

Editor's Note

This number inaugurates a new development in the life of RSA Journal, the Journal of AISNA, the Italian Association for North American Studies. The journal has a new editorial board, and new decisions have been taken as regards its contents: each issue will have a thematic part, in addition to essays on different subjects, by our members. The theme of this issue, "The theme of destruction in American culture" was indeed chosen after 9/11, but, perhaps not amazingly, at a three year distance period from that tragic event, it has kept all of its relevance. In the year 2004, when the war in Iraq has left a wake of continuous and continuing destruction and terrorism has not abated, the theme of destruction appears tragically relevant as does any meditation on the American writers' and artists' coming to terms with destruction in their works.

In the five essays focussing on this theme, the authors deal with movies and novels. Movies include "combat films," such as those by John Huston pertaining to World War II discussed by Federico Siniscalco, with special emphasis on one, San Pietro, that stands out as a non-propaganda war documentary, denouncing the horrors of war. Movies discussed include those by great film directors of the 1990s, Altman, Anderson and Solondz: Alessandro Clericuzio shows how these movies have transformed the (catastrophic trend of commercial blockbusters" into an even more anguishing threat to everyday life. Novels include the "classics" by Kurt Vonnegut in particular a novel of the 1970s, Breakfast of Champions, analyzed by Roberto Serrai in its representation of destruction, in relation to the celebrative rhetoric of the Whitman tradition. A SF novel, The Simulacra, dating back to the 1960s, but prefiguring many of the mass-mediatic culture elements of our time, is discussed by Umberto Rossi as an example of a disaster novel, where catastrophe is not caused by nature but by "a series of deliberate political decisions." These four essays seem to lead up to the present time, where the position of the Bush administration towards the tradition of American foreign policy is analyzed by Mario Del Pero, with a careful observation of historical and political interpretations pro and contra this administration.

Two essays on different subjects complete this issue: Paola Zaccaria's discussion of two central novels by Toni Morrison, and Francesca Bisutti DeRiz's presentation of a "walking wall" by land artist Andy Goldsworthy, and its American implications as regards the fundamental concept of the frontier and America's "nomadic and colonizing soul."

The editorial board is grateful to Bianca Maria Tedeschini Lalli, who generously allowed us to use an excerpt, from Romaine Brooks's unpublished autobiography, No Pleasant Memories, a typescript on which Tedeschini Lalli is working, within the major project "Reti di donne: soggetti, luoghi, nodi di incontro Europa-America 1890-1950," directed by Marina Camboni.

Finally, the editorial board would like to thank Agostino Lombardo for the interview with Ugo Rubeo. With its publication, the editors and AISNA would like to pay homage to Professor Lombardo, as to the principal founder of American Studies in Italy. His final remarks tie in, not haphazardly, with the general theme of this special issue, thus underlining its resonance and importance in American culture.

Rosella Mamoli Zorzi