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Introduction

1968, or “*il Sessantotto*” as Italians call it, is a year that continues to loom large in Italy’s national consciousness. It denotes a period in which a call for change echoed through the streets and other public spaces, manifesting itself in the violent protests and political upheaval that will forever mark it as a decisive breaking point in modern history. As an inspiration for both contemporary as well as retrospective artistic activity, 1968 persists in stimulating the national imagination up until the present day. Accordingly, and in commemoration of the 40th anniversary, we have dedicated the current special edition of *CARTE ITALIANE* to the events of 1968 and its cultural and political ramifications. The current issue is the brainchild of Lucia Re’s graduate seminar taught at UCLA in the Spring of 2007, which sparked an interest in the wide array of literature, visual arts, and cinema spawned by the events of 1968. As we observed, the critical and artistic interest that ’68 has engendered over the past 40 years has been both varied and sustained, and in this volume we give voice to some recent international scholarship on the subject. What we found, and what is represented in the following pages, is that ’68 was not a single entity or monolithic experience; it was the peak year of roughly a decade of revolutionary turmoil that involved Italy in a series of social and political movements of global dimensions whose many worldwide repercussions are still felt and discussed today. All the movements learned from each other, and the advances in women’s and gay rights were fought for on the streets in Italy as in other parts of the world in the aftermath of 1968. *Il Sessantotto*’s attack against the ethics of authoritarianism in Italy was also an attempt to disrupt patriarchal systems of sexual repression and gender normalization. Well before the legendary events of May 1968 in Paris, contestatory movements and revolt against authoritarian practices had begun to emerge in the mid-sixties throughout Italy, with traditional institutions, including the family, the Church, and education, becoming increasingly challenged, and with a first, tragically violent confrontation between students and the police on March 1, 1968—the so-called “Battle of Valle Giulia” near the school of architecture in Rome. The storm that swept the world in the 1960s started in Vietnam; the spectacle of the brutal war waged by the US, televised by news programs worldwide, triggered a global wave of revolt, and the anti-war protest at Berkeley and other US campuses became a model of activism. Italian students’ uprisings started with the

occupation of the University of Trento's school of Sociology in January 1966. In Italy, the movements of 1968 and their aftermath were among the strongest and most violent in Europe, and, as can be seen in several of the essays published here, the debate is still open regarding the legacy of il Sessantotto and the connection between 1968 activism and the bloodshed of the so-called "anni di piombo," with the explosion of terrorism and the "strategy of tension." What these essays make clear, in any case, is that the movement/s of 1968 went far beyond just "the left," making inroads in the most important institutions in Italy, including the languages of literature, theater, art and film, and changing the very way we see and think about Italy and the world.

Our anniversary edition opens with a section devoted to experimental poetics, one of the most significant developments of the radical spirit of il Sessantotto. The section begins with Gian Maria Annovi's discussion of the cultural and social revolution of '68 as a symbol of transgression that finds its expression in Andrea Zanzotto's groundbreaking poetic work *La Beltà*. This is followed by a consideration of the pivotal figure of Pier Paolo Pasolini which is addressed in Andrea Pera's study of Pasolini's theatrical works, beginning with the 1968 "Manifesto for a New Theater." In our second section, key narrative works about 1968 by Nanni Balestrini, Dacia Maraini, and Luisa Passerini, are analyzed in the essays by Dominic Siracusa, Cinzia Samà, and Staisey Divorski, respectively. Offering a Marcusian reading of *Vogliamo tutto*, the first essay illustrates Balestrini's surprisingly ironic take on revolutionary violence. The feminist ambivalence towards the events and ideologies of the period, expressed or implicit in the novels by Maraini and Passerini, are clearly evidenced in the other two essays of this section. The one on Maraini sets the novel in the context of the feminist author's entire literary production, while the essay on Passerini provides a careful reading of the metaphoricality of food and nourishment in relation to the question of gendered identity in *Autoritratto di gruppo*. The section on the visual arts comprises two articles (by Riccardo Boglione and Adrian Duran) that focus on the background to the changes and radical experiments in a period in which Italian art sees the apparently sudden blossoming of a new era. Boglione traces the emergence of the little-known Italian version of the situationist avant-garde, with its ironic and hybrid forms, including especially Lamberto Pignotti's comics and postal stamps that play with visual writing and the contamination of high and low. Duran maps out the rise of the internationally acclaimed radical

phenomenon of *arte povera*, effectively tracing its creative and critical genealogies in the postwar period.

In the fourth section of this issue we present two very different essays dealing with the political heritage of *il Sessantotto*. Riding the “long wave” of the politics of 1968, Andrea Righi dissects Adele Cambria’s feminist critique of Antonio Gramsci’s sexual politics, while Glen Duerr examines the phenomenon of mass protest from a political science perspective, and from the point of view of the European Union’s continuing efforts towards normalization and the pacification of social conflicts. In the section devoted to cinema that examines the political, social, and cultural impact of ’68, we have included two articles on the epochal films by Marco Bellocchio and Bernardo Bertolucci that anticipate and later revisit in very different but equally thought-provoking and imaginative ways the turmoil of that revolutionary period, and the problematic relationship between politics and sexuality. Federica Colleoni then looks at how recent commercial cinema and literature (including an example of the so-called “Mediterranean film noir” and a children’s novel written by a reformed female member of the Red Brigades) have attempted to defuse and contain—mostly in simplistic and scapegoating terms—the specter of terrorist violence. In the final essay of this section, Giovanna Summerfield discusses the recent films (and international commercial hits) *La meglio gioventù* and *Mio fratello è figlio unico*, works that although profoundly different stylistically, seem to mark a similar nostalgic regression to an ideal of the family that 1968 had radically challenged.

The last section of this special issue is devoted to creative and autobiographical texts and begins with another exclusive publication, Kristina Bigdeli’s translation of Elsa Morante’s little-known 1968 short play *La serata a Colono* (*The Evening at Colonus*). We then have the distinct pleasure of publishing the first translation of two Amelia Rosselli poems by professor Lucia Re and Diana Thow. Our anniversary edition concludes with a first-hand account of the uncertainties and perplexities experienced by many observers and participants as violence escalated in the aftermath of 1968 in Italy, written by Simonetta Falasca Zamponi, who studied sociology in Trento and is now a professor of Sociology at UCSB.

This volume of CARTE ITALIANE would not have been possible without the help of a number of people. We would first like to thank William Morosi, who has not only been the typesetter of CARTE ITALIANE for a number of years but who has also been a trusted consultant and has been instrumental in reviving the journal in its new series.

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Sarah Carey and Brendan Hennessey