

Report of the Conference Eva e le altre,
University of Salerno, 15-17 May 2019

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Report of the Conference Eva e le altre,
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Abstract: Short report of the Conference Eva e le Altre, held at the University of Salerno, about women in Latin America

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Recently the University of Salerno has hosted the *Giornate di studio salernitane di Letteratura*, organized in the framework of the XLI International Congress of American Studies, in cooperation with Department of Humanistic Studies and Literary, Linguistic and Historical Studies, promoted by the Center for American Studies “Circolo Amerindiano ONLUS Perugia” and Center for American Studies “Circolo Amerindiano di Salerno”. Within the *Giornate*, the Conference *Eva e le altre* (Eva and the others), chaired by Rosa Maria Grillo, took inspiration from the centenary of the birth of Eva Duarte Perón (Los Toldos, 7 May 1919) for a talk about Latin America through the stories of iconic female figures in the fields of literature, arts and cinema.

Eva Perón entered international popular culture, especially in her native Argentina, where many events have celebrated the birth of a first lady as criticized as loved. Her lasting presence has defied both national borders and the corrosive effect of the time. Besides permeating Argentine politics and society until today, Eva has been the subject of books, films, musicals and plays, which have transcended the national arena. About the “the myth” of Eva Perón and its cultural, historical and social settings, the Conference has proposed several papers, such as those of Lilliana Bellone, *Eva Perón la subjetividad de una época el arte y la construcción literaria*, Maria Ines Palleiro and Victoria Frantoni, *Eva Perón: ficción, historia y mito en clave de género*, Fernando Diego Rodríguez, *La gira Arco Iris. Evita en Europa, el viaje como espectáculo de la política*.

Other papers, presented during the Conference focused on different keys of interpretation of the charismatic life of Evita Perón, but a leitmotif united the authors: the intention of humanizing her figure to propose a new Evita, far from clichés and “sacralization”. In this way, Eva is probably one of the most important examples of the difficulty of representing women from a point different from the dichotomy of demonizing or canonizing a woman. But it is not the only one. During the Conference, in fact, several female figures have been examined: revolutionary mothers, exiled artists, scattered daughters, women between absence and presence, private and public space. For example, Laura Scarabelli presented a paper on *Eugenia Prado Brassi: Advertencias de uso para una maquina de coser* and tried to explore herself in a context where, since the beginning, female archetype has been constantly dismembered, stitched and re-stitched, measured, manipulated, categorized, classified, accused, as in the case of Eve in the Bible.

Fernanda Elisa Bravo Herrera, with her *Representaciones y voces de Argentinos e inmigrantes italianos en Cesarina Lupati*, emphasised the role of woman as bridge between different cultures and apparently distant worlds. Cesarina Lupati, indeed, from 1908 to 1911 lived in Argentina and studied the Italian society and the migrant institutions in the South American country, dedicating her life to create ties between immigrants and Italy and promoting a transnational identity, beyond the borders.

Borders that divide, as explained by Emilia Perassi in *Madri e Patrie nel romanzo contemporaneo sulla migrazione. Scrittrici italiane e argentine*. Emptiness, abandonment, power of absence, represent the “war scenario” where plots and characters of migration literature take form, emphasizing familiar themes, equilibria between old and new, allegiances to family. In this framework, the migration experience establishes a new order of things for all that concerns mothers and women. An order based on the dichotomy between motionlessness (enclosed space) and movement (open space, dominated by male). These women and these mothers overcame the enclosed space to respond to new challenges, changing the categories used to interpret the world, giving a new point of view based on care, natality, emotions, as a way of salvation.

This salvation is presented in the shape of care in the paper *Eva Sámano de López Mateos: Protectora de la infancia y maestra de México* by Edgar Gómez Bonilla. Eva Samano, during her service as First Lady of Mexico from 1958 until 1964, established the National Institute for Infants, which was

Mexico's first social organization dedicated to children. This woman put her life at the service of defenseless people, working to improve the conditions of most vulnerable groups through education, giving to Mexico and Mexicans the possibility to learn how “to take care of themselves”.

These are only some of the female figures examined at the Conference. The authors, indeed, also told the stories of other women who, with their activity and efforts, have overcome the clichés. In this way, *Eva e le altre* could be understood as a starting point to rethink borders, spaces, directions of those powerful women who challenged obligations, common sense and, therefore, were condemned or often hindered by prejudices. Once again, just like Eve in the Scripture, female figures are sentenced because of their inquisitiveness, their desire to take action, explore, and research with their own power the shapes of life and how they take form.