

Leo Ferrero

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For Leo Ferrero, a talented young playwright, poet, and cultural critic with a promising career before him, just getting out of fascist Italy in 1927 seemed impossible. Fearing the antifascism expressed by his internationally famous father, the historian Guglielmo Ferrero, Mussolini's government denied passports to Leo's family. At the same time, its surveillance of this family intensified, with 36 policemen surrounding their home and following their every move. Finally, after a tense confrontation with authorities, Guglielmo Ferrero was able to get passports for his two children – Leo, then 24, and Nina, 17. When his family accompanied Leo to the border, they were followed by squads of policemen that changed in each city they passed through – almost, his mother wrote with bitter sarcasm, «a royal guard»¹. By 1928 Leo's life in Italy had ended and he had begun a new one – as an antifascist writer in exile.

A famous family, a precocious child, and a promising career

Leo Ferrero Lombroso (as he sometimes called himself to recognize both his family legacies) was born in Turin on 16 October 1903. His grandfather, Cesare Lombroso, was a Jewish physician who became world famous for his studies of what was then called criminal anthropology. Leo's mother, Gina Lombroso, co-wrote some of her father's studies while also publishing her own books analyzing social conditions and opposing industrialization. Her first book, *The Soul of Woman*, was translated into 12 languages. Among the many writings by Leo's father, the historian Guglielmo Ferrero, was a five-volume history of ancient Rome that emphasized what the past suggested about the present. It became a world-wide best-seller. Although never given

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¹ Leo Ferrero, *Diario di un privilegiato sotto il fascismo*, Firenze, Passigli, 1993, p. 176.

an academic position in Italy, he was invited to lecture in universities in France, Switzerland, Argentina, Brazil, and the United States. A passionate defender of political liberalism, Ferrero's newspaper columns were syndicated internationally. As a result, Leo grew up as the privileged son of intellectual celebrities who counted among their friends the American president Theodore Roosevelt, King Albert of Belgium, French philosopher Paul Valéry, Spanish guitarist Andrés Segovia, and many other writers, artists, politicians, and social thinkers.

Leo's early life itself suggested a kind of contemporary social science experiment, since his mother kept a «baby book» (which she later published) documenting the development of her obviously gifted son from the day of his birth. By age 7, Leo was writing poetry, by 12 his first novel, and by 14 his first comedy. When Leo was 13, his family left Turin for a townhouse in Florence, spending summers in their Tuscan estate called Ulivello, which Leo adored. In both they hosted international salons in which the precocious young Leo often participated. Among their Florentine friends were Gaetano Salvemini, a professor of history and a member of Italy's Parliament, and Amelia Rosselli, a successful playwright. Like the Lombrosos, the Rossellis were an assimilated Jewish family and Amelia's sons Nello and Carlo, 3 and 4 years older than Leo, became his lifelong friends².

Following the examples of his grandfather, father, and mother, Leo too hoped to write for an international audience – in his case, as a producer and critic of the arts. A voracious reader fluent in Italian, French and English, he loved history, philosophy, and theology as well as art and literature. «His father's library was his kingdom», Nello Rosselli explained. «When Leo encountered Homer or the Bible or Dante or Shakespeare, treasures covered in scholarly dust, he spoke about them with so much warmth and made

² Gina Lombroso, *Lo sboccio di una vita. Note su Leo Ferrero Lombroso dalla nascita ai venti anni*, Turin, Carlo Frassinelli, 1935; Nina Ferrero Raditza, *Gli anni di Leo*, in Leo Ferrero, *Il muro trasparente. Scritti di poesia, di prosa e di teatro*, ed. by Manuela Scotti, Milan, Libri Scheiwiller, 1984, pp. 9-17. An outstanding biography of Leo is Anne Kornfield, *La Figura e l'opera di Leo Ferrero*, Povegliano Veronese, Gutenberg, 1993.

them his own with so much naive freshness that you would have thought he had discovered them». He wanted «no intermediary» and had little interest in «the pseudo-culture of the schools», Rosselli added. And he was especially fascinated by avant-garde writers and playwrights³.

When Leo was 12, he joined 15-year-old Jean Luchaire as leaders of the Lega latina della gioventù, sponsored by Florence's Istituto francese (where their fathers, Guglielmo Ferrero and Julien Luchaire, were active). Its goal was to promote Italian-French collaboration, and that year Leo published his first two articles in «Les Jeunes Auteurs», its monthly review. By age 16, he was writing for Italian and French periodicals⁴. By 19, he had co-authored a history book with his father called *La palingenesi di Roma antica (da Livio a Machiavelli)* [The Palingenesis of Ancient Rome (from Livio to Machiavelli)] while also publishing two plays. Extremely sensitive, passionate, and usually joyful but also prone to depression, much of Leo's writing focused on inner lives (including his own) in a style that Nello Rosselli described as «melancholy lyricism»⁵. By 1924 his career had begun to flourish when one of his plays was successfully staged in Rome. As a result, he was invited to join the group of playwrights led by the famous modernist Luigi Pirandello, becoming at the age of 20 its youngest member.

A «privilegiato» under Fascism

The lives of these intellectuals would change dramatically, however, in the years after Mussolini came to power. By 1924 Guglielmo Ferrero had publicly denounced fascism – and drawn increasing government scrutiny to his activities. That year Leo wrote three articles on theatre for «Il Baretto», an arts and culture journal started by his Turinese friend Piero Gobetti, a young

³ Nello Rosselli, *Una giovinezza stroncata: Leo Ferrero*, «Nuova rivista storica», 17, 1933, p. 546.

⁴ Leo's lifelong involvement with French culture is documented in Cristina Trincherio, *Leo Ferrero, «torinese di Parigi». Un intellettuale tra Italia e Francia in età fascista*, Fano, Aras edizioni, 2020.

⁵ N. Rosselli, *Una giovinezza stroncata*, cit., p. 549.

liberal antifascist. Yet with each year came more violence. In 1925 Salvemini was arrested, and Leo and his mother attended his trial. They barely escaped unharmed when violent gangs attacked the courthouse. Although acquitted, Salvemini had to flee Italy. In Turin, Gobetti was severely beaten and his publishing office destroyed; although he fled to France he died from his injuries the following year at the age of 25⁶. In September 1925 Leo was drafted and served with an Alpine unit; fortunately, his mother wrote, that kept him away from Florence that fall when more antifascists were brutally murdered.

During these years Leo deepened his interests in theology. In 1926 he joined Alberto Carocci, Eugenio Montale, his neighbor Raffaello Franchi, and other writers in starting a new journal. Called «Solaria», a name they invented for an imaginary city of sun [*sole*], air [*aire*], and loneliness [*solitario*], its goal was to explore «art and ideas about art»⁷. Contributing to its first volume, Leo published *Abbandono: preghiera alla Vergine* [Abandonment: Prayer to the Virgin], a poem that captured his haunting fear that he was doomed to die young. While «I don't believe in you», this poet from a half-Catholic, half-Jewish family tells the Virgin in its lines, «I so love the grace with which you anoint our pains with your pity that imagining you in the evening consoles me». In its first verse Leo, then 22, voiced his despair:

Virgin, I pray to you, sick and tired,
because invading me, along with the shadows,
is the terror of disappearing, as the day dies,
without having written my dreams on paper⁸.

Yet with his family under ever-tightening surveillance, Leo's chances for a writing career in Italy were increasingly blocked. In response, he turned

⁶ Gina Lombroso, *Prodromi al Diario*, in L. Ferrero, *Diario di un privilegiato*, cit., pp. 25-44; see C. Trincherio, *Leo Ferrero, «torinese di Parigi»*, cit., pp. 65-69.

⁷ Riccardo Monti (ed.), *Solaria ed oltre*, Florence, Passigli, 1985, p. 27.

⁸ Leo Ferrero, *Abbandono: Preghiera alla Vergine*, «Solaria», 1 June 1926, p. 8. This poem was written three years earlier, according to Gina Lombroso who included it in *La catena degli anni. Poesie e pensieri fra i venti e ventinove anni*, Lugano-Geneva, Nuove edizioni di Capolago, 1939, p. 39, but Leo published it in *Solaria's* first volume.

inward. «I can begin a diary», he wrote on 7 October 1926 – not to record his «melancholy» but to express his «manhood». Here too he recorded his fear of dying young. «After all, who knows?» its first entry concluded. «Destiny perhaps reserves for certain men the dismal and harrowing privilege of always remaining young»⁹.

Captured in Leo's diary was his life under fascism, as well as his efforts to understand its perpetrators, collaborators, and victims. Also recorded were his father's angry and largely futile attempts to assert his rights at a time when police powers were expanding, violence increasing, and spies so numerous that even speaking Mussolini's name at home was dangerous. (The Ferreros used the code word «Bal» for Mussolini and «balismo» for fascism)¹⁰. With «respect to fascism», Gina Lombroso explained, this family was still «among the privileged» largely because most of their assets came from books or articles published outside Italy, which were harder for the government to control. Even so, they lived in fear of being attacked at home or arrested at any moment because, as Leo explained to a friend, someone had warned them that «the servant, the cook, the daughter of the servant, the friend of the daughter of the servant, the maid, the friend of the maid, [the neighbor] Franchi's maid», or «the daughter, sister or friend of Franchi's maid» had been «paid by the police to discover 'our plots'»¹¹.

When his father threatened to fire their cook of 20 years for spying, Leo recorded her response verbatim in his diary: «Let God strike me dead this instant if I say anything bad or tell a lie!» «Poor thing, she is a good woman», Leo wrote. «Impossible to make her understand» that «to tell the police the names of the friends that come to the house or telephone is 'being a spy' and damaging us». «To be a spy,» he now recognized, was «not very different

⁹ L. Ferrero, *Diario di un privilegiato*, cit., 7 October 1926, p. 49.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, fn. p. 76. In the Old Testament «Ba'al» is a term used to describe a false God, and in Christianity it is associated with the devil or Satan.

¹¹ Letter from Leo Ferrero to Pierre Jeanneret, n.d., reprinted in L. Ferrero, *Diario di un privilegiato*, cit., p. 48.

from gossiping», only this form of gossip «confers more prestige»¹².

Why, Leo wondered in his diary, was fascism so successful? Why were so many Italians susceptible to its techniques? Why were foreign visitors and journalists so easily fooled? Seeking his own answers, he focused on the psychological and social mechanisms that kept this regime in power. According to Leo, fascism was a «regime of force» that had found new ways to combine intimidation with corruption, and that depended on «that special attitude towards violence, immorality, sadism, and oppression typically found in the worst part of humanity». «For these fascism truly represents 'paradise'», he proposed, «and the fascination that the fascist exerts in the world make us believe that these are the majority!» Yet there were actually two groups sustaining this regime. While the first included those with «no principle, ideal, or aspiration, other than staying in power» and willingly used violence to do so, the second included «foolish conservatives (more numerous than one would think)» who argued that fascism could «defend Italy from bolshevism» or «hold high the name of Italy». To these, Mussolini was a wise leader who should never be questioned. The central feature of this new society, Leo concluded, was the lie. Lying was now evident everywhere – in Mussolini's speeches, in comments from Italian politicians who feigned ignorance about what was happening all around them, even in their mailman's insistence that their letters were not being opened. «In a regime of dictatorship», Leo recorded, «the lie is the first and most urgent duty of the citizen and the official»¹³.

Also included in Leo's diary were brief sketches for future writings, both tragic and comic. One, for instance, would center on a woman whose husband was assassinated by the government. She wants to identify his killers but is being pressured against this. «The first chapter would be the political assassination», Leo proposed, and the last «the trial in which all the

¹² Ibid., 17 November 1926, p. 56.

¹³ Ibid., 7 August 1927, and 13 November 1926, pp. 131-132, 53.

accused are acquitted». Around such a nucleus, he wrote, one could see «much of the world!» In another, two men are criticizing a tyrant. The first, apparently a policeman, tries to arrest the second – but the second is also a policeman who wants to arrest him first. After realizing this, they begin criticizing the tyrant in earnest. But then a third man (also a policeman) overhears them and wants to arrest them both – until they explain that each was just testing the other¹⁴.

In November 1927, Leo earned his degree in art history from the University of Florence by writing a thesis analyzing Leonardo da Vinci's ideas about art and beauty¹⁵. Yet his sense of despair was deepening as his family faced virtual confinement. Earlier that year, when his father had tried to leave for a lecture tour in the US, he was denied a passport. Once the American press reported this, the surveillance on Leo's family intensified, with dozens of policemen surrounding their home and entering their garden. His father's wisdom, Leo wrote, had become «an instrument that no longer serves him, a key when the lock had been changed». Yet adjusting to this new world was taking a psychological toll. «One feels around us only hatred, vanity, ignorance, envy, bad faith, lies, distrust, fear, ferocity, but above all an immense, dull, ostentatious, triumphant, prevailing stupidity», Leo wrote. «It is terrible to live in this atmosphere and never be able to rectify it»¹⁶. Throughout 1927, Leo suffered increasing isolation, with his movements monitored, his mail opened, and his efforts to publish his writing largely blocked. To survive mentally, Leo decided, he would have to get out of Italy. His parents agreed, and his father once again forcefully challenged government officials demanding passports for his children – this time successfully.

¹⁴ Ibid., 12 December 1927, pp. 172-173.

¹⁵ See L. Ferrero, *Leonardo o dell'arte*. Turin, Buratti, 1929; translated as *Léonard de Vinci ou l'oeuvre d'art*, Paris, Kra, 1929.

¹⁶ N. Ferrero Raditza, *Gli anni di Leo*, cit. p. 15; L. Ferrero, *Diario di un privilegiato*, cit., pp. 147, 174-175.

London and Paris: a legal exile

In January 1928 Leo and Nina left together. They spent two busy weeks in Paris, where Leo met with authors, playwrights, family friends – and anyone with political influence who might help his parents get out of Italy. They then traveled to London, where Leo spent the next three months getting to know this city, improving his English, and again meeting with anyone who might prove influential. According to Nina, he wrote to his parents almost daily during this period since he knew they were isolated. Yet since their mail was read, he was extremely cautious and focused mainly on people he met, work he was doing, and differences he observed in comparing cultural life in Italy, France, and England. «It's curious», he noted in one letter, that in London «no one talks about his work afterwards. They work for *leisure*. In Italy, work invades man as a loving passion. Italians work with their minds even after the last term of office»¹⁷. It would be Paris, however, to which Leo would return later that year to start a new life as a writer in French. To his parents, he spoke about this move as a «marvelous adventure», but Nina saw her brother as traumatized. Writing to his friend Marion Stancioff, Leo admitted to feeling «crushed by a burden of sadness and bitterness that is truly far too heavy. I am a legal exile». he declared. «I left Italy with a passport but with a heart full of disgust and indignation for what is happening there [...]»¹⁸.

Restarting his career proved challenging emotionally. He could still write literary criticism, Leo reported, but not yet poetry, since that required him to feel «absolutely pure from every other thought [...] and I can no longer forget fascism: I think of it every minute of the day and even at night, when I dream». In the past, he had told himself that fascism had «not yet entered into the most profound part of my soul. Now it has», he confessed. «Now I

¹⁷ Leo Ferrero to his parents, 25 January 1928, in *Lettere europee. Le lettere familiari di Leo Ferrero dal 1919-1933*, ed. by Anne Kornfeld, Rome, Bulzoni, 1999 (hereafter cited as *Lettere*), p.91.

¹⁸ N. Ferrero Raditza, *Gli anni di Leo*, cit., p. 15; Leo Ferrero, letter to Marion Stancioff, 28 October 1928, quoted in Luisa Passerini, *Love and the Idea of Europe*, Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2009, p. 114.

am not alone and free in any part of myself»¹⁹. The public, Leo wrote in his journal, was as yet «indifferent to the great sufferings of today's exiles whom literature has not yet mentioned. Dictators are fully aware of this», he added, «for they always begin by eliminating from their countries the writers who might sit in impartial judgment on them, and by forcing those who can be bought to sing their praises».²⁰

Yet soon evident was the stark contrast between Leo's forced isolation in fascist Italy and his warm welcome into a Parisian world of writers, artists, and intellectuals. «Our parents' friends opened their homes to him», Nina explained. In 1929 Leo's thesis on Leonardo da Vinci was published in Italian and French. He was especially proud that both editions contained an introduction by the famous French philosopher Paul Valéry – a sign, Leo believed, that he belonged within this community. For the next four years his life was filled with cultural events, European travel, various love affairs, and lots of writing. His closest friendships, however, remained with other Italian antifascist exiles. And while he never joined their resistance organization, Giustizia e Libertà, he spent much of his time with its leaders in exile, Aldo Garosci and Carlo Rosselli²¹.

Leo also wrote dozens of pieces for «Solaria» that tried to counter Italy's intensifying nationalism by emphasizing an older European humanism. In one, entitled *Perché l'Italia abbia una letteratura europea* [For Italy to have a European literature], he argued that Italians should employ their own deep artistic traditions to help shape a broader European consciousness. That such an idea was now controversial, he noted, was itself «proof that we are no longer in Europe!»²² Yet even in France, he feared Italian spies. In 1930,

¹⁹ Leo Ferrero quoted in A. Kornfeld, *La figura e l'opera di Leo Ferrero*, cit., p. 104.

²⁰ Leo Ferrero, *Meditazioni sull'Italia. Letteratura e politica*, Lugano-Geneva, Nuove edizioni di Capolago, 1939, pp. 107-108.

²¹ N. Ferrero Raditza, *Gli anni di Leo*, cit., pp. 15-16. Aldo Garosci, *Ricordi d'un amico perduti e ritrovati*, in L. Ferrero, *Il muro trasparente*, cit., pp. 5-8.

²² Leo Ferrero, *Perché l'Italia abbia una letteratura europea*, «Solaria», 3, 1, January 1928, pp. 32-40; Leo Ferrero, letter to his parents, n.d. [January 1928], in *Lettere*, p. 88.

Leo's parents were finally allowed to leave Italy (after King Albert of Belgium and others intervened on their behalf). They resettled in Geneva, where their home again became a haven for antifascist intellectuals. Yet both his parents and Leo were now very wary of what they wrote or said in public. Surveying the state of Italian literature for the Argentine journal «Sur» in 1931, Leo's pessimism was evident. «Italian writers are, in general, poor and sad», he concluded; «unsure of their friends, at odds with many known enemies and many more unknown, they live among men in solitude»²³.

While in France, Leo tried to support himself without his family's help by writing for journals and newspapers. He hoped to sell a bigger project to an American magazine: interviewing the remaining kings of Europe to determine their attitudes towards democracy and dictatorship. Yet while he was able to interview King Albert of Belgium and King Carol II of Rumania – itself a testimony to the power of his family name – his magazine deal was rejected, and he remained financially dependent²⁴.

Leo also visited his parents in Geneva. His father, now studying how governments achieved legitimacy, had renewed his interests in the political and sociological ideas of Gaetano Mosca. Leo was apparently influenced as well, as seen in his next book, published in 1932. Called *Paris, dernier modèle de l'Occident*, it offered a loving tribute to the beauty and vitality of the city that had so generously embraced him. Central to Leo's text is a concept developed by Mosca and other Italian sociologists: the theory of «the elite». Paris had not only survived but thrived, Leo now argued, due to the efforts of its «elites», a group of intellectuals and artists (including its Enlightenment thinkers) who over time had articulated a set of principles and values now widely accepted by «the multitude». In his book Leo compared the relationships between «the elite» and «the multitude» in Italy, England, and

²³ Leo Ferrero, *El malestar de la literatura Italiana*, «Sur», 4, 1931, p. 118.

²⁴ C. Trincherò, *Leo Ferrero, «torinese di Parigi»*, cit., pp. 178-181. Leo tried to sell his series of interviews with kings to the American magazine «Cosmopolitan», but they rejected it. See L. Passerini, *Love and the Idea of Europe*, cit., p. 112.

France (which he clearly saw as the ideal). Equally clear, Leo saw himself as belonging to an intellectual and artistic «elite» whose role was to articulate humane and moral values, even when «the multitude» failed to appreciate them²⁵.

A play too dangerous to publish?

While in Paris, Leo also secretly wrote a satirical antifascist play called *Angelica*. He apparently began working on it in 1928, using scenes and themes sketched out in his diary of the previous year. Yet with his parents and other relatives still in Italy, he did not yet feel safe enough to publish it.

Although written in French and thoroughly modernist, Leo's play incorporated artistic traditions from Italy's past to address its present. Its central characters, Orlando and Angelica, evoked the hero and heroine of Ludovico Ariosto's 16th century epic poem *Orlando Furioso*, in which the Christian knight Orlando (known as Roland in French and English) falls hopelessly in love with the pagan Angelica, who rejects him for someone far less worthy. Surrounding them were the comic characters from Italy's 16th century *commedia dell'arte*, recreated in modern forms but still recognizable by hints in their costumes (Harlequin, for instance, now a sculptor, wore a waistcoat of red, yellow, and green triangles). In its first act, Orlando, an outsider, enters this «kingdom of masks» and meets Pantalone, who explains that an illegitimate «Regent» had assumed dictatorial powers and restored the *jus primae noctis* (the right of the lord to sleep with women before their wedding night). This law, Pantalone complains, now threatened his beautiful daughter, Angelica. Orlando, who is known to his friends as «the man who resists», decides to save Angelica from this unjust fate by organizing a rebellion²⁶.

²⁵ Carlo Lottieri, *Guglielmo Ferrero in Svizzera. Legittimità, libertà e potere*, Rome, Studium, 2015; Leo Ferrero, «*Paris dernier modèle de l'Occident*», Paris, Rieder, 1932.

²⁶ Leo Ferrero, *Angelica*, Florence, Fratelli Parenti, 1946.

Within this work, Leo's gentle irony is evident even in his stage directions. His play was to be set, he wrote, in a «piazza of an imaginary city, in which houses, trees, inhabitants, costumes, revolutions, and governments are a little simplified [...] The soldiers and the members of the crowd can be substituted by marionettes²⁷». Within its pages he wrote comic lines for characters like Pulcinella, now a member of Parliament (and, as always, an opportunist).

While Orlando succeeds in leading a rebellion that deposes the Regent, he finds governing more challenging, since he is opposed by those who prefer a more corrupt regime. Even Harlequin, the sculptor, is displeased because unlike the Regent, Orlando refuses to commission a statue of himself as a great hero. Also worrying is the unrepentant behavior of the now-deposed Regent, who has decided to run for office as head of a new «absolutist party» – and is again drawing listeners. Most disturbing is the response from Angelica, who wonders why Orlando felt compelled to rescue her. As she now informs him, she had long been attracted to the Regent, whom she found «witty, refined, elegant, cruel». And after all, «he was the Regent», she declares, «and I, like all women, adore power²⁸». In its final act Orlando, who represents justice and morality, is shot by Angelica and dies as a Christ-like figure. And while only a few around him understand or appreciate his values, after his death they're happy to commemorate him in a statue – so Harlequin gets his commission after all.

Writing this satire in the late 1920s, when fascist movements were gaining power and popularity across Europe, Leo evidently found it hard to envision how fascism could be defeated – even in fantasy. The most problematic issue, his play suggests, is not the lack of a viable military response but something much deeper: it is the seductive appeal of the arrogant, corrupt, powerful, and charismatic leader to the public, here represented by Angelica.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 130.

An invitation to America

In 1931, Leo's life took a surprising turn when he learned about a new fellowship opportunity. The Rockefeller Foundation was seeking an Italian candidate to join a unique American educational experiment. Called the «Seminar on the Impact of Culture on Personality», its goal was to bring at least a dozen social scientists, each representing a different European or Asian «contemporary culture», to Yale University for the 1932-33 school year. Working together, they would explore how distinct national cultures influenced different types of personalities. Leading this seminar would be Edward Sapir, an anthropologist at the forefront of the emerging interdisciplinary field called «culture and personality» studies. Seeking someone to represent «contemporary Italian culture», the Rockefeller Foundation turned to the economist Luigi Einaudi, who usually nominated its Italian fellowship recipients (and who was also a close friend of both Gina Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrero). He nominated Leo²⁹.

Yet even with this recommendation, Leo was a risky choice, the seminar's organizers argued. Unlike the other candidates, he was not a social scientist. (The only other Italian nominated for this fellowship was the antifascist Jewish psychologist Renata Calabresi, whom Leo knew; but since seminar organizers did not plan to include women, she was never seriously considered)³⁰. In accepting Leo, Rockefeller official Lawrence Frank convinced Sapir to «take a chance with him as a representative of Italian culture even though he may not be as professionally well qualified to contribute psychologically and anthropologically». Instead, Frank asked Leo to focus on how Italian literature, art, and aesthetics participated in «the formation of

²⁹ Regina Darnell, *Edward Sapir: Linguist, Anthropologist, Humanist*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989. Alessia Pedio, *On Luigi Einaudi's Advisory Collaboration with the Rockefeller Foundation (1926-1931)*, «Annals of the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi», 52, December 2018, pp. 247-300, esp. pp. 261-262, 284, 298-299.

³⁰ Letter from Tracy Kittredge to Lawrence Frank, 12 February 1932, in Rockefeller Archive Center, New York, R.G. 1.1 Projects, 200/S, b. 408, f. 4829.

personality patterns»³¹.

While Seminar organizers had their doubts about Leo, Leo was even more doubtful about this seminar. He had long been skeptical of academic life. And although his parents and sister had enjoyed their visits to the United States, a country Leo had yet to see, he had already developed a distaste for American culture. Such views were common among French intellectuals – especially as represented in the extremely popular 1930 travel account by Georges Duhamel called *Scènes de la vie future*. Published in English in 1931 as *America, the Menace*, it contrasted French artistry and individualism to American mass production, standardization, and soulless materialism – views that Leo shared³². Yet despite his reservations, Leo accepted this opportunity to see more of the world while also becoming more financially independent. Once the seminar ended, he decided, he would cross the Pacific and travel through Asia, where he could study Buddhism and Confucianism – subjects that had increasingly captured his attention – before returning to France.

Leo's doubts about the United States were confirmed when he began reading the books required for this seminar. He laughed when he read *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture* by Robert and Helen Lynd, a work that gauged how the lives of ordinary Midwesterners had changed over the past 30 years. «There is a certain *Middletown*», he told his parents, whose authors had gathered «very accurate statistics [...] on thousands of individuals in this average American city on these topics: «How many American boys or girls before or after the age of 18 have attended a *petting party*? How many times a week do young men and women stay at home, or go to the cinema? Truly American academics are even more idiotic than those in Europe», he concluded³³.

³¹ Ibid., letter from Lawrence Frank to Edward Sapir, 30 March 1932.

³² Georges Duhamel, *Scènes de la vie future*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1930, published in English as *America, the Menace. Scenes from the Life of the Future*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1931. Leo was in touch with Duhamel in Paris; see Fondazione Primo Conti, *Fondo Leo Ferrero*, letter from Duhamel to Leo Ferrero, 13 June 1930.

³³ Robert and Helen Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture*, New York, Harcourt

Even more startling to Leo was this seminar's first assignment, due that summer, which asked each participant to write a 20-page autobiography examining how his own culture's institutions may have shaped his personal development. While his future classmates wrote about how their families, schools, or churches had influenced the kinds of men they had become, Leo instead sent a letter (in French) to Edward Sapir. «Monsieur», it began, «permit me not to send you my autobiography». Leo did return a form that asked about «the external facts» of his life. «As for my interior life», he wrote,

if I could sum it up in twenty clear and neat pages I would be the happiest man in the world [...] I admit that for a long time my constant concern, I would almost say my obsession, has been to discover, to see myself. I sometimes seem to glimpse it, as one glimpses a wild island from a boat; but usually, at that moment, a gust of wind carries the boat away and I lose sight of myself.

In avoiding writing about his past, his parents, his schooling, or his government, Leo instead offered a summary of Buddhist beliefs on the impermanence of the self. Yet despite its philosophical language, his letter still suggested personal anguish. He ended it with a plea for Sapir to understand «that a man who is where I am – a man at sea – cannot write his autobiography³⁴».

Despite his reservations, Leo made plans for this year abroad. He was leaving for America, he told a friend, as if «certain of being shipwrecked³⁵». Even so, on 10 September 1932 he sailed from Le Havre (along with other European fellowship recipients whose travel was paid for by the Rockefeller Foundation)³⁶. «To me», his sister Nina later wrote, «Leo is still the handsome young man with the penetrating blue eyes, and a smile at times filled with joy and often terribly full of sadness, as it was when we accompanied him to the

Brace, 1929. Letter to his parents, May 1932, in *Lettere*, p. 287. From now on, English words in the text are indicated in Italics.

³⁴ Leo's autobiographical letter to Sapir is reprinted in A. Kornfeld, *La figura e l'opera di Leo Ferrero*, cit., pp. 172-173.

³⁵ Letter to Victoria Ocampo, 25 August 1932, discussed in *Lettere*, p. 288, fn. 13.

³⁶ See Statue of Liberty - Ellis Island Foundation, *Passenger search*, «Ferrero Lambroso [sic] Leo» <<https://heritage.statueofliberty.org>> (accessed upon registration 25 November 2021).

train that would bring him to the boat and across the ocean to the United States»³⁷.

Among the American social scientists

Arriving in New York, Leo first visited his Florentine friend Giovanna Calastri Lawford. A young painter (and the daughter of the sculptor Olindo Calastri), she had married an American and now invited Leo to her home³⁸. From there he took the train to New Haven. Yale university was «sumptuous in a fake English medieval style», he reported to his parents, and his new classmates were intelligent and amiable – except when they discussed sociology with «a truly excessive respect»³⁹. He was especially intrigued by this seminar's Chinese participant, Bingham Dai, who had a strong background in Confucianism. After reading an essay by Dai explaining Chinese culture, Leo had it translated into Italian and published in «Solaria»⁴⁰. Most surprising, however, was this seminar's leader, anthropologist Edward Sapir, whose intellectual depth and breadth earned even Leo's respect. Still, Leo refused to take seminar assignments too seriously, and spent much of his time working on a novel while trying to earn money as a journalist. In addition to a dozen articles he wrote from America for «La Dépêche», he also published his two interviews with European kings in the «New York Times»⁴¹. Meanwhile, his classmates were trying to convince the Rockefeller Foundation to fund them for a second year. «The members of the seminar don't have many ideas about culture and personality», Leo reported to his parents, but they could

³⁷ N. Ferrero Raditza, *Gli anni di Leo*, cit., p. 9.

³⁸ Letter to his parents, n.d. [late September 1932], in *Lettere*, p. 299.

³⁹ Letter to his parents, n.d. [1932] and letter to his parents, n.d. [September 1932], in *Lettere*, pp. 300, 298.

⁴⁰ Letter to his parents, n.d. [September or October 1932] and letter to his parents, n.d. [September 1932], in *Lettere*, pp. 300, 298. Bingham Dai, *Le caratteristiche essenziali della cultura cinese considerate da alcuni eminenti studiosi cinesi*, «Solaria», 8, 2-3, February-March 1933, pp. 46-70.

⁴¹ Leo Ferrero, *Portrait of a King who Likes his Job: «I am not one who finds fault with kingship», Says Carol of Rumania in Telling of his Royal Life*, «New York Times», 8 January 1933, pp. 5, 13; and *A Modern King and a Democrat as Well: Albert of Belgium Makes a Visitor Feel at Home and Tells Him of his Deep Faith in America*, «New York Times», 16 April 1933, pp. 4, 15.

think of countless ways to «tap the Rock» – that is, «to prolong the time in which we can enjoy the beneficent largesse of gold from petroleum»⁴².

In the months that followed, Leo observed American life – and especially its social science – with a writer's eye and an ironic sense of detachment. «This American sociology has no ideas», he told his parents, but it compensated by studying «cases» from authentic life. As a result, the American sociologist had become «a fine medium between the professor and the *detective*, the doctor, the journalist, the confessor, the adventurer». When they spoke like professors, Leo found them annoying, but when they acted like detectives, he responded with «Bravo»⁴³.

While Leo was getting used to life in New Haven, his parents in Geneva were following the spread of European fascism, especially in Germany, with growing alarm. «Here no one feels Europe», Leo confessed to his parents. Even he and his fellow Europeans at Yale now «read the news with detachment and without understanding well» while «the Americans don't care about it». America, he explained, seemed «far, far away». As for American politics, Leo remained unimpressed. «I will probably go to N.Y. to see the election», he wrote in the fall of 1932. «But the characteristic of these elections is indifference. The people vote for this or for that without any passion; they go to the election rally like to the cinema, they applaud frenetically the 'big man' that speaks to 40,000 people – and then there is the band, etc. Surely French democracy is the most alive that I know [...]»⁴⁴.

The more Leo saw of the United States, the more he declared himself repelled by it. He did enjoy New York, he conceded, but the rest of the country failed to impress him. With the Rockefeller Foundation supporting research-related travel over the Christmas holidays, Leo decided to visit Chicago. What he found in this city, however – an «apocalyptic vision of chimneys, gas ovens, railroads, wagons in the middle of the city, under a dirty

⁴² Letter to his parents, 23 October 1932, in *Lettere*, pp. 305-306.

⁴³ Letter to his parents, 5 November 1932, *ibid.*, p. 307.

⁴⁴ Letters to his parents, 19 October 1932, and 1 November 1932, *ibid.*, pp. 305, 307.

gray sky» – only reinforced Duhamel's conclusions. In the United States, Leo concluded, «industrialism permeates everything»⁴⁵.

Even so, Leo's Chicago visit was intriguing. «The sociologists here are in friendly contact with all the *gangsters*», he told his parents – including those Leo called «my illustrious *connazionali*». «I saw all the species, from the children to the *bigshot*», he reported, and had long talks with several of them. In America, he explained, it was «difficult to find the dividing line between the gangster, the policeman, the politician, the banker, the industrialist», since they all valued money above all and didn't mind how they got it. «And in truth», he added, «you can't object to the gangsters when they tell you: we don't steal more than Rockefeller»⁴⁶.

While in the Midwest, Leo also decided to see for himself the Indiana city that was the research site for *Middletown*. «I write to you waiting for the train to Muncie, the classic *Middletown* of the Middle West (celebrated in a book of sociology)», he told his parents. Yet after spending a day in this mid-sized factory town as the guest of a professor from its university, his disillusionment with all things American only deepened. «If you have not seen the desperation of a cultured man obliged by poverty to live in Muncie, a *typical city* of the Midwest», he told his parents, «you don't know America»⁴⁷. It is not hard to understand why Leo, who had lived in Turin, Florence, and Paris, would find artistic and cultural life in Muncie, Indiana – and in New Haven, Connecticut – disappointing at best, and horrifying at worst. During the 1920s many American writers including Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald had also moved to Paris, a city they too adored. Yet by the early 1930s, Leo was even more out of step with cultural developments taking place in the United States.

If Leo were seeking a society led by and appreciative of its intellectual or

⁴⁵ Leo Ferrero, *Esquisses a la Plume sur L'Amérique*, in *Amérique, miroir grossissant de L'Europe*, Paris, Rieder, 1939, p. 21; letter to his parents, n.d. [probably January 1933], in *Lettere*, p. 313.

⁴⁶ Letters to his parents, n.d. [probably 1 January 1933] and 2 January 1933, *ibid.*, pp. 332-315.

⁴⁷ Letters to his parents, 2 January and 5 January 1933, *ibid.*, pp. 314-316.

artistic «elites», then he had come to the wrong country at the wrong time. To the contrary, as he learned in several lectures devoted to explaining American cultural values to this seminar's foreign participants, he was now in a land that had long been skeptical of European elites and instead glorified the «common man». Even its most important political leader, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, himself a member of New York's elite society of wealth and privilege, had spoken that year of putting his faith «once more in the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid». Especially during the Depression, theories emphasizing the importance of «the elite» struck many Americans as little more than snobbery⁴⁸.

Ironically, these differences in national values formed one of the main subjects the Yale seminar was trying to study. During this year, its leaders experimented with new ways to assess cultures comparatively. Among the methods they used were questionnaires, including one on «the family». In answering a long list of questions, seminar participants were encouraged to respond less as social scientists and more as native informants – that is, as members of their societies with first-hand experiences. One question in particular drew a strong response from Leo when it asked: «Is the family regarded, more or less consciously, as a model of the State or community as a whole? Or looked at apart from them?» In replying, he began with a gently satiric portrait of the Italian patriarchal family.

The family is the only organized group of Italy. It is very often organized against the world. An Italian man believes, in general, that he is the only really existing man in the world, and that other men are his representations, mere shadows. When he marries, he extends this unbelievable 'egocentrism' [sic] to the family. His sons are the only good, intelligent children in the world. His wife has chiefly the function of admiring him. His thirst for grandeur is a torture for him; his life is always a failure, he never succeeds in obtaining the recognition he thinks he deserves. He looks at himself in his wife's eyes as in a mirror, in which he can see, even when he is ugly and stupid, the image of a genial and good looking self. The Italian women, who are really superior to the men, never forget to admire their husbands. They do it sincerely. The husband

⁴⁸ Franklin D. Roosevelt, *The Forgotten Man*, Radio Address from Albany, New York, given on 7 April 1932 <<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu>> (access 24 November 2021).

is the husband.

Also included were some lines of dialogue, written to illustrate how a fictional Italian wife might answer questions by deferring to «Emilio», her fictional husband. «I don't know what happened in 1848», Leo's character declares. «If Emilio were here he could tell you. He knows history. He spends all his nights in reading books». And «How can you say that D'Annunzio is a bad writer? Emilio says that D'Annunzio is a great writer». Yet while conceding that Italian fathers often acted like kings of their households, he refused to see this as a model for how citizens should regard the head of state. «The family is not a model of the state», Leo argued emphatically. «It exists for itself, a standing rock in the ocean of the political revolutions» and «the only refuge of man during the centuries in which Italy has been oppressed by tyrannies. The man must bow outside, but in his family he is the king.». For the next question, which asked «How does the family express itself in the community? Holding property in common? Joint political representation?» Leo had a much shorter answer: «In Italy nobody votes»⁴⁹.

While this seminar's participants found Leo to be charming, very intelligent, quick-witted, and warm-hearted, at least one of its visiting lecturers, University of Chicago political scientist Harold Lasswell, especially appreciated his insights. An expert on propaganda, Lasswell was the author of *Psychopathology and Politics* (1930) and an advocate for introducing psychological perspectives into his discipline. At the Yale seminar he lectured on «Personality in the Political World» and was particularly impressed by Leo's responses.⁵⁰

Leo himself felt closest to Sapir – one of the few people he trusted with some of his deepest fears. In one assignment designed to explore symbolic behavior, participants were asked to analyze an action or object that meant

⁴⁹ Leo Ferrero, «The Italian Family», manuscript in Fondazione Primo Conti, *Fondo Leo Ferrero*. Questionnaire in Library of Congress, Margaret Mead Papers, b. G10, f. 6.

⁵⁰ Letter from Harold Lasswell to Leo's parents in *Angelica à travers le monde. Jugements sur la pièce avant sa représentation*, Paris, Rieder, 1934, p. 61. Max Ascoli to Leo's parents, in G. Lombroso, *Lo sboccio di una vita*, cit., pp. 322-326.

more than it seemed to on the surface. While others described playing chess in Poland or eating croissants in France, Leo wrote a private response. Marking his paper as «Very Personal», he told Sapir about the changed meaning of the Italian flag. While previously symbolizing «something friendly, maybe glorious and at any rate worthy of respect», Leo wrote, under the fascists it now symbolized «a violent party». Unlike their neighbors, his father had refused to display this flag «during the endless fascist commemorations» – a small act of defiance with potentially deadly consequences, since it made their home vulnerable to attacks. «Now the Italian flag, for me», he wrote, symbolized «murder, blood, empty and aggressive nationalistic speeches, civil war, tyranny, brutality, violence 'for patriotic reasons'. I shiver when I see it».

Also changed was the meaning of southern Italian dialects. Previously, Leo conceded, when he «heard a Sicilian speaking», he had «smiled with a friendly superiority». Now he felt fear. «All the policemen are Neapolitan or Sicilian», he explained, and he had seen them beating and imprisoning his friends. Italian police had become «criminals protected by the law» and their dialects had become symbols of «secret violence, of corruption, of illegality, of injustice, of something one must fear and against which there is nothing to do». In fact, even in the US, when he heard a stranger speaking Italian he immediately became «anxious and uneasy» and told himself to «be careful, it can be a spy. Go away. Don't talk»⁵¹.

While Leo showed little interest in American politics, that spring one political event did touch him deeply. On 10 May 1933, a massive New York rally drew over 100,000 people to protest Germany's new Nazi decrees, its brutal treatment of Jews, and its burning of books, with similar rallies held in dozens of American cities. To Leo's amazement, the speakers at these events included not only Jews but also leaders of Christian churches and politicians from both parties. As an article he wrote for «La Dépêche» demonstrates,

⁵¹ Leo Ferrero, «Two Symbols», manuscript in Fondazione Primo Conti, *Fondo Leo Ferrero*.

this humanitarian outpouring made him reassess at least some of his theories on the «inhumaneness» of American culture. «You have to live in America,» he now wrote, «to understand how Europeans are resigned to evil»⁵².

A summer in Mexico and the American Southwest

In May 1933 the seminar's lectures ended, and participants went their separate ways (with Rockefeller funding) to conduct pre-approved summer research projects around the country. While there had been little interest in Leo's ideas about studying «the role of elites», in working with Sapir he had developed a different project that gained Rockefeller support: studying responses to American industrial culture among Mexicans and Native Americans living in Santa Fe and Los Angeles. This project would allow Leo to visit Mexico, a country he longed to see. And after completing his research in New Mexico and California, he could travel west and visit Japan, China, and India before returning to France.

«Mexico is beautiful like Italy», he wrote that June. «Imagine a tropical nature, with bananas, mangos, pineapples [...] and everywhere melancholy and regal Indians [...] and costumes, sombreros, ponchos, each more beautiful than the next – and objects of art everywhere. The modern Mexican painters are *phenomenal*». Yet while Leo thoroughly loved his time there, he came to see a darker side. Under the continuing influence of the country's former president Elias Calles, he told his mother, this country too was experiencing a kind of fascism, with «enemies of the government murdered every day» and Mexicans reluctant to discuss this with strangers – something, he added, that as an Italian he understood⁵³.

All too soon, he had to return. «Here I am again in the United States», Leo wrote.

⁵² Article reprinted in L. Ferrero, *Amérique*, cit., Paris, Rieder, 1939, p. 70.

⁵³ Letters to his parents, 8 June 1933 and n.d. [probably end of June or early July], in *Lettere*, pp. 334 and 344.

And they say that the American states are so different! I am two meters from Mexico and I've found the same Main Street, the same hotel with the same manager, blond and cordial, the same room, the same radio, the same shower, the same *lettuce and tomato sandwich*, the same bar, the same barmaid, blond, well-scrubbed, smiling and indifferent, the same prices, the same Grecian-style official post office, the same shirts for 95 cents that are in New Haven and everywhere else. American uniformity is the most perfect that I know⁵⁴.

Yet notwithstanding Leo's constant criticisms of America's industrial culture, its mechanical coldness and uniformity, and above all its failure to appreciate the importance of its artistic elites, he still seemed to be enjoying himself. In his letters, he repeatedly emphasized that he was in good spirits and making excellent progress on his novel, entitled *Espoirs (Hopes)*. Family friend Max Ascoli, who had spent Christmas in Chicago with Leo and saw him in New Haven that April, described him as «vivacious, contented, and happy with Sapir, with the friends he had made among his colleagues in the seminar, and with his work». Leo had found «great pleasure in living here», Ascoli told his parents. Overall, the Yale Seminar, Leo concluded, had been «a first-rate experience»⁵⁵.

And he especially liked Santa Fe, where he developed close friendships with Hazel Hyde, a sculptor interested in Native American pottery, and Mary Austin, a Southwestern novelist. «I have more social life here than in Paris», he admitted that August, and now preferred this region's natural beauty to the artificiality of city life⁵⁶.

Perhaps during this year, Leo was simply experiencing the absence of the intense political pressure he had lived under for a decade. Or perhaps he felt freer in an environment in which far fewer people knew his family. Whatever the reason, his close friend Nello Rosselli also sensed a change in Leo's mood. To him, the Leo who wrote from America seemed calmer, more at

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 344.

⁵⁵ Letter from Max Ascoli to Leo's parents in G. Lombroso, *Lo sboccio di una vita*, cit., pp. 322-326; letter to his parents, 25 May 1933, in *Lettere*, p. 331.

⁵⁶ Letter from Hazel Hyde, 28 August 1933, and letter from Mary Austin, August 1933, both in Gina Lombroso Ferrero, *L'éclosion d'une vie*, Paris, Rieder, 1938, p. 283-285, p. 280. Letter to his parents, 21 August 1933, in *Lettere*, p. 350.

ease, more centered. Slowly but surely, Rosselli believed, «a new Leo was breaking free»⁵⁷.

Tragically, it's impossible to know if Rosselli's prediction would have proven true. That August, Leo joined Hazel Hyde and several others on a trip to Gallup, New Mexico, to watch the Inter-tribal Indian Ceremonial, an annual event where Navaho and Pueblo Indians performed traditional dances. While returning, their car collided head-on with another coming towards it. Suffering from a fractured skull, Leo died the next morning, on 26 August, 1933. He was 29.

A posthumous legacy

Leo's parents would never recover from the shocking news of the death of the son they both adored. Obituaries soon appeared in newspapers in North and South America and across Europe – although not in Fascist Italy. «French letters were thrown into mourning by his tragic death», André Maurois declared⁵⁸. Guglielmo Ferrero found at least some comfort when Leo's friend Aldo Garosci, who travelled to Geneva for Leo's funeral, brought him the materials left in his Paris apartment. Among these was his antifascist play *Angelica*, written in French, which came as a surprise to his family and friends. Even in these somber circumstances, Garosci wrote, he felt as though he had brought «proof of something about Leo that not only *had lived*, but that was still living, and that had a future before it»⁵⁹.

In the years that followed, Leo's parents devoted themselves to collecting whatever they could find of his writings and to editing and publishing many of his letters, poems, plays, notebook entries, and his unfinished novel. In 1934 they arranged for the first public reading of *Angelica* before a Paris audience of writers and critics. According to Maurois, it «produced an

⁵⁷ N. Rosselli, *Una giovinezza stroncata*, cit., p. 553.

⁵⁸ André Maurois, *French Books Reflect the Stormy Times*, «New York Times», 8 July 1934, p. BR10.

⁵⁹ A. Garosci, *Ricordi d'un amico*, cit., p. 7.

extraordinary effect. We all knew that Leo Ferrero was charming and intelligent», he explained in a «New York Times» review, but «we did not know that he was capable of this keenness in satire, of this tender poetry». *Angelica* was «a work singularly objective and ripe to have been written before the age of 30», he added, «but misfortune and exile matured it»⁶⁰.

These new publications brought even more international responses, including one from Harold Lasswell, the American political scientist who knew Leo from Yale. «Seldom have I rejoiced more than when I read *Angelica*», Lasswell wrote his parents, «for I, too, had feared that the tragic end of Leo had blasted every hope of hearing what he had to say. And I was among those who sensed the superlative quality of his mind and spirit». Lasswell found in Leo's writing «the same compelling subtlety and gentle irony which conferred so much of worth and distinction upon every expression of his lofty personality. I was not among those who came to know him well», he explained. «But no contact, however, ephemeral, could fail to disclose something of the delicate yet virile quality of his originality». According to Lasswell, Leo's «personal style had all the nuance of that form of detachment which is the attainment of the profound rather than the retreat of the bruised». He had hoped for «an ultimate development of our casual acquaintance into friendship. I am glad to have renewed our contact in this book», he concluded, «even after all hope had passed»⁶¹.

In 1936 Leo's play was produced in Paris by Georges Pitoëff, the Russian-born head of Europe's foremost modernist theatre company, with Georges playing Orlando and his wife Ludmilla as Angelica. It was also staged successfully in London and Geneva as well as Montevideo and Buenos Aires (where Orlando was dressed in the uniform of the Spanish Republicans fighting Franco)⁶². In

⁶⁰ A. Maurois, *French Books Reflect the Stormy Times*, cit., p. BR10.

⁶¹ Letter from Harold Lasswell to Leo's parents in *Angelica à travers le monde*, cit., p. 61.

⁶² Paola Ranzini, *Un dramma satirico contro il fascismo? Angelica di Leo Ferrero*, «Revue des études italiennes», 45, 1-2, 1999, pp. 35-84 (with an appendix of Ferrero-Pitoëff letters); María Belén Hernández González, *Angelica, el teatro en libertad de Leo Ferrero*, «Anales de filología francesa», 21, 2013, pp. 105-122; and *Razones para una traducción invisible: La Angelica de C.*

1946, *Angelica* was published in Italy, with the literary scholar Renato Poggioli, himself an antifascist exile, adding an essay analyzing its significance. Leo had called his play an «outburst», Poggioli explained, since it indicated his «desire to sublimate in an artistic catharsis the repressions which so fine and delicate a nature had suffered in Italy, under the moral and political whip of dictatorship»⁶³. In 1948, nearly 20 years after it was written, it was staged in Rome by Giulietta Masina, the wife of Federico Fellini, with an as-yet unknown actor named Marcello Mastroianni playing Orlando. Leo would never experience «the joys of returning to a land that had since become unfamiliar to us», Aldo Garosci would later write. (And neither would Carlo or Nello Rosselli, both assassinated in France by fascists in 1937). Yet to Garosci, reading Leo's words from years earlier was like finding «a message in a bottle» tossed into the sea⁶⁴.

During the late 1930s and early 1940s, many other writings by Leo appeared in volumes prepared by his parents, usually published in Paris or Geneva. Among these were *Désespoirs. Poèmes en prose, prières, pensées* (1937); *Amérique, miroir grossissant de l'Europe* (1939); and a volume in Spanish called *Meditaciones sobre la civilización en los Estados Unidos y en México* (1942). An Italian volume, called *Meditazioni sull'Italia. Letteratura e politica*, was published in 1939 with a preface by Count Carlo Sforza, Italy's most prominent antifascist political leader then in exile. Sforza worried about how Italians of 1939 would respond to Leo's writings, since they had become «accustomed to the bombast of pseudo-Roman phraseology, which injures instead of serves the cause of Italy». Would they «understand that certain of Leo's bitter observations were dictated by the very intensity of his love for the Italian people, by the fear that they might never be able to cast off the yoke

Rivas Cherif, «Anales de filología francesa», 22, 2014, pp. 143-160.

⁶³ Renato Poggioli, *Saggio su Angelica*, in Leo Ferrero, *Angelica*, Florence, Parenti, 1946, p. 7; translated into English and reprinted in R. Poggioli, *The Spirit of the Letter: Essays in European Literature*, Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press, 1965, p. 180.

⁶⁴ A. Garosci, *Ricordi d'un amico*, cit., p. 7.

of meaningless rhetoric, by his desire to serve his country during one of the darkest periods of its history?», he wrote. That year Sforza translated his preface into English and published it as an article with a pointed title: «Leo Ferrero, Italian Patriot»⁶⁵.

Only after the war would some of Leo's journal entries from the years 1926-27 be read by the public. Edited by his mother as a book entitled *Diario di un privilegiato sotto il fascismo*, it was published in Italy in 1946. Within its pages is a poignant, original, and insightful contemporary account of intellectual life under Italian fascism – as experienced by a writer who would soon become an exile.

Main publications during Ferrero's lifetime

- *La chioma di Berenice; Le campagne senza Madonna* (plays), Milan, Athena, 1924.
- With Guglielmo Ferrero, *La palingenesi di Roma antica (da Livio a Machiavelli)*, Milan, Athena, 1924.
- *Leonardo o dell'arte*. Turin, Buratti, 1929; translated as *Léonard de Vinci ou l'oeuvre d'art*, Paris, Kra, 1929.
- *Paris, dernier modèle de l'Occident*, Paris, Rieder, 1932.

Published posthumously

- *Angelica*, Paris, Rieder, 1934.
- *Espoirs. Comédie italienne*, Paris, Rieder, 1935.
- *Désespoirs. Poèmes en prose, prières, pensées*, Paris, Rieder, 1937.
- *Amérique, miroir grossissant de l'Europe*, Paris, Rieder, 1939
- *La catena degli anni. Poesie e pensieri fra i venti e ventinove anni*, Lugano-Geneva, Nuove edizioni di Capolago, 1939.
- *Meditazioni sull'Italia. Letteratura e politica*. Lugano-Geneva, Nuove

⁶⁵ Carlo Sforza, *Prefazione*, in L. Ferrero, *Meditazioni sull'Italia*, cit., p. I; Carlo Sforza, *Leo Ferrero, Italian Patriot*, «Books Abroad», 13, 2, 1939, p. 164.

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- *Appunti sul metodo della Divina Commedia, del drama, dell'arte classica e decadente*, Lugano-Geneva, Nuove edizioni di Capolago, 1940.
- *Le secret de l'Angleterre*, Geneva, Editions de Présence, 1941.
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- Marina Calloni and Lorella Cedroni (eds.), *Politica e affetti familiari. Lettere di Amelia, Carlo e Nello Rosselli a Guglielmo, Leo e Nina Ferrero e Gina Lombroso Ferrero (1917-1943)*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1997.
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- Nina Ferrero Raditza, *Gli anni di Leo*, in L. Ferrero, *Il muro trasparente*, cit., pp. 9-17.
- Aldo Garosci, *Ricordi d'un amico perduti e ritrovati*, in *ibid.*, pp. 5-8.
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