to restrict the vast territory under analysis and because Whitman's greatest impact was on other writers.

The goal of my study is not to quantify the extent or weight of Whitman's "influence." My theoretical perspective aims to radically differentiate itself from any idea of debt and to be closer, instead, to the idea of dialogue and reinvention and to T. S. Eliot's concept of literary tradition. <sup>17</sup> Eliot's idea that "what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it "<sup>18</sup> is also a recurring idea in Whitman's poetry. Whitman's poetry continually asked, demanded, to be addressed, actualized, transformed, reinvented. Whitman

wanted more than a passive reception: he wanted an active reinvention of his work by future readers and poets who would write the modern identity, create the modern poetry, and advance toward a modern "America" that would always remain an aspiration, a goal never quite realized. "America," for Whitman, was, like democracy, "a great word, whose history, I suppose, remains unwritten, because that history has yet to be enacted." Somewhat paradoxically, Whitman's conception of "America"—or, perhaps more accurately, his *search* for a conception of "America"—was frequently taken up by writers and thinkers in other countries and used as a sort of blueprint for their own national projects.

This study does not conceive Whitman's poetry as a monolithic product or a list of prescriptions imported and adapted (in)to a foreign culture and country. The aim is not that of describing any derivative lineage or of reinscribing and extending the canonical dominance of Whitman within and beyond the North American literary scene. Rather, I regard Whitman's poetry as a constantly negotiated embodiment of "otherness," mediated by translations, articles, and creative responses and understood according to different needs, wants, desires. Here I am referring in particular to the idea of Homi Bhabha, who wrote that "[t]he study of world literature might be the study of the way in which cultures recognize themselves through their projection of 'otherness.'" 20 Studying how the Italian reinvention of Whitman took place is an opportunity to explore a series of cross-cultural contacts and encounters. It is a way to investigate how and what readers and writers perceived and wanted to perceive in Whitman's expression of "America." For Italian literati, reading Whitman, echoing, "imitating" his poetry, or even criticizing and opposing it, was always a way to go "beyond" their situated, present Italianness and to confront and dialogue with their idea of otherness, of "America," of modernity. Reading, translating, and responding to Whitman was a powerful way to question, redefine, innovate, and often attack Italian literature and culture.

The idea of "modernity," which returns often in this book when discussing both the Italian and the other international scenes of Whitman's reception to which Italy was connected, is obviously a vast term, with infinite reverberations. My view is close to Jacques Rancière's rethinking of modernity in terms of a much more gradual and much longer process than those usually ascribed to the development of "high modernism."

Rancière has shown, in fact, how modernizing forces have been at work in various places for many centuries, not only in the early part of the twentieth century, and that the interactions of tradition and innovation, past and projected future, are quintessential components of any "modern/ist" art.<sup>21</sup> This need to recast and pluralize modernism, to show it as a recurrent phenomenon that produced innovation across not only a couple of decades or so but across centuries, has also been underlined by Susan Stanford Friedman in her book entitled *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time*.<sup>22</sup> It is in this sense that I intend Whitman's work in this book: his poetry had the effect of being a "precipitant of the modern," as Alan Trachtenberg defined it.<sup>23</sup> It did not provoke immediate, radical revisions in the way and the aims for which Italians wrote, but it did propel a rethinking: a rethinking that was adequate to the need to reframe Italian literary identity in a newly formed country.

And this same rethinking, as I show, was happening also in different contexts, where Whitman's work also sparked new aesthetic and political understandings of what literature and language should be and do: ultimately, studying Whitman's reception in a transnational perspective is an opportunity to perceive how many countries were at the same time collaborating to carve out the writing of modernity. In this sense, this book not only shows the interconnectedness of various international agents engaged in understanding and contributing to the spread of Whitman's work, but, more largely, it demonstrates the constellation of premodernist and modernist consonances. This understanding of modernity also stands in contrast to a sense of an innovation that comes suddenly, from nowhere: as Betsy Erkkila has shown, Whitman himself was "no isolated primitive or eccentric national genius."<sup>24</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that he often tried to deny it, his work was grounded in the literary past just as much as was that of the writers who admired him, no matter the level of iconoclasticism to which they aspired. It is precisely in the gradual and productive negotiation with the past that the reframing of modern poetry took place.

It will be useful to gain some preliminary insights about the historical and cultural context for the Italian reception of Whitman for the period discussed in this book: 1870 to 1945. When Whitman's work arrived in Italy, in the 1870s and 1880s, the country had only recently been unified and was in a post-Risorgimento phase of transition and adjustment. The ideolog-

ical origins of the Risorgimento movement, the name of which means "resurgence" or "revival," can be traced to the period of French domination during the Napoleonic Empire to which Italy had been subjected. After the fall of this regime in 1815, the Italian states were restored and subjected again to their former rulers and to the general hegemony of Austria. In the 1820s, secret societies started to oppose these developments, and Giuseppe Mazzini founded the democratic group Giovine Italia (Young Italy) in 1831, which hoped to encourage people to resist reactionary movements and start conceiving a sense of nationhood. After the failure of liberal revolutionary attempts in 1848, the state of Piedmont, the only one with a liberal constitution, declared war on Austria but was defeated. A second war of independence from Austria was won—with the help of French allies—in 1859, when the republican Giuseppe Garibaldi conquered Sicily and Naples with his guerrilla Redshirts and the Piedmontese united most of Italy under their rule in 1861. Veneto and papal Rome remained to be annexed, but they finally became part of Italy in 1866 and 1870, respectively. The newly unified Italy would remain a constitutional monarchy, under the House of Savoy, from 1861 until 1946, when the Italian Republic was established.

While Italy had finally managed to achieve its unification in March 1861, politically, as observed by historian Giuliano Procacci, the centralized government of moderate prime minister Cavour looked more like an extension of the old Sardinia Kingdom than a new political organism.<sup>25</sup> The gap between the elite and the masses was pronounced: only a few "illuminated" Italians could vote, and illiteracy, poverty, and criminality were peaking. The heterogeneity and separation of territories, dialects, and cultures was extreme. In words attributed to patriot and statesman Massimo D'Azeglio (and which have become a popular motto), "Italy has been made, but Italians aren't being made." And arguably, not even Italy was "made," as the question of the so-called unredeemed lands still remained to be answered. These were territories (including Trentino, Venezia Giulia, Dalmazia, Nizzardo, Corsica, and Malta) that, after Italy's third war of independence, in 1866, remained under foreign domination: only at the end of the First World War would the question of the unredeemed lands be closed. The social and political upheaval of these decades led many Italians (especially from the South), unsatisfied with and left impoverished by the young nation's direction, to migrate to the United States or South America.

In the newly formed Italy of the 1860s, the nation's literati felt a huge responsibility: they had to try to build an adequate literature, and therefore an identity, for this renewed political entity. They had to leave behind an aristocratic tradition, with its anachronistic attachment to academism and classicism, and give shape to a new, more modern literature. And identity, in literature, is shaped first and foremost by language. But how to form a national literature in a land with so many cultural and linguistic differences? In this context, Whitman's language and poetics were regarded as a fitting and inspirational example. The "cultural translation" of Whitman, to use Wynn Thomas's expression, <sup>26</sup> was shaped by—and responded to—the need for a true "Italianization," a more homogeneous nationhood. Whitman's poetry was evoked as a way to keep the democratic, humanitarian Mazzinian and Garibaldian ideals that had been the ideological core of the heroic struggles to achieve unification, not only unforgotten, but vital, in a potentially revolutionary sense. Italy was not a culture that received Whitman's "lesson" passively, but a culture animatedly concerned with its identity and determined to bring about, also through Whitman's example, renewal.

With the appearance of the first selected translations from Whitman's work by Luigi Gamberale in 1887 and 1890 and with more attention directed toward Whitman by Italian critics, knowledge of Whitman became more widespread in the country, and Italian poets started echoing the American poet more consistently, each with a particular sensibility and aesthetic and/or political agenda. This proto-modernist moment of Whitman's international reception remains an intriguing and immensely fruitful phase of transition. Whitman acted as a figure of liberation in many senses, but not through complete dismissal of the past: in fact, his voice was often perceived as a powerful continuation and revision of the classical epic tradition that had to be recuperated and forged anew. The mediation of the appreciation of Whitman by the French symbolists, with whom Italian writers were often in close contact, was also important in this sense.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Italy's situation was not made easier by its first (failed) colonial attempts. Social conflicts proliferated, masses of workers began to organize into anarchic groups, the first trade unions were born, and the Italian Socialist Party was formed in 1892—the year of Whitman's death. While some progress was made during

the government of Giovanni Giolitti (1903–1914), social and political conflicts remained constant. In the meantime, thanks to the appearance of the first unabridged translations (Gamberale published his, the first complete translation to appear in Europe, in 1907) and the increasing number of critical and creative responses, knowledge of Whitman's work in Italy and around the world was spreading rapidly and reaching new heights by contributing to the shaping of the intense stylistic and thematic experimentation of futurist and modernist avant-gardes. This was also another enormously rich moment for the reinvention of Whitman's work in Italy.

However, the post-Risorgimento fervor that had animated the first readings of Whitman's work in Italy and in Europe was still quite strong. In particular, what remained productive was the idea of looking at Whitman's poetry as an exemplary form of national identity construction and mythmaking. And this fervor was heightened by major events like World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution, events that put national and political identities under close scrutiny. The country was greatly divided over the decision to enter the war, and this rift is evident in the literature that was published in these years. The appreciation of Whitman's work thus assumed during this time heightened political meaning, and it was often employed and manipulated to further particular political agendas: from militaristic and irredentist to communist to fascist.

Italy was profoundly weakened by the war. The victory did bring the annexation of Trentino, Venezia Giulia, Istria, and Alto Adige, but not of Dalmatia and other colonial territories that the allies had initially promised to Italy. Italian socialists and communists, also inflamed by the Soviet Revolution, blamed the politicians who had supported the war, and in 1919 an alliance of socialists and Catholics (the Popular Party) won the elections. But 1919 also saw the birth of Italian fascism under the command of Benito Mussolini: the fascists started to violently oppose the socialists, and in 1922 Mussolini came to power, with the support of the monarchy, the Catholics, and a large portion of the bourgeoisie. In a few years, Mussolini changed the liberal state into an authoritarian one, and fascism became a repressive regime. It is in this repressive climate that many Italian literati became more and more curious about American literature, and therefore also about Whitman (Gamberale's final complete translation, which was

published in 1923, surely favored this development). This interest gradually and increasingly came to assume an anti-fascist perspective.

The colonial enterprises continued, and Italy sided with Franco in the Spanish Civil War: in those same years, Italy tied itself to Nazi Germany, entering the Second World War at its side (counting on an easy victory) in 1940. But the military situation worsened rapidly, and in 1943 the Mussolini regime fell. In September, Italy proclaimed armistice with the arrival of the Anglo-Americans. After the armistice, in the northern part of Italy, still occupied by Germany, a new neofascist regime established itself. A large number of heterogeneous partisan Resistance groups became active in the long process of liberating Italy from Nazi-fascist forces, which finally took place in April 1945. American support was crucial in Italy's reconstruction. In 1946, Italy did away with its past as a constitutional monarchy and became a republic, preparing itself for a decade of "economic miracle" and the increasing domination of the moderate Christian Democratic Party. It was during this time that American studies were institutionalized, and a new complete translation of Whitman came out in 1950, marking the beginning of a new era in Whitman's reception in Italy.

While my study does proceed largely chronologically, each chapter examines one or more cases of encounter and interaction between Whitman and a writer, translator, or literary movement, cases that often spread across a number of decades and connect with different scenes and similar literary developments taking place elsewhere. The first chapter studies two initial, crucial acts of critical introduction that came to Italy through France and England: the article by Thérèse Bentzon and the editions and selections from Leaves of Grass by Anglo-Italian critic William Michael Rossetti. Bentzon's article, notwithstanding its vehemence in denying the value of Whitman's work, still managed to spark the initial interest of two figures who would become central agents of the Italian reception: critics Girolamo Ragusa Moleti and Enrico Nencioni. Rossetti's editions, which I present as necessarily connected to the Risorgimento ideology particularly given Rossetti's biographical connection to Italy and his ideological upbringing—present a political side of Whitman that was inherited and extended by Nencioni. Nencioni, like other Italian literati of the time, had the somewhat paradoxical desire to look beyond the borders of current Italian literature in order to found a new national literature. This

renewal was further pursued by an extremely influential writer of the last decades of the nineteenth century: Giosuè Carducci, whose encounter with Whitman's work I also describe in Chapter 1, in particular with reference to Carducci's sense of the need to elaborate an unprecedented, barbaric diction. Carducci's reading of Whitman proved inspirational for his seminal work of mediation between tradition and innovation, just as it happened, in these same exact years, to Russian writer Ivan Turgenev, whose case, briefly discussed at the end of the chapter, reveals a series of relevant parallels with that of Carducci.

The second chapter considers the figure and work of Luigi Gamberale and his translations of Whitman's poetry. My research at the Agnone library, Baldassarre Labanca, to which Gamberale bequeathed his books, journals, translation drafts, correspondence, and other miscellaneous materials, afforded me a privileged insight into the translator's lifelong work with Whitman's poetry and led me to a series of discoveries, including a previously unnoticed selected translation in three inexpensive volumes, published in 1912 and intended for working-class laborers. I observe not only the changing historical and cultural contexts in which Gamberale's translations were executed and published, but also the translator's personal taste and his evolving understanding (and misunderstanding) of Whitman's poetics. I compare Gamberale's translation with others that appeared in the same years, also noting the direct influence that Gamberale's 1907 edition had on French, Spanish, and Russian translators. The chapter also examines Gamberale's correspondence from these years, illuminating the translator's relationships with other figures involved with Whitman's international reception and the heightened enthusiasm for Whitman among common readers. Gamberale received letters from readers congratulating him, expressing their interest in the American poet, and submitting their own creative work to Whitman's Italian translator, in search of his approval.

The third chapter discusses the work of a poet who has never before been studied with reference to Whitman's Italian reception: Ada Negri. Negri's interest in Whitman was sparked by a circumstance in her private life: the American poet's work was presented to her in 1892 by Ettore Patrizi, her romantic partner, who in that same period migrated to the United States. Negri's ideological view of America's promise of democracy and of Whitman's significance was shaped not only by her interest in Nencioni's critical

works and in Carducci's poetry and by her socialist ideals and support of the working-class cause at the time, but also by this private romantic episode and a personal mythologizing of a land to which Negri herself contemplated moving. In the chapter I observe the existence of striking consonances between Negri's and Whitman's production, highlighting how Negri's understanding of Whitman is notable for the attention she gives to Whitman's depiction of sexuality, at a time when it was largely ignored. Negri's political perspective can be productively compared to similar political readings by other international poets and critics at the time, and it also illuminates an intriguing line of continuity between socialism and early fascism.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to Gabriele D'Annunzio's long and complex history of admiration for Whitman, a history that went through a series of phases that have never been adequately examined. By looking at letters and at his personal, annotated copies of Whitman's editions, I observe how D'Annunzio started from a Nencionian-Rossettian perspective and then, thanks to his knowledge of French vers librism and of similar Italian experiments, moved further than his mentor Nencioni in his appreciation and imitation of Whitman's formal innovations, even while retaining his flamboyant and decadent poetics. Later, D'Annunzio paired the energy and inspiration he received from Whitman with Nietzschean overmanism, before finally returning to his first political reading, ultimately inflating it into a form of hypernationalism. D'Annunzio's experience thus serves as a case study of the myriad modes of Whitman's Italian reception.

Giovanni Pascoli, whose work and appreciation of Whitman I describe in Chapter 5, was an innovative poet who carried on Carducci's experiments with "barbaric" quantitative metrics and looked with interest to Poe and Whitman, often combining these two influences. Coining the concept of "reflected rhythm" and applying it to Whitman, Pascoli came close to Pasquale Jannaccone's important 1898 study of Whitman's "psychic rhythm." Pascoli's case, considered in conjunction with Jannaccone's study and other critical articles that came out in these years, highlights a sophisticated Italian understanding of Whitman's rhythmical and musical characteristics. This resonated with other international insights, including those of José Martí and Vyacheslav Ivanov.

I dedicate the sixth chapter to a woman writer and critic who links

various threads of Whitman's Italian reception: Sibilla Aleramo. Significantly called "the errant Sibilla," 27 Aleramo took active part in several literary circles of the time: the Roman circle of the Nuova Antologia, the Florentinian groups that gathered around the periodicals Lacerba and La *Voce*, the Milanese early futurist movement, and, finally, the Parisian circle of the Mercure de France. Aleramo can be seen as our figurative guide to understanding how she and other Italian and international writers and intellectuals, who were part of these milieux, were reading and appropriating Whitman. I am also able to prove, for the first time, Aleramo's authorship of a pseudonymous article on Whitman that appeared in the Nuova Antologia in 1908. I also argue that Aleramo, writing under the name NEMI, authored three other pieces on Walt Whitman in 1902, 1906, and 1907. These Nuova *Antologia* pieces, which had been briefly discussed in previous scholarship but were always attributed to a variety of male writers, are all illuminating and deserve attention, as they show a new understanding of Whitman's poetry in both political and formal terms, an understanding that was vital to Aleramo and her literary emergence. Aleramo's passion for Whitman deeply impacted both her private life and her creative production.

The seventh chapter analyzes the case of the literary periodical *La Voce* and of the readings of Whitman by three members of this influential cultural circle: Giovanni Papini, Ardengo Soffici, and Piero Jahier. While references to other figures in this group are made, concentration on these three writers allows us to grasp the existence of different trends in Whitman's reception and to observe the idiosyncratic approach of writers who belonged to the same circle. Papini's approach showed a strong consonance with other futurist readings of Whitman, but Papini never adopted free verse. Soffici shared Papini's admiration for the American poet and echoed Leaves of Grass, but at the same time he diminished Whitman's stature as a poet, proudly claiming his own value as an Italian poet and the value of European letters. Jahier adopted a long, free, almost biblical verse and echoed Whitman repeatedly, also by adopting the use of the long dash—an unprecedented feature in Italian literature—but with completely different poetic and political aims than those of Papini and the futurists: Jahier's poetry was profoundly anti-fascist.

Chapter 8 is dedicated to two poets, Dino Campana and Emanuel Carnevali, who have been little studied in connection with Whitman. The poets

were both part of the avant-gardist literary circle that gravitated toward La Voce, and they both decided to physically migrate to "America"—Campana to Argentina and Carnevali to the United States. Their writings about this experience are filtered through a Whitmanian perspective. Both poets left behind the Italian literary scene and plunged into the new American lands that, in their eyes, incarnated modernity, and their understanding of "America" proved to have been significantly shaped by reading Whitman. While traveling and upon arrival, both Campana and Carnevali in fact wrote poems that directly invoked Whitman's presence, not only as a sort of traveling companion presence, but even as a tutelary deity. While Campana went to Argentina and had a turbulent experience working different jobs before returning to Italy, Carnevali, after an initial period of poverty and difficulties, started to collaborate with the magazine *Poetry* and met various writers, including Carl Sandburg and William Carlos Williams. Before returning to Italy due to illness, Carnevali had even begun to plan with them a new periodical, New Moon, modeled on La Voce. Carnevali's poetry represents a unique textual *locus* of encounter of the Italian and the American avant-garde. Campana's and Carnevali's poetry can be seen as two important outcomes of the modernist transnational imagination in which the figure of Whitman played a central role.

Chapter 9 analyzes the emergence of free verse in modernist and early futurist Italian literature and evaluates Whitman's contribution to its development. Writers like Gian Pietro Lucini and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, who had studied and lived in France and were trying to bring free verse to Italy, programmatically adopted the technique and gave fuller force to the creative reinvention of Whitman's diction that had started in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. While Marinetti started to embrace a militarism that eventually led him to disregard free verse, and while some futurists began to carry out fascist appropriations of Whitman's poetry, others refused to do so. For example, British expatriate and futurist writer Mina Loy—who lived in Florence for a few years—admired Whitman's depiction of sexuality and his use of polyglossia. I also show how Russian futurism, based on a line of continuity with Whitmanian endeavors by Russian symbolists, initially shared with Italian futurism a similar appreciation and imitation of Whitman's free verse.

The final chapter follows the critical work and creative dialogue with

Whitman that writer Cesare Pavese began while still a university student. Pavese belonged to a new generation of Italian intellectuals and writers who were deeply fascinated by American literature. He wrote his thesis<sup>28</sup> on Whitman, and this document has been recently reevaluated by critics, together with a few translations of Whitman that Pavese had prepared (but never used) that have emerged recently. Pavese's 1933 description of Whitman's work as "poetry of poetry making" offers evidence of a deeper understanding of the formal nature and value of the American poet's work that had only sporadically, and never before in such a clear expression, emerged in the Italian reception. But it must also be noted that Pavese fell short by failing to discuss the crucial homoerotic component of Whitman's poetry, as many others had done before him. Pavese did, however, have the merit to encourage Enzo Giachino to work on a new translation of Whitman's work, which was published in 1950. This would enhance the already existing interest of an entire generation not only of writers, but also of scholars and intellectuals, and contribute to the birth of American studies in Italian academia, largely in the name of Whitman. As declared by Agostino Lombardo, in fact, for this first generation of Italian Americanists, the discovery of Whitman coincided with the discovery of American literature at large.29



This book contributes to tracing, through the particular lenses of Whitman's reception, a history of modern Italian literature and of the pursuit of transnational literary modernity. But it cannot and should not be taken as intending a final, definitive assessment of these immensely complex, plural, and rich phenomena, which will continue to reveal new aspects and which demand constant reevaluation. I wrote this book to illuminate a series of encounters with Whitman's poetry that Whitman himself had strongly called for and projected in his own writing. I observed how his poetry questioned, prompted, excited, and touched (for good or ill) the poetry of others and, ultimately, how it interrogated what poetry is capable of *saying*, *imagining*, and therefore also of *creating*, of *doing*. It is from this perspective of a quintessentially modern revision and questioning of the limits, value, commonalities, and potentialities of the poetic experience that I hope this book will be read.

# Post-Risorgimento Encounters Enrico Nencioni, William Michael Rossetti, and Giosuè Carducci

Strolling in Florence, Reading a French Periodical: Girolamo Ragusa Moleti, Enrico Nencioni, and Thérèse Bentzon's Review of Whitman

Crucial encounters can often take place during a pleasant walk, and so it went for the very first encounter with Whitman supposedly ever made by an Italian. Or, at least, so it was reported in 1889, when Sicilian critic, journalist, writer, and folklore scholar Girolamo Ragusa Moleti (1851–1917)¹ published a quasi-mythical account of the event.² In it, Ragusa Moleti declared that, while strolling in Florence one pleasant afternoon in 1872, he had stumbled upon an article on Whitman authored by French critic Thérèse Bentzon, freshly published in the *Revue de Deux Mondes*.³ During that same walk, Ragusa Moleti would also casually meet the prominent Florentinian critic and Anglicist Enrico Nencioni, to whom he would show the article. Nencioni immediately admired Whitman's original voice, yet, curiously, he waited seven years before writing about it.

This story has prompted some doubts. Scholars have commented on how Ragusa Moleti's account of his pioneering reading can be seen as the product of a certain simplistic megalomania<sup>4</sup> and also on the oddity of Nencioni waiting so long to write about Whitman once he had read his work.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, Bentzon's article harshly criticized the American poet's work. So one may ask why, according to Ragusa Moleti's story, both he and Nencioni would be so enthusiastic at first meeting the work of Whitman. How could they be so quickly attracted to Whitman's work, considering that they encountered it through the rather negative lens of Bentzon? Whitman's rhymeless poems—simply the result of a confusing conglomerate of prose and poetry, in the French critic's opinion—were, in fact, condemned by Bentzon as a brute and arrogant exhibition of virility

and a celebration of materialism, guilty of dismissing any form of literary idealism altogether.

As explained by Mariolina Meliadò Freeth in her study,<sup>6</sup> it is not hard to understand why Bentzon's outraged tone served, counterintuitively, to spark a positive interest in the two Italian critics. While in France literary naturalism and realism were starting to be criticized by the moralizing bourgeoisie of the Second Empire, in Italy literary critics had only just begun to value and embrace the advent of these new styles. It is also important to note that Ragusa Moleti belonged to the literary and cultural circle associated since the 1880s with the Sicilian periodical *Il momento letterario artistico e sociale*, a periodical whose agenda was profoundly anti-romantic and anti-idealist and aimed to promote literary naturalism. Bentzon's accusation that Whitman combined "the worst excesses of Victor Hugo with 'the most poisonous compositions of Baudelaire'" must have indeed sounded appealing to Ragusa Moleti, who would, after a few years, actually dedicate a monograph to Baudelaire.<sup>8</sup>

It is also plausible that both Ragusa Moleti and Nencioni followed the French debate that Bentzon's article ignited and that they read the articles on Whitman written in the following years by Emile Blémont, who described Whitman as a messianic leader of his people, and Henri Cochin, who attacked the poet's "egalitarian madness." Both Ragusa Moleti and Nencioni were in fact passionate readers and popularizers of foreign literatures (they were, respectively, experts in French and English literature), who wanted to help Italian culture develop more awareness of recent developments in international cultural scenes.

It is important to note that Bentzon's article, despite all its negative criticism, explicitly exempts *Drum-Taps* (Bentzon offers translated sections in the article) and the poem "Come Up from the Fields Father," in particular, which Bentzon translates in its entirety, describing them as the best pieces that Whitman wrote. If we trust Ragusa Moleti's account, if he and Nencioni really read Whitman for the first time through Bentzon, then their first encounter was marked by Bentzon's appreciation of the war poetry. This appears to underpin what can be regarded as a foundational characteristic of this very first phase of Whitman's international reception in 1870s: the great emphasis critics put on the political and war poems.

As we will see later in this chapter, William Michael Rossetti's editions and critical interventions also privilege these aspects of Whitman's poetry. The same is true for Ivan Turgenev, who chose to translate "Beat! Beat! Drums!" into Russian, and for the Polish critic Seweryna Duchinska, who moralistically criticized Whitman yet presented his war poems as a sort of redeeming exception, to list just a few examples. Nencioni himself, in his articles and translations, would mostly concentrate on political and war poems, and it is evident that both Bentzon's article and Rossetti's editions strongly contributed—together with the Italian political and cultural climate of the time—to shaping Nencioni's vision.

True or not, mythicized or not, casual or not, the encounter of Ragusa Moleti and Nencioni with Whitman's work produced substantial, long-lasting effects in Italian culture. Back in his beloved Sicily that he worked so hard to put into lively contact with the rest of Italy and the world, Ragusa Moleti would strenuously encourage a series of people to translate from Whitman. Among these was high-school teacher and progressive principal, intellectual, and translator Luigi Gamberale, who taught in Sicily in the early 1880s and would soon become not only the first Italian, but also the first European, to fully translate *Leaves of Grass*. Gamberale would acknowledge Ragusa Moleti's encouragement in the initial dedication of his first unabridged translation, in 1907. Between 1899 and 1902, about thirty years after this first encounter, Ragusa Moleti would also write a few articles about Whitman in the Palermitan journal *L'Ora*. The articles clarify how Ragusa Moleti, while fascinated by the contents and the "naturalistic" scope of Whitman's poetry, resented the poet's use of free verse. 15

Ragusa Moleti's distaste for Whitman's long free verse was shared by Nencioni, who never really understood the degree and the revolutionary value of Whitman's formal innovations and who often talked about the poet's evident flaws. <sup>16</sup> The attitude of the two critics reflects the general unpreparedness and reluctance of Italian literary culture to recognize the groundbreaking value of what Eugenio Montale would later describe as "poetry which becomes prose without being prose." <sup>17</sup> This unpreparedness was typical not only of Italy, but of other countries as well, as we will see. And yet, Nencioni's critical work remains perhaps the one fundamental mediating act for the initial Italian diffusion of Whitman's work, as he would write a series of articles and offer some sample translations that

would attract the interest of the general Italian public as well as that of Italian writers and literati who were among his friends and disciples.

Enrico Nencioni (1837–1896) was not only an influential critic, <sup>18</sup> a foreign literatures scholar, and an Anglo-Americanist who wrote about—among others—Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Edgar Allan Poe, Algernon C. Swinburne, and Thomas Carlyle. <sup>19</sup> He was also an active member of the Florentinian and Roman cultural scenes. A regular of the Anglo-American salons in Florence and Rome, he met Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, William Wetmore Story, Henry James, and Vernon Lee (Violet Paget). <sup>20</sup> Nencioni's experience reminds us of another important element shaping Whitman's reception: the existence, in Italy and elsewhere, of these highly cosmopolitan and ever-renovating communities of literati, educated travelers, and artists coming from all over the world. In these intellectual hotbeds, Whitman's novel and controversial work fueled animated internal debates. No doubt it was in these circles that many Italian readers and critics first encountered at least the name, and sometimes the work, of Whitman.

In other words, while Ragusa Moleti's account vividly highlights the historical impact of Bentzon's article and of Ragusa Moleti's and Nencioni's crucial mediating enterprise, still we should not forget that this was just one part of a much larger process of coming to know Whitman's work within a complex, multisided, interconnected system of circulation. An important filtering action for the Italian reception was also enacted by William Michael Rossetti's critical and editorial work on Whitman.

#### William Michael Rossetti's Editions and Their Influence on the Italian Reception: Whitman as a Post-Risorgimento Hero

Editions of Whitman's work by William Michael Rossetti (1829–1919) and Rossetti's critical assessment of the American poet were a crucial nexus of the initial reception: not only highly influential within Italian culture, they were also mutually dependent on it, as they can be seen to express a common adherence to the Italian and European Risorgimento and post-Risorgimento political and intellectual ideology. Rossetti's criticism of the formal nature of Whitman's writing, <sup>21</sup> as well as the emphasis he put on Whitman's war and political poems, are, notwithstanding the

differences, quite resonant with Bentzon's perspective. This same criticism of the innovative forms and the predilection for "the poet of the American war," to use the title of the 1891 article by Nencioni, is what the Florentinian critic and other Italian literati would focus on in these years. In Nencioni's August 1881 article "New Poetic Horizons" (his second devoted to Whitman), he urged young Italian poets to learn from Whitman's simple and direct poetry, vehemently concluding: "And please paint our Italy. It is an almost virgin topic for us Italians, from Dante on. And in saying this, I feel greatly ashamed." These dissatisfied words and Nencioni's assessment of the state of Italian literature and culture reflect the larger, profound frustration faced by citizens of the newly formed Italy in the years that followed the unification of the country. The words are even more significant when considering the venue of their appearance: the Florentinian *Fanfulla della domenica*, the first literary periodical founded after the unification that aimed to have a national outreach.

Rossetti's reading of Whitman deeply shaped Italian readings, <sup>23</sup> within the context of a shared political interest and a shared vision of Whitman's America as the leading prototype for "a global democratic awakening," to use the words of Kirsten Harris in her book on Whitman and British socialism. <sup>24</sup> Italian literati prolifically responded to what Samuel Graber has called Rossetti's gesture of "locating of the American war poetry," and the American Civil War in particular, "in the context of a long transatlantic tradition of expanding liberty." <sup>25</sup>

While critics have often, and rightly, focused on the Victorian moral prudishness that animated Rossetti's "expurgated" 1868 edition of Whitman's poems, which excludes "Song of Myself," the "Children of Adam," and most of the "Calamus" poems, less emphasis has been put on the "democratic thrust of Rossetti's project," to use Harris's phrase. The British critic and author of *Democratic Sonnets* chose to start his edition with Whitman's 1855 Preface, followed by "Chants Democratic" and *Drum-Taps*. These choices originated in his own radicalism as a cosmopolitan democratic republican and socialist who supported the North in the American Civil War, passionately rooted for Italy in her struggle for unity and independence from foreign rulers, and sympathized with the Paris Commune in 1871.

As Rossetti made clear in his prefatory note, he intended to present Whitman's book "[as] the poem both of Personality and of Democracy;

and, it may be added, of American nationalism."<sup>27</sup> Rossetti identified Whitman as the champion of a liberal democratic agenda that deeply resonated with the European lineage of the French Revolution, the 1848 struggles, and the most recent developments in that direction. In this sense, it is also important to remember Wynn Thomas's study of Whitman's own take on this "European Risorgimento nationalism," which shows how Whitman's poetry consciously relates and responds to "the mid-nineteenth century European concern with nation formation and with writing the nation."<sup>28</sup> And, significantly, that poem of personality, democracy, and American nationalism was also considered by Rossetti "the modern poem *par excellence*," as he indicated within the same prefatory notice.<sup>29</sup> The combination of this idea of poetic modernity as embodied by Whitman's work, in conjunction with a national identity in need of being written, would be a key and constantly operating component in shaping the Italian reception.

Rossetti's ideological stance was rooted in the Italian Risorgimento tradition, which was historically and deeply interconnected with Britain. Rossetti's father, Gabriele Rossetti, was an exiled Italian patriot who took refuge in London from the 1820s on, together with many other Italian political refugees (among whom Giuseppe Mazzini came to be the most eminent figure). A nobleman, poet, and Dante scholar from the city of Vasto in the Kindgdom of the two Sicilies (Vasto now falls within the region of Abruzzo), Gabriele Rossetti had been a member of the secret society called Carbonari, the liberal (and, in later years, democratic) agenda of which aimed mainly to oppose absolutism and to push for constitutional governments all over Italy. The Carbonari society and insurrections played an important role in the early Italian Risorgimento. Gabriele Rossetti had participated in the Carbonari's resistance to the French occupation and in the so-called failed revolution of 1820, after which he had to leave, departing first for Malta and then for London, in forced exile.

But apart from Rossetti's father's experience and political faith, and its influence on his upbringing, the ideological connection between Italy and Great Britain was more widespread. As summarized by Giuliana Pieri, in her study of the influence of Pre-Raphaelitism on fin de siècle Italy, "the emotional and political link between Great Britain and Italy was particularly strong during the years of the Risorgimento, with the British support [especially of the younger generations] for the Italian national cause."

As Carlo Placci points out, this link facilitated an important reciprocity: "influences of our [Italian] past times on the Brits, and the influences of their [the Brits'] present times on us." The Italian Renaissance served as an inspiring model for British Pre-Raphaelites, while their work represented for Italian artists and intellectuals, as shown by Pieri, a modernized version of Italy's "glorious past on which [they] could build a new artistic identity." The admiration of the British Pre-Raphaelites for the Italian Renaissance is well attested in William Michael Rossetti's 1868 Whitman edition, which starts with an epigraph taken from Michelangelo Buonarroti's poetry and reproduced in the original Italian rather than in translation: "Or si sa il nome, o per tristo o per buono, / E si sa pure al mondo ch'io ci sono." (Now the name is revealed, whether it is good or bad / And the world knows that I exist.)

The 1895 Biennale of Art in Venice, which was a major occasion for the dissemination of Pre-Raphaelite and British art and in which William Michael Rossetti participated as a committee member, was perhaps the epitome of the cultural exchange between Italy and Great Britain, and at its base was the common idea of a rebirth of the arts in nationalistic—and yet libertarian—terms. And here it is useful to think of the ambivalence underlined by Wynn Thomas concerning the Risorgimento concept of nationhood: both "libertarian and authoritarian . . . violent and pacific." We have to keep this ideological landscape in mind when we think of the entrance into Italy of Rossetti's 1868 edition of Whitman's poems.

Together with Bentzon's article, Rossetti's edition was the main initial source of the diffusion of knowledge of Whitman's work in Italy, and its contribution to shaping the Italian reception was crucial. Nencioni reproduced Rossetti's retitling of Whitman's poems (such as, for example, "Letter from Camp" for "Come Up from the Fields Father" or "The Wounded" for "A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest") in his first articles and translations in the 1880s that served to disseminate Whitman's work. This proves that Nencioni not only read Rossetti's edition but used it as his "original" reference text, or perhaps even the sole one. Nencioni does mention, in the 1881 article quoted, the 1870–71 Boston edition of *Leaves of Grass*, but he never seems to use it as the textual source for his translation. In his selected translations, <sup>35</sup> Nencioni reproduces the centrality assigned by Rossetti to the *Drum Taps* cluster and Rossetti's assertions about Whitman as the

"greatest of American poets," by inserting, almost exclusively, poems about the war or those with an evident political content. In his 1891 article on Whitman entitled "Il poeta della guerra Americana" ("The Poet of the American War"), Nencioni strikingly defines the American Civil War as "fertile, useful and holy." 36

Rossetti's influence on Nencioni's views is directly acknowledged by Nencioni in his 1881 articles on Whitman, in which he defines his British colleague as "one of the finest and most credible critics in England and in Europe," as if aiming to reassure Italian readers about the certainty of the value of the American poet championed by Rossetti. But the most interesting aspect of Nencioni's contribution on Whitman, in its clear interconnection with the ideological foundation that Nencioni shared with Rossetti, consists in his explicit pairing, in a separate 1884 article, of Whitman with Mazzini, the revolutionary activist whose ideas and actions constituted the very soul of the Italian Risorgimento. It must be noted that Rossetti deeply admired Mazzini, as he wrote in his 1872 letter to Whitman, in which he commented on Mazzini's death and proudly confessed to Whitman to be three-fourths Italian in blood.

Whitman, in this 1884 piece, is depicted by Nencioni as the poet who realizes Mazzini's ideals about literature and its ethical mission: a poet who writes not about the past but about the present and imminent future and who builds a sense of communal identity, a poet who is "with the people" and not "for the people," as Mazzini would say. It is clear then, how the epigraph from Carlyle used by Rossetti in his 1868 edition must have deeply resonated with Nencioni: "Yes, truly, it is a great thing for a nation that it get an articulate voice—that it produce a man who will speak forth melodiously what the heart of it means."

In his articles, Nencioni also reproduces Rossetti's various criticisms of Whitman's formal flaws: this, as I wrote earlier, appears to be a widespread phenomenon within the Italian and transnational initial appreciation of Whitman. The author of the first whole translation of *Leaves* in Europe and in Italy, Luigi Gamberale (a familiar figure for the Rossetti family, with whom he corresponded, having translated from Dante Gabriel Rossetti's work and written about that of Christina Rossetti), would also often hint at the flawed forms of Whitman's poetry, perhaps anticipating readers' reactions to an unfamiliar technique. But it must be noted that Gamberale's

case, as we will see more fully later, is much more complex: perhaps because of his direct contact and work with the original texts, the translator repeatedly displayed awareness of the innovative value and beauty of Whitman's unusual diction, even if he was not able to fully understand it or, crucially, to reproduce it in his translation.

Even if American editions and Italian translations had, by the 1880s, started to circulate quite widely in Italy, it is obvious how Italian literati continued to assign to Rossetti's editions and critical mediation a striking priority. For example, the first collection dedicated to American literature in Italy, which came out in 1884 and which was edited by Gustavo Strafforello, a compiler of educational manuals, bears the clear sign of Rossetti's mediation: Strafforello inserts Whitman in his descriptive section on "humorous poets," <sup>41</sup> as Rossetti had done in his 1872 collection titled *Humorous Poems* (in which Whitman appeared with the satirical but indeed still political "A Boston Ballad"). <sup>42</sup>

The Rossettian filtering of Whitman as the mythical voice of liberal democracy and its appeal to the Italian post-unification sense of discontent with the outcomes of the Risorgimento would remain a major contributing factor within the following phases of the Italian reception, and it would also enter the new century, encountering a variety of critical and creative remakings, often even with quite opposite intents. The post-unification discontent would still be distinctly felt and discussed by Italian intellectuals up until the 1920s: the First World War would be seen by some, in fact, as the "fourth war of independence," that is, the ideal conclusion of the Risorgimento's process of nation formation. Later I will discuss, for example, how a copy of Rossetti's 1886 edition was bought in a Parisian bookshop by poet (and Nencioni disciple) Gabriele D'Annunzio. The Rossettian-Nencionian filtering of Whitman's poetry would be crucial for D'Annunzio. Significantly, in a speech he gave while guiding the famous fascist blockade of Fiume in 1919, D'Annunzio would convey once again the idea of a necessary "holy war" (directly echoing Nencioni's words in the aforementioned 1891 article about Whitman and the American Civil War). I will also show how, on the other hand, the Rossettian emphasis on Whitman's poems of liberty would be taken up and revived not only by the fascist, nationalistic ideology but also by Italian communists who were hoping for a different kind of political revolution.

#### Between Tradition and Innovation: The Case of Giosuè Carducci

A classicist writer and professor of Italian literature at the University of Bologna, Giosuè Carducci (1835–1907) aimed to create a concrete poetry that, even when erudite, could still be close to reality and carry on a moral and civil mission. Convinced of the need to recuperate classical, quantitative Latin and Ancient Greek metrics and to transfer it to modern Italian qualitative metrics, Carducci elaborated a system that allowed him not to perfectly reproduce, but to rhythmically imitate the main types of classical verses. This new metrics he called "barbaric," a word that he also used for the title to his collection of poems, Odi Barbare (Barbaric Odes, published in a series of different editions between 1877 and 1893). It must be noted how the word "barbaric" is intended by Carducci as the adjective that Latin or Ancient Greek poets would have used, if they could hear his odes and had to describe how they sounded: to their ears, Carducci's title implies, this transfer of quantitative metrics to qualitative metrics would have simply sounded odd, unrecognizable, and, therefore, "barbaric." While a direct lineage of derivation of Carducci's "barbaric" from Whitman's famous "barbaric yawp" in "Song of Myself" cannot be established, particularly considering how early Carducci employed the adjective in comparison to when he started reading Whitman's poetry,<sup>43</sup> the connection remains fascinating.

Even if Carducci's barbaric poetry might seem, at first glance, to stand as far away as possible from Italian literary innovation and from the beginnings of free verse, it crucially contributed to its advancement. It corresponded, in fact, to an initial break up of regular Italian metrics: it allowed a certain degree of freedom, of play, and it invited a radical rethinking of rhythmical structures. Carducci's works, like those of other poets of his generation, often stand at the border between tradition and innovation. As underlined by the poet and critic Edoardo Sanguineti, the real revolution was slowly started by the poets who, like Carducci, mediated between classicism and modernism, and it exploded only later, with the futurists and other avant-garde movements.<sup>44</sup>

Carducci's theorization, as a professor of classics and Italian literature and as poet laureate, of the barbaric element remains a central moment in the development of modern Italian literature, and I have here to disagree with Delphine Rumeau's assertion in her book that there is an "absence of 'barbaric classicism' in Italian literature," sepecially in comparison to French or English literature. Rumeau's judgment seems arbitrary, especially as she attributes the cause of the English admiration of the barbaric in Whitman to the existence of a particularly widespread "Hellenomania" in British culture, seemingly forgetting that this same Hellenomania was present in Italy, as well.

If the term, as used by Carducci, needs to be understood in this intrinsic relational sense (what is fully regular and perfect in classical metrics and what is barbaric)—a sense that undoubtedly carries a certain revolutionary value—it also remains far from Whitman's much more radical poetic iconoclasticism, as evoked by the passage in "Song of Myself." Carducci's remains a barbaric "ode," after all, and definitely not a barbaric "yawp." But what is certain is that the idea of a new, unprecedented, barbaric poetic diction, whether derived from Carducci, or Whitman, or both, would have had a strong impact on later poets like Gabriele D'Annunzio, Dino Campana, and Giovanni Papini, as we will see later.

In an 1881 letter from Carducci to Enrico Nencioni, with whom he had a close friendship (the two had gone to the same high school in Florence),<sup>47</sup> Carducci expressed his wish to translate Whitman by using Homeric metrics: an idea that highlights both Carducci's perception of the "classical" stature of Whitman's work and at the same time his shortsighted understanding of Whitman's free verse—which Carducci felt an urge to regularize. In this letter, Carducci comments on Nencioni's second article on Whitman, entitled "Nuovi orizzonti poetici" ("New Poetic Horizons") and published in 1881, in which he urged young Italian writers to "paint our Italy." An avid reader of foreign literature, Carducci appreciated Nencioni's first article (1879) on Whitman and immediately encouraged him to write more, as he was convinced that coming into contact with foreign literature and with poetry like Whitman's might help: "Italy needs to get healed," 48 Carducci writes. And Carducci had been looking forward to reading this new article: in a previous letter (August 15) to Nencioni, he had complained about not having been able to read it yet, as he was staying in his house in the country and had had no access to it. But on August 26, he wrote to Nencioni that he had finally read it, and he made sure to let Nencioni know that he absolutely agreed with his general assessment of current Italian literature.<sup>49</sup>

Nencioni opened the article by quoting Flaubert's complaints that the language used by current literature had become stiff and conventional, a fixed literary jargon aimed at chiseling and embellishing: a colorful, decorative style that collects cocottes and bohémiens, Nencioni would add. The Florentinian critic then moved to recommend the remedy that he thought could heal Italian literature: studying the classic writers, who "were simple because they were strong—they were great because they were healthy."50 And, he added, among them were the ones who have "a powerful wing and vast horizons . . . the painters of the great spectacles of nature": Goethe, Shelley, Byron, Hugo, Whitman. Whitman, in particular, is defined by Nencioni as "simple, strict, rude, and colossal (and, in all of these qualities, perhaps excessive)." Among all of Nencioni's articles on Whitman, this is the one most directly treating the "classical" character of Whitman's work,<sup>51</sup> rather than its democratic value or its depiction of the American Civil War. Of course, Nencioni's views retain a deep political resonance, as he thinks it is exactly from this classical, "healthy" writing that Italian writers should begin to be able to form a new, more adequate Italian literature.

Carducci can only praise such ideas, since they are completely consonant with his own poetics. He adds that he had personally read and orally translated Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* three times<sup>52</sup> during the private lessons he took with his English language teacher, Annibale Ferrari. Ferrari, who had left Italy for the United States when he was seventeen and returned to Italy after many years, had fought in the Civil War. The lessons started in 1879 and ended sometime in 1882 or early 1883. "He is a beast, always drunk," Carducci told Nencioni, but he "feels and breathes America; he has almost no Italian any longer; and he would comment [on Whitman's book] with ferocious gestures and shouts." It is fascinating to imagine Carducci and Ferrari in the same room overlooking the quiet square in front of Carducci's elegant house in Bologna, debating Whitman's work: Carducci wanting to translate it into Homeric hexameters, Ferrari animatedly building parallels between the poetry and his adventurous times in the United States.

It is not known which edition of Whitman Ferrari and Carducci used for their lessons or where it came from: the book is not now part of Carducci's private library, which is well maintained in his house. The poet owned only the 1887 selection from *Leaves of Grass* by Gamberale, a volume published well after these lessons. So did Ferrari own the book himself, and had he brought it with him from the United States? Or could Carducci have retrieved it from the library of the University of Bologna, where he taught, or borrowed it from some other writer or critic?

These mysteries aside, what is certain is Carducci's admiration for Whitman. In this same letter, he associated Whitman with "the great colossal poets, Homer, Shakespeare, Dante" and praised Whitman's immediacy and originality. "It's a shame and a damnation that I understand so little of English,"55 he concluded. Is this admiration reflected in Carducci's writing of these years? The second edition of the *Odi barbare*, entitled *Nuove* odi barbare (New Barbaric Odes), came out in 1882 (precisely the period when Carducci was translating Whitman with his teacher and writing about him in his letters to Nencioni). The Nuove odi barbare received the immediate praise of, among others, Nencioni. 56 The edition is obviously characterized by an extensive use of the Carduccian barbaric metrics: the poem-manifesto "Ragioni metriche" ("Metrical Reasons") explains that hendecasyllables are too slow to measure Italic beauty, and that the triumphal, heroic hexameter—significantly, the same meter that the poet wanted to use for translating Whitman—is needed instead. There are many Latinisms, and the register is high and often archaic. Homer is often invoked, together with Pindar, Horace, and Petrarch, and images of muses and goddesses populate the pages. But, at the same time, Carducci's diction sounds strikingly unusual, new. There are no rhymes, and there are frequent anaphoras. Carducci often builds long sequences of tracking shots that evoke those created by Whitman, both formally and thematically. We see these features in "Sogno d'estate" ("Summer Dream"):

[...]
Off went the child with little steps of pride,
superb with motherly love, struck in the heart
by that immense feast that the nourishing nature was singing.
[...]
and on peaks and on the valley, up on the winds, up on branches,
up on waters,
the spiritual melody of spring was running;

and peach trees and apples trees all were flowered with whites and reds, and below, with yellow and turquoise flowers smiled the grass and the red clover clothed the slopes of the meadows, and softened by golden brooms stood the hills, and a sweet air moving between those flowers and smells came down from the sea; on the sea four candid sails went and went rocking slowly in the sun, that splendidly circumscribed the sea and land and sky.<sup>57</sup>

These passages strongly evoke Whitman's "There Was a Child Went Forth," and there are even identical images: the clover, the apple-tree, the white and red flowers, the fragrance of the sea, all appearing, in both texts, in a long anaphoric catalogue, and the larger mythopoetical idea of the poet-child passing through, observing, absorbing. Of course, figures like the drunkard or the schoolboys do not appear in Carducci, as they are not compatible with his more dignified tone.

The poem "Saluto italico" ("Italic Salute") might also recall "Salut au Monde!" Carducci's poem addresses the recuperated ancient verses and assigns them with the mission of drawing a panning shot of Italic historical landmarks, in order to rewrite and consolidate Italian identity and to exult in the final climax, "Italia! Italia! The multiple anaphoras, an inclusive tone similar to Whitman's, and an incredibly far-reaching and God-like vision, as if from above, are strongly reminiscent of Whitman's poem. Carducci's poem is far from Whitman's universal and all-embracing vision of the world. But this can read as Carducci's adaptation of Whitman's poem to his priorities as poet, scholar, and intellectual: strengthening Italian political and cultural identity by strengthening its literature. And for Carducci, this could only be done by going back to its origins: to Italic peoples and to the classics.

This second edition also presents a few poems that seem incredibly modern in diction, as compared to the main bulk of the collection. For example, "Una sera di San Pietro" ("An Evening of Saint Peter"):

I remember. The sun between red vapors and warm clouds went down to the sea as a big shield of copper that in barbaric combats sparkles fluttering then falls [...]
And I languid and sad (not long since I had the Maremman fever, and my nerves weighed as if made of lead).
[...]
S8

With its longer, accumulative lines and enjambments, a more colloquial lexicon, the use of parenthesis, as well as a more somber and intimate tone, this poem resembles work that would be written in Italy two or three decades later, and it symbolizes the profound modernity that actually resides at the heart of Carducci's classicist experiment.

It is in this continuous and gradual negotiation between tradition and innovation that the first phases of the creative reinvention of Whitman's work took place, in Italy and in other countries. As I have observed, Whitman was mainly appreciated for his political resonance, his writings about the potentialities of American democracy and identity, seen both as a geographical territory in exciting evolution and as the promising symbol of a modern writing space. He was also admired, often idealized and invoked as a model, for the renovated and yet classical weight of his diction. The first, timid advancements in the understanding of his forms were also starting to take place. Often divided and ambivalent about this, critics, translators, and writers would debate whether Whitman wrote poetry or prose, or something in-between. Some said it was music. Some recognized the impasse and concluded it did not matter. But, surely, some echoes of Whitman had started to appear in the poetry of others.

The case of Carducci's admiration and echoing of Whitman can be compared to that of other international writers who were, in these same early years of the Italian reception—the 1870s and 1880s—meeting the work of the American poet while operating, in their own work, on a ground of mediation between tradition and innovation. An appreciation of these similarities is useful to understand that the Italian desire for poetic modernity, as expressed by Nencioni in his articles and by Carducci in his groundbreaking attempts to renovate poetic diction in conjunction with the need to write the newly united nation, was not an isolated phenomenon. Other cultures and national literatures, while in different contexts, had similar aims in these years, and many found in Whitman's poetic project a refreshing and inspiring example. This comparative approach helps us

to not lose sight of the fact that poetic modernity transcends nations and languages, as it is the larger result of the work of—and the direct and indirect dialogue between—multiple and interconnected scenes and agents.

Carducci's experience, in which Whitman played, as we have seen, a relevant role, comes particularly close to that of Russian (and expatriate in France) novelist and poet Ivan Turgenev (1818–1883): both Carducci and Turgenev were in fact animated by a similar desire to regenerate, linguistically, thematically, but also, more fundamentally—at a bare prosodical level—Italian and Russian literature. And both writers, while generally perceiving Whitman's novelty, also interestingly "mis-perceived" its true stylistic nature: for Carducci, Whitman's lines had the same weight as Homeric hexameters; for Turgenev, Whitman wrote prose poems. In other words, both writers adapted their sense of Whitman's novelty to their own diction: a diction that lived at the border between tradition and innovation. While not radically experimental, their contributions were still seminal (and have been recently reevaluated as such) in starting the transition from old, nineteenth-century models of writing into the experimentation of the early twentieth century.

While critics have discussed Turgenev's manuscript translations from Whitman, not much has been said about possible connections with Whitman in Turgenev's own works. Rumeau has peremptorily excluded, without justifying why, any possible creative effect of Whitman on Turgenev.<sup>59</sup> I think that the question should be explored in more depth. As reported by Stephen Stepanchev, Turgenev had declared (possibly while talking to Henry James, in 1874) that Whitman's poetry contained a lot of chaff, but also some good grain, 60 conveying his mixed feelings about Whitman. But what was the "good grain" according to Turgenev? Who was he, as a writer? While being famous mostly for his novels, novellas, and short stories, Turgenev had started his career by writing poetry; he was always interested in achieving a form of lyric prose, and he repeatedly experimented with this type of writing. His last work, Стихотворения в прозе (Poems in Prose), published in 1882 (the same year Carducci's Nuove odi barbare appeared), is the epitome of this experimentation and would be highly influential in Russian literature. As critic Adrian Wanner argued, "in their hybrid mixture of realism and decadence, conservatism and innovation, Turgenev's prose-poems lead to a two-pronged juncture [...] a tradition of realist prose

poems [...] [and] a tradition of modernist formal experimentation." This experimentation is particularly valuable, in a national literary culture—that of Russia—that has always been, and partially remains, to this day, attached to rigid schemes of rhyming and versification.

French models and Baudelaire's poèmes en prose certainly influenced Turgeney, who lived in Paris for many years (at various times during the 1840s and 1850s and then more consistently from 1871 until his death in 1883). But it is also highly probable that another model for this was Whitman, whose work Turgenev first encountered in France. Turgenev first mentions the "astonishing American poet" in his November 1872 letter to critic Pavel Annenkov. It is striking to think that Bentzon's article had come out in June of the same year, and that the poem "Beat! Beat! Drums!," which Turgenev would also translate, was precisely one of the poems that Bentzon had translated in her article. 62 Perhaps for Turgenev the "good grain" in Whitman's poetry consisted of its proximity to prose while yet retaining a powerful lyrical value. This would also explain why Turgenev's attempt to translate "Beat! Beat! Drums!" renders the poem with extremely long lines: he sees Whitman as a writer of poèmes en prose, and he privileges the long line—in which he is personally so interested and which is indeed a novelty for Russian literature—over the rhythm.

If Whitman is a model in this sense, then, can we find echoes of his work in Turgenev's 1882 collection? It must be noted that, in general, Turgenev's prose poems retain a narrative quality that is almost always absent from Whitman's poetry. Turgenev's extensive use of dialogues is another important difference. And if, differently than Carducci's case, it is difficult to identify, for Turgenev, one particular poem or passage by Whitman that can be seen as a potential model of reference, there certainly exists, in this work, an analogous depiction of ongoing, strongly vivid and ordinary scenes that enhance the visual and spatial quality of the lines and an extensive use of energetic exclamations and apostrophes. One eloquent example of this is in the prose poem "Деревня" ("The Country"):

The last day of June; for a thousand versts around, Russia, our native land.

An unbroken blue flooding the whole sky; a single cloudlet upon it, half floating, half fading away. Windlessness, warmth...air like new milk!

Larks are trilling; pouter-pigeons cooing; noiselessly the swallows dart to and fro; horses are neighing and munching; the dogs do not bark and stand peaceably wagging their tails.

[...] A round-faced young woman peeps out of window; laughs at their words or at the romps of the children in the mounds of hay. Another young woman with powerful arms draws a great wet bucket out of the well.... The bucket quivers and shakes, spilling long, glistening drops.

Before me stands an old woman in a new striped petticoat and new shoes.

Fat hollow beads are wound in three rows about her dark thin neck, her grey head is tied up in a yellow kerchief with red spots; it hangs low over her failing eyes.

But there is a smile of welcome in the aged eyes; a smile all over the wrinkled face. The old woman has reached, I dare say, her seventieth year . . . and even now one can see she has been a beauty in her day. [...] "My word, what oats!" I hear my coachman saying. . . . Oh, the content, the quiet, the plenty of the Russian open country! Oh, the deep peace and well-being!<sup>63</sup>

Turgenev's emphasis on the idea of the sanity, beauty, and equal well-being of people, young and old, in this piece and throughout the collection, is also strikingly Whitmanian. Formally, the frequent use of ellipsis (again not only in this piece, but throughout the collection) is particularly relevant. Turgenev's *Poems in Prose* is on a mission to depict Russian life realistically and yet lyrically, with its problems, strengths, and beauty, by employing the distinctively Russian idiom that Turgenev described, in a passionate linguistic faith similar to Whitman's, as "great, powerful, righteous, and free!" 64

Although still anchored to a strong narrative line, Turgenev's prose poems were an important modernizing force in a Russian poetry that had been too attached to rigid metrical structures, an over-refined diction, and imagery that often seemed ritualistic and artificial. And while substantial differences do exist, it is difficult to think that Whitman's work did not contribute to boost Turgenev's confidence in pursuing his agenda of altering conventional poetic language, just as it did with Carducci. 65

# Luigi Gamberale's Lifelong Translating Enterprise and Its Impact on Whitman's Italian and International Reception

ARRIVING IN THE SMALL, remote town of Agnone, located on a rocky spur in the mountainous southern region of high Molise and famous for its bell manufacturing tradition, one is immediately struck by the beauty of the medieval architecture, the mystery of the alleys that suddenly open up to offer stunning views of the surrounding country, and the atmosphere of a daily life based on simplicity and peacefulness. It is here that the first person to translate the whole corpus of *Leaves of Grass* into a foreign language was born, grew up, and returned, after his retirement, perhaps looking for the tranquility he needed to carry out this cumbersome translating project.

Luigi Gamberale (1840–1929) remains an intriguing and still understudied figure in Italian literary history.¹ A man who had studied English mostly on his own and, as he declared, had never spoken it with any living English speaker,² Gamberale translated from Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Robert Browning, Whitman, and others with the same zeal and rigorous method that he used to translate from Latin and Ancient Greek, the subjects that he passionately taught throughout Italy for many years. Translating and teaching were not his only activities: he also wrote a number of progressive treatises on pedagogy, in which he endorsed more frequent and informal relations between students and teachers, and he promoted the benefits of recreational activities. His experience as a school principal led him to strongly advocate for the modernization of the Italian system of education.

Gamberale donated his incoming correspondence, his private library, and his various manuscript materials, including the drafts of his translations from *Leaves of Grass*, to Agnone's small library, Baldassarre Labanca, located in an evocative former Franciscan convent that dates back to the fourteenth century. These materials reveal the myriad interests and activ-

ities that Gamberale engaged in throughout his life. Among these, translating Whitman was a primary one. Looking at the various translation drafts and notes<sup>3</sup> from and about Whitman's poetry, one is struck by the meticulousness and order of Gamberale's minuscule handwriting and imagines him dealing diligently with each single word, each single line, with the help of his grammar books, dictionary, sense of poetry, and, ultimately, bare intuition. Although critics have often noted the mistakes present in Gamberale's translations,<sup>4</sup> his outstanding effort and his valuable results have generally been praised.

As I will discuss in detail in the course of this chapter, Gamberale published a series of translations from Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*: two selections, in 1887 and 1890, the unabridged translation in 1907, another selection in 1912, and a final unabridged translation in 1923. Gamberale was first encouraged to translate Whitman by his friend Ragusa Moleti while the former was teaching in Sicily, and his first choices of poems reveal the weight of Rossetti's influence, to the point that the Italian translator often used as a base for his translations the various retitlings coined by the Anglo-Italian critic, rather than Whitman's original titles. Gamberale had some criticisms of Whitman's style, but at the same time he appreciated it more than did Nencioni or other Italian critics of the time. This appreciation has often been overlooked by scholars, perhaps because Gamberale's early materials (the first articles written by the translator for the periodical *Il momento* in 1884 and the first selected translations) are difficult to access.

As for the English editions used by Gamberale, it is known (only from a catalogue of his private library, since the physical copies are not available) that he owned a copy of Rossetti's edition (possibly the 1886 one), and also Ernest Rhys's edition. Just as Rhys's did, Gamberale's selections appeared in an affordable popular edition by a Milan-based publishing house, Sonzogno, that targeted Italian workers as its main readership of both Italian and foreign classics and the latest novelties. Gamberale retains some of Rossetti's new titles while also inserting poems included by Rhys, and at the same time he presents—already in the 1890 selection—poems that were probably derived from the 1872 Rossetti edition. In the introduction to his 1907 complete translation, Gamberale indicated that he used the 1883 edition of Whitman's poetry published in Glasgow by Wilson and McCormick (a replica of the 1881–82 Osgood edition). One

can hypothesize that he already owned the edition when he was working on the 1887 and 1890 selections and that he combined Rossetti's and Rhys's editions with the McCormick edition, since the 1887 translation contains poems—or sections of them—that are not present in either the Rossetti or the Rhys edition.

### The 1887 and 1890 Selected Translations

Let us then take a more detailed look at the 1887 and 1890 selected translations authored by this fascinating progressive principal figure from Molise for the popular editions of Sonzogno.6 The translations came out at a moment of big adjustments for Italian politics: while the central political coalition remained stable thanks to the practice called *trasformismo*, which isolated the extremes of left and right and deliberately left various forms of corruption unchecked, riots and revolts were becoming more and more prominent, due also to the increasing economic hardships that new protectionist measures were not really able to contain and that new colonial enterprises in Erithrea and Ethiopia were making only worse. Emigration to countries like Argentina and United States grew more and more frequent. The condition of the working classes was becoming a central issue, in part thanks to the Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical "Rerum Novarum" denouncing the exploitation of workers and promoting trade unions; in addition, the Italian Socialist Party was founded in 1892. So, although Italy had been a unified country for almost three decades, it remained a country in tumult and rife with dissatisfaction.

Gamberale shared with Rossetti and Nencioni a predilection for Whitman's political vein, as is clear from looking at the first selection of 1887, which contains a large number of political poems and poems from *Drum Taps*. In this sense, Gamberale's first translation effort aligns with that of the German poet and translator, exiled in Britain, Ferdinand Freiligrath, as shown by Walter Grünzweig. Freiligrath, who had read Rossetti's edition, also privileged Whitman's war poems in his 1868 selection.<sup>7</sup>

As noticed by Meliadò Freeth, it is significant that Gamberale opens his 1887 translation with "Song of the Universal": the poem of cosmic democracy, of the "all eligible to all." This emphasis on a sense of cosmic democracy is also important, I would add, in light of Gamberale's personal

view of Whitman's democratic ideals. In 1884 Gamberale had written, in a polemical article against Nencioni, that Whitman should not be regarded as or compared to "a European democratic poet," as his democratic ideals are founded not on the past ("the past is the past") but on his faith in the American present and future. In this first selection, Gamberale would almost completely ignore "Song of Myself" (and remarkably, the only section from this poem that appears in this 1887 collection is that of the Goliad Massacre). This almost complete omission is striking, especially considering that, in an article published in *Il momento* in 1884, Gamberale had written that "Song of Myself" contained Whitman's poetical program. <sup>10</sup>

The 1887 translation includes a significant epigraph taken from Dante's *Purgatorio* XXII: "Facendo come quei che va di notte, / Che porta il lume dietro e sé non giova / Ma dopo sé fa le persone dotte" (Doing as he who goes by night / he carries the light behind, and does not aid himself / but makes people after him instructed). But it must be noted that the first word of this tercet has been, in the epigraph to Gamberale's translation, modified and italicized (to signal the modification), from Dante's original *facesti* (you did) to *facendo* (doing). The tercet belongs to the dialogue between the Roman poet Statius and Virgil. Statius has been asked about his conversion to Christian faith, and he answers by using the similitude just quoted: it is actually thanks to the pre-Christian work of Virgil that he was enlightened.

In her article on Whitman and Italian futurism, Marina Camboni has argued that this epigraph summarizes Gamberale's judgment of the aesthetic value of Whitman's poetry: 12 the translator framed Whitman as fundamentally immature and imperfect, although certainly also as a crucial, prophetic precursor who opened the way to future works. Just as Virgil was not, and could not have been, for obvious temporal reasons, a Christian, and yet is recognized and even thanked by Statius for being pre-Christian, Italian readers should accept and celebrate what Gamberale saw as Whitman's roughness, unripe style, and creative naïveté, as these qualities still served to channel a series of important, groundbreaking messages. This idea also resonates with Whitman's own oxymoronic poetic program of being a humble bard who is "merely" giving some hints and preparing the terrain for those "poets to come" whom he vehemently calls for. In this sense, the epigraph resembles Pound's perspective of continuity-in-difference

in "The Pact": that is, Whitman is the fundamental, impulsive breaker, but others will carefully carve. Gamberale, like Pound, failed to see that Whitman was also a carver.

But the epigraph could also hide a second implication: it could be a reflection on Gamberale's own limitations as a translator. Gamberale's modification of "you did" into the gerund "doing" may in fact also point toward his own translating work and interpretive act. Gamberale may have meant to indicate that his own work on Whitman is only an unripe initial attempt, in the dark, to pave the way for future readers, and, most of all, for future translators of Whitman. With his self-taught English and complete lack of experience with spoken American English, Gamberale must have felt both the pressure and the honor of bringing Whitman to Italian readers for the first time. And, significantly, it is precisely with one of Whitman's writing staples, the present participle, a form with which Gamberale, and other translators around the world, would struggle, that Dante's original is modified here: a Whitmanian twist to a past (facesti, "you did") transformed into the ongoing present of Gamberale's ambitious, extremely hard, and necessarily imperfect, translating work.

In the introduction to the selection, Gamberale provides readers with a solid, if not entirely accurate, biography, and announces major themes and stylistic issues. The introduction can be regarded as a summa of the series of articles mentioned earlier that the translator had published in *Il momento letterario artistico sociale* in 1884. In them, Gamberale recognized the polysemic value of Whitman's poetry, its ability to capture "immensity and complexity." He called it "chaos that carries in its lap a new universe of harmony and light [...] the grandiose *fuga* of a great counterpointist [...] a freed musical development." He also prepared readers: they might find things that would seem in need of censoring, but, he argued, these were an essential part of Whitman's poetics of the union of body and soul, and they were composed without any sense of indecency. In an insightful touch, Gamberale suggested that indecency was rather "in our thoughts," in readers' own prejudices and moral restraints.

Despite all he accomplished, Gamberale also revealed his limits: while he perceived the harmony of this new music, he did not quite understand how Whitman had been able to give it shape. In fact, Gamberale simplistically associated this renewed musicality with prose more than with

poetry. As he put it, "The Muse of modern times, of this busy and hurried nineteenth century, cannot [...] [but] aspire to the freer, the vaster, more divine sky of prose." In other words, Gamberale sensed the value of the result but lacked a fine understanding of the procedures that led to it. In Gamberale's opinion, Whitman's art was too new and groundbreaking. Employing a musical analogy again, the translator concluded that perhaps his ear was just too inexperienced. 16

These ideas, first appearing in the articles in *Il momento*, emerge again in the introduction to the selection that would first present a more complete version of Whitman's work to Italian readers, who until then had read only single poems in articles and anthologies. Here, the translator immediately shows his fondness for Whitman's poetry: his enthusiasm is palpable. But he also, perhaps anticipating readers' reactions, addresses what he considers Whitman's oddities: he lists the strange use of punctuation and the syntactical alterations; the frequent use of neologisms and words from other languages, what he deems a rushed quality in the writing; and the lack of organization and selection. All this exuberance often leads to a lack of lucidity, Gamberale argues. But, he also notes:

sometimes this lack of lucidity derives from something else. For his divinations of the future, for his remote and naturally indefinite aspirations, the expression becomes almost airy and impermanent as a fluid: his style, ceasing to be sculpted, becomes colored by half tones, sentences assume the indetermination of music, and thought shows itself as bundled in a crepuscular, dim light. But this is not a flaw: lyrical style, or better, the style of any poetry which departs from the spirit and is directed to the spirit, from Pindar to Carducci, is necessarily indefinite; since alive feelings and impetuous aspirations are, in and of themselves, without limits and contours.<sup>17</sup>

Gamberale seems almost to be manifestly contradicting himself: the lack of lucidity he had just criticized becomes, in this passage, praiseworthy. Gamberale perceives, although he does not fully embrace or understand, the innovative and premodernist value of Whitman's poetry, with its fluidity, musicality, indirections, and half tones and with its active refusal to give contours to thoughts and feelings. And the fact that Gamberale here mentions his contemporary writer Carducci illustrates his taste in poetry

and illuminates how he could be simultaneously attached to tradition while also appreciating innovation.

Gamberale's mixed feelings about Whitman's style, about where to stand with regard to tradition and innovation, and his cautiousness in moving closer to the latter, are reflected in the last part of the introduction. Here, he briefly reasons about rhymed and unrhymed poetry and, once again, only timidly concludes that unrhymed poetry would probably soon start to dominate the Italian literary scene. Gamberale's prediction is based, as he says, on the recent experimentation with unrhymed rhythmic forms (including that of Carducci) <sup>18</sup> and on the increasing use of the Leopardian *canzone libera* <sup>19</sup> and of free verse. And perhaps, he concludes, the future of poetry is precisely in the grandiose, superb "new music" of Whitman, rather than in the "warbling trills of the usual lines *sugared with rhymes*."

Does Gamberale then try to reproduce, in translation, this music he so greatly admires but cannot quite define? Gamberale's lines are often longer than Whitman's. This is of course due primarily to the syntactical structures of the Italian language, but Gamberale doesn't seem to have worked too much at trying to shorten lines when he could. Let us look at some significant examples, starting with Whitman's poem "There Was a Child Went Forth," which, as we have seen, had captured Carducci's interest. The second line of the poem, which reads "And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became," is converted in Gamberale's version into "E, non prima gli veniva visto un oggetto, che, ecco, in quell'oggetto ei si trasmutava" (literally, "and, as soon as he had seen an object, then, in that object he would transform himself"). Gamberale adds length, triples the single comma in Whitman's original, and adds an unnecessary "then," thus significantly slowing down and hampering the fast, hopping rhythm of the original, and privileging, instead, an emotional, if not sentimental, quality.

The translator also gives little attention to the structure of lines, as he often joins two lines into a single, extremely long one (for example, he does not separate the third and fourth line of the first stanza of this poem). The numerous anaphoras of the original are also strangely dealt with: sometimes they are maintained, sometimes they are not, and sometimes they appear where they were actually not present in the original. But Gamberale often manages to keep the musical quality of the catalogues alive—if not as powerfully as in the original—by selecting and ordering words accord-

ing to their rhythmical quality. In this same poem he frequently uses, for example, alliterations that, although not always present in the original, have the effect, in the Italian, of making up for the often lengthier, less fluid lines: "the father strong, self-sufficient" is "il padre forte, fidente di sé," and "the yearning and swelling heart" becomes "il gonfiarsi e il gemere del core," while "the tight bargain, the crafty lure" become "i celeri contratti e gli allettamenti astuti."

To continue to evaluate Gamberale's rendition of Whitman's musical power, let us now look at one of Whitman's poems most celebrated for its musical nature, "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking." Gamberale substitutes for the sense of eternal ongoing-ness in the title the stiffer and more traditional "Ricordanze delle rive del mare"23 (Rememberings of the shores of the sea) that is interestingly close to Whitman's first title for the poem when it was published in the New York Saturday Press in 1859 ("A Child's Reminiscence") and to its second title in the 1860 edition, "A Word Out of the Sea." The sustained rhythm of the extremely long and yet extremely pressing incipit is not fully reproduced, as Gamberale does away with all the present participles at the ends of various lines and does not maintain all of the anaphoras. But perhaps the most striking feature of the translation is Gamberale's decision to close the stanza not with the verb "sing," but with the Italian word for "reminiscence," thus shifting away the emphatic weight put by Whitman on the act of singing and regularizing the impressively altered order of the original, "a reminiscence sing."

The first Italian "Out of the Cradle" also suffers from lengthier and often convoluted lines that stop the lyrical flow, become mechanical, or cease to exist altogether. "A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me, never to die" becomes, for example, "Migliaia di ciarlieri echi sono balzate alla vita dentro di me, le quali non moriranno mai più": having *le quali*, the feminine relative pronoun equivalent to the English "which," for echoes, is not necessary here, and, in fact, it is redundant, mechanical, and prosaical. A simple (and more literal) *per non morire mai più* would have been much smoother.

Another strange choice by Gamberale is changing the original "aria" of section eight to "canto," song, in Italian: why wouldn't he keep the explicit reference to opera represented by Whitman's use of the Italian term? As for rendering the various present participles in this same stanza and across

the poem, Gamberale often opts to substitute them with past verbs, thus also altering the significant sense of continuity in the original. Whitman's use of the "-ing" forms remains, indeed, a challenge for Italian translators and, as we will see shortly, for other non-English-language translators.

This initial edition of Gamberale's selected translations displays what will remain, over the course of about forty years, the main characteristics of the translating enterprise of the teacher from Agnone. There can be imprecise renderings and oversights, misunderstandings and awkward moments, and, certainly, too large a reliance on an archaic and refined lexicon that vastly diminishes the modern(izing) quality of Whitman's diction. This stanza from "Song of the Open Road" is exemplary in this sense.

You air that serves me with breath to speak!

You objects that call from diffusion my meanings and give them shape!

You light that wraps me and all things in delicate equable showers!

You paths worn in the irregular hollows by the roadsides!

I believe you are latent with unseen existences, you are so dear to me.<sup>25</sup>

#### This becomes in Gamberale's words:

O aere che mi doni il fiato ond'io parlo!

O voi, oggetti, che rivocate dal disperdersi i miei pensieri, e date essi una forma!

O luce, che investi me ed ogni cosa del tuo così equo e delicato nimbo,

O vie consunte in irregolari solchi sui marciapiedi,

La mia fede è che voi, a me così dilette, occultate, in voi, esistenze invisibili.<sup>26</sup>

Let us start with the title that Gamberale assigns to the poem: "Canto della pubblica strada" (Song of the public road), which sounds like an overinterpretation. It is true that the road the lyrical I is taking is open to everybody (and is, therefore, public), but the sense of spatial vastness and of the figurative act of walking toward the American future should still be maintained in the translation. It is also interesting to take into consideration lexical choices such as *aere*, *onde*, *rivocate*, and *nimbo*, terms that sound completely archaic today but that had a very dignified tone even at the end of the nineteenth century. *Aere*, *rivocate*, and *nimbo*, in particular, are Latinisms that are inevitably far from their commonly used English

counterparts, "air," "call," and "showers." The choice of iterating the vocative "O!" at the beginning of each verse adds rhetorical emphasis and solemnity to the passage. Finally, Gamberale tends to make things more complicated than the original, as happens in the fifth verse of this stanza, lengthened, reordered, and reworded with a more grandiose register: the English "I believe you are latent with unseen existences, you are so dear to me" becomes "La mia fede è che voi, a me così dilette, occultate, in voi, esistenze invisibili" (literally, "My faith is that you, so cherished to me, conceal, in yourselves, invisible existences"). Gamberale's inversion of the first and last part of Whitman's original makes the Italian line sound confusing, if not completely incomprehensible. But Gamberale's translation contains plenty of luminous moments as well, even in its first iteration. Although he turns too often to archaisms and erudite terms, Gamberale's word choice remains generally excellent, especially considering his limited knowledge of English. And even if lengthened, slowed down or altered, Whitman's tone and poetic footprint are still strongly recognizable.

In the second volume of selected translations, meant as the continuation of the first, which came out in 1890, again for the popular series by Sonzogno, Gamberale displays a more thorough knowledge of Whitman's work: he includes the 1855 Preface, and he also informs readers about his own rearranging and selection of poems from the larger corpus of the American original. And, this time, Gamberale includes more extended excerpts from "Song of Myself" and poems from the "Calamus" cluster. In addition, he differs from his first selection by putting less emphasis on war poems.

The impact of Gamberale's work on Italian and other international readers would tend to be greater with his later unabridged translations, but the 1887 and 1890 translations are important documents that give voice to particular historical and cultural contexts. Who else was translating Whitman in the world, in these same years? And how can we evaluate these translations in comparison to Gamberale's? Gamberale's tendency to make Whitman's lines much more prolix in his Italian version than in the English original is also present in initial attempts by others to translate Whitman into non-English languages, thus denoting a common tendency across various reception scenes. We can see this in a poem that was widely translated into various languages in this first phase of the reception: "Beat!

Beat! Drums!" Many international critics and translators focused on this poem, which confirms, once again, the centrality assigned to Whitman's war poems at this time (although it must certainly be remembered that this militaristic poem is actually not particularly representative of Whitman's attitude toward the war).

This was, as I noted before, one of the poems that Ivan Turgenev translated but never published (the manuscript was discovered at the French National Library).<sup>27</sup> As noted by a later translator into Russian, Kornei Chukovsky,<sup>28</sup> for the marching rhythm of the first line of the poem, "Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!"29 (which returns in the poem at the beginning of each of three stanzas), Turgenev used sixteen syllables where Whitman had used seven. Looking to Gamberale, we see he rendered the same line with seventeen syllables.<sup>30</sup> Thérèse Bentzon had also translated the poem, using twelve, 31 which is considerably better than others but still almost doubles the original. Future translators of this poem did much better, attending more carefully to the formal nature of Whitman's writing. Chukovsky himself, for example, would use eleven syllables for the first line (and would still not be happy with it, expressing his frustration with the prolixity of Russian language) in 1907.<sup>32</sup> German translator Johannes Schlaf, also in 1907 and, of course, also facilitated by the closeness of German to English, used eight.<sup>33</sup>

As for other constitutive elements of the poem, while Gamberale, Turgenev, and Bentzon do pay attention to anaphoras, which they try to reproduce most of the time, they do not always keep repetitions internal to lines (as in "would the talkers be talking?"). These latter are important, as they constitute the linear, continuing rhythmical counterpoint of the normal daily routine activities that the decisive beating drums of the war are appointed to break. Whitman's use of repetition is, simply, not fully understood and/or accepted. Alliteration is also only sporadically maintained (nobody, for example, keeps the repeating "b" of the original's first line or attempts other alliterating sounds throughout the line). And while Turgenev maintains Whitman's dashes, they completely disappear in Gamberale's and Bentzon's texts (the latter actually does use dashes, but only to signal the ends of lines, as the translation appears in paragraphs).

The considerable lengthening of the first line I discussed applies to the rest of the poem in all the translations I have mentioned. It is striking that

this general lengthening takes place even in such a militaristic poem in which Whitman insists on assertive rapidity, creating a perfect rhythmical counterpart to the ideological celebration of the war. While we know that Gamberale had a tendency, also due to the syntactical nature of the Italian language, to lengthen Whitman's lines, and that Bentzon did not seem to pay too much attention to the formal nature of what she considered "brute" verses anyway, the case of Turgenev remains particularly surprising, especially considering the importance of traditional metrical rigor in Russian versification. The source of the Russian writer's choice not to try to replicate this clamped rhythm may reside, as I have argued before, in his perception of Whitman as a writer of prose poems.

# The 1907 Unabridged Foglie d'erba

Luigi Gamberale's 1907 complete translation of *Leaves of Grass*, mentioned in passing before, deserves direct attention in its own right. Seventeen years after the publication of the second volume of his selected translations from Whitman's poems, Gamberale was ready for a larger and more important project. The political and social context was perhaps not as unstable as when he published the first translations: the economy had improved, although not much in Southern Italy; various social reforms and welfare measures were being implemented, but at the same time a nationalist sentiment (also due to a continued colonial enterprise) was on the rise.

In 1907, the Palermo-based publishing house Sandron published Gamberale's unabridged translation<sup>34</sup> and inserted it in the Biblioteca dei popoli (Library of the Peoples) series directed by the writer Giovanni Pascoli. Pascoli had warmly encouraged Gamberale to carry on this ambitious project and, in 1902, with the help of Girolamo Ragusa Moleti, had persuaded the publisher Sandron to consent to publishing it.<sup>35</sup> Pascoli and Ragusa Moleti in fact encountered a series of difficulties convincing Sandron to plan a volume dedicated to Whitman's poetry. Sandron's perplexity derived from the fact that the two Sonzogno selected translations volumes had already come out in 1887 and 1890. But Pascoli and Ragusa Moleti's argument that this new edition would be an unabridged translation containing a large number of new poems finally convinced the publisher. Ragusa Moleti used these words to motivate Gamberale:

Your version will be the only one made until now, not only in Italy, but in Europe. Of Whitman there is not even a French translation. Europe is still either too classic or too romantic to feel the need of that genial poet. No other translators of Whitman, then, except you.<sup>36</sup>

Gamberale, who in 1902 was sixty-two years old and nearing retirement from his job as principal in Reggio Calabria, accepted the new challenge. After all, he must have considered it a great honor. In the letter that confirmed Gamberale's appointment as translator, Pascoli, who at this time was already one of the most well-known poets in the Italian literary scene, saluted Gamberale by reinforcing the significance of the new enterprise in these terms: "Dear and good master, you will soon go far, and my heart will follow you. And you will have to work so much and I will be so proud to announce it to Italian readers. My endless wishes...." Pascoli's predictions were accurate: Gamberale's labors were extensive, and his translation would soon go very far.

In 1904, Gamberale finally retired from his job, left Calabria and went back to live in Agnone, his hometown in Molise. Relieved of his pedagogical and administrative duties, the translator had the time and quiet needed to revise and expand his work on Whitman. Before sending his final drafts to Sandron, <sup>38</sup> Gamberale read, among other things, Henry Bryan Binns's 1905 Whitman biography, the 1898 critical work on Whitman's rhythmical structures by Pasquale Jannaccone, Oscar Triggs's 1893 study on Browning and Whitman, and the chapter on Whitman included in Edmund Stedman's 1885 *Poets of America*. Now in daily contact with Whitman's work, and with the help of his 1902 Webster's dictionary, Gamberale added to the substance and value of his work.

Comparing the preface of the volume containing the 1887 and 1890 selected translations to the preface to the 1907 edition reveals Gamberale's heightened knowledge of Whitman: the translator, quoting repeatedly from Binns's work, is much more precise in his biographical account of Whitman. But it must be noted that, while the biography is generally more accurate, Gamberale also inherits from Binns the excessive emphasis on events in New Orleans, especially Binns's theory that Whitman had a love relationship with a woman. Gamberale goes so far as to attribute the positive transformation of Whitman's writing to this disappointing love

experience: "Love and the knowledge of the Southern states had widened the targets of his poetry to America and to humanity" (xiv). Gamberale's insistence on the heterosexual elements of Whitman's poetry returns later in the preface, where he discusses Whitman's "never immoral" treatment of sexuality: this sexuality, for Gamberale as for many other critics in these first phases of the European reception, remains strictly heterosexual.

Gamberale also shows this time a much better understanding of the publication history of the different editions of *Leaves* and of the cultural and historical background of the poet's work. But what is most evident from reading this new preface is the diminished degree of enthusiasm in Gamberale's tone: it is as if the translator, with the passing of time, has developed a more critical perspective on the American poet. The passion and excitement of the first encounter with Whitman shown in the first collection has been replaced by a much more experienced, cultivated attitude. And, as often happens in long-term relationships, Gamberale makes clear that he knows Whitman very well and is also frustrated with what he considers Whitman's flaws.

This frustration seems to derive primarily from the complexities of the translating endeavor itself: when talking about these flaws, Gamberale repeatedly mentions, in fact, his translating challenges. Whitman aims to depict an "impersonal personality" and a "universal individualism," Gamberale explains. But often, Gamberale argues, the indirections and imprecise concepts used by Whitman to achieve this run the risk of becoming too abstract, too vague. As he puts it, "While human personality abounds, at the same time, human personality is missing" (xxxv). Not only are Whitman's ideas imprecise, but his expressions are as well, Gamberale argues. And here derives the main difficulty in translating: "One must often settle for what's more probable and logical; and translation becomes interpretation" (xxxiv).

Gamberale is also bothered by Whitman's "uncertain syntax" and use of punctuation: Whitman, he ironically argues, is barely aware of the existence of the colon and semicolon (xlv). To remedy this, Gamberale announces that he has often changed the original punctuation: even while aware of how "dangerous" such a modification can be, the translator hopes that doing so can improve the poems' intelligibility (xlvi).<sup>40</sup> After all, Gamberale humbly confesses, he is aware of his own limits as a translator. As he had

done in the previous collection of translations, with the quote from Dante he used in the epigraph, here he once again clarifies how his is only an initial attempt: "Translators from the Bible, Aeschylus, Dante and Shakespeare must have met the same difficulties: the translators who succeeded them did better, but even these latter, were still not perfect" (xlvi).

Gamberale's modifications are not only limited to adding semicolons or colons in place of the original commas: convinced, as he states in the preface, that Whitman's poetry has only an appearance of being verse, but is "really, prose and nothing else," Gamberale even feels free to structure Whitman's poetry as he pleases. Section one of "Song of Myself," for example, is formed, in Gamberale's translation, by only one stanza instead of the original four. This had already happened in the first selected translation (where, because of the general principle of selection, poems themselves would often be truncated by the loss of entire parts). But if Gamberale had, back then, left the poet the benefit of the doubt by stating that Whitman's writing was a mix of prose and poetry, at this point he boldly proclaims that it is "prose and nothing else." Does this mean that the Italian translator's understanding of Whitman's poetics has regressed rather than progressed?

Not exactly. Gamberale's assertive and seemingly final statement about Whitman's poetry being prose may in fact consist mostly in a simplistic provocation intended to dismiss the value of analytical studies such as Pasquale Jannaccone's 1898 rigorous analysis of Whitman's prosody. In that book, Jannaccone conceptualized the idea of "psychic rhythm" to indicate what he regarded as the peculiar form used by Whitman to build his stanzas, arguing that it is close to primitive and biblical forms and to ancient Greek religious poems. But Jannaccone clarifies that this does not mean that Whitman's diction corresponds to an involution of poetic forms:

But this reproduction of ancient forms is not a return to the primitive stages because of a decline of the poetic organism; it is, instead, a necessary consequence of the evolution of verse. The form of the poems of *Leaves of Grass* marks, to put it simply, the first stage in the modern phase of the evolution of verse; it strengthens and gives relevance to the logical element, diminishes and sometimes even almost suppresses phonic rhythm, so that, between the two elements, a new balance and agreement can be formed. From this, more varied and more suggestive

rhythms that can be more adequate to the ideological content, can be formed. $^{42}$ 

Jannaccone identifies Whitman's "exquisite sensibility for music" (127) and describes the peculiar structure employed by the American poet: a proposal, two lines of development, and a refrain, which create, he argues, a rhythm capable of reproducing thinking processes and, ultimately, their uncontrollable nature. In the book, Jannaccone also criticized Gamberale's translations, provoking a harsh response from the translator a few years later. Gamberale regarded Jannaccone's assessment of the rhythmical structure in Whitman as too forced and underlined, instead, the centrality of the "recitatif" model in Whitman's poetry, aligning himself with Oscar Triggs's indication of a parallel between Whitman and Wagner.

Gamberale is, in fact, convinced that it is impossible to assign precise rhythmical schemes to Whitman's work, and that, in the end, "when talking about Whitman, technical questions are trifles" (xlviii). But it is also clear that Gamberale still appreciates Whitman's innovations. As already appears evident when reading the 1890–91 preface, the Italian translator may not know how to explain the nature of this innovation, and may not appreciate others' attempts to do so, but he clearly suggests that the direction showed by Whitman is the one that the poetry of the immediate future should follow (1).

Gamberale seems to *feel* the overall effect of innovation, but he fails to *see* what this latter is composed of. He is profoundly bothered, for example, by Whitman's enumerations, which often seem to him "an anatomical index" or the "inventory of a bazaar" (xxxvii).<sup>45</sup> Thus he feels entitled to correct and distort Whitman's punctuation and stanza lengths. In the midst of this ambivalence of continual rejection and acceptance, blame and praise, comes Gamberale's definition of what he sees as the core of Whitman's poetics:

Intending to instill in the soul of men that love that should keep them united in the moral world with the same virtue for which, in the physical world, matter is kept together by the force of adhesion, his poetry had to pour out, as a benevolent rain that could penetrate in every layer. Did he achieve this? We don't dare to answer. We only know that, either victim

or priest of his own ideality, if he is not always a great artist, he is often a great poet, and always a great heart; and that he wrote not to make some books, but to make one book *aimed to help the souls of men*. (xlix) $^{46}$ 

Gamberale, whether deliberately or not, failed to recognize the strongly homoerotic component of this vision, but he did grasp the idea of Whitman's message of love and the American poet's understanding of writing as a form of social and political activism. This remains a dominant trait in Gamberale's understanding and ultimate appreciation of Whitman: it is when discussing this that the old enthusiasm that Gamberale had shown in the past comes back at full force, and that Whitman returns to being a "great poet."

# Translating Convergences: The International Influence of Gamberale's 1907 Edition

Gamberale paid close attention to the reviews of the 1907 translation.<sup>47</sup> The volume had remarkable resonance in Italy and abroad. Gamberale's 1907 work was, in fact, as Ragusa Moleti had touted, the first unabridged translation of Whitman in Europe, and it would be highly influential for translations into other languages. The most striking example is that of the first larger volume of selected translations from Whitman published in Spain.<sup>48</sup> The translation appeared in 1912, authored by Álvaro Armando Vasseur. Vasseur based his translation principally on Gamberale's 1907 volume, and probably also on Léon Bazalgette's 1909 complete translation into French, while only sporadically consulting the 1891–92 original English edition of Leaves. 49 As Matt Cohen has shown, many changes and errors made by Vasseur are "the passive reproduction of Gamberale's changes or errors," but at the same time, "glaring innovations in Vasseur's translation are almost invariably his own departure from the Italian."50 And if Vasseur also looked at Bazalgette, Bazalgette was in turn certainly inspired by Gamberale's work, as is clear from the existing correspondence between the two.

One can see an example of this textual convergence of the three translations by observing the three renditions of the title of Whitman's poem "Song of the Open Road." <sup>51</sup> As discussed, Gamberale strangely decides to translate the title as "Canto della pubblica strada" <sup>52</sup> (literally, "song of the

public road"): he does not opt for the much more literal, and much more apt term, *aperta* (open), which would have aptly conveyed the sense of unrestricted liberty of the figurative road of the original; he opts instead for the rigid, almost procedural-sounding adjective "public." Vasseur and Bazalgette retain the exact word (*pública* for Vasseur, and *publique* for Bazalgette), <sup>53</sup> while they both could have certainly used the equivalent for "open" in Spanish and French. Both Vasseur and Bazalgette seem to look at Gamberale first, rather than at Whitman.

Another similarity among the three translations lies in the general prolixity of lines: Whitman's original lines are usually much longer and often more prose-like than those of his translators. Let us look, for example, at "Song of the Exposition." The first parenthetical stanza reads:

(Ah little recks the laborer, How near his work is holding him to God, The loving Laborer through space and time.)<sup>54</sup>

This becomes, in Gamberale:

(Ah! Chi lavora poco stima Quanto il lavoro congiunge strettamente l'operajo a Dio, A lui, l'amoroso operajo, attraverso lo spazio e il tempo.)<sup>55</sup>

This, in my strictly literal English back-translation, reads:

(Ah! The one who works cares little
Of how work tightly joins the worker to God,
To him, the loving worker, through space and time.)

Gamberale, as he often does, changes Whitman's punctuation by adding an exclamation mark and by taking out a comma. He is successful in keeping the first line relatively short, but he decides to take away the original's significant emphasis on the little degree of the worker's concern by moving the equivalent for "little," poco, later in the line. And, still in the first line, he makes another odd choice by making the protagonist a generic "one who works" instead of, as in Whitman, a laborer. Gamberale then makes the word operajo<sup>56</sup> appear in the second line, where the original does not have it, and to do this he takes away the original's possessive adjective from "work." This has the effect of uselessly complicating and lengthening the line. In

the third line, Gamberale repeats "to him," "the loving worker," which again lengthens and slows down the rhythm and is also quite confusing. He also does not capitalize "worker" when the term referred to God. Because of Gamberale's choices, the clean, direct parallel established in Whitman's original between the laborer of the first line and the Laborer of the third is made much more intricate. Readers may have to reread the stanza to grasp an image that in the original is immediately clear.

In Bazalgette, the same stanza reads:

(Ah! il importe trop peu au travailleur, Combien son ouvrage le rapproche de Dieu, Le Travailleur au coeur aimant à travers l'espace et le temps.)<sup>57</sup>

In my back-translation, this becomes:

(Ah! it matters too little for the laborer, How much his work brings him close to God, The Worker with a loving heart through space and time.)

Bazalgette inherits the exclamation mark from Gamberale, and while he freely makes "little" become "too little," he is at least able to keep the French term for "laborer" in the first line and to capitalize it when it occurs in the third line with reference to God. Bazalgette's verbal choice in the second line with the use of the verb *rapprocher* (to come/put close) takes out the poignant sense of "hold" present in Whitman's original. But, while also longer and more prose-like than Whitman's, Bazalgette's rendition is more successful than Gamberale's.

Finally, Vasseur's stanza reads:

(¡Ah, qué poco caso se hace del que trabaja! Sin embargo, su labor lo aproxima en secreto a Dios: A El, el amoroso obrero a través del espacio y del tiempo.)<sup>58</sup>

# And my back-translation:

(Ah how little it is minded of the one who works! Certainly, his work brings him secretly close to God: To Him, the loving worker through space and time.)

In Vasseur, a few elements of Gamberale's and Bazalgette's versions

conflate, and the result is not ideal. Gamberale's exclamation is not only maintained, but extended by Vasseur to the whole first line, which adds an overly dramatic charge to the tone of the stanza. While Vasseur keeps the "one who works" solution used by Gamberale, he at least does not make the mistake of inserting "worker" in the second line. But he gives the first line a different meaning than do Whitman and the other translators: for Vasseur, people in general do not care about workers. This sounds like a sentence that could be used in a protest for the rights of workers, and in this sense, it goes far beyond Whitman's original intention.

Like Gamberale, Vasseur also does not capitalize his equivalent of the word "laborer" when referring to God. In fact, he decides to avoid the word God altogether in the third line and to copy Gamberale's useless repetition "To him," only with the pronoun in a capitalized form, which makes the line significantly more conventional. Vasseur looks at Bazalgette's rapprocher in the second line, but he also puts his original mark by freely adding the expressions sin embargo (certainly) and en secreto (secretly), which have the effect of lengthening and of adding a colloquial tone and a nuance of confidentiality that is not present in Whitman's stanza. Another original addition by Vasseur is the colon in the second line.

Also of note are the translators' renditions of sexually charged images and expressions. Let us take a look at Whitman's first two lines in "The Dalliance of the Eagles."

SKIRTING the river road, (my forenoon walk, my rest), Skyward in air a sudden muffled sound, the dalliance of the eagles,<sup>59</sup>

While Vasseur does not include the poem at all in his 1912 selection, we can look at Gamberale's and Bazalgette's versions. Gamberale's title is "La carezza delle aquile" (literally, "the caress of the eagles"), and the expression comes back in the second line, as well:

Fiancheggiando la via del fiume (mia mattutina passeggiata e mio riposo),

Su, verso il cielo, nell'aria, ecco, improvviso, uno smorzato schiamazzo, la carezza delle aquile;<sup>60</sup>

My back-translation:

Flanking the river road (my morning walk and my rest), Up, toward the sky, in the air, there, suddenly, a softened squawking, the caress of the eagles;

In Italian, the term *carezza* does not carry the same implication of casual sexual encounter that "dalliance" does: it usually connotes a tender touch of friendly or parental affection. While in the rest of the poem Gamberale renders the physical, sexual tension of the encounter quite well (for example, by insisting on the convulsive, desiring onomatopoeic value of the long and nervous present participles), the title and its repetition in the second line only manage to convey the idea of a lukewarm tenderness.

Bazalgette does slightly better with the title: he chooses "Amours des aigles" (Loves of eagles), which also remains rather platonic in comparison to Whitman's title. The first two lines read:

Je longeais la route du fleuve, (pour ma promenade d'avant-midi, mon délassement),

Lorsque soudain, venant du ciel, j'entendis dans l'aire une rumeur assourdie, deux aigles qui se caressaient;<sup>61</sup>

#### Back translation:

I was walking along the road of the river (for my morning walk, my rest), When suddenly, coming from the sky, I heard in the air a muffled sound, two eagles that caressed each other;

Here Bazalgette reveals his attentiveness to Gamberale: even if he renders the title differently, he also opts, in the second line of the poem, for "deux aigles qui se caressaient" (two eagles who caress each other). The French *caresse* or *caresser*, as a verb in this case, has the exact connotation of the Italian and the English "caress." Bazalgette also replicates Gamberale's modified punctuation, by adding a series of commas in the second line and a semicolon at the end of it.

Although Gamberale's choice of *carezza* did not reach as far as Spain, it went, via Bazalgette's edition, as far as Russia. In his selected translations from Whitman, published in 1911, Konstantin Balmont would in fact include this poem with the title of "Ласка орловь" ("The Caress of the Eagles").

И дя вдоль реки по дороге (это утромь мой отдыхъ, прогулка), Я въ воздухъ, тамь, ближе къ небу, заглушенный услышаль звукъ; Внезапная ласка орловь,  $[\dots]^{62}$ 

# My back-translation:

Walking along the river on the road (it was the morning of my rest, my walk),

In the air, there, close to the sky, I heard a muffled sound;

The sudden caress of the eagles, [...]

How did "caress" reach Russia? One hypothesis is that Balmont most probably had Bazalgette's version at his side. The Russian poet knew French well: by 1911 he had several times lived in Paris (and by 1920, he would permanently move to France, where he would die in 1942). While he moves the "caress of the eagles" to the third line, Balmont also repeats the use of various commas in the second line and the insertion of a semicolon, just as it was done by both Gamberale and Bazalgette. In Russian, too, the term  $\pi ac\kappa a$  does not carry any possible erotic nuance. This case shows how Gamberale lessened the erotic charge of the poem with his choice of the word carezza, and this was later transmitted to Bazalgette's translation and, indirectly, through the French version to Balmont. This helps us understand how Whitman's original text became blurred and also how the very notion of an original source text is destabilized in the international and interlinguistic web of translation, reception, and remaking.

Another case in this sense is that of the poem "City of Orgies." But here the move away from the original is more gradual. Gamberale in fact translates Whitman's last line, "Lovers, continual lovers, only repay me"<sup>63</sup> as "Amanti, continui amanti solamente, compensano me."<sup>64</sup> (Back translation: "Lovers, continual lovers only, compensate me.") Gamberale's rendition of the word "lovers" as "amanti" is appropriate, as the Italian word has a clear sexual implication. But Bazalgette renders the same line as "Seuls, des amis, un perpétuel cortège d'amis, me payent de retour."<sup>65</sup> (Backtranslation: "The only ones, friends, a perpetual procession of friends, pay me back.") *Ami* in French, especially when preceded by a possessive adjective (which is not the case here) may suggest "lover," but the term remains deliberately ambiguous. So Bazalgette's translation, while not fully

incorrect, is less accurate than Gamberale's. Vasseur seems to have looked at Bazalgette: "Amigos, un perpetuo cortejo de amigos, basta para que me sienta retribuido, pagado." (Back translation: "Friends, a perpetual procession of friends, is enough for me to feel compensated, paid back.") Vasseur keeps the image of the "perpetual procession" used by Bazalgette, and, more importantly, he uses *amigos*. But if *amis* in French still carried a certain ambiguity, the Spanish *amigos* cuts off any potentiality in this sense, since the word does not have a sexual or erotic connotation in Spanish.

This brief analysis of the different translations into various languages and of the dependence and influence they had on one another shows the value of a multinational and multilingual approach when evaluating Whitman's reception and reinvention. I am convinced that further comparative studies of Whitman's translations across the world would lead to important discoveries. For now, let us draw some conclusions about the existence of common patterns in the first complete or selected (but substantially long) translations that appeared in various countries in which Gamberale's 1907 translation had a central role.

It is first of all clear that all these translations are generally characterized by an increased prolixity, in comparison to Whitman's original. This may be due to a partial, but sometimes substantial, lack of understanding or appreciation of the formal nature and value of Whitman's work. Translators aimed to concentrate on the contents, but they did not grasp how these were shaped by the forms. They felt free to considerably change both semantic connotations and syntactic structures and to often apply cuts or additions without signaling them.<sup>67</sup> The sexual charge of Whitman's poems and the homoerotic component were generally downplayed and at times fully erased. Whitman's original diction still managed to emerge in its force and charisma, but it often sounded heavier and less fresh and experimental than it actually was. Yet, reading Whitman in translation still generated an outburst of reactions, and, usually, very positive ones. Sifting through the heap of papers on Gamberale's desk—which we can imaginatively reassemble from the collection of his personal documents in Agnone—allows us to catch a glimpse of this phenomenon.

### From Gamberale's Mailbox: Readers' Reactions

Gamberale's manuscript incoming correspondence illuminates the responses to his translations and to the general reading of Whitman by many readers from Italy and abroad. The translator received letters from well-known critics and writers, from other translators and colleagues, and from a number of "common" readers." The responses of ordinary readers are particularly interesting since these often get lost in reception history studies.

In the early summer of 1893, for example, Gamberale received a series of strikingly intense letters from a certain Margherita C. Haskard, a woman of Scottish origins who lived in Pisa. <sup>69</sup> Having read Gamberale's 1887 and 1890 selected translations, Haskard wrote to thank the translator. The tone of the letter is strikingly informal. Haskard, who writes in Italian with a minor number of anglicisms and imperfections, often breaks into English and calls Gamberale *fratello* (brother) and *camerata* (camerado). Haskard recalls how, when first reading Whitman in English in 1888 while in Edinburgh, she "jumped out of joy for knowing I was not alone any longer," <sup>70</sup> and how reading Gamberale's translation recreated that feeling.

Haskard then goes on to talk about herself. In an intriguing opening sentence, she declares: "You would be scared if I told you how much I suffered for being a feminine Whitman." It then progressively becomes clear why Haskard calls herself this. The daughter of a Christian pastor, she has grown to be a fervid religious believer, or perhaps more precisely, a mystic fanatic, and Haskard has fully conflated the figure of Whitman—and the principle of open, universal love contained in his poetry—with "the poet of poets," as she calls him: Christ. And she is trying, with her own life, to be like Christ and to testify to the message of love. Switching to English, she explains that she has written an essay entitled "Christ and Whitman" and suggests that Gamberale may want to translate it into Italian. 71 On her side, she offers to volunteer to help spread knowledge of Whitman in Italy: she has the intention of buying dozens of copies of Gamberale's translations and distributing them to friends. "Italians don't read enough," Haskard complains, and perhaps it would be a good idea to "present Walt on the stage," she says. She herself had been an actress in Scotland when she was younger. Progressively, more information emerges about the woman's life: she is forty-five and has six children, the oldest of whom is twenty-four. And she has spent six months in a mental institution where, she says, she has testified how "God is love: Father-Mother, Duality" and where "the life of Christ has manifested itself in my mortal body." Haskard also defines herself as "the little sister of Jesus, Whitman and Oliphant," who lives "with eternal ingenuity and candor."

In another letter, undated but presumably following the first one, Haskard goes on to talk about her life: in the Italian mental institution where she had spent six months as a patient, she had started to write a book entitled *The Motherhood in Fatherhood of God*, which she is now trying to publish.<sup>74</sup> Haskard tells Gamberale that her husband, "a rich English banker" who lives in Florence, is currently in London to try to divorce her on the basis of the contents of the book, which he has brought with him to prove his wife's madness.

What was Gamberale's reaction to reading about Haskard's difficult personal situation, mental problems, and mystical fanaticism, which the woman so enthusiastically paired with her love for Whitman? We do not know, as his letters are not present in the collection. But we do know that he responded, since Haskard addresses, if briefly, his answers and comments. Was Gamberale interested in Haskard's theorization of a Christ-like Whitman and in her detailed and long theological discussions? Was he interested in the woman? Or both?

The letters from Haskard do have an insistent tone of intimacy. In another undated letter, Haskard writes in a bold Whitmanian move: "Camerado, accept my kiss, my embrace, this is not a letter, it is a woman, sent by the Father-Mother who are love, to rejuvenate you and give you joy and peace." In the letter of May 30, she writes:

Who has understood Walt more than me? [...] to complete his work. 75 He always said that a woman waited for him. Maybe it is me. In the meantime, you understand me. You understood Walt, and many of his songs that I did not read in English, I [now] read and find [them] perfect as translated by you in Italian.—Ah, how can I thank you! I think of you. When I sit alone, and alone I stay awake at night, I keep thanking you.

Still in this letter, Haskard implores Gamberale to adopt her same perspective for reading Whitman: "Open, camerado, your Gospel, and read this passage in the Apocalypse, and recognize, starting from verse 15,

the spirit of inspiration of Walt." And Haskard complains about the fact that "Walt has made a mistake, he has missed badly, to not sing Christ." Blinded by her fanaticism, Haskard has missed the many direct and indirect references to Christ made by Whitman. But Haskard's reading may have left a trace in Gamberale, after all. At the end of his 1907 preface, in fact, Gamberale did establish a parallel between the innovative message of Whitman and that of Christ: such a parallel was absent in the preface to the 1890–91 collection.

Haskard left a trace somewhere else, as well. In a speech on Whitman's poem "Years of the Modern" that he gave at the Academy of Sciences of Padua in 1894, Professor Biagio Brugi recalled being introduced to Whitman by a mysterious and unnamed

[...] fanatic Scottish lady who, all invaded by the doctrines of that sect called *Vita Nuova*, went around with three books under her arm: the Gospel, the *Scientific Religion* by Oliphant, the great pontifex of the sect, the poems of Walt Whitman. The mystical word of that not inelegant lady writer, while in front of the Tirreno sea and the blue sky from which all things emerge with sharp and radiant contours, did not leave me indifferent. And it was useful for appreciating the lines of the American poet. If the lady was not able to induce me to be a neophyte of the Vita Nuova, she gained an admirer of her poet and she made possible the fact that, these old rooms, today, could echo the rhythm, full of modernity, of an extremely new poet.<sup>76</sup>

Brugi's words prove how Haskard had indeed done what she promised in her letter to Gamberale: to walk around and spread Whitman's word.

On February 20, 1904, another native English speaker with a strong religious inclination wrote to Gamberale, again in Italian. This was Reverend William Edwards Davenport. In the letter, Davenport did not formally introduce himself, but he simply wrote that he was, like Gamberale, a "Whitman enthusiast." Not much information is available about Davenport, but we do know that he was born in Connecticut in 1862 and died in Brooklyn in 1944. His brother was the eugenicist Charles Davenport. A minister of the Plymouth Church and the founder (in 1901) and director of the Italian Settlement House in Brooklyn, William Davenport wrote a few articles about Whitman<sup>77</sup> and also a few books of poems.

The letter from Davenport to Gamberale came from Campobasso, Molise, very close to where Gamberale lived.<sup>78</sup> It is unclear why Davenport was there, but perhaps the time he spent in Italy was somehow connected to his work for the Italian Settlement (and the same speculation holds for his perfect knowledge of Italian). In the letter, Davenport writes that he had read and appreciated Gamberale's 1903 article on Whitman in the *Rivista d'Italia*<sup>79</sup> and that he had even translated a shortened version of it at the request of the director of the *Conservator*. (The translation would be published in the *Conservator* in September 1904.)<sup>80</sup> The article is enclosed in the letter. But Davenport encloses something else with the letter. As he writes,

About [Whitman's] influence on my life it is not important to talk: but I took the freedom to send you with this letter a book of mine that can demonstrate the power of Whitman in my work.<sup>81</sup>

The book Davenport sent is his *Poetical Sermons Including the Ballad of Plymouth Church*. <sup>82</sup> Many poems in the book strongly echo, perhaps even directly imitate, Whitman's poetry. But Davenport's book is centered on the figure of Christ and on a theological interest. In this sense, Davenport's reading and re-elaboration of Whitman comes quite close to Haskard's.

Davenport was not the only reader and admirer of Gamberale's work to send the translator poetry. In April 1908, G. B. Menegazzi, a teacher of Italian and foreign literatures and art history at a grammar school in Vicenza, wrote to Gamberale to thank him for his 1907 translation, which, he thought, would in the near future do much good for Italian youth. 83 Menegazzi was in fact convinced that Italian poetry was in a state of decadence and that the example of Whitman's poetry could help rejuvenate it and give it the "breath of present times [...] the great pulse of the universe." A few months later, Menegazzi would write again, this time to send a book of his own poetry and to ask Gamberale to express his judgment: "Nobody can see better than you." In the book, entitled *Malinconie, ritmie rime (Melancholies, rhythms and rhymes)*, Menegazzi has included a few experiments "on the path of Carduccian odes": a few poems that closely imitate Whitman's free verse, an attempt, Menegazzi says, to "italianize" this new poetic form.

Gamberale would also receive comments on his work from overseas. On May 5, 1908, Isaac Hull Platt, author of a series of articles and studies on Whitman,<sup>85</sup> wrote from Pennsylvania to congratulate the Italian translator. The letter reads:

[...] I have just been examining with greatest interest your translation of *Leaves of Grass* into Italian. I know enough of Italian to understand the pronunciation and see how excellent you have caught the lilt and rhythm of those wonderful poems. As a friend and countryman of Whitman I wish to express my thanks and appreciation of your work and as a small token of them I am sending a trifle<sup>86</sup> that I myself have contributed on the same subject.<sup>87</sup>

This sense of gratitude pervades many other letters from these years: a missive from writer Adolfo De Bosis from July 1908 talks about the excellent translation and about Gamberale's right to receive Italian people's thanks.<sup>88</sup> Writer Antonio Bruers wrote repeatedly between 1916 and 1922. In his first letter, Bruers writes:

[...] I received the much appreciated gift of the new edition<sup>89</sup> of Whitman, which I immediately put close to the previous one [published] by Sandron. I thank you with my heart. I always had a special cult for this poet, whom I regard among the greatest in humanity. I have *known* you for a long time, dear Sir, and precisely since when I first read Your Whitman in the little edition by Sonzogno, and I can't but express an old certainty of mine, telling you that with the unabridged translation of *Leaves of Grass* you have brought an outstanding contribution to Italian literature.<sup>90</sup>

In the following letter to Gamberale, Bruers enclosed his 1912 *Poemi spirituali* (*Spiritual Poems*), written in an experimental *poème en prose* style. Commenting on them, as if to explain them better to Gamberale, Bruers writes: "I myself as a critic would be embarrassed in judging whether this is a simple incapability to make verse or the choice of a form than can be historically explained [...] as in the modern times [there is] a tendency to this form of literature which has even become a characteristic sign." Bruers's experimentation was far from being as programmatic and self-aware as that of other Italian writers at this time: he remained insecure about the real nature of this experimentation, and he was sending the poems to Gamberale also as a way to ask for a confirmation of their value. 92

In 1909, it was Léon Bazalgette's turn to write to Gamberale. Bazalgette, writing in French,<sup>93</sup> thanked his Italian colleague for having sent him his 1907 translation:

# Dear Mr Gamberale,

I want to let you know all the pleasure that I felt when I received your Foglie d'erba (which I was familiar with already) with the affectionate phrases you included for me. It is a great thing that Italy and France have now the means to judge Walt Whitman directly, by looking at his poems, and not at the words of his commentators. And in this work of diffusion of the *Leaves* in Europe, it is you who will keep the honor of having been the pioneer, the first author of a complete translation into a foreign language. It has been four years that I have been preparing mine. [...] I have asked myself many times if it will be possible to found a sort of "Walt Whitman Followship<sup>94</sup> of Europe": there may be something to do in this sense. What do you think? [...] How was your version of *Leaves of Grass* received in Italy? [...] It seems to me that the "cause" of the Leaves has made enormous progress and that if the Good Gray Poet was still in this world, he would have had the chance to strengthen his confidence in the fact that his work will continue to be read. 95

In the letter, Bazalgette also included his review of Gamberale's translation. <sup>96</sup> It can be inferred that Gamberale, in response to this letter, informed Bazalgette of the commercial success that his translation was having in Italy. This greatly pleased Bazalgette (as is evident in his next letter), <sup>97</sup> who was just about to publish the product of his own hard work. Bazalgette's letters not only confirm the fact that, before publishing his translation, Bazalgette had looked extensively at Gamberale's version and was influenced by it, but they also testify again to the vital component of transnational alliances at the base of Whitman's reception in the world.

Another message of acknowledgment and appreciation, and another declaration of adhesion to the Whitmanian lineage, came to Gamberale on January 3, 1913, in the form of a book with the following autographed dedication: "To Luigi Gamberale, to the author of the magnificent version of *Foglie d'Erba*." The book was the collection *I poeti futuristi* (*The Futurist Poets*), 98 and the person who had sent the book and signed the dedication

was Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, whose "Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista" ("Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature") was the opening piece in the collection, as I will discuss later in this book.

This tendency of readers and admirers to send their often experimental—or, at least, what they believed to be so—creative work to Gamberale, as if asking for his approval, is an emblematic sign that these correspondents perceived the Italian translator of Whitman to be a figure of authority on evaluating and blessing innovation. It also indirectly confirms that these people thought of their writing (which often gained only minor recognition or remained unpublished) as being part of a worldwide Whitmanian lineage.

# A New Emergence:

# The 1912 Economical Selected Edition for Working-Class Laborers

A few years after his 1907 unabridged translation came out in 1912, Gamberale set out to publish a new selected translation of Whitman's poems, in an edition divided into three thin volumes and published by the Roman house Bernardo Lux. 99 No mention of this edition has ever been made in the existing studies of the Italian reception and of the different Italian translations. The actual copies were printed by the small printing house of Sammartino-Ricci in Gamberale's hometown, Agnone, and they are now rarities in Italian libraries, a fact that likely accounts for the silence of previous scholars concerning this edition: once again, the time I spent browsing Gamberale's papers and materials at the Baldassarre Labanca library in Agnone has been enormously illuminating in revealing the existence of this additional translation.

This edition was not only crucial in paving the way for the final translation published by Gamberale in 1923, but it also showed Gamberale's preferences and personal approach to Whitman's work: in this third translation Gamberale seems to have felt more freedom than ever to put out the version of Whitman most clearly shaped by his own concerns. For this "essential" edition, all that Gamberale regarded as unnecessary or ugly could be left out, with the excuse that it was of no essential use.

The contents of each volume were selected by Gamberale, who called the first volume *The Program-Songs*, the second volume *The Great Songs*, and the third volume *The Songs of Maturity*. Interestingly, Gamberale uses the word *canti*, which literally means "songs," and not the word for poems. He had done the same in the 1887 and 1890 *Canti scelti*. The choice gives the title a grandiloquent and classical spin, as is quite typical of Gamberale's diction. <sup>100</sup>

Very simple in design and made of cheap materials, with a selling price of sixty liras each, the volumes were intended to be popular and accessible to all. Gamberale, who in 1909 had founded a University of the People in Agnone to help improve the literacy and education of Agnonese workers, put a lot of energy into designing the edition, as testified by the drafts kept at the Agnone library. It may be surmised that Gamberale took particular inspiration from Ernest Rhys's edition, which he had consulted repeatedly, among other editions, as we have seen, for his earlier translations.

These books were intended to be a vade mecum for working-class laborers: the short preface written by Gamberale makes this clear from the very beginning. He writes:

Walt Whitman has not only left to the world a message of love and fraternity, but also the example of his life. From this latter, workers can learn: they can learn how, even when being without the adequate resources, it is still possible to ascend to those moral and intellectual heights without which any democracy becomes a vulgar and wild mess; they will see what they have to do in order to create their own individuality with the sole tenacity of their own will; they will deduce that the right path—the only one—that leads to the creation of oneself, is the one that one walks on without the help of others, with his own forces and his own efforts. <sup>101</sup>

And while this new edition was conceived by the translator with this main aim, the occasion also allowed him to freely cut and select to his exclusive preference, which he could not do in 1907 and would not be able to do in 1923. As he writes in the preface,

This economical edition of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* does not contain the entirety of the songs as they appear in the original: I took out those songs or parts of songs that are nothing else than lists of names of places, or parts of the human body, or of industries and inventions.

I also took out those songs or parts of songs, whose content appears in other songs already included here. The reason for this selection lies in the fact that this edition is destined for workers; to these latter, naked nomenclatures are of no use. And as for repetitions, it is known how they bore all readers, workers or not. Overall, these three volumes, if not materially—but actually, also materially, as what has been omitted is not a lot—contain the whole poetic substance of Whitman, and all its patriotic, civil, human ideologies. And this is what most counts. (vii)

This results in a dramatic change in the aspect and functioning of the overall *Leaves* and of the individual clusters. Gamberale may minimize the omissions, but they are quite numerous. The guiding principle of "cutting the lists" announced in the preface is followed: in Gamberale's translation of "Song of Myself," for example, the catalogue of section 15 (which starts with "The pure contralto sings in the organ loft") <sup>103</sup> is omitted except for the last six lines, in which the catalogue is coming to a pacifying end. <sup>104</sup> The striking excision of "The Sleepers" and "Our Old Feuillage" may result from the same cause: Gamberale's belief that catalogues were "boring." In this sense, Gamberale misunderstood one of the main elements of Whitman's proto-modernism.

Gamberale's omissions are all the more striking in this particular edition, conceived to be read by workers. As argued by Jacques Rancière, Whitman's catalogues have a double, aesthetical and political meaning: 105 they provoke a break with the logics of hierarchical representation, and they create an egalitarian procession of things, activities, sights, women and men, urban spaces and natural spaces, which are all given to readers so that they can experience them, pass through them. It is thus, Rancière argues, that Whitman contributed to the construction of a community "in possession of its own meaning." But Gamberale, who in the preface talks about how this book can help each reader in "the creation of one's self," sees things much differently.

Gamberale's annoyance with catalogues may not be the sole guiding rationale for his omissions. For example, if we continue to concentrate on the version of "Song of Myself" that Gamberale offered to workers in 1912, we discover a worker Gamberale has completely erased from the text: "The negro that drives the long dray of the stone-yard" of section 13. In

Whitman's original, the lyrical I describes in admiring and sensual terms the physical strength and beauty of the body of the black driver and expresses love for him: "I behold the picturesque giant and love him [...]." Was this too much to handle, for Gamberale? Was the translator scandalized by what Ed Folsom and Christopher Merrill have defined as a "casual and easy expression of love across races"? Looking at the unabridged 1907 translation, where Gamberale did necessarily have to include the section, might give us a clue. The section does appear there, in fact, but with two significant cuts: the half-line "steady and tall he stands pois'd on one leg on the string-piece" and the line "his blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast and loosens over his hip-band" have both been omitted. Gamberale's omissions of these powerful physical descriptions make the encounter of the lyrical I with the black driver much blander and more forgettable, and they empty that expression of "love" from any possible implication of sexual desire.

This leads us to ask another question: do these cuts in "Song of Myself" correspond to similar cuts in "Calamus"? If yes, is Gamberale's editorial and translating practice meant to fully obliterate any homoerotic allusion? This does not seem to be the case. In the 1912 edition the translator does omit a few poems with an explicit homoerotic implication (such as "We Two Boys Together Clinging" and "Behold This Swarthy Face"), but at the same time he leaves others intact. And when he translates the whole cluster in the 1907 edition, he does not hide words like "manly love" or "lovers," as some translators in other languages do at this time. It may very well be that Gamberale does not see the real homoerotic charge of "Calamus." The case of the black driver scene, partially cut in 1907 and totally removed in 1912, remains, in this sense, isolated, and therefore all the more interesting: is the deletion the result of Gamberale recognizing homoerotic content here? Or is it because of the combination of homoeroticism and cross-racial attraction? Did he consider it too "promiscuous" to show a black man with a naked chest and to affirm love for him?

This edition remains particularly interesting also for the noticeable change in Gamberale's use of language: probably because of the intended audience, the translator often uses a more colloquial and less refined lexicon than the one used in the 1907 edition. In this sense, the 1912 economical and selected edition is an important transition point on the path toward

the final 1923 edition. Gamberale also pays more respect to the structural nature of the poems he translates by maintaining the stanza structure as it appears in the originals. Another striking fact is that in the preface to this edition, unlike those of 1907 and 1923, Gamberale gives only a short biographical introduction to Whitman; he does not attempt to illuminate readers about the poet's style and about the aesthetic value of the poetry. As the concluding lines of the preface read, "This was the man, this the naked image of the message of his life. As for the message of his poetry, readers will see it in his songs. Nobody can say it better than he himself did" (xvii). Is Gamberale displaying high confidence in the interpretive capabilities of his worker-readers? Or is he assuming that they would not be interested in a discussion of style and forms? And why does he opt to provide them almost solely with the Whitmanian projection of a perfect equivalence of the figure of the man with his work?

These questions remain to be explored by future studies that may further illuminate this translation in comparison to those of 1907 and 1923, studies that may also reveal how this book for workers expressed a particular genre, especially in years in which the Italian working class was solidly increasing in numbers and social recognition, particularly due to the work of the emerging trade unions. While it was certainly not as largely influential and well-known as the 1907 edition, the 1912 edition printed in Agnone clearly displays the core ideas and preferences at the base of Gamberale's understanding of Whitman, and in this sense, it constitutes a precious reading guide to all of his translation work. This edition also represented a midpoint opportunity for the Italian translator to revise and correct his past work. Gamberale would, in fact, use many of the changes and corrections he applied in 1912 for his 1923 edition.

### 1923: The Final Translation

When evaluating Gamberale's final translation of *Leaves of Grass*, published in 1923 by Sandron (the same publisher who had issued the 1907 translation), scholars have overlooked two important facts. The first one is that Gamberale, who in 1923 was eighty-three years old, did not work, at this moment, at extensively revising the 1907 translation or at translating full poems anew. Instead, Gamberale used the revisions he had made

years earlier, for the edition that, as I explained, has gone unnoticed in previous studies and that the Italian translator had conceived as his final work on Whitman: the 1912 Bernardo Lux economical selected translation for workers.

If one compares the 1923 edition with that of 1912, it becomes apparent that the poems that appear in both editions (since the 1912 is selected, not everything appears there) 109 are identical. And in the case of those poems or parts of poems that do not appear in the 1912 selected edition, Gamberale does not translate them anew but uses the 1907 translation versions, usually revising them only slightly, if at all. This means that the 1923 edition should be regarded not as a new, independent, and isolated product of Gamberale's creativity that emerged in the early 1920s, sixteen years after the first unabridged translation. Instead, it is a reenactment of the 1912 translation, mixed with a few elements of the 1907 translation, including a few additions and corrections. And this is not surprising: as he indicates in the preface to the 1912 edition, Gamberale thought of the bulk of his work on Whitman as already finished by 1912, and when the project of a new edition emerged in the early 1920s, Gamberale simply revived his 1912 publication. Gamberale's reluctance to intensely work anew and to offer a radically different reading of Whitman is also seen in his 1923 preface, which is almost identical, except for minor changes, to the 1907 one. 110

This new understanding of the textual nature of the 1923 translation can help us clarify how it fits into important historical and political contexts. Marina Camboni has noted that Gamberale's translation of the word "atom" appears not as *atomo*, but as "drop" (*goccia*) for the "Song of Myself" line "every atom of my blood." She connects the change in the 1923 edition to the "change of cultural atmosphere produced by the rise of fascism," arguing that "the fascist mystic of sacrificial blood had penetrated in Whitman's text." But we must now note, in light of the discovery of this new edition, that the relevant context in which Gamberale made this textual change is not 1922 or so, but 1912 (as the change appeared already in the Lux edition), and thus the very beginning of futurist militarism.

Another overlooked element of the 1923 edition is the editorial work of Paolo Emilio Pavolini, who was at the time the director of the Biblioteca dei popoli (Library of the Peoples) series in which Gamberale's new edition appeared. Pavolini was a scholar of Sanskrit and other Indo-European

languages. The collaboration between Gamberale and Pavolini did not get off to a great start. In his letter of February 6, 1922, Pavolini wrote, with an annoying tone of superiority:

When I assumed the directorship of the "Library of the Peoples," I agreed with the Publisher that I would revise the drafts of each work published or republished within the series. How this revision is more than needed has been proved by the *Leaves of Grass*. The comparison with the original [...] has enabled me to discover a quantity of slips, inaccuracies, and even full translating mistakes, that I needed to amend.<sup>112</sup>

Pavolini then listed a series of small and large mistakes, often accompanying them with exclamation marks in parenthesis to ironically express his displeasure. He then asked Gamberale to acknowledge his editorial contribution in a final note.

Notwithstanding the humiliating tone used by Pavolini, Gamberale's response was controlled and polite, but how upset the translator felt is evident in another letter, this time to the publisher Sandron. In April of the same year, Sandron in fact wrote to Gamberale, saying that Pavolini wanted "all of his corrections to be used, since he has dedicated to them a lot of time and done conscientious and accurate work." Gamberale rebelled at this idea. He answered that he would not accept anything a priori. And in fact, not all of Pavolini's corrections would ultimately be employed. 114

Significantly, the copy of the draft annotated by Pavolini is part of Gamberale's collection in Agnone. The translator requested, in fact, to see the draft and the corrections, and it is possible that he then sent a new, final draft, in which he implemented some of the corrections. Pavolini's corrections are mostly of a philological nature. By closely reading Gamberale's translation and the original, Pavolini, also thanks to his philological education and experience, was able to correct Gamberale's frequently erratic choices: he integrated omissions (including the lines previously omitted by Gamberale from section 13 of "Song of Myself" about the encounter of the lyrical I with the black man who drives a cart with four horses) and restored the syntax, spacing, and formal order of the original, often freely disrupted by Gamberale. Pavolini also made a few lexical suggestions that tended to simplify convoluted passages or modernize Gamberale's diction. But, overall, the main contributions were philological. From a strictly tex-

tual point of view, the quality of the 1923 edition would be much weaker if not for Pavolini's intervention.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings, the mistakes, and at times idio-syncratic choices, Gamberale's work remains overall admirable and highly readable today. And while it sounds more dignified and often less fluid than the original, Gamberale's translation, the product of a lifelong enterprise of this humble, hardworking, and intellectually curious high-school principal from Molise, is still remarkably able to convey the power and novelty of Whitman's work: a fact attested to by the outsized influence of Gamberale's translation on the future reading and reception of Whitman, both in Italy and abroad.

# "Whitman has said that which was sprouting in my mind" Ada Negri's Socialist Perspective and Creative Dialogue with Whitman

IN FEBRUARY 1893, the anti-clerical, liberal-democratic periodical *Il* figurinaio published Ada Negri's article "Il gigante della libera America" ("The Giant of Free America"). Negri (1870–1945), who was at the time a twenty-three-year-old poet and teacher, discussed Whitman's poetry with a tone of passionate admiration. She had published her first collection of poems, Fatalità (Fatality), only one year earlier, and the book, focused on social and working-class issues, was very favorably received. Thanks to the book's success, the poet had just been offered a prestigious advance in her career as a teacher: from the countryside near Milan, where she had been teaching elementary school, Negri moved to Milan itself, where she started teaching high school. There Negri would fall in with a circle of people that included some of the first members of the newly formed Italian Socialist Party: Filippo Turati, Anna Kuliscioff, and Benito Mussolini. Turati and the others appreciated Negri's work for its political weight and its treatment of poverty, social and gender inequality, and class struggle. Decades later, Mussolini himself, having become the leader of the fascist regime, would continue to admire Negri, whose work had shifted toward patriotic themes after the First World War. Negri never denied her sympathy for Mussolini and for the regime. The poet received the 1931 Mussolini award and later became the first and only woman poet to be selected as a member of the Italian Academy, the cultural institution founded by the regime (operating between 1929 and 1944) with the aim of officially promoting and coordinating the "best" Italian intellectual activities. But critic Patrizia Guida importantly clarifies how Negri, notwithstanding the fact that she never rejected the regime, cannot be fully labeled as an actively "fascist writer" as her work only rarely supported fascism directly. The last phase of Negri's writing, which corresponded chronologically with

the acme of fascism, would be characterized, for example, by an intense spiritual introspection.<sup>2</sup>

Negri's critical piece on Whitman has never been taken into consideration in the few existing critical assessments of Whitman's reception in Italy,<sup>3</sup> perhaps because of its rarity, or perhaps because of the widespread tendency, in these studies, to privilege more well-known male critics' and writers' contributions. And yet this is a document of paramount importance. The essay clearly stands at the crossroads of a few lines of the interpretation of Whitman's work in Italy. Negri inherited much from the Rossettian-Nencionian approach and updated and adapted it to her socialist agenda. But Negri also uses a language and an emphasis that come close to later, early fascist and futurist readings of Whitman. More precisely, Negri's article is the textual locus in which the post-Risorgimento champion of democracy created by Rossetti, the "healthy" writer capable of chanting America and the future with a renovated epic energy, as described by Nencioni, is being transformed into the legendary, absolute source of revolt that will alternatively appeal both to socialism and to early fascism.

The article also exemplifies Negri's complex and controversial profile and contribution within the Italian literary, cultural, and political scene of the time. Always a proud and passionate free thinker, Negri was a convinced socialist who ended up adhering to fascism because of the similarities that, at least initially, she (and many other Italian writers and intellectuals) perceived between the two political movements. A few central themes that appear in this piece on Whitman—specifically, the rebellious rejection of academia and aristocracy, the search for revolutionary models of renovated strength, the emphasis on the importance of work—would also be at the core of early fascism. But the article also reminds us of the main differences: Negri is still firmly socialist in her pacifism and internationalism and in her appreciation of Whitman's depiction of the dignity of the humblest people. Finally, the article shows how Negri, even while perhaps not classically a feminist<sup>4</sup> like her friend Anna Kuliscioff, the leader of the suffragette movement in Italy, still underlined Whitman's equalization of the sexes and was nonconformist enough to provocatively engage what was at the time a completely taboo topic: sex.

While not iconoclastically innovative, Negri helped renovate Italian poetry, both in terms of content and form. As an emerging writer, Negri

admired the work of Carducci and Nencioni. She wrote to both, asking for guidance and advice, and thanked them for their favorable judgment of her first books. Her first production was close to Carducci's diction and thematic interests. She closely followed Nencioni's critical work, which she estimated as "robust and profound," and she might have first heard about Whitman in Nencioni's essays. But there is also another source for Negri's appreciation of Whitman and of the American lands and identity that he came to represent, in her estimation: Ettore Patrizi, a journalist and political activist whom Negri met in Milan (in the same socialist group of which Mussolini was part) and with whom she had a romantic relationship.

Patrizi migrated to the United States in March 1893,<sup>7</sup> and a few months before doing this, in June 1892, he sent a copy of Whitman's book—most probably the collected volume of Gamberale's 1887 and 1890 translations<sup>8</sup>—to Negri. This parallels what would happen a few years later with another couple in Italian letters: Sibilla Aleramo and Dino Campana, whose correspondence, which resulted in a love story, started with a reference to Whitman, a shared favorite of the two, as I will discuss later in this book. Negri's reaction to receiving and reading Whitman's book is reported by her in a June 12, 1892, letter to Patrizi:

Immediately, I must write to you immediately, I am so happy to have Walt Whitman, you cannot imagine how much. This morning, when I saw [the book] and thought it was mine, I jumped, you can laugh, my mom laughed, too, but I did jump. I have it here, I have already read a few pages, a few sublime pages, and my soul has already fused with the big universal soul of the poet.<sup>9</sup>

A few passages in the letter would later on, in slightly revised form, appear in a critical article by Negri displaying a fascination with the new horizons not only of Whitman's poetry, but of America itself. Patrizi, who was about to leave on his transatlantic journey, was enormously attracted to the "freedom, civilization, the virile and gigantic enterprises and the parabolic and fantastic progresses" that he associated with America. <sup>10</sup> Negri understood Patrizi's excitement, and even encouraged him to migrate, although she hoped he would come back, and she repeatedly contemplated whether to join him (but never did). The two corresponded until 1896, when they finally ended their challenging long-distance relationship.

Patrizi remained in the United States, where he would spend the rest of his life: first in Chicago and then in San Francisco, working as editor and publisher of the newspaper *L'Italia* and as a producer of operas.<sup>11</sup> It is important, then, to keep in mind how, given these circumstances, at the moment of writing her article, in the winter of 1893, a few weeks before Patrizi's departure for the United States, Negri was particularly sensitive to Whitman's work and to the idea of America, which had come to assume a certain exciting, mythical aura both in her ideological landscape and in her emotional life.

The article by Negri is preceded by an unsigned short foreword (presumably written by a member of the periodical's editorial staff). The foreword opens on a polemic note, lamenting how Whitman's death, in 1892, had gone almost unnoticed in Italy: the piece by Negri is then presented, with a certain tone of pride, as some compensation. But the author of the foreword also makes clear how this lack of attention to the loss of a poet defined as "one of the greatest sons, one of the most powerful and most original geniuses" (2) not only of America, but of "the whole Humanity" is not the only disappointing aspect of Whitman's reputation in Italy at the time. Another problem denounced here is the widespread critical attitude held by many "phony literati [and] big and small critics" (2) who denied to Whitman the rank of poet. This leads us back to one of the main issues that characterized the first phase of the reception: the inadequate understanding of the formal, poetic nature of Whitman's writing, even while appreciating its content and scope. This part of the foreword reads:

If the word poet was today understood in its truest, highest and most magical sense, we would call this *yankee* who coordinates his thoughts and deeds with a vast and very elevated humanitarian ideal, who aligns the strong vibrations of his intellect and the generous pulsations of his heart with the big and small actions of his daily life, a poet. A poet we would call, this humanitarian, this thinker who sings the praises of democracy and prophesies it and hastens its arrival with the mastery of his powerful art. (2)

While arguing for the need of finally, fully recognizing Whitman as a poet and garnering for him the attention he deserves, this passage also clearly lays out the author's (and perhaps, more largely, the periodical's) view of what a poet should be: an individual guided by a strong humanitarian ideal, someone able to address intellect and heart, the big and the small, in the continuous effort to describe and build a more fully democratic world. These ideas animate Negri's poetry at the time, and the ideology of the periodical she collaborated with. And in fact, on a last note, in presenting Negri to the readers, the author of the foreword builds a direct parallel between her work and that of Whitman, arguing that Negri "has in common with him the same aspirations and inspirations, [the same] noble and generous mission of art" (2).

Negri's critical piece starts with the translation of the lines, "Camerado! this is no book; / Who touches this, touches a man!" from Whitman's "So Long!" Negri's first paragraph reinforces this idea: readers can feel, she passionately remarks, the touch of a "new and violent iron hand that drags [them], . . . a surge of boiling, healthy blood spilling in [their] veins." (2) This insistence on the strength, health, and physicality of Whitman's poetry is something that the Italian futurists, later on, would also emphasize with regard to the "new man" that Whitman, and his work, represented for them. Negri persists in noting that this robust temperament (and its accompanying joy and pride) are the primary traits of Whitman's writing. "No weakness, no sentimentality, no degeneration of sense, character or taste" (2) are detectable in this poetry, Negri argues.

This impetuously anti-romantic and anti-decadent assessment by Negri is the product of a freshly radicalized, socialist response to the post-Risorgimento appeals by Nencioni to build, via Whitman, a poetry of renovated civic strength, and of Carducci's experiments and example in this sense. Negri's words in this passage and even the title of the article directly echo Nencioni's words (praised by Carducci) about Whitman in one of his articles: "simple, strict, rude, and colossal." And it is precisely in this idea of Whitman's colossal, gigantic "sanity" that Negri's socialism meets early fascism: only a few years later this idea would escalate into the futurist and fascist legend of an ultra-masculine, infallible, Nietzschean, omnipotent Whitman. Another legend, that of the new, free world of futurity also originates here in the description of the American lands that Negri represents as virgin and wild, primordially healthy and grandiose: their offspring inevitably being a "new race full of the future" (2). 17

For Negri, it is only natural that the energies of such a robust, pow-

erful poet would be applied to what she regards as the manifestation "of the highest and most useful form of human strength" (2): work. Negri underlines how Whitman sings what had traditionally remained quite unexplored topics in poetry: the triumphs of industrialism and technology and the value of human labor. She lists and briefly describes poems like "Song of the Exposition," "A Song of Joys," and "Song of the Broad Axe," defining this latter as one of the most wonderful pieces in the book. She also remarks how these poems often include snapshots of a vast range of working activities, from intellectual to manual work, including the humblest ones.

This leads her to discuss her next point: Whitman's democracy. Negri underlines here how Whitman chants of both "virility and femininity" (2), demonstrating a much more comprehensive understanding than that of the futurists, for whom Whitman's poetry would only embody the ultramasculine. Negri is fascinated with Whitman's ability to equalize and "level off" humanity, to chant the "divine average" (2), to use his words. In his vision, Negri argues, there is no space for any old form of aristocracy or hierarchy, but only for one compact, median social body made by "camerados and workers" (2). It is curious to note that Italian and German fascism would use terms equivalent to "camerado" in referring to their members. But Negri's ideological framework in evaluating Whitman is distinct from that of futurism and of postwar fascism because it remains strongly democratic and internationalist. For Negri, "Years of the Modern" is the highest, most perfect expression of Whitman's poetry, the most vital embodiment of his vision: Whitman is here the prophet of the future advancement not only of America, but of all nations, united together, having finally reached that "mature and perfect degree of equality and solidarity to which [humanity] must certainly rise, by evolution or by revolution" (2).

While the internationalism and democracy evoked and praised here by Negri would not be at the center of the futurist and fascist agendas, the idea of rejecting any form of aristocracy would remain a crucial ideological staple of these movements as well. This same rejection of aristocracy and academia becomes apparent in this piece when Negri discusses how to evaluate Whitman's literary value: it cannot be described by traditional, academic—"useless, idle and almost ridiculous" (3)—literary criticism, but it must be experienced and loved. Whitman is then, in this piece, fully

recognized as a poet in the "truest" sense—to evoke the expression used in the foreword—but, at the same time, he is, once again, although this time for different reasons, seen as inaccessible for traditional literary criticism.

The weight of the Rossettian and Nencionian influence, with regard to the emphasis given to Whitman's war poems, is echoed by Negri, who dedicates a long paragraph toward the end of the article to discussing what she considers as Whitman's sincerest and most touching writing: *Drum Taps* and *Specimen Days*. Here Negri calls the American Civil War "the most grandiose war ever fought by the modern man in the name of Democracy" (2) (echoing the critics who had preceded her, and especially Nencioni). But, most importantly, she ultimately interprets Whitman's writing about the war as a message of peace, or what Negri calls "the only means for the prosperity and progress of the Nations" (2). Negri's stress on Whitman's pacifism remains one of the most innovative and relevant aspects of this article and is perhaps what most fundamentally sets her apart from later futurist and fascist readings and appropriations of Whitman's poetry.

In another remarkable passage toward the very end, Negri discusses Whitman's depiction of love, which she interprets as almost never ideal or romantic, but almost always physical, sexual, and often descriptive of reproductive acts. Earlier in the article, Negri had underlined how even orgies are present in this poetry, as they are also an expression of the depiction of vitality that is at the center of Whitman's poetics. But Negri's reflections on Whitman's depictions of sexuality remain reductive and anchored to her general discourse about the health and sanity of this poetry: sex, she argues, is always "sane and fertile" (3) in Whitman. In other words, sex in Whitman's poetry remains for Negri eminently heterosexual and eminently "useful" for reproduction.

Nonetheless, the simple fact that Negri, a woman—and an unmarried, young, "exceptional" woman, as an intellectual, teacher, and published writer—even discusses (and not subtly, but outspokenly) such themes in 1893, remains remarkable. Many Italian and international critics who had written about Whitman's work up to this moment and later would not even dare to include the word "sex" in their studies, let alone "orgy." Negri's choice to write about carnal matters highlights her wish to alter the gender expectations of her era. It is not coincidental that Negri, almost three decades later, in 1921, would publish one of the most "scandalous"

books in Italian literary history for its frank depiction of love and passion, *Il libro di Mara* (*The Book of Mara*).

Negri's ardent, frank, and courageous piece on Whitman closes with the expression of her strong desire to see Whitman's work present in all libraries, all hands, and translated into all languages, in order to be a companion and guide for all, from thinkers to industrialists, to workers and teachers. Echoing the foreword's complaint about the scarce attention given to Whitman's death in Italy, Negri seems to confirm the impression that the American poet was at the moment still underappreciated. This closing passage resounds with all the enthusiasm, openness to foreign cultures, and active search for alternative political models that characterized the Italian socialist group in its nascent phase.

Is Negri's enthusiasm for Whitman's poetry reproduced and manifested in her poetry? Can we trace the presence of such an influence by looking at the first two collections of poems<sup>18</sup> that Negri published around these same years, and about which she would write to Nencioni and Carducci to ask for opinions and suggestions? Was the author of the foreword that precedes Negri's article right in assessing a certain closeness of forms and contents between Negri and Whitman? Once again, Negri's letter of June 12, 1892, to Patrizi is highly informative. In it, she wrote:

I confess something to you: Whitman has said that which was sprouting in my mind. I did have similar thoughts: but the word had not revealed itself to me. I also confess something else to you: I wrote, two days ago, a poem: "Workplace Deaths." It was a sublime hour for me; in that moment I loved, I loved so much those poor broken bones of the workers, that that poem is not only a poem, but a part of myself. And then: reading today "The Mother of All" by Whitman, I noticed that the general concept of this poem is similar to that expressed in the final part of my poem. Only in Walt there are dead soldiers on the field and the poet asks the air, the soil, the woods, to give him back, in centuries, the dear blood of the brothers, in atoms, in essences, in blades of grass, in whispers; I impose on the blood of the dead workers to transform into golden grapes that can give wine to all. [...] Therefore there is a different development. Right? Please reassure me, they won't say that it is plagiarism!... It would be unfair!<sup>20</sup>

Notwithstanding her anxiety about possible suggestions of plagiarism, Negri's "Workplace Deaths" would be published in 1893. <sup>21</sup> The poem does indeed resemble Whitman's elegy, in its dramatic evocation of the tragic deaths of the lost youths, and in its prayer to the earth to absorb their energies, and even their bodies, so that they can live again through it. Negri's poem employs rhyme (which I was not able to maintain in my translation), but there is a strong oratorical afflatus and a similar reliance on an anaphoric, climactic structure. And Negri also establishes a parallel with the war and asks polemically who erects monuments for workers, who are nothing less than "soldiers with the mallet and pickaxe":

```
Sons of the shadows, heroes of matter
   curved under an unripe yoke
[\ldots]
They all fell: —under debris,
   from a bridge, into a ditch
in the infernal blaze of the forge
   their bones broken and scattered;
[\ldots]
Who remembers the numerous regiment
   fallen into deep oblivion? . . .
On the smashed bones who cries
who kneels down on the muted grave? . . .
For the soldiers with the mallet and pickaxe
   who erects monuments [?]
[...]
These hearts, these muscular chests
   live again underground.
Pure blood of the defeated and the rejected
Tremble, ferment, fecundate the earth:
[...]
May the world drink your juices, o lively blood,
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 $[\ldots]$ 

May, like a vivid wave that rolls and broadens, Life flow again.<sup>22</sup>

But resemblances to Whitman's work appear also in Negri's first book of poems, Fatalità, published a few months before the article. Interestingly, Fatalità came out before the moment when Patrizi gave Negri Whitman's book as a gift. This might mean that Negri had read Whitman before that time (the letter to Patrizi seems to imply this: her tone indicates that she knows Whitman already, and in fact cherishes the gift even more, because of this). The collection is characterized by a certain Carduccian, therefore classicist—and at the same time innovative—diction. While traditional rhyming is maintained and refined lexicon is employed, there is a clear (and often overemphatic) oratorical quality, and the lines are, if still regular, rather long. Negri exhibits a strong lyrical I and an accumulative and often repetitive style. There are frequent and intimate addresses to the reader and long lists of nonhierarchically organized images, often scenes of working-class life. There is also an extensive use of long dashes and of exclamations. Thematically as well, the poems contain numerous echoes from Whitman. One of the most explicit can be found in Negri's "Il canto della zappa" ("Song of the Hoe") in which the hoe itself speaks, explaining its own symbolic value of dignity and hope, a positive sign for a more democratic and peaceful future. The work of the hoe continues incessantly, fired with the desire of one day becoming the symbol of the people's triumph. One passage, as well as the poem's title, is particularly resonant with Whitman's "Song of the Broad Axe":

```
But the blades will be free from blood, and white will be the flags;

[...] and from the earth saturated with love,

[...] will rise a hymn and a cry

"Peace...work...bread!"<sup>23</sup>
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Here, Whitman's line "I see the blood wash'd entirely away from the axe" 24 and the overall exulting tone of the closing stanzas come to mind.

Negri's optimistic song identifies the hoe as the literal embodiment of a poetry that depicts the dignity of labor and that works at establishing the conditions for a future, more just and democratic society. While Negri's poem remains much shorter than Whitman's, and certainly less complicated and dualistic than Whitman's, the same optimistic vision of progress and advancement embodied by a human tool of daily use lies at its base.

In *Fatalità*, the lyrical I is often depicted as content to wander in the woods, in harmony with a nature that, just as in Whitman, regenerates and inspires pure freedom, of thought and of action. In "Arrivo" ("Arrival") Negri writes:

Freedom, unrestrained freedom was mine, was mine! . . . If you knew how beautiful it is to burst alone and disheveled in the forests and fields, without rigid laces and without name, the eye full of lightning!<sup>25</sup>

Whitman's cosmic consciousness is also repeatedly evoked in Negri's poems: the lyrical I can be both a seed and a God, a leaf of grass and a bird, and there is a similar overarching, all-embracing desire to express the value of life in all its forms. Likewise, there are many metatexual reflections on the sense of the renovated epic breadth of this poetry. In the poem "Immortal," which echoes ideas used by Negri in her article (the boiling blood, the physical strength and health, the ardent temperament) and presents Whitmanian anaphoric catalogues that portray nursing mothers, tired fathers, soldiers, woods, and mountains, the lyrical I declares to be singing "an uncontrollable, untamable hymn; / simple as wheat, robust as man, / eternal like the sun!" 26

In *Tempeste* (*Storms*), published in 1895, Negri also echoed Whitman, this time with reference to his more erotic poems, which she knew well, as her article makes clear. In "Eppur ti tradirò" ("And Yet I Will Betray You") a lyrical I is addressing a mysterious "you," asking to "not be jealous" and to be let free to live "one hour of joy and madness"—a likely reference to Whitman's "One Hour of Madness and Joy"—not only for the literally repeated expression (except for an inverted order of the nouns), but for the general request to be liberated, "confined not." Finally, *Maternità* (*Maternity*), a

collection published by Negri a few years later, in 1904, would also remain close to Whitman's diction.<sup>27</sup>

Negri's perception of the enormous revolutionary force and socialist messages of Whitman's poetry testifies to the ideological zeitgeist shared by many critics and writers around the world during the turn of the century phase of the reception. After Whitman's death in 1892, the mythical aura that had already been assigned to him in his later life (as in the works of, among others, Rossetti, Nencioni, and Darío) tremendously intensified. And Whitman became, more and more, a standard-bearer for different political and cultural agendas. Socialist readings of the American poet as the "giant" of a cosmic, democratic, and humanitarian poetry, such as the one given by Negri, were certainly numerous, if not preponderant. What the Russian critic N. Popov, as early as 1883, had defined as "the spirit of revolt and pride" of the poet who was "a champion of working-class solidarity and the brotherhood of all nations"28 had become recognized as a distinctive Whitmanian trait in many cultures. In 1887, José Martí had described Whitman, and his "America," using a lexicon that sounds extremely close to Negri's:

The free and decorous life of man in a new continent has created a wholesome, robust philosophy that is issuing forth upon the world in athletic epodes. For the largest sum of free, industrious men that Earth ever witnessed, a poetry is required that is made of inclusiveness and faith, calming and solemn; poetry that rises, like the sun out of the sea, kindling the clouds  $[\ldots]$ .

In 1889, Rolleston and Knortz had published their first translation into German, centered on democratic ideals. And, as Kirsten Harris notes, in these same years British socialists from Ernest Rhys to Edward Carpenter promoted Whitman's poetry, seeing it as a means to speak to and for the socialist cause, to be charged with a special socialist significance. Russian poet Konstantin Balmont likewise claimed to be finishing his translations from Whitman to the sound of the revolutionary guns, in 1905. And Balmont would declare that Whitman was a part, and a strong part, of that future which is swiftly coming toward us, which is, indeed, already being made in the present. Ideal Democracy. Full Sovereignity of the people . . . . Whitman spoke of it."

But for now, we must remain in Italy and discuss the work of another poet who, like Negri, was a direct disciple of Carducci and, most of all, of Nencioni, and who would inherit their readings of Whitman and apply them and adapt them to his new unique, controversial, and flamboyant poetical and ideological enterprises: Gabriele D'Annunzio.

# "My big sympathy" Whitman and Gabriele D'Annunzio

IN CONTRAST TO THE relatively neglected Ada Negri, Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863–1938) has been the single Italian poet on whom critics have concentrated most when discussing Whitman's influence on Italian literature. There are a few reasons for this: D'Annunzio's canonical centrality within late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Italian letters; his rich and influential production as both poet and prose writer; the myth that formed around his bizarre and megalomaniac personality during his life and after his death; his military and political activism and his connections with the fascist regime; and last—but certainly not least—the extremely large number of direct and indirect allusions to Whitman's poetry, for which the Italian poet was even accused of plagiarism, as early as 1896.

But, while critics have commented on D'Annunzio's admiration and imitation of Whitman, they have done little to clarify the various phases of this literary relationship. In my analysis, I will show how the presence of Whitman, "my big sympathy," in the words used by D'Annunzio, evolved with the passing of time, playing different roles at different moments within the Italian poet's long career. Rooted at first in Nencioni's perspective, D'Annunzio's appreciation of Whitman evolved in dialogue with his own decadent and aestheticizing sensibility, filtered through Nietzsche's theory of the overman, and echoed more deeply in D'Annunzio's experimentation with free verse, which expanded as a result of his frequenting of Paris literary salons. Finally, D'Annunzio went back to rediscovering the emphasis that Rossetti and Nencioni had put on the political Whitman in order to support and justify his nationalist and irredentist activism in the cause of the post–World War I annexation of the city of Fiume.

These different phases can be delineated by studying D'Annunzio's works and letters and by examining his reading, a key but neglected topic.<sup>4</sup> D'Annunzio owned an extensive collection of books on varied topics. His

private library—part of the writer's luxurious and extravagant mansion, Vittoriale, in Gardone Riviera, where he lived from 1921 until his death, in 1938—has to this day been meticulously preserved as it was left by its owner: books are still held in the various rooms that the writer used for different purposes, and they are still kept in the original positions. It is important to consider the function of each room to understand the importance that D'Annunzio assigned to a certain book and the use that he made of it. In the so-called Officina (office) the large room overlooking the Vittoriale courtyard and Lake Garda, the place with the best light in the house and with Virgil's warning—"Hoc opus hic labor est" (Here is the endeavor and the strain)—at the entrance, the writer did most of his writing and liked to work in perfect isolation. Here D'Annunzio kept the books (about two thousand) that he regarded as essential and that he wanted to keep close to him for quick consultation. Usually heavily annotated, this group includes dictionaries and encyclopedias and Italian and foreign literature. In the so-called Monco (one-armed) office, D'Annunzio handled his correspondence. (The writer ironically referred to his sculpture of one "cut out" hand that gave the room its name, when justifying why he did not answer all of his correspondence.) There he kept a few books (mostly of French literature) that might be useful when citing other writers in his letters. In the living room and in another couple of offices on the first floor, D'Annunzio kept the rest of the books that he consulted less frequently than those in the Officina and the Monco.

Among these rooms and volumes were various editions of *Leaves of Grass* (in translation and in the original) and monographs and essays on Whitman that the Italian poet consulted and annotated. And, crucially, some of D'Annunzio's Whitman volumes were housed in places that suggest their centrality in the writer's life and work. D'Annunzio owned Rossetti's edition of 1886 (located in the Officina), the 1890 Gamberale translation (in the first-floor library), Bazalgette's monograph on Whitman (in the landing office), the 1903 Putnam edition (in the Monco), the 1907 Gamberale translation (in the first-floor library), and two copies of Bazalgette's 1909 translation (one in the Officina and one in the landing office). Significantly enough, Rossetti's edition and Bazalgette's translation are the only books by Whitman that D'Annunzio had with him in the Officina in the last period of his life: as I will show, D'Annunzio encountered Whit-

man's work again in France in the early 1910s, where he bought these two books (they both have the label of a bookshop on Rue de la Banque),<sup>5</sup> and heavily annotated them, underlining political passages. But the other copies, often annotated as well, are also useful in helping us to retrace the different stages in D'Annunzio's encounter with the American poet.

Like Negri and many other young writers in the 1880s and 1890s, D'Annunzio had been looking to Carducci and Nencioni for inspiration and advice. It was in Carducci's *Odi barbare* that D'Annunzio found inspiration for his first poems, and it was from Nencioni that the seventeen-year-old D'Annunzio, in 1880, received the first encouraging words about them. And it was, again, with Nencioni, that D'Annunzio soon began a relation of mentorship and close friendship that would only cease with the Florentinian critic's death, in 1896. During their long walks in Rome, where the two both lived for a period of time in the early 1880s, D'Annunzio would learn from Nencioni about a range of topics: from the foundations of literary criticism to Roman history, to the foreign writers that Nencioni specialized in. The young poet from Abruzzo would also read Nencioni's articles and comment on them in his letters to his mentor.

Already in a letter dated October 12, 1881, a few months before he moved to Rome, D'Annunzio wrote to Nencioni:

If I read your articles? I read, I read each single piece of yours, I avidly read it [...] The *New Horizons* on poetry are wonderful; I think I can give you that ray of light that you are looking for, since I immersed myself in Nature and I studied the *thoughts* of Nature. I will read you everything; I will read you my new lyrical, long poem [...] I am almost done with it; I have worked at it with all my soul; I drafted it on the naked beach of the Adriatic and in wheat fields I have felt it; I have deeply felt it.<sup>7</sup>

In this letter, D'Annunzio is referring to Nencioni's August 1881 article on Whitman, entitled "New Poetic Horizons," that I have discussed before. In it, Nencioni complained about the current state of Italian (and French) literature and urged young Italian poets "to paint our Italy" and to abandon an artificial way of writing that had been characterized by "the search for the new at any cost, the hunt for eccentric themes, the complacent, insistent painting of sensual refinements, the mania of describing for description's sake." Young Italian poets were therefore invited to look at Whitman, with

his simple but powerful style, as "the most effective medicine" against this type of literature. As I have argued before, Nencioni, in the article, had expressed the post-Risorgimento desire to found a stronger, renovated, and more cohesive Italy through literature and to do away with a conventional, over-refined, elitist, and exoticist way of writing. D'Annunzio is in this letter responding to Nencioni's appeal, arguing that he is trying to do what the Florentinian critic wished for, and that with his poetry he can, in this sense, bring that "ray of light" that Nencioni has been seeking. The work D'Annunzio is referring to with this hope is his *Canto novo* (*New Song*), which would come out shortly after this letter, in 1882. D'Annunzio emphasizes how his *Canto novo* derives from an immersion in nature and from a careful study of it, how it is indigenous to the land and the sea (the Adriatic beach of Francavilla al Mare) in which it was written. *Canto novo* does indeed aim to express an organic, authentic unity and sensuous embrace of a passionate, energetic, animal-like lyrical I with nature:

The great midday lays on this lonely green-blue basin of waves and plants and I, like an agile leopard, lurk in ambush, sacred plane tree, here in your hair.

[...]

[...] O shiny rain of splinters and scales above my head, above the blooming grass!

O white vipers, luscious cerulean lascivious snakes joking and freshly uproaring on the gravels!...9

But while in *Canto novo*, D'Annunzio's frequent use of exclamations, repetitions, and enumerations is similar to Whitman, other aspects of his style greatly diverge from that of the American poet, especially the widespread employment of archaic, dignified terminology and a vast number of Latinisms and frequent allusions to the work of Horace and Pindar and to classical mythology. In this sense, D'Annunzio's diction is close to Carducci's (and notably, the metrics used here are also close to Carducci's in the *Barbare*) and also to Nencioni's tone as a poet. <sup>10</sup> Once again, with D'Annunzio's *Canto novo*, the programmatic wish to learn from Whitman's innovations and to reproduce them is not fully executed. Once again, Italian poetry hews close to tradition, taking significant but cautious steps along

the road of modernity. Once again, abandoning tradition is easier said than done. And yet there is a stubborn persistence in this will to renovate that keeps going back to Whitman as an indispensable guide. A few years later, in 1884, in another letter to Nencioni, D'Annunzio would write again about the American poet, encouraging Nencioni to write a full monograph on him:

Ah, if we were together, now that I am good!

How many horizons you would show me!

Speaking of *horizons*, why don't you publish a full book on *Whitman*? Gathering the articles you already have, expanding them, translating other poems into prose, into that musical prose of yours . . . I would love it. [...] The *aim* of the book should be a vigorous revolt against the miserable *small-mindedness* of contemporary art. You should talk, a little more extensively, about the *new horizons*, the new tendencies, the new needs; you should charge headlong at the mechanical *chiselers*; then indicate and delineate the great figure of the American poet. It would be a beautiful and strong work.<sup>11</sup>

D'Annunzio's insistence on the idea of "new horizons" is revealing both in terms of his relationship with the Florentine critic and of his perception of Whitman. The Italian writer is using the term not only to directly invoke Nencioni's 1881 article on Whitman, entitled "New Poetic Horizons" and to recycle this particularly cogent formula, given the transnational context in which this receptive interaction takes place, but he is also expressing his recognition of Nencioni's mentorship as an eye-opening experience for his intellectual growth: "How many horizons you would show me!" D'Annunzio then repeats the term in a sentence in which Whitman's "new horizons" are strikingly contrasted with the "mechanical chiselers": on one side, the vast, enormous, adventurous new spaces of a new and different poetry, and on the other, the petty concentration on small details and decorations of an old and conventional, almost automatized poetry that lacks an ampler vision. This contrasting image suggests yet again what had been a common attitude in the Italian and, more widely, the international reception, in the first phase: to regard Whitman as a breaching force, not a chiseler, to depict him as a mythical initiator of a "vigorous revolt," without paying too much attention to the methods that he used to achieve this end.

And yet this letter also shows a timid step forward in this sense. Meliadò

Freeth is right in assessing that Whitman is starting to have, with D'Annunzio, an unprecedented "subterranean influence." While D'Annunzio seems to reproduce his mentor's perspective on the American poet (enamored with the message, shortsighted about the forms), he is in fact evolving toward a deeper understanding. While Nencioni's creative work remains entirely unresponsive to Whitman, and conventional in metrics, themes, and tones, D'Annunzio has begun to warm toward a more daring experimentation. It is not a coincidence that in this same letter D'Annunzio is inciting Nencioni to insert, in this potential monograph on Whitman, a few translations into Nencioni's best "musical prose." And it is not a coincidence that he writes, still in this letter:

I would like to work on the *heroic poems*, but I find little epic materials, and the martellian is not satisfying; nor other meters can promise me any contentment. And I am tired of sonnets and of the other lyrical forms. Oh well! I want to write another two or three *novellas* in prose and join them in a volume.<sup>13</sup>

As Grippi notes, this passage clearly shows how D'Annunzio "was obviously concerned with the question of new experimental forms at that time." His attraction to musical and lyrical prose was becoming stronger. And D'Annunzio continued to encourage Nencioni to experiment, as another letter from 1884 indicates:

Start right away to work at your *conversational poem*; right away, understand? I want to read the first part by the beginning of May, without fail. Won't I be the first one to admire you? The attempt is splendid; if it works, as I am certain it will, you will have given to Italy a new genre and you will have opened a new path for Italic poets. Start, then, dear Enrico. *You are not old*, you are one of those rare men in which an inexhaustible and always warm youth keeps gushing from the heart. Don't distrust your strengths! Listen to me: the day after tomorrow, as soon as you receive this, get out; walk around the streets of Florence, which must be in this month delightful and divine, with the sun and the flowers; then go back home and throw on the paper the first line of the poem.<sup>15</sup>

The roles might seem to have been inverted here: D'Annunzio now sounds like the mentor, as he vehemently exhorts and almost tries to

discipline Nencioni with regard to writing. But, in reality, D'Annunzio is the one desperately looking for guidance. He demands Nencioni to be brave enough and to be finally innovative not only as a critic, but also as a writer, so that he, D'Annunzio, might follow in his footsteps. D'Annunzio has understood that Whitman's example must be absorbed more deeply and put into real practice. The "new horizons" are not enough, any longer: a tangible "new path for Italic poets" must now be formed. But Nencioni could not be of help, this time. D'Annunzio would have to build this path on his own.

And it would take D'Annunzio quite a long time to reach a deeper experimentation. In the second part of the 1880s and early 1890s, which he mostly dedicated to writing novels (including the novel canonically considered his masterpiece, *Il piacere* [*Pleasure*], published in 1889), the writer fully embraced the decadent trend that had been dominating the Roman cultural scene. His works started touching what were considered as scandalous themes, and they were often accused of obscenity, and Nencioni, among others, had to repeatedly jump to his defense. <sup>16</sup>

Is the appreciation of Whitman still present in this phase of D'Annunzio's production? The prose, characterized by a large use of dignified terms, and by an aestheticizing, sensual and impulsive tone, is certainly quite musical, perhaps in the sense that the poet associated with Nencioni's translations from Whitman. The few poems that appeared in those years, also full of dignified expressions, archaisms, rare words and Latinisms, were characterized by rhetorical complacency and by a reliance on traditional methods, such as perfect rhyme and regular metrics, with only a few experimental incursions into the use of enjambment. In this sense, this poetic diction was far less innovative than the prose. And it was still far from Whitman's. And yet the work of this latter was still directly evoked by D'Annunzio.

Meliadò Freeth has found, for example, a direct similarity with Whitman's "Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun" in the poem "O Rus!" contained in D'Annunzio's 1893 collection (which included poems composed after 1891) titled *Poema Paradisiaco* (*Heavenly Poem*):

Give me the juicy fruits, the good fruits of my land, so that I can bite them,

Ah, mad is the one who does not remember of you, Mother, and of your simple gifts!

Give me the fresh milk, so that I can drink it in big sips.  $[\dots]^{17}$ 

Meliadò Freeth notes that "Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun" was precisely one of the poems translated by Nencioni that D'Annunzio praised for its "musical prose." This poem remained one of D'Annunzio's favorites even many years later: his private library includes a copy of the 1909 French edition of *Leaves of Grass* with this poem highlighted and annotated.

It is strange, however, that Meliadò Freeth did not notice the poem that comes just before "O Rus!" in this collection: "L'erba" ("The Grass"). The poem reads:

Grass pressed by the foot, o humble creature of the earth, you who are born everywhere, in feeble threads and in bundles from clumps and from fissures,

and always alive you wait for future spring in horrible frosts, and feed the innumerable herd, and are born again, still well alive after the harvest,

immortal grass, o you that the foot crushes, I know of a man who threw in the world a seed like yours, sweet and tenacious;

and nothing can destroy that seed . . .

—Think of the Soul as a deep jail where the humble grass freely sprouts in peace. 18

The tone of the poem remains highly ceremonious in comparison to Whitman's diction, and the use of enjambment does not fully modernize a structure that still relies, if partially, on enclosed rhyming. But it is fascinating to think that "the man" that D'Annunzio is referring to in this poem might well be God but might also, easily, be Whitman. The grass is here, in fact, as in Whitman's section six of "Song of Myself," growing everywhere,

"sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones," and assuming a series of symbolic values: democracy, resilience, immortality, the cyclical nature of life, youth, hope. And the soul also appears, in a capitalized, personified fashion that is strikingly reminiscent of Whitman.<sup>20</sup>

Both in "O Rus!" and "The Grass," Whitman's example is echoed with reference to nature, seemingly working as a metatextual reminder of the essential values of an authenticity and simplicity of inspiration that should not be forgotten. It is as if D'Annunzio is excavating to bring back to light the pulsating enthusiasm and sensual engagement with nature that had characterized his first works. It is perhaps not a coincidence that, in his personal copy of Gamberale's 1890 translation, which D'Annunzio might have read while composing his *Poema Paradisiaco*, he underlined passages such as "It is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the earth" from "Song of the Open Road," and "Demand the blades to rise of words, acts, beings, / Those of the open atmosphere, coarse, sunlit, fresh, nutritious" from "The Prairie-Grass Dividing." 22

In a collection that remains classically decadent for being highly nostal-gic and funereal and for displaying exotic, oneiric, and erudite themes, the exclamatory poem "O Rus!" represents an image of strength. Here and in "The Grass" we get images of vigor, immortality, and peace and fundamental outbursts of energy. This energy is a constant element within the whole of D'Annunzio's production. In this sense, while adapted to the needs of different phases, D'Annunzio's "big sympathy" always provides a regenerating, propulsive force, whether formal, thematic, or explicitly political.

In the early 1890s, D'Annunzio also gained confidence and strength through his encounter with the works of Friedrich Nietzsche. Whitman's influence would in this sense double with that of the German philosopher in creating in D'Annunzio a form of eloquence that corresponded to an "affirmation of overman power," to use Meliadò Freeth's words. This tendency started to delineate itself in the same year in which *Poema Paradisiaco* had come out: 1893. D'Annunzio's *Odi Navali* (*Naval Odes*) contain a series of nationalistic poems that celebrate the Italian Navy, combining the poet's raising political activism and his long-lasting naval passion. D'Annunzio composed them on the occasion of the death, in 1892, of Simone Antonio Pacoret de Saint-Bon, an admiral of the Navy who had taken part in Risorgimento battles.

And it is with regards to a poem included in this collection that poet and critic Enrico Thovez, in 1896,<sup>24</sup> denounced D'Annunzio's plagiarism of Whitman's poetry. The poem "In Memoriam," written in free verse and dedicated to the admiral, is in fact extremely close to Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," and some lines do read, as noted by Meliadò Freeth,<sup>25</sup> as a literal translation from sections seven and ten of Whitman's elegy for Abraham Lincoln. But there is also a direct acknowledgment of D'Annunzio's debt: in the epigraph, the Italian writer cites, in the original English, the first three lines of section ten of "Lilacs." It is with a translation of the same lines that D'Annunzio opens the poem. Thovez seems to have disregarded this important gesture by D'Annunzio when talking about plagiarism. If it is true that D'Annunzio heavily borrows from Whitman, he also does not hide it. In fact, D'Annunzio's translation of the epigraph as an opening could be seen as an innovative intertextual experiment that literally places Whitman's words at the core of the poem. In this sense, D'Annunzio writes this poem in the name of Whitman. And whether one judges it an act of plagiarism or not, D'Annunzio's appropriation of "Lilacs" shows a renovated, nationalistically inflated perception of the political Whitman, hero of the Civil War and singer of those epic times, first presented to readers by Rossetti and Nencioni.

But this short collection is also interesting as it shows the first signs of D'Annunzio's breakthrough into formal innovation. Lines, though still regular, become much longer; rhymes are often abandoned; anaphora is present; exclamations are frequently used; the lexicon is still dignified, but much closer to common speech. It is striking to note how the political and the formal elements are joined. It is as if D'Annunzio has finally found the courage to follow Whitman's innovative example when embracing a more political poetry: D'Annunzio, it seems, saw Whitman first of all in terms of an epic, oratorical force.

It is also important to consider that these last years of the century saw a general increase in the appreciation and imitation of Whitman's free verse throughout Italy and abroad, and D'Annunzio probably felt encouraged by seeing how other writers were trying to open precisely that new path that he had asked Nencioni to open. Poets that D'Annunzio knew well, like Thovez, the person who had accused him of plagiarism and a long-time opponent, and also his friend and colleague Adolfo De Bosis, <sup>26</sup> had

started employing free verse and other strikingly Whitmanian elements in their poetry.<sup>27</sup>

D'Annunzio was also familiar with other experiments with free verse and with various forms of *poèmes en prose* that had started to appear in these years, first in France, especially, with those by Charles Baudelaire, whom D'Annunzio deeply admired. But there were also Italian examples, and one of them must be discussed more at length: Luigi Capuana's poetry collection *Semiritmi* (*Semirhythms*). This 1888 collection certainly influenced D'Annunzio.<sup>28</sup> In *Semiritmi*, Capuana, mostly a verist prose writer, had fused poetry with prose, creating long lines in free verse, and employing a flowing, almost colloquial diction. It is interesting to note how, two decades later, in his interaction with the young futurist writers who would praise him as the father of Italian free verse, Capuana underlined his first place in this sense, clarified that he had not imitated any foreign writer, and identified D'Annunzio as a successor. In his letter to Filippo Tommaso Marinetti inserted in the *Enquête international sur le vers libre* (*International Inquiry into Free Verse*), Capuana wrote:

I was the first in Italy to attempt to introduce the *semirhythm*, and without any intention of foreign imitation. In 1883, when, at first for a parody, I gave a sample of it in the *Fanfulla della domenica* and then, more seriously, I finally published a volume (Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1888), there had been no mention of *free verse*, at least among us. My opinion is that, if used with skill, [free verse] can contribute to give speed and freedom to poetic form. D'Annunzio has published wonderful examples. [...]<sup>29</sup>

Capuana's emphasis on originality—his lack of "foreign imitation"—is particularly striking for a series of reasons. As he states in this letter, he had initially published parts of the book with a parodic intention: he presented them as if they were linear prose translations of the work of a fictional Danish poet whom he had called W. Getziier. He had only later put these texts into poetry and revealed that they actually were pseudotranslations, and that he was the real author. With the invention of Getziier, Capuana made fun of the many critics who, in those years, translated from foreign contemporary writers, often praising and mythologizing them, and developing a dependence on foreign models. At the same time, perhaps these translations from foreign writers (which were often paraphrases of poetry

rendered in prose) had inspired him in an experimental way and had led him to ask: What defines poetry as such? Can poetry still somehow be poetry even when it becomes prose? To pursue his inquiry, Capuana had used the excuse of the translation as a shield behind which poetry and prose could interact in an unprecedented way. If pseudotranslation is, in the definition used by Isabelle Collombat, the mise-en-scène of alterity,<sup>31</sup> Capuana had used "Getziier" to experiment with a new, alternative form, attributing its strangeness to its status as a translation and only later revealing that it was not.

Capuana's choices and his negation of a foreign model become all the more interesting when considering that parts of *Semiritmi* appeared in 1883 in the *Fanfulla della domenica*. Capuana himself directed this periodical from 1882 to 1883, and it was the same periodical in which Nencioni published, from 1879 to 1885, a series of articles on Whitman. When creating the *Semiritmi*, Capuana was therefore repeatedly exposed to Whitman's poetry. Was Capuana's parodic intention also directed to Nencioni, among others? And was Whitman really not influential at all on the *Semiritmi*, as Capuana proudly—perhaps, in fact, too proudly—claims with regard to any foreign writer? Did Capuana have the merit of understanding the value of Whitman's free verse, at a time when, as he reminds Marinetti in his letter, the question of "free verse" did not even exist as it would a few years later? Did reading Whitman via Nencioni provide Capuana with the idea of creating his "Getziier"?

Capuana's collection abounds with classical references, linking the poet closely to tradition, at a first glance. But the poems also employ anaphora, exclamations, and questions, a colloquial tone, and, most of all, very long lines. And at the heart of the collection lies Capuana's declaration of rhythm as a foundational principle for his innovative poetry. In the poem "Poesia musicale" ("Musical Poem"), he writes:

Words, words!... But in the syllables lives, rolling up in a harmonius spiraling wave, a profound sense; rhythm itself is poetry that, indefinite, invades the heart.<sup>32</sup>

This discovery of rhythm would be extremely influential on subsequent Italian poetry, and especially on the symbolists.

The poem in the collection that comes closest to Whitman is "Sub Umbra" ("Under the Shadows"), with lines such as the following:

And the green grass, protected by the shadows of the branches, and the chrysanthemums and the silvery daisies were surprised by that song, new for them.

 $[\ldots]$ 

Lying down on the wet grass, indolent, not thinking about anything, in the big quiet, we breathed the voluptuousness of living;

[...]

with intense egoism, muted in the saintly oppression of yours, o Nature with your tepid breath!...<sup>33</sup>

In 1893, critic George Arthur Greene would indeed acknowledge this closeness, by selecting and translating the quoted poem into English and by inserting it in his anthology of Italian literature, presenting Capuana's *Semiritmi* with these words:

A more serious contribution to poetical literature is his curious volume of "Semiritmi" (Milan: Treves, 1888), in which he makes essay of various rhythmical forms which approach the nature of measured prose, and reminding the English reader of Walt Whitman, though without the American author's freedom and "verve."

Greene's comparative assessment is dismissed by critic Carolina Nutini, who argues that Greene is falling into the trap of the parodic intent of Capuana: Whitman could not be a model for the writer who intentionally made fun of having models. But the matter might not be so simple. While Capuana did want to make fun of the dependence on foreign models, Whitman's poetry, with which he certainly came into contact (and this is a point Nutini seems to forget), might have still influenced his interest in new poetic forms and his experimentation with them.

What is certain is that Capuana's poem is strongly reminiscent of D'Annunzio's *Canto novo*, which had come out a few years earlier, and not simply for the mention of a "new song," but for the depiction of how organic this new song is with nature: the influence between the two writers was there-

fore reciprocal. It is not coincidental that D'Annunzio's name came up in Capuana's assessment of the heritage he left for the evolution of Italian free verse. In 1903, the first three books of D'Annunzio's Laudi del cielo, del mare, della terra e degli eroi (Odes to the Sky, to the Sea, to the Earth and to the Heroes) came out. <sup>36</sup> Free verse, oratorical style, erudite classical and mythical references and Nietzschean overmanism joined to create a work that deeply contributed to transform Italian literature. In it, D'Annunzio gave full expression to an epic, semidivine lyrical I that declared:

I will sing the man who ploughs, who sails, who fights, who extracts iron from cliffs, and milk from nipples, sound from oats.

I will sing the greatness of seas and of heroes, the war of ancestries, the patience of oxen, the antiquity of the yoke, the magnificent act of the man who dunks the flour and of the man who pours oil in the vase and of the man who starts the fire;  $[\ldots]^{37}$ 

In the second volume of the collection, which came out in 1904, appears the figure of Dante, showing once again the relevance that post-Risorgimento culture and Italian literature at the end of the nineteenth century gave to his figure in terms of an inspiring model for the foundation of a renewed national language and identity: from the Rossettis to Gamberale to D'Annunzio, the voice and significance of Dante was often paired with that of Whitman. If there is not a poem explicitly dedicated to Whitman in this collection, we can still detect him and his "oceanic mind" in the poem "A Dante" ("To Dante"). And of course, there we can find D'Annunzio himself, with his own Nietzschean idea of heroic overman:

Drinking alone at sunrise at the secret fountain of immortal things, first Hero of our renovating blood; oceanic mind [...]
[...] ancient and new soul,

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educated and ignorant,
remembering and foreseeing, where all of the thinking
of the Sages is enclosed and where Fire Air
Water and Earth palpitate;
[...]
Only in your word is light for us, o Revealer,
Only in your song is strength for us, o Liberator,
[...]<sup>38</sup>
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Whitmanian enumerations and exclamations are largely employed in the *Laudi's* energetic celebration of a cosmic poetic presence. Much attention is put on the musical aspect: assonance, alliteration, and even internal rhymes are noticeable, in the original Italian.

Astonished I gazed at the light and the world. So many pallets I had!
I lay on the gilded sheaf hearing under my weight the arid spikes.
I lay on fragrant hay, on warm sands, on carriages, on shippings, on marble loggias, under pergolas, under curtains, under oaks.
Where I lay, I was reborn.<sup>39</sup>

Notwithstanding these striking innovations, D'Annunzio's tone is still strongly anchored within classical tradition: many poems sound like excerpts from the Bible or classical literature, also because of the use of archaic diction, which will remain characteristic of D'Annunzio in later works, too. It is for this reason that poet and critic Eugenio Montale would sternly conclude, with reference to D'Annunzio's free verse and formal innovations as derived from Whitman: "It still remained an erudite poetry, and the Dannunzian free verse remains the least free verse of all."

And an incipient nationalism is observable in the collection, with ref-

erence to the employment of Roman references, thus also already anticipating D'Annunzio's later production. It is precisely for the purposes of his progressively increasing nationalism that D'Annunzio would continue to refer to Whitman. In France, where he went to live from 1909 to 1915, D'Annunzio would continue to expand his knowledge of the American writer while being an active member of French literary circles:<sup>41</sup> as mentioned earlier, in a bookshop on Rue de la Banque in Paris, D'Annunzio bought the 1908 Whitman biography by Léon Bazalgette and the 1886 edition by Rossetti. The writer underlined both books and annotated them by writing in French, the language he used in those years. Identified by his fellow Italian expat Marinetti as the "premier verslibriste italien," D'Annunzio's role was becoming in those years more and more central in Italian culture, not only for having stylistically opened the new path he had eagerly looked for, but also for assuming a strong political leadership.

In the time that immediately preceded the First World War, D'Annunzio recuperated the first Rossettian-Nencionian reading of Whitman that he had been familiar with in his youth, and he did it for a precise political and, more specifically, nationalistic and irredentist agenda. Notably, Rossetti's 1886 edition and a copy of Bazalgette's 1909 translation were two books to be found, after D'Annunzio's death, in the poet's Officina, the office overlooking the lake that he used exclusively for his creative writing, and where he kept the books that were most influential for him and that he habitually consulted. The Rossetti edition contains three bookmarks, all of which are marked by D'Annunzio's handwriting, but in French, not in Italian. When living in France, D'Annunzio privileged using French rather than his native language. Two bookmarks appear in the pages of "Salut au Monde!," and D'Annunzio wrote on them: "France" and "Le original Amerique," while another was used to mark the poem "France, the Eighteenth Year of These States." D'Annunzio was evidently struck by the significance of Whitman's use of the French language and by the American poet's references to, and celebration of, the French revolution. In "France, the Eighteenth Year . . . ," he underlined the lines: "Was not so desperate at the battues of death—was not so shocked at the repeated fusillades of the guns," and "And I do not deny that terrible red birth and baptism." These same exact lines were also underlined by the poet in his copy of Bazalgette's translation (perhaps in an attempt to improve his understanding, as his French was certainly better than his English). In both the Rossetti edition and in the Bazalgette translation, D'Annunzio also underlined, seemingly with the same pencil, the same exact passage from "The Poet" (in *Drum Taps*): "I see but you, warlike pennant! O banner so broad, with stripes, I sing you only."

It is fascinating to see that D'Annunzio, in the early 1910s, had decided to buy and read, with the help of the French Bazalgette translation at his side, the Rossetti edition that, at least three decades before, had been so crucial in shaping the views of his mentor and friend Nencioni. It is as if D'Annunzio was going back to the first source of his introduction to Whitman: back to Nencioni's "Poet of the American War," to the Whitman of "Salut au Monde!" (which Nencioni translated and repeatedly quoted), back to a Mazzinian, Risorgimental Whitman. This was not a nostalgic gesture, but an extreme reactualization of the same positions that had animated Nencioni via Rossetti.

Italy was, in fact, in these exact years preparing for what Italian historians have called "the fourth war of independence," what was seen as the fulfillment of the process of unification, especially with reference to the so-called unredeemed lands that had remained under foreign dominance after the unification. D'Annunzio fervidly lined up with the interventionists before the war (and repeatedly referred to the glorious Roman past and to Risorgimento heroes such as Garibaldi). Although he was fifty-two years old, he decided to volunteer as a fighter pilot, and he undertook an astute, and successful, operation of self-heroization.

D'Annunzio's ardent nationalism and militarism turned into full authoritarianism and prefascism in 1919, when he led two thousand men (among whom were some Italian futurist writers) who blockaded the city of Fiume (now Rijeka, in Croatia). A considerable part of the population of Fiume spoke Italian and identified as Italian, but the city had not been annexed: as part of the post-war agreements, Italy had obtained the cities of Trento and Trieste, but not Fiume and the Dalmatia region. This led to acute frustration over the "unredeemed lands" following the Risorgimento and to the idea that the Italian victory in the war was "mutilated" and that "Italy was not complete."

Whitman's voice and the idea of America's necessary and just war accompanied the poet-leader in this desperate, expansionist enterprise: in October 1919, in Fiume, D'Annunzio delivered an appeal entitled "To the

Italians of the United States." D'Annunzio's appeal to Italian people residing and working in the United States was motivated by the fact that, after the war, the United States had been among the fiercest opponents of Italy's request, made during the Paris Peace conference, to annex Fiume. In the speech, D'Annunzio invited Italian people in the United States to "collect, across the Ocean, the cry of Fiume and pick it up." <sup>44</sup> D'Annunzio rhetorically asked: "Can the American people allow that the pure victory of Italy gets lacerated by the claws of a flock of robbers?" He urged Italian migrants to repeat the question: "Ask it yourself, brothers, to the people of George Washington, to whom you give your assiduous work and your faithful devotion."

D'Annunzio insisted on his ideological admiration of America. For him, the American Civil War had been "a spiritual sign for all the insurgent nations to defend the most beautiful cause that man ever fought for [...] here we want to remain and fight and die for that cause of armed America: for an ideal reason, for a heroic vindication." Significantly, toward the very end of the speech, D'Annunzio invoked Whitman's name as the flag of this cause:

Tell it to the people who are hosting you and adopting you; tell it also in the name of that fighting poet who, while celebrating the march of armed America, remembered the song of John Brown. Tell it in the name of the defender of Fiume, for that branch of lilac offered by Walt Whitman to the coffin of Abraham Lincoln. [...] He had shouted one day: "Liberty! Let others despair of you! I never despair of you."

The line cited by D'Annunzio<sup>45</sup> is from the poem that Whitman had first (in 1850) called "Resurgemus" and that later became "Europe, the 72nd and 73rd Year of These States." D'Annunzio gives prevalence to the Rossettian-Nencionian reading, building a parallel between Whitman and himself, "the defender of Fiume." It is curious to notice how D'Annunzio's desperate search for the consent of the Italian expatriates leads him to resort to the pathos of the sentimental image of Whitman's lilac branch for Lincoln. D'Annunzio's pairing of the cause of the abolition of slavery and freedom with the aggressively expansionist and irredentist enterprise of Fiume is paradoxical, if not completely deranged, and the employment of Whitman's name and words in the appeal remains one of the most radical and extreme political usages of the poet's work. But it is important to

remember that Whitman's poems of "liberty" dedicated to European revolutionary history were at this time not used by D'Annunzio only. Earlier that same year, 1919, the American poet's name appeared in a completely different venue, standing for a completely different cause. Marxist intellectual Antonio Gramsci had planned on publishing, in the June 7, 1919 issue of his socialist weekly periodical *L'Ordine Nuovo*, the Italian translation (executed by Communist leader Palmiro Togliatti) of Whitman's poem "To a Foil'd European Revolutionaire." The Turin censorship, however, did not allow the publication of the poem. <sup>46</sup> In the first page of the following issue (June 14), Gramsci commented on the decision of the censors:

We wanted to commemorate, in the previous issue, the first centenary of the birth of Walt Whitman (May 31, 1819) in the most respectable way: translating and printing one of the best songs of the great American poet: "To a Foil'd European Revolutionaire." The Turin office for publication revision has inexorably whitened the poem: they have even imposed to suppress the bibliographic note in which we wrote that the poem had first been published in 1856 with the title "Liberty Poem for Asia, Africa, Europe, America"47 and published again, with additions and corrections, in the years 1867 and 1871, with the title "To a Foil'd European Revolutionaire." The delegates of public security, the lawyers and the ex-journalists who exercise the power of censorship assigned to them by the democratic State—parliamentary, bureaucratic, police-state—are not required to know that Walt Whitman was never an agitator, a man of action, an "instigator," for whom poetry was a means of revolutionary propaganda: they have offended poetry, they have obscenely insulted beauty and grace. As drunk monkeys, they have obscenely pounced on beauty, on the pure creation of artistic fantasy. [...] And we get even more angry, when we think of the prejudice, widespread among the so-called intellectuals, that the workers' movement and Communism are enemies of beauty and art. [...] No, Communism will not obscure beauty and grace: [...] The effort that Russian Communists have made to multiply schools and theatres and concert halls, to make galleries accessible to the masses [...] demonstrates how the proletariat that has gained power tends to establish the reign of beauty and grace, tends to elevate the dignity and freedom of the creators of beauty. In Russia the two Commissioners of the People of Public Education that have until now been in charge, have been a very fine aesthete, Lunacharsky, and a great poet, Maksim Gor'ky.<sup>48</sup>

Gramsci deemphasizes the political value of Whitman's poetry to serve a specific rhetorical and ideological aim: that of showing how Communism cares about art and encourages its production and consumption. But Gramsci did think that Whitman's poem had a political relevance, and this becomes clear when one reads the note that accompanied the poem, when it was finally published in the issue of  $L'Ordine\ Nuovo$  of July 12 of the same year. On July 1, 1919, censorship was in fact abolished, and Gramsci was finally able to publish the translation. The note reads: "The abolition of censorship finally allows us to give to our readers this song [...], which is rich with ideas that are still nowadays of the utmost relevance."<sup>49</sup>

In the December 6–13 issue of the same year, another poem by Whitman appeared in Gramsci's periodical, again in a translation executed by Togliatti. The poem was "Europe, the 72nd and 73rd Year of These States," but the title was shortened by Togliatti to, simply, "Europe." Not even two months after D'Annunzio's citation of the poem in his appeal to Italian Americans to support his ultra-authoritarian Fiume exploit, Gramsci and Togliatti were using the same poem to launch an opposing ideological message. For Gramsci and Togliatti, in fact, the Italian Risorgimento had been a wasted opportunity for a real revolution of the common people, a revolution that they hoped could still happen. But notwithstanding the different ideological aims, it is clear how both D'Annunzio's and Gramsci and Togliatti's messages were rooted in a similar discourse: a shared, substantial dissatisfaction with the outcomes of the Risorgimento.

## Whitman, Giovanni Pascoli, and Symbolism A Question of Sound

ANOTHER ITALIAN POET who had been a disciple of Carducci and who was in these same years, just as D'Annunzio, tirelessly trying to forge a new path in poetic diction was Giovanni Pascoli (1855–1912).¹ But while Pascoli became close to D'Annunzio (and joined him and De Bosis by working for the *Convito*), and while, later in his life, he tried to echo the patriotic vein of Carducci, Pascoli remained fundamentally different from both decadent fetishism and political magniloquence: his diction is far from the energetic and vitalistic proclamations of D'Annunzio. But Pascoli's contribution to Italian literature, as also mediated by his deft reading of Whitman, remains central for the dignity he assigned to common objects of daily life, common moments and experiences, and the use of a common language capable of infinitely suggesting through music, rather than fully and singularly declaring.

Pascoli, who had studied with Carducci in Bologna and who, later in his life, having become a university professor of classics, was called to take his mentor's chair, always felt the duty to continue the work of the old poet from whom he had learned so much. Carrying on and advancing Carducci's rhythmical experiments with the *Odi barbare*, Pascoli reached new levels of linguistic innovation, demonstrating once again the existence of a fruitful line of continuity—rather than a breakage—between classic and modern poetry. And this careful revision of rhythms, joined with Pascoli's symbolist style and his attention to humble and common themes, created a poetry that sounded radically renewed and that is often identified as one of the founding modernizing contributions to Italian poetic form of the twentieth century.

Italian writer, intellectual, and film director Pier Paolo Pasolini famously wrote, for example, that Pascoli's innovation in using colloquial language in poetry (partially following Carducci's example) created a new poetic

lingua franca for twentieth-century Italian writers. For Pasolini, Pascoli's colloquial and vernacular diction was seminal in introducing an expressive potentiality that would be crucial for poets as different (but all as central and influential) as Corrado Govoni, Giuseppe Ungaretti, and Eugenio Montale. Pasolini noted that Pascoli's fresh gaze, in impressionistically depicting reality through "objects," produced a lyricism capable of being at the same time "naïve, wise, immediate" and anticipatory of the revolution of Italian hermetism and of neo-experimental Italian poets.<sup>2</sup>

Many hypotheses can be made about Pascoli's first encounter with Whitman's work: perhaps he first heard about it from Carducci when studying in Bologna, or perhaps in conversation with Ragusa Moleti. Pascoli lived in Sicily, where he taught at the University of Messina, from 1897 to 1903, and was there in contact with Ragusa Moleti. Pascoli quotes from Ragusa Moleti's 1899 article in Flegrea about Whitman<sup>3</sup> when discussing rhythm in a 1900 letter to classicist critic (and first Carducci biographer) Giuseppe Chiarini. In this same letter, Pascoli discusses the idea of *ritmo* riflesso (reflected rhythm), of which, he thinks, Carducci's Odi barbare is a perfect expression. As he notes, "Carducci's lines, even when composed of our own series and hemistichs, have the virtue of suggesting to our soul the memory of the ancients" (944). Reflected rhythm is then an indirect echo of classic rhythms, and, for Pascoli, a proof of the fact that rhythm remains a core, indispensable element for poetry. As he argues, "For the dream to exist, reality is needed; for the echo to exist, voice is needed; for the shadow to exist, an object is needed" (947): for the larger, indirect reflected rhythm to exist, a more precise, basic cadence must exist as well. Pascoli contests, then, what he regards as the naïve and problematic declaration of Luigi Capuana (whose work, as he clarifies, he continues to admire) that poets are right when they get rid of rhythm in order to gain freedom and agility. No matter how difficult, Pascoli argues, poets must not—and in fact cannot, even when they declare they want to do so—do away completely with rhythm.

And, in his letter to Chiarini, Pascoli also contests the declaration of another poet, whom he believes is as naïve as Capuana: "a great master from across the Atlantic" (950), Whitman. The words by Whitman discussed by Pascoli are contained in the subsection "New Poetry" of "Ventures, on an Old Theme," which is part of *Specimen Days*. But it must be noticed—and

previous critics have failed to do so—that Pascoli is actually misquoting Whitman, as he is reproducing the Italian translation and adaptation of "New Poetry" included by Ragusa Moleti in the 1899 article quoted.<sup>5</sup> Ragusa Moleti had in fact shortened and adapted (sadly, without acknowledging he is doing so) Whitman's longer paragraph, making it sound like a total rejection of poetic rhythm in favor of prose. Ragusa Moleti had taken out an important portion containing exactly what Pascoli saw as missing: Whitman's acknowledgment of the fundamental importance of poetic rhythm. Among the omitted words by Whitman are: "the truest and greatest *Poetry*, (while subtly and necessarily always rhythmic, and distinguishable easily enough), can never again, in the English language, be express'd in arbitrary and rhyming meter."

In this piece Whitman attacks regular and conventional meter. In a hyperbolic provocation, he says that "the Muse of the Prairies, of California, Canada, Texas, and of the peaks of Colorado, dismissing the literary, as well as social etiquette of over-sea feudalism and caste, joyfully enlarging, adapting itself to comprehend the size of the whole people, [...] soars to the freer, vast, diviner heaven of prose" (323). But his parenthetical, and thus in typical Whitmanian fashion absolutely central assessment, about the "greatest *Poetry*" being "necessarily always rhythmic" cannot be overlooked. The omission exposes Ragusa Moleti's manipulation of Whitman's text with the selfish aim of promoting the *poémes en prose* that he had been working on himself (as also inspired by his own translations from Baudelaire)<sup>7</sup> and of emphasizing the rude quality of a poetry that he presented as completely lacking any sentimentality.<sup>8</sup> But the omission ultimately works in Pascoli's favor, as it shows the fine nature of his critical understanding of Whitman.

While truly—and perhaps naïvely—convinced that Whitman was not aware of this, Pascoli is, with a pretentious tone, "teaching" the American poet that "elementary and essential poetry is only rhythm, only!" But most importantly, Pascoli argues that Whitman is paradoxically disowning an element that is, in fact, a leading part of his poetry: rhythms drawn from the Bible. And exactly here lies Pascoli's merit: in the recognition that "the fact is that Whitman rejects the precise rhythm of iambs and dactyls; but relies on the indefinite rhythm of the singers of Sion [...] He despises rhythm, but he does not give up on it [...]" (944). In a strange twist of

fate, by scolding and teaching Whitman, Pascoli is making up for Ragusa Moleti's omission: he is actually doing justice to Whitman. He is finally concentrating on the formal, musical factor in Whitman that Italian critics before him had practically neglected to study.

While Charles Grippi does not notice the important omission of Whitman's words by Ragusa Moleti—consequently reproduced by Pascoli as well—he still rightly suggests that Pascoli's idea of "reflected rhythm" is close to the concept elaborated in the 1898 study of Whitman's prosody by Jannaccone that I have discussed before, in connection to Jannaccone's polemic with Gamberale: the idea of "psychic rhythm." Whether Pascoli was aware or not of Jannaccone's study remains uncertain, but the study was well-known to the circle of Italian literati who were interested in Whitman.

And it must also be remembered that other critical assessments at the turn of the century were starting to advance a similar appreciation of Whitman's forms in Italy and abroad, putting a special emphasis on their intrinsic musicality. In 1894, Biagio Brugi talked about "barbaric rhythms" that derived from "the rhythmical union of words or a line made of the fusion of lines of different length." Both Francesco Chimenti, in 1894, 10 and Ulisse Ortensi, in 1898, 11 commented, just as in the cases of Triggs and Gamberale mentioned earlier, on the presence of a distinguished Wagner-like (and also Dvořák-like, in the case of Ortensi) style in Whitman's work. Ortensi noted, for example, the constant employment of a leitmotif and variations structure and cited Wagner among Whitman's main sources of inspiration. It can be hypothesized that Ortensi had read Edward Carpenter's 1896 piece on Whitman, Millet, and Wagner, as—in a gesture unlikely to be coincidental—he cited Millet among these sources, too.<sup>12</sup> If building parallels between Wagner and Whitman had become almost a trend in international criticism about Whitman, Italian critics were certainly making their contribution.13

Pascoli's 1900 assessment also comes significantly close to José Martí's groundbreaking words about Whitman's rhythm from thirteen years earlier:

Walt Whitman speaks in Biblical verses; without apparent music, although after hearing them for a short time one realizes that these sounds ring like the earth's mighty shell when it is trodden by triumphant

armies, barefoot and glorious. At times Whitman's language is like the front of a butcher shop hung with beef carcasses; at others it resembles the song of patriarchs seated in a circle, with the sadness of the world at the time of day when smoke loses itself among the clouds. Sometimes it sounds like an abrupt kiss [...]. But never does his utterance lose its rhythmical, wavy motion [...] a sense of the universal pervades the book and gives it, within the surface confusion, a grandiose regularity; but his sentences—disjointed, flagellant, incomplete, unconnected—emit rather than express. 14

Both Pascoli and Martí pioneeringly detected the presence of a constant, subterranean "rhytmical, wavy motion" in Whitman's diction. In other words, both Pascoli and Martí reveal a fundamental but often unnoticed—perhaps because apparently too discordant with Whitman's façade of complete abandonment of any rhetorical tradition whatsoever—component of Whitman's poetry. And strikingly enough, Martí's vivid remarks about Whitman's language, capable of shifting from the physical to the metaphysical, and his "emitting rather than expressing" is a particularly fitting formula to describe Pascoli's linguistic experimentation and poetic diction, as well.

Pascoli's notion of Whitman's "reflected rhythm" emerged, then, from a renovated and fertile critical terrain, in which the formal nature and value of Whitman's work had finally started to be taken into serious consideration. Unlike the early years of the reception, Italian critics were now starting to accept the idea that Whitman was legitimately a poet: even when still not fully understanding the methods on which it was built, they held no more doubts about the poetic nature of his work. This enthusiasm was accompanied by a large number of new selected translations, and, finally, the 1907 unabridged translation of *Leaves of Grass* by Gamberale that came out in the series Biblioteca dei popoli (Library of the Peoples) that was created and directed by Pascoli himself. The series aimed to offer readers "Poems and other literary monuments that survive their times and are immortal, being the vestiges that people live with in history. Collecting and divulging them among other people, is almost like re-making the history of human thought in its highest manifestations." 18

In the ten years during which Pascoli directed it, the series presented readers with works such as the *Mahabharata*, Aristophanes's *Acharnians*,

Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, the *Nagananda*, the *Kalevala*, and a collection of popular Greek songs. It is clear then how Whitman was inserted by Pascoli in a cosmopolitan editorial initiative that aimed to build a sanctum sanctorum of epic classics. Whitman remained an important figure of reference for Pascoli, and the publication of Gamberale's translation must have provided the poet with an opportunity to further ponder his work. Is Pascoli's creative work, then, resonant with Whitman's echoes? Is there any trace of the "reflected rhythm" that he described? How did Whitman contribute to Pascoli's linguistic experiments?

Grippi and Meliadò Freeth both discuss various affinities. 19 The first of them can already be found in the title of Pascoli's first collection, published in 1891 (and then in a larger, updated form in 1903): Myricae, a Latin word meaning "tamarisks," which echoes Virgil's invocation to the Sicilian Muses in the fourth ecloque in the *Ecloques*. In the invocation, Virgil asks the Muses to give him the inspiration to chant of "more elevated things," as "not everybody benefits from shrubs and humble tamarisks." <sup>20</sup> This eclogue is in fact the least pastoral one, both thematically and stylistically, as Virgil is chanting the advent of a new, mythical golden age. Pascoli programmatically chooses *myricae*, then, to express his adherence to humble and common themes. And this, as observed by Getto, certainly resonates with the title of Whitman's poetic volume, as well as his general attitude.<sup>21</sup> The world of Myricae is made of fields and woods, animals and plants, simple daily life objects and events. But while this adherence to depicting the experience of common people comes remarkably close to Whitman, Pascoli's diction remains significantly distant from that of the American poet. First of all, there are only a few uses of the first person singular pronoun in the whole collection: as subjective as the perceptions of the poetic voice are, there is an absolute lack of a Whitmanian construction of—and reflection about—the weight and complex nature of the I. The collection is pervaded by a nostalgic and often grieving atmosphere that, while not absent from Whitman's work, is certainly not a dominant trait.

But it is precisely in one of Pascoli's funereal poems that an echo of Whitman, and more specifically, of his "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," can be found. It must be noticed that both Meliadò Freeth and Grippi have talked about how this poem by Whitman might have influenced a crucial passage of Pascoli's famous manifesto of poetics "Il fanciullino"

("The Young Boy," published in 1897). This prose text, divided into twenty chapters, describes Pascoli's theory—significantly influenced by his pedagogical studies and certainly close to a Wordsworthian perspective—of a poetry that must try to describe things with the same perceptual freshness of a young boy who looks at them for the first time. Meliadò Freeth notices how in one passage of "Il fanciullino" there is a similar image of a wheezing sea, a nightingale, and a young boy who is trying to decipher the bird's singing, which at times sounds like a complaint, or a rejoicing, or a questioning, images that tie "Il fanciullino" to Whitman's "Out of the Cradle." Grippi echoes Meliadò Freeth's assessment without adding any novelty.<sup>22</sup> But both Grippi and Meliadò Freeth failed to notice the connection between "Out of the Cradle" and another poem by Pascoli that appeared that same year, 1897, first in *Il Marzocco* and then in the fourth edition of Myricae: "L'assiuolo" ("The Scops Owl").23

Highly representative of Pascoli's impressionist phono-symbolism and of his heavy employment of onomatopeias, this poem actually presents a unique combination of echoes from the two American writers that Pascoli appreciated the most. Not only Whitman's "Out of the Cradle" is present here, but also Poe's "The Raven," a poem that had inspired Whitman's own elegy, and a poem that Pascoli had translated into Italian.<sup>24</sup> "L'assiuolo" reads

Where was the moon? As the sky swam in a pearl sunrise, And the almond tree and the apple tree erected themselves to see it better. Came breaths of lightning from the black of clouds over there; came a voice from the fields: kiù . . .

The stars shone rare among the milky fog: I heard the rocking of the sea, I heard a fru fru in the thickets: I heard a jump in the heart, as the echo of a shout from the past. And far sounded the sob: kiù ...

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On all of the shiny peaks; shook the grasshoppers precious silvery sistrums (jingling of invisible doors that maybe can be opened no more? . . . ); and there was that chant of death . . . kiù . . . <sup>25</sup>
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My English translation cannot render the alternate rhyme and the large number of alliterations, but I have transliterated the onomatopoeic chiù of the original into English to keep the sound and tried to maintain the syntactical inversions where I could. It is important to consider that the sound chiù in Italian closely evokes the word più, meaning "more," but also "no more," perhaps a nod to Poe's "Nevermore." Pascoli's insistence on highlighting the combination of various elements (the visual, the auditory, the physical, the intellectual, the emotional) in the perceptual experience emerges clearly when one considers the use of synesthesia and hypallage, the various evocations of different forms of sound and the quasi-personification of natural and animal figures. In a strange leap, the grasshoppers are producing a sound that comes close to that of the ancient Egyptian sistrums. The original sentivo, which I translated as "I heard," can also mean "I felt," and the polysemia of this verb contains Pascoli's symbolist agenda: evoking feelings through sound. The rhythmic structure of the poem, while relying on traditional meter and rhyme, achieves, through inversions and enjambments, the anaphoric repetition of the last line, and the employment of a generally plain, simple, not dignified but highly vivid language, a distinct effect of novelty.

If the night and the grieving singing of a bird (verbalized, here too, but in onomatopoeic form) play important parts in Poe's poem as well, a few elements distinctly echo Whitman's poem: the rocking of the sea, the sob provoked by hearing the echo of a cry perhaps belonging to a lost figure, the pervading sense of the immanence of a chant of death represented through various alliterating and onomatopoeic solutions, the agency of the natural landscape in revealing the symbolic secret it contains. Pascoli re-elaborates, then, these two poems and conflates them creatively in order to achieve his poetic aim, which is eloquently defined by Giorgio Agamben (actually

with reference to "Il fanciullino") as "uttering speech in its inceptive state, as pure intention to signify"<sup>26</sup> (which echoes, again, Martí's idea of "emitting rather than expressing"). The singing of the bird becomes, in fact, a primordial voice, a communicative bridge between what can be said and what remains unsaid, between a prelinguistic, linguistic, and postlinguistic dimension. This connects Pascoli's experiments with Russian futurism and its theories of a prelanguage to be rediscovered.

Pascoli found significant inspiration in the work of Poe and Whitman. There are a few other possible echoes of the latter's work in Pascoli's poems, <sup>27</sup> and overall I agree with Meliadò Freeth, who asserts that Pascoli shares with Whitman a sort of Adamic gaze, in the sense of seeing things for the first time. <sup>28</sup> This insistence on depicting a perceptual novelty also by pursuing innovative rhythmical and musical methods appears then to be a fully symbolist and ultimately proto-modernist reading of Whitman by Pascoli. The latter's response to Whitman can therefore be inserted into the larger frame of the various transnational symbolist appreciations of Whitman's poetry, characterized, notwithstanding a series of inevitable differences, by a shared interest in Whitman's use of indirection and in his capacity to suggest rather than state directly. <sup>29</sup> And a particular connection exists, in this sense, between Pascoli and another symbolist poet from Russia (but an admirer of Italy, where he often traveled and where he moved permanently in 1924): Vyacheslav Ivanov.

An erudite classicist, philologist, and Latinist, just as were Carducci and Pascoli, Ivanov theorized Russian symbolism as the movement capable of enacting the "barbaric renaissance" that he thought Russian culture needed.<sup>30</sup> With this idea, he indicated a modern(izing) culture based on a line of continuity with primitive and mythological culture, or what he called "the barbaric god." For this reason, fellow symbolist Russian poet Andrei Bely eloquently labeled Ivanov "a learned barbarian."<sup>31</sup>

Ivanov listed Whitman among the main examples of such a renaissance. For Ivanov, symbolist poets should be, just like Whitman, capable of penetrating "aboriginal secrets" and discovering "a forgotten language of universal truth."<sup>32</sup> Or "a song of earth to wake in hearts / another song," as Ivanov puts it in his poem "Альпийский por" ("The Alpine Horn"), set in the Italian mountains he loved:

Up in empty mountains I met a shepherd
Who blew on a long alpine horn.
Pleasantly his song poured, but loud
The horn was but an instrument for waking
A more captivating mountain melody.
And each time, after a few notes, the shepherd listened
As the echo rushed back through narrow gorges
With indescribably sweet harmony
And I imagined an invisible choir of spirits
With instruments not of this earth translating
Earth's utterings into the language of heaven.
And I thought: "Genius! Like this horn
You must sing a song of earth to wake in hearts
Another song. Blessed is he who hears."
[...]<sup>33</sup>

Ivanov's metapoetic lines strongly evoke Pascoli's bucolic landscapes, and the insistence on the Whitmanian idea of an echo to be translated is a crucial meeting point between the Russian and the Italian poet.

Ivanov's call for a recuperation of the barbaric, a concept that originated in the primitivist discourse of Russian (and international) culture at the time, is strongly reminiscent of and close to Carducci's experiments and Pascoli's continuation of them with his notion of reflected rhythm. And this idea of the barbaric will also remain vital in the following phases of Whitman's Italian reception, as part of Giovanni Papini's prefuturist judgment on Whitman, of Velimir Khlebnikov's assessment of the heritage left by the American poet, and of Dino Campana's Whitmanesque lexicon, as I will discuss later in this study.

## NEMI, or Sibilla Aleramo Writing about Whitman Behind a Pseudonym

WHITMAN'S IDEA (as reported by Edward Carpenter) that women might understand him better than anyone else¹ found significant confirmation in the Italian reception. Not only had poet Ada Negri been struck with Whitman's work, but other women writers and critics were devoting their energies to studying it and writing about it. Often they did so behind a pseudonym,² and this may explain why studies of the Italian reception have said little about them. But the presence of pseudonyms should not inhibit us from analyzing the pieces, as this analysis can help in the work of liberating these women from the oppressive net of anonymity.

Between November 1902 and November 1908, in the biweekly periodical of "letters, sciences and arts" *Nuova Antologia*, as part of the column "Tra libri e riviste" (among books and periodicals), there appeared four articles dedicated to the work of Walt Whitman. *Nuova Antologia*, a prestigious and influential Roman periodical, had earlier published articles about Whitman by Enrico Nencioni and regularly published work by poets like Giosuè Carducci and Giovanni Pascoli, who admired Whitman. With these four pieces in the column "Tra libri e riviste" and with other occasional articles, the journal was continuing to advance knowledge of the American poet in Italy.

The articles are crucial in the reception history not only because of the venue in which they were published but also because they consolidated existing readings of Whitman, contested others, and brought forth new ones. Interestingly, these articles supported a socialist-humanitarian and pacifist reading of Whitman, and they showed a continuing admiration for the poet's nursing role during the Civil War. They also carried on a clear mythicization of Whitman's personality (but dismissed any insistence on his supposed egotism) and demonstrated an advanced understanding of Whitman's innovative poetic style. Finally, they announced the publication

of important scholarly works about the American poet, such as Gamberale's 1907 translation and Bazalgette's 1908 biography.

But who wrote these articles? All four were unsigned, as were the rest of the individual articles included in the column. And while, at the very end of the column itself the signature "NEMI" does appear, this was not the name of an individual, but only a pseudonym used as a collective signature, indicating, in general, the editorial staff of the periodical. Because of this, the authorship of the pieces has remained unclear. Scholars who have written about the Italian reception of Whitman have taken varying approaches when acknowledging the existence of these articles: they have listed them in the final bibliography without discussing them at all; they have briefly mentioned them and generically assumed that "NEMI" was a male critic (but without indicating whom the writer might be and without mentioning the problem of authorship at all); or they have evidently misattributed the authorship.

To better address this question of authorship, we need to excavate the life of a woman who had just started to be active in her collaboration with the Nuova Antologia and who was specifically in charge of curating the more strictly literary pieces published in this column. This was Rina Faccio (1876–1960), a young woman writer and intellectual who had just courageously decided to abandon her marriage and to move from the Marche (unfortunately without her young son, who was kept by her husband) to Rome, to work and live with the newly appointed editor-in-chief of the Nuova Antologia, Giovanni Cena, with whom she had a romantic relationship. NEMI was not the only pseudonym that Faccio would use: for the publication of her first novel, *Una donna* (A Woman) in 1906, the writer, probably fearing possible repercussions from her husband, would in fact permanently abandon her actual name, her "first name," as she calls it in her journal,<sup>9</sup> and become, once and for all, Sibilla Aleramo.<sup>10</sup> This is the name with which she is known in literary history and which I will use here in referring to her.

As we will see, it is in a letter to the French translator of Whitman, gone unnoticed by other scholars who worked on this question of authorship, that we can learn that the last of these four articles, the one written in 1908, was certainly written by Aleramo. But there are also multiple reasons to identify Aleramo as the author of the other three, written in 1902,

1906, and 1907. First of all, it is possible that Aleramo had already heard of Whitman in Milan at the end of the nineteenth century: Aleramo, who in the 1890s had collaborated with a few feminist and positivist periodicals when still living in the Marche, and had attempted to found a Feminine League there, was appointed as the director of the Milanese periodical L'Italia femminile, and moved to Milan in 1899 with her husband and son. There, she would direct the periodical only for a few months, but she was able to enter the highly stimulating cultural circle in which figures like Ada Negri, Matilde Serao, and Anna Kuliscioff were active. 11 But what is certain is that Aleramo was reading Whitman, along with other foreign writers, by the summer of 1902, right after moving in with Cena and a few months before the first article was published. <sup>12</sup> Secondly, in July 1916, Aleramo herself acknowledged the authorship of what she called, at the time, an old article on Whitman, and forwarded it in her letter to her soonto-be lover, poet Dino Campana, declaring that she had loved the work of the American poet for a long time. 13 Thirdly, all the articles show a very strong continuity both in terms of the themes they treat and of their tone and style of writing, which is strikingly consonant with Aleramo's. Lastly, when comparing these pieces with Aleramo's intellectual and ideological mindset and interests, with her later pieces, with notes and letters in which she mentioned Whitman, and with the echoes from Whitman present in her creative work, it becomes evident that the NEMI who wrote about Whitman was almost certainly, in all four cases, Aleramo. There is of course a small chance that she was not the only author, that Cena or others wrote parts of the articles or contributed to their editing and revision. In light of this slight degree of uncertainty, for the first three articles, it remains useful to refer to the author as "NEMI." The articles need to be studied in parallel with Aleramo's formation and life, however, and with the cultural climate in which they were produced.

Raised by a father whom she described in her 1940s journal as a "scientist and atheist" who had "inherited from my Mazzinian grandfather the moral concepts of sincerity, loyalty, honesty, freedom, what today are called nineteenth-century ideologies," and who had transformed them into a sort of "religion, a human religion," Aleramo had deeply imbibed a radical nonconformism. To the education given to her by her father the writer also attributed a peculiar "pantheistic, touching sense of all things," 14

an idea that can help us identify the roots of Aleramo's initial attraction to Whitman's work.

The first article by NEMI, published in November 1902, is marked by a strong political emphasis on what is called Whitman's "humanitarian physiognomy," which makes it appear very close to Ada Negri's 1893 article in *Il figurinaio*. NEMI'S article, which is complete with pictures of the poet in his old age in Camden, of his family house, and of his grave, starts with a brief introductory part that indicates significant scholarly documentation on Whitman: the complete edition in preparation by Bucke, Harned, and Traubel, is mentioned, together with an article in the *Critic* dedicated to this edition. A few critical words are said about the fact that "about Walt Whitman little is known, in Italy," as there is only an "incomplete and imperfect" translation into Italian and a few essays "lost among the periodicals" (154). And while Jannaccone's study on rhythmical forms is defined as "good," NEMI complains that Jannaccone had promised to publish more studies, which did not happen.

But the perhaps overemphatic negative tone of this assessment serves a rhetorical aim: NEMI writes that Whitman's work is unpopular not only in Italy but also in America and England, and this is because this work is "too personal," and "too different" from the literature that is generally popular. Even the few people who claim to know the work of the American poet are often wrong, NEMI argues. This is a salient moment in the article, as NEMI sets out to debunk what is seen as a false argument about Whitman: "He was not only a man who weighed two hundred pounds and who exhibited, in some poems, a rather primitive exuberance of physical vitality; he was not, most of all, the egotist that many are pleased to imagine" (154).

Instead, NEMI here puts emphasis on Whitman's life as "fine, free, simple, picturesque, far from any greed, devoted to others, and uniformly serene" (154). This observation is particularly in tune with the frugal, humble life that Aleramo and Cena were leading in that period, while actively dedicating themselves to helping to open schools and improve the living conditions of the poor in rural areas of the Agro Romano. And Whitman's experience in the war is given, once again, great relevance, but not in order to talk about the exemplary conquest of freedom that Nencioni had described. Rather, Whitman's compassionate role as a nurse is emphasized, as ultimate proof of his humanitarian commitments. And just as Ada Negri

had done a few years earlier, NEMI concentrates on stressing Whitman's pacifism:

The readers of these poems [*Drum-Taps*] can see that the writer's aim is not that of portraying battle scenes or to celebrate military bravery, but to sing the human aspects of anguish that follow the war. He perhaps felt that, as Burroughs writes, the permanent condition of modern society must be peace. [...] Today's Homer must sing war as a temporary episode and from the point of view of peace, progress, and benevolence. (155)

Whitman's words from "Lo! Victress on the Peaks!" are quoted right after this passage, and mistranslated of for the purpose of emphasizing the poet's anti-war message. The original line "No poem proud, I chanting bring to thee, nor mastery's rapturous verse," is rendered as "Io non ti porto un poema marziale, nè versi maestrevolmente entusiastici" (I do not bring you a martial poem, or masterly enthusiastic verses) (155). The original "proud," which in Italian would be *orgoglioso* or *fiero*, becomes here *marziale*, "martial," indicating a much more explicit renunciation of war songs.

The article goes on in remarking Whitman's democratic spirit, his docile personality, always intent at "contemplating the movement and life of workers and carts drivers," always surrounded by children at play, and always in love with an America that had to grow "not with weapons, but with work and with industrious benevolence" (156). The nature of Whitman's work, its stylistic novelty or thematic centers, are barely treated, in favor of the quasi-mythical depiction of the poet's figure, with its exemplary traits. One interesting and quite unusual observation regards the poet's passion for Italian opera, and in particular, for the singing of the contralto Marietta Alboni. This important connection with Italian culture had, surprisingly enough, rarely been discussed in previous Italian articles.

A few years later, in January 1906, *Nuova Antologia* would publish another one-page article on Whitman, in the same column, signed by NEMI.<sup>18</sup> This piece shows a striking continuity with the first article, as it underlines, once again, "the profound democratic sentiment" (344) at the base of Whitman's inspiration. But, at the same time, it shows an evolution in the appreciation of the formal characteristics of Whitman's work, to the point that it can be considered one of the finest critical assessments

produced in the Italian reception until this moment. NEMI argues in fact that Whitman's poetic temperament is a rarity, and that the poet could be defined as "mystic-materialist."

This definition, which is indeed, in its antinomic nature, particularly suitable to Whitman, is explained in these terms: Whitman repudiates both an empty and intangible idealism, and the crass materialism of a society merely devoted to the pleasures of the senses. His work, on the other hand, aims to idealize and "exalt the present and the real, to teach to the average and mediocre man the glory of his daily work," to give "an immediate and vital expression of all the forces and aspirations of the modern civilization of his country" (344). NEMI clarifies how Whitman's "strange and chaotic" style should then be seen not only as the result of a "desire of originality for himself and for the new art of his country," but as the natural outcome of the poetic aim described. Such an aim, argues NEMI, "required a new poetic instrument, varied and flexible enough to follow the fluttering, multiform, vast matter that the poet encountered when he decided to be the interpreter of modern democratic life." This resulted, as summarized in the conclusion, in an "interesting and beautiful experiment" (344).

The recognition of this compact correspondence between content and form, the idea that Whitman's experimentation derives from and greatly contributes to his mythopoetic vision, is quite unprecedented in the Italian reception, and it would only be reached again a few decades later, with Cesare Pavese's formulation, which would cogently emblematize Whitman's creative mission as the "poetry of poetry making." 19 As argued by NEMI, Whitman's free verse, his accumulations, his nontraditional syntactic and semantic choices are nothing but new poetic instruments that are indispensable for chanting a "multiform, vast matter." And the nature of Whitman's poetry, Pavese would argue, lies in the mythical sense of discovering that very matter, that world in need of being sung, and in responding to such an urgent exigency through an eager search for giving it appropriate expression. In this sense, then, according to Pavese, Whitman's is the ultimate poetic utterance. While perhaps not as articulate and informed as Pavese's critical assessment, this 1906 article can be seen as an important anticipation of it.

In the following years, NEMI's last two contributions on Whitman in the *Nuova Antologia* would be aimed at announcing two crucial publications that had just taken place and that would highly influence Whitman's transnational reception: Luigi Gamberale's 1907 first unabridged translation of *Leaves of Grass* into Italian<sup>20</sup> and Léon Bazalgette's 1908 biography of Whitman,<sup>21</sup> in French. In December 1907, NEMI opens with a celebratory tone, calling the translation the "gigantic endeavour" of "the cultured professor" (45). And while in 1902, a negative note had been struck about the value of Gamberale's selected translation, this time nothing is said about the quality of the translation. All the attention is focused on enthusiasm for the accessibility of Whitman's work for the Italian people.

Once again, Whitman is described first of all as "one of the greatest modern poets, the singer of that free, robust and ascending American democracy that is now one of the main factors of progress in the world" (45). NEMI's choice of the adjective *gagliardo* (robust, healthy) in this passage is particularly significant, as the adjective would be widely used in the futurist reception of Whitman.<sup>22</sup> There, it was used to emphasize the value of masculinity and the vitalistic, if not altogether violent, call to revolutionary action that Whitman's work came to represent. This use of the word in 1907 might denote a developing understanding of Whitman in prefuturist terms, and it might also indicate how Gamberale's translation itself could have been influential in this sense, as the translator did emphasize the healthy, strong trait that is, indeed, an important component of Whitman's poetic persona and rhetorical discourse.

If NEMI is, as I believe, Aleramo, was she using the word in this sense? The writer would indeed be close to the futurist movement at a certain point, but that would be much later, certainly not earlier than 1912. Aleramo had shown a particular fondness for the word *gagliardo*, but she had used it in a feminist sense. The first line of her 1906 semiautobiographical novel *Una donna*, reads in fact "La mia fanciullezza fu libera e gagliarda" (My youth was free and robust). The line is a bold, feminist declaration of pride and independence, as the pairing of the values of freedom and robustness were quite unusual in association with the youth of a female child in nineteenth-century Italian culture. The assertive tone and the shortness of the sentence also contribute to making it particularly striking. This line comes very close to the line in the 1907 article that I cited: "the free, robust and ascending...": significantly, in both the novel and the article, freedom and robustness are paired in depicting, in one case, a woman who rebelled

against the social norms imposed on her because of her gender and, in another, the "ascending" American democracy sung by Whitman.<sup>23</sup>

The short article ends with four excerpts from Gamberale's translation, accompanied by no comments other than a few words to introduce the topic of each passage. The first excerpt contains Gamberale's translation of the first two stanzas of "For You, O Democracy," preceded by this short introduction: "He sings to American democracy." The original stanzas in English read:

Come, I will make the continent indissoluble,
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,
I will make divine magnetic lands,
With the love of comrades,
With the life-long love of comrades.

I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America, and along the shores of the great lakes, and all over the prairies,

I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other's necks,

By the love of comrades, By the manly love of comrades.<sup>24</sup>

But NEMI chooses to cut one line, when reporting Gamberale's translation of these stanzas: the very last line of the second stanza, "by the manly love of comrades," translated by Gamberale as "col virile amore dei camerata," is absent in NEMI's article (and a period, instead of a comma, is put by NEMI at the end of the line that precedes the one that was cut out). It could be argued that the cut might derive from a form of moral prudery that was present in Italian culture at the time (but certainly not in Aleramo's lifestyle and ideology). But the choice may, instead, give us a further proof of the fact that NEMI was, indeed, Aleramo. If the Italian word *camerata* evokes primarily a man in a military context, and it implies a relation of intimacy and sharing with other men, the word, especially in its plural form, *camerati*, could ultimately (and provocatively, in a feminist sense) be extended to women. But the Italian word *virile*, just as the English "manly," necessarily excluded these meanings. And this would certainly

not be welcomed by Aleramo's strong feminist credo. Significantly, while this cut satisfies this credo, it also inevitably undermines the strong, and important, homoerotic connotation of the passage, thus depriving Italian readers of the possibility of recognizing Whitman's unusual theorization of a democracy founded on manly love.

The next excerpt is section sixteen of "Starting from Paumanok," in its entirety:

On my way a moment I pause,
Here for you! and here for America!
Still the present I raise aloft, still the future of the States I harbinge glad and sublime,
And for the past I pronounce what the air holds of the red aborigines.

The red aborigines,

Leaving natural breaths, sounds of rain and winds, calls as of birds and animals in the woods, syllabled to us for names,

Okonee, Koosa, Ottawa, Monongahela, Sauk, Natchez, Chattahoochee, Kaqueta, Oronoco,

Wabash, Miami, Saginaw, Chippewa, Oshkosh, Walla-Walla, Leaving such to the States they melt, they depart, charging the water and the land with names.<sup>25</sup>

The passage is thus announced by NEMI: "But he does not forget the poor American Indian people, while they disperse from their ancient land." These words aim to emphasize, once again, Whitman's benevolence, and the choice of the passage seems to be intentionally aimed—as the adversative incipit "but" implies—to counterbalance the imperialist flavor of the opening lines of the previous passage. But NEMI's choice is naïve, if not altogether myopic, as this passage does nothing but double the weight of the controversy. It is true that the overall image is certainly poetic and emotionally appealing and that there is a striking insistence in enumerating the sounds of the Native American names. This insistence does materially strengthen the idea of a certain permanence of the Native American people. But it must also be noticed that the disappearance of these people is problematically pictured as natural and, most of all, as actively carried out

and not violently imposed ("leaving [...] they depart," Whitman writes, and NEMI repeats: "they disperse"). NEMI's lack of insight in this sense reflects a quite widespread tendency in the Italian and transnational reception of Whitman, at a time in which colonial enterprises—including Italian ones—were at full speed.

The next two poems, which also function to end the article, are fully reproduced by NEMI and are unified by a single introductory sentence that reads: "And so he sings to poets." The poems are "Poets to Come" and "To a Historian." Whitman's typical invocation of a dimension of futurity is significantly doubled, as if to strongly spur the creativity and inspiration of reader-writers. And this gesture is also understandable when recalling that this article appeared at a time when dozens of emerging young writers were animating the vibrant scene of the international avant-garde. Aleramo's awareness of and active participation in this avant-garde was in these years becoming stronger. In 1910, she would in fact leave Cena and Rome, and enter the Florentinian circle that gathered around the periodicals La Voce and Il Marzocco. In 1912, in Milan, she came into contact with the first outbursts of the futurist movement; she then left for Paris, where she remained from November 1913 to April 1914, making friends not only with D'Annunzio, who was living there, but also with other important figures of the French and international literary scene.

The last piece on Whitman signed by NEMI was published in the *Nuova Antologia* on November 1, 1908, but here we can abandon calling the author "NEMI" and opt for Aleramo. The article illuminates an intellectual encounter with someone with whom Aleramo had been in touch beginning that very year, as confirmed by Aleramo in correspondence dated November 1, 1908: Léon Bazalgette. This encounter is particularly remarkable, considering that Whitman's French translator and biographer was a pivotal figure in European Whitmanism and was trying to establish a European Whitman Society (similar to the Whitman Fellowship of which Horace Traubel was secretary), and who kept in touch with Traubel. And it is precisely in the correspondence with Bazalgette that we find the final proof that Aleramo authored this article. The November 1908 piece in the *Nuova Antologia* is dedicated to the recent publication of Bazalgette's biography *Walt Whitman: L'homme et son oeuvre*. The biography was in French, and no Italian translation was then (or is, even to this day) available, but

Aleramo did know French, and many readers did, too: educated Italians would in fact study French as a second language at school, and many read widely in French. But how had Aleramo come to know about the biography, and how had she gotten the book?

It is highly probable that it was Bazalgette himself who sent the book to Aleramo, as his letter to her on May 14, 1908, seems to indicate. The French translator had written the letter primarily to express appreciation for Aleramo's novel *Una donna* (*A Woman*), which had been quite successful in France: "some chapters are of an absolute beauty," he noted. But he also added,

As a testimony of the joy of humanity that the reading of *A Woman* has given me, I take the liberty to send you a recent volume, devoted to the glory of a great Individual, whom you are going to love, I am sure, as he represents one of the peaks of the novel consciousness.<sup>26</sup>

It is safe to conclude that the book Bazalgette is talking about is his biography of Whitman, especially considering that Bazalgette did not write any other biography in that period, and that Aleramo's article about the biography appeared only a few months later, on November 1. And Aleramo must have also sent her article (signed as NEMI) to Bazalgette, as he wrote to her, on November 10, 1908, to thank her for how she had assessed the book:

## Dear Madame,

I have read with the emotion of seeing myself so entirely, so wonderfully, understood [in] the account that you gave about my book in the *Nuova Antologia*. It is a rare joy to hear talking about Walt Whitman as you did.<sup>27</sup>

Bazalgette appreciated Aleramo's assessment of his book on Whitman so much that he even used an excerpt of Aleramo's article as a blurb in an advertisement of the biography. The clipping of the advertisement is present in Aleramo's collection: Bazalgette probably sent it to Aleramo to acknowledge that he had used part of her article as a blurb. The part used by Bazalgette reads, "The big volume of Bazalgette is, we repeat it, a conclusive and masterly biography, which has the double value of history and of art. / Sibilla Aleramo." Here, significantly, Bazalgette cites the article (listing the

publication venue, too) by doing away with "NEMI" and choosing to give, instead, Aleramo's name directly, thus publicly revealing her authorship.

Aleramo's article closes the critical cycle on Whitman started in 1902: if the first article lamented that Whitman was still not well-known in Italy, now Aleramo opens by saying that "the American bard has become this year almost a familiar presence for Italian readers" (148), thanks to the 1907 publication of Gamberale's translation. With reference to *Leaves of Grass*, Aleramo also reminds readers of how "we repeatedly discussed the ideal meaning of this wonderful work in the *Nuova Antologia*." This statement reinforces the idea that Aleramo is the author of all four pieces published in the 1902–1908 period. The reference to Henry Bryan Binn's biography, which had appeared in the 1906 article, is repeated, and similar observations on Whitman's "complex, mysterious, [...] extraordinary" personality also come back.

Aleramo admired Bazalgette's work as "a reading of passion and dream, romantic in the true sense of the word" (149). Among the many available passages, Aleramo chose one in which Bazalgette discusses the daguerre-otype inserted, in lieu of the author's name, as the frontispiece of the 1855 edition of *Leaves*. Aleramo reported Bazalgette's description of the image in the daguerreotype (an image that Italian readers lacked access to):

This young man, in workman's dress, with an indifferent attitude, and at the same time firm, modest and arrogant, with a calm, decided visage, whose glance, cast upon you, questions and follows you, appears to have arisen to justify his people, the men of the average, the silent heroes of the common people, the builders of cities, the modern Atlantes, arrived at the calm consciousness of sovereignty. The man in shirtsleeves who stands before you, his hand on his hip, his left hand in his pantaloons pocket, the felt hat tipped to the side, has the absolute attitude of a king. And he is, in effect, the individual-king. No court mantle could equal in majesty the insolent and natural looseness of his dress, the irreducible freedom of his whole figure. He comes as an ambassador of a new race, charged to promulgate his life throughout the world.<sup>29</sup>

The choice of this passage demonstrates, once again, a socialist interest in Whitman: an interest in average men and their sovereignty, as underlined by Bazalgette with reference to Whitman. These traits had already emerged

in the previous articles on the American poet (especially in the second one from 1906), and they are highly resonant with Aleramo's political ideas, thus once again suggesting that she is very likely to be the author of the other three articles, as well. But what to make of the ending of the passage, in which Bazalgette coins the expression of "individual-king" and talks about the figure in the daguerreotype emanating "irreducible freedom"? Could this part be particularly appealing for Aleramo? And if yes, why so?

The article itself, in conjunction with the rest of the articles discussed, gives us the answer. While the 1902 article criticized readings of Whitman that depicted the poet as an exaggerated egotist, and the others never mentioned Whitman's individualism, but rather his generosity and benevolence toward others, in this new article Whitman is called, with no hesitation, "a ferocious individualist." But this is not a contradiction. Whitman's individualism must have been appealing to Aleramo, indeed, but specifically in reference to two important components of Aleramo's ideology at this time: her readings of Nietzsche, as joined with—and as a tool for—her feminist agenda. This strong expression (stronger, even, when considering how previous articles had always tried to underline the poet's tenderness and empathy) is, in fact, only and specifically used when explaining why the poet escaped from the love passion<sup>30</sup> he had encountered in New Orleans: because he was a "ferocious individualist" and "in order not to tie his life forever." Significantly, the only reference ever made in this cycle of articles to Whitman's individualism comes when discussing the abandonment of his supposed love relationship, of what could eventually become a too limiting obligation. This seems to echo Aleramo's personal struggle, the same one she described both in *Una donna* and in *Il passaggio* (The Passage): the escape from a married life and motherhood, in order to strenuously pursue her professional aspirations and, ultimately, her complete independence and self-determination. Significantly, when this last 1908 article on Whitman appeared, Aleramo was about to escape from her relationship with Cena as well.

Aleramo finally left Cena in September 1910, also leaving her job at the *Nuova Antologia*. In the next couple of years, she wandered in different parts of Italy and published a few articles, now signed as Sibilla Aleramo, in various journals. One of the stops was in the Veni Valley, in the Alps. There, in the summer of 1911, she wrote (and signed with her name) an

article entitled "Vallate dell'Alpe" (Valleys of the Alps), <sup>31</sup> in which, by using a highly lyrical prose, she describes her time in the mountains, looking for peace. <sup>32</sup> "Now" she writes, "what is needed is to know how to be one and the same thing with the water and with the stone, with the musk and with the star" (9). One of the few books she has been reading during this time of exploration and contemplation of nature is *Leaves of Grass*. The passage about this reads:

Walt Whitman is here with his "leaves of grass." He is one of the few poets that can be listened to, while in the middle of nature. It is true that he tried out his stanzas by reading them out loud above the storm's music and in the silence of the fields. He does not substitute himself for the things he sees, with conceited descriptions: he is happy with saluting them, with joyful exaltation. And he enumerates with perennial freshness of tone all that in life has seemed sacred to him: from the naked human body to the idea of cosmos, from the shell of the sea to the architectures of the exposition palaces, from the face of the wounded soldier in a battle to that of the prostitute on the sidewalk. His major greatness consists in this religious unity, in this reverence, in this passionate gratitude for all the hours of his long life. Even when he suffers—and how he suffers from the subtlest interior torments, this man whose fame is that of being only a greedy and rough sensualist!—his lament is never a blasphemy. A vehement and confident heart, among the crowd and in solitude, for himself and for the world. He would have wanted that his words could sound as those of a robust friend for all the wanderers of the earth . . . . (10-11)

The adjective *gagliardo*, "robust," appears again, this time with reference to Whitman's desire to be "a robust friend for all the wanderers of the earth." The idea of closeness offered by Whitman's work, and much appreciated by Aleramo, is central in this passage: as if obeying Whitman's 1855 suggestion to "read these leaves in the open air," Aleramo brings the book with her in her walks in the mountains. "Walt Whitman is here," she writes: not Whitman as words on a page but Walt Whitman the man, she seems to imply. As all the articles in the *Nuova Antologia* had done, the piece concentrates on the man as much as on the work, and Aleramo is evidently not willing to separate the two things. And, just as in NEMI's

1902 article, one of the main critical aims here is that of debunking what Aleramo sees as false, damaging assumptions about Whitman's personality and writing. Here, Aleramo underlines the dark and more fragile side of Whitman, arguing that he is not only the poet of joy, but also of sadness and anguish. Overall, the article is crucial in showing how Aleramo felt a particular confidence in knowing and explaining Whitman (she goes so far as to write: "he would have wanted [...]"). Aleramo's assertive tone in assessing Whitman's desires and preferences reinforces the hypothesis that, by this time, 1911, the Italian writer had read and written about Whitman for at least a decade.

Aleramo also strikes a polemical note at the fame of Whitman as a "rough sensualist." But what is she referring to? Is she thinking of specific articles that came out in these years? Or is she referring to (or projecting) a general judgment perhaps passed by "common" readers? While she significantly lists "the naked human body" as the first of the many things sung by Whitman, and the face of the prostitute on the sidewalk as the last one, the Italian writer worries that Whitman's attention to the body and sexuality, and his uninhibited tone, may be easily mistaken for a rough "sensualism." It is perhaps not a coincidence, then, that she uses the word "sacred" when introducing that list.

Aleramo's insistence on a religious lexicon pervades the whole passage ("his lament is never a blasphemy," 35 she clarifies, while also talking about a "religious unity"). It is as if Aleramo is trying to elevate Whitman's figure, to sanctify him. And this is particularly striking, when thinking that, only a couple of months after writing "Vallate dell'Alpe," Aleramo was reading from and writing about Saint Francis of Assisi. After the Alps, in the fall of that same year, she went to Assisi. This was another important stop in her physical and spiritual wandering at this point of her life, in active search of a fuller, renewed, existential peace. And of Saint Francis, she wrote

Saint Francis, then, is still here, he walks again in front of our eyes [...]. He comes, talks, sings, somebody hears him, but his voice, though, is not enough. And he takes refuge in the caves, alone, to cry out his dream. But in every hour of light he goes out again in the blue valleys, again he sings with untiring faith his *laude*. [...] He was a poet: a man of rich blood, who had the strong need of extending his life, of seeing it

flower, produce fruits, fuse with the Everything. A poet  $[\ldots]$ . A free and unsettled man, across valleys and seas, in the caves where he cried, in the palaces where he imposed his certainty. Almost naked and barefoot he trod with his naked foot all the roads of the world  $[\ldots]$ .

It is as if Whitman and Saint Francis have merged and become, in Aleramo's mind, one and the same: a mythical figure of reference, a co-wanderer that Aleramo admires, cherishes, venerates, and from whom she takes a major inspiration for both her life and her work. It is also significant that for both figures Aleramo underlines the strength, the joy and confidence, as well as the difficulties and struggles. This may directly relate to the delicate moment of her life: she had completely regained her freedom, but she also was struggling to find the next direction.

After Assisi, Aleramo went on with her wandering. She would soon be in Florence, close to the circle of La Voce, then in Milan, where she met the main exponents of the emerging futurism, and then in Paris. In the French capital, within the stimulating literary salon of Madame Aurel, in Rue de Printemps, Aleramo spent time with her friend Bazalgette, but also with other members of the circle of the literary magazine *Mercure de* France, which included figures like Gustave Apollinaire, Émile Verhaeren, Colette, Anatole France, Natalie Barney, and others.<sup>37</sup> Aleramo entered the scene as a famous foreign writer, as her novel *Una donna* had been much appreciated in France<sup>38</sup> (where the book had been translated in 1908), and she had the chance to closely interact with these people, many of whom were deeply interested in Whitman.<sup>39</sup> The strengthening of Aleramo's friendship with Bazalgette in the Parisian period is attested by a letter that the French translator sent to the Italian writer a few years later, in February 1921. In it, Bazalgette says that he would have liked to translate an essay by her into French, if he had known about it earlier. The letter, originally in Italian, reads:

# Dear friend,

I salute your two books<sup>40</sup> that reach me as a breath of resurrection. In looking at them I see two things, first of all: *Il Passaggio* will come out in French, of which I am very happy—and your essay on Slataper, whose book *Il mio Carso* will soon be published in a series

that I direct.<sup>41</sup> If the translator had not written an introduction already, I would have asked you to send your essay to put it at the beginning of our volume. How many years without hearing from you! And what years . . . I still feel the weight of five of them . . . I can't recognize you in the portrait at the beginning of *Momenti*. I can see you more clearly in my memory. Dear friend, I am infinitely sensitive to the testimony of affection and I thank you. Maybe I can send you something this year, in exchange. But how hard and bitter are these new times and how much they try our patience. . . . <sup>42</sup>

Although they had not heard from each other for a few years, it is clear how close Bazalgette and Aleramo nonetheless remained. The war emerges from Bazalgette's letter as an ominous presence that has dramatically changed his living landscape since the time spent with Aleramo in the *Mercure de France* circle. It is highly significant that Aleramo decides to send to the French translator her second novel and her first poetry collection, as it proves how Bazalgette had remained an important figure of reference for her. The letter also shows the common interests of the two: the fact that Aleramo had just written about the autobiographical novel by Slataper and its lyrical prose, and that Bazalgette was about to publish it, confirmed once again a shared taste.

Aleramo continued to be interested in Bazalgette's work on Whitman, and this is testified by a few entries in her notebook. These notes, originally undated, have incorrectly been attributed by the editor of the published notebook to 1902. The editor must have associated these notes with the first article by NEMI on Whitman, which came out in 1902, hypothesizing that they were written as Aleramo was first reading Whitman. But in the notes, Aleramo is citing, within the same page, first from the 1909 translation by Bazalgette, and, secondly, from his critical book on Whitman entitled *Le poème evangile de Walt Whitman* (*The Gospel Poem of Walt Whitman*), which came out for the first time in 1921. The notes must, then, be dated as at least from, or after, 1921. In fact, Bazalgette's indication, in the 1921 letter, that he might send something of his in exchange for Aleramo's kind gesture of sending her books, might explain these citations: perhaps the French translator, knowing about Aleramo's passion for Whitman's work, sent the Italian writer both a copy of his 1909 translation and his

1921 newly published essay. This new evidence about the dating proves that Aleramo's interest in Whitman was not confined to the initial years of the twentieth century, when she first read and wrote about Whitman's work, but extended to much later. It spanned, in fact, her entire life: in 1950, at the age of seventy-four, she wrote in her journal that *Leaves of Grass* had been "vicinissimo come forse nessun altro poema al mio essere" (so very close to my being, perhaps as no other poem ever). And important traces of this predilection can be found in another crucial aspect of the writer's life: her turbulent, intense love relationships with various Italian avant-garde writers and intellectuals. In many of these cases, in fact, Aleramo seemed to invoke Whitman in order to confirm and to strengthen an existing affinity, or to test the potentialities of an incipient one.

In February 1912, Aleramo published in the Florentinian periodical *Il* Marzocco a review of Giovanni Papini's collection of short stories Parole e sangue (Words and Blood). 46 At the time Aleramo had just met Papini, a central figure of the Florentinian avant-garde, and the two were about to begin a short but very intense relationship, which ended in the summer of 1912. But if they had met in person only that year, the two writers had already read each other's creative and critical work, and they had both collaborated with the *Nuova Antologia*. Like Aleramo, Papini had published in 1908 in the *Nuova Antologia* an article on Walt Whitman.<sup>47</sup> In this article, Papini announced, just as Aleramo would do a few months later, the publication of the complete translation by Gamberale and discussed, in a passionate tone, his love for the poetry of Whitman: a poetry through which, as he put it, he had for the first time "felt what poetry meant" (696). Emphasizing the duality and contradictory nature of Whitman's poetry, Papini underlined both the personalism and pantheism, the roughness and the tenderness of this poetry<sup>48</sup> and noted, as Aleramo had done a few times, the poet's "profound sympathy for the most humble beings of society" (706). He also discussed, at length, the universalist democratic principle at work within Whitman's attempt to "explain to the world a kind of democratic mythology" (707). To confirm the profound affinity that both writers must have felt when reading each other's articles on Whitman, in 1912 Aleramo decided to start her review of Papini's Parole e sangue with the translation of one of her favorite quotes from the American poet: "Give me your tone therefore o Death  $[\ldots]$ ."<sup>49</sup>

A few months later, in Milan, with the relationship with Papini over, Aleramo fell in love with the futurist Italian painter and sculptor Umberto Boccioni. Boccioni at first reciprocated this love, but he soon started to turn Aleramo away, for which she suffered a great deal (she talked about Boccioni as "perhaps my most passionate love"). <sup>50</sup> Probably assuming that Boccioni, as other fellow futurists like Filippo Marinetti and Ardengo Soffici, would appreciate Whitman, Aleramo, in one of her attempts to reestablish the love that Boccioni was withdrawing, sent him, among other books, a copy of *Leaves of Grass*. This is how Boccioni, in his typical brusque tone, answered:

The books you sent me, while showing your kindness toward me, offend my sensitivity. Books, I told you, disgust me. Even Walt Whitman bothers me. All that solemnity, that biblical tone, finds me indifferent, I don't understand it and I am disgusted by it. [...] I detest all those who cling to finding analogies between themselves and those who have done great things. I want to do everything in my own way and then destroy every artistic germ within me. [...] Love, you know it, I told it to you and I repeat it, love disgusts me!<sup>51</sup>

Boccioni's rejection of Whitman mirrors his rejection of Aleramo, creating a tall wall of indifference. But the fact that Boccioni writes "even Walt Whitman" is significant. It seems to indicate that Boccioni is acknowledging that not appreciating Whitman is an unusual thing: perhaps Boccioni had liked Whitman in the past, and/or he did recognize the fact that the American poet was generally much appreciated in the futurist circle of which Boccioni was part.

Considering her failed attempt to seduce and reconquer Boccioni with the help of Whitman, it is evident how the very first letter that poet Dino Campana sent Aleramo in 1916 52 must have sounded particularly sweet to her ears. Campana, in a move that mirrored Aleramo's with Boccioni, wrote: "Dear Sibilla, I want to write to you but I can't. I am terribly bored. Do you know Walt Whitman? […]." A couple of days later, Sibilla answered the crucial question:

I have loved Walt Whitman, as a few others have. And it's been a long time. I send you a few old articles: journalism, nothing else. But in one of them I talk, in fact, as I was able to do then, with a naïve seriousness, about Walt. $^{53}$ 

The ardent relationship with Campana, or what poet Mario Luzi has called a "deflagration," s4 was off to a formidable start. While it is not clear which one of her articles on Whitman in the *Nuova Antologia* Aleramo sent, as no enclosure is present, s5 what is most important is that Aleramo acknowledges both her authorship and her long-held admiration of Whitman.

If it is clear how the interest in Whitman had deeply marked not only Aleramo's journalistic career and critical writings but also her private and emotional life, one final question must be asked about her creative production. Is there any echo of Whitman in Aleramo's novels and poems? The first novel, *Una donna* (1906), already shows a characteristic that will distinguish all the subsequent novels: Aleramo's highly lyrical prose. But the novel, a semiautobiography with the intent of sending a loud message about women's emancipation, does not exhibit direct stylistic or thematic consonances with Whitman's work. It is in the second novel, *Il passaggio* (1919), also semiautobiographical, but more fragmentary <sup>56</sup> and even more explicitly lyrical, that various echoes from Whitman can be heard. The first one is in Aleramo's description of the anxiety, the urge, that moves her writing: a creative principle that fuses with and is embodied by the narrating persona.

Anxiety of all comprehending, of all respecting and surmounting. Attention impatient and tireless, religious surveillance of my humanity. As if I were, instead of a person, an idea, an idea to extract, to manifest, to impose, to save.<sup>57</sup>

This principle-persona is then depicted as intent on empathically contemplating the world, at walking, passing through it:

I contemplated the agitated mystery of my spirit, and the alert aspect of the universe, and many that I thought alive as me, men and women, and the beating of the veins on their foreheads. Men and women are on my path so that I can love them. [...] Grace of faces and bodies, flashes of souls, glory of enjoyments and sufferings, message without end. Words have come to me even out of deformed and unformed lives. And where I pass, unknown, almost furtively, even there I imagine to touch with

my spirit those who do not see me, to distract them for a moment from themselves, in a warm vortex. High valleys, farmsteads in the fields, the grass softens the rustling of my foot.  $(14)^{58}$ 

Aleramo's reflections on the creative, life-giving role of readers for what she writes are also reminiscent of Whitman's continuous attention for, and invocation of, readers. The corporeal metaphor built by Aleramo takes a precise maternal configuration:

If I write, I excavate in my thought or in my passion, and the words distill blood, I believe that I am giving myself and instead I am receiving. I am deceived because I nourish my prey with myself. But he who listens to me is like my son was when he drank from my nipple and I held him in my arms, a thing that was mine and that made my life precious.  $(14-15)^{59}$ 

And right after this passage comes Aleramo's Whitmanian declaration of a firm, single, and yet inclusive, and cosmic, identity:

I affirm me to myself: nothing else, nothing else!

Oh, but I affirm all that I am composed of, all that is around me and that I absorb! Nothing gets lost. And when I desire to be loved it is again my love for all things that asks to be recognized, it is the world that wants to be embraced and sung.  $(15)^{60}$ 

All four passages cited here are part of the section entitled "Le ali" ("The Wings"), the second one in the book. "Le ali" functions as an opening introduction, a gathering of forces, both in a creative and in a personal sense, as the narrating persona—once again a woman who leaves her marriage and motherhood—is recounting who she is and where she comes from, before starting to describe her "flight." The echoes from Whitman become, then, the bones at the base of this alar structure, the indispensable propulsive equipment of the novel. There are also other moments in the novel that resemble Whitman's poetry: the use of exclamations and anaphoras, the frequent invocations of the persona's soul, the final reflections on the ambivalence of death, described as "a thing of pearl [...] soaked with light" (95),62 and the seraphic farewell at the very end of the book: "With a quiet breath I go to reconcile with all that is pure and silent, I blend with the arcane smile of goodness" (95).63

Aleramo's early poetry<sup>64</sup> is characterized by a frequent use of long, free verse. The anaphoric poem, "Sai bene..." ("You Know Well..."), for example, reads:

You know well that I am attracted to the margins of the rivers, You know well that to the flames my restless hands I tend,

You see me while I look at you in the clear water of the eyes, You put your forehead close to the warm bunches of grapes,

And yet we have been lingering—perverse or poor?—

And it is always that first hour in which we liked each other in silence.<sup>65</sup>

But these early poems are still short and fragmentary, mostly confessional or at least very concentrated—and often self-indulgently so—on describing emotions and states of mind. It is only more than two decades later, at a very different stage of Aleramo's life and of Italian history and politics, that the writer will more closely echo Whitman's voice, in her poetry. As happened in the case of D'Annunzio, Aleramo went back to her long-standing interest in Whitman when embarking on a new, highly politicized phase of her career as a writer. And, like D'Annunzio, Aleramo resorted to Whitman as a sort of last means to justify and fully embody her ideology, although she went in a completely opposite direction compared to D'Annunzio.

Aleramo, who in 1925 had signed the manifesto of anti-fascist intellectuals written by Benedetto Croce to oppose the manifesto of fascist intellectuals written by Giovanni Gentile, had later supported the fascist regime, since this latter provided her with the economic security she desperately needed. 66 But she finally went back to the socialist and humanitarian beliefs of her youth. Aleramo in fact officially adhered to the Italian Communist Party in 1945 and even went to visit the USSR. In a September 1948 letter to Palmiro Togliatti, Aleramo wrote:

Dear comrade Togliatti,

I would be happy if you found this poem that I drafted on my way back from Poland, even if rough, worthy of being published in *Rinascita*. <sup>67</sup> You who translated Whitman. I proposed it to *Unità*, but young Ferrara found it too long, or whatever. Sure, I wrote in

the past better poems, but these are dear to me as the beginning of a new activity, our activity. What do you think? Will you let me know, in all honesty?  $[\dots]^{68}$ 

Here, Aleramo is appealing to Togliatti's translation of Whitman's "Europe, the 72nd and 73rd Year of These States" (which had been republished in *Rinascita* just the month before, in August 1948, nearly thirty years after its first appearance in *L'Ordine Nuovo*)<sup>69</sup> as an implicit symbol of commonality and immediate understanding. And the appeal was successful, as Aleramo's poem, "Tre ricordi di Polonia" ("Three Memories from Poland") was published in *Rinascita* in November of the same year.

In Poland, Aleramo had participated in the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defense of Peace, and the poem she sent to Togliatti recalls the experience. Like most of her later poetry, the poem is characterized by an oratorical timbre and an extremely long, free verse employed to emphatically convey the strong political credo of the writer in the last fifteen years of her life. The last stanza of the poem reads:

 $[\ldots]$ 

But now, in remembering, Poland, be thanked.
For the brave face for your ardent face
that we have all seen, all of us from forty-five nations,
and for having reinforced our heart,
you, resurrecting from death, with your example
Poland, you, believer in a more genuine humanity,
be thanked, generous and dear,
for that will of acting that you have recognized in us,
united until the last breath,
so that never such an abomination as the war will repeat,
never again by the hand of men
any extermination of countries and races will take place.<sup>70</sup>

Aleramo's earlier poetry, as we have seen, did not particularly echo Whitman: it remained fragmentary and autobiographical, and it lacked any epic weight altogether. But in this phase of her life, Aleramo seems to have consciously taken on the bardic voice of Whitman. Her diction has rhetorically adjusted to the amplitude of her renovated poetic/political

vision: now she uses catalogues, anaphoras, exclamations. As the lyrical I declares in another poem, written in 1949,

Help me to say! So big is what rouses my breast, deep vision of the future, love of time that prepares itself and passion and pride for the suffering of an hour, so big, help me to say!

Not only in my chest, in many other countless in the earthly immense space the immense certainty breathes of the world as it will finally be tomorrow human world of compact justice

[...]

Countless we are in preparing that limpid globe of joy

[...]

So big, help me to say, the wonder of this ardent union

high idea that combines all who believe in it, from those who strongly work,

plow the nude earth
raise babylonian towers
load up boats beat up metals,
to the wise people who scrutinize the motion of the stars
or to the ones who in soft soft syllables try to
secure the rhythm and the melody of eternal seasons.

So big, help me to say, this, that in my chest and in countless other in the earthly immense space immense certainty breathes  $[\ldots]^{71}$ 

Aleramo's mythopoetical projection of the future takes a patriotic turn in a poem that she significantly dedicates to Togliatti. In the poem, entitled "Mia Italia un dì" ("My Italy One Day") and composed in 1954, the lyrical I takes a Whitmanian walk throughout Italy, among factories, workers, fields:

As if throughout dreams I went throughout the years Along so many of your roads Italy loving you But only now in this that I am saying is the evening of my life Only now I am discovering our great people Italy

[...]

and among the women in the Lombardian rice fields, and among the women who in Liguria harvest olives and flowers and among the artisan women who in Valenza engrave gold and among day laborers in Emilia and in the Padan fogs and the dock workers of Ancona and the dock workers of Trieste and the Sicilian workers of the solfataras and the Maremman woodsmen and everywhere bricklayers fishermen construction workers and typographers and tram drivers and railway workers

oh humble and modest list of millions of arms millions and millions of working arms Peninsula and islands supported by these arms oh humble and powerful list of arms who make you live Italy  $[\ldots]^{72}$ 

Aleramo's communist appropriation of Whitman's diction has allowed us to take a look into a post-war scene in which the name of the American writer would be frequently invoked by intellectuals and writers of the left wing who pursued Italy's rebirth after the long fascist regime and the war.

The case of Aleramo's appreciation of Whitman, never treated before by existing studies on the Italian reception, has proven to be immensely rich. From her initial work as a critic at the *Nuova Antologia*, to her personal life and tormented love stories, to her wandering in various parts of Italy and her stays in France, to her first poetry collections and later, politicized work, Whitman accompanied Aleramo in her courageous search for independence, happiness, and fulfillment, both as a woman and as a writer.

#### The Presence of Whitman in the Periodical La Voce

THE ITALIAN AVANT-GARDE scene of the first fifteen years of the twentieth century has often been referred to by a second, alternative name—"the age of the periodicals"¹—because of the large number of literary periodicals that were started in these years and their central role in the cultural scene of the time. Various innovative cultural and literary movements active in this period revolved, in fact, around the magazines themselves. We have already begun to observe this phenomenon when discussing the cases of Aleramo's writings in the *Nuova Antologia* and *Il Marzocco*. But here I will concentrate on what remains an unstudied case in Whitman's Italian reception:² the responses to his poetry by the members of the modernist Florentine periodical *La Voce*, which was active from 1908 to 1916. The case of *La Voce* is particularly interesting if seen in relation to early Italian futurism: To what degree was *La Voce* influenced by futurism? How did the two modernist movements differ? How were they similar?

La Voce emerged from the same historical context in which Marinetti's futurism developed. In politics, the shortcomings of the bourgeois liberal state during the post-unification years caused widespread dissatisfaction with an evident socioeconomic and cultural underdevelopment that had certainly not helped Italy in its attempt to fashion a new collective identity. In literature, classicism and decadentism were only slowly fading away to leave space for more modern forms. Periodicals like La Voce were explicitly founded with the aim of being antidotes to this situation, and La Voce was neither the only nor the first such initiative. In fact, in 1908, La Voce was founded by the intellectual and literary critic Giuseppe Prezzolini as an ideal successor to Leonardo, the periodical that he had directed, together with Giovanni Papini, from 1903 to 1907.

Leonardo had been programmatically centered on philosophical pragmatism and on the Bergsonian imperative of cultural renewal via secular religion. As noted by critic Walter Adamson, the *leonardiani* had worked on the idea of "synthesizing international modernist and Tuscan regional perspectives in a call for a national renewal." But the idiosyncrasies internal to the group had brought *Leonardo* to a dead end. *La Voce*, then, was created by Prezzolini with the aim of keeping a coherent unity, notwithstanding the diverse intellectual itineraries of its protagonists. *La Voce*'s "general harmony of disharmonies" was grounded both in a collective avant-garde activism highly motivated to create a new culture and a new way of living, as noted by Antonio Gramsci, and on a common desire to update readers about the most revolutionary creative forces operating internationally. Many *vociani* had, or were still having, formative experiences among the Parisian avant-gardes, and the idea of helping to renovate Italian culture so that it could take an active part in the international avant-garde scene, but also in the remaking of Italian society, was highly stimulating.

The literary program of *La Voce* consisted first and foremost in overcoming decadent aestheticism through forms of writing capable of a concrete, moral engagement with reality. Among other things, Prezzolini insisted on the virtues of sincerity and "authenticity" in writing, on the importance of addressing readers directly, and on the need to look at poetry as a sensorium of experiences. Stylistic innovation was warmly recommended, and the attempt to revitalize Italian literature undertaken by authors who gravitated toward *La Voce* can in this sense be considered successful. Prezzolini's periodical was able to make a number of young and new voices heard: the periodical was popular and influential. Benito Mussolini was, for example, a faithful reader. 6 And many of the writers he was reading had turned to Whitman for inspiration.

## Giovanni Papini and Ardengo Soffici

The poet and critic Giovanni Papini (1881–1956), a co-founder of *La Voce*, was a great admirer of Whitman's poetry, as we have already seen when discussing in connection to Sibilla Aleramo the article that Papini dedicated to Whitman and published in *Nuova Antologia* in 1908. In it Papini had not only discussed Whitman's democratic universalism and compared the American poet to both Nietzsche and Saint Francis of Assisi; he also described Whitman's work in terms of a moral, didactic mission. For Papini, Whitman "does not sing with the purpose of singing, but with the purpose

of waking people up, to educate them and encourage them." But to be an educator, Papini argued, Whitman had to be rude and without affectations. In this sense, the lesson that Italian writers who wanted to contribute to the moral renovation of society had to take from Whitman was that of:

[...] getting rid of the literary dust that fills our eyes and kills our pure capacity to see things. We—and I mean especially us, Italians—are too literate and courteous. We are gentlemen even in front of the earth, which does not want to receive any compliment: even in front of poetry, which does not like too much politeness. We must put back in our dried-up veins of amateurs, polished citizens, and ladies' men, a little bit of that good blood of the farmers, of the mountain men, of the swindlers. [...] We must become barbarians again—maybe even a bit boorish—if we want to rediscover poetry. If Whitman did not teach us at least this, then all the translations and all the talking that has been made about him were completely useless. (711)

These ideas must have had a strong appeal for the *vociani*, who were looking out for models of international poets to follow, and who wanted to become, themselves, poet-educators, poets who could finally change Italian society through a radical cultural renewal. The poet Arturo Onofri, for example, in a letter to Papini on June 15, 1911, wrote:

I too am among those who recur to the great American to ask him to give me the strength to win over the last temptations and intermittent perplexities; and yes, finally, I too feel that the best will can blossom in the vastness of that desert, in that genuine rudeness, together with the usual heroic energy of a new song.<sup>8</sup>

In this case, the name of Whitman is not even explicitly mentioned, but it is clear that Onofri is referring to him. Onofri's remarks are rather generic, and they mostly insist on the idea that Whitman's poetry works as a liberating inspirational source. But Papini's ideas about a primitiveness to be regained, in association with a weak masculinity to be shunned and a bourgeois mindset to reject, are definitely subtler and more ideologically charged. As argued by critic John Champagne, who has recently carried out a study of the connections between aesthetic modernism and masculinity in fascist Italy,

Papini's call for barbarism not only invokes a "healthier" past as an antidote to the present but also contains the seeds of fascism's critique of the "soft" bourgeoisie, emblematized in the fascist imagination by the Giolitti years and the liberal government fascism replaced. It is thus not difficult to imagine how Whitman's poems could have been manipulated to serve fascism.<sup>9</sup>

Papini's emphasis on masculinity would always remain a fundamental element of his ideology. In later years, Papini would insist on the sexist idea that the backwardness of Italian literature was because "all the men are dead and  $[\ldots]$  only women are writing now." <sup>10</sup>

Another interesting case of Whitman's appearance within the correspondence of the *vociani* can be found in the letters that Papini exchanged with the Tuscan painter and writer Ardengo Soffici (1879–1964). When Papini, in December 1907, sent Soffici a copy of Gamberale's recently published unabridged translation of *Leaves of Grass*, Soffici had just returned to Italy after having lived in Paris for four years. The gesture of giving *Leaves of Grass* as a gift appears once again, in this history of the Italian reception, as an unmistakable sign of profound sharing and empathy. In Papini's letter that announces the gift to Soffici, Whitman appears in the middle of other things: a planned exhibition, the comments on Soffici's work. And then, unexpectedly, Papini writes: "I bought for you Walt Whitman (*Leaves of Grass*) a volume of 600 pages where there is *all* W.W." Soffici certainly knew Whitman's work, but only superficially, as he admits in his answer to Papini. Reading Gamberale's translation was a groundbreaking moment for Soffici. His answer to Papini reads:

#### Dearest Giovanni,

Having given me the book by Whitman has been, on your side, a brotherly sign of affection for which my soul will always be grateful, but it has also been a sort of disaster for me (sweet, in the end). Already when reading the (mediocre) preface I recognized that even the facts of life he has stolen from me—look at page X around the middle!—Apart from this, there is an infinity of ideas and images that have been swirling around in my head for years and that are expressed in his songs, and this is exasperating! Do

you still believe that my work will be worth something even after this? What makes me confident and brave—at least after the first disappointment—will be the thought and the awareness of my sincerity and spontaneity and Italian-ness. [...] Your company fills me each time with the courage and fire for work and of hope for life. It is absolutely necessary that we do something great for Italy.<sup>13</sup>

Soffici exhibits anxiety about his extreme closeness of style and purposes with Whitman, which is similar to the discomfort felt, almost twenty years earlier, by Ada Negri. But the letter is also important for that element of difference that, as Soffici declares, might save the originality of his work: "Italian-ness." As the editor of the correspondence, Mario Richter, explains, this is the first time that Soffici uses this term in his letters to Papini. And this is a crucial concept both for Soffici's work and for the cultural and political agenda that he shared with Papini and that resonated with the main goal of both La Voce and Lacerba (the periodical that Soffici and Papini would found together in 1913): "to do something great for Italy." It is important to note that around the same time that Papini sent Soffici Whitman's Leaves, he also sent him books by Mazzini, and the two friends started fantasizing about founding a Mazzinian political party called Partito dell'Anima (Party of the soul), which never came to fruition. It is clear then how Whitman was once again read from a post-Risorgimento perspective. His work was exemplary and had to be imitated and adapted to the most urgent political need: to fully realize Italy as a nation.<sup>14</sup>

In the letters, Papini and Soffici repeatedly talk about their affection for each other and their shared political and artistic ideology in terms of "brotherhood." And the relevance of the role assumed by Whitman in their imagination is made clear by Papini in his January 3, 1908, letter to Soffici: "Walt will be our third brother. Love him for me." In 1908, both writers published pieces that invoked Whitman directly: Soffici wrote a poem, and Papini the already mentioned essay on the *Nuova Antologia*. Soffici's poem, published in the first and last issue of the periodical *Il Commento* on February 16, 1908, was entitled "Risposta a Walt Whitman per il suo 'Canto dell'esposizione'" ("Answer to Walt Whitman for His 'Song of the Exposition'"). The poem reads:

No, Walt, brother, the one you saw was not
A widowed immigrant woman. She was the Muse
Whom the sea, through the sky, brought to you.
Pulled by the proud appeal, she came, and remained with you
And she kissed your superb forehead and smiled to your songs; but
in her heart
She brooded the return and the farewell.

Not ash and wind, not nailed coffins and ruins, Not all dead was her ancient homeland!

[...]

And she came back. With wet trembling lips

She closed your eyes, and came back to her gardens along the sea.

Now she is here, Walt, she is here, I feel she is close to me,

I smell the springy scent of her breath . . .

She touches my hair, I embrace her, I press her to my breast with passion,

Lovingly, with robust arms, and I sing!<sup>16</sup>

The Muse whom Whitman had invoked to "come migrate from Greece and Ionia" to America is proudly called back by Soffici to his side of the ocean in what Delphine Rumeau has eloquently called a gesture of "territorialization of art." Soffici employs not only a Whitmanian tone, but also highly sensual images that call to mind numerous scenes in Whitman's work. Soffici's poem is also striking for the exhibition of the virility of the lyrical I: the connotation of the Muse is that of a woman who is not "widowed," who is still married with a man, the poet, who passionately embraces her. It is clear how Soffici's answer to Whitman corresponds to both a recognition of admiration and "brotherhood," but also to a challenge, and to a metaphorical claim to repossess, regain, one's own "property."

Soffici's challenging tone would not end here. The publication of Papini's piece sparked a debate between Papini and Soffici that reveals the continued existence of an old prejudice about Whitman's work. Having read Papini's article, Soffici, notwithstanding his love for Whitman's poetry, wrote to Papini saying that, in his opinion, Whitman could not be seen as better than, or even on the same level as, Dante or Baudelaire. Soffici declared:

W.W. is not a poet; he is something better—according to somebody—and for others he is something less—he is somebody who is in love. He is the most extraordinary lover that I know, among the saints. [...] [But] with all this love, he lost his creative will. [...] The real greatness in general, I think that it consists in restraining, dominating oneself, and the creative will that builds style. [...] Dante, Cervantes, Dostoyevsky, Baudelaire, etc. The work of these people is limited, tamed, subjugated to their will [...] <sup>18</sup>

When Papini tried to defend Whitman, arguing that he actually does select and carve quite a lot, <sup>19</sup> Soffici still remained of the opinion that "generally [Whitman] lets himself be overwhelmed by the enormity of his love and he escapes too often from [using] the brake of art." <sup>20</sup> Delphine Rumeau rightly brought attention to the importance of this debate between Soffici and Papini, as it seems, as she indicates, to "formulate a major stake" of many other debates around the world about the value and worth of Whitman as a poet who establishes a new poetics less prone to select and refine and more aimed at establishing a direct, immediate connection between art-making and nature. <sup>21</sup>

It must also be noted how, once again, Soffici's criticism of Whitman proved to be strongly centered on his own agenda for Italian art. Specifically, Soffici discussed what he regarded as the main flaw of Whitman's style to emphasize a point to Papini: what Italian art needed was not so much to liberate, but to restrain itself, to acquire more self-awareness and more precision. Soffici conflated Whitman and Nietzsche, affirming that the widespread reliance of Italian avant-gardes on Nietzsche's theories advocating a liberating, if not altogether destructive, impulse, was actually not beneficial for them. Soffici wrote:

Summing up, what I wanted to say [about Whitman] is that the great artist must concentrate and restrain himself in order to become compact and conclusive, rather than expanding himself and losing strength and light for having abused strength and light. This can be connected also with what I told you about Nietzsche, which is that we, a free race by tradition, do not need to liberate but rather to restrain ourselves, and rather than our *rights*, we must affirm our duties.<sup>22</sup>

Soffici's perspective defines an interesting countertendency within the international reception where, as we have seen, Nietzsche and Whitman were often conflated and appropriated as a radical outburst of invigorating energy.

Although Papini was clearly not a very talented poet (he was certainly more apt to write in prose and to work as a critic and intellectual), it is interesting to look at his work and search for echoes of Whitman's poetry. These echoes confirm Papini's reading of Whitman in terms of a Nietzschean exuberance, energy, freedom from inhibition. There is, for example, an interesting connection with the image of the hawk in Whitman's section 52 of "Song of Myself" (and, more generally, with Whitman's frequently recurring identification of the lyrical I with a bird). Papini's "Decima poesia" ("Tenth Poem") could be seen as a creative response to the accusation that the spotted hawk made to the lyrical I of "Song of Myself": "The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab and of my loitering."23 In Papini, the lyrical I has become the hawk: "I am a bad hawk with a few words to say / I dissipate my life as I want."<sup>24</sup> And it is probably not a coincidence that in a further poem in this same collection, the "savage" lyrical I expresses his hatred for the city (probably as simplistically contrasted to the country) in this way: "I belch out my hatred over the constructed city,"25 which is resonant with the famous "belch'd words" of section 2 and the "barbaric yawp" of section 52 of "Song of Myself." 26

An occasional use of exclamations and of anaphoras in Papini's poetry makes for some superficial similarities with Whitman's style. However, the formal nature of Papini's poetry is significantly different from that of the American poet: Papini makes a constant use of alternate rhyme; he always writes in quatrains; and although he theorizes the need for a poetic "unusual language," he uses a very high and erudite lexicon that does not leave any space for colloquialisms or neologisms. To put it simply, Papini's poetry remains far from the formal innovations carried out by most of his contemporaries and by the futurist group, nothwithstanding the theoretical importance he assigned to the need for a renewal of Italian literature. Strangely enough, Papini's love for Whitman did not work as a liberating force releasing him from the chains of that classicist poetic diction that Papini had so violently criticized (and not only when writing about Whitman). In the end, critic Asor Rosa is right to call Papini "a conservative revolutionary." 28

The ideological approach to Whitman's poetry that Papini cultivated during his years at *La Voce* revealed its full strength in the new periodical called *Lacerba* that he founded with Soffici in 1913 after having abandoned *La Voce*. Paradoxically enough, in Papini's and Soffici's minds *Lacerba* should have given more space to literary and artistic topics in comparison to *La Voce* (which they thought was too dedicated to political issues). But only one year later their *Lacerba* became one of the preferred showcases for militaristic and interventionist futurist proclamations. *La Voce*, on the other hand, shifted toward an almost exclusively literary dimension in 1914, when Giuseppe De Robertis became the new director of *La Voce* in place of Prezzolini.

## Piero Jahier

An important echo of a Whitmanian line is the *trait d'union* between the work of Papini and that of Piero Jahier (1884–1966). This example is useful in demonstrating the essential contrariety of the readings and reinventions of Whitman by these two *vociani* poets. The line is "Who has gone farthest? For I would go farther" from Whitman's poem "Excelsior." Papini translated the line literally and used it as an epigraph to a chapter of his autobiography titled *Un uomo finito* (*A Finished Man*), which was published by La Voce Press in 1913. The chapter in question was dedicated to his career as an intellectual and writer. Elsewhere in the book, Papini declared that a writer had to be "a saint and a genius," A Nietzschean Übermensch, and his use of Whitman's line sounds like a solemn proclamation of this precise mission.

Jahier's first line in one of his most famous poems, "Ritratto dell'uomo più libero" ("Portrait of the Freest Man"), which was published in *La Voce* on July 28, 1914, <sup>32</sup> seems to be a direct answer to Papini's epigraph. Jahier's line reads: "Who has gone highest?—Because I want to go just as far down." It is evident how Jahier overturns the verse: first of all, he adds a vertical dimension to the first half-line, which is absent in both Whitman's line and in Papini's translation of it, and then he declares an aim that is no longer that of excelling, of standing out among others and surpassing them to become their guide, but of going down. In other words, while Papini felt that his mission was that of becoming an exemplary *Übermensch*, Jahier

wanted to create a renovated poetry capable of going back to reality and of standing with common people. His verse can be read as an intentional polemic against Papini's use of Whitman's verse.

His poetry, which often takes the form of *poème en prose*, is characterized by the use of phonetic and rhythmic iterations, anaphoras, and syntactic parallelisms. Jahier expressed on various occasions his admiration for Whitman's work, <sup>33</sup> and he never hid how, together with reading the Bible and the work of the French writer Paul Claudel, Whitman's tone had been one of the major inspirational sources for the formation of his lyrical voice. <sup>34</sup> Jahier's extensive knowledge of the Bible originated in his childhood: his father had in fact been a Waldensian pastor, and Jahier's own religious beliefs, although characterized by a dismissal of dogmas, were strong, as is evident from the ethical component of his writings.

The same poem I have cited in relation to the use of the Whitmanian line from "Excelsior," "Ritratto dell'uomo più libero," will help us analyze Jahier's style and the themes that are central in his work:

Then I discovered: in the morning it is to resurrect with the warm ideas that were set aside in the universe that holds me by hand.

When I discovered what it is to rest:—how flowers open towards the tired eye, just as toward the sun;—how birds take off and fly, one toward each other.

When I discovered the small profit: they know your heart is somewhere else; they won't buy what they can't have.

When I discovered a buried treasure: yes, instead of dusty old habits, an uncontrolled passion always at hand.

[...]

When I discovered my faith: ah! Don't tell me you believed that faith is not needed to live a life without faith!  $(27)^{35}$ 

Jahier's long verse almost feels like prose, even if the anaphoras and the alliterations of the Italian text are able to create a peculiar rhythm that repeats and consolidates itself as to almost form a fixed structure. The cited passage is also representative of Jahier's typical rhetorical gesture of addressing the reader directly and of making a large use of exclamations. Even if he often deals with class issues, social marginalization, and work alienation, Jahier never abandons a positive undertone of hope and faith

that emerges through quick flashes of joy, which usually correspond to exclamatory moments. But probably the most revolutionary feature of this poetry is Jahier's use of the long dash for rhythmical purposes. The dash had hardly ever been used in Italian poetry before, and it is highly probable that Whitman's poetry played a significant role in its adoption. These passages from "Canto del Camminatore" ("Song of the Walker"), a long poem divided into seven sections and published in two separated parts in *La Voce* first on October 16, 1913, and then on December 25, 1913, are a good example of Jahier's use of this particular punctuation mark:

But for one day at least—give a vacation to the mortified body—let me for one day walk while fasting,

So that I can recognize the stations of my identity—and try out the anchors of my destiny—and interrogate my full young blood—far from the contamination of lazy chatty life.

 $[\ldots]$ 

Then—if the the insect is born while the thyme blossoms,

If the planet comes back on time, if it crosses its fire in the scattered sky of the earth,

Then—my place in life is right.  $(13, 15)^{36}$ 

"Canto del Camminatore" can be considered Jahier's *manifesto* of poetics: art and life, just as well as soul and body, have to be united. Poetic art must follow the rhythms of natural and daily life. It has to be a peripatetic poetry in which both body and soul experience the world: "To walk—in the infinity of these lively things—with my hands immersed in the regurgitating treasure chest" (14).<sup>37</sup> Conversations of the lyrical I not only with his soul, but also with his body, suggestively recall Whitman:

My body, even if I never directly asked your opinion, I spent you as a good coin.

You were not raised in a rich greenhouse, but in a sane excercise of poverty, patience, and subjection.

Little span of seeding land, how can you give bread to many mouths? And how can you give crumbs to the birds of the sky, and, also, how, squeezing your heart, can you give a sprout of saint poetry, as a stick that blossoms? (13)<sup>38</sup>

It is also crucial to note how Jahier's poetic language is a *pastiche* of Tuscanisms, Latinisms, and erudite, technical, and colloquial terms. And this innovative lexicon sounds even more innovative when the poet experiments with syntax, through a large use of infinitive tenses and nominal style.

Politically, Jahier was explicitly anti-fascist, <sup>39</sup> so much so that he was a constant target of fascist repressive control and threats. With respect to his involvement in the First World War, Jahier voluntarily enlisted in the alpine troops in 1915 and soon became a lieutenant, but his poetry was never militaristic. Jahier was convinced that the war had to be looked at as a matter of ethical responsibilty. To fight meant to contribute to a just cause. His 1920 collection of war poems, *Con me e con gli alpini* (*With Me and the Alpines*) conveys a sense of fraternal solidarity and of a choral suffering shared by humble soldiers, who usually came from the poorest and most marginal classes of Italian society, to which Jahier always felt very close. Jahier's voice is one of encouragement and sympathy, as in the poem "Reclute" ("Recruits") where, while supervising his platoon in the dormitory, he calls his soldiers *piccoli figli* (little sons). The poem is very reminiscent of Whitman's *Drum-Taps*:

I walked among the abandoned bodies in the grey light.

Everything the same, everything identical;

And each of them with his own memories and with his own affections; And each man with his story.

I felt the need to give them a sign of affection.

I said: goodnight, little sons.

And all of them answered: goodnight.

Nobody was sleeping. (11)40

Jahier never used Whitman's poetry as a virile Nietzschean instigation of blood sacrifices and, ultimately, of war.



This brief comparison of Papini's and Jahier's reinventions of Whitman has proved how divergent were their approaches, despite their shared context of *La Voce*. While Papini can be seen as close to the fascist readings of Whitman that would be carried on within the second phase of futurism, he also

missed a major point that the futurists had absorbed: Whitman's formal innovation. As for Jahier, while there certainly are thematic consonances, the closeness of Jahier's poetry with Whitman's is to be primarily identified in a formal sense. Jahier took the example of Whitman's innovative diction immensely further than Papini.

# Traveling with Whitman Emanuel Carnevali and Dino Campana

#### From Florence to New York, in the Name of Whitman: Emanuel Carnevali

A poet who cannot be fully considered a *vociano* for mere chronological reasons, but who had deeply admired the products of that cultural movement, was Emanuel Carnevali (1897–1942).¹ Carnevali had even translated a poem by Piero Jahier into English for his special section "Five Years of Italian Poetry (1910–1915)" published in *Poetry* in January 1919.² For critic Gabriel Cacho Millet, Carnevali and Jahier shared the same syntactic experimentalism, the same "disregard for grammar" and the same "poetics of the common man."³

Carnevali had left Florence in 1914, when he was only seventeen, to migrate to the United States. In New York, initially, he worked at different jobs and lived in poverty, while trying to realize his biggest dream: to make poetry. The only available contemporary Italian poetry that he could find to read in New York was that published in La Voce and Lacerba: the two Florentine periodicals were, in fact, part of the New York Public Library's collection. La Voce became for Carnevali a sort of indispensable poetry textbook while he was writing his first poems and sending them to American literary periodicals. Notably, the poems Carnevali published were in English: from 1918 until his death, Carnevali only wrote his poetry and prose in English, even when he was back in Italy. He was, in fact, convinced that a poet should choose his own expressive language and that this latter need not necessarily correspond to that same poet's native language. Perhaps Carnevali had not remained indifferent to Papini's words in Opera prima (First Work): "l'ideale sarebbe: a poeta nuovo lingua nuova" (The ideal [thing] would be: to [each] new poet, a new language) (173).

What is certain is that  $La\ Voce$  accompanied Carnevali in his poetic debut. The initial program of  $La\ Voce$  echoed Carnevali's own aim to write

an essential poetry that could get away from the classicist and decadent tradition he personally disliked: Carnevali wanted to write a poetry that addressed problems of daily life and that attempted to solve them. He started writing to Papini and to another *vociano*, Carlo Linati. Perhaps because of his spatial and temporal distance from the experiment of *La Voce*, Carnevali had come to idealize the periodical, as well as Papini's critical iconoclastic tones, as is clear both from the correspondence with Papini and from the article that Carnevali wrote about him and published in *The Modern Review* in 1922.<sup>4</sup>

Carnevali sent out his first poems for publication in 1918 and began associating with the bohemians in Greenwich Village. 5 He soon met numerous American writers, including Carl Sandburg, Lola Ridge, William Carlos Williams, and Alfred Kreymborg, and started to collaborate with them. Having been awarded the first prize for poetry by Harriet Monroe's Poetry in March 1918, Carnevali moved to Chicago in 1919 to become associate editor of the magazine. Carnevali had in mind to found, together with the aforementioned writers, a new periodical that he wanted to call New Moon. In his letters to Papini, Carnevali asked for advice: New Moon would make up for what *Poetry*, according to Carnevali, lacked: that is, a decent connection with other international avant-garde scenes. Carnevali wanted to imitate *La Voce*, because he thought that the periodical had been successful in updating Italian readers about international literary news. Papini's collaboration, Carnevali said, would have been indispensable. But New Moon was never founded, and Carnevali himself went back to Italy in 1922 because of a serious illness and remained there until his death in 1942.

Carnevali's experience within the context of the American modernist scene is a significant moment for the history of the reception and reinvention of Whitman's poetry. And yet no mention of Carnevali's case is made in the previously cited studies and articles dedicated to the Italian reception of Whitman.<sup>6</sup> With his admiration for *La Voce* and for writers like Papini and Jahier, Carnevali entered the world of American modernist poets who were, on their side, intensely looking back at Whitman to carve the new wood he had broken, to use the famous Poundian expression. While he was close to these poets and was actively collaborating with them, Carnevali also criticized them: he thought that they lacked authenticity and that they were too concentrated on technical details. Carnevali's accusation did not

remain unheard, and in fact, many writers pled guilty to his charge and were thankful to Carnevali for opening their eyes. The New York poets of the magazine *Others* that, as Mario Domenichelli put it, "Carnevali had attacked [...] with a violence rooted in his own utter, real, otherness," were so grateful for the constructive criticism that they even dedicated the last issue of the magazine to the Italian poet.

Carnevali tried to bring back the authenticity and sincerity that he thought was lacking, and Whitman was a great source of inspiration in this regard. In May 1919, Carnevali published in the *Poetry* Whitman centenary issue a short poem called "Walt Whitman" that seems to conjugate Papini's reinvention of Whitman with Jahier's. It reads:

Noon on the mountain!—
And all the crags are husky faces powerful with love for the sun;
All the shadows
Whisper of the sun.<sup>8</sup>

Here, Jahier's long verse, use of the long dash, and formal experimentation meet Papini's sense of primordial strength. But Carnevali's fuller and more original reinvention of Whitman's poetry occurs as well in other poems, where it even seems to anticipate Ginsberg's Whitmanian jeremiads:

O altars of a little comfort, altars of a dyspeptic god gone crazy in America for lack of personality (hamburger steak, Irish stew, goulash, spaghetti, chop suey and curry!) O lunch-room counters! O tripods of a little secure religion, tripods of a little secure beauty! O kitchen fires!

[...]

My malediction on the cowards who are afraid of the word (the word is a kind sweet child, a kind sweet child!)—

Malediction on the sacrifices of the dumb and deaf!

Hesitating everywhere, hesitating fearfully,
The few poets, they who weigh with delicate hands,
Walk in unfrequent roads,
Maundering,
Crying and laughing
Against the rest.9

This intertextual connection with Ginsberg is particularly interesting if we consider that the main element that Ginsberg appreciated in Whitman's poetry (and the main thing he learned from it) was, as he claimed, "candor." Ginsberg's idea of candor comes strikingly close to Carnevali's idea of "authenticity." <sup>10</sup>

Like Whitman, Carnevali often concentrates on Manhattan, with its vivid "sacred crowds" ("Afternoon"), which are one of his favorite subjects. And then, in the poem "Evening," Carnevali invokes Walt Whitman himself. The poem is reminiscent of the sunset skies of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" and Whitman's masterful connection of the past with the future through the present, contemplating, eternal poetic moment:

Tender and young again, feminine, sky of the evening of summer is blushing.

Round, long and soft like a draped arm, sky of the evening over the poor city resting.

Spaces of cool blue are musing—

They will hold all our sadness, O spaces of cool blue.

O city, there lived in you once, O Manhattan, a man WALT WHITMAN.

Our hands are wasted already, perhaps; but enough for contribution to Beauty,

Enough for a great sadness, will be,

Evening of summer, evening of summer going to sleep

Over the purple bed, over the light flowers of the sunset.

Many other evenings have I in my heart—I have loved so much, so long and so well—don't you remember cool blue spaces brooding? I shall recall you,

I shall recall you if insanity comes and sits down and puts her hands in my hair.

Once I touched things with religion, once a girl loved me, once I used to go hiking with young folks over the Palisades,

Once I cried worthily.11

The analysis of the work of Carnevali in terms of a textual *locus* of encounter of the two, Italian and American, avant-gardes, and of their different interpretations of Whitman, in particular, remains open to future studies. When Carnevali wrote to Papini that, in New York, to give voice to

that feverish modernity, "a new man like Whitman is needed," <sup>12</sup> he repeated the same idea that had circulated in the Florentine avant-garde. Carnevali tried to be that new man, and he tried to do it in the name of Whitman, in the land of Whitman, and in the language of Whitman.

In *La Voce*, within a complex and contradictory scene—given to different, if not opposite, poetic and political orientations—the name of Whitman had stood for the declaration of a break with tradition. The name of Whitman had meant an active, and often exasperated, search for the new. It is fascinating to think of how, for Carnevali, this strong sense of a break and of a push toward the new led him to abandon once and for all his native language and to deliberately and programmatically choose, even once he went back to Italy, American English, as an exilic poetic language of otherness.

# The Longest Day: Dino Campana and Whitman Across Italy and South America<sup>13</sup>

According to Roger Asselineau, Dino Campana (1885–1932), author of the collection *Canti Orfici* (*Orphic Songs*; 1914), <sup>14</sup> was the Italian poet most influenced by Walt Whitman. <sup>15</sup> Yet, the connections between these poets have not been thoroughly explored, nor have critics assessed the implications of Campana's decision to take *Leaves of Grass* with him in 1907, when he left Genoa on a ship for Argentina in what would become his transformative journey to South America. <sup>16</sup>

Campana—who has been regarded (and perhaps stereotypically stigmatized) as the Italian *poète maudit* par excellence, because of his mental illness, <sup>17</sup> his extravagant and rebellious ways of living, his turbulent social interactions, and the explosive power of his poetic voice—was, with this journey, abandoning himself once again to the roaming life that he deeply loved. But this time the poet was going much farther than his previous sojourns to Paris or Switzerland or Mount of La Verna in the Tuscan Apennines, which he loved to climb and get lost in for weeks. This time, Campana was going far away to start a new life in the American hemisphere that he had encountered through the words of Whitman, so it was fitting to bring *Leaves of Grass* along. With reference to his journeys and experiences in South America, Campana wrote with a mythopoetical and very Whit-

manian perception of the American landscape and its imminent potential (especially in the poems "Journey to Montevideo," "Pampas," "A Trolley Ride to America and Back," "Dualism," and in the early draft of "Pampas," "The Fiery Train on the Tawny Pampas"). 18 These poems can be read as Campana's creative response to Whitman's idea of "America" as the source of an extra-European newness, freedom, and regeneration. For Campana, just as for Whitman, to be a poet in "America" and of "America" meant to move toward modernity and experimentation, to embody a bardic voice that sings a future land of equality and democracy, to pursue a personal, social, political, and also creative liberation. 19

Dino Campana represented a figure of radical alterity within the context of the avant-gardist Italian literary scene of his time—a scene that he repeatedly and desperately tried to enter, but also a scene from which he naturally stood out because of his highly idiosyncratic manner, characterized by a mixture of stylistic innovations and archaisms and by a daring expressionist tone. Although he studied in a prestigious grammar school in Faenza, took part in university cultural life in Bologna, and did his novitiate in the circles of *Lacerba* and *La Voce* and the Florentinian literary cafè Giubbe Rosse, Campana refused to adhere to the literary edicts of the futurist avant-gardes that rejected values of the nineteenth century and that urged the emergence of a new intellectual class ready to make sense of the new industrial society. As a result, Campana was shunned and misunderstood by these circles during his lifetime and also excluded from the mainstream canon after his premature death. His poetic vision remains singular. Labels classifying him as the "Italian Rimbaud" or a "visionary poet" have done as much to distort our understanding of his work as have the harsh words of the poet Umberto Saba, who judged Campana to be "crazy, only crazy." We should recognize Campana instead as someone with serious mental issues that had the effect of radicalizing his verse and making it, as poet and critic Edoardo Sanguineti said, "enact a sort of cultural sabotage that led [him] to be completely alone to face things in their nakedness."21

Eugenio Montale's description of Campana as "a tramp who read Rimbaud and Whitman" (and, we could add, Verlaine, Baudelaire, Poe, Goethe, and Nietzsche) reminds us that, while spending weeks hiking in the mountains, incarcerated for months here and there, and traveling

penniless around Europe and South America, Campana imbibed from the very sources of Western poetic modernity, and one key source was Whitman. Campana read Luigi Gamberale's 1907 translation of *Leaves of Grass*, and, according to the poet Camillo Sbarbaro, Campana "used to walk around Genoa with the book in his hands, as if it was a sort of Bible." It is also evident that the Italian poet consulted the original: Campana, who knew English quite well, quoted some of Whitman's lines, both in his notebooks and in his book, in the original English. And while there is no definite proof of which English edition he consulted while in Italy, we do know that, during the time he spent in Genoa in 1915, Campana repeatedly requested the Rossetti edition at the public library.

As I mentioned earlier in this study, Campana chose Whitman to open his first letter of July 1916 to his soon-to-be lover, Sibilla Aleramo: "Dear Sibilla, I would like to write to you but I can't. I am terribly bored. Do you know Walt Whitman?" Aleramo responded immediately, and with great enthusiasm: Whitman worked as a love potion, as had happened in the relationship of Ada Negri and Ettore Patrizi, also discussed previously.

Campana's fascination with Whitman is revealed in a number of striking analogies between his and Whitman's poetic style. Like Whitman with Leaves of Grass, Campana almost exclusively concentrated on writing one single, Mallarmean book that he kept revising in a continual rewriting process that aimed to produce an open, plural, polysemic work. His mixing of verse and prose was extremely innovative. Not only did he write full poèmes en prose, but he also created heterometrical poems that are the result of his deliberate intermingling of traditional verses with hypermetrical ones. Campana's poetry abandons any strophic partition and plays with iterative parallelisms, obsessive repetitions, and rhythmical dissonance. Like Whitman, Campana had a preference for a nominal style made of catalogues, present participles, gerunds, and juxtaposed adverbs and adjectives, as well as anaphoras and homoeoteleutons (near rhymes). Like Whitman, he built a multilingual text by using English, French, German, vernacular, and dialectal forms, but also by mixing classical, erudite terms and archaisms with popular and technical ones. Like Whitman, he was "afoot with [his] vision," carrying out an initiatory journey to look for a point of pure, electric (an adjective that Campana, like Whitman, used profusely) contact with nature and with its cosmic cycles, battling against common certainties and

assumed cultural and social clichés, trying to catch the shapeless flow of reality at its core source, in which past, present, and future could converge.

Another interesting connection between Whitman and Campana involves Enrico Nencioni's 1879 assessment of Whitman's poems as "veri canti orfici senza tradizione": real, unprecedented, orphic songs. <sup>27</sup> Significantly, Campana entitled his 1914 book *Orphic Songs*. This striking combination of a Whitmanian and an Orphic lineage extends to the present: contemporary writers Giuseppe Conte and Roberto Mussapi, for example, both define themselves as "neoorphic" poets as well as direct descendants of Campana, and, at the same time, both have translated Whitman's poetry, written critical pieces about it, and are clearly inspired by Whitman's work. <sup>28</sup> Within the twentieth-century Italian literary scene, Campana's work functions, then, not only as an inspirational text *per se*, but also as an important mediation site for the diffusion and appreciation of Whitman's poetry.

Direct quotes by Campana from *Leaves* appear both in his notebooks (including passages from "So Long," "To a Locomotive, in Winter," "Bivouac on a Mountain Side," and "Whispers of Heavenly Death") and in Orphic Songs itself. A more complex intertextual case consists in the fact that Campana's original manuscript for what would eventually become Orphic Songs was initially called Il più lungo giorno (The Longest Day).<sup>29</sup> A few Campana scholars have suggested—although without being able to provide any conclusive proof—that the title might derive from Gabriele D'Annunzio's 1910 novel Forse che sì, forse che no (Maybe Yes, Maybe No) in which the solstice of summer, and the specific expression "il più lungo giorno" (repeated seven times across the book), appears as an important leitmotif.<sup>30</sup> Campana did indeed read D'Annunzio and often echoed him—although their poetic voices remained conflictually different—so, in this sense, the hypothesis is perfectly plausible. But these scholars have completely overlooked the existence of a deeper, more crucial intertextual connection: line 18 of Whitman's poem "Salut au Monde!"—"Within me is the longest day." It becomes clear, then, not only how Campana, who extensively read and studied the Leaves, might have as well found the expression there, rather than in D'Annunzio's novel, but, most importantly, how D'Annunzio himself most certainly derived the image from Whitman.

I am convinced of this for two reasons: first, it is notable that, while in

the Italian language it is much more common to have the adjective follow the noun, Campana and D'Annunzio opt to retain the comparative adjective before, and not after, the noun (they both have "il più lungo giorno" rather than what would be much more common and expected, that is, "il giorno più lungo"). In other words, the fact that both Italian poets not only use the same exact expression as Whitman but also the same (odd, in Italian) syntactical order is a strong indicator that Whitman is indeed the underlying source. But, secondly, it is once again the precious copy of Rossetti's edition of Whitman's poems, bought by D'Annunzio while in Paris, where he had moved in 1909, and available in his private library, that gives us confirmation of this hypothesis. By looking at the physical book, in fact, the poem "Salut au Monde!" appears not only read, underlined, and annotated by the poet, but there is even a bookmark (one of three in the whole book) to keep the page at hand. And this becomes an even more striking coincidence when we think that the final drafts of Forse che sì, forse che no were sent to press in 1910, while D'Annunzio was in France, and at a time when he may have very possibly already bought the Rossetti edition marked with the French bookstore of Rue de la Banque label.<sup>31</sup>

Another intriguing sign of Whitman's presence in Campana's book is in the final epigraph of *Orphic Songs*: an adaptation (and significantly without reporting Whitman's original authorship) from Section 34 of the deathbed edition version of "Song of Myself," which reads: "they were all torn and cover'd with the boy's blood," instead of the original "the three were all torn and covered with the boy's blood." It is clear, then, how Campana had somehow started with Whitman, with the initial title *The Longest Day* for his book, and then, in the later, final version of it, he had changed the title, but still finished with Whitman by including this epigraph. In a 1916 letter, the Italian poet told the critic Emilio Cecchi to consider these words of the epigraph, which he did, on that occasion, acknowledge to be taken from *Leaves of Grass*, as the most relevant words in the whole book.<sup>32</sup>

This acknowledgment has caught the attention of scholar Francesca Roberta Seaman. In her 2007 dissertation on Campana, which offers a psychoanalytical interpretation of recurrent figures and chromatic images that reveal the centrality of the sense of loss and despair in Campana's writing, Seaman repeatedly argues that the epigraph taken from Whitman stands within Campana's collection as an emblem of the existential tragedy

inherent to his poetry.<sup>33</sup> But in Campana's work, anguish is offset by many luminous moments of serenity and optimism. And even the epigraph, although it contains a dramatic image, signifies, as indicated by Roberto Coppini,<sup>34</sup> more than the actual suffering that Campana endured in his life and reflected upon in his writing. Rather, it evokes Campana's perception of Whitman's poetry as a strong, energizing encouragement for him to break with past formal rules, legitimate his distancing himself from them, and declare his almost heroic, creative alterity, his absolute faith in a new, independent poetry—a faith that could even result in martyrdom and bloodshed. In this sense, Campana's journey to South America, accompanied by Whitman's book, should be read as a literal enactment of a Nietzschean and messianic quest for a poetical territory of revolt and regeneration.

Campana's three-week journey across the ocean was on a ship bound to Buenos Aires, Argentina, via Montevideo, the coastal capital of Uruguay. The central image of his poem "Viaggio a Montevideo" ("Journey to Montevideo") is that of a physical and metaphysical, almost Dantean, "crossing" of the ocean, reminiscent of Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." Here the lyrical I remembers what he saw when approaching the new continent. There are many affinities with Section 3 of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," mostly due to a similar insistence on evoking the visual experience: "I saw from the deck of the ship / . . . We saw rising in the enchanted light / . . . And I saw like whirling [ . . . ]" (LB 103, 105). Analogous images of birds floating in the sunset sky, lit by the last sun beams, occupy the central part of both poems. In Campana's,

The pale-blue evening languished on the sea:
From time to time the golden silences of wings also crossed Slowly in the deepening blue . . .
Distant tinged with various colors
From the most distant silences (LB 103; ellipsis in original)<sup>37</sup>

## And the speaker in Whitman's:

Watched the Twelfth month sea-gulls, saw them high in the air floating with motionless wings, oscillating their bodies,
Saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies and left the rest in strong shadow,

Saw the slow-wheeling circles and the gradual edging toward the south.<sup>38</sup>

The vivid prefiguration of the New World is in Campana's poem embodied by "a bronze-colored girl / Of the new race [who] appeared to us / Eyes shining, and clothes in the wind!" (LB 105),<sup>39</sup> which brings to mind the women of Whitman's "A Woman Waits for Me": "They are tann'd in the face by shining suns and blowing winds."<sup>40</sup>

The connections are not only thematic and imagistic. As in Whitman, the use of flowing free verse and of iterated gerunds (highly unusual in Italian poetry)—calando (hiding), varcando (crossing), battendo (beating)—allows Campana to create a vision that dwells in a mythical time between real and unreal, old and new, personal and public, past and present. "Journey to Montevideo," like "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," aims at seizing an eternal moment of stillness and presence from the incessant whirlpool of life. And it is also a Ulyssean journey (notice the "shipwrecked hearts" of line 16 [LB 103])<sup>41</sup> toward a savage shore and an endless prairie, toward what's unknown, primordial, archaic, old and new at the same time.

It is a journey toward an ideal reintegration of the self within a profound, ahistorical, universal harmony that the lyrical I of the *poème en prose* "Pampa" ("Pampas") seems to have reached, having left behind the cultural preconditioning baggage and restraints of old Europe. It is significant that Campana finally chose the *poème en prose* structure here, having first tried to compose the poem in hendecasyllables, as one can see in his 1911–1912 notebook.<sup>42</sup> The lyrical prose of the final version of "Pampas" is characterized by a radical use of minimal punctuation, except for a number of colons, which are in many cases followed by relative pronouns, as in the following quotation:

My thoughts wavered: my memories drifted by in quick succession: that delightfully seemed to submerge and reappear in the distance now and then lucidly beyond the human, as if through a deep mysterious echo, within the infinite majesty of nature. (LB  $_{149}$ ) $_{43}$ 

This is an unusual, unconventional stylistic choice that produces a sort of rhythmical shock, and that also seems to be an odd re-creation of line breaks and enjambments within a prose structure. It is this peculiar struc-

ture that allows Campana to experiment with free verse and the mingling of poetry and prose, while he tends to stay attached to more traditional modes of versification in other poems, such as "Batte botte" ("Pound the Ground") or "La Petite Promenade du Poète" ("The Little Walk of the Poet"). "Pampas" is full of Whitmanian echoes, beginning with the symbol of the Argentinian grassy prairie<sup>44</sup> and the image of a bivouac under the stars. The Italian word used by Campana, *bivacco*, is the translation of "bivouac," which Whitman used in "Bivouac on a Mountain Side":

Stretched on the virgin grass, facing the strange constellations, I was gradually giving in to the mysterious play of their arabesques, delightfully rocked by the muffled noises of the camp . . . Slowly gradually I was rising to the universal illusion: from the depths of my being and of the earth, across the paths of the sky I followed mankind's adventurous journey toward happiness through the centuries. Ideas shone with the purest starlight . . . A star flowing in magnificent flight marked in glorious line the end of a course of history. (LB 149)<sup>45</sup>

The key symbolic elements of this poème en prose are stars and constellations that seem to be comets indicating a new path for mankind. Here, while "for a wonderful instant the eternal destinies alternating immutably in time and space" (LB 151), 46 the moonbeams illuminate the prairie enough to see "an army that hurled throngs of horsemen with their lances couched, sharp-pointed and gleaming" (LB 151).<sup>47</sup> This description resembles "The shadowy forms of men and horses, looming, large-sized, flickering, / And over all the sky—the sky! Far, far out of reach, studded, breaking out, the eternal stars" of "Bivouac on a Mountain Side." But, for Campana, the army is made of "Indians dead and alive" who seem to be offered, in this ahistorical dimension of primordial freedom, the possibility to "reconquer their dominion of freedom. The grasses bent in a light wail at the wind of their passage" (LB 151).49 The grass here, as in Whitman, is a multisymbolic element standing for nature, democracy, connection with the past, and renewal of life. But Campana's use of the word "illusion" is also highly significant. The Italian poet is aware that he will have to go back to Europe, and, most of all, he is aware that even the "new" land of South America bears the signs of history and human violence and injustice. But the dream goes on for a moment, and the lyrical I reaches out for cosmic forces:50

I was on the speeding train . . . the Pampas racing toward me to take me into their mystery . . . Where was I? I was standing: I was standing: on the pampas in the rushing winds, standing on the pampas that were flying toward me: to take me into their mystery! A new sun would greet me in the morning! Was I speeding among the Indian tribes? Or was it death? Or was it life? . . . Stretching out on the iron flooring, concentrating on the strange constellation fleeing among light silver veils: and my whole life so similar to that blind fantastic irresistible rush coming back in bitter vehement streams.... The light of the now impassive stars was more mysterious on the infinitely deserted earth: a vaster homeland had destiny given us: a sweeter natural warmth was in the mystery of the savage good earth. (LB 151; 153)<sup>51</sup>

The poetic persona is presented on a train completely absorbed by the rush, and the hope, of finding a "new sun," a "vaster homeland." The 1911–12 draft of "Pampas," "Nella pampa giallastra il treno ardente" ("The Fiery Train on the Tawny Pampas,") is significantly indicative of a Whitmanian isomorphism of the lyrical I, the continent, and the book: "The fiery train on the tawny pampas / Always ran its triumphant race / And vertiginously upset / The virginal infinite endlessly / Kissed me on the face and the grotesque and enormous / Continent changed its posture immediately endlessly / So my book: and here it: / Here it comes on crippled feet / My sonnet a salute to you / Accept it kindly . . ." (ILS 129). 52 Campana's words are reminiscent of Whitman here, both in his sensual, even carnal, embrace of the continent and in his ultimate entrusting of his book to his readers.

"Pampas," as noted by critic Piero Bigongiari, seems to have a "genetic function, with its labor pains, propitiating the birth of the new man" (377). But the "new man being born" is a "free man" at the end of the text, a man finally born to freedom in the American space:

And it was then that in my final torpor I felt with delight the new man being born: man being born reconciled with nature, ineffably sweet and frightening: delightfully and proudly vital juices being born to the depths of being: flowing from the depths of the earth: the sky like the earth high above, mysterious, pure, deserted of shadows, infinite. I had stood up. Under the impassive stars, on the earth infinitely deserted and

mysterious, from his tent free man extended his arms toward the infinite sky undefiled by the shadow of Any God. (LB 153; 155)<sup>53</sup>

This vitalistic, Nietzschean, mythical regeneration, far from the chains of tradition and morals—and instead, blessed by a reconciliation with nature—contains the quintessence of Campana's perception of "America," and with it, of the renewed, innovative, modern poetry that Italy was still struggling to achieve. Campana's stylistic experimentation here becomes vehement in its feverishly appositive style, reinforced by the use of iterated colons that disconnect the lines only to give way to semantic repetitions that have the opposite effect—a rush toward the craved conclusion.

Carlo Bo and Gabriel Cacho Millet, two critics who have noted (if only briefly) the fact that Campana brought *Leaves of Grass* with him on his journey to Argentina, have rightly observed that Whitman's poetry served as a cherished companion for this journey, but they argue that *Leaves of Grass* did not serve as Campana's guide or model. <sup>54</sup> In contrast, what interests me is the evident closeness of Whitman's and Campana's utopian and mythopoetical perception of American possibility: both poets share the common European myth of "America" as the land of the barbaric, the new, the tabula rasa both in political and poetical terms.

The critic Silvio Ramat offers an attractive hypothesis: playing with the word "chimera" (as defined by Bonaffini, a "hauntingly complex apparition, a fleeting sign of metaphysical opening, present throughout Campana's work and prefiguring the poetic mission itself"),55 he anagrammatizes it as "America." For Ramat, Campana's true object of desire is "America," "the new continent of poetry: the most modern and most primordial one."56 And yet, if "America" does help Campana to find contact with personal freedom and poetic inspiration, innovative diction and experimental strength, he chooses not to root his poetry exclusively in such a real and ideal territory: he wants to create an authentically transnational poetry. As he writes in "Dualism," Argentina has been a place where "for a moment my life came into contact again with the forces of the cosmos" (LB 127),57 but he has to go back "toward the calm oases of old Europe's sensibility" (LB 129); 58 it is no accident that, in several poems about this journey, he insists on the idea of a "round trip." The secret, as the title "Dualism" implies and the poem makes clear, is to be able to profit from both, and perhaps

to understand that a separation does not even exist—it is artificial—and that Europe and America are inevitably interconnected. Another significant poem in this transnational sense is "Fantasia su un quadro d'Ardengo Soffici" ("Fantasy on a Painting by Ardengo Soffici,") where Soffici's work as a painter is intrasemiotically translated into poetry by Campana within an American setting that resonates with tango:

Face, anatomical zigzag that dims The grim passion of an old moon That watches hanging from the ceiling In a tavern American Café chantant: the red speed Of lights rope-dancer that tangoes Ashen Spanish girl Hysterical with lights dissolves in tango: That watches in the American Café chantant: On the hammered piano three Red flames lit up all by themselves. (LB 109)<sup>59</sup>

Campana saw Soffici's painting at a futurist exposition in Florence, at the Libreria Gonnelli, in November 1913. The painting, called Compenetrazione di piani plastici: Tarantella dei pederasti (later destroyed by the artist), was abstract and made no explicit reference to an American and/or Argentinian setting, and yet, as noted by critic Gabriel Cacho Millet, 60 it reminded Campana of a dance he saw in the Argentinian café chantant where he worked as a pianist. Thus, the aesthetic perception of a work of art produced in the context of Italian futurism and, more largely, of European avant-gardes of the beginning of the twentieth century, fused with the poet's experience in another cultural context and became a new, independent, and yet always interconnected, transcultural poem. This exemplifies how Campana's poetry should be read in relation to Whitman's work and to Whitman's idea of "America." More generally, this reminds us of the polyvocal, intertextual dialogue that texts constantly, though sometimes more and sometimes less explicitly, contain and enact.

## Whitman, the Futurists, and the Birth (and Death) of Free Verse

AS MARJORIE PERLOFF has argued, futurism remains a "curiously misunderstood movement," intended—and often negatively discarded—as a monolithic and temporally compact phenomenon of insurrection.¹ We should look at it, instead, as Geert Buelens and Monica Jansen suggest, as a conglomerate of different subgroups and individuals, "precursors, protagonists, and legacies," and also as a movement that was not starkly separated from but, in fact, strongly rooted in nineteenth-century romantic and symbolist sensibilities.² Whitman's reception and reinvention by Italian but also by Russian futurism must be studied by trying to identify a series of phases, spaces, differences, internal contradictions, and lines of continuity.

"Not a destroyer, but a barbarian builder": Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Gian Pietro Lucini, and the Centrality of Free Verse in Early Futurism

Let us start from a precise point in time. In 1913, when Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876–1944) sent a copy of the 1912 anthology *Poeti futuristi* (*Futurist Poets*) to Luigi Gamberale, complete with his autograph dedication, Marinetti thought of the anthology as the culmination of the efforts of more than a decade of literary activity. *Poeti futuristi*, which contained not only the poetry of thirteen other writers but also Marinetti's own "Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista" ("Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature"), had the clear aim, as shown by Davide Podavini, of illustrating and embodying futurism and its principles.<sup>3</sup> The anthology had come out three years after the famous "Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism," which was published in 1909 in a series of Italian newspapers, as well as in the French *Le Figaro*.<sup>4</sup> Cesare Segre notes that in the 1909 manifesto, futurism had been proclaimed as the force that could realize a "complete demolishment of literary language and of established genres"

in response to "the extraordinary changes of industrial civilization." Why did Marinetti send Luigi Gamberale (whom Marinetti called "the author of the magnificent version of *Leaves of Grass*") what he conceived to be the finished product of the futurist iconoclastic force that he had theorized a few years earlier? What did this gesture mean? What did Whitman represent for Marinetti, and for other figures of early futurism, who were close to the movement's official founder?

To answer this question, we must consider the formation of both the movement and its founder, Marinetti. Having been educated for the most part in France, in the very last years of the nineteenth century Marinetti had come close to the French circle of the periodical *La Plume*. There he met, among others, Gustave Kahn and read his experiments in vers libre. Influenced also by the work of Jules Romains, Paul Fort, and Émile Verhaeren, as a young symbolist writer Marinetti was able to appreciate firsthand the phenomenon that Betsy Erkkila in her study of the French reception terms *Whitmanisme*. But Marinetti did not absorb the influence of Whitman solely through French literature.

In 1905, the writer started to be a fundamental mediator between French and Italian culture: he worked for the Parisian magazine Vers et Prose while also founding and maintaining the international magazine *Poesia* in Italy. For Vers et Prose, Marinetti translated several poems by Carducci, Pascoli, and D'Annunzio<sup>7</sup> into French, thus having the opportunity to closely observe the characteristics and methods of three writers who—in different ways, as we have seen—had helped revitalize Italian literature, partly through Whitman's example. Marinetti was bringing to France what he thought was the best, most advanced contemporary Italian poetry. At the same time, Marinetti was bringing more than that. As shown by Eleonora Conti, in what look more like "poetic adaptations" than translations, Marinetti often rendered the poems of the three writers in free verse, increased the number of colloquial terms and exclamation points, and tried to give them more solid, concrete images than in the originals. Helped by the musicality of the French language, he also tried to experiment with sound much more than did the originals. The translations exemplify the line of continuity, but also of innovation, in which Marinetti's use of language initially placed itself, when still far from his later futurist, exasperated, and violent enforcements of novelty.

Fully immersed in this doubly stimulating French-Italian environment, Marinetti started to compare the trajectories of Italian and French literature. In October 1905, he first felt the necessity to promote his survey, "Inchiesta internazionale sul verso libero" ("International Inquiry into Free Verse"), which appeared repeatedly in *Poesia* in the years 1905 to 1908 and was finally collected in a volume published in 1909, where, significantly, it appeared in conjunction with the 1909 futurist manifesto. The question Marinetti asked in the survey was straightforward: what do you think about free verse? Interestingly, Marinetti—who would eventually define himself as the quintessential destroyer, even in a strictly militarist sense—was a mediator, a collector, an archivist who wanted to preserve, order, and classify the responses to a phenomenon, free verse, that had increasingly become more common in the past two decades. Marinetti's aim was also that of strategically legitimizing free verse, to explain it and to ultimately make it more acceptable to common readers.

Not all the writers that Marinetti asked to participate responded with the same zeal and enthusiasm. Kahn and Verhaeren certainly did, but D'Annunzio, for example, dismissed the question altogether. Negri, disappointingly, declared that her ideas about the questions were not clear, but that it seemed to her that the important thing was to always maintain a "rhythmical garment" in poetry. Capuana talked about his personal Italian record with the *Semirhythms*. But there was another Italian writer who took Marinetti very seriously, and whose response deeply inspired him: Gian Pietro Lucini (1867–1914).

A Carduccian enthusiast and (like Marinetti) an expert in French literature, Lucini described free verse in these terms:

[It is] a general desire of the modern and European mind at this point of the century; it is an index of the revolution and evolution that took place in international literature; an episode of what in France was called decadentism and symbolism; an aspect that becomes a systematic insurrection against the "principle of authority," in politics, in the sciences, in the arts. (107)

For Marinetti, who until 1911 called himself an anarchist,<sup>9</sup> the idea of a systematic insurrection against the "principle of authority" must have sounded delightful. And the continuity of this insurrection with the dec-

adentism and symbolism with which he had grown up and from which he had started, was another encouraging signal.

After having traced the influences of the precursors of free verse in European literature, Lucini moves to the Italian ones, agreeing with Capuana about his self-proclaimed record, but also indicating Carducci's progress and Negri's experimentation in *Tempeste*. Then, Lucini names Whitman, and quotes a few passages from the 1855 Preface:

He is not one of the chorus ... he does not stop for any regulation ... he is the president of regulation. [...] The known universe has one complete lover and that is the greatest poet. [...] The greatest poet does not moralize or make applications of morals ... he knows the soul. The soul has that measureless pride which consists in never acknowledging any lessons but its own. 10

This passage is used by Lucini to give a definition of free verse: an absence of regulation, or better, a regulation decided only by the president-poet. And, while Lucini strongly encourages the diffusion of free verse, he makes clear in various parts of his piece that free verse should not become the sole new form of writing poetry, imposed on every new poet.

Unwilling to be part of any school or tradition, while he was close to early futurism and to Marinetti, Lucini never wanted to be labeled as a futurist, and when this movement assumed stronger nationalistic and militaristic tones, Lucini would deny any possible tie that he had with it. But in 1909, when the inquiry on free verse came out, Marinetti was still trying to convince Lucini to join the futurist cause. The year 1909, in fact, also marks the year in which Lucini's collection of poems *Revolverate* (*Revolver Shots*) came out. Significantly, Lucini wanted the title to be *Canzoni amare* (*Bitter Songs*) but Marinetti, who wrote the preface, convinced Lucini to change it. In the preface to the collection, Marinetti writes:

He [Lucini] declared himself not to be a sectarian of Futurism. But if we don't share what we love, we share what we hate. [...] Lucini has strenuously fought against these worn-out forms, in his masterful work *Free verse*, which is undoubtedly one of the highest, one of the most dazzling peaks of human thought. [...] Of Free Verse he has made, in the end, a poetic reason that surpasses the very value of his work and

becomes the canon of every aesthetical evolution of the future. Not a destroyer, but a barbarian builder. [...] Our affinities are vast. If he negates them, he is wrong. And the volume that appears under our flag, only with his threatening and disturbing title, demonstrates this. A gun doesn't get shot unless there is a target to point the gun at. And anyway, all the heroic attitude of this man, in life and in art, proves his aboriginal nature of futurist. Herald of literary evolution, Gian Pietro Lucini has considered Free Verse as the symbol and the most natural instrument of that evolution.<sup>12</sup>

Marinetti's words about Lucini are also perfectly fitting to describe the perception of Whitman's role in this early phase of futurism: "not a destroyer, but a barbarian builder."

Notwithstanding Marinetti's words of conciliation, Lucini, who strongly disagreed with the 1909 manifesto, would soon free himself from this forced association with futurism, <sup>13</sup> and he would not be part of the 1912 anthology that Marinetti sent to Gamberale. But Marinetti's words clarify the centrality assigned to free verse in the early years of futurism and how Marinetti's conception was influenced by Lucini's theorization of this poetic device. Citing Lucini's treatises *Il Verso Libero: Proposta (Free Verse: Proposal)* and *Ragion poetica e programma del verso libero (Poetic Reason and Program of Free Verse)*, also published in 1908, Marinetti assigned them, in fact, even a higher value than Lucini's creative work as a poet. In both the treatises, Lucini discussed and quoted Whitman, whose work deeply shaped his conception of free verse. He even called him "l'Omero dell'oggi" (The Homer of today). <sup>14</sup>

Echoes from Whitman can also be frequently heard in Lucini's own poetry, even though it remains (unlike Whitman) strongly witty and satirical, characterized by a high, extremely educated register. The long poem "Per tutti gli Dei morti e aboliti" ("For All the Gods Dead and Abolished") celebrates the divinity of individuals:

Mystery is for Us, inside Us, in this incalculable quiver, which attracts, judges and rejects, in this passion exalted by all the senses, all the pores of our flesh, in the energy that makes you say and long for,

and bite and pray and die and be born again, hidden God, the causer, the revealer. God is in Us, we carry him as a saint ostensory of Robustness for Beauty and for Will: it is in our value, the red and violet flower for him who is thirsty and is dying of love. God is in Us; nature insures the miracle to this immortality of ours, completes History with the times to Come for the crisis and infinite genesis of the traveling Humanity. Reason stays silent, the Soul affirms itself; it confirms its divinity in its freedom. 15

Lucini's diction is striking for its ability to create a rhythmical, cyclical fluidity. Not only the general theme of this poem and the urgency of the writing, but also the use of anaphoras and of the capitalized, almost theatrically personified words, are highly reminiscent of Whitman. The relevance given to Whitman by Lucini appears in the very last reflections that the Italian writer dedicated to free verse, in a section included in the autobiography Lucini completed just a few years before his death, at age 47, in 1914.

Free verse represents a modern modification of our conscience. [...] Free verse is the long poetic word that explicates and closes a concept in its form, in its warmth, in its harmony, as it is born directly in the mind of a poet. It is the medium through which, without losses or additions, a thought becomes manifest. It must then be painting, sculpture, music, suggestion. I believe I have been the first one to use it in Italy; my first rough attempts can be dated to 1887. [...] The other day on the *Mercure* [de France] D'Annunzio was baptized as the one who introduced free verse in Italy. [...] In France [they] look at the very Italian D'Annunzio: I, the French Lucini, carried the italic tradition to the extreme and, contemporarily to Kahn, I was able to find new metrics in Italy. But who was the father of them all, then? There is somebody who is called Walt Whitman, as if we said Dante, isn't this true? <sup>16</sup>

Here, Lucini, in an outburst of pride, contradicts what he had said in the "International Inquiry" about Capuana being the first Italian writer to experiment with free verse. He also assesses Kahn's equal contribution in France. But, at the same time, he assigns to Whitman the ultimate father-hood, significantly pairing him, after Homer, with Dante.

Lucini's acknowledgment and celebration of Whitman's contribution to modern poetry can be seen as the peak of the gradual process of comprehension of the value of Whitman's forms that had started with Carducci, Negri, D'Annunzio, Pascoli, and Aleramo. The context in which Lucini was writing about Whitman and free verse, by the end of the first decade of the century, had certainly favored this achievement: not only had the French vers libre become an established phenomenon in the international literary scene, but a number of Italian writers, in addition to Lucini himself and to Capuana, had also been increasingly adopting it. Poets Enrico Thovez, Adolfo De Bosis, Paolo Buzzi, Enrico Cavacchioli, and Corrado Govoni, among others, had been using it.<sup>17</sup>

The work of many of these poets was included in the 1912 anthology *Poeti futuristi*. As Podavini notes, the anthology itself is at odds with Marinetti's "Technical Manifesto" that precedes the poems. <sup>18</sup> Principles listed in the manifesto, such as the abolishment of adjectives, the preponderance of the infinitive tense, and the destruction of the syntax, were almost never followed by the writers, not even by Marinetti himself, whose poems, both in French and Italian, are included at the end of the anthology. Adjectives are profusely used in the anthology, and while there certainly is a programmatic insistence on futurist ideas such as velocity, destruction, violence, rebellion, and physical strength, there is also an equivalently strong persistence of decadent and often melancholic tones.

But if there is one unifying element that appears consistently throughout the anthology, it is the long line written in free verse. This technique is everywhere: all thirteen writers employed it, if in different ways. And this is not a coincidence. Free verse had in fact appeared again as the main principle to be followed by the futurists: the anthology also includes a short piece on this subject, authored by Paolo Buzzi. It is in the adoption and remaking of free verse that Whitman's influence on Italian futurism is most pronounced. The futurists also often echoed his use of exclamations and anaphoras and his experimentation with a reinvigorated poetic sound.

Thematically, again, the anthology remains a mix: close to decadent and also classical subjects, but also starting to exalt technology, velocity, and exuberance and to promote militarism. With reference to Whitman, as Marina Camboni has suggested, many futurists would appropriate the poet's emphasis on strength, health, self-confidence, and exuberance, turning them into "[the symbol of] an anarchic, comradely life of rebel youths, thirsty for blood and violence." While these ideas can be found in a number of poems in the anthology, many others show a consonance with Whitman's celebration of life, joy, nature, humbleness.

Ultimately, to retrace Whitman's presence in the anthology that Marinetti sent to Gamberale, there is no better place to start than Marinetti's own poems included in the volume. Marinetti included poems in both French and Italian, mostly taken from a collection, *Destruction* (*Destruction*), that had appeared, in French, in 1904, and that Marinetti had dedicated to Gustave Kahn. In the long poem "Le démon de la vitesse" ("The Demon of Velocity"), Marinetti writes:

O! The identical ebb and flow of the tide that lifts with ecstasy and rupture our hearts madly in love, plunging with delight and then springing out of the bitter foam, like a swimmer launched among the flight of waves that balance themselves to the cadenced rhythm of these tribes of Stars migrating in silence toward the great summer nights!...

[...]

Calm, my soul, your superhuman fever, because we have an exquisite hour to savor, in freedom, as we please, in lounging and loafing with our desires at the will of the pacifying fans of silence!

[...]

Hurrah! . . . let us go, my soul, let us escape beyond the energy of contracted muscles, beyond the frontiers of space and time, out of the possible black, into the absurd blue, to follow the romantic adventure of the Stars! (300–301, 303, 309)<sup>21</sup>

The poetic persona's invocation of the soul, the use of present participles, anaphoras, and the inciting exclamations, the oceanic imagery and the sense of a liberating "lounging and loafing" are all resonant with Whitman's poetry. Marinetti's long poem, divided into sections, is composed of very long lines in free verse, but there is no trace of the abandonment of traditional syntax for which he himself had called in the manifesto that opens the book. Again, this is true also for all the poems that Marinetti included in the anthology. Even the two poems he did not take from his 1904 *Destruction* but from his 1912 *Le Monoplan du Pape* (*The Pope's Monoplane*) are in fact written in free verse, with no attempt to destroy syntax.

The poems taken from *Le Monoplan*, explicitly militaristic in tone, are important as they signal the beginning of Marinetti's full embrace of interventionism and of the celebration of violence. While the idea of "war being the only hygiene of the world" appeared already in the 1909 manifesto, Marinetti gave it fuller force only around 1911, when the Italo-Turkish War exploded. This interventionism, which originated primarily in the ardent nationalism and irredentism that dated back to Marinetti's youth,<sup>22</sup> puts an end to the initial phase of futurism and begins the second, led by the new manifesto "Guerra sola igiene del mondo" ("War the Only World Hygiene"), which was first published in French in 1911 and later, in 1915, in Italian. In this latter, Whitman's name appears once, together with those of Zola, Kahn, and Verhaeren: the writers that Marinetti had loved in his youth remained as tutelary deities, as names to invoke in Marinetti's increasingly exasperated race to modernity. But the interest in free verse had at this point completely ceased: significantly, the expression appears in this manifesto only twice, one with reference to Kahn and once when Marinetti assesses free verse as still useful, but only for futurist theatre.

## Destroying Syntax...and Free Verse, Too: Whitman's Influence on Futurism's Militaristic Phase

The poetry of this new, more fully militaristic futurist phase was more fully theorized in 1913, in the manifesto Distruzione della sintassi: Immaginazione senza fili: Parole in libertà (Destruction of Syntax: Imagination without *Threads: Words in Freedom*). In it, Marinetti declared free verse to be dead: it was time, he argued, to radically pursue the destruction of any conventional syntax and to put the ideas of "images without threads" and "words in freedom" into practice. Words had now to be completely disconnected from each other: they had to become pure electrical flashes; they had to rupture any linguistic order, to shock, explode, and exalt. Interventionism and the official abolition of free verse were too much to tolerate for writer Corrado Govoni. As Lucini had already done, Govoni, whose work was indeed included in the 1912 anthology, abandoned Marinetti and the futurists soon after that volume's publication.<sup>23</sup> The anthology thus remains an important document standing at the crux of futurism's two phases. Similarly, the fact that Marinetti sent the book to Gamberale seems to symbolically put an end to the phase of Marinetti's work that celebrated and legitimized the revolutionary form he had learned from Kahn and from Whitman: free verse. Soon after, he would find the form not revolutionary enough, at least not enough for chanting the war.

If Whitman had deeply influenced the first phase of futurism, primarily with regards to the employment of free verse, what role did he play in this second phase? In 1915, many Italian futurist writers and artists were drafted to fight in the war. Some died in it. Italian futurism preceded, inspired, and then started to align with the nascent fascist movement, with which it then remained affiliated until the end of the regime itself. Literary history has often emphasized this fact only. As Willard Bohn notes, "According to the prevailing myth, [Italian] Futurist poetry concentrated on three subjects, which it explored almost exclusively: modern machinery, warfare, and the Fascist dream. Poem after poem supposedly praised modern inventions, glorified violence, and engaged in political propaganda. In reality [. . .] Futurist poetry was much more diverse." Whitman was certainly, and especially in this second phase, as symbolized by Marinetti's 1915 manifesto, associated with values that were closely tied to fascism: masculinity,

rebellion, deletion of the literary past, and even violence. We can find an example of this in the 1915 poem "Orchestra lirica" ("Lyric Orchestra") by Auro D'Alba (the pseudonym of Umberto Bottone, 1888–1965):

In a single night in a single hour in a single moment freeing oneself from the past need to shout shout at the top of one's voice red purple insults as sharp as arrows at the start punctuation fragile ancient literature—to the sentimental lights awaiting the tardy bourgeois on a remote street corner

AIR air LIFE life

Diagonal hail of arrows thunderbolts—rattlesnakes to arms roofs houses rooms roads cluttered tables rolling in the sky cauterizing the yellow wounds blocking all the doors driven smashing all the barricades at the battlefront

[...]

a vein ruptures violently (light slashing the heart of darkness) a satyr's mouth scalpel on severed carotid current of millions of veins capillaries sonorous tributaries of the

GREAT FUTURE RIVER

blaring fanfares of horns running footsteps automobile rhythm *Motor's* dizzy drumming wings [...]<sup>25</sup>

Since he retains free verse, D'Alba does not fully embrace Marinetti's "words in freedom," but he does experiment with capitalization and with

the visual emergence of words from the blank page and with unorthodox spacing. Here, Whitman's catalogues and energizing diction are echoed, but they are brought to much more extreme consequences. Whitman's yawp has become "purple insults as sharp as arrows," and the image of the "smoke of my own breath" has turned into a capitalized "AIR" that hosts, and launches, these arrows. The cosmic embrace of a very Whitmanian "great future river" is accompanied by the violent rupturing of veins: the river is, in fact, a river of blood.

#### Whitman in Russian Futurism

If it is important not to forget how Marinetti's first Whitman had certainly been that of the French *Whitmanisme*, that of Lucini, Buzzi, and Govoni, that of free verse, we must also remember that this was also the first Whitman of the Russian futurists, who, inspired by the first Italian manifestoes, started their own literary revolution by embracing and echoing Whitman's free verse. The case of Russian futurism, in fact, also proves the existence of a meaningful continuity, more than an abrupt rupture, with the experiments of the symbolist movement that had preceded it. In 1909, Velimir Khlebnikov (1885–1922) wrote in the poem "Зверинец" ("A Zoo"), dedicated to the master of Russian symbolist primitivism, Vyacheslav Ivanov, and therefore, indirectly, to Whitman, who, as we know, had deeply inspired Ivanov:

## O Garden, Garden!

Where the metal is akin to a father who reminds his sons that they are brothers and stops a bloody fight.

 $[\ldots]$ 

Where a camel knows the clue of Buddhism and suppresses the smirk of China.

[...]

Where a hawk's breast resembles the cirrus clouds before a storm. [...]

And that the reason that there are so many animals in the world is that they can see God in different ways.

Where animals, tired of roaring, stand and look at the sky.

[...]

Garden, Garden, where the stare of an animal tells more than heaps of finished books.

Garden.

 $[\ldots]$ 

Where an eagle sits with its neck to the public, the wings oddly spread. Does it daydream it's soaring high in the mountains? Or is it praying? Or just suffering from heat? [...]<sup>26</sup>

As argued by Elena Evich, Khlebnikov's words "the stare of an animal tells more than heaps of finished books" echo many similar passages in Whitman's poems. Evich also establishes further connections between this poem and Whitman's "Song of Myself." But I would go even further and say that Khlebnikov's diction in "A Zoo" anticipates that of Allen Ginsberg: in both poets, in fact, the Whitmanian long lines and oratorical tone become shouted, and almost parodical. There is, in fact, in Khlebnikov, the same dose of humor that will appear in Ginsberg.

Unlike Marinetti, Khlebnikov never abandoned free verse, the device with which he had started his creative revolution. But in the 1910s, Khlebnikov did continue to embark on various other technical and linguistic experiments, especially in the realm of the so-called *zaum*, that is, the transmental or transrational experimental prelanguage or *Ursprache* of phono-symbolism theorized by him and other Russian futurists, aiming to create new forms of nontraditional semantic meaning. Whitman remained a stable, inspiring presence throughout all of Khlebnikov's writing career.

In 1921, in an untitled poem, the Russian poet wrote:

Attentively I read the springtime thoughts of the Divinity in designs on the speckled feet of tree-toads,

Homer shaken by the awful wagon of a great war, the way a glass shakes at a wagon passing outside.

I have the same Neanderthal skull, the same curving forehead as you, old Walt.<sup>28</sup>

The poem makes clear that Whitman is perceived by Khlebnikov in primitivist terms. Whitman is, once again, the DNA-provider: his role is read not in terms of destruction, but of transmission of a genetic heritage of

innovation. For Khlebnikov, Whitman is (just as Marinetti had said of Lucini) "not a destroyer, but a barbarian builder." It is therefore also in this light of experimental construction with free verse, with rhythm, with phono-symbolism and not solely of radical destruction, that a "futurist" Whitman should be read. It is also important to remember how many other futurist and modernist writers were looking at Whitman not only in terms of a general precursor but also with regard to specific, idiosyncratic poetic agendas, often independent of the main futurist declinations. An examination of such encounters will aid in further dispelling the myth of a monolithic futurism. One example is that of British and cosmopolitan writer Mina Loy.

### Mina Loy and Whitman: Sexuality and Polyglossia

Mina Loy (1882–1966), the British-born member of the expatriate community of writers in Florence (from 1906 until 1916, when she migrated to New York) and active contributor to Italian futurism and author of the "Feminist Manifesto," regarded Whitman's depiction of sexuality as exemplary and inspiring for her own poetry. In her Manifesto, Loy wrote that "there is nothing impure in sex—except in the mental attitude to it—."<sup>29</sup> Loy found this idea perfectly exemplified by Whitman's work. As she wrote in a 1915 letter to Carl Van Vechten: "I believe we'll get more 'wholesome sex' in American art—than English after all—though you are considered so suburban—but that is to be expected—we haven't had a Whitman."<sup>30</sup> One example of Loy's work on sexuality can be found in the thirty-four-poem collage "Love Songs to Joannes" (1915–17), first published in the magazine *Others*, in which Loy wrote about her stormy relationship with Giovanni Papini. Sections IX and X of the poem read,

When we lifted
Our eye-lids on Love
A cosmos
Of coloured voices
And laughing honey
And spermatozoa

At the core of Nothing
In the milk of the Moon
Shuttle-cock and battle-door
A little pink-love
And feathers are strewn<sup>31</sup>

Loy is here intent to depict sex in its raw nature. As put by Rachel Blau DuPlessis, the poem is "filled with sex-radical evocations of pleasures both sexual and intellectual, and the equal meeting of the partners on a sexual terrain." Loy also deeply admired another characteristic of Whitman's writing: its same faith in the renovating contribution that a polyglot American language could make to modern poetry. In the essay "Modern Poetry," Loy writes:

It was inevitable that the renaissance of poetry should proceed out of America, where latterly a thousand languages have been born, and each one, for purposes of communication at least, English—English enriched and variegated with the grammatical structure and voice-inflection of many races [...]. This composite language is a very living language, it grows as you speak. For the true American appears to be ashamed to say anything in the way it has been said before.<sup>33</sup>

Loy's observations on poetic language are highly consonant with Whitman's. And her declaration of poetics is also relevant. To Julien Levy she said that "I was trying to make a foreign language because English had already been used." Loy's long poem "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose" (written in 1923–25) employs what Marjorie Perloff calls a "mongrelization of linguistic registers": the deeply relies on foreign words, neologisms, and locutions and syntactic structures taken from African, Latin American, Asian, and various European cultures as well. This creates a polyglossia that reflects not merely Loy's own autobiographical "Anglo-mongrel" ancestry and her condition as an expatriate in adult life, but her programmatic will to radically reinvent poetic language.

These passages from a later poem by Loy, written in 1949, "Letters of the Unliving" also exemplify her linguistic poetics.

```
As erst my body and my reason you left to the drought of your dying:

[...]

Can one who still has being be inexistent?

I am become dumb in answer to your dead language of amor

[...]<sup>36</sup>
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In this love poem Loy employs free, extremely short lines, an archaism (the adverb "erst") in conjunction with an odd, broken, and highly expressive syntax and a Latin and/or Spanish expression (amor). The result is a radical estrangement, and at the same time a powerful revision, of classical lyricism. Certainly, Loy's polyglossia, like that of other high modernists, is different from Whitman's in at least two respects. First, it is less, if at all, oriented toward the building of a collective and polyphonic identity; its focus is, rather, on showing the fragmentation and multiplicity of identity and the limitations of language itself. Second, it derives from a real (multi)linguistic proficiency that Whitman lacked. Whitman's multilingual experiments, in this sense, are clearly less sophisticated, and yet, still fascinating, perhaps also because they don't sound as orchestrated as those of many modernists.

Once again, the futurist reinvention of Whitman proves to be a complex phenomenon, not solely intent to use Whitman's audacity and energetic faith in the future, but also his attempt to establish a radically modern poetic language, capable of giving authentic expression to crucial aspects of individuality, such as one's sexuality. The breadth and variety of Whitman's work, in this sense, gives us hints to the futurists' own breadth and variety.

# Cesare Pavese's Whitman The "Poetry of Poetry Making"

IN THE VERY PERIOD in which the fascist regime had firmly installed itself and the last edition of Gamberale's translation had just come out, the young intellectual, writer, and translator who would become a very influential figure in Italian literature, Cesare Pavese, was just starting his studies in American literature. Pavese was part of a group of emerging intellectuals and critics who persistently looked at, wrote on, and translated from American literature, which they considered a particularly inspiring example to innovate Italian literature. Pavese's role was fundamental in initiating the process that led to the appearance of the new unabridged translation of Whitman by Enzo Giachino, in 1950, and thus he is a central figure in Whitman's Italian reception.

Pavese was born in 1908 in Santo Stefano Belbo, a small village on the Langhe hills, close to Turin. The family moved to the city of Turin when Pavese was still young, and the move proved to be traumatic for him. The nostalgia for a rural life and for contact with nature is a significant and constant theme in Pavese's writings. Thanks to the growth of the FIAT car industry, Turin was at that time feverishly evolving into an industrialized and urbanized city. In the meantime, Mussolini was ascending to power. Pavese's intellectual growth took place in an atmosphere characterized by both rapid changes and a certain cultural and political stiffening.

In the 1920s, Pavese made friends with figures who would become important intellectuals and political opponents to fascism, such as Leone Ginzburg, Giulio Carlo Argan, and Giulio Einaudi. While Pavese's own political commitment was never a fully militant one, in 1935 he did get arrested and sent into exile in Southern Italy because of his affiliation with this group. Especially in connection with these biographical circumstances, the predilection for American literature of Pavese and other Italian literati of this time has commonly been read and described as a strongly ideologi-

cal, anti-fascist phenomenon. But recent studies by John Champagne and Jane Dunnett have convincingly suggested that a more nuanced reading is needed. Contesting the mythical idea of fascism's total autarky, Dunnett has shown how, in reality, both fascists and anti-fascists greatly invested in what she called "the American myth." Dunnet reflects, in particular, on the considerable influence of the American economic model and new modes of consumption on fascist Italy, and she shows how translations of American fiction were found to be lucrative for the fascist economy. John Champagne has argued that American barbarism was a common leitmotif in Italian literary discourse and the cultural climate that both Pavese and Papini admired.<sup>2</sup> These arguments reach the heart of a question often discussed in my study: the phenomenon of a primitivist reading of Whitman's work that was shared by different, if not opposite, figures and movements (consider Marinetti and Khlebnikov or Campana and Papini). Pavese, as we will see, had his own, idiosyncratic understanding of Whitman's primitivism, which needs to be studied in detail.

According to one of the first Italian Americanists, Agostino Lombardo, Italian writers of the 1930s and 1940s like Pavese and Elio Vittorini looked toward America for more than an ideal political system: they also sought a larger ideal of utopian newness; they were recuperating the classical European myth of America as the land of new opportunities.<sup>3</sup> Lombardo's assessment rings particularly true in the case of Pavese, who wrote in various letters to his Italian American friend Antony Chiuminatto and to Professor Giuseppe Prezzolini (who at that time taught Italian language and literature at Columbia University) expressing his desire to move to the United States to start a new life there. Pavese tried to apply to Columbia University and would even consider "marrying the most horrible heiress," as he put it, if only he could get there, as he wrote in a letter to Chiuminatto on April 2, 1932. Unfortunately, Pavese would never move to nor even visit the United States.

Pavese's utopian idea of American life and American literature, which critic Claudio Antonelli defined as "an inspiration for his ghosts," is well expressed in another letter to Chiuminatto, written in 1930:

You Americans are the peach of the world! Not only in wealth and material life but really in liveliness and strength of art, which means thought

and politics and religion and everything. You've got to predominate in this century all over the civilized world as before did Greece and Italy and France. [...] Each of your worthy writers finds out a new field of existence, a new world, and writes about it with such a downrightness and immediateness of spirit it's useless for us to match. [...] [A] good modern European book is, generally speaking, only interesting and vital for the nation which produced it, whereas a good American one speaks to a larger crowd springing, as it does, from deeper wants and really saying new things, not only queer ones, as we at our best are to-day doing.<sup>6</sup>

Pavese had started to satisfy his thirst for American literature when he was barely a teenager by reading Whitman's poetry both in Gamberale's translation and in the original. (He knew English well: he learned it at school and practiced it by keeping up a steady correspondence with his friend Chiuminatto). In a little slip of paper he stealthily passed to his peer Tullio Pinelli during a high school class, he wrote that Whitman's poetry exalted the big forces of the modern world and expressed "love of freedom, love of humanity, justice, energy, enthusiasm." What Pavese immediately liked in Whitman at such a young age was the strength and confidence of tone and what he judged to be the absence of any moralism, which constituted a good opposition to Pavese's own weaknesses, interiorized prejudices, and insecurities, as he described them in his journals and letters from this time.

During his university years, Pavese decided to work critically on Whitman's poetry and even to devote his thesis to it, which he defended in 1930.8 With regards to this study, in another letter to Chiuminatto Pavese wrote: "I succeeded barely in finding somebody I wanted for my degree's thesis about Walt Whitman. (You don't know, I'll be the first Italian to speak at some extent and critically of him. Look me over, I'll almost reveal him to Italy)."9 Pavese was certainly aware that he was not the first Italian to comment on Whitman, but he seemed to enjoy the idea of being one of the first American literature scholars in Italy.<sup>10</sup> Antonio Catalfamo has recently shown how, during their review discussion, the majority of Turinese academics who were part of Pavese's committee opposed the thesis, seeing it as belonging to the critical school of thought of anti-fascist critic Benedetto Croce. <sup>11</sup> Pavese was also encouraged to revise by "italianizing"

the text, which contained a few original passages from Whitman and a large employment of English words, especially in the portion discussing Whitman's use of slang (a topic that particularly interested Pavese). Thus, the thesis, which Pavese had not necessarily composed with an anti-fascist ideology in mind, still was received by most of the Turinese committee as an attempt to undermine the cultural and political status quo.

In addition to Catalfamo, several other scholars have recently discussed Pavese's thesis, spurred by its publication for the first time in 2006. Mark Pietralunga has studied the preparatory materials for the thesis (including excised materials that Pavese's advisor urged the student to take out), now part of the Einaudi collection in the Pavese archives in Turin, finding Pavese's partial translation (six stanzas) from "Passage to India." Pietralunga argues that the document shows that the practice of translation was an essential step in Pavese's critical understanding of Whitman and that the poem chosen by the Italian writer shows Pavese's great interest in what he himself described as the various levels of Whitman's pioneerism (American, historical, poetic, and mystical).<sup>12</sup>

A full first draft of the thesis was recently unearthed by Pavese's descendants, who brought it to the attention of the editorial board of the weekly cultural supplement *Il Venerdì* of the newspaper *La Repubblica*. On May 22, 2020, *Il Venerdì* published two short translations of Whitman that Pavese had initially prepared to include in the thesis. <sup>13</sup> One is an excerpt—with an intriguing excision—from section three of "I Sing the Body Electric." The original English reads:

He was a frequent gunner and fisher, he sail'd his boat himself, he had a fine one presented to him by a ship-joiner, he had fowling-pieces presented to him by men that loved him,

When he went with his five sons and many grand-sons to hunt or fish, you would pick him out as the most beautiful and vigorous of the gang,

You would wish long and long to be with him, you would wish to sit by him in the boat that you and he might touch each other.<sup>14</sup>

Pavese translated the passage quite literally,<sup>15</sup> but he excluded part of the description of the farmer: the words "he had a fine one presented to him by a ship-joiner, he had fowling-pieces presented to him by men that loved

him" do not appear in Pavese's version. Pavese's decision to exclude this explicit depiction of affection between men is disappointing, but not surprising; his thesis and following criticism on Whitman never touch on the poet's homoeroticism. If this was done by Pavese to avoid possible problems with the conservative committee and with the fascist regime, given its official condemnation and persecution of homosexuality, or to follow, more largely, a tendency of the Italian reception that we have seen reflected in the works of Aleramo, Gamberale, and others, remains to be investigated. But while this systematic general omission, as also reaffirmed by the case of this particular translation, shows Pavese's conscious decision not to talk about homoerotic sex in Whitman, it also constitutes an eloquent revelation of the fact that Pavese was indeed aware of the existence of this very element.

Pavese's decision to exclude the homoerotic connotation of the passage is reinforced by his further decision to render the original "you" of the English with the Italian plural personal prounon "voi": the plural is not capable of retaining the suggestion of strong physical intimacy that Whitman's original evokes, especially in the passage "you would wish to sit by him in the boat that you and he might touch each other." Pavese's "voi" distances readers from the possibility of individually meeting the farmer, of touching him and desiring him.

Another passage inserted and translated by Pavese is the fifth stanza of "A Woman Waits for Me," the same one that Campana had emulated in his "Journey to Montevideo":

They are not one jot less than I am,

They are tann'd in the face by shining suns and blowing winds,

Their flesh has the old divine suppleness and strength,

They know how to swim, row, ride, wrestle, shoot, run, strike,

retreat, advance, resist, defend themselves,

They are ultimate in their own right—they are calm, clear, wellpossess'd of themselves. 16

Once again, Pavese translates this vivid passage literally (for example, he retains the English use of the adjectives before the noun in the line "la loro carne ha l'antica divina pieghevolezza e forza"), in a simple and elegant tone.

Esse non sono una iota meno di me, sono abbronzate in volto dai soli splendenti e dai venti soffianti la loro carne ha l'antica divina pieghevolezza e forza esse sanno nuotare, remare, cavalcare, lottare, sparare, correre, colpire, ritirarsi, avanzare, resistere, difender se stesse, esse sono definitive nel loro diritto. Sono calme, serene, ben padrone di sé.

The thesis has also been studied to identify Whitman's influence on Pavese's own literary works. Italianist and comparative literature scholar Gabriella Remigi has, for example, argued that the study, completed when Pavese was only twenty-two years old, already contained Pavese's fundamental ideas about Whitman's poetry. <sup>17</sup> Remigi is also convinced that these ideas are actually at the root of Pavese's own poetics and that they shape his poetry and prose. She notes how Pavese was convinced that every writer is characterized by a certain "monotony" (in terms of style, but also of a repertoire of themes and images) and how Whitman's "monotony" corresponded, in Pavese's opinion, to a use of primitivist images and to a certain sense of a healthy virility and pioneering vitality. In addition to this, Pavese deeply appreciated Whitman's anti-literariness and originality, as well as the general mythopoetic nature of his writing. This mythical dimension of the poetic persona's absorption of the external world, his adoration of daily, ephemeral things, is for Remigi what Pavese really saw as the nucleus of Whitman's writing, but also what would become the nucleus of his own writing. However, I am afraid that Remigi and other critics, such as Catalfamo, Lawrence G. Smith, and Valerio Ferme, 18 who also wrote about Pavese's thesis, may be assigning too much weight to a study written by the extremely young Pavese, at a time during which he was still inexperienced both as a writer and as a critic.

It is true that Pavese's thesis already contains, if in rough form, a few of Pavese's central ideas about Whitman: that he wrote metapoetically, composing what Pavese called a "poetry of poetry making," characterized by "the myth of discovery" and by a poetic persona mostly equivalent to the traditional American figure of "the pioneer." These ideas would return, in a much more refined form, in the essay called "Walt Whitman, poesia del far poesia" ("Walt Whitman, Poetry of Poetry Making") written by

Pavese in 1933.<sup>19</sup> In this article, in addition to what he had done in the thesis, Pavese importantly explains the textual history of the different editions of the *Leaves* and argues once again, and more effectively, that Whitman, despite what had been said, especially by other European critics who tended to depict the American poet as a relatively naïve "idler," had a clear metacognitive and critical awareness that guided his composition and revision processes. For Pavese, the American poet precisely "knew what he was doing," and for this reason "he was his own best critic." Pavese also underlines the biblical and oratorical components of Whitman's verse and praises Whitman's catalogues. Pavese's critical discourse on Whitman was primarily aimed at differentiating itself polemically from those previously produced by other European and Italian critics.

This fresh understanding of the programmatic and self-aware component of Whitman's poetics and formal innovations is undoubtedly Pavese's greatest merit as a critic of Whitman's poetry. This passage from the article can be seen as the culmination in Italy of the long process of coming to terms with Whitman and ultimately recognizing his creative mastery and metatextual modernity:

[Whitman] did not succeed in the absurdity of creating a poetry that could be appropriate to the democratic and republican world and to the principles of the newly discovered land—because poetry is, after all, one and only one thing—but spending his life repeating in various ways his intention, he made poetry out of the intention to make poetry, the poetry of the discovery of a new world in history and of the singing about it. Briefly, to spell out the apparent paradox: he made poetry out of poetry making.<sup>20</sup>

Pavese's idea of a "poetry of poetry making" is also particularly striking as applied to Whitman, when we think of his continuous work of revision, restructuring, and rewriting of the different editions of *Leaves*: a work undergoing constant making and remaking.

But when we come to the actual influence of these ideas on Pavese's own poetics, we should avoid any simplistic formulation. By reading "Il mestiere di poeta" ("The Poet's Craft"), an essay (which Remigi does not take into consideration) written by Pavese in 1934 and inserted as an appendix to the second edition of his collection of poems *Lavorare stanca* (*Working* 

Wearies),<sup>21</sup> it is clear that his writing there is first of all oriented toward a narrative quality that is not a primary element of Whitman's poetry. In the 1933 article "Walt Whitman, Poetry of Poetry Making," Pavese argued that "Whitman thinks in lines, that is to say, that with him every thought, every flash of inspiration, creates for itself a definitive form in which it consists, and does not lapse into a rhythm preexistent or subject to other laws" (153). But in introducing his own poetry in "Il mestiere di poeta" Pavese repeats more than once that he intends "each poem as a story." 22 And even if in *Lavorare stanca* there is an experimentation with a long, free verse that could be tentatively interpreted as, at least partially, Whitmanian and that was highly innovative compared to other Italian poetry of the time, it is also clear that these poems aim, most of all, to be examples of a "calm and clear narrative" (155). This critical piece is also relevant because here Pavese acknowledges how coming into contact with American slang (more directly through the correspondence with Chiuminatto, in which this Italian American friend taught current American slang to Pavese, than through reading Whitman or other American authors) helped convince him of the power of the spoken word (and often even dialect) in his works.

Pavese dedicates a specific passage to the innovative versification of this collection:

I had also created a personal kind of verse, which I swear I did not do deliberately. At that time I knew only that free verse did not suit me very well, because of its capricious and undisciplined exaggerations that usually pass for imagination. I have written elsewhere of the free verse of Whitman, which on the contrary I greatly admired and feared, describing my confused presentiment that so much rhetoric demanded inspiration to bring it to life. I lacked both the inspiration and temperament to use it. I had no faith in traditional metres because of the amount of triteness and unjustified fiddling about which I thought they implied: and, moreover, I had used them too much in parody for me to take them seriously and achieve a rhyming effect which would not strike me as comic.

I knew naturally that there are no traditional metres in the absolute sense, but every poet re-creates in himself the interior rhythms of his imagination. (157-58)

Passages like this confirm the idea that Pavese's elaboration of poetics does contain habitual references to Whitman's poetry: it acknowledges its "lesson," and it keeps it in mind as an example of poetic greatness. And yet, Pavese is also consciously looking for the rhythm and tones of his own imagination. Objectivity of narration, precision of symbolic images, and economy of diction are the principles that animate his style. And if it is true that Pavese, as a critic, found in Whitman a sense of the myth of discovering and "naming" the world, a firm belief in the possibility to *make* reality, and the present, and America, through writing, the poems of *Lavorare stanca* mostly deal with a nostalgic look into a fairly hopeless and depressing present, if not into what appears to be a mythical but absolutely lost past.

If we examine the first two stanzas of "Incontro" ("Encounter") we can observe how the lines unfold by following a precise narration. The rhythm found here is peculiarly Pavesian, as we'll verify by locating it again later on. It is a moderate rhythm, and yet it is quite cadenced by a repetitive and fragmented scheme. But we never find the accumulation and iteration typical of Whitman.<sup>23</sup> Secondly, we can see how nostalgic, resigned, and somehow desolate the general tone is.

These hard hills that made my body and shake it with so many memories, they disclose the wonder of that girl who doesn't know that I feel her and that I can't understand her.

I met her, one evening: a lighter spot beneath the ambiguous stars, in the summer haze. Around was the tang of these hills, deeper than the shadow, and all of a sudden sounded as if coming out of these hills, a voice clearer and harsher yet, a voice from times that are lost.

I created her from the depth of all the things that are dearest to me, and I can't understand her.<sup>24</sup>

The Langhe hills are certainly the main recurrent element of all Pavese's work, both in poetry and prose. The desire to go back to them, to find them intact, unmodified, is a theme that obsesses Pavese, while the fleeting im-

age of a mysterious woman often embodies the poet's search for creative genius, his longing to recover an ancestral voice: "I created her from the depth of all the things / that are dearest to me."

There are, however, certainly a few echoes of Whitman's tones in Pavese's works. This is the case in the novel *Il diavolo sulle colline* (*The Devil in the Hills*) and in some short stories, like "L'eremita" ("The Hermit") or "Lotte di giovani" ("Struggles of Young Men"), which contain scenes, motifs, and images that are strikingly reminiscent of Whitman's. In his novel, Pavese writes:

In the dark, I recalled the project of hiking over the hills with Pieretto, our knapsacks on our shoulders. I did not envy the motor cars. I knew that in a car you cross over but do not come to know a land. "On foot," I imagined myself saying to Pieretto, "that's the real way to get about in the country, you take the paths, you pass by the vineyards, you see everything. It's the same difference as looking at water or jumping in. Better to be a beggar, a vagabond."  $[\ldots]$  That summer I spent an hour or two at the river every morning.  $[\ldots]$  Seated on the thwarts of that boat I developed a taste for the open air and came to understand that the pleasure we get from water and earth is something that continues from the far side of infancy, from the far side of a vegetable garden and an orchard. These mornings I used to think that all life is like a game beneath the sun. [...] Whenever I spent the noon sweating in the boat, then the rest of the day my blood would stay fresh, invigorated by my plunge into the river. It was as if the sun and the living weight of the current had imbued in me a virtue of theirs, a blind force, joyous and stubborn, like that of a tree or a woodland beast.<sup>25</sup>

Pavese's emphasis on the regenerating sanity of the relationship with nature, the sense of walking through it, under the sun, are strikingly reminiscent of Whitman.

In the posthumous collection of ten poems, *Verrà la morte e avrà i tuoi occhi (Death Will Come and It Will Have Your Eyes)*, we find two short poems that strongly recall Whitman's "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" <sup>26</sup> and the ancestral voice of the maternal sea that continually invokes death.

Red earth black earth, you come from the sea, from the arid vegetation, in which are ancient words and bloody striving and geraniums among the rocks you don't know how much you carry of the sea the words and the striving, |...| you hard and very sweet word, ancient because of the blood  $[\ldots]$ ancient indeed like the hands of your mother, the bowl of the brazier  $[...]^{27}$ 

Always you come from the sea, and you have its hoarse voice, always you have secret eyes of running water among brambles, [...] Every time you live again like an ancient thing a wild thing, which the heart already knew and it stops. Every time it is a tear Every time it is death.  $\lceil \ldots \rceil$ Until our heart trembles. They have said one name of yours. Death starts again. Unknown thing and wild you are born again out of the sea.28 Pavese wrote about the city as well. He wrote about the life of factory workers, of prostitutes and employees, about cinemas and cafés and trams and cars, and about the overwhelming feeling of being part of an immense crowd. The influence of Whitman's work on Pavese in this direction has been often overlooked by critics, who have concentrated instead on his appreciation of Whitman's "Arcadian evasion into an ancestral dimension." But in a 1930 letter to his friend Tullio Pinelli, Pavese noted how he shared with Whitman a love for big cities:

Now, I don't know if it's because of the influence of Walt Whitman, but I feel I would give out 27 country places for 1 city like Turin. The country is sure good for a momentary relax of the soul, good for the landscape. To see it and to run away on an electric train! Life, True modern life as I dream it and fear it, is a big city, full of noise and factories, with huge buildings, crowds and beautiful women (it's such a shame that I don't know how to approach them, anyway).<sup>30</sup>

Like Whitman, Pavese embraced city life and its teeming possibilities without being blind to its grime, noise, and fearful dimensions.

Pavese liked Whitman also because of the latter's capacity to write both about urban and rural life, and to mediate between them, which is something Pavese had tried to do both in his real life and in his creative works. But Pavese never recurs to the use of Whitmanian catalogues nor to Whitman's peculiar use of the I, either in the individual or collective Whitmanian sense. Pavese offers instead, sharp, essential, and, once again, quite prosaic and anti-lyrical, descriptions, as in "Pensieri di Deola" ("Deola Thinking"):

Deola spends the morning in the café and nobody looks at her. At this time in the city people are all rushing under the still fresh sun of sunrise. Deola also does not look for anybody, but smokes in peace and breathes the morning.<sup>31</sup>

In this type of passage, Pavese sounds almost like Langston Hughes, another admirer of Whitman who took inspiration from *Leaves of Grass* to focus on ordinary people in urban settings while describing them in relatively flat, prosaic, but undeniably poetic and powerful ways.

Pavese's interest in Whitman's poetry grew at a time when Italian literature was programmatically looking outside itself to try to renew its tones and methods: Whitman's idea of a renovated literature that could be understood by "common" people and that could mythopoetically found modernity was highly appealing to the Italian writer and critic. In Whitman, Pavese saw an invitation to find his own identity as a writer. But on a formal level, Pavese wrote mostly prose. His poetry, even if characterized, for the most part, by a free, long verse, remained anchored to a narrative pattern that is very rarely used by Whitman. And on a thematic level, some allusions to Whitman's poetry can be found, but they remain minimal.

While Pavese's first criticism of Whitman was not overtly anti-fascist, in a later phase the Italian writer did fully embrace an anti-fascist reading of the American poet. Significantly, this happened precisely when Pavese enrolled in the Italian Communist Party in the fall of 1945. Pavese's translation of Whitman's "The Wallabout Martyrs" appeared on December 12, 1945, in the Turinese Marxist periodical *Il Politecnico*, directed by Elio Vittorini. 32 Whitman's original reads:

Greater than memory of Achilles or Ulysses,

More, more by far to thee than tomb of Alexander,

Those cart loads of old charnel ashes, scales and splints of
mouldy bones,

Once living men—once resolute courage, aspiration, strength,

The stepping stones to thee to-day and here, America.<sup>33</sup>

Pavese's translation, significantly inserted in an article about the remains of Nathaniel Bacon and appearing in an important venue for the left-wing reconstruction of Italian culture and democracy after fascism, sounds like a tribute to the sacrifices of the Italian resistance movement, of those partisans who had died to defy fascism and Nazism and to liberate the country from them. Pavese had not actively participated in the fight: when he was called up into the fascist army, he was living in Rome. Because of his asthma, he spent six months in a military hospital. When he went back to Turin, German troops had occupied the city, and most of his friends had left to fight as partisans. Pavese fled to the hills around Serralunga di Crea, near Casale Monferrato, taking no part in the armed struggle that took

place in the area. This translation is Pavese's expression of gratitude to the

resistance martyrs. Accompanied by articles about Hemingway, American music, philosophy in the USSR, and the United Nations Charter signed in San Francisco in June of that same year, Pavese's translation firmly places itself within this strongly anti-fascist ideological sphere.

Three years later, in December 1948, Pavese published, this time in the periodical *Poesia*, a translation from *Specimen Days*, which he entitled "Naturismo ottocentesco" ("Nineteenth-century Naturism"). The accompanying note to the translation summarizes Pavese's understanding and appreciation of Whitman and also his peculiar way of conceiving of Whitman's "primitivism." It reads:

[...] while the impressionist and cataloguing manner [of these pages] conveys also in prose the measure of the stylistic revolution achieved by Whitman [...] the evident, incessant, obsessive references to the notes, the composing, the readings, the scenes, the "poems" show how from literature one cannot escape—and even less so when one declares to be primitive, a prophet, and not a literatus. For Walt, through Naturism, even American democracy became an expressive problem. Which is beautiful and consoling, still today.<sup>34</sup>

Pavese held that Whitman's call for and enactment of primitivism was first and foremost the effect of "an expressive problem," which originated in a quintessential literary, artistic concern: a total rethinking of *how* "America" should be written. Despite what some Italianists have claimed, Pavese did not see Whitman as a primitive, irrational, wild poet. Ultimately, the idea is suitable neither for Whitman nor for Pavese himself, since Pavese's writing is anything but that of a primitivist. The Italian writer's call for contact with one's visceral instincts and individual convictions and passions comes from his nascent awareness of the need to write in new ways in order to found a new, modern Italy. This common "expressive problem" shared by Pavese and Whitman brings us back once again to our starting point: the post-Risorgimento reading of Whitman's poetry.

Whitman's methods and results seemed so relevant and necessary to Pavese for post–World War II Italy that he actively worked for the realization of a new unabridged translation. Shortly before he committed suicide in 1949, Pavese convinced Enzo Giachino to accept the challenge. Pavese's contribution to the Italian reception of Whitman thus remains crucial. If

he touched one of the highest critical peaks in his evaluation and description of Whitman's poetry, the Italian writer was also importantly able to maintain his creative identity and originality. He understood that Whitman was an inspiring force for originality, not for imitation. Or, to use Ruben Darío's words, Pavese had looked at Whitman with this question in mind: "Who do I need to imitate, in order to be original?" 36

# Conclusion

WHEN IT ENCOUNTERED the work of Whitman, Italian literature was in a crucial stage of self-reinvention. Whitman's poetry was first perceived as a broad source of inspiration and then, gradually, as an incisive tool to be used to enact such reinvention. The newly formed Italy, which had for centuries and centuries been separated and divided by firmly circumscribed territories, opposing cultures, and dialects that were almost incomprehensible to each other, needed unity, identity, purpose. And Whitman's poetry resonated with those needs, not because he had *found* or secured the formulas that defined that unity, identity, and purpose, but because his America needed them, just as much: because his poetry was the active enactment of a search for them. While first appreciated mostly in a political sense and often mythicized ideologically, Whitman's America gradually became also the figurative space (and sometimes literal space, as in the case of Carnevali and Campana who journeyed there or of Negri and Pavese who contemplated migrating) in which to put into practice a new language of modernity—a language that could adequately express the present times, the dimension and the urges of today.

This convergence of needs and imaginations was not limited to Italy and America: many other literary scenes were moving and working toward that same expression of modernity. This can be detected by observing how Whitman's work was disseminated throughout the Italian scene after first coming from another country's, and vice versa, often via the direct connections and collaborations of various agents that transmitted, shared, and echoed texts, comments, translations, articles, and so on. But this convergence also manifests itself to a greater degree in the surprising ways in which the impact of Whitman's poetry—and the expressive urge at its base—reverberated in similar thematic and stylistic experiments that span borders, national languages, and poetic traditions, thus forming an

"international community of art," to use the beautiful expression adopted by Betsy Erkkila in the epilogue to her *Walt Whitman Among the French*. This needed and desired modernity was not easy to achieve, and most of all, it did not imply a complete refusal of tradition, even in the case of a group of writers—the futurists—who programmatically tried to force an idea of their own identity as completely cut off from the past. This study has, in this sense, primarily shown how a continuous and fruitful negotiation between tradition and innovation, and not a sudden breakage with the literary past, is at the very heart of the Italian and transnational reception of Whitman.

Whitman did not provide any solution to Italian problems and dissatisfactions: his work was not a medicine or a miraculous unguent. But it provided the honest acceptance, exposition, and actualization of a substantial expressive problem: How to sing a modern identity in constant evolution? How to show and illuminate its complicated, multisided nature? This problem was a fitting starting point for the post-Risorgimento quest to "paint Italy," as Enrico Nencioni asked Italian writers to do in his 1881 article on Whitman. And it was a productive, creative, open question that Luigi Gamberale kept in his mind for decades, continuing to interrogate the ability of his translation to successfully replicate choices and methods the powerful effect of which he could feel, but could not fully grasp. Different creative and political agendas met that same question: from Carducci's search for a new Italian poetic diction to Negri's socialist causes to D'Annunzio's magniloquent wish to innovate to Pascoli's symbolist incursions in the territory of pure sound to Aleramo's writing of spiritual growth and emancipation to Jahier's optimistic and compassionate celebrations of the dignity of all things to Carnevali's search for a new language of otherness to Loy's bold embracing of sexuality—to just name a few examples among those investigated here.

It was not a perfect symbiosis. Many were the oversights, the full mistakes, and the criticisms. The writers who understood Whitman more profoundly, like Pavese, for example, often did not imitate him, as a well-behaved pupil would do, thus showing he had absorbed more fully than others Whitman's first and foremost message as a "teacher": individual originality. But Pavese at the same time disappointingly missed the revolutionary nature of Whitman's depiction of sexuality: an aspect that women writers like Negri and Loy grasped much better, much earlier. Many facets

of Whitman's poetry were downplayed or omitted in problematic ways (consider the homoerotic passages deleted by Aleramo and Gamberale—the latter in a double exclusion of a racial connotation as well, as I have shown).

Many aspects of the Italian reception of Whitman, an area of study that remains vast, need to be investigated further. A number of questions linger. Are there more echoes of Whitman's war poetry to be found in writers that depicted (or perhaps directly fought in) the First and Second World Wars? Is there a more comprehensive understanding of Whitman's celebration of the body, of homoerotic love, sexuality, and pansexuality more generally, to be found in the critical and/or creative production of perhaps "minor" figures, whose work should be excavated and brought back to light? And if not, what are the historical and cultural reasons for such a general neglect of a theme that was so crucial in Whitman? Are there other translations, perhaps unpublished or published only locally by small publishing houses, that went unnoticed? Is it possible to map the different local responses to Whitman, especially in "minor" cities and regions that remained quite isolated from the main cultural centers of Milan, Rome, Turin, and Florence? Could we find out more about the responses to Whitman of common readers, which proved so telling in the case of Gamberale's correspondence, perhaps by analyzing local periodicals or reading club reports? And at the same time, could writers' private libraries and archives holding manuscript notes and correspondence be further explored, to find out to what degree Whitman was read and discussed even by writers who did not display an appreciation of his work in their writing? And how about studying the responses to Whitman in Italian popular culture, cinema, music, the visual arts—areas that this study did not take into consideration? And, finally, while this book did make a conscious effort to recover and highlight the responses to Whitman of women writers and critics, more work should definitely be done, in parallel to the larger and crucial task of recovering women's contribution to Italian literature in the past two centuries.

More can also be done with regard to finding further connections between the Italian scene of Whitman's reception and his reception in other international scenes, both in terms of discovering new evidence of the direct collaboration between critics and translators, but also in broader comparative and intertextual terms. My linguistic and literary expertise

could only cover a few languages and countries: future studies will illuminate areas that for now remain only partially—if at all—explored. Such studies will make the general picture much more complete.

Obviously, an analysis of Giachino's 1950 translation and its impact on the Italian poetry that followed remains to be undertaken. The abundance of the Italian responses to Whitman in the second part of the twentieth century and the first two decades of the twenty-first is in fact as stunning as that of the first part of the twentieth century. This response has also been driven by a series of new selected translations, some of which were carried out by poets like Roberto Mussapi, Giuseppe Conte, and Ariodante Marianni. This mark of appreciation thus far culminates with Mario Corona's 1996 translation of the 1855 edition and Igina Tattoni's 2007 translation of the 1856 edition, and with a new complete translation of the deathbed edition, again by Corona, in 2017. A very recent publication is Diego Bertelli's translation of *Live Oak*, *With Moss*, published by Tunué in 2019.

The creative work of the aforementioned poets who have translated Whitman should certainly be investigated in the search for consonances, but this is true more generally for Italian poetry of the last seventy years, in which Whitmanian echoes can often be detected, starting, for example, with the highly metapoetic and linguistically experimental collection of poetry Laborintus, published by Edoardo Sanguineti in 1956. Here, a multiplied lyrical I declares, in a playful tone (also highlighted by the ambivalence of the Italian verb "sono" that can be used for both a singular and a plural subject): "io sono io sono una moltitudine" (I am I am a multitude). And, as it happened in the first phase of the reception, Whitman's name is also invoked directly. Like Aleramo had done more than a hundred years earlier, poet Mariangela Gualtieri links Whitman with Francis of Assisi in her 2015 poem "Io ringraziare desidero" ("I Wish to Thank"). In a move similar to Aleramo's, Gualtieri parallels Whitman with Francis of Assisi in a poem that is an ecstatic chant of universal gratitude and wonder, a chant composed by many voices, and one that is continually being rewritten:

I wish to thank For Borges For Whitman and Francis of Assisi For Hopkins, for Herbert Because they already wrote this poem, Because this poem is inexhaustible, And it changes according to the people And it will never reach the last line.<sup>4</sup>

While these are only two isolated examples, it is my impression that future studies should surely be able to detect a rich creative reception. The knowledge of Whitman in Italy has in fact been, since Giachino's translation appeared in 1950, in rapid escalation. The institutionalization of American literary studies in the 1950s and 1960s strongly contributed to an increase in the general interest in American literature and therefore also in Whitman. The reevaluation of Whitman by the Beat Generation poets in the United States revived the interest of many Italian critics and writers who followed the Beat movement closely and with admiration: think, for example, of the fervent work of translation of Fernanda Pivano from the production of Allen Ginsberg. The Ginsbergian mediation in the understanding and re-elaboration of Whitman's poetry has also helped Italian writers and critics to grasp the homoerotic component of Whitman's poetry much more deeply. This latter facet of Whitman's poetry, in fact, has been and remains on the rise in the recent and current Italian reception.<sup>5</sup>

In the last seventy years, there have been twenty-one new selected and complete translations of Whitman into Italian, including the ones I mentioned: an average of about one new translation every three years. In 2017, when the major Italian publishing house Feltrinelli published a study that reported a ranking of the books of poetry selling the highest number of copies throughout the country (across all publishing houses) in the year of 2016–17, Whitman's 1855 Leaves of Grass (in the Feltrinelli edition translated by Alessandro Ceni in 2012)6 ranked number twelve. If Whitman came after Italian poet Alda Merini (number one on the list), Charles Baudelaire (number two), or Pablo Neruda (number eight), he was still in a much more advanced position than such beloved Italian writers as Giacomo Leopardi, Cesare Pavese, and Eugenio Montale. And, coming after Edgar Lee Masters (number five on the list), Whitman was the second American poet to be chosen by Italian poetry readers. Whitman continues to be heard in Italy, and he continues to aid in the new writing of that common "inexhaustible poem" evoked by Mariangela Gualtieri.

The fact that Whitman's work found—and keeps finding—in Italy such warm hospitality can certainly be attributed to a series of historical, political, and cross-cultural affinities between Italy and the United States, especially in the phase that followed the Second World War but also in the last part of the nineteenth and initial part of the twentieth century, due largely to the widespread migration of Italian people to the United States. But, as this book has meant to show, this success must also be attributed to the fact that, more than most other international writers, Whitman has been able to inscribe and represent a space of creative freedom and reinvention that Italian writers fervently needed and desired.

## NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

- 1. See Walter Grünzweig, "Collaborators in the Great Cause of Liberty and Fellowship: Whitmania as an Intercultural Phenomenon," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 5, no. 4 (1988): 16.
- 2. I am referring to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's foundational theorizations about world literature and the circulation and reception of literary works on a global scale. See K. J. Moorhead, ed., *Conversations of Goethe with Johan Peter Eckermann*, trans. John Oxenford (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1998), 165.
- 3. See Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (New York: Verso, 2013). In the book, Apter denounces the "bulimic" risk often run by world literature studies of assuming and spreading a ready and easy transferability across cultures.
- 4. See Zhang Longxi, From Comparison to World Literature (New York: SUNY Press, 2014).
- 5. Another useful resource is Gay Wilson Allen's *Walt Whitman Abroad* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1955). Allen's book consists of a collection of critical essays about Whitman written by critics, writers, and scholars from different countries.
  - 6. See Walter Grünzweig, "Collaborators in the Great Cause," 1, 3.
- 7. See Betsy Erkkila, Walt Whitman Among the French: Poet and Myth (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 237.
- 8. See M. Wynn Thomas, *Transatlantic Connections: Whitman U.S., Whitman U.K.* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005), xiv.
- 9. Delphine Rumeau, Fortunes de Walt Whitman: Enjeux d'une réception transatlantique (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019), 709.
  - 10. Rumeau, 287.
- 11. McCain's article was published in *Italica* 20, no. 1 (March 1943): 4–6. As McCain indicates, in 1918 Harry Nelson Gay published a translation into Italian of Harrison S. Morris's biography of Whitman, and in 1922 Kenneth McKenzie published a series of lectures on American literature, in which he also discussed Whitman's poetry.
  - 12. Published in Aut Aut 39 (May 1957): 244-63.
- 13. The categorization of Meliadò Freeth's work as a "thesis" perhaps requires explanation. While "thesis" in the American education system is usually reserved for the final output of an undergraduate or master's research project, it has a broader applicability in Italy. Her thesis was comprised of nearly two hundred pages of work, the result of months (or more) of dedicated research, and it represented the culmination of her college education. Such work is not, however, part of a graduate education in the same sense as a doctoral dissertation in the United States. Doctoral programs were not formed in Italy until 1980, with a distinction between undergraduate and master's degrees coming only in 1999. Most theses written prior to 1980, while technically written by undergraduate students (as we would

call them in the United States), were therefore longer and more thoroughly researched studies, perhaps on par with a master's thesis in the U.S. system.

- 14. The article appeared in the journal *Studi Americani* 7 (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1961): 43–76.
- 15. For example, while dedicating an extensive part of the dissertation to Giovanni Papini, Grippi completely excludes Piero Jahier.
  - 16. See note 13 in this chapter.
- 17. An important benchmark study for me, in this sense, is Kenneth Price's *Whitman and Tradition: The Poet in His Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).
- 18. See T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *The Egoist* VI, no. 4 (September 1919): 55.
- 19. Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas* (1871), in *Complete Prose Works* (Philadelphia: McKay, 1892), 229. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at www.whitmanarchive.org /published/other/CompleteProse.html.
  - 20. See Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture (New York: Routledge, 1994), 17.
- 21. See Jacques Rancière, Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art (New York: Verso, 2013).
- 22. See Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).
- 23. See Alan Trachtenberg, "Walt Whitman: Precipitant of the Modern," in Ezra Greenspan, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Walt Whitman* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
  - 24. Erkkila, Walt Whitman Among the French, 5.
  - 25. See Giuliano Procacci, Storia degli Italiani (Roma: L'Unità, 1991), III, 390.
  - 26. M. Wynn Thomas, Transatlantic Connections, 171.
- 27. See Bruna Conti, ed., Sibilla Aleramo, Dino Campana: Un viaggio chiamato amore; Lettere 1916–1918 (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2015), 9.
- 28. Regarding the nature of the thesis in the Italian educational system at this time, see note 13 in this chapter.
- 29. See Agostino Lombardo, *La ricerca del vero: Saggi sulla tradizione letteraria americana* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1961), 17–27.

- 1. For more on Ragusa Moleti, see Giovanni Saverio Santangelo, "Girolamo Ragusa Moleti: Un letterato ribelle tra idealismo desanctisiano e 'realismo romantico,' "in "Porquoi la littérature?" Esiti italiani del dibattito francese, ed. Laura Restuccia (Palermo: Palumbo, 2003), 111–230; Giovanni Gentile, Il tramonto della cultura siciliana (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1919), 176. On Ragusa Moleti and Whitman, see Giuseppina Calò, "La poesia americana e Walt Whitman nelle riviste letterarie siciliane dell'Ottocento" (PhD diss., Università degli Studi di Palermo, 1990), and Irene Manzone, "Walt Whitman and Girolamo Ragusa Moleti" (undergraduate thesis, Università degli Studi di Palermo, 1988).
- 2. See Girolamo Ragusa Moleti, "I fili d'erba di Walt Whitman," *Flegrea* V (October 5, 1899): 431–52.

- 3. Thérèse Bentzon, "Un poète americain—Walt Whitman," Revue de Deux Mondes (June 1, 1872): 565–82.
- 4. Charles S. Grippi, "The Literary Reputation of Walt Whitman in Italy" (PhD diss., New York University, 1971), 4.
  - 5. Rea McCain, "Walt Whitman in Italy," Italica 20, no. 1 (March 1943): 6.
  - 6. Mariolina Meliadò Freeth, "Walt Whitman nella cultura italiana," 40.
- 7. See Roger Asselineau, "Whitman in France and Belgium," in Walt Whitman and the World, ed. Gay Wilson Allen and Ed Folsom (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1995), 234.
  - 8. Girolamo Ragusa Moleti, Carlo Baudelaire (Palermo: Gaudiano, 1878).
- 9. See Emile Blémont, "La poésie en Angleterre et aux Etats-Units, III, Walt Whitman," Renaissance Litteraire et Artistique, no. 7 (June 1872): 54–56; no. 12 (July 1872): 90–91.
- 10. Henri Cochin, "Un Poète Americain: Walt Whitman," *Le Correspondant* (November 25, 1877): 634–35.
  - 11. Bentzon, 577-81.
- 12. See I. Chistova, "Turgenev and Whitman," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 13 (Summer 1995): 68–72.
- 13. See F. Lyra, "Whitman in Poland," in Allen and Folsom, Walt Whitman and the World, 296–97.
  - 14. See Ragusa Moleti, "I fili d'erba di Walt Whitman," 431-34.
- 15. See Girolamo Ragusa Moleti, "Le *Foglie d'erba* di Walt Whitman," *L'Ora* (September 1901): 1–14; "Le Poesie di Walt Whitman," *L'Ora* (February 1902): 9–10; "Walt Whitman," *L'Ora* (November 1902): 16–17; "Al 'ma' di un lettore," *L'Ora* (February 1902): 16–17.
- 16. See Enrico Nencioni, "Walt Whitman," Fanfulla della domenica 1, no. 21 (December 7, 1879).
- 17. See Eugenio Montale, "Il cammino della nuova poesia," *Il Corriere della Sera* (January 24, 1951), reproduced in *Sulla poesia*, ed. Giorgio Zampa (Milano: Mondadori, 1976), 465–71. My translation.
- 18. For Nencioni's critical influence on the Italian literary scene of the time, see *Le più belle pagine di Enrico Nencioni*, ed. Bruno Cicognani (Milano: Garzanti, 1943), and Benedetto Croce, *La letteratura della nuova Italia*, vol. 2 (Bari: Laterza, 1943), especially the first half. With reference to Nencioni's role in the diffusion of Pre-Raphaelitism in Italy, Giuliana Pieri argues that "any attempt at tracing the exact pattern of the Italian diffusion of Pre-Raphaelitism inevitably leads to Nencioni, who sits at the centre of the web." See Giuliana Pieri, *The Influence of Pre-Raphaelitism on Fin-de-Siècle Italy: Art, Beauty, and Culture* (London: Maney, 2007), 44.
- 19. For more on Nencioni's specific interests and aesthetics, see Isabella Nardi, *Un critico vittoriano: Enrico Nencioni* (Perugia: Università degli Studi di Perugia, 1985).
- 20. This becomes particularly evident when studying Nencioni's correspondence and by looking at his close relationship and correspondence with Carlo Placci, a young writer who had a privileged place within Florentinian high society. Much of this correspondence is available at the Marucelliana Library in Florence. For Nencioni's cultural and political ideology, and for his role in the Florentinian scene, also with reference to the reception of Whitman in it, see Silvio Balloni, "Walt Whitman nella Firenze dei Macchiaioli," *Antologia Viesseux* 18, no. 52 (2012): 43–59.

- 21. As Rossetti puts it in his prefatory notice: "Certain faults are charged against him, and, as far as they are true, shall frankly stand confessed—some of them as very serious faults. Firstly, he speaks on occasion of gross things in gross, crude, or plain terms. Secondly, he uses some words absurd or ill-constructed, others which produce a jarring effect in poetry, or indeed in any lofty literature. Thirdly, he sins from time to time by being obscure, fragmentary, and agglomerative—giving long strings of successive and detached items, not, however, devoid of a certain primitive effectiveness. Fourthly, his self-assertion is boundless; yet not always to be understood as strictly or merely personal to himself, but sometimes as vicarious, the poet speaking on behalf of all men, and every man and woman." See "Prefatory Notice," in *Poems by Walt Whitman*, ed. William Michael Rossetti (London: John Camden, 1868), available on the Walt Whitman Archive at https://whitmanarchive.org/published/books/other/rossetti.html.
- 22. Enrico Nencioni, "Nuovi orizzonti poetici," Fanfulla della domenica 3, no. 34 (August 21, 1881).
- 23. I am indebted to Marina Camboni, who brought attention to these ideas in a talk she gave during the Third International Walt Whitman Week, held at the University of Macerata in June 2010.
- 24. Kirsten Harris, Walt Whitman and British Socialism: "The Love of Comrades" (London: Routledge, 2016), 18.
- 25. Samuel Graber, "Twice-Divided Nation: The Civil War and National Memory in the Transatlantic World" (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 2008), 466.
  - 26. Harris, Whitman and British Socialism, 4.
- 27. Rossetti, "Prefatory Notice," in *Poems by Walt Whitman*, available on the Walt Whitman Archive at https://whitmanarchive.org/published/books/other/rossetti.html.
- 28. M. Wynn Thomas, "Walt Whitman and Risorgimento Nationalism," in *Literature of Nation and Region*, ed. Winnifred M. Bogaards (St John's: University of New Brunswick, 1996), 352. On this, see also Larry J. Reynolds, "Revolution, Martyrdom, and *Leaves of Grass*," in his *European Revolutions and the American Literary Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 148; Albert Boime, "*Leaves of Grass* and Real Allegory: A Case Study of International Rebellion," in *Walt Whitman and the Visual Arts*, ed. Geoffrey M. Sill and Roberta K. Tarbell (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 53–84.
  - 29. Rossetti, "Prefatory Notice," in Poems by Walt Whitman.
  - 30. Pieri, Influence of Pre-Raphaelitism, 5.
  - 31. Placci's words are reported in Pieri, 7-8.
  - 32. Pieri, 172.
- 33. My translation. See Michelangelo Buonarroti, Rime di Michelagnolo Buonarroti, ed. Michelangelo Buonarroti II Giovane (Firenze: Appresso I Giunti, 1623). Edward Whitley argues, with reference to Rossetti's use of the epigraph from Michelangelo, in conjunction with other epigraphs and the book cover design: "Poems by Walt Whitman also includes several devices which serve to bring Whitman safely across the Atlantic and into the arms of the European literati. Epigraphs from Emanuel Swedenborg, Thomas Carlyle, and Maximilien Robespierre seem to suggest that Europe as a whole—from Scandinavia and the British Isles to the Continent itself—is ready to embrace Whitman, while the juxtaposition on the title page of a drawing of the world with the American continents facing forward

placed underneath a quote from Michelangelo suggests years before F. O. Matthiessen that an American Renaissance was underway." See Edward Whitley, "Introduction to the British Editions of *Leaves of Grass*," available on The Walt Whitman Archive at https://whitmanarchive.org/published/books/other/british/intro.html.

- 34. Thomas, "Walt Whitman and Risorgimento Nationalism," 359.
- 35. Nencioni's various translations of Whitman's poems appear both in his articles on the American poet and also in a 1904 volume dedicated to foreign literature that came out after Nencioni's death: L. Morandi and D. Ciampoli, eds., *Poeti stranieri* (Città di Castello: Lapi, 1904), vol. 2. (Here, Whitman appears only via his war poems in the translations of Contaldi and, in two cases, of Nencioni.) Nencioni's translations are prose-like (also in the way they are assembled on the page) and quite literal, often employing a high register.
- 36. See Enrico Nencioni, "Il poeta della guerra americana," *Nuova Antologia*, 3rd ser., vol. 36, bkt. 23 (December 1, 1891): 452–68.
- 37. Nencioni, "Nuovi orizzonti poetici." A very similar appreciation of Rossetti's value as a critic appears as well in Nencioni's cited 1879 article on Whitman in the *Fanfulla*.
- 38. See Enrico Nencioni, "Mazzini e Whitman," *Fanfulla della domenica* 6, no. 16 (April 20, 1884).
- 39. See Rossetti's letter to Whitman of March 31, 1872, in *Selected Letters of William Michael Rossetti*, ed. Roger W. Peattie (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 286.
- 40. It must be noted that by 1884 Nencioni had edited a collection of the literary writings of Giuseppe Mazzini (see Enrico Nencioni, ed., *Gli scritti letterari di Giuseppe Mazzini* [Roma: Commissione Editrice, 1884]).
- 41. See Gustavo Strafforello, *Letteratura americana* (Milano: Hoepli, 1884). The section dedicated to Whitman is on pages 144–45.
- 42. See Humorous Poems Selected and Edited by William Michael Rossetti (London: E. Moxon, 1872), 471–73.
- 43. Carducci argued that he had been thinking about his *Odi Barbare* since he was young, especially after reading German poetry. See Carducci's letter to Severino Ferrari, published in *La Lettura* in April 1908. From my research, it appears that Carducci did not read Whitman earlier than 1879, as I discuss later in this chapter, while the first *Odi Barbare* were published in 1877. It should also be considered that the most probable text of Whitman's poetry available to Carducci in these early times of Whitman's Italian reception would have been Rossetti's edition, which does not include "Song of Myself" with its passage containing the "barbaric yawp."
- 44. See Edoardo Sanguineti, "Introduzione," *Poesia italiana del Novecento* (Torino: Einaudi, 1969), xxxix–xl.
  - 45. See Rumeau, Fortunes de Walt Whitman, 69. My translation.
  - 46. See Rumeau, 58-59.
- 47. It is important to note that Ragusa Moleti was also an admirer of Carducci, to whom the Sicilian critic wrote on August 19, 1878, saying that he considered him "the greatest living Italian poet" and asking him for advice about his own poetry, which he sent along. The letter is part of the correspondence collection that I consulted at Carducci's house, in Bologna.
  - 48. Original: "L'Italia ha bisogno di risanarsi." The December 7, 1879, letter from Carducci

- to Nencioni is reported in the pamphlet by Giuseppe Lesca about Carducci's readings of Whitman, *Carducci lettore di Whitman* (Bologna: Cooperativa Tipografica Azzoguidi, 1937), 4.
- 49. All the letters from Carducci to Nencioni that I discuss here are available in the special collections section at the Biblioteca Marucelliana, in Florence.
  - 50. Nencioni, "Nuovi orizzonti poetici." My translation.
- 51. The article also contains Nencioni's translation of Whitman's "Salut au Monde!," thus emphasizing the universal value of Whitman's "classical" voice.
- 52. Among the various remaining notebooks that Carducci used for his English exercises, also available for consultation at his house, there is not a single mention of Whitman, so he must have translated the *Leaves* only orally, as he declares.
- 53. For more on this, see Torquato Barbieri, "I maestri d'inglese di Giosuè Carducci," *Studi e problemi di critica testuale* 15 (1977): 163–75.
- 54. Letter from Carducci to Nencioni of August 26, 1881. My translation. The letter is also reproduced in Lesca, and in Giosuè Carducci, *Lettere: Volume 13 (1880–1882)* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1951), 172.
  - 55. Letter from Carducci to Nencioni of August 26, 1881. My translation.
- 56. The two friends would, in fact, constantly offer feedback about each other's creative work. While Nencioni was mostly a critic, he also published a few collections of conventional poems characterized by an extensive use of regular metrics and high registers and, often, by a melodramatic tone and an almost obsessive focus on death. See for example, his *Poesie; Lo spedale; Un paradiso perduto; Varie* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1880).
- 57. Original: "Andava il fanciullo con piccolo passo di gloria, / superbo de l'amore materno, percosso nel core / da quella festa immensa che l'alma natura intonava. [...] e su le cime e al piano, per l'aure, pe' rami, per l'acque, / correa la melodia spiritale di primavera; / ed i peschi ed i meli tutti eran fior' bianchi e vermigli, / e fior' gialli e turchini ridea tutta l'erba al di sotto, / ed il trifoglio rosso vestiva i declivii de' prati, / e molli d'auree ginestre si paravano i colli, / e un'aura dolce movendo quei fiori e gli odori / veniva giú dal mare; nel mar quattro candide vele /andavano andavano cullandosi lente nel sole, / che mare e terra e cielo sfolgorante circonfondeva." See Giosuè Carducci, *Nuove odi barbare* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1882), 22. My translation.
- 58. Original: "Ricordo. Il sole fra i rossi vapori e le nubi / calde al mare scendeva, come un grande clipeo di rame / che in barbariche pugne corrusca ondeggiando poi cade. [...] Io languido e triste (da poco avea scosso la febbre / maremmana, ed i nervi pesavammi come di piombo)." See Giosuè Carducci, *Nuove odi barbare*, 85. My translation.
  - 59. See Rumeau, Fortunes de Walt Whitman, 82.
- 60. See Stephen Stepanchev, "Whitman in Russia," in Allen and Folsom, Walt Whitman and the World, 302.
- 61. See Adrian Wanner, *Russian Minimalism: From the Prose Poem to the Anti-Story* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003), 32.
  - 62. See Chistova, "Turgenev and Whitman," 70.
- 63. Original: "Последний день июня месяца; на тысячу верст кругом Россия— родной край. Ровной синевой залито всё небо; одно лишь облачко на нем—не то плывет, не то тает. Безветрие, теплынь . . . воздух—молоко парное! Жаворонки

звенят; воркуют зобастые голуби; молча реют ласточки; лошади фыркают и жуют; собаки не лают и стоят, смирно повиливая хвостами. [. . . ] Из окна выглядывает круглолицая молодка; смеется не то их словам, не то возне ребят в наваленном сене. Другая молодка сильными руками тащит большое мокрое ведро из колодца.... Ведро дрожит и качается на веревке, роняя длинные огнистые капли. Передо мной стоит старуха-хозяйка в новой клетчатой паневе, в новых котах. Крупные дутые бусы в три ряда обвились вокруг смуглой худой шеи; седая голова повязана желтым платком с красными крапинками; низко навис он над потускневшими глазами. Но приветливо улыбаются старческие глаза; улыбается всё морщинистое лицо. Чай, седьмой десяток доживает старушка . . . а и теперь еще видать: красавица была в свое время! [. . . ] — Ай да овес!—слышится голос моего кучера. О, довольство, покой, избыток русской вольной деревни! О, тишь и благодать!" Ivan Turgenev, "Деревня" ("Derevnya") in Стихотворения в прозе (Stichotvorenya v proze; 1882), available online at https://www .gutenberg.org/files/8935/8935-h/8935-h.htm#link2H 4 0005. Translation by Constance Garnett, in Ivan Turgenev, Dream Tales and Prose Poems (London: William Heinemann, 1906), 239–42. Garnett incorrectly translated the original "июня" ("of June") as "of July." I corrected the error in my reproduction of the translation.

64. Original: "о великий, могучий, правдивый и свободный русский язык!" Ivan Turgenev, "Русский язык" (Russky Yazyk), in *Стихотворения в прозе*, available online at http://www.ilibrary.ru/text/1378/p.51/index.html. My translation.

65. Other cases of writers contemporary to Carducci and Turgenev can be added for a wider evaluation of how Whitman stimulated poetic modernity in these very early years of the Italian reception. Just to cite an example, as discussed by Erkkila in her study of the French reception, translating Whitman clearly had the effect of creatively liberating Jules Laforgue, encouraging him to be who he really was as a writer. It was, in fact, at this time that Laforgue decided to abandon his conventional poetry writing and to switch to a much more innovative free verse, to use words of ordinary provenance and urban origin, and to create neologisms. Numerous echoes of Whitman can be found in Laforgue's late poetry. See Erkkila, Walt Whitman Among the French, 70-77; and also Rumeau, Fortunes de Walt Whitman, 151. Notably, a less productive heritage—at least in aesthetic and formal terms—seems to have been left by Whitman in South America modernismo, as also assessed by Alegría, "Whitman in Spain and Latin America," in Allen and Folsom, Walt Whitman and the World, 80; Enrico Mario Santí, "The Accidental Tourist: Walt Whitman in Latin America," in Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?, ed. Gustavo Pérez Firmat (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 156-76; Rumeau, 229-53. Alegría has argued that "Spanish American modernist poets did not really grasp the essence of Whitman's message. Whitman's voice often is present in their work, but seldom his spirit. To them, Whitman was mainly a legend." Similarly, Santí has said that Latin American modernistas "invoke rather than imitate Whitman. In their works Whitman tends to be a *theme* rather than a stylistic or rhetorical model." Rumeau has emphasized the "geographical" aspect of the South American reception: the perception of Whitman as the poet of the New World who rebels to the European cultural dominion. I would add that, in general, the diction of the modernistas remains close to the Romantic tradition, with a widespread evocation of classic mythology and of exotic, eastern elements. Refined adjectives and foreign words

are often used to exhibit personal erudition rather than in a truly innovative sense. Rubén Darío's and Leopoldo Lugones's employment of foreign words, for example, are far from Whitman's use of them to experiment with pure sound and with the acognitive, sensory aspect of language.

- 1. The only existing monograph on Gamberale is Antonella Iannucci's *Luigi Gamberale e la cultura italiana e europea* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1997). In it, Iannucci edits a selection of Gamberale's correspondence and discusses the translator's life and work based on these materials.
  - 2. See Iannucci, 23.
- 3. The manuscript drafts available at the library in Agnone are mostly from later years (early twentieth century and on to Gamberale's death in 1929).
- 4. See, for example, Meliadò Freeth, "Whitman nella cultura italiana," 85–86; Cambon, "Walt Whitman in Italia," 251–52.
- 5. Iannucci, in her Luigi Gamberale e la cultura italiana e europea tra Otto e Novecento, reports on the presence of Rossetti's edition in Gamberale's private library. Iannucci saw it in the Archives of the Public Library of Agnone, Italy (64). But Iannucci saw the physical book in 1996. The collection in which the private library was held was moved to the main building of the library in 2000, and a new catalogue was created. When I went there, in May 2016, the book could not be found. It has been hypothesized by the staff that the book was misclassified or somehow left out during the operations for the compilation of the new catalogue. As for the diffusion of Rhys's edition in Italy, we know that it was certainly available (and it is still owned by a few libraries there), although Italian critics mention it far less often than the Rossetti edition.
- 6. See Walt Whitman, *Canti scelti*, trans. Luigi Gamberale, 2 vols. (Milano: Sonzogno, 1887, 1890). The two volumes were also combined, with no modifications, in an 1890–91 edition. Since Gamberale based his first translations on editions by Rossetti, Rhys, and the publisher Wilson and McCormick (equivalent to the 1881–82 Osgood edition), I will refer to one of these editions when citing Whitman's original in parallel to Gamberale's translations.
- 7. See Walter Grünzweig, "Whitman in the German Speaking Countries," in Allen and Folsom, *Walt Whitman and the World*, 161–62. Grünzweig also refers to another early German translator of Whitman, Karl Knortz, who was convinced that, with his translation, he could contribute to bringing democratic ideals to German people.
- 8. See Meliadò Freeth, "Whitman nella cultura italiana," 86. For more on this, see also Marina Camboni, "Italian Translations of 'Poets to Come,'" available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/foreign/poets/italian/intro.html.
- 9. See Luigi Gamberale, "Per l'esattezza: Ad Enrico Nencioni," *Il momento letterario artistico sociale* 2, no. 22 (April 15, 1884): 6. Here, Gamberale corrected Nencioni's mistakes with regard to describing the aesthetics of Pre-Raphaelitism and his listing of Whitman's publications, and he also clarified how his views differed from Nencioni's with regard to Whitman's conception of rhythm.
- 10. The fact that at least part of "Song of Myself" appears in the 1887 translation confirms that Gamberale was already using the Wilson and McCormick edition, as neither Rossetti

nor Rhys include "Song of Myself." See Luigi Gamberale, "Walt Whitman: Indole della sua poesia," *Il momento letterario artistico sociale* 2, no. 23 (May 1, 1884): 7.

- 11. My translation.
- 12. See Marina Camboni, "Le *Foglie d'erba* di Walt Whitman e la ricezione italiana fra Papini, i futuristi e Dino Campana: ovvero sangue sulla scena della *translatio*," *Nuova Antologia* 616, 2278 (April-June 2016): 361.
  - 13. Gamberale, "Walt Whitman: Indole della sua poesia," 6.
- 14. Luigi Gamberale, "Walt Whitman: Ideali democratici," *Il momento letterario artistico sociale* 2, no. 24, (May 16, 1884): 3. My translation.
  - 15. See Gamberale, "Per l'esattezza," 5. My translation.
  - 16. Gamberale, "Walt Whitman: Ideali democratici," 3.
- 17. Luigi Gamberale, "Introduzione," in Walt Whitman, *Canti scelti* (Milano: Sonzogno, 1887), 12–13. My translation.
- 18. Gamberale's mention of Carducci's "barbaric" meters had already appeared in the article of 1884 entitled "Per l'esattezza: Ad Enrico Nencioni." The final passage of this article is very close to the one in the introduction that I am discussing here and probably served Gamberale as a draft.
- 19. This term, literally meaning "free song," is used to describe early nineteenth-century poet Giacomo Leopardi's employment of stanzas of different length with different metrical schemes and free, irregular rhyming.
  - 20. Gamberale, "Introduzione," 14. My translation. Italics present in the original.
- 21. See Walt Whitman, "There Was a Child Went Forth," in *Leaves of Grass* 1881–1882, 282. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1881/whole.html.
- 22. Gamberale, trans., "Ei vi era un fanciullo che uscia ogni giorno," in *Canti scelti* 1887, 17–19.
  - 23. Gamberale, trans., "Ricordanze delle rive del mare," in Canti scelti 1887, 41-47.
- 24. See Walt Whitman, "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," in *Leaves of Grass* 1881–82, 200. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1881/whole.html.
- 25. See Walt Whitman, "Song of the Open Road," in *Leaves of Grass* 1881–82, 121. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1881/whole.html.
  - 26. Gamberale, trans., "Il canto della pubblica strada," in Canti scelti 1887, 58.
- 27. For more on this, see Stepanchev, "Whitman in Russia," in Allen and Folsom, *Walt Whitman and the World*, 302. The manuscript of the Russian translation is reproduced in Chistova, "Turgenev and Whitman," 69.
  - 28. See Chukovsky's "Turgenev i Whitman," Literatura Rossiya 2 (July 28, 1967): 17.
- 29. See Walt Whitman, "Beat! Beat! Drums!," in *Leaves of Grass* 1881–82, 222. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1881/whole.html.
  - 30. Gamberale, trans. "Battete! Battete! Tamburi!," in Canti scelti 1887, 59.
- 31. Bentzon's (untitled) translation of the poem appears in her 1872 article, "Poète americain," 577-78.
  - 32. Chukovsky's translation of the poem is reproduced and discussed in Elena Evich,

"Walt Whitman in Russian Translations: Whitman's 'Footprint' in Russian Poetry," available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/foreign/russian/evitch.html.

- 33. Schlaf's translation of the poem is reproduced and discussed in Werner Grünzweig, "Music in the Rhythm of War: Otmar-Shoeck and the Beginning of Whitman-Music in the German Speaking Countries," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 8, 1 (1990): 29–40.
- 34. Gamberale's translation was based on the 1883 edition published in Glasgow by Wilson and McCormick (a replica of the 1881–82 Osgood edition), with the addition of "Sands at Seventy," "Good-Bye my Fancy," and "Old Age Echoes," taken from the 1900 Small, Maynard and Company edition. The physical copies of the Wilson and McCormick edition, as well as other editions of Whitman's work that Gamberale used or might have consulted, are unfortunately not present in the Gamberale collection at the Agnone library, as I mentioned before.
- 35. This is testified by the letter from Pascoli to Gamberale of February 14, 1902. The manuscript letter is not available in the correspondence collection in Agnone, but it is reproduced in Luigi Gamberale, *Scritti vari* (Agnone: Sammartino Ricci, 1912), 523. See also the letter from Girolamo Ragusa Moleti to Luigi Gamberale of November 17, 1902, available in Agnone. The letter is signed by Moleti as "Mommino," which testifies to the friendly relations between him and Gamberale.
  - 36. Letter from Ragusa Moleti to Gamberale, November 17, 1902. My translation.
  - 37. Scritti vari, 523. My translation.
- 38. With reference to the translation drafts for the 1907 edition, the collection at Agnone does not include any of them, while it does include drafts for the 1912 translation (published by Bernardo Lux) and for the 1923 edition (published once again by Sandron).
- 39. See Luigi Gamberale, "Prefazione," in Walt Whitman, Foglie d'erba, con le due aggiunte e gli "Echi della vecchiaia" dell'edizione del 1900 (Palermo: Sandron, 1907), xxxi. All translations from the Italian preface into English used here are mine.
- 40. It must be noted that Gamberale's choice to often modify the punctuation was strongly influenced by Ragusa Moleti, who in the letter of April 1903 (also available in the Agnone collection), wrote: "Commas must be used at the end of each proposition, and not of every line. The comma between the name and its adjective, between the active verb and the object is intolerable. Syntax mistakes must also be corrected in the drafts, and everything that makes the meaning unclear should also be corrected. If you don't give up, I will impose myself, and in the last drafts, I will correct everything against your will. You must persuade yourself, dear Luigi, that to accept the punctuation of Whitman, is to hurt the fame of that great [poet]." My translation.
- 41. See Pasquale Jannaccone, *La poesia di Walt Whitman e l'evoluzione delle forme poetiche* (Roux Frassati: Torino, 1898), 123. My translation. Jannaccone was a scholar of political economics with an interest in American literature (he wrote on both Edgar Allan Poe and Whitman). For more on his study of Whitman, see Meliadò Freeth, "Whitman nella cultura italiana," 92–101, and Grippi, "Reputation of Walt Whitman in Italy," 110–26.
  - 42. See Jannaccone, La poesia di Walt Whitman, 123. My translation.
- 43. See Luigi Gamberale, "La vita e le opere di Walt Whitman," *Rivista d'Italia 6* (1903): 201–7.

- 44. See Oscar L. Triggs, Browning and Whitman: A Study in Democracy (London: Swan Sonnenschein; New York: Macmillan, 1893).
- 45. In this sense, not surprisingly, Gamberale, a teacher and principal who worked in pedagogy all his life, rendered this message by finding a metaphorical image in the world he was most familiar with: he compared Whitman to a teacher who assigns themes for future bards.
  - 46. Italics present in the original.
- 47. Several reviews of the translation were published right after its publication, and some of them are included in Luigi Gamberale, *Scritti vari*. Among the people who reviewed the translation—and generally praised it, while sometimes mentioning a few imprecisions—in major Italian journals were critics Domenico Oliva, Alberto Lumbroso, Alfredo Galletti, Francesco Pucci, and Mrs El (Laura Cantoni Orvieto).
- 48. Note that, as discovered by Kelly Scott Franklin, Vasseur's translation, which was believed to be the first Spanish one, was actually preceded by a series of Whitman poems published in the avant-garde journal *Prometeo* and translated by Julio Gómez de la Serna. See Kelly Scott Franklin, "A Translation of Whitman Discovered in the 1912 Spanish Periodical *Prometeo*." *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 35 (2017): 115–26. Franklin's article is also important in reminding us of the influence of these *Prometeo* translations on Mexican and Latin American avant-gardes, once again proving how Walt Whitman's reception is "shaped by multiple languages and textual crosscurrents, crossing and recrossing the hemispheres" (122).
- 49. For more on this, see Matt Cohen and Rachel Price, "Introduction to Walt Whitman, Poemas, by Álvaro Armando Vasseur," available online at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/foreign/spanish/vasseur/introduction.html. See also Matt Cohen, "Transgenic Deformation: Literary Translation and the Digital Archive," available at http://whitmanarchive.org/about/articles/anc.00165.html. It must be noted that Cohen's and Price's reference to a 1900 complete translation by Gamberale is a misunderstanding that originates in Gamberale's 1907 title Foglie di erba, con le due aggiunte e gli "Echi della vecchiaia" dell'edizione 1900 (when Gamberale cites "the 1900 edition" he means not a previous translation by him, but instead the 1900 Small, Maynard and Company edition from which he has taken the annexes).
- 50. See Cohen and Price, "Introduction to Walt Whitman, Poemas," available online at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/foreign/spanish/vasseur/introduction.html. Italics present in the original.
- 51. See Walt Whitman, "Song of the Open Road," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 120. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
- 52. "Canto della pubblica strada," translation by Luigi Gamberale, in Foglie d'erba 1907, 141.
  53. See "Chant de la voie publique," translation by Léon Bazalgette, in Walt Whitman, Feuilles d'Herbe traduction intégrale d'après l'édition definitive (Paris: Mercure de France, 1909), 198; "Canto de la vía pública," translation by Álvaro Armando Vasseur, in Whitman, Walt Whitman, Poemas (Valencia: F. Sempere y compañía, Editores, 1912), 19.
- 54. See Walt Whitman, "Song of the Exposition," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 157. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.

- 55. "Canto dell'esposizione," in Foglie d'erba 1907, 193.
- 56. An archaic diction for operaio, worker.
- 57. "Chant de l'exposition," in Feuilles d'Herbe, 261.
- 58. "Canto de la exposición," in Poemas, 123.
- 59. See Walt Whitman, "The Dalliance of the Eagles," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 216. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
  - 60. "La carezza delle aquile," in Foglie d'erba 1907, 271.
  - 61. "Amours d'aigles" in Feuilles d'Herbe, 356.
- 62. "Laska orlov," in Walt Whitman, Побеги травы (Pobegi Travy), trans. Konstantin Balmont (Moskva: Knigoizdatel'stvo Skorpion, 1911), 125.
- 63. See Walt Whitman, "City of Orgies," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 105. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
  - 64. "Città di orgie," in Foglie d'erba, 120.
  - 65. "Cité d'Orgies," in Feuilles d'Herbe, 171.
  - 66. "Ciudad de orgías," in Poemas, 30.
- 67. The most striking case in this sense is that of Kornei Chukovsky's first selected translations into Russian, which often contained substantial cuts of entire stanzas or omissions of words that were originally part of a line. See, for example, Chukovsky's complete omission of the first parenthetical stanza of "Song of the Exposition" (which he retitles "Muse, run away from Hellas, leave the Ionian") and his cuts of various lines and rewordings of others. Chukovsky's choice in "Song of the Exposition" is particularly significant. The poem was the opening piece in Chukovsky's 1907 collection, and the choice to start with Whitman's invocation to the Muse to "run away" from the Western literary tradition in section two of the poem was, for the Russian translator, a stratagem with the dual effect of giving an appearance of classical "respectability" while at the same time immediately introducing the strictly anticlassical call of Whitman's poetry. This editorial choice exemplifies Chukovsky's desperately ambivalent enterprise: the translator wanted to depict Whitman's anarchic nature, and at the same time he wanted to make Whitman's work acceptable to the conservative Russian literary establishment. See "Muza, beghi iz Elladi, pokin' Yunyu," translation by Kornei Chukovsky, in Поэт анархист Уот Уитмен, перевод в стихах и характеристика (Poet Anarkhist Uot Uuitman, perevod' v stikhakh i karakteristika) (Poet anarchist Walt Whitman: Translation into poetry and characteristics) (Sankt-Petersburg: Kruzhka Molodyk', 1907), 21.
- 68. The larger part of Gamberale's private correspondence is reported or summarized in Iannucci's book *Luigi Gamberale e la cultura italiana ed europea*. The book also offers a thorough and very useful biographical account of Gamberale's life and work through Iannucci's detailed study of the correspondence and work with the collections at Agnone. A few imprecisions are present in the book (for example, Iannucci talks about Gamberale's 1908 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, which was actually published in 1907).
- 69. None of these letters by Haskard appear in Iannucci's book (they are not discussed, nor do they appear in the final catalogue), perhaps because the handwriting is particularly hard to decipher.
  - 70. Letter from Margherita C. Haskard to Luigi Gamberale, May 26, 1893. This letter

and the others I will discuss in this section are available in the Gamberale collection at the Agnone public library, Baldassarre Labanca, with the exception of the letters from De Bosis and Marinetti, which are taken from *Scritti vari*. All of the translations of letters written in Italian or French were made by me.

- 71. Haskard claims to be attaching the English manuscript to the letter, but the enclosure is not present in Gamberale's collection. She claims to also be sending a picture of herself (and asks Gamberale for his), but the picture is also not extant.
  - 72. Underlining present in the original.
  - 73. Haskard is referring to writer, traveler, and mystic fanatic Laurence Oliphant.
- 74. I found no bibliographic record for such publication. Haskard says that the initial drafts were taken from her while at the mental hospital in Italy and that she had to rewrite the book once she was out of the institution, while being temporarily back in Scotland, in 1892.
  - 75. A few illegible words are present here.
- 76. See Biagio Brugi, "Una poesia di Walt Whitman ('Years of the Modern')," *Atti e memorie della Accademia di Scienze e Arti in Padova* 9 (1894): 150. My translation. The piece also contains Brugi's translation into Italian of "Years of the Modern." Brugi does not name Haskard, and no other critic who commented on Brugi's piece has named or talked about her, but it is clear that she is the "fanatic Scottish lady" to whom he refers.
- 77. See William E. Davenport, "Walt Whitman in Brooklyn—W. E. Davenport Recalls Some Interesting Facts About the Poet's Residence Here. Father and Son Printers. Anxious to Become a Platform Orator. Text of an Address Before Brooklyn Art Union in 1851," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, July 14, 1900, 18: 1–2; "Identity of Whitman's Work and Character," Conservator 13 (February 1903), 181–84; "Dante and Whitman," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, September 14, 1921), 6: 5; "Walt Whitman Memorial Should Be Placed in Old Fort Greene Park," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, June 18, 1925, 6: 6.
- 78. At the end of the letter, Davenport even suggests that he could go to Agnone and visit Gamberale, but there is no evidence that the visit took place.
  - 79. See Luigi Gamberale, "La vita e le opere di Walt Whitman," 181–207.
- 80. See "The Life and the Works of Walt Whitman," extracted and translated by William E. Davenport, *Conservator* 15 (September 1904).
- 81. Letter from William Edwards Davenport to Luigi Gamberale, February 20, 1904. My translation. In her book about Gamberale's correspondence, Iannucci wrongly identifies Davenport as a friend of Whitman's. See Iannucci, *Gamberale e la cultura italiana*, 136.
  - 82. The book had been published by G.P. Putnam's Sons in 1897.
- 83. Letter from G. B. Menegazzi to Luigi Gamberale, April 12, 1908. My translation. Iannucci transcribes this letter on page 272 of her book, *Luigi Gamberale e la cultura italiana ed europea*.
  - 84. Letter from G. B. Menegazzi to Luigi Gamberale, November 12, 1908. My translation. 85. See, among others, "Assailants and Defenders of Whitman," *Conservator* 18 (February
- 85. See, among others, Assailants and Defenders of Whitman, Conservatoris (February 1908): 183; "The Poet Who Could Wait: Contemporary Appreciations of Walt Whitman," Book News 24 (April 1906): 545–49.
- 86. The token Hull Platt refers to is his biography of Whitman, enclosed with the letter and still available in Gamberale's library. See Isaac Hull Platt, *Walt Whitman*, Beacon Biographies of Eminent Americans (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1904).

- 87. Letter from Isaac Hull Platt to Luigi Gamberale of May 5, 1908.
- 88. Letter from Adolfo de Bosis to Luigi Gamberale, July 8, 1908, reproduced in *Scritti vari*, 522.
- 89. Bruers is evidently referring to Gamberale's 1912 selected translation edited by Bernardo Lux.
- 90. Letter from Antonio Bruers to Luigi Gamberale, May 30, 1916. My translation. In his letter of June 10, 1922, also present in Gamberale's correspondence in Agnone, Bruers would also celebrate the forthcoming publication of the 1923 edition of Gamberale's revised unabridged translation, calling it a "noble and historic enterprise." Note that this letter is not included in Iannucci's correspondence catalogue.
- 91. Letter from Antonio Bruers to Luigi Gamberale, June 10, 1916. My translation. This letter is also interesting for Bruers's assessment of D'Annunzio's plagiarism (while we do not have Gamberale's letter, it can be inferred from Bruers's comments that Gamberale signaled a series of plagiarisms of various writers by D'Annunzio). Bruers, a follower of D'Annunzio who would also become, later in his life, the chief librarian at D'Annunzio's Vittoriale, defended D'Annunzio's originality.
- 92. In the first letter of May 30, 1916, Bruers had written: "This one, of Whitman, yes, is a 'futurism' in which I have faith, [...]," perhaps as a way to slightly differentiate himself from the Italian futurists and from reclaiming his own declination of what "real" futurism should be. Bruers's relation with the futurists is complex: his interest in spiritualism and religion prevented him from being a real iconoclast, and his writing was simply more traditional and lacked the vehemence and provocation present in the futurists. But Bruers's prefascist and fascist ideology also puts him inevitably close to the futurists' sensibility.
- 93. Bazalgette wonders if Gamberale knows French and says that next time he could write in English. Gamberale must have responded positively, as the next letter is again in French.
  - 94. Word used in the original.
  - 95. Letter from Léon Bazalgette to Luigi Gamberale, April 14, 1909. My translation.
- 96. Bazalgette had published the review in the Parisian literary journal *La Phalange* 3, no. 28 (October 15, 1908).
  - 97. See letter from Léon Bazalgette to Luigi Gamberale, June 9, 1909.
- 98. See Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, ed., I poeti futuristi: Libero Altomare [et al.]; con un proclama di F. T. Marinetti e uno studio sul Verso libero di Paolo Buzzi (Milano: Edizioni futuriste di Poesia, 1912).
- 99. Gamberale confusingly indicates on the book cover that this is a third edition: what he actually means is that it is his third translation (after the one from 1887–90 and the one from 1907).
- 100. As for the specific contents of each volume, considering how hard it is to consult the physical books, I am offering here a summary of them: the first volume contains a selection from the Inscriptions poems, "Starting from Paumanok" (in its entirety), a shortened version of "Song of Myself," and selections from "Children of Adam" and from "Calamus." The second volume contains almost all of the individual poems that come before "Birds of Passage" (including "Song of the Open Road," while "Our Old Feuillage," "Song of the Exposition," and "Youth, Day, Old Age and Night" are cut out). Next, are selections from

"Birds of Passage," "Sea Drift," "By the Roadside," "Drum Taps" (only a few poems are cut from this cluster, which significantly reinforces the idea of the centrality of this part of Whitman's work in the Italian reception), and the first part of poems from "Memories from President Lincoln." The third volume contains the second part of poems from "Memories from President Lincoln," a selection from "Autumn Rivulets," a selection from "Whispers of Heavenly Death," a selection from "Noon to Starry Night," a selection from "Songs of Parting," and selections from "Sands at Seventy," "Good-Bye My Fancy," "Fancies at Navesink," and "Old Age Echoes." Significant omissions, which I will partially discuss here, are the ones from "Children of Adam" and "Calamus" and the complete absence of such poems as "France, the 18th Year of These States" and "The Sleepers."

101. See Luigi Gamberale, "Prefazione," in Walt Whitman, Foglie di erba (Bernardo Lux: Roma, 1912), trans. Luigi Gamberale 1:vii–viii. All passages from the Preface discussed here are translated by me.

102. This last unabridged edition would be, as I will discuss later, a combination of the 1907 and 1912 translations, with minor revisions and corrections.

103. See Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 39. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html. 104. See *Foglie di erba* (1912), 1:39.

105. Rancière would actually argue that the two things always go together.

106. See Jacques Rancière, Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art (London: Verso Books, 2013), 64.

107. See Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 38. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html. 108. See Ed Folsom and Christopher Merrill, eds., *Song of Myself: With a Complete Commentary* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2016), 45.

109. I list the contents of the 1912 selected edition in detail in note 100 of this chapter and again in Chapter 3.

110. The Bernardo Lux edition had a very short preface, conceived for workers to read, that would have been inadequate for the Sandron edition: thus, Gamberale decided to go ahead and use the older one from 1907.

111. See Camboni, "Foglie d'erba di Walt Whitman," 370. My translation.

112. The letter is part of Gamberale collection in the Agnone library, and it is also reproduced in Iannucci, *Luigi Gamberale e la cultura italiana ed europea*, 275–76. My translation.

113. The letter is also available in the Agnone library, and it is partially reproduced in Iannucci, 208. My translation.

114. This is the case, for example, of the idiomatic expression used by Whitman in section 47 of "Song of Myself": "to hit the bull's eye," which Gamberale translated literally, instead of understanding it figuratively. Pavolini had listed this in his February 6, 1922, letter as one of Gamberale's major mistakes, but the expression remained unchanged in the 1923 edition. The same is true for the expression "O span of youth!," translated by Gamberale as "O espandersi di giovinezza" (O expansion of youth), which Pavolini also noticed in his letter. This expression too remained unchanged.

- 1. See Ada Negri, "Il gigante della libera America," Il figurinaio 5, no. 8 (February 19, 1893): 2–3. The biweekly periodical, based in the Tuscan city of Lucca, was active from 1889 to 1895. Only a few libraries in Italy still own copies of it. I was able to retrieve this rare piece by Negri thanks to the help of librarians at the Fondazione Gramsci Emilia-Romagna, in Bologna. All passages from the article quoted here are translated by me.
- 2. See Patrizia Guida, "Ada Negri: una scrittrice fascista?," *Quaderni d'italianistica: revue officielle de la société canadienne pour les études italiennes* 13, no. 2 (2002): 45–58. Guida's study is also useful to retrace the origins of Negri and Mussolini's friendship and correspondence and to investigate the reasons for Negri's adhesion to fascism.
- 3. The article is never discussed by Grippi or Meliadò Freeth in their studies, nor by Asselineau or Cambon in their articles. McCain only briefly mentions Negri's article, with reference to Biagio Brugi's quotation of it in his 1894 speech at the Sciences and Arts Academy in Padova. See McCain, "Walt Whitman in Italy," 11.
- 4. While Negri would extensively portray the conditions of women, particularly those of the working class, she would also, especially later in her career, promote firmly traditional and anti-emancipatory models of motherhood and of the role of women in society.
- 5. See for example, Negri's letters to Nencioni of September 2, 1893, and to Carducci, of February 2, 1896. The first letter is available at the Biblioteca Marucelliana in Florence, while the second can be consulted at Carducci's house in Bologna.
  - 6. Negri's words are taken from her September 2, 1893, letter to Nencioni. My translation.
- 7. Patrizi boarded the steamship *Kaiser Wilhem* for New York in Genoa on March 23, 1893. On this, see Paola Maurizi, *Ettore Patrizi, Ada Negri e la musica* (Perugia: Morlacchi Editore, 2007), 17.
- 8. Negri refers to poems that appear in Gamberale's second volume of translations: she does misquote a couple of them, probably due to citing them from memory without double-checking the actual text, but it is evident that the textual corpus she refers to is that of the 1890–91 volume.
- 9. The letter is reproduced in Giacomo Pellicanò, *Due vite una storia: Le lettere di Ada Negri a Ettore Patrizi 1892–1896* (Orvieto: Intermedia edizioni, 2017), 46. My translation. I am grateful to Pellicanò for sharing a preview of his book and for exchanging his notes with me.
  - 10. Patrizi's words are reported in Pellicanò, 108. My translation.
- 11. It is interesting to note that Patrizi, similarly to Negri and other figures who had been part of the same socialist and progressivist political group in which Mussolini had played an important role before founding the fascist party, would follow their friend's example and adhere to fascism. In 1942, Patrizi received the order to leave San Francisco by the city's government, because of the pro-fascist views of his newspaper.
  - 12. Italics present in the original.
- 13. See Walt Whitman, "So Long!," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 382. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
- 14. For more on this, see the reflection on the central presence of the idea of blood in the writings of Italian futurists when commenting on Whitman's poetry in Marina Camboni, "Foglie d'erba di Walt Whitman," 369.

- 15. Significantly, in her letter to Carducci of February 2, 1896, Negri would write: "And thank you, thank you with all my heart, great master, to whom all of us, from the young generation of poets, owe so much of our lively blood." My translation.
- 16. Enrico Nencioni, "Nuovi orizzonti poetici." Carducci praises the article in his letter of August 26, 1881, to Nencioni. The letter can be consulted at Carducci's house in Bologna.
  - 17. These same words had appeared earlier, in the June 12, 1892, letter to Patrizi.
- 18. Negri's Fatalità (Fatality) came out in 1892, while Tempeste (Storms) was published in 1895.
- 19. Negri is referring to Whitman's "Pensive on Her Dead Gazing," which appears in Gamberale's 1887 volume (and then in the collected 1890–91 volume) with the Italian retitle "La madre di tutto" ("The Mother of All").
  - 20. In Pellicanò, 51–52. My translation.
  - 21. See "Le vittime del lavoro," Vita Moderna 2, no. 5 (January 29, 1893): 33.
- 22. Original: "Figli dell'ombra, eroi della materia, curvati a giogo acerbo, / [...] / Caddero tutti:—sotto una ruina, da un ponte, in una fossa, / Nel bagliore infernal d'una fucina, frante e disperse l'ossa; / [...] / Chi ricorda l'innumere falange nel grave oblio perduta? ... / Sopra le frantumate ossa chi piange, / Chi s'inginocchia su la tomba muta? ... / Ai soldati del maglio e del piccone chi erige monumenti [?] / [...] / Questi cuori, muscolosi petti, rivivete sottoterra. / Puro sangue di vinti e di reietti, / Fremi, ribolli, feconda la terra: / [...] / Beva il mondo i tuoi succhi, o vivo sangue, / [...] / Scorra e s'allarghi come vivid'onda / Un rifluir di vita." My translation.
- 23. Original: "Ma le lame saran pure di sangue, e bianchi gli stendardi; / [...] / e da la terra satura d'amore, / [...] / salirà come un inno ed un singulto: "Pace! ... lavoro! ... pane! ...." Ada Negri, "Il canto della zappa," from *Fatalità* (1892), in *Ada Negri: Opere scelte*, ed. Elena Cazzulani (Lodi: Il Pomerio, 1995), 45. My translation.
- 24. See Walt Whitman, "Song of the Broad Axe," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 154. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
- 25. Original: "La libertà, la libertà sfrenata / fu mia, fu mia! . . . Se tu sapessi come / è bello irromper sola e scapigliata tra le foreste e i campi, / senza rigidi lacci e senza nome, pieno l'occhio di lampi!" Ada Negri, "Arrivo," in *Tempeste* (Milano: Treves, 1895), 111. My translation.
- 26. Original: "[...] un inno irrefrenato, indomo; / semplice come spica, robusto come l'uomo, / eterno come il sol! ..." Ada Negri, "Immortale" in *Tempeste*, 120. My translation.
- 27. Maternità is, in fact, characterized by an experimentation with long lines and with the use of anaphora. Thematically, the collection concentrates on motherhood, but a strong echo from Whitman is still present with Negri's "Saluto fraterno" ("Brotherly Salute"), which might be directly echoing Whitman's "To a Stranger."
- 28. Popov's words are reported in Yassen Zassoursky, "Whitman's Reception and Influence in the Soviet Union," in *Walt Whitman of Mickle Street*, ed. Geoffrey Sill (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 44.
- 29. See José Martí, "El Poeta Walt Whitman," *El Partido Liberal*, May 17, 1887: 129–43. The English translation used here is by Arnold Chapman and appears in Allen and Folsom, *Walt Whitman and the World*, 98–99.

- 30. See Grünzweig, Constructing the German Walt Whitman, 152.
- 31. See Harris, "Introduction," Whitman and British Socialism, 1-2.
- 32. Balmont's words are reported and translated in Stepanchev, "Whitman in Russia," in Allen and Folsom, Whitman and the World, 293–94.

- 1. See Meliadò Freeth "Whitman nella cultura italiana," 153–84; Grippi, "Reputation of Walt Whitman in Italy," 75–90; Asselineau, "Whitman in France and Belgium," in Allen and Folsom, Walt Whitman and the World, 262–63. See also Franco Ferrucci, "Whitman e D'Annunzio," Strumenti critici 13 (1998): 185–98; Caterina Ricciardi, "Da Whitman a D'Annunzio verso il Modernismo," in Gabriele D'Annunzio e la cultura inglese e americana, ed. Patrizia Nerozzi (Chieti: Solfanelli, 1990), 101–18; Mario Praz, "D'Annunzio e la letteratura anglosassone" in his Il patto col serpente—Paralipomeni di "La carne, la morte e il diavolo nella letteratura romantica" (Milano: Mondadori, 1972), 418–19.
- 2. Freeth might be the only exception in this sense, as she does distinguish various phases. But she limits the nationalistic phase of D'Annunzio's reading of Whitman to the 1890s, and she does not consider the employment of Whitman's words by D'Annunzio during the Fiume enterprise in 1918. Grippi's analysis builds on Freeth's, but it remains quite superficial. Asselineau only briefly mentions D'Annunzio and directly echoes Freeth's work. Ferrucci skips the initial role of Nencioni for D'Annunzio's knowledge and appreciation of Whitman, and only does he discuss his later production, especially the works in which D'Annunzio employs free verse. Ricciardi underlines the proto-modernist Whitmanian elements employed by D'Annunzio (and builds an interesting parallel with Ezra Pound).
- 3. This expression is used by D'Annunzio in his letter to Nencioni of April 17, 1884. The letter is reproduced in Renato Forcella, "Lettere ad Enrico Nencioni (1880–1896)," *Nuova Antologia* 18 (May1, 1939): 14. My translation.
- 4. The only mention of D'Annunzio's personal copies of *Leaves of Grass* is made in Praz 418–19. Praz signals that Rossetti's 1886 edition is present in D'Annunzio's library and that the poems "Salut au Monde!" and "France" were clearly read by the poet. But he does not describe or comment on this further: there are actually more poems, and other volumes read by the poet, and one wonders why Praz only talked about the Rossetti edition. See Praz, 418–19. For my research at the Vittoriale library, I am extremely thankful for the help and expertise of librarians Alessandro Tonacci and Roberta Valbusa.
- 5. A label indicating the name of the bookshop is present in both books, which can be consulted at the Vittoriale.
- 6. For more on Nencioni's and D'Annunzio's relationship, see Giuseppe Fatini, "D'Annunzio e Nencioni," *Quaderni dannunziani* 18–19 (1960): 645–704. D'Annunzio and Nencioni shared a particular interest in romantic and pre-Raphaelite literature, and they would also—although to different degrees—both appreciate the emerging decadent movement of which D'Annunzio later became one of the major exponents.
- 7. The letter is reproduced in Forcella, "Lettere ad Enrico Nencioni," 6. My translation. Italics present in the original.
  - 8. Enrico Nencioni, "Nuovi orizzonti poetici." My translation.

- 9. Original: "Sta il gran meriggio su questa di flutti e di piante / verde-azzurrina conca solitaria; / ed io, come un agile pardo a l'agguato, m'ascondo, / platano sacro, qui fra le chiome tue. / [...] Oh pioggia lucente di schegge e di squame / sovra il mio capo, sovra l'erbette in fiore! / Oh vipere bianche, cerulee bisce lascive / scherzanti con freschi strepiti su le ghiaie! ..." Gabriele D'Annunzio, Canto novo (Roma: Sommaruga, 1882), 33–34. My translation.
- 10. In this same letter, D'Annunzio declares that he looks at Nencioni's creative production as a source of inspiration. Nencioni's poems were often characterized by a conventionally high, dignified register (sentimental and melodramatic tones, which were also given to the author's special insistence on the theme of death). See Nencioni's *Poesie*; *Lo spedale*; *Un paradiso perduto*; *Varie* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1880).
- 11. The letter, dated February 15, 1884, is reproduced in Forcella, "Lettere ad Enrico Nencioni." Italics present in the original; my translation.
  - 12. See Freeth, "Whitman nella cultura italiana," 154.
  - 13. Forcella, "Lettere ad Enrico Nencioni," 13. Italics present in the original. My translation.
  - 14. Grippi, "Reputation of Walt Whitman in Italy," 79.
- 15. The letter, dated March 16, 1884, is reproduced in Forcella, "Lettere ad Enrico Nencioni," 14. Italics present in the original. My translation.
- 16. While Nencioni, coming from an earlier generation, did not belong to the movement, and never employed taboo themes in his creative work, he did display a certain decadent sensibility: his refined poetry often dealt with issues of illness, melancholy, solitude, and death.
- 17. Original: "Datemi i frutti succulenti, i buoni / frutti de la mia terra, ch'io li morda. / Ah forsennato chi non si ricorda / di te, Madre, e de' tuoi semplici doni! / Datemi il fresco latte, ch'io lo beva / a larghi sorsi. [...]" Gabriele D'Annunzio, "O Rus!" in *Poema paradisiaco; Odi navali* (1891–1893) (Milano: Treves, 1896), 131. My translation.
- 18. Original: "Erba che il piede preme, o creatura / umile de la terra, tu che nasci / ovunque, in fili tenui ed in fasci, / e da la gleba e da la fenditura, / e sempre viva attendi la futura / primavera nei geli orridi, e pasci / l'armento innumerevole, e rinasci, / pur sempre viva dopo mietitura, / erba immortale, o tu che il piede preme, / io so d'un uomo che gittò nel mondo / un seme come il tuo dolce e tenace; / e nulla può distruggere quel seme . . . / —Pensa l'Anima un carcere profondo / ove l'erba germoglia umile in pace." Gabriele D'Annunzio, "L'erba," in *Poema paradisiaco; Odi navali* (1891–1893), 128. My translation.
- 19. See Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891-92, 33. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
- 20. Capitalizations also appear elsewhere in this collection, with reference to other major protagonists of D'Annunzio's poems: Dream, Death, Day, Mystery, and others.
- 21. See Walt Whitman, "Song of the Open Road," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 123. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
- 22. See Walt Whitman, "The Prairie-Grass Dividing," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 107. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
  - 23. Meliadò Freeth, "Whitman nella cultura italiana," 167.
  - 24. Thovez's attack is contained in the article "L'arte di comporre di Gabriele D'Annun-

- zio" Gazzetta letteraria (January 4, 1896). The article was republished in Thovez's L'arco di Ulisse: Prose di combattimento (Napoli: Riccardo Ricciardi Editore, 1921), 32–47. In the piece, Thovez also underlined how D'Annunzio plagiarized Baudelaire, Verlaine, Shelley, and others. Critics like Benedetto Croce and Charles Maurras defended D'Annunzio, arguing that, if he borrowed from others, he also always transformed them through his unique style.
- 25. Meliadò Freeth, "Whitman nella cultura italiana," 170. For an extended discussion of the parallels between the poems, see Meliadò Freeth, 168–73; Grippi, "Reputation of Walt Whitman in Italy," 88–89.
- 26. In 1895, D'Annunzio and De Bosis had founded, together with Angelo Conti, the literary criticism and artistic periodical *Il Convito*. The periodical, strongly decadent in orientation, remained active until 1907.
- 27. Caterina Ricciardi has shown how this latter, especially with poems like "Giovine che mi guardi parlare" ("Young Man Looking at Me Talking") and "Ad un macchinista" ("To an Engine Driver"), closely followed Whitman formally and thematically, being concerned "in making poetry out of everyday life, which at that time was facing great social and technological changes" and announcing "the Futurists' appeal to the modern in art." See Caterina Ricciardi, "Walt Whitman and the Futurist Muse," in *Utopia in the Present Tense: Walt Whitman and the Language of the New World*, ed. Marina Camboni (Roma: Il Calamo, 1994), 265–98. (For more on the influence of Whitman on De Bosis see Chapter 5 in Giorgio Pannunzio, *Cittadino del cielo: De Bosis poeta tra modernità e tradizione* [Raleigh: Lulu Press, 2014].) In the same article, Ricciardi also briefly describes Enrico Thovez's deliberate imitations of Whitman in his "Grido di liberazione in un mattino di primavera" ("A Cry of Liberation on a Spring Morning").
- 28. It is not coincidental that writer and critic Diego Garoglio pairs Capuana and Whitman as examples for Italian poets who, like D'Annunzio, moved toward free verse. See Diego Garoglio, *Versi d'amore e prose di romanzi: Saggi di critica contemporanea* (Livorno: Giusti, 1903), 157.
- 29. Capuana's letter to Marinetti is part of *Enquête international sur le vers libre et manifeste du futurism*, ed. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (Milano: Éditions de Poesia, 1909), 37–38. My translation. Italics present in the original.
- 30. For more details on this, see Aldo Menichetti, "Testi di frontiera tra poesia e prosa," in Stefano Agosti, et al., *Lezioni sul Novecento: Storia, teoria e analisi letteraria* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1990), 82. Menichetti also notes how the genre of pseudotranslation was quite popular in Italy and in France in those years.
- 31. See Isabelle Collombat, "Pseudo-traduction: La mise en scène de l'altérité," *Le Langage et l'Homme* 38, no. 1 (June 2003): 145–56.
- 32. Original: "Parole, parole! . . . Ma vive nelle sillabe, / avvolgentisi in spirale onda armoniosa, / un senso profondo: il ritmo anch'esso / è poesia che, indefinita, invade il cuore." Luigi Capuana, "Poesia musicale," in *Semiritmi* [1888] (Napoli: Guida Editori, 1972), 66. My translation.
- 33. Original: "E l'erba verde, protetta dagli ombrosi / rami, e i crisantemi e le argentee margherite / stupivano di quel canto, nuovo per loro. /  $[\ldots]$  Sdraiati sulla rorida erba, indolenti, / non pensando più a nulla, nella gran calma, / respiravamo la voluttà di vivere; /

- [...] con intenso egoismo, muti nell'oppressione / tua santa, o Natura dal tiepido alito!..." Luigi Capuana, "Sub umbra," in *Semiritmi*, 56–57. My translation.
- 34. See George Arthur Greene, Elkin Mathews, and John Lane, *Italian Lyrists of To-Day: Translation from Contemporary Italian Poetry with Biographical Notices* (London: Macmillan, 1893), 53.
- 35. See Carolina Nutini, *Tra sperimentalismo scapigliato ed espressivismo primonovecentesco: Poemetto in prosa, prosa lirica e frammento* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2012), 243.
  - 36. The other two would come out in 1912 and 1918.
- 37. Original: "Canterò l'uomo che ara, che naviga, che combatte, / che trae dalla rupe il ferro, dalla mammella il latte, / il suono dalle avene. / Canterò la grandezza dei mari e degli eroi, / la guerra delle stirpi, la pazienza dei buoi, / l'antichità del giogo, / l'atto magnifico di colui che intride la farina / e di colui che versa nel vaso l'olio d'oliva / e di colui che accende il fuoco;" Gabriele D'Annunzio, "L'Annunzio," in *Laudi del cielo del mare della terra e degli eroi*, vol. 1 [*Maia/Laus Vitae*] (Milano: Treves, 1903), 17. My translation.
- 38. Original: "abbeverato solo nell'albe al segreto fonte / delle cose immortali, Eroe primo di nostro sangue / rinnovellante; / oceanica mente [...] / [...] anima vetusta e nuova, / instrutta e ignara, memore e indovina, ove si serra / tutto il pensier dei Saggi e palpitano il Fuoco l'Aria / l'Acqua e la Terra; [...] Sol nel tuo verbo è per noi la luce, o Rivelatore, / sol nel tuo canto è per noi la forza, o Liberatore, [...]." Gabriele D'Annunzio, "A Dante," in Laudi del cielo del mare della terra e degli eroi, vol. 2 [Elettra] (Milano: Treves, 1904), 6, 7, 10. My translation.
- 39. Original: "Attonito io rimirava / la luce e il mondo. Quanti / furono i miei giacigli! / Giacqui su la bica flava / udendo sotto il mio peso / stridere l'aride ariste. / Giacqui su i fragranti / fieni, su le sabbie calde, / su i carri, su i navigli, / nelle logge di marmo, / sotto le pergole, sotto / le tende, sotto le querci. / Dove giacqui, rinacqui." Gabriele D'Annunzio, "Laus Vitae. I giacigli," in *Laudi del cielo del mare della terra e degli eroi*, vol. 1 [Maia/Laus Vitae] (Milano: Treves, 1903), 26. My translation. It must be noted that in my translation I am not always capable of rendering the archaisms of the original.
- 40. See Eugenio Montale, "Il cammino della nuova poesia," *Il Corriere della Sera* (January 24, 1951), reproduced in Giorgio Zampa, ed., *Sulla poesia* (Milano: Mondadori, 2000), 467–68. My translation.
- 41. For D'Annunzio's presence and interactions in French cultural circles, see Giovanni Gullace, *Gabriele D'Annunzio in France: A Study in Cultural Relations* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966), 145–58.
- 42. See Fabrizio Miliucci, "Tra Francia e Italia: 'Liberazione del verso' nei primi anni del Novecento," in *Cantieri dell'italianistica: Ricerca, didattica e organizzazione agli inizi del XXI secolo*, ed. B. Alfonzetti, G. Baldassari, and F. Tomasi (Roma: Adi Editore, 2014). The version I am using here is the full text pdf, available online at http://www.italianisti.it/upload/userfiles/files/2013%20Miliucci.pdf. The letter reported here is on page 4 of this pdf version.
- 43. D'Annunzio used the second printing of Rossetti's edition (which is almost identical to the first).
- 44. The speech, delivered on October 12, 1919, and printed in Fiume, is available online at http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums763-ioo1. My translation.

- 45. For his citation, D'Annunzio used Gamberale's Italian translation of the poem.
- 46. Grippi mentions the appearance of the poem in Gramsci's periodical in his final bibliography, but he does not discuss it in depth and does not explain what happened with the censorship. Freeth briefly mentions the case in her two entries on Gramsci, as contained in the bibliographic appendix to her article, "La fortuna di Walt Whitman in Italia," 64–65.
- 47. Perhaps for space reasons, Gramsci cuts the full title of the 1856 version of the poem, which is "Liberty Poem for Asia, Africa, Europe, America, Australia, Cuba, and the Archipelagoes of the Sea."
- 48. See Antonio Gramsci, "Cronache dell' 'Ordine Nuovo,'" *L'Ordine Nuovo* 1, no. 6 (June 14, 1919): 39. (Note that the page numbers I refer to belong to the 1966 Feltrinelli reprint edition of the periodical.) My translation.
- 49. See "A un rivoluzionario vinto d'Europa," trans. Palmiro Togliatti, *L'Ordine Nuovo* 1, no. 9 (July 12, 1919): 68.
- 50. See "Europa," trans. Palmiro Togliatti, *L'Ordine Nuovo* 1, no. 29 (December 6–13, 1919): 226.
- 51. Gramsci's interest in Whitman must also be connected to how the work of the American poet was being read, at this same time, in the Soviet Union. In Gramsci's June 1919 editorial complaining about the censorship of Whitman's poem, he praised Anatoly Vasilyevich Lunacharsky, the first Soviet Commissar of Education, who wrote the introduction to Chukovsky's 1918 translation of Whitman. Lunacharsky's piece, entitled "Whitman and Democracy," aims to redefine the way of understanding Whitman's democratic poetry and to redefine it, precisely, in communist terms. Whitman's democracy, Lunacharsky clarifies, should, in fact, be read not in terms of individualism, but as in direct opposition to individualism.

- 1. See what Miliucci says about this: "The ferment that led Carducci to conceive his *Odi barbare* was alive also in the two greatest poets of the turn of the century, D'Annunzio and Pascoli, to whom we owe a strenuous experimentation of traditional rhythms that practically brings regular metrics to a final tension, so that even after the 'verslibrist revolution,' the poets who would in future years test themselves with free verse, were inevitably influenced by these predecessors" (my translation; see Miliucci, "Tra Francia e Italia," in Alfonzetti, Baldassari, and Tomasi, *Cantieri dell'italianistica*, 1).
  - 2. See Pier Paolo Pasolini, Passione ed Ideologia [1960] (Milano: Garzanti, 1997), 265–68.
  - 3. See Ragusa Moleti, "I 'fili d'erba' di Walt Whitman."
- 4. The letter is now included in the section entitled "Antico sempre nuovo," which is part of Pascoli's first volume of collected prose. See Giovanni Pascoli, *Prose I: Pensieri di varia umanità* (Milano: Mondadori, 1971), 904–76. All quoted passages from the letter used here are translated by me.
- 5. See Meliadò Freeth, "Whitman nella cultura italiana," 142, and Grippi, "Reputation of Walt Whitman in Italy," 132. Neither scholar notices that Ragusa Moleti (and Pascoli, reproducing Ragusa Moleti's translation) has omitted some of Whitman's words.
  - 6. See Walt Whitman, "New Poetry" (from Specimen Days), in Complete Prose Works

- (Philadelphia: McKay, 1892), 323. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/other/CompleteProse.html.
- 7. For more on this, see the chapter entitled "Girolamo Ragusa Moleti: dalla traduzione alla pratica del poemetto in prosa," in Nutini, *Tra sperimentalismo scapigliato ed espressivismo*, 119–76.
- 8. This mention of a lack of sentimentality is, in fact, completely invented by Ragusa Moleti, as it is absent from Whitman's original.
- 9. See Biagio Brugi, "Una poesia di Walt Whitman ('Years of the Modern')," *Atti e memorie della Accademia di Scienze e Arti in Padova* 9 (1894): 150–51. My translation.
- 10. See Francesco Chimenti, *Note di letteratura americana* (Bari: Pansini, 1894). For more on Chimenti's reflections on Whitman and Wagner, see Meliadò Freeth, "Whitman nella cultura italiana," 90–91.
- 11. See Ulisse Ortensi, "Letterati contemporanei: Walt Whitman," *Emporium* 8, no. 43 (1898): 17–24.
- 12. See Edward Carpenter, "Wagner, Millet and Whitman: In Relation to Art and Democracy," *Progressive Review* 1 (October 1896): 63–74. Ortensi was a librarian, critic, writer, and translator who authored the first Italian translation of Robert Burns's poems in 1893 and who avidly worked on other foreign writers and read international criticism, so he might have easily seen Carpenter's essay.
- 13. The association of Whitman and Wagner had already been made by many friends and readers of Whitman's work, when the poet was still alive. Whitman himself commented on this in 1888, by saying, as reported by Horace Traubel: "So many of my friends say Wagner is Leaves of Grass done into music that I begin to suspect there must be something in it. [...] I was never wholly convinced—there was always a remaining question. [...] What am I to believe? I confess that I have heard bits here and there at concerts, from orchestras, bands, which have astonished, ravished me, like the discovery of a new world [...]." See Horace Traubel, With Walt Whitman in Camden, vol. 2 (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1915), Friday, August 10, 1888. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://www.whitmanarchive.org/criticism/disciples/traubel/WWWiC/2/contents.html. References made to Wagner in international criticism include Fernand Freiligrath's in 1868, Knut Hamsun's in 1889, and two anonymous reviews (a British one in 1886 and a Russian one in 1916). See Allen and Folsom, Walt Whitman and the World, 40, 162, 316, 366.
- 14. See José Martí, "El Poeta Walt Whitman," *El Partido Liberal*, May 17, 1887: 129-143. The English translation used here is by Arnold Chapman, as it appears Allen and Folsom, *Walt Whitman and the World*, 105.
- 15. See, for example, critic Giulio Pisa's assessment in 1899: noting how "scowling critics have denied [to Whitman] the title of great [poet]" and certainly lacking an understanding of the finesse of Whitman's formal choices himself, Pisa insisted on the need to recognize Whitman as "a great poet." "Among the many poets who are the poets of a dying world, he is the poet of an arising world," he argued. See Giulio Pisa, "Gualtiero Whitman," in *Studi letterari* (Milano: Baldini & Castoldi, 1899), 174–75. My translation.
- 16. In the same 1899 article quoted, Ragusa Moleti, once again egotistically underlining how he encouraged some of them, describes the various projects of selected translations by a series of literati he was in contact with: Angelina Damiani Lanza, A. R. Levi, A. Olivieri,

- and Giuseppe Farina. Giulio Pisa had also translated a few poems, while Biagio Brugi had ended his article with a translation of "Years of the Modern."
- 17. Pascoli directed the series from 1902 until his death, in 1912. The series, which includes a total of seventeen volumes, would be published until 1922, and in its last decade it was directed by Paolo Emilio Pavolini.
- 18. This agenda description was contained in the 1909 general catalogue of the series and is reproduced in *Remo Sandron*, *Palermo: Catalogo delle pubblicazioni del periodo comprendente l'attività di Remo Sandron (dal 1873 al 1925) e quella dei suoi eredi fino al 1943* (Firenze: Edizioni Remo Sandron, 1997), 89. My translation.
- 19. See Grippi, "Reputation of Walt Whitman in Italy," 131–40, and Meliadò Freeth, "Whitman nella cultura italiana," 129–53. See also Giovanni Getto, "Pascoli e l'America," *Nuova Antologia* 91, bkt. 1870 (October 1956): 159–78. Getto also discusses Pascoli's knowledge and appreciation of Edgar Allan Poe's works.
- 20. Original: "[...] paulo maiora canamus! / Non omnes arbusta iuvant humilesque myricae." Virgil (70–19 B.C.), *Ecloga IV*, available online at http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/vergil/ec4.shtml. My translation.
  - 21. See Getto, "Pascoli e l'America," 165.
- 22. See Meliadò Freeth, "Whitman nella cultura italiana," 129–31. It is interesting to think of Giorgio Agamben's notes on the idea of dictation in Pascoli's "Il fanciullino," as paralleled to Whitman's "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking." See Giorgio Agamben, "Pascoli and the Thought of Voice," in *The End of the Poem: Studies in Poetics*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 72.
- 23. I first wrote about this poem (together with others by Italian writers) in comparative conjunction with "Out of the Cradle" in the last chapter of my master's thesis, defended in 2010 at the University of Macerata and entitled "Parole dal mare: Walt Whitman da 'A Child's Reminiscence' a 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking.'"
  - 24. See Getto, "Pascoli e l'America," 160-62.
- 25. Original: "Dov'era la luna? chè il cielo / notava in un'alba di perla, / ed ergersi il mandorlo e il melo / parevano a meglio vederla. / Venivano soffi di lampi / da un nero di nubi là giù: / veniva una voce dai campi: / chiù ... / Le stelle lucevano rare / tra mezzo alla nebbia di latte: / sentivo il cullare del mare, / sentivo un fru tru tra le fratte; / sentivo nel cuore un sussulto, / com'eco d'un grido che fu. / Sonava lontano il singulto: / chiù ... / Su tutte le lucide vette / tremava un sospiro di vento: / squassavano le cavallette / finissimi sistri d'argento / (tintinni a invisibili porte / che forse non s'aprono più? ...); / e c'era quel pianto di morte, / chiù ... ." Giovanni Pascoli, "L'assiuolo," in Myricae (Livorno: R. Giusti, 1903), 127–28. My translation.
  - 26. See Agamben, "Pascoli and the Thought of Voice," 72.
- 27. Cambon, Getto, Grippi, and Meliadò Freeth find a few other connections, including a striking resemblance of Pascoli's "Soldato di San Piero in Campo" ("Soldier from San Piero in Campo"), with Whitman's "Come Up from the Fields Father." See Getto, "Pascoli e l'America," 165; Cambon, "Walt Whitman in Italia," 246; Grippi, "Reputation of Walt Whitman in Italy," 136; Meliadò Freeth, "Whitman nella cultura italiana," 147.
  - 28. See Meliadò Freeth, "Whitman nella cultura italiana," 130-31.

- 29. For more on the individual responses to Whitman by French and Belgian symbolists, South American *modernistas*, and the Russian symbolists, see Erkkila's second chapter in *Walt Whitman Among the French* and the following essays from Allen and Folsom, *Walt Whitman and the World*: Asselineau, 235 and 242 (for Belgian poet Emile Verhaeren's symbolist reading of Whitman in comparison to French ones); Alegría, 82–83; and Stepanchev, 303–4.
- 30. Delphine Rumeau, too, talks about Russian primitivism as imported from France and England, forgetting the autochthonous Russian studies of the classics. See Rumeau, Fortunes de Walt Whitman, 83.
- 31. In Rachel Polonsky, *English Literature and the Russian Aesthetic Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 41.
- 32. See Polonsky, 43-44. For the cited words by Ivanov, I am using Polonsky's translation into English, which appears in these pages.
- 33. Original: "Средь гор глухих я встретил пастуха / Трубившего в альпийский длинный рог. / Приятно песнь его лилась; но, зычный, / Был лишь орудьем рог, дабы в горах / Пленительное эхо пробуждать. / И всякий раз, когда пережидал / Его пастух, извлекши мало звуков, / Оно носилось меж теснин таким / Неизреченно-сладостным созвучьем, / Что мнилося: незримый духов хор, / На неземных орудьях, переводит / Наречием небес язык земли. / И думал я: «О гений! Как сей рог, / Петь песнь земли ты должен, чтоб в сердцах / Будить иную песнь. Блажен, кто слышит." "Альпийский рог" ("Alpinsky Rog"), Kormchie Zvezdy: kniga liriki, Saint Petersburg: Tip. A. Suvorina, 1903. My translation.

- 1. See Edward Carpenter, *Days with Walt Whitman* (New York: Macmillan; London: George Allen, 1906), 43. Carpenter writes: "What lies behind 'Leaves of Grass' is something that few, very few, only one here and there, perhaps oftenest women, are at all in a position to seize."
- 2. While here I will only concentrate on the case of Sibilla Aleramo writing on Whitman as NEMI, there is also the case of critic and writer of children's literature Laura Cantoni Orvieto, who wrote articles in the Florentinian periodical Il Marzocco using the pseudonym of "Mrs El." Married to the founder of Il Marzocco, Angiolo Orvieto, Laura Cantoni Orvieto often invited writers Sibilla Aleramo and Amelia Pincherle Rosselli to collaborate with the periodical, animating various debates with them. On January 26, 1908, "Mrs El." announced in Il Marzocco the publication of Gamberal's 1907 translation. The article is entitled "La traduzione di un intraducibile" ("The Translation of an Untranslatable [Poet]"). Orvieto did not particularly appreciate Whitman's enumerating style, which, for her, lacked elegance, and she called Whitman's longest poems "the least perfect" (3), but she recognized the importance of reading Whitman for "those souls who aspire to elevate themselves in freedom and fullness of strength, of joy, of desire [...]" (3). My translation. Orvieto also overall praised Gamberale's translation, apart from noticing the presence of occasional mistakes. A curious fact is that, because of the English-sounding pseudonym used by Orvieto, critic Alberto Lumbroso, who also wrote a review of Gamberale's translation for the periodical

*Rivista di Roma* on February 10, 1908, while mentioning the important and, as he called it, "wonderful" article that had appeared in *Il Marzocco*, affirmed that the article was written by a mysterious "British female collaborator."

- 3. While it was founded in Florence in 1866, *Nuova Antologia* moved to Rome in 1878 and remained there until 1978, when it was moved back to Florence.
- 4. See, for example, Giovanni Papini, "Walt Whitman," *Nuova Antologia*, 5th ser., coll. 135, vol. 219, bkt. 876 (June 16, 1908): 696–711. See also the letter sent to Papini by Giovanni Cena on April 25, 1907, when prompting Papini to write the article on Whitman. The letter is included in *Lettere Papini–Aleramo e altri inediti* (1912–1943), ed. Annagiulia Dello Vicario (Napoli-Roma: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1988), 214.
- 5. NEMI was used as the general editorial staff signature of this column from 1902 until 1923.
  - 6. See Meliadò Freeth, "Whitman nella cultura italiana," III.
- 7. See Asselineau, in Folsom and Allen, *Walt Whitman and the World*, 270; Meliadò Freeth, "La fortuna di Walt Whitman in Italia," 59–62.
- 8. See Grippi, "Reputation of Walt Whitman in Italy," 140. Grippi, who only briefly mentions the articles in his dissertation, states that they were authored by writer Flora Vezzani. But this latter was born in 1903, and so this is simply impossible. Grippi's mistake must have emerged because Vezzani did use the pseudonym "Orsola Nemi," but never to write in the *Nuova Antologia*, and of course much later than 1902–8.
- 9. This expression appears in Aleramo's short autobiographical notes (unpublished), as reported in *Orsa minore: Note di taccuino e altre ancora*, ed. Anna Folli (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2002), 219.
- 10. As she explains in her autobiographical notes, the first name "Sibilla" derived from a sonnet by Giovanni Cena, dedicated to her (the first line reads "I discovered her and called her Sibilla") while the last name was inspired by the Carduccian ode "Piemonte," specifically by the line "Il ridente di castella e vigne suol d'Aleramo" ("The delightful land of Aleramo with its castles and vineyards"). As argued by Franca Angelini, the transition to the new name corresponded to a symbolic loss of Aleramo's former identity and the embrace of her new, creative identity, her "birth to literature." See Franca Angelini, "Un nome e una donna," in *Svelamento: Sibilla Aleramo; Una biografia intellettuale*, ed. Annarita Buttafuoco and Marina Zancan (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1988), 65.
- 11. See for example the letter from Negri to Aleramo of August 1, 1900, in *Sibilla Aleramo* e il suo tempo: Vita raccontata e illustrata, ed. Bruna Conti and Alba Morino (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1981), 25.
- 12. See Anna Folli, *Penne leggere: Neera, Ada Negri, Sibilla Aleramo; Scritture femminili italiane tra Otto e Novecento* (Milano: Guerini, 2004), 185; *Aleramo e il suo tempo*, ed. Conti and Morino, 36.
- 13. The letter (which is no longer complete with the forwarded article) is included in *Dino Campana/Sibilla Aleramo*: Lettere, ed. Niccolò Gallo (Firenze: Vallecchi Editore, 1958), 16, and *Sibilla Aleramo*, *Dino Campana*: Un viaggio chiamato amore; Lettere 1916–1918, ed. Bruna Conti (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2015), 44–45. The article she forwarded, Aleramo assessed, displayed a certain "naïveté," as the one she felt she had "back then": this reflection on a past intellectual naïveté reinforces the hypothesis that Aleramo is referring to a piece that

she had written much earlier than 1916. Scholars Bruna Conti and Anna Folli have both suggested that the article in question is the 1906 one published in the *Nuova Antologia*, but there is no final evidence for this, as confirmed by librarian Cristiana Pipitone at the Gramsci Foundation in Rome.

- 14. All these autobiographical remarks on Aleramo's father are contained in *Un amore insolito* (*Diario 1940–1944*), ed. Alba Morino (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1979), 43. My translation.
- 15. See NEMI, "Walt Whitman," *Nuova Antologia*, 4th ser., coll. 186, vol. 102, bkt. 741 (November 1, 1902): 154–57. All the citations contained here are translated into English by me.
- 16. Gamberale did not translate the poem in his 1887 or 1890 collection, so the translation must have been made by the author of the article.
- 17. See Walt Whitman, "Lo, Victress on the Peaks," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 252. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
- 18. NEMI, "Walt Whitman," *Nuova Antologia*, 5th ser., coll. 121, vol. 205, bkt. 818 (January 16, 1906): 343–44. All the citations contained here are translated into English by me.
- 19. See Cesare Pavese, "Whitman, Poesia del far poesia," in *La letteratura americana e altri saggi* (Torino: Einaudi, 1951), 141–65.
- 20. See NEMI, "Le Foglie d'Erba di Walt Whitman," *Nuova Antologia*, 5th ser., coll. 216, vol. 132, bkt. 864 (December 16, 1907): 697–98.
- 21. See Sibilla Aleramo, "Una biografia di Walt Whitman," *Nuova Antologia*, 5th ser., coll. 122, vol. 238, bkt. 885 (November 1, 1908): 148–50.
  - 22. On this, see Camboni, "Foglie d'erba di Walt Whitman," 362.
- 23. The word "robust," gagliarda, would also come back in the first stanza of an Aleramo poem whose main image was quite controversial, for the time: "Nuda nel sole" ("Naked in the Sun"): "Naked in the sun / for you, while you are painting, I am immobile / the chest only giving the rhythm / to the robust life of the heart." My translation. Original: "Nuda nel sole / per te che dipingi sto immobile, / il seno soltanto ritmando / la vita gagliarda del cuore." Significantly, for one of her more "scandalous" poems, Aleramo went back to use the word that had marked her literary beginning. In this poem, too, in fact, the word evidently stands as a renovated signifier of her personal pride and her strong-willed fight to be free from gender norms and moral prejudices. "Nuda nel sole" was first published in the magazine La Grande Illustrazione in 1915 and then in Aleramo's collection of poems Momenti (Firenze: Bemporad, 1921), 37.
- 24. See Walt Whitman, "For You O Democracy," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 99. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
- 25. See Walt Whitman, "Starting from Paumanok," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 27. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
- 26. The letter from Bazalgette, in French, is available in the Aleramo collection at the Gramsci Foundation in Rome. All the other letters between Bazalgette and Aleramo discussed here are also available in the collection. My translation.
  - 27. My translation.
  - 28. My translation.

- 29. For reproducing the discussed passage in English, I used Ellen Fitzgerald's translation of Bazalgette's book: *Walt Whitman: The Man and His Work* (Garden City and New York: Doubleday, 1920), 94.
- 30. Significantly, Aleramo speaks only generally about this love, defining it as a "love passion," without attributing to it any gender specification.
- 31. See Sibilla Aleramo, "Vallate dell'Alpe," *Il Resto del Carlino*, September 1, 1911. The article is reproduced in Sibilla Aleramo, *Andando e stando: Prose* (Firenze: Bemporad, 1922), 3–12. My translation.
- 32. Aleramo sent the article to Bazalgette, who commented on it on a postcard to the Italian writer, written on September 22, 1911: "I infinitely loved such a high naturist meditation and your lines on Walt Whitman are truthful and beautiful." My translation. The postcard is available in the Aleramo collection at the Gramsci Foundation in Rome.
  - 33. The title of Whitman's book is left in lowercase letters in the original article.
- 34. See Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* 1855, vi. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1855/whole.html.
  - 35. The original Italian word, bestemmia, specifically refers to a curse against God.
- 36. The piece on Francis of Assisi is contained in Aleramo's notebook entries, collected in Folli, *Orsa Minore*, 63–64.
- 37. For the centrality of the *Mercure de France* for the French and international reception of Whitman, see Rumeau, *Fortunes de Walt Whitman*, 37, 394–400.
- 38. The editors of the *Mercure de France* wrote, for example, in the issue of December 12, 1916, on page 749: "We owe to M.me Sibilla Aleramo to have created a very complete type of woman, one that Italian literature had not ever analyzed, with a remarkable, and well remarked, psychological subtlety." My translation.
- 39. Aleramo recalls this time in the essay, "Esperienze d'una scrittrice" (originally a lecture given by Aleramo in Torino at the Unione Culturale on March 8, 1952), reproduced in *Andando e stando*, ed. Rita Guerricchio (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1997), 12–14. On page 13 she talks, for example, about dining with Bazalgette, "the acute and passionate biographer and translator of Whitman" at a restaurant in Montparnasse.
- 40. Bazalgette is referring to Aleramo's novel *Il passaggio* (1919) and her poetry collection *Momenti* (*Moments*) (1921).
- 41. The French translation of the novel by Scipio Slataper (originally published in 1912) was published, that same year, by Rieder as *Mon frère le Carso*.
- 42. The letter is included in *Aleramo e il suo tempo*, ed. Conti and Morino, 170–71. My translation.
  - 43. See Folli, Orsa minore, 124-25.
- 44. See Léon Bazalgette, *Le poème evangile de Walt Whitman* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1921). The citation by Aleramo in her notebook is from page 224: "Il est une âme publique qui se voudrait foulée comme la grande route." (He is a public soul who would like to be trodden upon, as a big road.) My translation.
- 45. For "poem," Aleramo intends "long poem" or "epic poem," as the word *poema* can also indicate this in Italian. The words, included in Aleramo's journal from December 30, 1950, are reported by Adriana Perrotta in the essay "'Questo balsamo, la lettura': Ovvero la necessità della cultura," in *Svelamento*, ed. Buttafuoco and Zancan, 117. My translation.

- 46. See Sibilla Aleramo, "Le confessioni di un fantastico," *Il Marzocco* 17, no. 8 (February 25, 1912). The essay is reproduced in Dello Vicario, ed., *Lettere Papini–Aleramo*, 225–29.
- 47. See Giovanni Papini, "Walt Whitman," *Nuova Antologia*, 5th ser., coll. 219, vol. 135, bkt. 876 (June 16, 1908): 696–711.
- 48. In a striking coincidence of interests, Papini had established a parallel that Aleramo must have particularly appreciated: "to be complete, he must at the same time be as joyous as Saint Francis and as violent as Nietzsche" (703). My translation.
- 49. The original quote in Italian is "Oh, morte, dammi il tuo tono!..." The line is taken from Whitman's "Scented Herbage of my Breast" (in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 96. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole. html). It appears also in Aleramo's notebook (see Folli, *Orsa minore*, 125).
- 50. See Sibilla Aleramo, *Diario di una donna: Inediti, 1945–1960*, ed. Alba Morino (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1978), 462.
- 51. The letter, undated (but certainly from 1913), is reported in Conti and Morino, eds., 95–96. My translation.
- 52. Campana wrote to Aleramo on July 22, 1916. in response to Aleramo's letter: while the two writers had never met before, Aleramo had read Campana's *Canti orfici* (1914) and had written to him to congratulate him. Campana's letter has been printed in Gallo, ed., *Dino Campana/Sibilla Aleramo*, 15. My translation.
- 53. This letter is also included in Gallo's collection of the letters; see *Dino Campana/Sibilla Aleramo*, 16.
- 54. The expression by Luzi is reported in Bruna Conti's introduction to *Un viaggio chiamato amore*, 11.
- 55. As I said, scholars Folli and Conti have hypothesized that it was the 1906 article, but they have given no clear reason for this assessment.
- 56. This experimental style of prose writing was very fashionable in the Italian literary avant-gardes of the 1910s and 1920s, and especially in the Florentinian circle of *La Voce*.
- 57. Original: "Ansia di tutto comprendere, di tutto rispettare e sormontare. Attenzione trepida ed instancabile, religiosa vigilanza della mia umanità. Come se io fossi, invece d'una persona, un'idea da estrarre, da manifestare, da imporre, da portare in salvo." Sibilla Aleramo, *Il passaggio* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2000), 13. All the passages cited from this text are translated by me.
- 58. Original: "Ho contemplato l'agitato mistero del mio spirito, e il lucido aspetto dell'universo, e tanti che ho pensato vivi come me, uomini e donne, ed il pulsar delle vene sulla loro fronte. Uomini e donne sono sul mio cammino perch'io li ami. [...] Grazia di volti e di corpi, bagliori d'anime, gloria di godimenti e di patimenti, messaggio senza fine. Mi sono venute parole anche dalle vite deformi e dalle informi. E dove passo ignota, quasi furtiva, ivi pure immagino talvolta di toccare col mio spirito coloro che non mi scorgono, di rapirli un attimo a loro stessi, in un caldo gorgo. Alte vallate, casolari fra i prati, l'erba smorza il fruscio del mio piede."
- 59. Original: "Se scrivo, se scavo nel mio pensiero o nella mia passione, e le parole sono stillanti sangue, credo di darmi ed invece prendo. M'illudo perché nutro di me la mia preda. Ma colui che m'ascolta è com'era mio figlio quando beveva alla mia mammella ed io lo teneva nelle braccia, cosa mia che faceva preziosa la vita mia."

- 60. Original: "Affermo me a me stessa: null'altro, null'altro! Oh, ma affermo tutto ciò di cui mi compongo, tutto che mi sta attorno e ch'io assorbo! Nulla va perduto. E quando anelo ad essere amata è ancora il mio amore per tutte le cose che chiede di venir riconosciuto, è il mondo che vuol essere abbracciato e cantato." In her postface to this edition, Bruna Conti comments on this passage and puts it close to Whitman's first lines in "Song of Myself." See "Postfazione," in *Il passaggio*, 105.
- 61. Once again, as she had done in *Una donna*, Aleramo talks about her youth in terms of strength: "who made me so strong?" See *Il passaggio*, 11.
  - 62. Original: "cosa di perla [...] compenetrata di luce."
- 63. Original: "Con sommesso respiro mi riavvicino a tutto che in purità tace, mi riconfondo con l'arcano sorriso della bontà."
- 64. I am referring specifically to the collection entitled *Poesie* (Poems) that includes poems from 1912 to 1928. See Sibilla Aleramo, *Poesie* (Milano: Mondadori, 1929).
- 65. Original: "Sai bene che m'attraggono i margini dei fiumi, / sai bene che alle fiamme le mani inquiete tendo, / mi vedi guardarti nell'acqua chiara degli occhi / m'accosti la fronte dai grappoli caldi, / pur da tanto indugiamo perversi o poveri? / e sempre è quell'ora prima che tacendo ci piacemmo . . . ." In *Poesie*, 70.
- 66. The writer was granted an award by the fascist cultural institution called Royal Italian Academy and was also granted a monthly stipend by the regime.
- 67. Rinascita had been founded by Togliatti in 1944 as the official publication of the Italian Communist Party.
- 68. The letter to Togliatti appears in *Sibilla Aleramo e il suo tempo*, ed. Bruna Conti and Alba Morino, 308. My translation.
  - 69. See "Europa" in Rinascita 5 (August 1948): 310.
- 70. Original: "Ma ora, nel ricordo, Polonia, sii ringraziata. / Per il volto coraggioso per il volto ardente / che tutti ti abbiam visto, noi di quarantacinque nazioni, / e per averci rinsaldato il cuore, / tu risorgente dalla morte, con il tuo esempio / Polonia, tu credente in una umanità più vera, / sii ringraziata, generosa e cara, / per quella che indomabile in noi hai ravvisata, / volontà d'agire uniti sino al respiro ultimo, / affinchè mai più obbrobrio di guerra si ripeta, / mai più per mano d'uomini / sterminio di paesi e razze avvenga." In addition to being published in *Rinascita*, the poem also appears in the 1956 *Luci della mia sera* (*Lights of My Evening*) (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1956), 32–34. My translation.
- 71. Original: "Aiutatemi a dire! Così grande / quel che il mio petto sommuove, / visione fonda dell'avvenire, / amore del tempo che si prepara / e passione e orgoglio per la sofferenza d'ora, / così grande, aiutatemi a dire! // Non solo nel mio petto, in altri innumeri / nel terrestre immenso spazio / immensa certezza respira / del mondo, qual sarà ne l'atteso domani, / umano mondo di compatta giustizia, / [...] / Innumeri siamo a prepararlo / quel limpido globo di gioia / [...] / Così grande, aiutatemi a dire, / la meraviglia di questa ardente unione, / [...] / alta idea che tutti accomuna i credenti in lei, / da quelli che rudemente faticano, // arano la nuda terra / alzano babiloniche torri / caricano navigli picchiano metalli, / ai sapienti che il moto degli astri scrutano / o a quelli che in lievi lievi sillabe tentano / fissare il ritmo e la melodia de le stagioni eterne. // Così grande, aiutatemi a dire, / questa che nel mio petto e in altri innumeri / nel terrestre immenso spazio /

immensa certezza respira / del mondo qual sarà ne l'atteso domani, / [...]." See Sibilla Aleramo, "Aiutatemi a dire," in *Luci della mia sera*, 29–31. My translation.

72. Original: "Come tra sogni andavo attraverso gli anni / per tante tue strade Italia amandoti / ma solo ora in questa che dico ed è sera di mia vita / ora solo scoprendo vo nostra grande gente Italia / [...] / e fra le donne nelle risaie lombarde / e fra le liguri raccoglitrici d'olive e fiori / e fra le artigiane che a Valenza incidon l'oro / e fra i braccianti in Emilia e nelle padane nebbie / e i portuali d'Ancona e i portuali di Trieste / e gli zolfatari siculi e i boscaioli maremmani / e ovunque muratori pescatori sterratori / e tipografi e tramvieri e ferrovieri // oh lista umile e senz'enfasi di milioni di braccia / o lista umile e possente di braccia che ti fan vivere Italia / [...]." The poem is included in *Luci della mia sera*, 76–81. My translation.

### CHAPTER 7

A shorter but similar version of this chapter, in Italian, is forthcoming as "Il nome di Whitman e l'avanguardia italiana, tra Firenze e New York: Il caso de 'La Voce,'" in *Proceedings of International Conference "Oltre i confini: Contaminazioni tra letterature antiche e moderne, arti visive, cinema e musica nella cultura americana,"* University of Macerata, Italy (Macerata: Eum, forthcoming).

- 1. For more on this, see Eugenio Garin, *Cronache di filosofia italiana*, 1900–1943 (Bari: Laterza, 1966), 23–24; Aurelio Benevento, *Primo Novecento* (Napoli: Loffredo, 1986), 8; Edoardo Sanguineti, *Poesia italiana del Novecento* (Torino: Einaudi, 1969), xxxix–xl.
- 2. The general case of Whitman and the circle of *La Voce* has, in fact, not been thoroughly analyzed by previous studies. The general tendency has often been to concentrate almost solely on the figure and work of Giovanni Papini. Interesting, if very brief, observations about Piero Jahier can be found in the 1997 thesis of Simona Rizzacasa, "La fortuna letteraria di Walt Whitman in Italia da Nencioni a Pavese" (Undergraduate thesis, Università degli Studi della Tuscia, Viterbo, 1997), 189–90.
- 3. See Walter L. Adamson, "Modernism in Florence: The Politics of Avant-Garde Culture in the Early Twentieth Century," in *Italian Modernism: Italian Culture between Decadentism and Avant-Garde*, ed. Luca Somigli and Mario Moroni (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2004), 229.
- 4. See Luigi Iannone, Conservatore atipico: Giuseppe Prezzolini intellettuale politicamente scorretto (Roma: Pantheon, 2003), 88.
  - 5. See Antonio Gramsci, Letteratura e vita nazionale (Torino: Einaudi, 1954), 9.
- 6. This does not mean that La Voce should be regarded as protofascist. By reading the periodical, Mussolini probably learned how to distrust his former positivism and combine his revolutionary socialism with philosophical idealism and pragmatism.
  - 7. See Papini, "Walt Whitman," 700. My translation.
- 8. The letter is included in Carlo D'Alessio, ed., *Carteggi Cecchi Onofri Papini* (Milano: Bompiani, 2000), 81. My translation.
- See John Champagne, Aesthetic Modernism and Masculinity in Fascist Italy (New York: Routledge, 2013), 128.

- 10. See Giovanni Papini, "Miele e pietra," in *Eresie letterarie* [1905–1928] (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1932), 53.
- 11. In France, Soffici studied with Cezanne, among others, and was an active presence in the literary and cultural circles of *La Plume* and *Le Mercure de France*. Papini repeatedly visited Soffici there, and the two often went to visit other writers and artists, including Picasso.
- 12. Letter from Giovanni Papini to Ardengo Soffici, December 28, 1907, included in Mario Richter, ed., *Carteggio: Giovanni Papini–Ardengo Soffici; Carteggio I,* 1903–1908, *Dal "Leonardo" a "La Voce"* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1991), 167. My translation.
  - 13. Letter (undated) from Soffici to Papini, in Richter, ed., 168. My translation.
- 14. For more about this political project and for the appropriation of the Risorgimento ideology by early fascism, see Simon Levis Sullam, *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Origins of Fascism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
- 15. Letter from Papini to Soffici, January 3, 1908, in Richter, ed., *Carteggio, Papini–Ardengo*, 174. My translation.
- 16. Original: "No, Walt fratello, quella che vedesti non era / Una emigrata vedova. Ben era la Musa. / Che sulla groppa celeste a te recava il tuo mare. / Tratta dal fiero appello, venne ella e si stette con te / E ti baciò la fronte superba e sorrise ai tuoi canti; ma in cuore / Covava il ritorno e l'addio. / Non cenere e vento, non conficcate bare e ruine, / Non tutta morta era la sua patria antica! / [...] / Ed ella tornò. Con umide labbra tremanti / Ti chiuse gli occhi, e tornò ai suoi verzieri in riva al suo mare. / Ora è qui, Walt, è qui, la sento aggirarmisi intorno, / Respiro l'odore primaverile del suo fiato ... / Mi tocca i capelli, l'abbraccio, la stringo al mio petto in sussulto, / Perdutamente, con le gagliarde braccia, e canto!" My translation. Ardengo Soffici, "Risposta a Walt Whitman per il suo 'Canto dell'esposizione," in Soffici, Marsia e Apollo: Poesie giovanili 1901–1908 (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1961), 4:707.
  - 17. Rumeau, Fortunes de Walt Whitman, 185.
- 18. Letter from Soffici to Papini, July 28, 1908, in Richter, ed., *Carteggio, Papini–Ardengo*, 277–79. My translation.
  - 19. Letter from Papini to Soffici, August 7, 1908, in Richter, ed., 284-86.
  - 20. Letter from Soffici to Papini, August 8, 1908, in Richter, ed., 286. My translation.
  - 21. Rumeau, Fortunes de Walt Whitman, 184-88.
- 22. Letter from Soffici to Papini, August 1, 1908, in Richter, ed., *Carteggio*, *Papini–Ardengo*, 282. My translation.
- 23. See Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 78. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
- 24. Original: "Sono un falcaccio di poche parole. / Sperpero la mia vita a modo mio." Giovanni Papini, "Decima poesia," in *Opera prima* [1917] (Genova: San Marco dei Giustiniani, 2008), 49. My translation.
- 25. Original: "Erutto spregio verso la costrutta / città [...]." Giovanni Papini, "Dodicesima poesia," in *Opera prima*, 53. My translation.
- 26. See Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 30. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
  - ${\tt 27.}\ For\ more\ on\ this, see\ Giovanni\ Papini, \textit{Eresie letterarie}\ (Firenze:\ Vallecchi, 1932), 173.$
  - 28. Asor Rosa's definition of Papini is reported in Iannone, Conservatore atipico, 100.

- 29. See Walt Whitman, "Excelsior," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 363. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
  - 30. See Giovanni Papini, Un uomo finito (Firenze: Libreria de La Voce, 1913), 145.
  - 31. Papini, Un uomo finito, 267.
- 32. Original: "Chi è salito più in alto?—Perché io voglio scendere quanto è salito." Jahier's poem is also included in the posthumous collection *Poesie in versi e in prosa* (Torino: Einaudi, 1981), 27. My translation. All the poems by Jahier that I am discussing here are taken from this collection, except the last one, "Reclute," which is taken from *Con me e con gli alpini* (Firenze: "La Voce" Società Anonima Editrice, 1920), 11. All passages reproduced here are translated by me.
- 33. See, for example, his correspondence with Cesare Pavese in the 1940s, when Jahier collaborated as a translator with Einaudi, the publishing house for which Pavese worked. In various letters, the two writers and translators repeatedly discussed Whitman's poetry and the possibility of translating *Leaves of Grass* for a new edition that Pavese wanted to prepare (the translation would eventually be executed by Enzo Giachino in 1950). See Cesare Pavese, *Lettere* 1924–1950, ed. Italo Calvino and Lorenzo Mondo (Torino: Einaudi, 1966), vol.1.
  - 34. For more on this, see Benevento, Primo Novecento, 137, 146, 224.
- 35. Original: "Allora scopersi: la mattina risuscitare colle idee calde serbate nell'universo che mi dà la mano. / Quando scopersi il riposo:—proprio verso l'occhio stanco si aprono i fiori come verso il sole;—proprio gli uccelli si spiccano incontro. / Quando scopersi il piccolo guadagno; sanno che è altrove il tuo cuore; non pagheranno quello che non possono avere. / Quando scopersi un tesoro giacente: sì, al posto di abitudini polverose, sempre sottomano la più sfrenata passione. / [...] / Quando scopersi la mia fede: ah! credevate che non ce ne voglia per vivere di fede!"
- 36. Original: "Ma un giorno almeno—vacanza al corpo mortificato—fatemi un giorno camminare in digiuno, / Affinché riconosca le stazioni della mia identità—e provi le ancore del mio destino—e chieda risposta al mio sangue intero giovanile,—lontanato il contagio della pigra vita chiacchierativa./ [...] / Certo—se nasce l'insetto contemporaneo alla fioritura del timo, / Se torna il pianeta puntuale, se rincrocia il suo fuoco nel cielo scarso terrestre, / Certo—è giusta la mia collocazione in vita."
- 37. Original: "Camminare—nell'infinito di queste cose viventi—immerse le mani nel forziere rigurgitante."
- 38. Original: "Mio corpo, quantunque mai ti abbia chiesto parere per decidermi, molte volte ti ho speso, come la buona moneta. / Non sei stato cresciuto in serra agiata, ma in salutare esercizio di povertà, di pazienza e soggezione. / Magro palmo di terra da semina, come renderesti pane per molte bocche? E, ancora, chicchi per gli uccelli del cielo, e, ancora, strizzando il tuo cuore, un germoglio di santa poesia, come un bastone che fiorisce?"
- 39. See, for example, Jahier's three contributions to Piero Gobetti's anti-fascist periodical *Rivoluzione liberale* (1922–25). The contributions have been collected by Paolo Briganti in "Jahier e la *Rivoluzione liberale*," *Studi e problemi di critica testuale* 11 (1975): 211–21.
- 40. Original: "Camminavo in mezzo ai corpi abbandonati sul grigio. / Tutto uniforme, tutto uguale; / eppure ciascuno i suoi ricordi e i suoi affetti; / ciascuno una sua storia di

uomo. / Ho sentito bisogno di dar loro un segno di cura. / Ho detto: buonanotte figlioli. / E tutti han risposto: buonanotte. / Nessuno era addormentato."

### CHAPTER 8

- 1. Because of Carnevali's closeness to the scene of La Voce, this section, in slightly altered version and in Italian, is also included in my previously mentioned essay "Il nome di Whitman e l'avanguardia italiana, tra Firenze e New York: Il caso de 'La Voce,'" in Proceedings of International Conference "Oltre i confini: Contaminazioni tra letterature antiche e moderne, arti visive, cinema e musica nella cultura americana," University of Macerata, Italy (Macerata: Eum, forthcoming).
- 2. See Piero Jahier's "Richiamati," *La Voce 7*, no. 12 (June 15, 1915): 752–53. Carnevali translated this poem and then wrote a poem reminiscent of it: "Utopia of the Men Who Come Back from the War," which was published in *The Touchstone* in July 1919. Carnevali's translation of Jahier's poem was published in "Five Years of Italian Poetry (1910–1915) with translations from Corrado Govoni, Salvatore Di Giacomo, Piero Jahier, Aldo Palazzeschi, Umberto Saba, and Scipio Slataper," *Poetry* 13 (January 4, 1919): 209–19.
- 3. See Gabriel Cacho Millet, ed., Introduction to Emanuel Carnevali, *Voglio disturbare l'America: Lettere a Benedetto Croce e Giovanni Papini e altro* (Firenze: La Casa Usher, 1980).
- 4. In this article Carnevali wrote that *La Voce* had been one of the best periodicals that had ever appeared. See "Giovanni Papini," *The Modern Review* I, no. 1 (Autumn 1922): 11–14.
- 5. For more on this, see "The Day of Summer: Emanuel Carnevali," in *Italoamericana: The Literature of the Great Migration*, 1880–1943, ed. Francesco Durante (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 867–76.
- 6. It must be noticed that Carnevali's 1919 poem "Walt Whitman," which I will discuss later, importantly appears in *Walt Whitman: The Measure of His Song*, ed. Jim Perlman, Ed Folsom and Dan Campion (Duluth: Holy Cow! Press, 1998), 123.
- 7. See Mario Domenichelli, "Emanuel Carnevali's 'Great Good Bye,'" in *Beyond the Margins: Readings in Italian Americana*, ed. Paolo A. Giordano and Anthony Julian Tamburri (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1998), 84–85. See also Menichelli's discussion of Carnevali's criticism of the Poundian idea of impersonality. While Domenichelli's piece is important for its general presentation of the figure of Carnevali and for the description of his relationship with American modernist writers, it does not make any mention of the influence of Whitman on Carnevali.
- 8. See Emanuel Carnevali, "Walt Whitman," *Poetry* 14, no. II (May 1919): 60. For an interesting discussion of this poem in conjunction with Whitman's work, see Achille C. Varzi, "All the Shadows / Whisper of the Sun': Carnevali's Whitmanesque Simplicity," *Philosophy and Literature* 41 (October 2017): 360–74.
  - 9. See Emanuel Carnevali, "Noon," Poetry 14, no. 6 (September 1919): 324–5.
- 10. See John Lofton's interview with Ginsberg, "When Worlds Collide: From 'The Puritan and the Profligate,' an Interview," *Harper's Magazine* 280 (1990): 1676.
  - 11. See Emanuel Carnevali, "Evening," Poetry 14, no. 6 (September 1919): 322-3.
- 12. See Carnevali's letter to Papini of May 16, 1919, in *Voglio disturbare l'America*, 77. My translation.

13. This section has been previously published. See Caterina Bernardini, "The Longest Day: Dino Campana and Walt Whitman Across Italy and South America," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 33 (2015): 4–20. The version reproduced here has been slightly modified and updated according to my new findings.

14. This is the only volume of poetry published by Campana (the book was released in 1914 in his hometown, Marradi, by the printmaker Bruno Ravagli). But a few other poems were published separately, in periodicals, and also various drafts and miscellaneous materials have come to light since the writer's death. Additional materials have been combined with the original 1914 bulk of poems in a second edition, published by Vallecchi in 1928 without the writer's authorization, and have often been used for later editions. (This is why editions of Campana's work after 1914 are usually entitled *Canti Orfici e altre poesie*, that is, *Orphic Songs and Other Poems*.) Here, I will mostly concentrate on poems that were included in the 1914 edition, but I will indicate in the notes when the text I am using did not appear in the original volume.

15. See Roger Asselineau, "Whitman in Italy," in Allen and Folsom, Walt Whitman and the World, 273.

16. According to Gabriel Cacho Millet, the source of this information was Campana's uncle, who had accompanied the poet to the harbor when he was leaving for South America. See Millet, "L'ultimo dei Campana," L'informatore librario 8, no. 5 (May 1978). Campana's journey to South America has been questioned, especially by the Italian poet Giuseppe Ungaretti, who even talked about "mythomania" because of an apparent lack of official documents that could prove that the journey did take place (see Piero Bigongiari, Capitoli di una storia della poesia italiana [Firenze: Le Monnier, 1968], 359). While scholars have now agreed to the journey as a fact, partly thanks to Caroline Mezey's retrieval of the document that proves Campana was granted a passport in September 1907 (see her "Documenti inediti per la biografia di Dino Campana [1906-1913]," Studi e problemi di critica testuale 32 [April 1986]), there is still no conclusive proof as to the exact dates and length of the journey. While in the quoted article Millet indicates February 1908 as when Campana left Genoa, he later hypothesized that the poet might have left already in the fall of 1907. See Millet's Dino Campana sperso per il mondo: Autografi sparsi, 1906–1918 (Firenze: L. S. Olschki, 2000), 32-35; "Introduction" to Il cantore vagabondo: Dino Campana (Milano: Corriere della sera, 2012), available online at campanadino.it. See also Gianni Turchetta, Dino Campana: Biografia di un poeta (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2013), 78-79. According to Millet and Turchetta, Campana spent about one year in South America—mostly in Montevideo and Buenos Aires—as the first traces of him back in Europe correspond to February/March 1909. In South America he worked on railway embankments, but he was also a miner, a fireman, and a juggler. At times, he just wandered like a nomad. At other times, he played the piano in brothels, stoked coal on a ship, and worked in a rifle range.

17. The poet was diagnosed early in his life with dementia praecox and neurasthenia and was often hospitalized in psychiatric institutions. He spent the last fourteen years of his life (1918-1932) in a mental institution.

18. All the English translations used in this chapter when quoting Campana are by Luigi Bonaffini, as they appear in Dino Campana, *Canti orfici e altre poesie; Orphic Songs and Other Poems*, trans. and introduction by Luigi Bonaffini (New York: Peter Lang, 1991). The

only exception is for the early draft of "Pampas," "The Fiery Train on the Tawny Pampas," which I took from *Dino Campana: Orphic Songs*, trans. I. L. Salomon (New York: October House, 1968), 129. When quoting from these translations, I will abbreviate Bonaffini's translation as LB and Salomon's as ILS, within the references in parenthesis. The original passages in Italian, which are offered in endnotes with page references, are all taken from Dino Campana, *Canti Orfici e altre poesie* (Torino: Einaudi, 2003), except for "Nella pampa giallastra il treno ardente" ("The Fiery Train on the Tawny Pampas"), which I took from Dino Campana, *Inediti*, ed. Enrico Falqui (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1942), 139–40. It could be argued that the translations into English significantly modified the tone of the original. I do not think this is the case, as both Bonaffini and Salomon have rendered Campana as accurately as possible. The iterations and gerunds and the nominal style are clearly present in the original, as one could notice by looking at the Italian. Perhaps the translators are not always successful at accomplishing the extremely difficult task of rendering the archaic terms and dignified nuances that Campana sometimes uses, but they do faithfully render in English the rhythm, the syntactical oddities, the imagery, and the overall tone of the original.

- 19. Throughout this section, I place in quotation marks the word "America" when I refer to the idea or myth of "America" as opposed to the reality of North and South America.
- 20. Saba's words are quoted by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo in *Poeti italiani del Novecento* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1978), 277. My translation.
  - 21. See Edoardo Sanguineti, Poesia italiana del Novecento, 1:liv-lv. My translation.
- 22. See Eugenio Montale, "Sulla poesia di Campana," *L'Italia che scrive* 25 (September-October 1942). Montale is one of the few critics who understood the relevance of Whitman's work for Campana's poetry. He wrote, for example, that "there is a certain Italian poetry that goes from the best followers of D'Annunzio (like Adolfo De Bosis) to the early Futurism and Campana, which could not be explained without recurring to names such as Poe and Walt Whitman" (my translation). See Eugenio Montale, *Il secondo mestiere: Prose 1920–1979* (Milano: Mondadori, 2006), 2:2033–2034.
- 23. References to Campana's readings of European and American writers (including Whitman) of the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth are made in Giovanni Bonalumi, *Cultura e poesia di Campana* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1953); Cesare Galimberti, *Sulla formazione di Campana* (Milano: Mursia, 1964); Mario Costanzo, *Critica e poetica del primo Novecento: Boine, Campana, Sbarbaro, Rebora* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Filosofia, 1969); *O poesia tu più non tornerai: Campana moderno*, ed. Marcello Verdenelli (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2003); *Dino Campana: Una poesia europea musicale colorita*, Giornate di studio, Università degli Studi di Macerata, May 12–13, 2005, ed. Marcello Verdenelli (Macerata: Eum, 2007). It must be noticed that Simona Rizzacasa's 1997 thesis (see 190–95) briefly treats the admiration of Campana for Whitman, but without offering an extensive evaluation of the intertextual connections between the work of the two poets and without making any reference to Campana's journey to South America.
- 24. See Renato Martinoni, "Introduzione," in Dino Campana, Canti Orfici e altre poesie (Torino: Einaudi, 2003), xix; Carlo Pariani, Vite non romanzate di Dino Campana scrittore e di Evaristo Boncinelli scultore (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1938), 56.
- 25. See Alberto Petrucciani, "Dino Campana alla biblioteca di Ginevra," *Biblioteche oggi* 32, no. 8 (October 2014): 28.

- 26. See Sibilla Aleramo e Dino Campana: Un viaggio chiamato amore, ed. Bruna Conti, 43.
- 27. See Enrico Nencioni, "Walt Whitman," Fanfulla della domenica 1, no. 21 (December 7, 1879). My translation. It is quite plausible that Campana had read Nencioni's essay, even if the critic wrote it when Campana had not yet been born. Campana was an extremely avid reader of both foreign literatures, and Nencioni's work on them was still highly influential. For more on this, see *Le più belle pagine di Enrico Nencioni*, ed. Bruno Cicognani (Milano: Garzanti, 1943); Benedetto Croce, *La letteratura della nuova Italia* (Bari: Laterza, 1943), 2, 116–24.
- 28. See Maria Antonietta Grignani, "Momenti della ricezione di Campana," in *Dino Campana alla fine del secolo*, Atti del convegno di Faenza, May 15–16, 1997, ed. Anna Rosa Gentilini (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999), 169–88; and also Roberto Mussapi's critical notes on Campana, included in *Il centro e l'orizzonte: La poesia in Campana, Onofri, Luzi, Caproni, Bigongiari* (Milano: Jaca Book, 1985).
- 29. Campana gave this manuscript to Ardengo Soffici in 1913; it was lost for nearly sixty years, thus forcing Campana to reconceive what later became *Orphic Songs*.
- 30. See Antonio Corsaro, "La prosa narrativa di D'Annunzio nell'opera di Dino Campana," in *Bibliografia campaniana* (1914–1985), ed. Marcello Verdenelli and Antonio Corsaro (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1985), 95; Simona Costa, "Dino Campana: Un rendiconto dannunziano," *Paragone* 330 (1997): 79; *Dino Campana: Il più lungo giorno*, ed. Stefano Giovannuzzi (Firenze: Le Cáriti, 2004), 23–24.
- 31. In note 17 in my published article, I had already hypothesized that D'Annunzio himself may have also borrowed the expression from Whitman's poem, but it is by looking at the book at the Vittoriale (which I did in the summer of 2016) that I received confirmation of this.
  - 32. See Cesare Galimberti, Dino Campana (Milano: Mursia, 1967), 47.
- 33. See Francesca Roberta Seaman, "A Poetry of Loss: Love, History and Mental Illness in the Writings of Dino Campana" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2007), 1. Seaman argues that "Whitman's verse could stand as an epigraph to all of Campana's poetic work," but her use of the word "verse" instead of "line" is misleading. Seaman's remark seems to encompass all of Whitman's poetry, but in fact her dissertation focuses on the dark implications evoked by a single line (the one from "Song of Myself," adapted and used as an epigraph by Campana) and does not venture into any larger comparative evaluation of the work of the two poets.
- 34. See Roberto Coppini, "Su Dino Campana," Revue des Langues Romanes 89 (1985): 135–56. In this essay, Coppini argues that the epigraph adapted from Whitman has not been sufficiently considered by critics and that it represents a crucial key to reading Campana's work. Coppini shifts his attention away from the possible biographical reference that the citation might seem to make to Campana's will to declare, in the name of and through the words of Whitman, his break with past literary traditions and his difference from the futurist group. Coppini's essay is also very useful for a larger contextualization of the influence of Whitman on Italian poets of Campana's generation.
- 35. This is also a recurrent image in other poems by Campana, such as "Bastimento in viaggio" ("Ship's Voyage"), "Umanità fervente sullo sprone" ("Humanity Teeming on the Spur"), and "Genova" ("Genoa"). (While the latter poem was part of the original 1914 *Orphic Songs*, the first two poems were first published in the 1942 *Inediti* and often included in later editions of *Orphic Songs and Other Poems*.)

- 36. Original: "Io vidi dal ponte della nave /... Noi vedemmo sorgere nella luce incantata /... E vidi come cavalle" (56, 57).
- 37. Original: "Illanguidiva la sera celeste sul mare: / Pure i dorati silenzii ad ora ad ora dell'ale: / Varcaron lentamente in un azzurreggiare . . . / Lontani tinti dei varii colori / Dai più lontani silenzii" (56).
- 38. See Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 130. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
- 39. Original: "bronzina / Una fanciulla della razza nuova, / Occhi lucenti e le vesti al vento!" (57).
- 40. See Walt Whitman, "A Woman Waits for Me," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 88. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
  - 41. Original: naufraghi cuori (56).
- 42. Piero Bigongiari discusses this draft in *Capitoli di una storia della poesia italiana*, 376. The draft was first published, with the title of "Nella pampa giallastra il treno ardente" ("The Fiery Train on the Tawny Pampas") in the volume entitled *Inediti* (*Unpublished Materials*), edited by Enrico Falqui and published in 1942 by Vallecchi.
- 43. Original: "I miei pensieri fluttuavano: si susseguivano i miei ricordi: che deliziosamente sembravano sommergersi per riapparire a tratti lucidamente trasumanati in distanza, come per un'eco profonda e misteriosa, dentro l'infinita maestà della natura" (93).
- 44. The "pampas" are vast fertile lowlands that occupy part of the territories of Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil.
- 45. Original: "Gettato sull'erba vergine, in faccia alle strane costellazioni io mi andavo abbandonando tutto ai misteriosi giuochi dei loro arabeschi, cullato deliziosamente dai rumori attutiti dal bivacco... Lentamente gradatamente io assurgevo all'illusione universale: dalle profondità del mio essere e della terra io ribattevo per le vie del cielo il cammino avventuroso degli uomini verso la felicità a traverso i secoli. Le idee brillavano della più pura luce stellare... Una stella fluente in corsa magnifica segnava in linea gloriosa la fine di un corso di storia" (93, 94).
- 46. Original: "per un meraviglioso attimo immutabilmente nel tempo e nello spazio alternandosi i destini eterni" (94).
- 47. Original: "un esercito che lanciava torme di cavalieri colle lance in resta, acutissime lucenti" (94).
- 48. Walt Whitman, "Bivouac on a Mountain Side," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 235. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
- 49. Original: "alla riconquista del loro dominio di libertà in lancio fulmineo. Le erbe piegavano in gemito leggero al vento del loro passaggio" (94).
  - 50. As he explicitly does in another poem set in Argentina, "Dualismo" ("Dualism").
- 51. Original: "Ero sul treno in corsa: ... la Pampa che mi correva incontro per prendermi nel suo mistero: ... Dov'ero? Io ero in piedi: Io ero in piedi: sulla pampa nella corsa dei venti, in piedi sulla pampa che mi volava incontro: per prendermi nel suo mistero! Un nuovo sole mi avrebbe salutato al mattino! Io correvo tra le tribù indiane? Od era la morte? Od era la

- vita?...Lo stendersi sul piatto di ferro, il concentrarsi nelle strane costellazioni fuggenti tra lievi veli argentei: e tutta la mia vita tanto simile a quella corsa cieca fantastica infrenabile che mi tornava alla mente in flutti amari e veementi....La luce delle stelle ora impassibili era più misteriosa sulla terra infinitamente deserta: una più vasta patria il destino ci aveva dato: un più dolce calor naturale era nel mistero della terra selvaggia e buona" (94, 95).
- 52. Original: "Nella pampa giallastra il treno ardente / Correva sempre in corsa vittoriosa / E travolto vertiginosamente / Il vergine infinito, senza posa / Mi baciava sul viso, e il continente / Grottesco e enorme cambiava la posa—immantinente, senza posa / Così il mio libro: ed ecco che: / Ecco che viene colle gambe storte / Il mio sonetto a voi per salutare / Accettatelo bene" (*Inediti* 139).
- 53. Original: "E allora fu che nel mio intorpidimento finale io sentii con delizia l'uomo nuovo nascere: l'uomo nascere riconciliato colla natura ineffabilmente dolce e terribile: deliziosamente e orgogliosamente succhi vitali nascere alle profondità dell'essere: fluire dalla profondità della terra: il cielo come la terra in alto, misterioso, puro, deserto dall'ombra, infinito. Mi ero alzato. Sotto le stelle impassibili, sulla terra infinitamente deserta e misteriosa, dalla sua tenda l'uomo libero tendeva le braccia al cielo infinito non deturpato dall'ombra di Nessun Dio" (95, 96).
- 54. See Carlo Bo, "Nel nome di Campana," *Dino Campana oggi*, Atti del convegno, Firenze, March 18–19, 1973 (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1973), 14; Gabriel Cacho Millet, *Dino Campana sperso per il mondo*, 36.
  - 55. See Luigi Bonaffini, "Introduction," in Canti Orfici e Altre Poesie, xxxv.
- 56. See Silvio Ramat, "Qualche nota per 'La Chimera,'" in Dino Campana alla fine del secolo, ed. Anna Rosa Gentilini (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999), 38.
  - 57. Original: "la mia vita ritrovò un istante il contatto colle forze del cosmo" (73).
  - 58. Original: "verso le calme oasi della sensibilità della vecchia Europa" (74).
- 59. Original: "Faccia, zig zag anatomico che oscura / La passione torva di una vecchia luna / Che guarda sospesa al soffitto / In una taverna café chantant d'America: la rossa velocità / Di luci funambola che tanga / Spagnola cinerina / Isterica in tango di luci si disfà: / Che guarda nel café chantant / D'America: / Sul piano martellato tre / Fiammelle rosse si sono accese da sé" (58).
  - 60. See Millet's Dino Campana sperso per il mondo, 40.

## CHAPTER 9

- 1. Marjorie Perloff, "The Audacity of Hope: The Foundational Futurist Manifestoes," in *The History of Futurism: The Precursors, Protagonists, and Legacies*, ed. Geert Buelens, Harald Hendrix, and Monica Jansen (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 9–30.
- 2. Geert Buelens and Monica Jansen, "Futurisms: An Introduction," in Buelens, Hendrix, and Jansen, *The History of Futurism*, 1–7.
- 3. The "Technical Manifesto" had originally appeared as a separate leaflet in May 1912. For more on the anthology, see Davide Podavini, "The Anthology *Poeti futuristi*: Poetry of Transition," in Buelens, Hendrix, and Jansen, *History of Futurism*, 33–52.
- 4. An English version of the manifesto I am referring to here can be found in Robert Willard Flint, ed., *The Selected Writings of F.T. Marinetti* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1991).

- 5. See Cesare Segre, *La letteratura italiana del Novecento* (Roma and Bari: Laterza, 1998), 12. My translation.
- 6. In her Walt Whitman Among the French, Erkkila explains how the expression le Whitmanisme, first coined by critic Henri Ghéon in 1912, describes the phenomenon of the centrally influential presence of Whitman's work in the French literary scene of the turn of the century.
- 7. Eleonora Conti has discussed these translations in her study of Marinetti's literary work in France and his transition from symbolism to futurism. See Eleonora Conti, "Marinetti in France between Symbolism and Futurism: *Vers et Prose* and Les Guêpes," in Buelens, Hendrix, and Jansen, *History of Futurism*, 53–80.
- 8. See Enquête international sur le vers libre et manifeste du futurism, ed. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (Milano: Éditions de Poesia, 1909). All my references to parts of the Enquête included here will be taken from this text. I will translate the French when needed.
- 9. As explained by Perloff, it is at this moment that Marinetti dismissed the profound anarchism of his youth and embraced the "violent independence" that only war (the Libyan war was the one Marinetti had in mind) could guarantee. See Perloff, in Buelens, Hendrix, and Jansen, *History of Futurism*, 17.
- 10. See Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* 1855, v, vii. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1855/whole.html.
- 11. Marinetti is referring to Lucini's book Il *Verso Libero: Proposta (Free Verse: Proposal)* (Milano: Edizioni di Poesia, 1908).
- 12. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Preface to *Revolverate*, by Gian Pietro Lucini (Milano: Edizioni di Poesia, 1909), 10–12. My translation.
- 13. See Lucini's article "Come ho sorpassato il futurismo" ("How I Surpassed Futurism"), published in *La Voce* on April 10, 1913. In February 1909, Lucini wrote to Marinetti: "As Verlaine did not recognize Symbolism, promoted in large part by him, so I do not recognize Futurism, which derives from me and [yet] which makes me feel ashamed." Letter to Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, February 14, 1909, included in Isabella Ghidetti, ed., Gian Pietro Lucini, *Prose e canzoni amare* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1971), 460. My translation.
- 14. See Gian Pietro Lucini, *Ragion poetica e programma del verso libero* (Milano: Edizioni di Poesia, 1908), 58. My translation.
- 15. Original: "Il mistero è per Noi, dentro di Noi, / in questo fremito incalcolabile, / che attrae, che giudica e rifiuta / in codesta passione esalata / da tutti i sensi, da tutti i pori della nostra carne, / nell'energia che ti fa dire e spasimare, / e mordere e pregare e morire e rinascere, / Dio nascosto, suscitatore, che si rivela. / Dio è in Noi, / lo portiamo come un santo ostensorio di Possanza / per la Bellezza e per la Volontà; / è nel nostro valore, / rosso e purpureo fiore / per chi è assetato e si muore d'amore. / Dio è in Noi; / la Natura assicura il miracolo a questa nostra immortalità, / ricompleta la Storia coll'A venire / per le crisi e le genesi infinite / della viaggiatrice Umanità. / Ragione tace, e l'Anima si afferma; / divina si conferma nella sua libertà." The poem is included in *Revolverate*, 267–68. My translation.
- 16. Gian Pietro Lucini, "Autobiografia," in Ghidetti, *Prose e canzoni amare*, 117. My translation.
- 17. For the influence of Whitman on some of these poets, see Ricciardi, "Whitman and the Futurist Muse," in Camboni, *Utopia in the Present Tense*, 265–84.

- 18. See Podavini, in Buelens, Hendrix, and Jansen, History of Futurism, 36–37.
- 19. Buzzi's piece in the anthology, entitled "Il Verso Libero," was taken from the "International Inquiry" published in 1908. In it, Buzzi defined free verse as "a complex of rhythms which is constantly influenced by a musical sensation" (43–44). Buzzi's poems are also highly reminiscent of Whitman's. One example is his poem "Poeti" ("Poets"), which was included in the 1912 anthology (147): "Great is the one who feels the desperate night song / and sings it, as it suppurates from his heart, / out on the streets, between the rays of the sewers and the stars. / If the world is in a poet, / this who wakes while others sleep and walk, / this who looks at the lights and shadows of every step / with all the colors in the face [...]." Original: "Grande è chi sente il notturno disperato / e se lo canta, come gli suppura su dal cuore, / via, per le strade, fra i raggi delle fogne e delle stelle. / Se il mondo è in un poeta, / questo che veglia mentre gli altri dormono e cammina, / questo che guarda le luci e le ombre d'ogni passo / con faccia di tutti i colori [...]." My translation. Buzzi's poem "Poema dei quarant'anni" ("Poem of My Forties"), with a section dedicated to Whitman, is reported and translated by Ricciardi, in Camboni, *Utopia in the Present Tense*, 275.
  - 20. See Camboni, "Le Foglie d'Erba," 365.
- 21. Original: "Oh! L'identique flux et reflux de la marée / qui enlevait d'extase et de ravissement / nos coeurs fondus éperdument, / plongeant avec délices et puis rejaillisant / hors de l'écume amère, tel un nageur lancé / parmi l'essor des vagues qui se balancent / au rhythme cadencé de ces tribus d'Etoiles / émigrant en silence par les grand soirs d'été! . . . / [. . . ] / Calme donc, ô mon âme, ta fièvre surhumaine, / car nous avons une heure exquise à savourer, / en liberté, à notre guise, / en prélassant nos grands désirs flâneurs, / au gré des pacifiants éventails du silence! . . . / [. . . ] / Hurrah! . . . partons, mon âme, évadons-nous / par-delà le ressort des muscles déclanchés, / par-delà les confins de l'espace et du temps, / hors du possible noir, en plein azur absurde, / pour suivre l'aventure romantique des Astres!" My translation.
  - 22. For more on this, see Perloff in Buelens, Hendrix, and Jansen, History of Futurism, 17.
- 23. Govoni's poems included in the anthology (and previously published in Govoni's 1911 collection *Poesie elettriche* [Electrical Poems]) are strikingly reminiscent of Whitman. Perhaps the most significant poem in this sense is "Fascino" (Fascination), where a collective lyrical "we" (presumably standing for an entire generation) is intent to express their love of life, often by using joyful exclamations, long catalogues, and a large number of explicitly sensual images. The last lines, for example, read, "In all the humblest things / we discovered a profound signification; / from everything came an admonishment; / in everything we found an unknown consolation. / And we loved life in its being multiple and in having a multitude of souls / with all its joys and pains, / with its spring and with the fatal winter, / with its continual renewal and decline, / eternal fascination" (281–82). Original: "In tutte le più umili cose / scoprimmo una profonda significazione; / da tutto ci venne un grave ammonimento; / in tutto trovammo un'ignota consolazione. / Ed amammo la vita molteplice e moltanime / con tutte le sue gioie e i suoi dolori, / con la sua primavera e il fatale inverno, / con il suo continuo rinnovarsi e morire, / fascino eterno." My translation.
- 24. See Willard Bohn, "Introduction," in *Italian Futurist Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 9.
  - 25. Original: "In una notte in un'ora in un attimo / liberarsi di tutto il passato necessità /

di gridare gridare a squarciagola insulti / rossi paonazzi / acuti come frecce / alle stelle punteggiature frangibili / vecchia letteratura ai fanali pederasti / sentimentali in attesa del tardo borghese / sull'angolo di una via remotissima / ARIA aria VITA vita / Saettamenti obliqui fulmini-serpenti / a sonagli all'armi tetti case / stanze camini tavoli ingombri / rotolarsi nel cielo causticarne / le gialle ferite bloccare tutte le porte / sospinte sfondare tutte le barricate / sul fronte di combattimento / [...] / una vena si strappa violenta (sfregio di / luce nel cuore della tenebra) / bocca di satiro bisturi su carotide squarciata / corrente di milioni di vene / capillari sonori affluenti del / GRAN FIUME FUTURO / squilli fanfare di corni passo di / corsa battuta d'automobile tamburo / vertiginoso di Motore ali [...]." Auro D'Alba, "Orchestra lirica," originally published in D'Alba's Baionette: Versi liberi e parole in libertà (Bayonets: Free Verse and Words in Freedom) (Milano: Edizioni Futuriste di Poesia, 1915), 97–98. The English translation is included in Bohn, Italian Futurist Poetry, 48–51.

- 26. Огідіпаl: "О, Сад, Сад! / Где железо подобно отцу, напоминающему братьям, что они братья, и останавливающему кровопролитную схватку. / [...] / Где верблюд, чей высокий горб лишен всадника, знает разгадку буддизма и затаил ужимку Китая. / [...] / Где грудь сокола напоминает перистые тучи перед грозой. / [...] / И что на свете потому так много зверей, что они умеют по-разному видеть бога. / Где звери, устав рыкать, встают и смотрят на небо. / [...] / Сад, Сад, где взгляд зверя больше значит, чем груды прочтенных книг. / Сад. / [...] / Где орел сидит, повернувшись к людям шеей и смотря в стену, держа крылья странно распущенными. Не кажется ли ему, что он парит высоко над горами? Или он молится? Или ему жарко?" Available online at http://rvb.ru/hlebnikov/tekst/о2poemy/195.htm. The English translation used here is by Joseph Brodsky and was taken from his "The Meaning of Meaning" (review of *The King of Time: Selected Writings of the Russian Futurian*, by Velimir Khlebnikov, trans. Paul Schmidt, ed. Charlotte Douglas [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985]), *New Republic* (January 20, 1986): 32–35.
- 27. Elena Evich, "Walt Whitman in Russian Translations: Whitman's 'Footprint' in Russian Poetry," available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/foreign/russian/evitch.html.
- 28. Original: "Внимательно читаю весенние мысли бога на узоре пестрых ног жабы. / Гомера дрожание после великой войны, точно стакан задрожал от телеги. / Уота Уитмана неандертальский череп с вогнутым лбом. / И говорю: всё это было! всё это меньше меня!" Available online at http://ruslit.traumlibrary.net/book/hlebnikov-sso6-o2/hlebnikov-sso6-o2.html#workoo2130. Khlebnikov's untitled poem [1921] is included in Velimir Khlebnikov: Selected Poems, ed. Ronald Vroon, trans. Paul Schmidt (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 93.
- 29. Mina Loy, "Feminist Manifesto" [1914], in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems of Mina Loy*, ed. Roger L. Conover (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), 156.
- 30. Loy's letter is reprinted in Virginia Kouidis, *Mina Loy: American Modernist Poet* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 27.
  - 31. The poem is included in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, 56.
  - 32. See Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "'Seismic Orgasm': Sexual Intercourse and Narrative

Meaning in Mina Loy," in *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet*, ed. Maeera Shreiber and Keith Tuma (Orono, ME: National Poetry Foundation, 1998), 45–74.

- 33. The essay, first published in *Charm* 3, no. 3 (1925), is also included in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, 158–59.
- 34. Loy's words to Levy are reported in Carolyn Burke, Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 361.
- 35. See Perloff's "English as a 'Second' Language: Mina Loy's 'Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose,'" in *Poetry On and Off the Page—Essays for Emergent Occasions*, available online at http://jacketmagazine.com/o5/mina-anglo.html.
  - 36. The poem is included in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, 129–31.

### CHAPTER 10

- 1. See Jane Dunnet, The "Mito Americano" and Italian Literary Culture Under Fascism (Ariccia: Aracne, 2015), 486.
- 2. See John Champagne, "'Il Mito Americano' and Masculinities of the Fascist Era," *Modern Language Review* 111, no. 4 (October 2016): 990. Champagne's article is also useful for the case of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's 1936 setting of ten *Calamus* poems to music.
  - 3. See Lombardo, La ricerca del vero, 50.
- 4. The letter to Chiuminatto is included in Mark Pietralunga, ed., *Cesare Pavese and Anthony Chiuminatto: Their Correspondence* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 158.
- 5. See Claudio Antonelli, *Pavese, Vittorini, e gli americanisti: Il mito dell'America* (Firenze: Edarc, 2008), 128. My translation.
- 6. Letter from Pavese to Chiuminatto, April 5, 1930. In Pietralunga, Cesare Pavese and Anthony Chiuminatto, 61.
- 7. See Cesare Pavese, *Lettere 1924–1950*, ed. Italo Calvino and Lorenzo Mondo, 2 vols. (Torino: Einaudi, 1966), 1:17. My translation.
- 8. See Cesare Pavese, *Interpretazione della poesia di Walt Whitman* (*Interpretation of Walt Whitman's Poetry*) (undergraduate thesis, University of Turin, 1930). The thesis was published by Einaudi in 2006.
- 9. Letter from Pavese to Chiuminatto, November 29, 1929. In Pietralunga, Cesare Pavese and Anthony Chiuminatto, 25.
- 10. Pavese's academic career never took off, but as well as being a writer, Pavese remained an active critic and translator. In addition to his thesis and critical essays on Whitman, Pavese wrote various critical essays (most of them published in the Florentine journal *La Cultura*, which was one of the few venues for international literature at that time) on other American writers such as Herman Melville, Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis, Gertrude Stein, Edgar Lee Masters, William Faulkner, and Theodore Dreiser. He also translated, among other works, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, Sherwood Anderson's *Dark Laughter*, John Dos Passos's *The 42nd Parallel*, William Faulkner's *The Hamlet*, Sinclair Lewis's *Our Mr. Wrenn*, Gertude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and *Three Lives*, and John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*.
  - 11. See Antonio Catalfamo, "La tesi di laurea di Cesare Pavese su Walt Whitman e i

- suoi studi successivi sulla letteratura americana," *Forum Italicum* 47 (May 2013): 80–95. Catalfamo eloquently proves that, in reality, Pavese's interpretation was not wholly and militantly Crocian.
- 12. See Mark Pietralunga, "Il mito di una scoperta: Pavese traduce *Passage to India* di Walt Whitman," in Margherita Campanello, ed., *Cesare Pavese*, atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Torino, Santo Stefano Belbo, October 24–27, 2001 (Firenze: Olschki, 2005).
- 13. See "Inediti: Pavese traduce Whitman," *Il Venerdì di Repubblica*, May 22, 2020. The article is available at https://rep.repubblica.it/pwa/venerdi/2020/05/22/news/pavese \_inedito-257084971/. It must be noted that the article does not present images of the larger textual work into which the translated passages are inserted by Pavese, and therefore my evaluation is necessarily limited to the translation itself.
- 14. See Walt Whitman, "I Sing the Body Electric," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 83. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
- 15. Pavese's translation reads: "Egli era un assiduo cacciatore e pescatore e apprezzava da sé la sua vela . . . / Quando andava con i suoi cinque figli e i molti nipoti a cacciare e a pescare, voi l'avreste scelto come il più bello e vigoroso della banda e avreste molto desiderato di stare con lui, di sedere accanto a lui nella barca sì che vi poteste toccare l'un l'altro."
- 16. See Walt Whitman, "A Woman Waits for Me," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 88. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
- 17. See both Remigi's essay, "Walt Whitman: At the Roots of Pavese's Poetics," in *Leucò va in America: Cesare Pavese nel centenario della sua nascita*, ed. Mario Mignone (Salerno: Edisud, 2010), and her monograph, *Cesare Pavese e la letteratura americana: Una "splendida monotonia"* (Firenze: Olschki, 2012).
- 18. In addition to Remigi and Catalfamo, see Lawrence G. Smith, *Cesare Pavese and America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008); Valerio Cristiano Ferme, "Cesare Pavese's and Elio Vittorini's Translations from American Literature: The Americanization of Aesthetics and the Subversion of Culture under the Fascist Regime" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1998).
- 19. The essay, first published in *La Cultura* in 1933, is included in *La letteratura americana* e altri saggi (Torino: Einaudi, 1951), 141–65. An English translation, entitled "Interpretation of Walt Whitman, Poet," is available in *American Literature: Essays and Opinions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), ed. Edwin Fussell.
  - 20. This passage is on page 146 of *La letteratura americana e altri saggi*. My translation.
  - 21. Lavorare stanca was first published in 1936; the second edition was published in 1943.
- 22. See Cesare Pavese, "Il mestiere di poeta," in *Lavorare stanca* [1936] (Torino: Einaudi, 1960), 154. All passages from this article cited here in English are my translations.
- 23. The only instance in which Pavese experiments with the use of iteration is in a later collection entitled *Verrà la morte e avrà i tuoi occhi (Death Will Come and It Will Have Your Eyes)*, published in 1951, shortly after his death. It is interesting to note how the long, free verse of *Lavorare stanca* has here completely disappeared.
  - 24. Original: "Queste dure colline che hanno fatto il mio corpo / e lo scuotono a tanti

ricordi, mi han schiuso il prodigio / di costei, che non sa che la vivo e non riesco a comprenderla. // L'ho incontrata, una sera: una macchia piú chiara / sotto le stelle ambigue, nella foschia d'estate. / Era intorno il sentore di queste colline / piú profondo dell'ombra, e d'un tratto suonò / come uscisse da queste colline, una voce piú netta / e aspra insieme, una voce di tempi perduti. / [...] / L'ho creata dal fondo di tutte le cose / che mi sono piú care, e non riesco a comprenderla." Cesare Pavese, "Incontro," in *Lavorare stanca*, 33. My translation.

25. Original: "Mi tornò in mente nel buio quel progetto di traversare le colline, sacco in spalla, con Pieretto. Non invidiavo le automobili. Sapevo che in automobile si traversa, non si conosce una terra. 'A piedi,' avrei detto a Pieretto, 'vai veramente, in campagna, prendi i sentieri, costeggi le vigne, vedi tutto. C'è la stessa differenza che guardare un'acqua o saltarci dentro. Meglio essere pezzente, vagabondo.' [...] In quell'estate andavo in Po, un'ora o due, al mattino. [...] Fu sulle tavole di quella barca che presi gusto all'aria aperta e capii che il piacere dell'acqua e della terra continua di là dall'infanzia, di là da un orto e da un frutteto. Tutta la vita, pensavo in quei mattini, è come un gioco sotto il sole. [...] Le volte che sudavo sull'acqua, mi restava poi per tutto il giorno il sangue fresco, rinvigorito dall'urto col fiume. Era come se il sole e il peso vivo della corrente mi avessero intriso di una loro virtù, una forza cieca, gioiosa e sorniona, come quella di un tronco o di una bestia dei boschi." Cesare Pavese, Il diavolo sulle colline [1949], in La bella estate (Torino: Einaudi, 1997), 109, 113, 114. Il diavolo sulle colline was first published in 1949. The English translation is taken from The Devil in the Hills, trans. D. D. Paige (London: Owen, 2002), 42, 48–49.

26. See Walt Whitman, "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 196–201. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.

27. Original: "Terra rossa terra nera, / tu vieni dal mare, / dal verde riarso, / dove sono parole / antiche e fatica sanguigna / e gerani tra i sassi— / non sai quanto porti / di mare parole e fatica, / [...] / tu dura e dolcissima / parola, antica per sangue / [...] antichissimo, come / le mani di tua madre, / la conca del braciere." Cesare Pavese, "Terra rossa, terra nera," in *Verrà la morte e avrà i tuoi occhi* (Torino: Einaudi, 1966), 11–12. My translation. *Verrà la morte e avrà i tuoi occhi* was first published 1951.

28. Original: "Sempre vieni dal mare / e ne hai la voce roca, / sempre hai occhi segreti / d'acqua viva tra i rovi, / [...] / Ogni volta rivivi / come una cosa antica / e selvaggia, che il cuore / già sapeva e si serra. / Ogni volta è uno strappo, / ogni volta è la morte. / [...] / Fin che ci trema il cuore. / Hanno detto un tuo nome. / Ricomincia la morte. / Cosa ignota e selvaggia / sei rinata dal mare." Cesare Pavese, "Sempre vieni dal mare" ("You Always Come from the Sea"), in *Verrà la morte e avrà i tuoi occhi*, 19. My translation.

- 29. See Remigi, Pavese e la letteratura americana, 24. My translation.
- 30. In Lettere 1:35. My translation.
- 31. Original: "Deola passa il mattino seduta al caffè / e nessuno la guarda. A quest'ora in città corron tutti / sotto il sole ancor fresco dell'alba. Non cerca nessuno / neanche Deola, ma fuma pacata e respira il mattino." Cesare Pavese, "Pensieri di Deola," in *Lavorare stanca*, 14. My translation.
  - 32. See Cesare Pavese, "I martiri di Wallabout," Il Politecnico 12 (December 15, 1945).

- 33. See Walt Whitman, "The Wallabout Martyrs," in *Leaves of Grass* 1891–92, 387. Available on the Walt Whitman Archive at http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/whole.html.
- 34. See Cesare Pavese, "Naturismo ottocentesco," *Poesia 9* (December 1948): 169–81. My translation.
- 35. See Walt Whitman, Foglie d'erba, trans. Enzo Giachino (Torino: Einaudi, 1950). For a thorough comparative evaluation of the translations of Giachino and of Gamberale, see Grazia Sotis, Walt Whitman in Italia: La traduzione Gamberale e la traduzione Giachino di "Leaves of Grass" (Napoli: Società Editrice Napoletana, 1987).
- 36. Rubén Darío, "Los colores del estandarte," *La Nación*, Buenos Aires, November 27, 1896, 3. My translation.

#### CONCLUSION

- 1. See Walt Whitman, *Dalla culla che oscilla eternamente*, trans. Roberto Mussapi (Milano: Polena, 1985); Walt Whitman, *Foglie d'erba*, ed. Biancamaria Tedeschini Lally, trans. Ariodante Marianni (Milano: Rizzoli, 1988); Walt Whitman, *Foglie d'erba*, ed. and trans. Giuseppe Conte (Milano: Mondadori, 1991).
- 2. See Walt Whitman, Foglie d'erba 1855, ed. and trans. Mario Corona (Venezia: Marsilio, 1996); Walt Whitman, Foglie d'erba: Edizione integrale del 1856, ed. and trans. Igina Tattoni (Roma: Newton, 2007); Walt Whitman, Foglie d'erba, ed. and trans. Mario Corona (Milano: I Meridiani Mondadori, 2017). For the latter volume, I curated the final bibliography, which includes two sections specifically dedicated to the poet's Italian reception. On pages 1566–67 of the bibliography I list the existing Italian translations from Whitman, and on pages 1579–83 I list the existing criticism on Whitman in the Italian language.
- 3. The book, with illustrations by Brian Selznick and an afterword by Karen Karbiener, is modeled on the American Harry N. Abrams edition, which came out just months before the Italian edition, in 2019.
- 4. The original reads: "Io ringraziare desidero / per Borges / per Whitman e Francesco d'Assisi / per Hopkins, per Herbert / perché scrissero già questa poesia, / per il fatto che questa poesia è inesauribile / e cambia secondo gli uomini / e non arriverà mai all'ultimo verso." See Mariangela Gualtieri, *Le giovani parole* (*The Young Words*) (Torino: Einaudi, 2015). My translation.
- 5. Consider, for example, the critical work of poet and scholar Franco Buffoni, who dedicates a section to Whitman and his depiction of sexual identity, in particular in homoerotic terms, in his recent *Maestri e amici: Da Dante a Seamus Heaney* (Montecassiano, MC: Vydia, 2020), and also Mario Corona's introduction to his aforementioned 2017 translation.
- 6. See Walt Whitman, *Foglie d'erba*: La prima edizione del 1855, trans. Alessandro Ceni (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2012).
- 7. Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology* has been extremely popular in Italy since 1943, when the first translation, by Fernanda Pivano, came out. Various singers, such as Fabrizio De André and Francesco Guccini, have also contributed to its popularization by using and citing it in their songs and albums.

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