

Different Visions of Space:

Italian Fascist Writers and the United States

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### **Fascist Italy and the United States**

The history of the relationship between Fascist Italy and the United States is a complex one. In the 1920s Mussolini enjoyed a good deal of esteem among American politicians and businesspeople, as the man who had restored Italy's economic fortunes, who had quelled social agitation and who had repulsed the threat of Communism. From 1923 onwards American journalists made frequent visits to Italy and reported favourably on the innovations made by the Duce, who, in the words of David Schmitz, 'quickly became a celebrity in the American press and in popular opinion'.<sup>1</sup> The Republican leaders were willing to ignore the destruction of democratic rights and institutions in Italy and to reduce Italy's debt payments to the States. American investment in Italy increased significantly until 1929. The Depression ended the American facility of influencing policies in Italy through financial incentive, but it did not mark a substantial change in relations between the two countries. When Roosevelt came to office in 1933 there was little, if any change in US policy towards Italy. It was not until the autumn of 1935 and the invasion of Ethiopia that Italo-American relations were placed under severe strain. Yet, American politicians were prepared even then to continue a policy of economic appeasement in the hope that Mussolini would act as a restraining force on Hitler.

In Italy perceptions of the United States were more ambiguous and more contradictory. Different feelings displayed contrasts between those who supported the regime and those who did not, they also demonstrated clashes of opinion within the ranks of Fascist sympathisers. As Gentile has shown, it is possible to speak not only of Fascist anti-Americanism, but also of Fascist Americanism. In the early years of his rule, Mussolini declared a certain admiration for American civilization.<sup>2</sup> Many commentators were fascinated by the technological innovations and material progress of the States. Enterprises such as Italo Balbo's non-stop plane journey from Italy to Chicago in July 1933, or the ocean liner *Rex* winning the Blue Ribbon in August of the same year, indicated a willingness to compete with the Americans on amicable terms. Only in the late 1930s were measures taken against the highly successful import of American films and until then enthusiasts for the American way of life had few problems in portraying the States as a dawning colonial power, similar in many important respects to the regenerated Italy.

The negative vision of America developed in tandem. Those who saw Fascism as a reactionary revolution, asserting traditional agrarian values, considered the States as Italy's antithesis: an urbanised civilisation of machines.<sup>3</sup> For a wider section of official opinion, America represented the threat of an individualistic and materialistic culture at odds with the collective values of Fascism. Of particular concern to the regime, as it embarked on its demographic campaign, were American examples of sexual freedom or lax moral attitudes. Widespread was also the fear that the import of American products, from chewing-gum to radios, would be harmful to the Italian way of life and the Fascist desire to remould aspects of the Italian character. To an increasing extent in the 1930s, Fascism sought to portray itself as 'a bulwark against the rising tide of modernity and against the new anxieties this brought

along'.<sup>4</sup> In the wake of the Depression, moreover, Italy was stepping up its programme of autarky, thus placing its economy on a war footing.

The uneasy co-existence between Americanism and anti-Americanism persisted, then, until the late 1930s. It was Italian foreign policy which changed things. In 1936 the Rome-Berlin axis was signed, in September 1937 Mussolini visited Berlin. In 1938 Italy began to introduce anti-Semitic legislation. America had become a competing model of civilisation and a possible, if not to say probable, future hostile power. After 1937 the import of American films was made more difficult, through the creation of an import monopoly. Cinecittà, opened in 1937, was soon used as a means to create derisive images of the United States.<sup>5</sup> The racial swerve which Fascism had taken led to markedly different conceptions and representations of the United States.

### **Journeys to the United States**

Between 1930 and 1940, as Gentile notes, no fewer than 51 books on America were published in Italy.<sup>6</sup> These texts are motivated by different imperatives, they concentrate on different aspects of the States and they demonstrate different connections with political power. But they all reflect the tensions in the relations between the two countries.<sup>7</sup> The texts are interesting in so far as they appropriate, develop or reject a range of Fascist discourses. In some instances America is used as a space onto which different interpretations of Fascism are projected and explored: America may be defined according to a system of facile binary oppositions; it may be used as a metaphor for the modern world or evoked as a fearful, morally contagious example. The USA may act as an utopian object of desire or, by contrast, it may serve the myth of Fascist Italy by providing a vision of its antithesis. It may

provide the ground for the representation for a clash of political and religious faiths.

Opposing constructions of the space may share common elements and, because they belong to the same dialectic, they may even serve to reinforce each other. Individual visions of the States certainly offer a key to an understanding of the value system at the base of Mussolini's dictatorship. In what follows, I wish to examine several accounts of journeys made to the States in the 1930s in an attempt to chart the changing vision of the space in the work of writers who were in different ways either critical or supportive of the regime. I want to concentrate on the ways in which the space changes over a critical period in Italy's history and how, on the eve of the Second World War, it is represented as a site of cultural, if not to say religious, opposition.

In the mid 1930s two very differing books on the States were printed. In 1934 the established travel writer and committed Fascist propagandist, Franco Ciarlantini, published a lengthy list of his impressions of the United States under the title *Roma-New York e ritorno. Tragedie dell'americanismo* (Rome-New York and Back. Tragedies of Americanism).<sup>8</sup> In 1935, the 29 year-old writer and journalist, Mario Soldati published his vision of the States in the popular and often reprinted work, *America, primo amore* (America, First Love). Though making a number of claims to objectivity, Ciarlantini's text does not offer a profound analysis of the country: the writer travels little in the States and offers few descriptions of individual Americans. His writing proceeds instead through assertion: it depends on the construction of stereotypes and often revolves around the narration of anecdotal stories. The overall tone is negative: Ciarlantini is dismayed both by the power of the machine and by the apparently unregulated nature of American society. He offers a series of doleful visions of a civilisation where human beings live in hellish urban environments, enslaved by the machines

that they have created.<sup>9</sup> His repeated assertion that in America, fundamental European institutions (a surprisingly large number of pieces focus on marriage) have been both materialised and devalued. The hostility towards the States is most intense when Ciarlantini considers the introduction of legislation in 1930, banning immigration to the country. The law is interpreted as evidence of the xenophobia of the Anglo-Saxon population which, keen to maintain its numerical superiority, willingly oppresses all other ethnic groups.

If Ciarlantini's text presents a fairly superficial and ideologically mediated picture of the States, the vision of the country offered by Soldati is less rhetorical and more complex. His book recounts episodes of a prolonged stay in America, first as a student at Columbia University and subsequently earning a living by doing various jobs in New York. The journey through different aspects of the States follows a linear course. To begin with Soldati is entranced by the novelty of the country, by the advanced material environment and by the evident differences in American modes of social interaction. He compares the sensations which he experiences with those of the first emigrants to the country. As the text progresses, however, he becomes progressively disillusioned with the 'new country' and especially with the Americans that he meets. More and more frequently, he encounters a sense of public squalor and individual desolation. The text offers scenes which indicate the extent of the Depression. In New York he describes rows of particularly sinister looking derelict factories and shops. Working in the Bowery he is appalled by the lack of any notion of social provision. Staying in cheap hotels, going to the cinema or the occasional Burlesque theatre, he meets lost and melancholy figures. Reflecting on the violence of Chicago and on the scenes of sexual passion enacted in American films of the period, he writes nostalgically:

Life in Italy is less adventurous, but less bleak [...] America is monotonous, arid and sinister. The Puritanism of the Americans has repressed and atrophied those instincts which make life worth living: love, conviviality, idleness, eating. The Devil, chased from the body, has re-entered the spirit.<sup>10</sup>

Though Soldati was by no means an enthusiastic supporter of the regime, the views which found expression in his book, and which had been circulated in various journals beforehand,<sup>11</sup> did counteract the idea that the States offered a utopian model which societies in Europe should aim to emulate.

In 1937, the art critic, journalist and prominent organiser of Fascist culture, Margherita Sarfatti, published her impressions of the States under the title of *L'America, Alla ricerca della felicità* (America. The Pursuit of Happiness).<sup>12</sup> The book runs to nearly 300 pages and gives a vision of the United States which is highly indicative of the time in which it was written. As a traveller, Sarfatti is, by her own admission, interested in examples of art and architecture, celebrated places and people. In her text she assumes the voice of the representative of Italian culture. She travels from New York to California, to Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago and Salt Lake City. The society in which she moves is always politically or culturally influential. She converses with Lady Astor, visits the governor of New York, exchanges ideas with the architect Norman Bel Geddis. When in California, she is taken on a private tour of Hearst's mansion.

The interest of the text does not lie in the number of famous figures that Sarfatti encounters, but in the way in which she posits the relationship between Fascist Italy and the United States. On the one hand, she registers the appreciation of Americans for the

innovations of the Duce. Describing her audience with Roosevelt, she reports on his knowledge of Italy and his enthusiasm for the policies which she says have led to 'our national rebirth'. When she visits Salt Lake City, she is overwhelmed by the applause of the Italian community. On the other hand, she sees aspects of American culture and politics as being essentially similar to what, in her view, are important elements of Italian Fascism. She draws an interesting parallel between Roosevelt and Mussolini. The former is the head of a 'constitutional dictatorship'<sup>13</sup> whose New Deal represents a return to the land, strong government and a controlled economy. Fascism, in her view, is a cultural revolution which has unleashed the creative energies of the Italian people. In the States she often experiences a sense of energy and a 'fervid, vital sense of élan'.<sup>14</sup> In particular, her interest in art and architecture is repaid by an instant admiration for the 'idealist and metaphysical enormity'<sup>15</sup> of New York's skyscrapers. As she does in her writings on the monumental architectural projects of the Duce, she compares the city's towering buildings with the cathedrals of medieval Europe and with the wonders of the ancient world. The skyscraper, she writes, is an affirmation of man's power, 'the apotheosis of the superman in man'.<sup>16</sup>

But Sarfatti is also impressed by the optimism of ordinary Americans. Most significantly of all, her description of American women offers no less than a typology for committed Fascist women. In the chapter, 'Eva in America', she defines the pioneering spirit of the first European women to settle in America and she draws a similarity between their determination and that of their 'southern sister', the Fascist icon, Anita Garibaldi.<sup>17</sup> She admires the range of professions which American women follow with disciplined, obstinate and energetic force,<sup>18</sup> contends that they have attained the status of equality through struggle, and interprets their apparent forwardness as a 'necessary virtue'. She writes of having

encountered in America 'some of the strongest examples of femininity that I have ever had the chance to venerate'.<sup>19</sup>

It is Sarfatti's contention that similarities between Italy and the States are not coincidental. They are instead the result of Italian cultural influence. An influence that has lasted over centuries. Sarfatti documents the massive presence of Italians in California, she points out that in 1937 both the mayor of New York and of San Francisco are of Italian descent. She repeats that Washington DC was once called Rome and that the Potomac was once named the Tiber. The examples she draws are used in support of the proposition that 'at the base of every white civilisation, one finds the Graeco-Roman ideal'.<sup>20</sup> The assertion that Italy and the States, despite their divergences, are linked by a common civilisation, serves an important function in the text: it justifies Sarfatti's defence of America as an imperial power. In her opinion, the faith in the future which the Americans display together with their undoubted material success, legitimates a continual expansion of the country's sphere of influence. She defines America as 'a new Rome [...] imbued with a spirit of determination, exploration, sacrifice and conquest',<sup>21</sup> a country 'whose adventurous and bellicose youth is bursting with energy'.<sup>22</sup> She salutes the birth of 'a new spiritual unity'.<sup>23</sup> It is plain, both from the content of these phrases and from the way in which they are modelled rhetorically, that Roosevelt's America is being used as an analogue of Fascist Italy. The apologia for America as an imperial power leads back to the vindication of Italy's role as a colonising power. She refers to her sense of sadness that Italy, given its importance in defining the imagination and the mentality of the west, should occupy so limited a space on the world map. Implicitly, she sets out Italy's credentials for continued expansion.



An equally positive, though essentially different, perception of the States was expressed in the late 1930s by writers opposed to Fascism. Elio Vittorini, Cesare Pavese and Giame Pintor never journeyed to the United States, but they created an image of the country through a reading of contemporary American fiction.<sup>24</sup> Their construction of the States served as a counter site to the myths of space communicated by the regime. America, for these writers, functioned explicitly as an other to the old world; it offered a different vision of masculinity from the ideal of the Fascist man; it functioned as a metaphor for a different kind of Italy and a different kind of psychological reality. The downtrodden heroes of the fiction of Hemingway, Steinbeck and Saroyan were figures with whom dissident young Italians had some feeling of affinity. Descriptions of the immensity of the American landscape provided a powerful image of freedom from the provincial and xenophobic constraints of Fascism. In the words of Giame Pintor: 'This America has no need of Columbus, it is inside us, it is the land to which we aspire with the same hope and the same trust as the first emigrants'.<sup>25</sup>

### **Emilio Cecchi and *America amara***

The views of Sarfatti on the one hand and Vittorini and Pintor on the other were to varying degrees out of step with the dominant discourse on America. The set of observations which were closer to official thinking and which, owing to their mode of diffusion, were far more widely read, were written by Emilio Cecchi. Cecchi was a leading journalist and highly respected critic. He was also a conservative sympathiser of Fascism. Between 1938 and 1939 he published a series of reports on America in the newspaper, the *Corriere della sera*. In 1939 these reports were printed in book form under the title of

*America amara* (Bitter America). The work has been described by Donald Heiney as 'downright dishonest to any reader who examines it in the post-Fascist era'.<sup>26</sup>

*America amara* is composed of 51 articles which describe Cecchi's journey from one state to another. He begins in New York, travels to Baltimore and Washington; he then moves down to Virginia and South Carolina; he travels onwards to Chicago and finally he spends some time teaching at the art history faculty in Berkeley. In the course of his travels he examines the industrial fabric of the country, the modalities of union organisation, American foreign policy, the effects of the New Deal, the condition of the country's universities and cities. In the preface to his book, he claims that he is motivated by the desire simply to discover 'the truth' about America and this expressed intention does lead to the accumulation of a wealth of statistics, of particular descriptions and factual details. Yet, despite this apparently empirical premise, America is read according to quite a clear interpretative strategy. Cecchi considers American society to be based on the puritanical principles of the founding fathers. But he sees these principles as having been moulded by the struggle 'to colonise the new land' and the 'impact of extreme natural forces'.<sup>27</sup> The ethos and world view of the society have, in his view, degenerated to such an extent that they no longer provide a framework of general ideas in terms of which the experience of the individual, whether intellectual or emotional, can assume a meaningful and salutary form.

These points are made explicitly in Cecchi's comments on recent American fiction. American fiction, he encourages his reader to believe, is simply a catalogue of sinister emotions and impulses. An analysis of the colonising myths of the frontier leads to the proposition that these myths have developed into stories of murder and perversity. The figure of the pioneer has become 'a gangster, a bootlegger, a murderer'. The argument is

that the combination of the hard years of the Depression and the weakening of the taboos of the puritan religion, the excessive attainment of social freedoms, have resulted at the level of individual consciousness in destructive and suicidal inclinations. Cecchi singles out the relationship between the sexes as it is represented in recent fiction as evidence of violent events and situations. He writes:

Social restraint having all of a sudden lost its power, and there having evolved no sincere capacity for enjoyment, one is left with a sort of gelid and uninhibited paganism, which has trodden over all taboos, whether internal or external: a paganism of mere violence, without any sense of contentment.<sup>28</sup>

The metaphor which he deploys to describe the textual space offered by American literature is that of the prison or the madhouse. The metaphor conveys an impression of the figures which populate the fiction: they are beyond the boundaries of reason and civilisation. The metaphor hints at the psychological state which the writing communicates and it conveys the otherness which he, as critic, experiences.

In all of his encounters with ordinary Americans Cecchi refers to them as puritans. He sees their conversation and behaviour as evidence of the continuing strength of puritanical religious concepts as well as evidence of their corruption. He articulates his belief that the Puritanism of the original colonisers has provided no strong philosophy of collective behaviour beyond a 'certain external conformism' and that it has, by contrast, isolated the individual and left him or her free to pursue their own 'delirious' fantasies. His descriptions of his meetings with Americans revolve around showing the degree to which the person to

whom he is talking is imprisoned within a limited or strange mental universe. Often he seeks to convey a sense of a distorted mode of perception by focusing on the oddity of the physical appearance or behaviour of the people he meets. He also tends to use the material environment that surrounds a particular figure as a metaphor for the obsessions of that individual. The environment provides an uncanny indication of his or her thinking processes. He is also fond of revealing what he believes are disparities between external appearance and inner reality.

From detailed observation of individual people, the traveller moves out to deliver a series of disarming generalisations. When he goes to lecture on art history in Berkeley, he is struck by the ignorance of the students he teaches. He goes on to talk about Americans living in 'an obtuse conformism', and within the confines of 'a servitude of opinion'.<sup>29</sup> On his journey to the Ford Motor Company in Edgewater, he observes that Americans naturally behave like automata. When examining aspects of the New Deal, he claims that, 'as a social mass, Americans behave like sheep'.<sup>30</sup> When talking about American intellectuals he goes so far as to claim that they do not have the cultural basis to think seriously about matters and that they are merely interested in feeling 'mentally and materially secure'.<sup>31</sup> He is fond of drawing a contrast between the highly advanced level of material progress that is everywhere apparent in the States and what he regards as its cultural backwardness. In his words:

One tends to consider the American civilisation as being the moral and juridical equivalent of the examples of extreme material modernity that one constantly

witnesses. But we must repeat that it is a civilisation that is in many respects primordial - full of lacunae and contrasts.<sup>32</sup>

What are perceived as the strange and irrational inclinations of the individual are reflected at a macrolevel in chaotic and violent social phenomena. Several of the chapters of *America amara* discuss the problem of organised crime: some of the most 'horrendous and monumental episodes' of mob terror are narrated, including the wars between various groups of gangsters in the late 1920s and the kidnapping and murder of the children of Mattson, Cash and Lindbergh. The relationship between the mob and the Prohibition is seen as incidental; the police force is seen as corrupt and inefficient; the legal system contains a number of laws designed to protect established criminals. But the polemical object of the articles on American criminality is to indicate the failure of the society to develop a sense of collective security. In Cecchi's words, organised crime in the States represents , 'the open and underground anarchy of the masses ranged against the state'.<sup>33</sup>

Cecchi also devotes considerable space to the relations between the different ethnic groups that constitute American society. His discussion of this area is partial: he says very little on the Hispanic community in California, nothing on native Americans and nothing on the Italian community in New York.<sup>34</sup> But his observations on the racial composition of the States are interesting in so far as they reflect official thinking in the late 1930s. He implies support for Mussolini's demographic campaign by emphasising the perils of the declining birth-rate of the Anglo-Saxon population. He goes on to present a picture of racial tension at all levels of American society. He describes the racially motivated violence in some southern states as a manifestation of 'diabolical madness' and 'puritanical hysteria'.<sup>35</sup>

Reflecting on the demonstrations in Harlem against the Italian colonisation of Ethiopia, he expresses the opinion that African Americans are highly susceptible to Socialist or Communist agitation. In another piece, 'Razzismo e opportunismo', he analyses the importance of the Jewish community in business and politics, pointing to the fact that there are many high ranking Jewish officials in Roosevelt's administration. This description is accompanied by a list of incidences of popular anti-Semitism in various states and the observation that the sympathy expressed by many Americans for German and Italian Jews is in reality very shallow. In describing what he believes to be the inevitable effects of the racial diversity of the States, Cecchi implies a belief in the superiority of a racially homogeneous society. The implication is the most depressing feature of the text since it inserts the writing within the climate of racial discrimination of Fascist Italy in 1938-1939. It is important to mention that Cecchi's articles appeared frequently on the front page of the *Corriere della sera* at the same time as Mussolini's speeches on the purity of the race were published and as measures restricting the freedom of Jewish Italians were announced.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, throughout Cecchi's book, landscape is used as the visible evidence of the mentality of its inhabitants and as a metaphor for the States as a whole. If Sarfatti had expressed enormous enthusiasm for the skyscrapers of New York, then Cecchi, confronted with the same vision, describes them as 'the expression of the proud and solitary economic empire', and as 'the bell tower[s] of a materialistic and godless religion'.<sup>37</sup> As he travels through different parts of the States, he is often struck by apparently incongruous sights. Describing a visit to the Bowery he writes:

There are places that are so drenched with poverty, shame and criminality that they have become eloquent visual history. Such places are like sinister, mummified epochs. Their deserted and devastated streets have the lugubrious solemnity of the cemetery. The Bowery, in New York, is one of these places. [...] The sensitive visitor on first entering this place is assailed by a mysterious sense of fear, like that which a visitor to an asylum or to a prison might experience. [...] If by day the place has the expressive power of a face that has been formed by the cinematographic accumulation of thousands of diseased and decayed faces. By night the place has the mad, blue majesty of the face of a corpse.<sup>38</sup>

The use of a repertory of strange and disturbing images as a medium to describe aspects of American culture is revealing. These images are the manifest indications of a sense of anxiety, of an established order being invaded or threatened. They express a clear sense of disavowal: the States are not a mirror of the visitor's own culture, but a site of opposition, a space that is *other*. The text argues that the individual American is bereft of a deep-laid system of values and becomes a victim of his or her own delirium. The subtext of this repeated assertion is that the culture which the observer belongs to and speaks from does possess a strong set of ideals. Ideals which structure both the collective functioning of a society and the inner life of the individual. Cecchi purports to do no more than observe and report, but what his writings do is set up one complex of culture patterns so that they can be denigrated and opposed by another. The younger, anti-Fascist writers of the 1930s, who constructed an entirely different notion of America, were certainly aware of the devices on which Cecchi's writings relied. Pintor pointed to the way in which his judgements were

based on criteria of aesthetic appreciation and how he transformed social situations into symbolic material. Focusing on the Gothic characteristics of the latter's prose, he went on to write:

Where Cecchi has scrupulously accumulated a chamber of horrors, where he has isolated decadence and disease and constructed a world in which it is impossible to believe, we have heard a voice which is similar to our own, the voice of true friends and contemporaries.<sup>39</sup>

Cecchi's writing on America implicitly supported the claim of the Fascist regime that it offered a 'third way', distinct from the perils of American capitalism on the one hand and those of Soviet Communism on the other. That it offered a mode of government which could preserve the 'spirituality' of the individual and of the nation against the materialistic ethos of Communist and capitalist societies. As Ruth Ben-Ghiat has shown, Mussolini was fond of claiming that Fascism represented a 'moral revolution' which catered for the 'whole person'.<sup>40</sup> When Cecchi speaks of American culture, he assumes the stance of the ironic observer of grotesque distortions of European ways of thinking or modes of behaviour. He presents Italian Fascism as a defence against an American model of development. In his view, Fascism protects the spiritual identity of the individual. The authoritarian policies of the regime safeguard the institutions of the nation. By ensuring political order, the regime guarantees moral stability. It ensures that existing social distinctions are respected. It is the guarantor of Catholicism and the custodian of the values and traditions of 'la civiltà latina'.



Not only in *America amara*, which offered the semi-official picture of the States, but in most texts which were written on the United States in the late 1930s<sup>41</sup> two competing models of civilisation are offered, each with competing morals and competing objects of worship. The definition of American society through a contrast with the Italy of the time can be seen as a response to the perception of a threat.<sup>42</sup> But the narrated journeys to America in the 1930s also provide a good deal of information on the mentality behind the imperial project of Fascist Italy. Sarfatti had spoken explicitly about the colonial claims of different nations and expressed her view that only deeply religious peoples were in a position to colonise other spaces. Though Cecchi does not express himself so plainly in *America amara*, his work implies that the organising principles which govern American society are corrupt and that the models of collective behaviour which it offers are pathological and dangerous. The various ethnic communities of the States are prey to the degenerate puritanism of the Anglo-Saxon majority. By contrast, the values of Fascist Italy together with the way in which they posit the individual are worthy of wider circulation. *America amara* and similar texts play their part in providing an apologia for Italian expansion in the wake of the conquest of Ethiopia and on the eve of the attempted appropriation of Albania, Greece and southern France.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> David F. Schmitz, *The United States and Fascist Italy 1922-40* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina University Press, 1988), p.81.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of different currents of thought regarding America within Italian Fascism see Emilio Gentile, 'Impending Modernity: Fascism and the Ambivalent Image of the United States', *Journal of Contemporary History* (1993), 28, pp.7-29.

<sup>3</sup> This strain of orthodox Fascist thinking is commonly referred to as 'strapaese' (superprovince). The current had its principal exponents in the writers Giovanni Papini, Curzio Malaparte and Ardengo Soffici.

<sup>4</sup> See Bruno Wanrooj, 'The American Model in the Moral Education of Fascist Italy', *Papers of the European University Institute*, Badia Fiesolana, January 1986, p.5. See also 'Progress without change: the ambiguities of modernisation in Fascist Italy', *Papers of the European University Institute*, May 1985.

<sup>5</sup> See the documentary, *Tempo di Guerra* (Time of War), Istituto Luce, 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Gentile, 'Impending Modernity: Fascism and the Ambivalent Image of the United States', p.7.

<sup>7</sup> The ambiguities present in these texts become still more interesting when they are placed in the long tradition of Italian writing on the United States. For a discussion of the lines which this tradition has followed over time see E. Franzina, 'L'America' in *I luoghi della memoria: Simboli e miti dell'Italia unita* (Memory's Places; Myths and Symbols of United Italy), ed. by M. Isnenghi (Rome, Laterza, 1996), pp.332-360. See also, G. Massara, *Viaggiatori italiani in America (1860-1970)* (Italian Travellers in America) (Rome, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1976).

<sup>8</sup> Ciarlantini, *Roma-New York e ritorno. Tragedie dell'americanismo* (Milan, Mondadori, 1934). Ciarlini had already written two other works on the United States: *Al paese delle*

*stelle* (To the Country of the Stars) (Milan, Mondadori, 1931) and *Incontro col Nord-America* (Encounter with North America) (Milan, Mondadori, 1929).

<sup>9</sup> In this characterisation of the States, Ciarlantini relies in part on the fictional writings of the American writer Stuart Chase.

<sup>10</sup> M. Soldati, *America, primo amore* (America, First Love) (Milan, Mondadori, 1985), p.182: 'La nostra vita non è così avventurosa; ma neppure così squallida. [...] L'America è monotona, arida, buia. Il secolare puritanismo ha represso, atrofizzato gli istinti che soli rendono sopportabile la vita: l'amore, la socievolezza, l'ozio, la gola. Intanto il diavolo, cacciato dal corpo, è rientrato per le vie dello spirito.' All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>11</sup> On this point see Ruth Ben-Ghiat, 'Italian Fascism and the Aesthetics of the 'Third Way'', *Journal of Contemporary History* (1996), 31, pp.293-316 (p.298).

<sup>12</sup> M. Sarfatti, *L'America. Alla ricerca della felicità* (Milan, Mondadori, 1937).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.184: 'dittatura costituzionale'.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24: 'fervido slancio vitale'.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32: 'il carattere idealista e metafisico della sua enormità'.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33: 'apoteosi del superuomo nell'uomo'.

<sup>17</sup> In 1932, amidst huge celebrations, the mortal remains of Anita Garibaldi were taken from Genoa to the site of their new resting place in Rome.

<sup>18</sup> See *ibid.*, p.203: 'forti nel dissimulare con il sorriso e la dedizione il costo del sacrificio'.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.184: 'alcuni dei più soavi e forti esemplari di femminilità che io abbia mai avuto la ventura di venerare'.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.75: 'al fondo di ogni civiltà bianca si trova l'ideale greco-romano'.

- <sup>21</sup>. Ibid., p.239: 'Questa novella Roma [...] impernia un mito di avventura e tenacia, di esplorazione, sacrificio e conquista'.
- <sup>22</sup>. Ibid., p.238: 'ebollizione di gioventù avventurosa e bellicosa'.
- <sup>23</sup>. Ibid., p.227: 'una nuova unità spirituale'.
- <sup>24</sup>. In 1941 Vittorini published his anthology of American literature under the title of *Americana* (Milan, Bompiani). The work appeared too pro-American to the Fascist censors and it was sequestered. The anthology appeared the following year with a number of drastic reductions and with an introduction written by Emilio Cecchi. Pintor's views on America appear in the volume *Il sangue d'Europa* (The Blood of Europe)(Turin, Einaudi, 1965). The writings of the 'Americanisti', as these writers were known, have received a good deal of critical attention. See in particular: N. Carducci, *Gli intellettuali e l'ideologia americana nell'Italia letteraria degli anni trenta* (Intellectuals and American Ideology in Italian Literature in the 1930s) (Manduria, Lacaita, 1973) and D. Fernandez, *Il mito degli Stati Uniti per gli intellettuali italiani nel periodo fascista* (The Myth of the United States for Italian Intellectuals during the Fascist Period) (Rome/Caltanissetta, 1969).
- <sup>25</sup>. G. Pintor, *Il sangue d'Europa*, p.149: 'Questa America non ha bisogno di Colombo. E' dentro di noi, è la terra a cui andiamo con la stessa speranza e con la stessa fiducia dei primi emigranti'.
- <sup>26</sup>. D. Heiney, *America in Modern Italian Literature* (New York, Rutgers University Press, 1964), p.35.
- <sup>27</sup>. Cecchi, *America amara* (Florence, L'arte della stampa, 1943), p.292: 'colonizzare la nuova terra', 'l'urto con la natura colossale'.

- <sup>28</sup>. Ibid., p.127: ‘Caduto, in massima, il pudore sociale, e non essendo d’altronde subentrata una sincera capacità di godere, si ha una sorta di gelido e sfrenato paganesimo, che si è messo sotto i piedi tutti i divieti, interni ed esterni: un paganesimo di mera violenza, senza respiro di felicità.’
- <sup>29</sup>. Ibid., p.52: ‘conformismo ottuso’, ‘servitù d’opinione’.
- <sup>30</sup>. Ibid., p.41: ‘come massa sociale gli Americani spesso si comportano da pecore’.
- <sup>31</sup>. Ibid., p.51: ‘moralmente e materialmente sicuri’.
- <sup>32</sup>. Ibid., p.163: ‘Si considera la civiltà americana come moralmente e giuridicamente coeva di quelle estreme modernità. Mentre dobbiamo ripetere che si tratta d’una civiltà [...] primordiale: tutta lacuna e contrasti.’
- <sup>33</sup>. Ibid., p.161: ‘una aperta e sotterranea anarchia di masse scagliate contro lo stato’.
- <sup>34</sup>. In the preface to his book, Cecchi suggests that readers who are interested in Italian community of America should refer to the work by Amerigo Ruggiero, *Italiani d’America* (America’s Italians) (Milan: Mondadori, 1937).
- <sup>35</sup>. Ibid., p.86: ‘diabolica demenza’, ‘isteria puritana’.
- <sup>36</sup>. The place in which Cecchi’s writings first appeared locates them, quite literally, within the dominant discourse of the time. One article written by Cecchi, ‘L’Agape nera’ (Black Agape), is prefaced by the editorial comment: ‘Quali violenze, quali tragedie, quali spaventevoli compromessi sono nascosti nell’innaturale ammicchiamento di razze inconciliabili?’ (What violence, what tragedies, what frightening compromises are hidden within the unnatural accumulation of diverse races). The *Corriere della Sera*, 23 September 1938.

<sup>37</sup>. Cecchi, *America amara*, p.14: ‘espressione d’orgogliosa e solitaria prepotenza economica’, ‘il campanile senza campane d’una religione materialista, senza Dio’. Ciarlantini also had described American cities as more dangerous than a jungle (p.307). Focusing on New York, Raffaele Calzini drew a direct correlation between a materialistic search for happiness and a weird and hellish landscape. See *Trionfi e disfatte di Nuova York* (Triumphs and Defeats in New York) (Milan, Mondadori, 1937). Even Sarfatti had produced a picture of the scarcely veiled ferocity of Chicago, *L’America. Alla ricerca della felicità*, (p.85).

<sup>38</sup>. Cecchi, *America amara*, p.152: ‘Vi sono luoghi che l’indigenza, la vergogna, l’infamia hanno talmente impregnati e saturati, da renderli, a così dire, eloquenti come una storia trasfusi in sostanza visiva. Vie e piazze, devastate e deserte; lugubramente solenni come cimiteri. La Bowery a Nuova York, è uno di questi luoghi. [...] Un viaggiatore sensibile al primo entrarvi è toccato d’una sorta di misterioso spavento, simile a quello che colpisce il visitatore d’una galera o d’un manicomio. [...] se di giorno ha la potenza espressiva d’un volto che sia formato dalla sovrapposizione cinematografica di migliaia e migliaia di visi malati e digrignanti, di notte ha la catalettica, bluastra maestà d’un viso di morto.’

<sup>39</sup>. G. Pintor, *Il sangue d’Europa*, p.150: ‘Dove Cecchi ha raccolto scrupolosamente un museo di orrori, dove ha isolato malattie e decadenza e riconosciuto un mondo a cui è impossibile prestar fede, noi abbiamo sentito una voce profondamente vicina, quella di veri amici e dei primi contemporanei.’

<sup>40</sup>. R. Ben-Ghiat, ‘Italian Fascism and the Aesthetics of the ‘Third Way’’, p.293.

<sup>41</sup>. Another good example of the representation of the clash of religions over the governance of space is Beniamino de Ritis', *La terza America* (The Third America) (Florence, Bemporad, 1937).

<sup>42</sup>. See Wanrooj, 'The American Model in the Moral Education of Fascist Italy'.