

Fabulations of the Exception: Law, Justice, and Violence in Louise Erdrich's *The Round House*

Giorgio Mariani

Louise Erdrich's novel *The Round House* investigates the complex interrelations between justice, the law, and tribal sovereignty. A number of critics have argued that the revenge mission against the white man responsible for the rape of the narrator's mother, should be justified not only on moral but also on cultural and legal grounds. The essay argues that this amounts to a serious misreading of both the novel and the anthropological/legal context it refers to. While the novel does call attention to the "toothless sovereignty" that the execution of the rapist is meant to remedy, it also stresses that violence fails in securing the basis for a true tribal sovereignty. The novel, in short, can only register a set of historical and political contradictions that admit no neat narrative resolution.

Houses and Rooms for Writing: From Louisa May Alcott to *Little Women's* Jo March

Anna De Biasio

Throughout her life, Louisa May Alcott lived in many different places, moving between the family home in Concord (MA) and numerous rooms in boarding houses and hotels. Alcott's preference for temporary accommodations is representative of a new need for personal space that the Victorian home fails to satisfy, as emerges from a comparison with the working routine (and literary worlds) of other *literary domestics* of nineteenth-century America. This spatial relationship with privacy is exemplified by the writer's study, a physical and symbolic place – linked to her status in the literary field – which never truly materializes. In *Little Women*, Jo's desire for her own space takes shape in various rooms (attic, bedroom, boarding house's loft) where she pursues writing, before abandoning her artistic career for marriage (though not forever, as revealed by the ghostly appearance of the author's study in *Jo's Boys*).

The Aventine Parliamentary Secession and Its Reception in the United States (1924-1925)

Jacopo Perazzoli

This article discusses how the White House and English-speaking American public opinion reacted to the political crisis provoked in Italy by the assassination of Giacomo Matteotti, which had its central moment in the parliamentary “Aventine Secession,” desired by almost all the anti-fascist opposition. By cross-referencing archive sources, diplomatic documentation, newspapers, and historical literature, the aim is to reflect on two aspects in particular: firstly, how Fascism sponsored its image in the United States in the phase immediately preceding the totalitarian turn in January 1925; secondly, admittedly from a specific perspective, examining the relations between the government in Rome and the American one at the beginning of Calvin Coolidge’s presidency.

Imaging, picturing, and fixing: The Role of Photography in Louise DeSalvo’s Writing

Lilia Di Pierro

This essay focuses on the way the Italian American writer Louise DeSalvo employs photographs in her *memoirs* to interpret and to make visible the thoughts and the experiences of the women of her family. Moreover, this study aims to analyze not only the way photographs are necessary for DeSalvo to rebuild her family history, but also, it points out the specific features of DeSalvo’s writing style, which is characterized by the frequent interaction with the photographic qualities of picturing and fixing subjects into certain frames. In the end, this essay will offer a description of how DeSalvo’s choice to avoid being blindly devoted to the principles of loyalty and silence shared by her family and by the Italian American community unveils the most hidden details of her household through pictures and personal effects belonging to her grandmother, her mother, and her sister.

Wandering and Vulnerability in Willy Vlautin's Fiction

Andrea Pitozzi

Inspired by the debate around notions such as *elsewhere* and *dislocation* in contemporary American post-western literature, this essay explores the interconnection between errancy and vulnerability as central themes in Willy Vlautin's fiction. Focusing on works like *The Motel Life* (2006), *Northline* (2008), and *The Night Always Comes* (2021), the analysis highlights how Vlautin's characters deal with economic and personal crises, while attempting to confront their marginal and vulnerable conditions. These stories articulate a renewed form of nomadism and alternative modes of dwelling, where errancy and dispossession emerge as forms of resistance to the pervasive effects of unregulated neoliberalism. In this context, Vlautin presents vulnerability not as passivity or resignation, but as a viable counterpoint to a diffused rhetoric of success and resilience, offering a critique of the ideological bases of contemporary American west.

I'll never forgive you if you stay: Forgiveness in Dragonfish and Vietnamerica

Pasquale Concilio

This article analyzes the theme of *forgiveness* in two prominent works of Vietnamese American literature: the graphic novel *Vietnamerica* (2010) by GB Tran, and the crime fiction *Dragonfish* (2016) by Vu Tran. Bearing in mind the theories of philosophers Charles Griswold and Jacques Derrida, forgiveness is here intended as a narrative tool that shapes and sustains the architecture of the two novels and frames a contemporary approach to the ghosts of the Vietnam War, in the view of two authors who gather their war stories mainly from their relatives' tales. Vu Tran and GB Tran belong, in fact, to the Vietnamese 1.5 Generation and Second Generation respectively. Engaging with a theme so deeply intertwined with postmemory allows the two authors to perform their own historical, stylistic, and emotional elaboration of the collective trauma that has characterized the lives of Vietnamese refugees in America.

Beyond the Supreme Court: Felix Frankfurter and the Construction of Transatlantic Elites

Emanuele Monaco

The essay explores the multifaceted legacy of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter (1882–1965), not only for his controversial judicial philosophy of *judicial restraint* but also for his influential role as a transatlantic power broker. While recent historiography debates his shift from progressive activism to conservative jurisprudence, this contribution highlights Frankfurter's informal networks and behind-the-scenes diplomacy, particularly his collaboration with Jean Monnet during WWII. Through these connections, Frankfurter played a pivotal role in shaping U.S. foreign policy and laying the groundwork for the postwar Atlantic alliance. The essay argues that Frankfurter's most enduring legacy may lie not in his court opinions, but in his strategic cultivation of elite networks that bridged law, politics, and international relations.

The Breakdown of Literary Models in Elena Ferrante's *L'amica geniale* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

Gloria Pastorino

In accordance with Simone De Beauvoir's thought that one is not born but becomes a woman, Lila and Lenù's story in Elena Ferrante's saga *My Brilliant Friend* (2011) offers a gendered idea of *Bildungsroman*, on the margins of post-World War II Naples, quite similar to that of pre-World-War II Ohio in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970). While some critics have found similarities between Lila's defiance of patriarchal society and Sula's (from Morrison's eponymous 1973 novel), it is the depiction of the marginalization from mainstream culture and privileges of Pecola Breedlove and the MacTeer sisters and the incomprehension of the world and logic of adults that bear striking resemblances to Lila and Lenù's story. Ferrante's concept of "smarginatura" can be found in the structure of Morrison's novel that dismantles the middle-class blissful existence offered by *Dick and Jane* basal readers, totally incongruous with the reality of black protagonists. In both novels, archetypal literary models are dismantled to illustrate a reality that cannot fit in them.