

WALDEMAR ZACHARASIEWICZ & DAVID STAINES

Introduction

The conference on which this volume is based was convened in October 2013 by the committee “The North Atlantic Triangle” of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. It had been founded out of an awareness that the ties across the North Atlantic between Europe and the USA and Canada have been so close and the demographic links - through the movement of millions of people as immigrants since the early nineteenth century and of hundreds of thousands as tourists in both directions in the last century - that this interconnection deserved close scholarly consideration. Above all the cultural, scientific and scholarly exchange has been so intense and the shared democratic values in the past – especially in the critical decades after World War II – so crucially important for Europe that an analysis (and ensuing synthesis) of this remarkable interdependence, which despite significant scholarly work has not been exhaustively investigated, merits further investigation. The transatlantic relationship continues to be a significant aspect of global reality, and despite some phases of seemingly increasing distance and temporary differences in attitudes to some major problems recent global developments and challenges have invigorated this connection. But an analysis is also needed as there are nevertheless significant differences in outlook between the USA, Canada and Europe which a study from an interdisciplinary perspective can bring out.

This goal is to be achieved through the collaboration of experts from several disciplines, ranging from literary studies, especially in Anglophone and francophone literatures, to history, from philosophy and sociology to the history of medicine and of music, and art history. This collection reflects this joint (interdisciplinary) endeavor to deepen the understanding of the basically different societies on opposite sides of the North Atlantic through the analysis of representative examples illustrating the long-standing contacts across the Atlantic and of the often fruitful relations resulting from such cross-cultural encounters. As the title of the collection indicates, the focus will be on narratives which bring out the specific nature and consequences of such contacts and the resulting / ensuing reciprocal perception of the societies on the other continent.

Like the conference the volume approaches this goal by arranging the analyses in clusters, which broadly follow in diachronic sequence, opening with a cluster of such transatlantic encounters in the nineteenth century.

Taking its departure from a series of contemporary paintings by native artist Robert Houle depicting the fateful ‘contact zone’ between the indigenous

and the European populations in North America, the essay by Birgit Däwes, which opens the first cluster of essays on nineteenth century cross-Atlantic travelers, studies mid-nineteenth century observations and travel reports of three Anishinaabe Methodist ministers in the European ‘contact zone’ they visited. These travelers from a nation living on both sides of the USA- Canada border may occasionally plead for economic and political support, but even more so they expose the shortcomings of European societies and the imperialist policies perceived as they reverse the “ethnographic gaze”.

Members of Victorian society are shown to have moved in the opposite direction across the Atlantic and to have been shaped by their encounter with indigenous people in Heinz Antor’s analysis of a historical novel by the Canadian novelist Guy Vanderhaeghe. *The Last Crossing*, the second novel of a trilogy, offers the narrative of the search for a brother in the Canadian West, who by becoming a missionary tried to escape his authoritarian Victorian father. In his attempt to convert the First Nations he was himself reshaped by the lifestyle of the indigenous as his brothers discover to their amazement. Antor carefully studies the character traits of the protagonists and the consequences of intercultural encounters between Europeans and First Nations rendered in multiple perspective seen from different angles.

In his essay Wynfrid Kriegleder compares the strikingly different narratives of three emigrants from German-speaking parts of Europe who spent parts of their lives in nineteenth century America, and he neatly distinguishes between the images of the transatlantic world they presented in their fiction; two of the three, also in autobiographies they produced after their return to Europe. Charles Sealsfield, who had abandoned his clerical vocation and lived under an alias in the Deep South before settling incognito in Switzerland, is shown to have adopted the mask of a well-informed native of America appreciative of the utopian potential of the frontier world in a series of novels underlining the differences between the Old World and the USA, while Frederic Strubberg offers fanciful adventure stories in the West, aggrandizing his own role in the management of settlements in Texas, which appears as merely a stage for his imagined feats. Heinrich Boernstein (in his turn) is presented as a very versatile theatre manager and effective journalist, first in Austria, then in Paris, and eventually in St. Louis, before his consular role in Bremen, conferred on him by Abraham Lincoln uproots him, thus costing him his political influence, and compelling him to return to Austria for theatrical work, while allowing him to reminisce about his cosmopolitan experiences and encounters in a globalized world, in which he had discovered sameness.

In his essay on “The Cosmopolitan Vision of LaFarge” Charles H. Adams surveys the early work of the immensely versatile artist John LaFarge and relates it to his transatlantic and then global encounters. Adams shows how La Farge as a painter of landscapes and masterful stained glass artist greatly impressed and at times also perplexed his American audience, after having been inspired by French *plein-air* paintings of the Barbizon School and the scientific study of color and optics in France. Both influences shaped his fine artistic sensibility, deeply admired by his friends, such as the James brothers and Henry Adams, for two years his travel companion, and helped generate his original canvases and a puzzling self-portrait before he integrated a whole range of other artistic forms and excelled as a decorative artist.

Carmen Birkle’s essay “Capitals of Medicine” opens a second cluster of articles dedicated to the transatlantic movement of practitioners of medicine from North America to the more advanced medical schools and hospitals of Europe, in Paris, Zurich, and especially Vienna. After referring to the benefit hundreds of American doctors like O.W. Holmes Sr derived from attending lectures at the Sorbonne and studying at French medical institutions (led by Pierre Louis and later Louis Pasteur), the essay focuses on the many obstacles to women’s entering the medical profession. It cites extensively from strong statements by opponents of higher education for women on both sides of the Atlantic, which accounts for the motivation of North American women to get the training from which they were barred at home in Zurich, which pioneered in the 1860s by admitting women as students of the medical profession. Birkle then traces in some detail the careers of four North American medical women, Elizabeth Blackwell, who pioneered as the chair of “Hygiene” in the Women’s Medical College of New York, Mary Putnam Jacobi, later at the same institution, the Canadian Maude E. Abbott, who later established herself at McGill, and – until her untimely death – the extremely promising young physician Susan Dimock.

In his essay “Exploring Vienna between the two World Wars,” Franz Lackner offers a broad survey of the close transatlantic ties involving members of the medical profession, and provides both eyewitness accounts and photographs of cohorts of the American Medical Association of Vienna. Sketching stages in the history of the AMA of Vienna from its foundation in 1904, Lackner lists prominent North American doctors who appreciated the progress in diagnosis and therapy of the renowned Vienna Medical School. He augments his essay with the observations in Vienna of the young doctor D.P. Abbott and his mother from Chicago, on the eve of World War One, and later cites the testimony of Alexander Mahan, who witnessed the recurrent crises in the Austrian Republic. The society’s notices in the journal *Ars Medici* furnish

evidence of the close social links between American doctors and diplomats and politicians at the well-attended Christmas parties. Lackner also explores the ties between AMA and the Austro-American Institute, which promoted transatlantic cooperation and interaction, and dwells on the professional benefits the prominent poet William Carlos Williams derived from his 1924 attendance at specialist courses, especially those offered by the prominent pediatrician von Pirquet, but also on his literary response to his exposure to the cultural sites of Vienna, including the art museums. One and a half decades later the program offered by AMA ended as a consequence of the *Anschluss* and the expulsion of many distinguished members of the Medical Faculty of Vienna.

While Waldemar Zacharasiewicz revisits the issue of the encounter of medical practitioners with Vienna as exemplified by W. C. Williams' fictionalization of his professional stay "on the banks of the Danube" in tune with current stereotypes of the region, the focus in his article is on the impressions of other American writers, who rendered them in autobiographical texts, highlighting the unique musical culture of the city as well as its cafés (J. P. Bishop, Louis Untermeyer, Ludwig Lewisohn, Joseph Hergesheimer). The article deals especially with the role of the dozen or so foreign correspondents frequenting these favorite venues, who used the city as a suitable point from which to observe social and political problems in Central and Southeastern Europe, which they mediated to their readership in a large number of American newspapers. They also did this in popular non-fiction texts and novels (e.g. John Gunther and, perhaps merely on the basis of these accounts, Joseph Freeman), not eschewing glib generalizations. Significant for the future were the ties of friendship which they developed with locals (cf. Dorothy Thompson and Eugenia Schwarzwald) and which helped some of the emigrés to find a safe haven in North America after the catastrophe of the *Anschluss*.

The transatlantic experiences and links in those decades are the topic in another cluster of articles. In her essay on the distinguished legal scholar Josef Redlich, Doris Corradini chronicles the frequent journeys to the USA in the remarkable career of this prominent Austrian constitutional lawyer and scholar in administrative law. On the basis of his recently published diaries and of his correspondence, Corradini traces the development of his ties to US American academics and politicians, which secured for him not only international recognition as an expert in the field of public law, but also, for the better part of a decade from 1926 onwards, a professorial position at Harvard. The essay also takes note of Redlich's role as a deputy in the *Reichsrat*, and his brief stints as Minister of Finance in the final months of the Habsburg Monarchy,

and again briefly in 1931 for the small Austrian Republic in a critical economic phase. The essay also highlights Redlich's role as an intermediary who assisted the Austrian government in its effort to receive loans to stabilize the currency, and traces the unique role played by this remarkable scholar, and sometime public official, to his earlier pre-war contacts with British and North American scholars in his areas of expertise.

In his essay on Rupert Brooke's *Letters from America* Martin Löschnigg provides vivid sketches of the response of the young poet on the eve of the Great War – in commissioned articles and in his private correspondence – to the urban and rural settings he visited during the roughly eight months he spent in the USA and Canada. The essay highlights the often supercilious comments of the young Cambridge don, proud of his Englishness, on the alleged absence of cultural traditions and on materialism especially in Canada, and illustrates his interest in raw and 'desolate' nature as well as revealing his failure to acknowledge the ties of aboriginal peoples to the seemingly empty land.

In his analysis of the responses of three prominent European scholars and scientists, two German economists, and the prominent Dutch historian John Huizinga, to their experiences in the USA, Manfred Prisching offers abundant evidence for the fascination of these travelers with the dynamic developments in American society in the boom years of the 1920s. He also illustrates in comparative fashion the ambivalence in their reactions to puzzling phenomena, as they registered not only the spirit of optimism and reform in the economy, and belief in unlimited progress and perfectibility, but also showed skepticism when faced with the apparent destruction of the past, and the consequences of unfettered capitalism. They were perplexed by the tendency to promote consumption, a seeming paradox in view of the puritanical origins of this wealthy, future-oriented society.

A further cluster of essays presents the significance for and impact of European contacts on prominent American intellectuals and social critics.

On the basis of his recent edition of a selection from the extensive correspondence of Malcolm Cowley, Hans Bak provides a survey of the life-long preoccupations of this important mediator between the continents across the North Atlantic. Highlighting the formative influence of two years spent in France, first in Montpellier and then in Paris, Bak traces the development and the shifts in Cowley's appreciation of French poets and fiction writers from his early admiration of Laforgue and the symbolists, and especially for Paul Valéry, through his interest in the Dadaists, especially Aragon, to the radical phase in the 1930s when Cowley turned away from the symbolist "religion of art", embracing leftist attitudes, which are all mirrored in his attitude to

individual French writers. The essay documents the indefatigable efforts of the author of countless reviews and excellent translations of French poems and essays from 1924 onwards, and establishes the unique importance of this minor poet, literary critic, reviewer, and translator as a champion and mediator of French literature to a sophisticated North American readership.

Drawing on his thorough familiarity with the Max Eastman manuscripts in Bloomington, which will form the basis for a biography of the prominent political activist, writer, and hedonist, Christoph Irmscher sketches a narrative of the delayed encounter of Max Eastman in 1927 with Freud, his admired ‘father confessor’ in Berggasse 19. Irmscher explores the tensions between the prominent socialist and popularizer of Freudian concepts in America, in whose private life psychoanalytic techniques seem to have served as a justification for his inability to keep intimate relationships intact, legitimizing his own powerful libidinal impulses, and documents the deliberate distance Freud seems to have kept in his letters to his admirer from America, which Freud skeptically termed a “mistake”. The detailed analysis of this remarkable encounter is enriched by reproductions of Freud’s brief letters to his American admirer.

Robert Brinkmeyer in his essay on “Lillian Hellman and European Fascism” underlines the impact of Hellman’s visit to Spain during the Civil War in 1937, which intensified her political commitment and strengthened her awareness of parallels between the violent racism in the American South and European fascism. He highlights her sense of the social injustice in the South she was to expose in plays like *The Little Foxes* and *Another Part of the Forest*, and, drawing on her autobiographical writings despite their notorious unreliability, underlines her criticism of those who watch the destructive forces at work in society as non-committed observers, whom she castigates in *The Searching Wind*, while showing decisive action against the supporters of fascism (for instance in *Watch on the Rhine*).

As in travelogues by other leftist American visitors to the Soviet Union in the 1930s, a plea for understanding the political project there and the reforms on the margins of that empire is contained in the notebooks, correspondence and public lectures of the influential American glaciologist William O. Field based on his observations during several expeditions to a region in the central Caucasus. In the essay by Tim Youngs, Field’s ambivalence in his assessment of the transformation of the society in Swanetia in Georgia with its archaic customs is, however, acknowledged.

The essay by Don Sparling, which inaugurates a group of essays related to the transatlantic links between Canada and Europe, relates Ernest Thompson Seton’s impact on Czech society to the general growth and rise/of youth

culture to which he prominently contributed. Sparling offers an account of the rivalry of Seton's "Woodcraft Indians" with Baden-Powell's "Boy Scouts" and numerous others offshoots, and focuses on the remarkable effect he had, culminating in the keen attention his visit to Czechoslovakia in 1936 received. Sparling also takes into account the ongoing popularity in the Czech Republic of Seton's pronouncements reflecting his holistic vision of nature.

In his essay "Mavis Gallant and Mordecai Richler: Abroad and at Home," David Staines surveys and contrasts the careers of two major writers from Canada, who stayed abroad during long periods of expatriation caused by their frustration with the stagnant character of Canadian literary life before its dramatic efflorescence. The essay also juxtaposes the concerns of the cosmopolitan writer of short fiction permanently settled in Paris and those of the Jewish-Canadian author, primarily of novels, who returned to Canada and, apart from apprenticeship work reflecting his temporary sojourn in Spain, continued exploring the intricate ethical problems of members of his own ethnic and cultural group, and those burdened by a history of racist guilt as perpetrators or victims. This collective experience is also shown to haunt many characters in Mavis Gallant's stories set in Germany, who are often exiles from their homeland and especially of themselves.

Based on her research for the commissioned biography of Timothy Findley, Sherrill Grace establishes the crucial importance for the writer's creativity of his sojourn as a young actor in London and his two visits to Berlin in the 1950s. The detailed study of his diaries and private letters reveals (not only Findley's frustrations in getting only minor theatrical parts but) the formative impressions of three years in London, filled with intensive reading and exposure to the musical scene, and his confrontation with the destruction evident in the rubble in postwar Berlin. These experiences engendered his concept of memory and the (urgent) need to avoid forgetting, preoccupations which were to shape the fiction of this sensitive observer, earlier marginalized in a family focused on male roles, and strengthened his pacifist leanings.

Taking its departure from a broad consideration of the general issue of typicality and individuality in the late nineteenth century fiction of "moral realists" like Henry James, and of immigrant memoirs and fiction (for instance, by Mary Antin) aiming at a "national American" narrative, Kasia Boddy approaches Lore Segal's work by considering the stages in her partial integration in American society as reflected in her memoirs and in the semi-autobiographical characters of her fiction. She argues that in Segal's later stories the tension between voluntary affiliation and the dominant individualistic strain in American society is still mirrored as it was in her thinly veiled autobiographical novel *Her First American*. This progress is marked by

the extent of the cultural space covered by the return of Ilka Weissnix, who resurfaces as Ilka Weisz, decades after her first confrontation with an alien society.

While the majority of contributions focus on the links and contacts between Anglophone North Americans with European individuals and / or groups, a final cluster of essays is devoted to the study of transatlantic voyages undertaken by francophone authors from Canada, as well as the impact they had on significant parts of the European public.

In the first of four essays written in French on the literatures of Canada, Peter Klaus takes a serious look at two remarkable writers, Edmond de Nevers (1862-1906) and Marguerite Andersen (b. 1924). The former, a twenty-six-year-old Quebec journalist, wrote detailed “Letters from Berlin,” sobering reflections on the Germany of his time, which appeared in *La Presse* between July 1888 and March 1891. The latter, a novelist, essayist, and leading authority on Franco-Ontarion writing, born in Germany and now Toronto-based, has been richly honored by Canada for her contributions to the literary and cultural life of Canada.

In “Les figures de l’absence: migration et maternité dans *L’Empreinte de l’ange* (1998) et *Reflets dans un oeil d’homme* (2012) de Nancy Huston,” Jörg Türschmann explores these two major works from the prolific author, one a major novel *The Mark of the Angel*, the other her essay, *Reflections in a Man’s Eye*. Writing about the relationship of motherhood and migration in her work, he studies the multidimensional fabric of her intricate writings. “Writing non-fiction,” comments Huston, “is more compatible with motherhood (because both are avowedly and as it were intrinsically ethical activities) than writing fiction.” And Huston maintains a personal stance in her non-fictional essays while she employs her novel’s plot to work out her layered themes.

Fritz Peter Kirsch explores the 2010 novel, *L’Âme du Minotaure*, by the young francophone Quebec writer, Dominique Audet. In this love story set in Germany, occupied Czechoslovakia, and Switzerland in the last years of World War II, the main characters observed by the narrator and expressing themselves alternatively in the first person are Reinhard Heydrich, Holocaust-instigator, called the “Butcher of Prague” and considered a monster by other members of the Nazi elite, and Katharina Lindemann, a secretary working for the SS who is unaware of the crimes committed by the regime and her lover. An attempt to make peace, a long time after the Quiet Revolution, with Quebec’s Catholic heritage, the novel fills a double gap in the history of Quebec literature: on the one hand, embracing central Europe in its most horrifying experiences, and, on the other hand, doing this by means of the

relationship with Christian spirituality as a controversial element of Quebec culture.

One of the more perceptive commentators on Huston's writing, Ursula Mathis-Moser studies the critical reception of Quebec and her authors in "Des illustres invisibles': À propos de la réception du Québec et de ses auteurs dans les médias imprimés germanophones (1960-2013)." Citing Peter Klaus's 1995 major article on the reception of Quebec in Germanic countries, she examines the growing interest there in Quebec and its writers. Basing her close analysis on a body of 900 articles which appeared in Germanic newspapers, she concludes that, as opposed to the 1960s and 1970s when there was little or no interest in Quebec, now there is discernible and discriminating commentary on the Quebec scene.

The sequence of essays on various kinds of encounters on both sides of the Atlantic concludes with Aritha van Herk's "A Bridge to Trieste," a meditative account of the journey undertaken by the North American writer. Van Herk reflects on the multiple bridges, literary and imaginary, which literary seekers from North America cross when encountering "the European." The encounter is epitomized by the penumbra of a city like Trieste, its multiplicitous history of having been part of many empires arguing a cultural genealogy. In exploring the triangulation of writing and its concomitant place-source, her essay uncovers a new perspective on the imprimatur of place within literature, seeking to understand cultural genealogy, to access sites of inspiration, and to re-visit already-delineated literary connections.

