

Response to Pietro Clemente, “Gli antenati dentro la pagina”

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To be cited so prominently in an article on citation and to be remembered so fondly in an article on memory is a signal honor, and it is particularly gratifying to have this come from Pietro Clemente, whom I admire greatly and who was my colleague for a brief period that I remember as one of the happiest and most stimulating in my life as a scholar.¹ As his point of departure, Clemente recalls a long-forgotten article, where I treated the practice of footnote citation as an academic ritual through which the living construct their own genealogies by invoking those whom they constitute as their ancestors, establishing a pattern for those they would constitute as their descendants and thereby creating the possibility for a decidedly secular immortality.² My discussion was rudimentary, however, and Clemente expands upon it in ways that deepen and improve upon it.

In the first place, Clemente identifies many more practices and sites wherein scholars pursue similar ends to those I recognized in footnotes. Inter alia, he makes mention of the *rites de passage* through which students affiliate to their *maestri* and *maestri* adopt students, as well as the ritualized moments of quasi-familial mobilization and memorialization that take place in dedications, reprint editions, photographs, conferences, and necrologies. To these, others still could be added, including *Festschriften*, book reviews, journal mastheads, the honorific introductions given to visiting lecturers, and the inevitable reminiscences and gossip that circulate among *convegnisti*.

Clemente's contribution is not simply additive, however. Where I spoke about *note 'a piè' di pagina*, he speaks of *Gli antenati 'dentro' la pagina*, and the change in

¹ I have written about my time as professore al contratto at the University of Siena in the introduction to *Discourse and the Construction of Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 11-12. Much of this book—which I dedicated to Pier Giorgio and Teresa Solinas, Pietro and Ida Clemente—came out the lectures I gave at that time (1984-85), and my analysis benefited greatly from exchanges with Solinas, Clemente, Maria Luisa Meoni, Luciano Li Causi, and the students in their Istituto d'Antropologia e Folclore Popolare.

² Bruce LINCOLN, “Two Notes on Modern Rituals: II. Invoking the Ancestors, or the Sacred Footnote”, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 45 (1997): 147-60, esp. pp. 152-156.

prepositions is highly significant. Thus, something I treated as a subtextual aspect of scholarship, emerges as an integral feature in Clemente's reformulation, which benefits from two decades of heated discussions among anthropologists and others. In 1977, when my article appeared, the ideal of "reflexivity" was not yet part of our vocabulary or conscience, but in the intervening years it has become ever less acceptable for scholars to (mis)understand and (mis)represent themselves as detached and impersonal entities who comment on their objects of study as if from an intellectual Olympus. Rather, we have come to recognize and problematize our own subjectivity, understanding that the production of a scholarly text is not just a commentary on something or someone else, but is simultaneously a moment of self-fashioning and self-representation, in which authors reveal (even when attempting to conceal) the perspective from which they speak and the life-history that brought them to that position. It is in this spirit that Clemente calls for us to place our ancestors –and also ourselves– '*dentro*', and not '*sotto*' la pagina.

At the heart of Clemente's intervention is his call to integrate the story of our lives with the story of our research, and he provides a graceful, moving, and instructive example of how this can be done. Within the pages of his essay, he offers us narratives of his childhood, his time as a student, his teachers and colleagues, living and dead, with occasional vignettes of his own students and even Eugenio Cirese, the father of his *maestro*. His text is a classic exercise in mixed genres. Poetry and prose mix as easily as do notions of biological and cultural paternity, within a discourse that is simultaneously memoir, reverie, homage, and confession. Although the vast majority of the characters who enter the narrative are scholars, many of the most effective and revealing allusions are to works of literature.

Although Clemente at one moment half-ironically imagines himself as "The last of the Mohicans", the picture he presents is that of a man embedded in a rewarding and sustaining web of (quasi-)kinship relations that connects him not only to generations past and present, but also to those yet to come. Above all, he is the faithful and appreciative, but independent son of a father whom he admires for his properly patriarchal qualities, but also for his sense of devotion to his own father, and not least of all, for the understanding, tolerance, and indulgence he shows toward the more independent of his offspring. Although Clemente has more to say about his filial than his fraternal relations, the latter appear in an almost equally warm light, and particularly touching are the elegiac laments he offers for his deceased age-mates, which remind us how sad and how serious are the untimely losses Italian anthropology has suffered (not only Italo Signorini, but also Giorgio Cardona and Anthony Wade-Brown).

Kindness and generosity characterize virtually all of Clemente's descriptions, and this signals an aspect of his analysis that may be open to question. Implicitly, his account suggests that kinship constitutes itself through the cultivation and expression of positive sentiments, which evoke reciprocity from those toward whom these are evinced. Benevolent parents produce loyal children, who themselves become benevolent parents. Supportive siblings can count on their siblings' support. All the rhetoric, rituals, and pedagogy that convert the naked facts of consanguinity into the moral practice of kinship advance these propositions. Yet anyone who has lived within a family, or within a quasi-familial group of any sort, knows that things differ from this idealized picture, often dramatically so. In addition to very deep and real affection, kinship also inevitably includes (indeed, produces) jealousies, rivalries, and hurt feelings; squabbles over precedence and rights of inheritance; charges of disloyalty and betrayal; unrequited loves and guilty affairs, all of which make life interesting, but also untidy and unseemly. Such things are more difficult to acknowledge and to treat in public than are the affectionate side of family life, but if our narratives are to be honest, realistic, and genuinely enlightening, these too must be present when we put ourselves and our ancestors *dentro la pagina*.

The problem is particularly acute for me, and for others who have been forced to confront the fact that our academic ancestors suppressed deeply disturbing parts of their own genealogy. We students of Heidegger, De Man, Eliade, Dumézil, and even Momigliano³ are left with the unhappy and perhaps impossible task of trying to reconcile our affectionate feelings –which include real gratitude and enduring admira-

³ The literature on all these figures is large, growing, and highly polemic. I would simply mention the following: on Heidegger, Tom ROCKMORE and Joseph MARGOLIS, eds., *The Heidegger Case: On Philosophy and Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), Victor FARIAS, *Heidegger et le nazisme* (Paris: Éditions Verdier, 1987); on De Man, Paul MORRISON, *The poetics of fascism: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Paul de Man* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), David LEHMAN, *Signs of the times: deconstruction and the fall of Paul de Man* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1991); on Eliade, Daniel DUBUISSON, *Mythologies du XX^{ème} siècle* (Lille: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1993), pp. 217-303, Ivan STRENSKI, *Four Theories of Myth in Twentieth - Century History: Cassirer, Eliade, Lévi-Strauss. and Malinowski* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1987), pp. 70-159, IDEM, *Religion in Relation* (Charleston: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), pp. 15-40, 166-179, Mac Linscott RICKETTS, *Mircea Eliade: the Romanian roots, 1907-1945* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1988); on Dumézil, Bruce LINCOLN, "Rewriting the German War-God: Georges Dumézil, Politics and Scholarship in the late 1930s", *History of Religions* 37 (1998): 187-208, Cristiano GROTANELLI, *Ideologie miti massacrì: Indoeuropei di Georges Dumézil* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1993), Didier ERJON, *Faut-il brûler Dumézil? Mythologie, science, et politique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992), Arnaldo MOMIGLIANO, "Premesse per una discussione su Georges Dumézil", *Opus* 2 (1983): 329-342; on Momigliano, C. DIONISOTTI, "Momigliano e il contesto", *Belfagor* 52 (1997): 633-648, W. V. HARRIS, "The Silences of Momigliano", *Times Literary Supplement* (12 April 1996): 6-7.

ration— not just with our shock at the groups our mentors joined, the movements they supported, and the values they espoused, but also with our sense of betrayal at having been deceived by their self-protective silences. If I heed Pietro's call to connect life and research by speaking directly of my lineage, the story I would tell is more anguished, unsettled, and unsettling than the one he offers by way of example. I suspect that most family narratives have similar, if less pronounced, ambivalences. To tell these stories is a beginning; to tell them honestly is better still, not for reasons of pop psychotherapy and cheap catharsis, but because full memories and a frank, uncensored, deromanticized discussion provide the best basis for a proper understanding of kinship and academic relations.