Harbors, Flows, and Migrations

Harbors, Flows, and Migrations:

The USA in/and the World

Edited by

Vincenzo Bavaro, Gianna Fusco,
Serena Fusco and Donatella Izzo

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Out of nearly one hundred papers originally presented at the conference, only thirty-two (including the three keynote lectures), after being substantially enlarged and revised, have become part of this volume. All but the keynote lectures were selected through a peer-review process: we thankfully acknowledge the reviewers who helped us with the difficult task of the selection, offering their time and expertise to assess submissions, comment on individual essays, and provide feedback and advice.

INTRODUCTION

VINCENZO BAVARO, GIANNA FUSCO,
SERENA FUSCO, AND DONATELLA IZZO

At a time marked by both globalizing economic processes and constantly increasing flows of people across borders and seas, the debate around harbors and their actual and symbolical meaning gains renewed significance and intensity. The past few decades have seen traditional migratory events overshadowed by relatively unprecedented massive phenomena: mass migrations, often by sea, caused by wars, climate change, and economic crises, the unparalleled rapidity in the circulation and mixing of both ideas and cultures, dramatically increasing concerns as to internal security, as well as the pervasive supranational logics of financial capitalism. All of these phenomena have contributed in recent years to bringing harbors back to the cultural and political spotlight as both a pivotal locale and a fraught symbol, equally capable of heating public discourse and stirring individual consciences.

In terms of economic and national identity, the port simultaneously functions as a physical border, an entrance point, and a site of multiple exchanges, while at the level of individual and collective experience it marks a working place, a place of trade, or a (more or less welcoming, more or less dangerous, more or less policed) place of transit: a place from where to leave or to escape, a place where to rest in-between journeys, or from where to start settling anew, sometimes facing harsh conditions, difficult processes of adjustment, and integration with or resentment of a hostile social environment. And yet, the prevalent images that come to mind today—images of global trade, war, and migration, which bespeak ongoing conflicts and overwhelming imbalances of wealth—do not quite exhaust the rich significance of the harbor, which includes more immaterial flows and exchanges—of thought, knowledge, and art—with a potential to alter, temper, resist, or contradict their harsher material counterparts in unpredictable ways. One of the most ancient port cities in Europe, Naples, the city which inspired the topic of the conference from

which this book originated, has epitomized these multiple and contradictory implications throughout its multi-millenarian history.

A powerful trope across many literary and artistic traditions, the harbor holds a peculiarly central position in the American imagination. The sea defines in fact the American experience, from the myths of discovery and foundation to the horrors of the slave trade and the plantation economy, from the relative isolation of the early colonies to the later attempts at expansion overseas, from tales of adventurous exploration to the immense numbers of transatlantic and transpacific immigrants who contributed to populate the U.S.A. Now, at a historical moment when the U.S. administration would seal its national boundaries against ethnically and religiously defined groups of "others" presumptively described as criminals and enemies, focusing on harbors may recall similar historical moments, but also fruitfully remind us of alternative traditions—traditions of hospitality, which do justice to the meaning of harbor not just as a place for regulating and policing borders and transactions, but as a place of refuge and shelter.

At this time when harbors, both real and of the imagination, are undoubtedly at the core of contemporary experience of separation and contact, of identity and contamination, this volume sets out to explore their significance through a decentered look at U.S. history, literature, and culture. The essays we have gathered aim at investigating both the flows and migrations of people, cultures, and ideas toward and from the United States, and the political/cultural/ideological position and role of the United States in movements and exchanges centered elsewhere. Drawing on the recent transnational turn in American Studies, the resulting collection is placed within the latest theoretical and critical trends in the field, also thanks to the contribution of three leading international scholars who have spearheaded the reconfiguration of American Studies over the last two decades.

The essays by Werner Sollors, Donna Gabaccia, and Lisa Lowe in the first part open the book with authoritative forays in different directions, setting the multidisciplinary character and wide scope of the investigations in the following sections. Building on a wide array of literary, cultural, and visual documents—ranging from newspaper advertisements to magazine illustrations, from obscure immigrant memoirs to canonical novels, from personal testimony to quilted carpets—Sollors offers a fascinating critical genealogy of the Statue of Liberty as an iconic immigrant myth, both evoked and debunked across recurrent scenes of arrival and departure, and still relevant as both a possible lesson and a caveat in the troubled waters of today's world. Donna Gabaccia equally lends historical depth to the

issues of the present in her essay. Addressing a constellation of ideas that revolve around the notion of "the freedom to move," Gabaccia defines mobility as a human right and a fundamental expression of human agency. Her discussion of the ambivalent inflections of the representation of this freedom along the history of the United States, therefore, offers powerful insights on the ways in which the freedom to move has lately become unthinkable. Finally, in her sweeping exploration of the multiple trans-national, trans-continental, trans-oceanic trajectories that make up what she has elsewhere called "the intimacies of four continents," Lisa Lowe draws from a dazzling array of disparate archives to situate the United States within the global connected history of liberalism, colonialism, racialization, and empire in ways that criticize, revise, disprove, or complicate received notions of progress, democracy, and freedom.

The rest of the book's ten sections reflect the considerable diversity of approaches and topics, as well as methodologies and academic disciplines, currently engaged in productive dialogue with American Studies. A number of the essays are situated at the intersection of multiple subfields, stressing not only the interdisciplinary nature of American Studies, but also the editors' commitment to intersectionality and heterogeneity as central facets both of the U.S. cultural and national identity, and of the Americanist scholarship that we deem relevant to the present intellectual, cultural, and political moment.

The first three sections interweave re-readings of highly canonical authors with analyses of lesser-known literary, cultural, and political texts from the past and the present, displaying a heightened awareness of gender and ethnic diversity, and of the international and transnational aspects of the circulation of ideas. Part II, "The Nineteenth Century: Re-readings and Re-writings from Offshore," sets off by casting a fresh look at two of the most canonical writers from the American Renaissance, Herman Melville and Walt Whitman, whose works are here interrogated from a decentered perspective aiming at illuminating questions of authorship and literariness. In his essay on "Old Melville," Paolo Simonetti traces the land/sea dichotomy, and the idea of the harbor as an ambivalent symbol partaking of both, in the author's biography as well as in his prose and poems, focusing especially on the unfinished *Burgundy Club* book. In this sweeping reading, Melville's visit to Naples becomes a privileged experience that deepened his reflections on the tension between a love for action and the longing for a "snug harbor," and ultimately on death, authorship, and the literary market. In Elena Furlanetto's reading of the "Sea-Drifts" section of *Leaves of Grass*, it is the homeland shore of Paumanok, Long Island, that becomes the stage for the widely recognized,

yet still underexplored encounter between Whitman's verse and the Sufi poetic tradition. Going beyond the mere acknowledgment of a literary influence and the unorthodox use of a foreign tradition by the self-proclaimed American bard, Furlanetto's analysis identifies specific structural parallels between Whitman's "Out of the Cradle" and Hafiz's "The Rose and the Nightingale," suggesting that this transcultural poetic conversation plays a potentially important role in shaping Whitman's (American) poetic self. Nicolangelo Becce's intertextual reading of Valerie Martin's contemporary novel *The Ghost of the Mary Celeste* (2014) leads us instead into an exploration of neo-Victorianism as a present-day response to the still powerful hold of the Victorian age over our imagination. As Becce points out, the turn-of-the-century cultural anxiety produced by death on the one hand and the so-called woman question on the other finds a codified answer in Modern Spiritualism and the figure of the medium, which are in turn used by authors such as Martin to deconstruct received notions about the role of women in Victorian society as well as their contribution to the literary sphere.

Part Three, "Across the Atlantic—and back," (re)focuses on the transatlantic space from a global(ized) perspective, thus creating a dialogue between the discourse of a "traditional" cross-cultural encounter and recent theoretical elaborations from fields as diverse as transnational American studies, tourist studies, visual studies, and queer studies. Marie-Odile Salati's essay tackles the harbor—and New York harbor in particular—as a trope that marks, in the final phase of Henry James's production (epitomized by *The American Scene*), a turning point in his imagination, suspended as he was between his "adoptive" Europe and his native U.S., as well as between a conservative outlook on culture and an inevitable confrontation with urban modernity. In the following two essays, Cristina Alsina Rísquez and Anna De Biasio both discuss Willa Cather, an author who is today both indisputably canonical and still, somehow, at the margins of American literary studies. De Biasio puts Cather in dialogue with Ernest Hemingway through the lens of tourist studies, innovatively redeployed for reflecting on ways to represent the tragedy of war. Using Jacques Rancière's idea of a "community of equals," and evoking the work of established Latin American authors, Alsina Rísquez repositions Cather in a transatlantic space that not only conjoins two shores, but also two hemispheres. Finally, Emanuela Zirzotti offers a detailed reading of the work of Joshua Slocum, known sea-traveler, captain, and author of travel literature. Zirzotti's analysis of Slocum develops into a problematization of the idea of the harbor as *locus*

amoenus and, consequently, of the very idea of "home"—with sociological, political, and cultural implications.

Part IV, "Transatlantic Views: The Euro-American Circulation of Ideas," expands the investigation of this dialogue across the Atlantic from the field of narratives to that of the circulation of socio-historical and literary-philosophical categories, highlighting the transnational space as the key to a more fruitful discussion of concepts that are at the core of the American (self-)perception and experience. Matteo Battistini tackles the historiographical origin and evolution of the middle class "as the key figure of the nation" in the American century, bringing together the European and American debate around this social group and foregrounding the shift between the nineteenth-century "national processes of industrialization and democratization" and the turn-of-the-century transatlantic debate sparked by the second industrial revolution, resulting in the U.S. into "a common lifestyle and an unquestioned acceptance of the liberal values of American democracy" for white- and blue-collar workers alike. The idea of democracy is also at the center of Roberta Ferrari's investigation of Beatrice Potter Webb and her contribution to the transnational debate on "sovereignty, government and pluralism" at the end of the nineteenth century. Highly influential ideas and sets of policies marking the twentieth-century history of Great Britain and the U.S., such as the Welfare State and the New Deal, are connected by Ferrari to the "Atlantic crossings" of thinkers, like Potter Webb, who took advantage of their chance to travel and make first hand experience of different political and social systems to reflect on the development of new forms of government responding to the challenges of modernity. Mena Mitrano's essay brings us back to the literary sphere, via her questioning of the concept of modernity as it has been traditionally interpreted in connection to Modernism, and T. S. Eliot in particular. Moving beyond the classic argument of the transatlantic production and circulation of modernist poetry, Mitrano propounds a novel approach that weaves together Eliot's poetic intuition and the thinkers usually labeled under the rubric "Italian Theory." Modernist writers like T.S. Eliot and contemporary philosophers like Roberto Esposito share a preoccupation with issues of modernity that are far from having been settled once for all, Mitrano argues, and are brought together by a renewed interest for the intellectual investigation of the "problem of the new."

The rest of the clusters complicate and enrich the transatlantic connection, both past and present. Part V, "Topographies of Slavery and Colonialism," focuses on the Black American experience, respectively allowing the emergence of a violent past of racial oppression spanning

both the United States and the West Indies, and shedding light on a relatively less investigated aspect of both African American literature and transatlantic literary influences. In the first essay of this cluster, Marina De Chiara reads acclaimed poet Derek Walcott's *Collected Poems. 1948-1984* examining the persistence of images of harbors, islands, shipwrecks, sails "as the poetic response that the poet offers to the uncomfortable questions of cultural identity and language in the Caribbean archipelago." A similar deliberate and transformative focus on memory and its power of shaping the present, in the case of both writers and critics, is tangible in Camilla Fascina's essay on Marina Werner's *Indigo or, Mapping the Waters* (1992). In examining this postcolonial rewriting of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Fascina discusses both the formerly silenced character of Sycorax and the author's positionality through her alter-ego's standpoint, the character of Miranda. In the essay that follows, Ada Savin's critical reflection on the Atlantic Ocean, the slave trade, and the place of memory is channeled through the reading of Paule Marshall's *Triangular Road*. The triangle, at once physical and profoundly ungraspable, made by three harbors—Richmond (Virginia), Bridgetown (Barbados), and Lagos (Nigeria)—evokes Marshall's ancestors' experience of slavery. Savin argues that Marshall's work articulates powerful tensions between cyclical time and progressive time, between dwelling and travelling, drawing "intricate connections between the local and the global, between roots and routes." The last essay in this section, by Meltem Kıran-Raw, investigates Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave*, with a careful scrutiny of the representation of land-, city-, and waterscapes. After introducing the notions of topophilia and topophobia—the love and fear, respectively, of places and spaces—it argues that the affective power of Northup's antislavery argument relies precisely on the consistent interlinking of these two. More specifically, Kıran-Raw convincingly argues, the topophobic moments in the text are crucially dependent on topophilia for their emotional power.

The next sections explore the topography and tropology of mobility across space, focusing on the actualities of transatlantic and transpacific routes and encounters, as well as on the accompanying tropes and mythologies that preside over their literary and cultural articulation ("Tropes of Migration and Harboring"). In Part VI Barbara Kreiger's "Adrift" questions the way language seems to "predefine or avoid experience," investigating the ambiguity and the subterraneous assumptions in the very use of keywords such as "harbors" and "migration." A celebrated work of American literature is the focus of Valerio Massimo De Angelis's essay: *Call It Sleep*, by Henry Roth,

articulates, in De Angelis's view, an unbalanced an unreconciled tension between a "mythology of migration" to the U.S., and the "dislocated vision of his young protagonist." De Angelis argues that despite David's (limited, biased) social and cultural positioning in the migratory process, the novel "succeeds in drawing a plurivocal horizon" for the cultural landscape it evokes. Mariacarmela Mancarella's essay focuses on the "complex and multilayered labor of memory" at work in the documentary film *Ellis Island: Tales of Vagrancy and Hope*, whose screenplay was written by Georges Perec. Mancarella explores the strategies by means of which a documentary on the physical site of Ellis Island becomes embedded in autobiographical narratives, while an investigation in the nature of memory merges with the quest for personal identity.

The following section radically shifts the traditional emphasis on the Atlantic to focus on "Trans-Pacific Encounters," investigating Asian American literature as one of the most productive sites of cultural elaboration and academic reflection of the past decades. Immigration from Asia started flowing to the U.S. in the mid-nineteenth century and, as Lisa Lowe has seminally demonstrated, the arrival (mostly on Californian shores) of diverse peoples who were, in racial terms, lumped under labels such as "Orientals" or "Yellows," created a site of un/dialectical tension that would, over time, constantly question U.S. nationalistic narratives. The authors of the essays included in Part Seven, "Trans-Pacific Encounters," discuss fiction from different historical periods, thus highlighting the rich history of Asian American literature and its potential for exploring topical issues such as ethnicity, migration, and globalization. From an ethnic studies perspective, articulated in a comparative key, Francesca de Lucia re-positions the work of Louis Chu, one of the canonical writers of Chinese America. De Lucia explores Chu's novel, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, along three main lines: the representation of the society of the ethnic enclave, the use of Chinese cultural elements, and the author's original linguistic strategies. Pirjo Ahokas's essay centers on one of the finest literary results of Asian American literature in the 1990s: Fae Myenne Ng's novel *Bone*. Ahokas's analysis explores the novel's rendition of Chinatown through a lens informed by maritime imagination and the ambivalence of the harbor as point of arrival and inevitably, again, of departure. Finally, Fulvia Sarnelli tackles Ruth L. Ozeki's most recent book, *A Tale for the Time Being*, published in 2013, demonstrating how this novel constructs a global, even "cosmic" dimension, wherein each shore is a harbor that is permeable to what comes from the outside, to the point of challenging the boundaries of both space and time. In Sarnelli's reading of Ozeki, this connection carries positive implications to the extent

that it is lived and experienced intimately, involving a private dimension, and not only as a buzzword in the public sphere.

Part VIII and Part IX, "Inflections of the Italian American Experience" and "Italian Americans between Fact and Fiction" bear witness to the new prominence and sophistication of Italian American studies, as displayed in the varieties of cultural objects scrutinized and the diversity of disciplinary approaches involved (from linguistics to historiography, from literary to socio-economic and political analysis, from visual to media studies), providing a comprehensive look at the place occupied by Italy, and Naples in particular, not only in the U.S. imagination and in the cultural tradition of one of its many immigrant communities, but also in its current international relations. Part VIII opens with a touching, yet scholarly and theoretically informed personal narrative of linguistic displacement and cultural longing by Albert Latorella Lehner. Tracing the story of his coming of age as a third generation Italian American in Boston, Latorella Lehner intertwines his own need for a mother tongue with both the literary tradition of Italian American authors and the academic discourse on the role of language in the making of the immigrant American subject. The paradoxical loss of a mother tongue that had actually never been acquired emerges as a strong cultural influence informing the author's approach to his profession as an academic in the field of Second Language Acquisition and casts new light on his understanding of the political implications of language embracing or rejection for different immigrant groups in the U.S. along the twentieth century. In the following article, Rosemary Serra investigates the language(s) spoken or lost within the Italian American community combining historical data and contemporary statistic evidence. Patterns of acquisition and modes of use across generations are thus traced, with specific attention to national self-identification and sense of belonging as an influencing force behind such phenomena, followed by the results of new research about the current use of Italian and Italian dialects among young Italian Americans in the greater New York area. From the realm of linguistic identity, we finally move to political agency with Stefano Luconi's contribution on the Italian-American vote in Italy's elections and referenda, in a transnational and transcultural perspective. After tracing the history of the right to vote for citizens of the so-called Italian diaspora from the fascist era on, Luconi moves on to analyzing the reasons behind the quite modest turnout of Italian American citizens who claimed their right to vote in 2001 as well as the trends in the following elections and referenda.

The essays in Part IX, "Italian Americans between Fact and Fiction," investigate works across three different media: dramatic literature, visual

art, and television series. An unpublished drama, *Two Fingers of Pride* (1955), by Jim Longhi is at the center of Elisabetta Marino's essay. The essay delineates a complex network of influences—between facts and fiction, indeed—surrounding the abduction of Italian American activist and longshoreman Pete Panto in 1939. Such events are not only the explicit focus of Longhi's play, but also the crucial background of both Arthur Miller's unpublished film script "The Hook" (1951) and the controversial 1954 film *On the Waterfront* directed by Elia Kazan. Fred Gardaphé's essay first introduces some of the core issues at the heart of Joseph Papaleo's literary production, and subsequently explores the works of his son, William Papaleo. The latter is a visual artist that twenty years ago relocated to Naples, and whose "Italian" production powerfully challenges assumptions, within Italian American scholarship and culture, regarding motherland and memory. In William's paintings of new immigrants in the streets of Naples, Gardaphé argues, we can see a more complex and nuanced understanding of memory at work, one that "inspires and creates new experiences." Finally, Francesco Chianese's essay establishes a critical dialogue between two acclaimed TV series, *The Sopranos* and *Gomorra-The Series*, focusing in particular on their representation of the city of Naples and the portrayal of the Italian family. Despite the contrast between the romanticized and folkloric representation of the earlier show with the raw and violent setting of Gomorra, Chianese contends that while *The Sopranos* offers a more balanced and realistic representation, both series contribute in important ways to a debate on the redefinition of the family in Italian culture.

Finally, the last section ("Representing Muslim America after 9/11") further multiplies the transatlantic trajectories, decentering the traditional Euro-American perspective and deconstructing the U.S. as a safe harbor: the essays investigating Muslim America and its post-9/11 representation, focusing on a growing number of texts by and/or about the Arab American community, give space and visibility to issues of cultural identity and its articulation in the midst of a hostile environment, in a diverse range of prose, poetry, drama, and non-fiction that go to the heart of today's most hotly debated cultural and political issues.

Fatma Saleh Assef analyzes the fiction of Mohja Kahf and Laila Halaby, two prominent Muslim American women writers, whose dissident work has had a major role in bringing to light the Islamic component in American culture, while demystifying a (liberal) gender-blind approach to Muslim American culture. Mirella Vallone's essay deals with Mohja Kahf's poetic production, reading it in the context of the most recent theoretical reflection (Judith Butler's, first and foremost) on vulnerability

as the basis of solidarity, in opposition to waging war. In Vallone's argument, the U.S. experienced by Kahf's female poetic personae is far from being a safe harbor of refuge: on the contrary, Muslim American women experience discrimination, due to the hypervisibility of their bodies, especially when veiled. Last but not least, Robert Muscaliuc's contribution explores the always permeable and problematic boundary between fact and fiction—a permeability here based on a dialogue, or, in Moscaliuc's terms, "continuum" between a "proximal" (i.e. based on experience) rendition of the experience of war and fictional, "ancillary" narrations of it. American discourse on the "War against Terror" is predicated, in Moscaliuc's argument, on such a "continuum," and any nuanced understanding and criticism of established discourses on war and terror should, accordingly, start from recognizing the mutual dynamics, and regulation, of both genres.

The organization of the volume thus seeks to trace an overall trajectory from a canonical past to a controversial present, but simultaneously insists on highlighting the dialogic quality of the individual sections, the manifold historical and conceptual connections between and among them, and the multiple directions of inquiry opened by each individual contribution. Bringing together thirty-two essays from scholars based in four continents and eleven different countries, who work in a variety of academic fields and with a variety of approaches, this volume, we hope, will intersect a wide range of diverse interests in its readers, bearing witness to the lively international and transnational debate within the field of American Studies today.

PART I

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES: LOCAL AND GLOBAL

CHAPTER ONE

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES[1]

WERNER SOLLORS

In memory of Sacvan Bercovitch

In December 2014, shortly after Sacvan Bercovitch (known as "Saki" to his friends) succumbed to a long struggle with cancer, Giuseppe Nori wrote me that you had wanted to invite Saki as one of your plenary speakers, but that after the sad news of Saki's death had reached you, "the AISNA Board thought we should invite the closest scholar and colleague to Saki," me. As you can imagine this was a touching invitation that I very happily accepted, since Saki was, indeed, a scholar whose immense learning, limitless curiosity, pathbreaking scholarship, and deep sense of self-questioning irony I admired and whose friendship I cherished.

I was all the happier that the topic you had chosen for your conference was "Harbors," since Saki and I loved, in the early 1980s, to take long walks along the decrepit piers at the Hudson River, where once steamboats had arrived to busy immigration inspection stations and porters at what was once the flourishing harbor of New York. Ernest Poole, in his novel *The Harbor* (1915), from exactly a century ago, described such piers: "Brand new gigantic piers they were, . . . roofed over, dim and cool inside" (175, 176). What we saw three quarters of a century later was different. As airports had replaced harbors, only skeletons of those piers remained, and we once entertained the fantasy of staging a Kafkaesque arrival scene at one of those impressively rotting piers.

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[1] This paper was delivered as a plenary lecture at the AISNA conference in Naples, September 24, 2015. An earlier version was presented at the MELUS conference in Athens, Georgia, on April 7, 2015. My thanks to my hosts John Lowe, Donatella Izzo, and Giuseppe Nori.

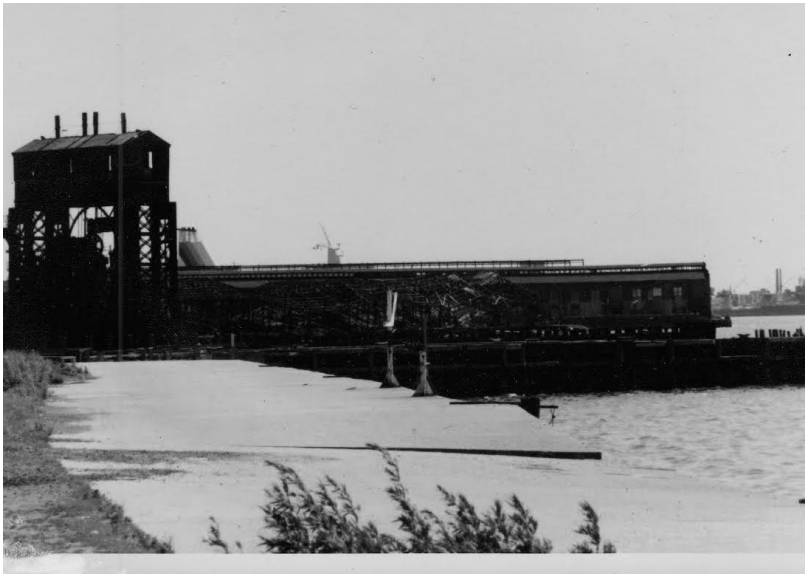

Figure 1. Original photo by Werner Sollors. Courtesy of W. Sollors.
See color centerfold for this image in color.

As I remember it, the scene would have included a single passenger arriving out of nowhere at the ruined, rotting pier where a single inspector seated at a bent metal structure that once might have been a desk would interrogate the passenger and ultimately arrest and detain him. Saki loved to pose for a photograph as the man behind bars—it appealed to his anarchist instincts.

What we were parodying was, of course, the myth of America, one of Saki's abiding interests, embodied, for example, in stereotypical arrival scenes of immigrants in the land of freedom, with prison-like metal bars rather than the Statue of Liberty awaiting the newly arrived migrant.

Figure 2. Original photo by Werner Sollors. Courtesy of W. Sollors.
See color centerfold for this image in color.

Arrivals

One frequently reproduced image representing this mythic moment in pure form is available at the Library of Congress Resources website, where it is identified as a wood engraving from 1887 and carries the caption, "New York. – Welcome to the land of freedom – An ocean steamer passing the Statue of Liberty: Scene on the steerage deck."[2] It is summarized as "Immigrants on deck of the steamer 'Germanic,'" and its subject headings are given as: "Statue of Liberty (New York, N.Y.) . . . ; Immigrants . . . ; Emigration and Immigration—United States—1880-1890." It is kept in a collection of "miscellaneous items in high demand," and originally appeared as a double page (may one already call it "centerfold"?) in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, or *Leslie's Weekly* for short.

[2] At http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/97502086/. Illus. in AP2.L52 1881 (Case Y) [P&P]. John Lowe selected the image as the theme of the MELUS conference, where it appeared on posters and served as cover image of the conference program.

Figure 3. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, July 2, 1887, pp. 324-5.
Courtesy of Harvard University Library.

It is a striking wood engraving, indeed. Placed in a wide angular space created by the rope ladders and the ship's deck and railing (both in diagonal positions) is the completely horizontal horizon (delimited by the American land) on which the completely vertical statue of a surprisingly slim Liberty is sharply outlined against a bright, lightly clouded sky. Three smaller ships are sailing in front of the statue and two others can be made out in the background.

The right half of the image—and that is the one a reader would have seen first when turning the page in *Leslie's Weekly* to the double-paged illustration—shows four similarly vertical rear-view figures (the *Rückenfiguren* from the tradition of *veduta* painting) in various ethnic-seeming outfits who are apparently looking at the statue, hence are encouraging the viewer to do the same.

This encouragement is reinforced by the three figures on the upper left, who are elevated above the others as they are climbing up on or clinging to the ship's Jacob's ladder. Their chests are at the level of the horizon, and while two of them gaze into the direction of the statue, the third man, the one closest to the statue is turned toward the other two, clearly telling them to look since his stretched out hand and index finger point at the statue. (It made me think of Ham pointing out to Shem and Japheth their drunken

father Noah, but here *Shem* and *Japheth* are looking.) The presence of a fourth man who is climbing up the rope ladder to share the view further increases the intensity with which the viewer is compelled to draw a connection between the human figures in the foreground and the statue in the back.

The human figures are standing on the crowded deck (I count twenty-one adults and two infants who are being held by their mothers); their faces are largely, but not exclusively, turned into the direction of the statue, which also means looking forward, toward the bow and the goal of the voyage. Whereas the couple on the lower left seems to be entranced by the view and the vision of their future that it seems to promise and some older people also look intently to the right, two older women are not looking forward and upward, but backward and even downward instead. The child at the very center of the image seems more interested in playing with her mother than taking in the sight of the statue; the mother makes up for this with redoubled attention. Also different is the casually positioned dandyish-looking man who is profiled against the railing. His chin is resting on his left hand and his right hand is in his pocket, his body resting on his right leg, while his left leg is bent at a relaxed angle. He seems to be looking forward but *not* at the statue; he is also the most isolated figure. Could he be a cabin passenger returning to America whereas all the others came in steerage, with the intention to immigrate? Or a member of the crew? Yet his own gaze notwithstanding, the angles that his figure makes and the arrow-like shape of his torso and arms also point diagonally toward the statue's torch. Though he is somewhat isolated, he forms a visual bridge between the four back figures on the right and the faces of the crowd on the left.

A tag line below the caption in the original issue of *Leslie's Weekly* further identifies the image as derived "from a sketch by a staff artist." *Leslie's Weekly* had many of them, including Georgina Davis and Joseph Becker, and though I was unable to identify the artist, perhaps one of you will undertake the effort to do so. The tag line ends, "see page 327," promising further information about the image and its intended meaning. Since at this point I was already looking at *Leslie's*, I did, indeed, turn the page to the recommended page and found a more detailed exegesis than I had expected.

After a general opening about possible motives for immigration, this mini-essay continues:

> To the immigrant from famine-haunted Ireland, or from the Scandinavian countries where opportunities of individual growth and development are so scant and rare, the first glimpse of the shores of this Land of Promise must

> indeed be inspiriting and joyful, and as they sail up our beautiful Bay and for the first time see the majestic statue of Liberty, standing, so to speak, at the very gateway of the Republic, we cannot wonder that their exultation should, as it often does, find enthusiastic expression.

The anonymous *Leslie's* staff writer then identifies the ship and praises the White Star line that operates it:

> Our double-page illustration depicts a scene of this character on the decks of the steamer *Germanic*, one of the best known of the steamers of the favorite White Star Line. For many years the steamers of this line have made their ocean voyages with a regularity and certainty which have established it in the favor of all classes of passengers. Four steamers, surpassed in appointments by none, comprise the regular transatlantic fleet, and to these extra steamers—during the Summer months—are frequently added. To the immigrant traffic the White Star steamers offer, by the celerity and the certainty of their trips, special advantages and a saving of time, which are none the less agreeable than to the tourists and travelers for pleasure. The appointments of the steerage are as complete as those of the first cabins, and although the demand for accommodation often exhausts the supply, nothing is omitted which may promote the health or the comfort of the seekers of wealth and fortune on the shores of the New World.

Moving from the practical-commercial to the idealistic-patriotic level, the conclusion returns to the image itself and offers this reading:

> As the great steamship comes slowly up the harbor, every eye is turned towards the statue, which, if it could speak, would salute the newcomers with welcomes, and every soul is stirred, feebly it may be, but none the less really, by emotions for which there is no fitting speech. May all who sail past it to these hospitable shores find every just expectation realized and prove in all things worthy of the citizenship which the land of freedom confers upon them.

It sounds as though the author knew Emma Lazarus's poem "The New Colossus" (written in 1883) and offered an elated paraphrase of it, in the subjunctive: "if it could speak." The issue of *Leslie's* came out on July 2, 1887, and this ending makes it sound like a Fourth-of-July oration, a genre the pat rhetoric of which Saki never tired to hold up to scrutiny. The prose piece in *Leslie's* gives us a very good sense of the reaction to the image that was expected from its readers, reinforcing the already quite strong clues we noticed in the picture itself.