

FOREWORD

I only met my mother a couple of years ago. Without premonition there she was, eighteen, laughing, with an ice-cream cone scooped seventy-five years ago in her hand and freedom in her eyes. Oh, I had caught a glimpse of her before, coming down a mountain path with a pack on her back and the sun on her hair - as my father, on a visit from the States, saw her for the first time, standing below with a cousin who was asking him "When will you marry, Henry?" And he replied, as he so often told me, glancing up the hill, "When I meet a blonde like that". But that vigorous 1920's frame, fitting in its way, all gloss, might have hung as a poster for Fascist Youth.

That was 1925, and the Italian Alps above the industrial town of Biella. Mussolini's "March on Rome" was then three years old; Socialist deputy Matteotti had just been assassinated; the Fascist régime was solidly in power. But my mother ate that ice-cream cone in 1921, when Socialists - women as well as men - were occupying the Biella textile factories and the narrow-gauge railway ran up the valley flying the red flag. Exiting years for a girl who had been in the factory since she was eleven and completed high school at night, walking the mile and more back down into town after a ten hour day on the job. Worthy, ambitious, unsparing, tireless. A monument to an open future.

I met that girl in a little shop in her home town, Sagliano Micca, where the hat factory she worked in still operates. Into the modest shop, where a cousin sells old-fashioned sweaters and practical underwear to an aging clientele and where I had never been before, came an elderly woman looking for grey wool or buttons. To my surprise the cousin said to her: "This is Leontina's daughter". My mother married and left Italy in early 1926, yet the woman's face lit up and she, in turn, said: "Ah, Leontina! She was so light-hearted; she was so nice to us little ones. She was a finisher. She did the fine work; we just ran errands and did easy things! She always helped us. I remember once - it was so hot; it was summer - and Leontina (she was 18 then), sent me down to buy ice-cream cones in the shop down the road from the factory and she laughed and said, 'Hurry so it doesn't melt!' and I did and I met the boss coming back and he said, 'What are you doing?' and I said, 'Leontina said to hurry so it doesn't melt', and I did and she laughed and said, 'You did right!'"

So here was my duty-bounded mother - who worked eight hours and over-time, wearing in all weather a boned corset - laughing, free in despite of historic closures. A revolution in herself, propagating laughter and subversion. Remembered for it after seventy-five years.

As I thought about that happy girl, other bits of memory came forward; the "oddities" that hadn't seemed to fit the public picture: my mother, in her mid-thirties,

laughing at slightly risqué jokes, “horsing around” and singing “Solidarity Forever” at the shop picnic; my mother at 46, back in her home-town for the first time since 1926, instigating her mother, sister and sister-in-law to smoke cigarettes and a teenage daughter - factory workers all - to paint her fingernails; leading the laughter when her brother came in from his evening at the café and was shocked. “It’s a free country!” the sister-in-law bravely declared, as she puffed and coughed.

But I also “remember” an episode my mother herself only told me about the last summer she spent with me, when she was already terminally sick. And that was the time she “ended up in the newspapers”, because she personally pulled the power switch and shut down the factory saying, “We’re going out!” when the boss, who had been using the ladies’ rest-room to store leather, refused to free the divan so the girls in the shop could rest on their break or, if they felt ill, “those days”.

So then I finally *really* understood why my mother had been re-elected chairlady of her three-shop local (majority of males) from the time in the ‘30s the Union came in until she retired, and why she was the first woman on the Regional Joint Board back in the forties and why, when Stuart Hughes was candidate for the Senate in 1962 with a platform of unilateral nuclear disarmament, she alone sat still at the Union dinner when all those supporting Ted Kennedy were invited to rise.

So that is really what this symposium and this book are all about. What happens to people who come of age in a moment of historical fracture, when everything seems open to choice and possibility - individual and collective - almost limitless? What do they do - where do they “go” - when the “the shooting is over”? When the years and daily tasks shut the doors one by one, and what “loyalty” to that younger self and to the world it thought it saw in the offing live on? Or, put it another way, is continuity or consistency always a straight line and only young “martyrs” stalwart? And does the reality that prevails in some way quietly allow for (“admit”) the force of the memory of what was, for important groups of individuals, the decisive, if fleeting, moment of their lives?

This volume carries on the discourse which began with *The Languages of Revolution* (1989) and *People and Power: Rights, Citizenship and Violence* (1992) and will be completed with *Visions of the Future. Collective & Individual; Secular & Sacred* (1996). It is, perhaps, significant that funds to “print utopia” were easily found and so *Quaderno 5* preceded this *Quaderno 4* by two years. “Utopia” is, after all, only one of the forms of consistency or “coherence”; but it is a form that is judged “harmless” and “romantic” (where the word “romantic” really means “sentimental”). “The order” and “the memory”, instead, coupled with the word “shooting” - though “over” - stirs up somehow a vague unease. In the minds of those organizing the symposium, “Visions of the future” meant a return to reality from “reverie”, a venturing a new into the public sphere, of conceiving projects, of attempting alternative communities.

Herewith, instead, studies on reverie - memory with regrets and desire - and individuals and groups “standing fast” as order sets up its pickets all about them. Christopher Hill reminds us of beginnings, of Bunyan and his Dissenter readers and links their memory of the republic to other, later, experiences. Bridget Hill shows Catharine Macauley’s gallant effort to keep memory alive flowing into the American world of the pre-revolutionary decades, testifying it had been done and not just imagined. Sioli’s whiskey rebels take their opinions on the just relations between

government and governed Westward; Delfino's Kentuckians try their hand at constitution-making of their own; Kelley's women attempt to remain in the public realm the Revolution had, for a moment, seemed to open to them. Dorigny, De Francesco, Luzzatto, Bianchi, show the revolution in France through the presence, phase after rapid phase, of those who keep faith with projects of decentralized government, circulation of ideas, a secular society populated by self-conscious citizens, adjusting their language and their public activity, keeping somehow their mental compass on "North". Outside of France "keeping faith" meant often, as Segre Rutz shows in the work of Goya, denouncing betrayal of the hope of "rebirth".

Back in the 19th century United States, the movement for the abolition of slavery openly challenges the established order in the name of revolutionary memory and, as Ginzburg Migliorino shows, calls again for "regeneration" of the body politic. Meanwhile, those who framed the constitution and set political procedure, undertake their version of national regeneration sweeping Westward with slavery, as Countryman eloquently illustrates, in the vanguard. The civil war - for slaves and free blacks a war of liberation - is another moment of possibility and of future and the burning memory of it marks the order and the memory of the rest of United States history, as Litwack and Blight make clear. Working-men, too, as Keil observes, remember spaces and dignity that the post-war hardening of industrial organization aims to destroy.

In all of these essays there is a theme that reappears persistently, and it is that of "rebirth", "regeneration", or - as the "Internationale" would phrase it for many - "a new humanity". Order, of whatever sort, attempts to build an appropriate humanity and those who do not identify in it, remember or imagine other humanities. All this remembering and imagining hinges upon a prior myth, or story, people have been telling themselves and each other, to influence, legitimate, console or incite, for many long centuries. So long, indeed, that there are those who consider the story imprinted upon the very intellectual DNA of humanity as archetype. This is the story of the Garden of Eden, the Golden Age, the Age of Innocence. It is also, for such stories have a shadowy version as well as a sunny one, the story of Primitive Man, Savages, The Evil Wilderness. These matters are addressed by Perez Castillo and Mackenthun; the one examining first perceptions of Europeans encountering native American peoples in the 1500s and 1600s, the other, fictionalized representation of contact and interaction in early United States literature.

There are things you will not find here: notably the considerations of Michel Vovelle and Alfred Young on memory and continuity stemming from the American and French revolutions. It is a real loss, and we can chalk it up to technology, for the thoughts were extemporaneous, the registration terrible and reconstruction impossible. Perhaps the bare sum of them was that many more people of all social classes and for many more years than one imagines - down to the mentors of both speakers and the speakers themselves - have felt that there was something very real, very vital, worthy of memory and fidelity going on in "revolutionary moments" in history. And so both, like Christopher Hill, remain staunch in believing that no "re-reading" or "revision" will ever be able to write it away.

Thus, the volume you have in hand is less sporadic than a first glance might suggest. Strong on memory, its order is both that of logical, temporal and geographic

sequence (from “rupturing” event to “rupturing” event) and that of intuitive connection, carried forward by recurring words, sentiments or situations. Some aspects of history are trans-historic. Some convictions and some people always lose, but are never beaten. Why be afraid to say so and to try to sort them out?

* Editor’s note: The institutions indicated for the authors are those they belonged to in 1992, when they first presented these essays in Milan. Some of them have since gone elsewhere.