

BRIDGES ACROSS CULTURES IV

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In June of 2019, H.J. Manzari, Amparo Alpañés from Washington & Jefferson College, Angela Tumini from the University of South Carolina, together with Filippo Petti of Nocera, Italy, came together to organize the fourth Bridges Across Cultures: An International Conference on Arts and Humanities. The conference was held at Maiori, Italy from June 24-28th, 2019. I owe debt of gratitude to Angela Tumini, Patrick Quinn and especially Michele Pharand for their hard work and dedication to editing these papers. The "Bridges" conference originated as a vision and an opportunity for academicians and professionals from various arts and humanities-related fields from all over the world to come together and learn from each other. Over the years, the conference has served as a meeting place for scholars and experts with interdisciplinary interests related to arts and humanities to interact with members within and outside of their own particular disciplines. It is my hope that the reader will be able to discover new and creative perspectives from which to study some traditional academic topics from the crossdisciplinary lens while reading the articles here presented. It is our wish to spark the reader's intellectual curiosity, and hopefully, to stimulate the reader to join in on the conversation.

HJ Manzari, Managing Editor
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IN SEARCH OF LOST TIME. TWO NOVELS BY JULIAN BARNES

ALBA GRAZIANO AND DANIELE NIEDDA¹

Introduction

Julian Barnes (born in 1946) is probably the most Francophile among twenty-first century English novelists. Both his parents were teachers of French and thus provided him with a bicultural background. His breakthrough novel *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984) was devoted to the giant of French literary realism. For their part, the French were so grateful as to award him both the Prix Médicis (for the above-mentioned book) and the Prix Femina Étranger (for *Talking it Over*, published in 1991), as well as to create him in 2004 *Commandeur de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* and finally to crown him with the *Légion d'honneur* in 2017. More recently, Barnes seems to have concluded his personal elaboration of the Proustian theme *par excellence*, the rediscovery of lost time, or, as the alternative English version of the *oeuvre cathédrale* calls it, the remembrance of things past. Despite its absence in the macrotext which forms the object of the present analysis (or indeed because of it), *À la recherche du temps perdu* is so pervasive a presence in *The Sense of an Ending* (2011) and *The Only Story* (2018) that it does not seem too far-fetched to consider these two novels by Julian Barnes as an English post-modernization, if not a post-post-modernization, of Proust's reflection upon time.²

Postmodern nonending

It has been said that the plot is not the forte of *The Sense of an Ending*, winner of the 2011 Booker Prize. *The New York Review of Books* finds its twists and turns so ordinary that it makes the novel "thin and underimagined". The same is also said of character psychology, including the protagonist's

¹ The authors conceived and discussed the article together. In particular, Alba Graziano is responsible for "Beyond Postmodernism?" and Daniele Niedda for "Introduction" and "Postmodern nonending".

² *The Sense of an Ending* and *The Only Story* were published in 2011 and in 2018, respectively, but not consecutively; between the two novels *The Noise of Time* appeared in 2016. Notwithstanding the title, the latter seems thematically incongruous with the former two, being a meditation on the relation between art and power from the point of view of the Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich. Therefore, the three works can hardly form a trilogy. All references are given in parenthesis and are to the works listed in the References section. At the time of the IV International Conference on the Arts and Humanities *Bridges Across Cultures* (Maiori, 24-28 June 2019), where our contribution was presented, Barnes had not yet published *The Man in the Red Coat* (2020), the new book on the Belle Époque and the fascinating life of Dr. Samuel Jean Pozzi. This is another powerful testimony not only of Barnes's *francophilia*, but of the importance he attached, as an Englishman during Brexit, to the building and maintenance of bridges across cultures.

(the narrator of the story). Even more scanty is the plot in *The Only Story*, as the title itself seems to announce. Our reading focuses on the endings of the two novels, both separately and taken as a macrotext, to see how much they reveal of the nature of postmodernist fiction, or whether they question or go beyond postmodernism, involving in this process the traditional structures of Narrative, such as narrator, protagonist, plot, etc.

We begin by making three hypotheses. First, the very incomplete conclusion of *The Sense of an Ending* defers the ending to the incipit of *The Only Story*, which continues the same train of thought about the sense of stories left suspended in the final pages of the first novel. Secondly, *The Only Story* takes the shape of a follow-up, a collateral story (as in a midrash), which takes two characters of the former story and turns them into the protagonists of the second. Lastly, *The Sense of an Ending* seems to show all the characteristics of a postmodernist narrative, while *The Only Story* seems to be a classic *Bildungsroman*. However, the final *dying fall* might hint at the banality of life, indifference to meaning, amnesia, ephemerality of cultural products; in other words, at a number of factors increasingly recognised by critics as phenomena of contemporary post-postmodernism, or pseudo-modernism or digi-modernism, as the era after postmodernism is commonly referred to.

The Sense of an Ending begins at a London school some time in the early 1960s, where Adrian Finn joins a group of three friends, including the narrator, Anthony Webster, prosaically nicknamed Tony. Adrian soon becomes the most outstanding fellow, not only among the three ‘musketees’, but of the whole school. While the trio’s general attitude is flippant, Adrian is a serious young man with a strong sense of responsibility and is extremely well read. “We were essentially taking the piss, except when we were serious. He was essentially serious, except when he was taking the piss” (p. 7). Unsurprisingly, he goes to Cambridge, whereas Tony and another friend go to the redbrick universities of Bristol and Sussex, respectively. Tony finds a girlfriend in Bristol, Veronica Ford, and introduces her to his friends. Previously, Tony had spent a weekend at Veronica’s in Kent, where he had felt patronised (“treating me as lower-class scum”, p. 27) by a posher family, with the notable exception of Veronica’s mother, Sarah, who even warns Tony against her daughter’s wiles. Veronica and Tony do not make love in the course of their relationship, which terminates when Veronica presses Tony on his intentions and he backs off. However, after some time the two have sex; however, feeling in no way engaged, Tony disappears afterwards, which hurts Veronica’s feelings. A few months later Tony receives a letter from Adrian asking permission to date his former girlfriend. Tony responds first with a quick and easy-going postcard; but on second thought he replies “properly” (p. 42) in a letter in which he warns Adrian of the dangers of getting involved with Veronica. Tony hints at incestuous relations with father and brother. On his return from a long vacation, he learns of Adrian’s suicide. The friend who last saw Adrian alive testifies to his happiness and his being in love, which state of

mind brings Tony to admire Adrian for acting on the conclusion of logical thought. Veronica, who he does not contact, is initially the object of blame and then simply of pity. Tony lives a peaceful life (gets married, divorced, but is on good terms with his ex-wife; has a daughter and grandchildren and is retired) until he receives a legacy of five hundred pounds and a diary from Veronica's mother. The problem is that the inherited diary is Adrian's and that Veronica has no intention to part with it. She only releases a sibylline fragment of it when the two finally meet. When Tony insists, she gives him the nasty farewell letter of yore. Veronica is more enigmatic than ever, answers Tony's questions like a riddling Sphinx, and finally manages to disquiet him. Her final act is to show him a group of mentally ill patients in community care. Among these a young man in his forties is very affectionate to her. Tony turns detective and discovers that this individual is not Veronica's son, as he had wrongly assumed, but the son of Sarah, Veronica's mother, hence Veronica's brother. He believes Adrian jr. to be his friend's son because of their physical resemblance ("I simply saw it in his face [...] I saw it and felt it", p. 137), but the narrator's impression is confirmed by no external authority.

The beginning of *The Only Story* also dates back to the early 1960s. On his university holidays, Paul Roberts, 19, joins the local tennis club, where he meets and falls for 48-year old Susan Macleod, and his advances are reciprocated. Paul becomes a familiar presence at Susan's, whose alcoholic husband mocks him as his wife's "fancy boy" (p. 77), but also teaches him to do crosswords. Occasionally Macleod becomes aggressive towards Paul, but it is his brutal act of violence against his wife that prompts the lovers' escape to London. They live in an apartment bought with Susan's money. He starts training as a lawyer; she keeps house and after some time they get lodgers. One of these is Paul's best friend, Eric, who alerts him to the fact that Susan drinks more than she should. The second part of the narrative, told in an impersonal 'you' by Paul, turns into the unhappy tale of Susan's deterioration and the end of their relationship. The third part is even more impersonal: Paul, in his old age, sees himself as a failure and an outcast. The third-person narrator assumes the task of saving a memory, which amounts to representing Susan "correctly" (p. 163), her "innocence of soul" (p. 164), before the ravages of alcohol. At the end of this revision, which resembles the long self-investigation of psychoanalysis, very little of the myth of love remains. The protagonist's emotional intelligence is fully ripe only when it is too late, as a certain Kimberley from Nashville testifies when she reveals herself to be smarter than him in their relationship. Only when he is done with sex does he garner the necessary detachment which leads him to fully empathize with other people, even with, for him, the most problematic character, the "villain" Mr. Gordon Macleod.

If one is familiar with English realist fiction, these stories must produce distinct echoes of classical themes explored by canonical and non-canonical novelists. Rewriting or revision is itself part and parcel of a postmodern poetics. All reviews and critical studies of the two novels seem to

relish the game of spotting direct or indirect quotations, allusions, references and the like. For example, the very title, *The Sense of an Ending*, repeats verbatim the title of Frank Kermode's classic study, which inspires the position of professor Old Joe Hunt in the history controversy at school (p. 18). The fundamental issue of addition *vs* increase concerning both life and memory, and hence history, comes directly from Philip Larkin's *Dockery and Son*. Albert Camus (*Le Mythe de Sisyphe*) has the final word on the group's discussion of suicide (p. 13). Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* lends its format to Adrian's diary (pp. 85-6). *Hamlet* gives a line ("shuffle off this mortal coil") to Paul's late meditations in *The Only Story* (p. 163).

As Colm Tóibín pointed out in his review of *The Sense of an Ending*, Barnes takes what he needs from the English novel, the key elements which make it different. For instance, the sense of class. This carries the most obvious implications of class conflict or tension, which applies to the figure of the gentleman and/or civil servant (whose classical elaboration is Dickens's famous trilogy: *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, and *Great Expectations*); to the sense of social awkwardness felt by the lower classes; and to the notion of culture as the antidote to materialism and consumer society, as Raymond Williams has shown. Another characteristic element involves the issue of sexual awkwardness and the coming-of-age story. The typical setting of the boarding school is reminiscent of the popular play by Alan Bennett, *The History Boys*. The familiar scene of the young man's visit to his girlfriend's grandiose house, where his sexual drives are shamefully repressed, is described by Alan Hollinghurst in *The Line of Beauty* (2004), among others. This very English theme also connects with Flaubert's *Éducation Sentimentale*, particularly in Barnes's variations. Lastly, both *The Sense of an Ending* and *The Only Story* exude an aura of disappointment, typical of every *Bildungsroman*, as the hero must learn to lower his ambitions and expectations in order to negotiate his active role in society. Generally, the failure to do so amounts to the hero's death (as in the most classic example of the genre, *Le rouge et le noir*).

More elements are indicated by Tóibín, to which we would like to add some typically narratological features. As is well known, detection is one of the distinguishing traits of English narrative, starting with *Robinson Crusoe* and its 'indiscretion' (exploration) into the dark side of nature and human nature; evolving into a bespoke genre – the detective story; and ending with all the diverse modulations of psychological investigation. In fact, *The Sense of an Ending* has been defined as a "psychological thriller" by Barnes himself (in the interview at the premiere of the film adaptation of his novel), of the kind that even constructs a gothic atmosphere underlining the protagonist's obsession ("haunted" is a key word in the second part of the novel and in its ending); while *The Only Story*, beyond being for the most part a long psychoanalytical session, presents us with domestic spaces and family relations evocative of Pinteresque atmospheres.

An element worth considering as postmodern is the decentring of the self, in the sense of both the character and the narrator. Anticipations of split subjects are, for example, the many doubles of late Victorian novels. In postmodern fiction a similar function is performed by playing on allusive proper names, thus reducing characters to fictional personae, masks, avatars, etc. In *The Sense of an Ending* Adrian alludes to the figure of the philosopher-emperor. Tony's surname, Webster, reminds the reader of both the revenge playwright and the lexicographer; Veronica plays the part of her saintly namesake by holding up the sudarium as a mirror to Tony. In addition, Veronica's surname, Ford, may well be a further allusion to the author of *The Good Soldier*, Ford Madox Ford, recognized as a possible source of Barnes's novel. Both works (by Ford and Barnes) share an unreliable narrator. Moreover, Kermode and Barnes wrote critical essays on Ford's fiction. Lastly, the panoply of metanarrative documents—such as diaries, letters, wills, notes, etc., at times lost, stolen, hidden or even non-existent (à la Poe and James)—puts in doubt the positivistic faith in a historiography based on documental evidence.

Following Peter Brooks's distinction between closure and ending, readers are alert to the fact that *The Sense of an Ending* closes on the narrator's discovery concerning Adrian jr. The *dénouement* marks the moment when, in Genette's terms, the *histoire* ends and the *récit* begins; the event from which narrator (and reader) move back to interpret or reinterpret everything. From the vantage point of the closure, narrator (and reader) identify the meaningful event worth starting narration from in the event which occurs exactly at mid-novel: this is when Tony receives the lawyer's letter containing the money and the promise of Adrian's diary (four pages from the beginning of Part II, p. 62). Typically, this is the event chosen by the filmmaker, Ritesh Batra, as the beginning of the filmic adaptation. As a general rule, the ending is instead the space reserved for the narrator's reflections on his story, the epilogue or afterword where traditionally the moral of the story is found and the narrator bids adieu to the reader. Now, if a distinction is usefully drawn between closure and ending, then the same is applicable to the opening and beginning as, respectively, the prologue and the event that trigger the narration.

Barnes's two novels put these distinctions to good use. Before and after the actual time of the *récit*, there are spaces the narrator reserves for himself and to a dialogue with his reader in an effort to make sense. In *The Sense of an Ending* both opening and ending are designed as random lists of memories or flashbacks, reproducing events of the story mainly connected with water or liquids. The last flash of memory occurring in the mind of the narrator at the end of the novel is the phenomenon of the Severn Bore, a well-known tidal wave formed when the ocean waves move upstream into the Bristol Channel, which in the opening had been judged 'nonsensical' (pp. 35-6). As such this natural

phenomenon is a metaphor for plotting in the first novel, but also works as a transition to the second one, *The Only Story*, as we will see.

The general structure of *The Sense of an Ending* is two novels in one. The first part is inspired by the social and sexual sense of shame of the protagonist as a young man. Tony is at odds with his family and its common sense, but also with the upper class represented by Veronica (“In this country shadings of class resist time longer than differentials in age”, p. 73). He has intellectual ambitions but is secretly jealous of Adrian’s superior intelligence. In Dickensian terms, Tony shares Pip’s feelings of inadequacy in Miss Havisham’s household and Copperfield’s inferiority complex with regard to Steerforth. The traumatic episode is the weekend at Veronica’s, where Tony feels humiliated but also intrigued by a halo of dubious relations in the family. The closure to this part is Adrian’s suicide, which incredibly does not spur Tony’s curiosity and investigation concerning the motives behind such a tragic end. Tony is happy with little information and with his own lucubrations and finally almost archives the event as one of many in the rapid summary of all the rest of his life after his university years, which works as the ending to the first part. The whole of this first half of the novel indeed serves as a long preamble, which reports about the way some events and some relationships have been lived and interpreted by the protagonist up to a certain point. He has grown to be a “peaceable” (pp. 54, 68) middle-aged English man with a “cowardly” (p. 93) attitude, in Veronica’s terms, to avoid asking the right questions, the ones about himself and not the others.

The second part is the real “psychological thriller” inspired by the sense of guilt of a protagonist quickly aligning with the narrative stance. The ‘whodunnit’ investigation starts from a detail, a letter which, even if lost to its writer, had always been present in his memory, although diminished in the gravity and disagreeableness of its contents and impact. This letter physically reappears, or rather returns like Pip’s convict or Hamlet’s ghost, and induces a second reading, turning a teenage rant into an ominously effective curse, thus fostering a different prospect on the narrator’s self-image. The change in the protagonist’s value judgement is of such great import as to persuade him that he has finally understood (“I got it”, p. 148). What he has understood is that he would be responsible for all the catastrophes which occurred to his two friends. According to his interpretation, he pushed Adrian into Veronica’s mother’s arms, being aware of her possible nymphomania; he consequently drove Adrian to suicide and even caused the birth of a “damaged” child (p. 139). Hence, the peaceable/peaceful, victimized, lower-class scum Tony can finally become the hero of his novel, the Archfiend at the origin of everything, despite what Sphinx Veronica keeps telling him all the time—“You never got it and you never will. Stop even trying” (p. 144)—and in total neglect of a possible alternative sequence of causes/effects which may not include him at all. In Adrian’s diary

entry (p. 85) these alternatives are posited using two equations containing the initials of the protagonists' names:

$$b = s - v \times a^1$$

and

$$a^2 + v + a^1 \times s = b$$

At the end, the narrator eliminates the first expression, where his initial is absent, and validates the second, where his initial is not only present but begins the equation (p. 149). In this way Tony can celebrate his social revenge, by 'killing' the friends who had made him suffer, twice: once by superstitiously believing in the efficacy of his curse, and then by demolishing Adrian in his imagination ("But now I had to recalibrate Adrian", p. 140), who would have committed suicide because "he was afraid of the pram in the hall" (p. 142)!

Yet, he will never recover his equanimity and will remain forever "haunted" (p. 149) by the ghosts conjured up by his sense of guilt. There will never be a *change* in his life. He will be trapped in his compulsion to repeat the typical act of narration, that is, reordering events according to causes and effects, whereas he is now left with only a random sequence of memories. To Tony Webster, revenge playwright and poor archivist, who has kept neither Sarah's letter after the weekend visit nor Adrian's permission letter (pp. 39, 42), the process of writing his story does not result in therapy; at most it becomes an exercise of sadomasochistic *excusatio*. APOLOGY is the object of his last mail to Veronica (p. 142).

What is the reader left with at the ending of *The Sense of an Ending*? Everything seems to be in doubt. All the protagonist/narrator's arguments have proved wrong, biased or incomplete. Every conclusion can be revolved into its opposite. The general dyadic structure and the random seriality of the narrator's memory both at the ending and at the opening of the novel throw light on the ironical use of the title, since no comedy or happy ending and no positivist history is ever possible in this story. Indeed, the protagonist/narrator makes no sense of the ending. His very last words are "there is great unrest" (p. 150). The 'nonsensical' movement of the Severn Bore is strengthened by the echo in this final sentence from one of "Marshall's idiocies" (p. 5), the vaguely humorous answer of one of his schoolmates to their teacher's warm-up question about the Tudor age. As readers, we are left suspended in a kind of tragicomic finale, baffled by hermeneutic alternatives all simultaneously valid. Like surfers on the Severn tide,³ we are left waiting for it to take its natural course back. We keep

³ There are some clips of surfers riding the Severn Bore on Youtube. See also the Severn Bore website <http://www.thesevernbores.co.uk/> and page <https://www.severn-bore.co.uk/>.

hoping to make sense of no ending, since we feel that we really cannot trust the narrator until his last report and interpretations of facts, which might have been quite different or at least have a different meaning. This is especially the case for the three hinges of the narrative: the weekend at Veronica's; the motives and the real significance of Tony's letter; and Adrian jr.'s paternity.

In short, are we really to believe that there is no chance that the Severn will flow naturally again, regain its natural movement and change direction again after the Bore? Is it so very implausible that 'life and opinions' might not be different?

Beyond Postmodernism?

The Only Story opens exactly where the first novel ends, on the same doubts and reflections, which now surround the story of Paul Roberts and Susan Macleod. At least regarding the age factor, the couple seems to re-enact Adrian Finn and Sarah Ford's relationship, which never got really narrated in *The Sense of an Ending*. The second novel surprises us when measured against the decidedly postmodern quality of the first one for at least two reasons.

Firstly, its opening represents the inversion of the Severn Bore. It seems to contain, if not a conclusion, at least a new possible and more suitable interpretation of the dilemmas left suspended in the former ending. It is as if this time the new narrator and protagonist, Paul Roberts, caught the hint at the end of Adrian's fragment ("So for instance if Tony...") and, very much in the same style of reasoning, decided to complete the hypothesis by following "traditional narrative terminology" (pp. 85-6) by commenting on the fact that Tony got stuck in and on his own egotism and narcissism only insofar as he offers a form of self-aggrandisement, albeit negative, which in any event forbids him to really understand and empathize:

do all these retellings bring you closer to the truth of what happened or move you further away? I'm not sure. One test might be whether, as the years pass, you come out better from your own story, or worse. To come out worse might indicate that you are being more truthful. On the other hand, there is the danger of being retrospectively anti-heroic: making yourself out to have behaved worse than you actually did can be a form of self-praise. (p. 3)

The reader of *The Sense of an Ending* can finally make sense of a nonending by following Paul's opening meditation.

Secondly, the general evolution of the 'only' story makes it a *Bildungsroman* and even one of the classical type: the young hero, who is completely wrapped up in his romantic love, must learn to humble his ego and demythologize his monomaniacal passion in order to grow and 'come of age'. In other words, he must *recalibrate* his younger persona in order to be able to recognise and identify himself in others. The narrative structure is triadic—one might almost say Hegelian—and is marked by the use of the three persons (I, you, he) through which the protagonist narrates himself with a final

triumph of the omniscient narrator, who as a *deus ex machina* carries out a successful self-analysis and revises all the characters and the roles played by them in the story. *The Only Story* ends on the word “helpful”, that is, on human sympathy—as in the best tradition of Victorian *Bildungsromane* (*Great Expectations* and even more so *Middlemarch*)—and on the banality of everyday life. After having finally empathised even with Susan’s husband, Gordon Macleod, the most negative and ambiguous character of the story, and having felt the same “anger” in himself; after having reassessed Susan without losing his pity for her; after discarding any possible sentimental, consoling, ‘cinematographic’ finale on the death bed for his love story, Paul’s mind gets carried away by his business and its chores, and by the everyday thought that his car needs tanking. To Paul Roberts, writing his story has indeed had the therapeutic effect which was suspended in *The Sense of an Ending*.

In conclusion, one must ask, Is the macrotext consisting of the two novels by Julian Barnes readable in terms of postmodern poetics? In our view *The Sense of an Ending* appears to be the more postmodern work of the two, whereas *The Only Story* seems to conform to more classical models of fiction, notwithstanding the author’s uncommon adoption of three different narrative personae for each part of the novel. Should that comprise, however, the sense of the ending of postmodernism? The suggestion that the day after postmodernism—“dead and buried” according to Alan Kirby—takes us back to more traditional types of writing or pushes us forward into the demotic forms of digital textuality that fetish the recipients of texts instead of their authors? In that case, the time of new digital artefacts would be forever lost to postmodern authors, only to be (re)gained by their committed and collaborative receivers.

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The New York Times and the Immigration Quota Laws of the 1920s.

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How will our future historians interpret such a law? They will have to tell the truth. They will have to record the fact that this measure embodied in it a new conception of the grouping of the people of this country, a precept which is so foreign to the letter and spirit of that great human document, the Constitution of the United States.

(The New York Times, Feb 15, 1924⁴)

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the immigration flow to the United States was so massive that Americans feared an invasion, which induced a segment of the population to ask for a limit on immigration. Several measures had already been taken, but none had significantly curtailed the migration movement (Patterson 1-10). At the beginning of the twentieth century, foreigners represented between 13% and 15% of the total population (Hutchinson 2). Thus, on May 19, 1921, and then on April 13, 1924, quota laws were eventually adopted to control the in-coming flow of immigrants in a more drastic way. They marked the end of free immigration to the United States.

There have been extensive analyses of these laws, but none focusing on how the issue was covered by *The New York Times*, the most influential and liberal paper of the New York City area where European migrants landed in considerable numbers. In 1920, foreigners represented over 36% of the city's population, the highest percentage of all American cities. This is why it is worth examining the opinions that the paper epitomized in its coverage of the debate related to the two laws. The paper's ambivalent position illustrates the identity crisis that the United States was experiencing due to both the need for a large foreign-born population and the desire to preserve Anglo-conformity.

I - A progressive restrictive legislation

The immigration question had become a major political issue by the end of the nineteenth century when the immigration flow was huge. Immigrants came mainly from Europe, which explains why the quota laws concentrated on the European movement, even if some clauses of the new legislation concerned Asian immigration, which was banned.

⁴ To avoid too fastidious a reading, only the dates of the articles in *The New York Times* are mentioned. The list of articles provided here is not exhaustive. The selection of articles is seen as a relevant illustration of the issues concerned.

Table 1. Immigration to the US by country of origin (selected from Europe)

Countries of birth	Periods			
	1891-1900	1901-1910	1911-1920	1921-1930
NW Europe				
England and Wales	271,538	525,950	341,408	339,570
Germany	505,152	341,498	193,945	412,202
Ireland	388,416	339,065	146,181	211,234
Norway	95,015	190,505	66,395	68,531
Sweden	226,266	249,534	95,074	97,249
SE Europe				
Greece	15,979	16,519	184,201	51,084
Hungary	181,288	808,511	453,649	32,868
Italy	651,893	2,045,877	1,109,524	455,315
Russia	505,290	249,534	95,074	97,249

Source: Department of Commerce, Washington D.C.

Progressively, from the 1870s onwards, immigrants coming from Southern, Eastern, and Central Europe (e.g., Russia, Italy, Poland, Greece) replaced the previous immigration wave, which means that the new immigrants did not belong to the same groups as the members of the core society whose ancestors came from Northern and Western Europe. The new immigrants embodied cultural heritages and social patterns different from those of the Anglo-Americans. Hence, their massive presence seemed to jeopardize the national identity, institutions, and power of the dominant Anglo-American group. As Mary Grace Patterson has maintained, “the war had germinated the belief that the permanent immigration policy of the United States should provide for immigrants whose racial stock corresponded with that of the basic population of the country in the earlier years of its existence” (24). The acceptability of newcomers seemed to depend on their belonging to specific national groups.

Table 2. Country of birth of the foreign-born population, in percentages

Regions	Years							
	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920
NW Europe	90.0	90.5	86.5	81.7	77.5	66.4	48.5	39.6
SE Europe	0.5	1.4	2.2	4.3	9.1	19.3	38.8	45.7

Source: Niles Carpenter, *Immigrants and their Children*, Census Monograph, 1920.

Several laws had previously been adopted banning the entry of specific classes of persons: criminals and lunatics were banned in 1875 (Higham 1955; Patterson 1944, 42-45). In 1882, and then in 1903, the list of individuals likely to be excluded was expanded to include prostitutes, anarchists, and people likely to become a public charge. These individuals could represent a burden, even a menace, for the United States, as *The New York Times* advanced on May 4, 1902:

“We are not, as our readers are aware, opposed to immigration in itself. We recognize the enormous benefit it has been to the country... But we hold that it is the duty of the American Nation, at the stage of development it has reached, to impose with strictness reasonable restrictions on the increase of immigration that is hindering and injurious”.

Thus the first law explicitly aiming at reducing the immigration from Southern, Eastern, and Central Europe was adopted in 1917. The Literacy Act⁵ stipulated that all individuals over 16 must be able to read and write in any language to be entitled to enter the United States. The rate of illiteracy in Southern, Eastern, and Central European countries was known to be higher than in Northern and Western countries: in Italy, for example, according to sources and regions, it stood between 50% and 80% of the population, whereas less than 10% of the French, British, Norwegians, and Germans were illiterate (Cabot Lodge 1896).

Restrictionists, however, maintained that the law was not efficient enough, as the flow continued. In 1900, foreign-born whites in the United States totalled 10,213,800; in 1910, they were 13,345,500, and in 1920 they were still 13,712,700. The foreign white stock amounted to 32,243,300 persons in 1910 and reached 36,398,900 in 1920 (Hutchinson 5). Therefore, new bills had to be introduced in order to protect American workers and the American population as a whole. The laws had to reduce the coming of undesirable individuals; new immigrants were seen as undesirable, as they were “very”, even “too” different from the native stock.

New immigrants were deemed to belong to inferior races (or national groups); hence, they jeopardized the Anglo-American race. According to the supporters of eugenics, individuals coming from Southern Europe belonged to the Mediterranean race; those born in Central and Eastern Europe belonged to the Alpine race, whereas those coming from Northwestern Europe belonged to the superior race of Nordics. Hence, in his famous book *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916), Madison Grant called attention to the danger of a possible “national suicide” because of the hybridization of the population resulting from the new immigration flow.

The loss of confidence in the power of American society to assimilate foreigners and the failure of the Melting Pot, in addition to the consequent mongrelization of the population, induced many Americans to demand more drastic measures (Jan 7, 1923). Most foreigners were Catholics and Jews, which challenged the supremacy of Protestantism in the United States. Their cultural and daily practices differed from those of the national population, thus calling the national identity into

⁵ The bill had been introduced four times but vetoed by successive presidents of the United States before it was adopted in 1917. President Woodrow Wilson had vetoed it, as he did not believe that the quality of immigrants was a problem since the industrialization of the country required more workers. In addition, such a bill was contrary to the traditional right of asylum provided by the United States. Yet members of Congress adopted it, as they maintained that the country was in danger of losing its identity because of the presence of too many foreigners.

question. They could also bring radical ideas into the United States. In Europe, communism and anarchism had progressed – in Italy or Russia, for example – and foreigners could be political agents bringing chaos to the United States, as confirmed by the assassination of President McKinley in 1901. Moreover, immigrants were job competitors, ready to work in poor conditions and for lower wages, whereas trade unions were eager to protect native workers. As a consequence, the United States seemed threatened.

An Emergency Quota Act was adopted by Congress in May 1921. This Act was to be temporary. It stipulated that no more than 3% of the foreign-born population for each nationality residing in the United States in 1910 could be admitted each year. No more than 20% of the annual quota could be admitted per month. As newcomers were still too numerous, according to the restrictionists who wished to maintain Anglo-American supremacy in the United States, a more drastic bill was introduced in Congress in December 1923. Its aim was to continue admitting migrants from Northwestern Europe, as they belonged to the same national groups as the Anglo-Americans, while preventing further immigration from Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe. The new law, the Johnson-Reed Act (also called the National Origins Act), was adopted in May 1924. It ruled that no more than 2% of the foreign-born population for each nationality residing in the United States in 1890 could be admitted each year. The use of passports was extended. The percentage of people eligible to enter the United States was reduced, and the year of reference was changed, as new immigrants were not as numerous in the United States in 1890 as they were in 1910. This new measure explicitly revealed that the target of the 1924 law was migrants originating from Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe.

Table 3. Examples of quotas allotted to selected European countries – 1921 and 1924

Countries	Quotas 1921	Quotas 1924	Countries	Quotas 1921	Quotas 1924
England	77,342	34,007	Greece	3,063	100
Germany	67,607	51,227	Hungary	5,747	473
Ireland	Included in England	28,567	Italy	42,057	3,845
Norway	12,202	6,453	Russia	24,405	2,248
NW Europe	197,630	140,999	SE Europe	155,585	20,423

The selection of migrants was based on their belonging to specific national groups; the prevailing view was that these new immigrants were so different from the members of the core American society that they were hardly assimilable. Thus, they were regarded as a political, cultural, and social threat, and many members of Congress maintained that it was time to save America!

The debate over the question of the adoption of such laws was extensively covered by *The New York Times*. The issue was crucial to the future of the nation and its identity. To provide a shelter

for migrants was part of the national legacy, as the Statue of Liberty testified; to close the doors to foreigners meant a break with the image of the Promised Land, a change in the national destiny of the New World.

II - *The New York Times*, an ambivalent approach to immigration

The adoption of the 1921 and 1924 laws seemed to challenge the basic principles of the nation, as John Higham has maintained: “the old belief of America as a promised land for those who yearned to be free was over” (1955, 330). The Knights of Columbus, for example, created by Irish Catholics, protested against the 1924 law, arguing that it was based on prejudice, too much bigotry, and racial discrimination (*Columbia*, Dec 15, 1924, 14). The laws emanated from feelings of superiority of the members of the dominant group and their wish to protect their institutions, nation, and identity.

The dominant discourse regarded new immigrants as unwelcome, and it seems that *The New York Times* sustained the opinion that those newcomers could represent a danger for the nation. At first, the editorial stance attested to a certain ambivalence over the question. Editorials discussed how immigration was progressively bound to be restricted. From the 1870s onwards, when new immigration appeared to be a problem due to its massive flow, the editorials favored restriction because the paper worried about the influx of criminals, lunatics, and beggars (Simon and Alexander 197-205). Some editorials, however, also considered the overall increase in immigration something positive. *The New York Times* acknowledged that foreign-born workers were needed, as the industrialization of the country was in full bloom.

In the late 1880s, however, as new immigration increased – during the decade nearly five million foreigners had arrived (Taeuber 294) – the paper took a hard line and called for greater restrictions; it suggested that more careful naturalization procedures were necessary to prevent the political influence of those who were likely to praise the disruption of the American political system. Radicals and anarchists were feared, especially after the Haymarket Square incident (1886). Hence *The New York Times* called for political assimilation. In the 1890s, one tenth of all editorials dealt with the immigration issue and tended to call for immigration laws to be strictly enforced (Simon and Alexander 202). The fear was that an invasion of “undesirable foreigners” – those who could not assimilate, who would spread infectious diseases and radical ideas, and who would change the national demographic spectrum – would bring about confusion in the nation (June 24, 1893).

During the first decade of the twentieth century, *The New York Times* insisted on the difference between desirable and undesirable migrants: the United States “needed immigrants as much as ever [because] this [was] a land of opportunities” (December 27, 1908), but it also warned

its readership about the political and social danger that foreigners might represent. 1907 was the peak year of immigration; according to the figures of the US Government Census, over 1.2 million people landed in the United States (over 6.2 million arrived during the 1900-1910 decade). On May 4, 1902, an editorial titled “The Rush to America” warned the population about the increasing number of newcomers and suggested a stricter control on borders. Nevertheless, in the 1900s, editorials showed some ambivalence, arguing that the economy of the country depended on a large labor force, namely the force that unskilled foreign-born workers could provide, but they were also so numerous that their presence posed a threat to the mainstream population.

Thus the paper advocated some control, some restrictions, but not the prohibition of immigration. In the 1910s, *The New York Times* opposed the adoption of a literacy test because of the traditional image of America as a land of freedom for political refugees. When the war broke out in Europe, it feared labor shortages, as it would be difficult for European workers to come to the United States. Yet, at the same time, the paper also resented the massive flow of Europeans fleeing the ravages of the conflict. For *The New York Times*, patriotism was stronger than economic interest. Hence, it encouraged immigrants already in the United States to stay and assimilate instead of being “birds of passage”; they should embrace the democratic and patriotic principles of their foster society.

The editorials of the 1920s focused on the need for efficient legislation to restrict or at least control immigration but opposed the adoption of quotas, as the criteria were unfair: they discriminated against some races in particular (May 11, 1920; January 15, 1924), and they might separate families (April 15, 1924). *The New York Times* recommended more humanitarian considerations: children and political refugees were to be admitted (June 10, 1924; July 30, 1926), and immigrant smuggling controlled (May 10, 1925). These are the topics developed by the articles published between 1919 and 1925.

III - *The New York Times*, a criticism of the implementation of the quota laws

On the one hand, *The New York Times* supported the adoption of laws to limit the number of migrants. It stood for selecting migrants and controlling their flow (Dec 3, 1920). For example, it reported many testimonies in favor of a limitation of new immigration and “the right to restrict immigration”, which was the title of a letter to the editor (Dec 7, 1923).

On the other hand, *The New York Times* condemned the “inhuman” procedures of the quota laws, without mentioning the fact that such laws did not meet the needs of the United States. The paper argued that they were unfairly implemented and gave a negative image of the Promised Land that the United States should stand for. Moreover, it seemed that the United States did not need such drastic laws, as the immigration movement had already begun to decrease (July 10, 1921). Some

argued that the country was in danger because of the ethnic and racial composition of the newer wave, but for *The New York Times*, to mention “the deterioration of the Nordic race” was an excuse, and it reflected “insincerity” (July 10, 1921). Moreover, the paper reminded its readers that immigrants and unskilled workers from Southern, Eastern, and central Europe in particular had contributed to the building of the nation; for example, Italians had built the railroads, and Poles had toiled in the mines (July 10, 1921; July 11, 1920; July 16, 1921). The article published on July 10, 1921, which is rather long – three columns – extensively criticized the adoption of the first quota Act because the situation had already improved due to reduced numbers of immigrants after the war.

The flaws of the laws were extensively covered: the harsh conditions of welcoming migrants at Ellis Island were said to define the center as a place of “indignity” (Dec 14, 1923) as Fiorello La Guardia, the forthright mayor of the City of New York, noted: for newcomers, Ellis Island meant “the suffering of the poor and innocent immigrants who looked to America as a haven of rest and freedom and safety” (Nov 18, 1923). Overall, Ellis Island was overcrowded, and many newcomers were stranded there, waiting to enter the country or be deported (Sept 13, 1921; Oct 2, 1923; Nov 24, 1923; Aug 7, 1924). The confusion, the lack of coherence in the organisation of authorities, and “the lack of forethought” in implementing the quota restrictions were criticized. The limited monthly quota in particular compelled migrants to calculate when best to migrate; in other words, they had better leave Europe by the end of each month to reach the American coast by the beginning of the following month to ensure the monthly quota was not exhausted (by the end of the nineteenth century, it took about one week to cross the ocean). Such practices led to an endless line of steamships waiting to be accepted off New York City harbor or in European embarkation ports (June 10, 1921; Oct 23, 1921; April 1, 1923; July 18, 1923; Aug 18, 1924; April 19, 1925).

The New York Times insisted on the drawbacks of the system, as American consulates in Europe did not succeed in delivering an adequate number of passports or preventing departures when quotas were full to enable people to avoid long waiting periods and overcrowded conditions of accommodation on Ellis Island (June 27, 1921; July 17, 1921; Oct 2, 1921; Sept 13, 1921; April 9, 1922; June 5, 1923; April 1, 1923; Nov 14, 1923; Dec 12, 1923). The paper castigated the intricacy of the laws that worsened the conditions of migration and travel. It deplored the deportations, a great number of which could have been avoided if the American consulates in Europe and medical or legal examiners in European ports had properly followed the requirements imposed by the laws (April 17, 1921; July 17, 1921; Sept 18, 1921; Feb 19, 1922; June 5, 1923; June 10, 1924). In brief, the paper advocated more effective regulations from the American Bureau of Immigration to avoid “needless cruelty” (Sept 15, 1921).

To condemn the conditions of waiting and life on Ellis Island, *The New York Times* did not hesitate to quote the statements of influential figures such as the Secretary of Labor, James Davies (Aug 18, 1923), or Immigration Commissioner Curran, who recognized that:

“it was a challenge to human intelligence if the execution of the quota law cannot be so carried out as to avoid having a single human being come all the way across the ocean and then having him go all the way back simply because we were not sufficiently acquainted with the situation beforehand to let him know what he could expect” (July 18, 1923).

One of the main grievances regarding the new legislation was the separation of families of migrants (Sept 9, 1921; Sept 14, 1921; Sept 26, 1923). From speeches by members of Congress to testimonies by social workers or migrants, the weight of the requirements of the laws and deportations due to exhausted quotas on the separation of families was severely blamed. For this reason in particular, Frances Kellor, the well-known social reformer, condemned the quota laws for “repudiating the sanctity of the family as a basis of organized society” (1923, I, 1). The paper gave the example of a Yugoslavian family as “[...] one of the pathetic cases where the immigration laws have separated families [...] because the September quota for [Yugoslavia] had been exhausted” (August 10, 1921). It is the heartless character of the legislation that *The New York Times* criticized, as such practices were “un-American and inhuman” (June 5, 1923). The lack of organization led to delays, long waiting periods, a lack of respect and confusion, as one reader testified in 1923: an Armenian family had had to wait several weeks before being able to enter the United States because the monthly quota of their country of origin had just been exhausted when they first reached the American coast due to the delay of their steamship. Such situations showed “the incoherence and inefficiency of the [1921] law”, confirming that it was “cynical, cruel piffle”, as one reader wrote (Aug 24, 1923). The very fact that the paper published this kind of testimony reflected its eagerness to shed light on the negative consequences of the law.

Another consequence that the paper denounced was smuggling (Feb 27, 1923). It is especially after the adoption of the second quota law in 1924 that smuggling and the arrival of illegal migrants became a problem (June 11, 1924; July 14, 1924; Nov 9, 1924; March 13, 1925; April 22, 1925; May 10, 1925). In addition to those who traveled on boats without proper documents, some illegally crossed the Mexican or Canadian borders in order to enter the United States. Others, especially seamen, overstayed on the national territory. It was necessary to be able to control the flow, and even if illegal migrants were relatively few in numbers, illegality represented a flaw in the system and should be avoided.

As a form of denunciation of the negative consequences of the quota laws, *The New York Times* reported some reactions from European governments. In Italy, the government deplored the adoption of quotas and the consequential decrease in the number of Italian workers in the United States. There were fewer remittances, which constituted a serious drop in earnings for the country (July 11, 1920; Nov 12, 1925). In Austria, the government expected the United States to provide help in solving the unemployment problem “by a special emergency law [...] admitting 50,000 Austrian workers [...] to lift a very great burden off Austria” (May 28, 1925). This help was never provided. Similarly, in Romania, the government deplored the economic consequences of the limitation of emigration to the United States, as mobility and remittances were part of the means for the recovery of the country after the war (Feb 21, 1924). The British Secretary for Foreign Affairs criticized the lack of cooperation between the British and American authorities when some British citizens, women and children, were detained on Ellis Island (June 22, 1923). By preventing workers from coming to the United States, the quota laws disregarded the economic – and diplomatic – relationships that existed between the Old and the New Worlds (Oct 2, 1921; April 30, 1924; May 20, 1924; May 27, 1924; Nov 12, 1925). Surprisingly enough, according to *The New York Times*, many European countries expressed regret rather than anger at learning about the new laws. Some even hoped for a presidential veto to stop the legislative process and reject the bills (April 20, 1921; Oct 1, 1922; April 24, 1924- p. 2); this was not to be. As President Warren Harding exclaimed while signing the 1921 bill into law, “America must be kept American!”

IV - *The New York Times* and the ethical controversy over the quota laws

Overall, a large part of the population and *The New York Times* agreed with the notion of limiting immigration, as the New World should not be invaded by poor people fleeing their war-torn countries. The paper noted that “The majority of the people clearly believe that [...] the United States is not a hospital nor a tuberculosis sanitarium for the feeble-minded” (Aug 13, 1922). In the same article, however, *The New York Times* recalled that except for “the Red Indian race, [Americans] were immigrants or descended from immigrants”. Thus, what the paper mainly opposed was the criterion of admittance of foreigners, in other words, selection according to national origin, which raised widespread opposition. Whereas the 1921 law tended to favor old immigration (from Northwestern Europe) rather than new immigration on a temporary and urgent basis, the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 accentuated the discrepancies, some would say injustices, between old and new immigration: the 1924 law was to be permanent, and administrative procedures for immigration and naturalization and medical requirements became much stricter. In explaining the provisions of the new law, *The New York Times* gave evidence of the injustice and discrimination used for the selection

of newcomers. In January 1921, it stressed the complication the new administrative requirements brought about, especially the adoption of “viséd passports,” as the law stipulated (Jan 17, 1921; Feb 19, 1922; March 12, 1922; Jan 2, 1923, May 9, 1923; Jan 14, 1924).

Several times the paper published essays about the history of immigration as an attempt to convince its readers of the positive contribution of the foreign-born population to the United States (July 11, 1920; July 31, 1921; Aug 13, 1922; Feb 17, 1924; May 18, 1924). Many articles dealt with the race-biased criteria, which explained the choice of the 1890 census as the year of reference to calculate the national quotas in 1924. The racialization of the debate pushed the leaders of some ethnic groups and representatives from districts where foreigners were numerous to call attention to the discriminatory, even racist, character of the laws (April 11, 1920; Aug 13, 1922). For example, the Inter-Racial Council reminded Americans of the contribution of foreign workers to the construction of the country, while calling the bill an “unfair and discriminatory” measure. The Italian community resented this new law, as they felt they were its main target:

“Italians considered that the new restrictive measures are directed especially against them. They base this opinion on the consideration that they are the hardest hit by the restrictions, which almost amount to total exclusion of Italians. This naturally wounds their pride, especially after Mussolini’s efforts to raise his country’s prestige in the world”. (Feb 27, 1924; April 19, 1924)

The Jewish community held that the first quota law was “opposed to American principles, unscientific and contrary to the highest dictates of Humanity” (Feb 14, 1921; May 27, 1921). When members of Congress were debating the second quota Act in 1924 (the bill was introduced in December 1923), *The New York Times* widely discussed the issue and over several days published Max J. Kohler’s analysis of the situation, which nourished the debate (Jan 5-14-25, 1924). Kohler, a Jewish Democrat and a prominent figure in the Jewish community, was appointed district attorney in 1898 and admitted to practise before the Supreme Court of the United States in 1902. His criticism of the law was based, among other things, on the choice of the 1890 census, which was highly discriminatory against new immigrants – and Jews in particular. He blamed the current legislation for the unfairness of the Literacy Act of 1917, and the new provision that stipulated the necessity of newcomers to prove they had substantial revenues to be able to remain in the country. He criticized the law for betraying the traditional welcoming image of the New World and the mission of freedom and equality America was imbued with.

The Commissioner of the Health Department criticized the law as “silly”. A law was necessary but had to be “sound” and meet the needs of the country. If the foreign population could live in good sanitary conditions, they would be happy, prosperous, and would assimilate voluntarily

(Dec 3, 1922). Such a view rested on the belief that the United States had the unquestionable power of assimilating aliens. Hence, assimilation was not a question of ancestry but of opportunities to understand, appreciate, and melt into the mainstream. Without assimilation, immigration menaced American national identity, institutions, and “race”. Thus, assimilation should be preferred to restriction. The quota laws could therefore be seen as the legal epitome of the Americanization movement that had spread since the end of the nineteenth century.

The paper aired a strong argument in favor of the continuation of immigration from Southern, Eastern, and Central Europe, namely the contribution of unskilled European workers to the progress of the American nation. After the war, it could be a moral responsibility to help European countries by hiring their workers, as the New World had found in these men the tools to develop and gain prestige before the war. In addition, the industrialization of the United States was in full bloom, and in spite of the economic crises of 1921, the nation needed a large labor force, and unskilled immigrants represented a continuous, available, and exploitable one. Hence, employers in industry and in agriculture tended to oppose the quota laws.

The paper published numerous articles dealing with the labor shortage, especially in 1922 and 1923. The 1921 Emergency Quota Act was supposed to be temporary. In a sense, by extensively promoting arguments against the labor shortage, *The New York Times* may have tried to influence public opinion and members of Congress not to call for or adopt further drastic measures to reduce the influx of foreign workers. The national economy depended on immigration, and reducing the number of foreigners was detrimental to farming, as “many farms [were] being abandoned owing to inability to procure help” (May 22, 1924). Restrictive laws may bring about “chaos in industry” (Feb 21, 1923): the General Manager of the Associated General Contractors even testified in *The New York Times* that there was an actual shortage of some 300,000 men in the construction industry. In the same article, the paper quoted several witnesses, among them the General Counsel of the National Association of Manufacturers, a representative of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company of Youngstown, Ohio, and another representative of the Railway Business Association of Philadelphia. All of them supported immigration as an industrial tool.

The accumulation of testimonies emphasized the dire need for an additional labor force. The subtitles of some articles underlined this view: “Told of labor shortage”, “Opposed to ‘Prohibition’ of Labor”. To solve the problem of the labor shortage, Joseph E. Ransdell, a Democratic senator from Louisiana, even introduced a bill to have workers come when needed without taking the quotas into account (Dec 21, 1922). Czech-born representative Adolph J. Sabath from Illinois declared that the American mind had been “poisoned” by European prejudice and was betraying the spirit of the United States as a land of freedom (April 6, 1924). New immigrants were numerous in Illinois, and

Sabath sought to encourage further industrialization in his state. In 1920, foreigners represented over 19% of the total white population of Illinois, and the foreign stock represented over 32% of the total white population (Carpenter 1920, 27). The Democrats in the House of Representatives signed a declaration stating “We are underhoused, underconstructed and underdeveloped and are in sore need of those who are willing to do our work, both skilled and hard and laborious, and this bill would tend to keep out that class of immigrants best suited for such occupations” (Feb 25, 1924).

Opposite views were also aired in the paper. Henry Curran, Commissioner of Immigration for the Port of New York, was eager to save America; “the only chance to keep America for Americans is to have less immigration. We cannot be discordant, we must be one nation”, he said while explaining “the 30 reasons for not admitting more aliens” (March 17, 1924). For Representative Johnson, chairman of the House Committee on Immigration, the law was “America’s second Declaration of Independence” (April 19, 1924). The feeling of being endangered led to a real battle on the Congress floor, where debates were so tense that a fight even broke out between the representative from Oregon, who was in favor of drastic measures, and the representative from Massachusetts, who was opposed to a new law (April 9, 1924). *The New York Times* put the controversy forward regularly, and it is significant to note that to do so it quoted public figures, members of Congress, and in particular Representative Johnson or Senator Reed, who had both initiated the 1924 law, as if the paper wanted to show objectivity without embracing their views (Jan 5, 1924; Jan 27, 1924; Feb 17, 1924; April 9, 1924).

Members of the Immigration Restriction League or members of the House Immigration Committee declared that the national economy and the industries could do without an additional foreign labor force. They believed it was necessary to curtail immigration to maintain a fair standard of living in America, good wages, and good work conditions. Such statements were also advanced by trade unions (June 30, 1920; April 19, 1923; Dec 20, 1925). In this case, the ethical, moral, and humane principles the Promised Land was based upon were ignored.

“In spite of restricted immigration, the United States Steel Corporation seems to have done very well with a net earning of \$410,000,000 in 1922 in spite of a 20 per cent. increase in wages. If the immigration laws are relaxed for every one immigrant who will come as a possible employee of the steel and other corporations, none will come to drag down the living standards of the United States. [...] Cheap labor makes a cheap country” (April 18, 1923).

According to Harvard professor Robert De Ward, “most of the evils which have resulted from the enormous immigration of the past twenty-five years have been due to the reckless greed for cheap labor” (April 22, 1923). Previous laws, such as the Foran Act of 1885 that prohibited the importation and migration of aliens under contract, had tried to protect American workers from competition with

foreigners. These laws, however, were not efficient enough. In addition, the foreigners' presence amounted to a progressive penetration of radicalism in the United States because their countries of origin (Germany, Italy, and Russia, among others) had witnessed revolutions since the beginning of the twentieth century (May 7, 1920; Dec 4, 1920; July 31, 1921). Consequently, quotas were needed to protect the United States and its political system (May 7, 1920; Nov 28, 1920; Dec 3, 1920; Jan 9, 1921). Before he became President, Warren Harding, then a senator from Ohio, supported an "America First" policy of immigration that would admit only aliens capable of easy assimilation and who would become imbued quickly with the American spirit" (Sept 15, 1920).

For the supporters of the quota system, the process enforced by the law was "complicated but just and efficient", and the treatment was "honest and humane" (Aug 13, 1922) because it was detrimental to let individuals dream of a better life and start traveling across the ocean if they were refused admission; in America, migrants could profit from a better standard of living and better sanitary conditions. In brief, selection was a basic condition to guarantee better integration, as only those who were likely to adapt to American values could then enter.

"The issue is fairly well drawn," [Kansas Republican] Mr. [Jasper N.] Tincher said. "On the one side is beer, Bolshevism, unassimilating settlements and many flags. On the other side is constitutional government, one flag, the Stars and Stripes, and American institutions. If this bill is amended, it should be amended so as to put the immigration bars higher. No people should want to come here to make this country their home unless they are friendly to its Government." (April 9, 1924)

The paper invited its readers to make up their minds about the impact of the new legislation on the future and the image of the United States abroad. It reported the votes held in Congress, and then the remarks that President Coolidge uttered while signing the bill into law: "in signing this bill, which in its main features I heartily approve, I regret the impossibility of severing from it the exclusion provision, which in the light of existing law affects especially the Japanese" (May 27, 1924).⁶

The paper also pointed out that due to these laws, not only did the number of migrants entering the United States decrease, but it seemed that "the old type of immigrant [was becoming] superior to the new type" (July 16, 1923; June 22, 1925). The purpose of the laws was then met. During the first ten months following the second quota law, between July 1924 and April 1925, 27,908 unskilled workers (i.e., mostly male adults coming from Southern and Eastern Europe) arrived, as against

⁶ In the House of Representatives, the votes were 308 for and 58 against the bill; in the Senate, 69 against 9 (May 16, 1924). Coolidge was reluctant to sign an exclusion provision concerning Asian immigration. Nevertheless, as the bill comprised clauses concerning both European and Asian immigrations, he was not entitled to sign the provisions separately.

97,886 during the same period the preceding year. Similarly, the net migration flow decreased by 71% when compared with the same period the previous year. The balance between arrivals and returns had been reversed. As a whole, for the period from July 1924 to April 1925, total immigration to the United States decreased by 62%, from 637, 602 to 242, 965 (June 22, 1925).

In short, the coverage of the adoption of the quota laws by *The New York Times* illustrates the ambivalence attached to such a crucial issue for the identity of the country. The paper praised restriction and some selection; for example, to protect American identity. Hence, in a way, it respected the spirit of the quota laws but did not support the criteria the laws were based upon, nor their implementation, because of their poor organization and biased views. It endeavored to remain objective, and it displayed the pros and cons of the laws using multiple and lengthy testimonies. In the early twentieth century, immigration was so massive that *The New York Times* believed that controlling the influx of newcomers was necessary. At the same time, however, it insisted on the mission of the United States to welcome foreigners. It was part of the country's national legacy to provide refuge to "those who yearned to breathe free", as Emma Lazarus stated in her poem "The New Colossus", engraved on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. The notions embodied in the quota laws challenged the ideological principles defined in the Declaration of Independence and the ethical responsibilities of the American people – which explains the reluctance of *The New York Times* to defend them.

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