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Marilyn Fischer

University of Dayton, mfischer1@udayton.edu

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Keywords: What's an Advocate to Do with the Words She's Given?

Marilyn Fischer, Ph.D.

University of Dayton

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I was ecstatic when I got to footnote 12 of Donna Gabaccia's paper. "There is a name for this? People really write books about it?" I was thrilled to learn that people do systematically what I, in a bumbling sort of way, dabble with. For the past few years, I've kept a "phrase file," entering what Gabaccia calls "central and evocative terms" along with instances of their use that I happen upon while doing other things ("Nations of Immigrants" 5). Every once in a while I check in with JSTOR, Reader's Guide Retrospective, and Google Books. I'm grateful to Gabaccia for showing us the power of this kind of analysis.

The point of the Coss dialogues is for philosophers to engage with people from other disciplines. In my response I will take Gabaccia's message about keywords leading to new insights, and adapt it to the historical recovery projects many of us pursue. First, I will give some concrete examples of how using keyword searches turned my head around and led me to read classic texts in new ways. Second, I will examine how Grace Abbott and Jane Addams talked about immigrants. They were advocates. When the words the culture gave them carried messages of denigration, restriction, and exclusion, they found strategies with which to subvert those messages.

Exploring Keywords

"The past is a foreign country" is a cliché among historians, but something philosophers working with texts by classical American pragmatists should keep in mind. As contemporary English speakers reading century-old texts, we sometimes forget how encoded language was and

is. Language communicates. I'll give three examples of surprises I found when I asked what perfectly ordinary-looking words communicated to an author's original audience, and traced the conversations in which those words functioned.

Mead and the International Mind: George Herbert Mead wrote about the "international mind," advocating that people develop one. Mitchell Aboulafia draws on these discussions in *The Cosmopolitan Self*, where he claims that Mead's international mind fits right in with Kant's *sensus communis*, Adam Smith's impartial spectator, and Arendt's inclusive human community (see especially Chapter Two). "International mind" was in my phrase file; I spent a delightful day sitting on the floor of the library stacks, reading through *Atlantic Monthl[ies]* from the Great War years. Lots of people talked about international minds back then, but none of those minds were cosmopolitan in the way Aboulafia assumes that Mead was. Internationally minded people wanted to establish international commercial and juridical machinery among "civilized" nations, that is, northwestern European nations and the United States. How these nations handled internal oppression or their own colonial empires was not part of the conversation. When Mead is placed in this conversation, he emerges as more politically conservative and decidedly less egalitarian and universalist than Aboulafia contends (See Fischer "Mead and the International Mind").

Royce and Antipathies: In his 1905 essay, "Race Questions and Prejudices," Josiah Royce attributes racial problems to our antipathies (285). Shannon Sullivan and Jacquelyn Kegley interpret Royce to be saying that with some attention we can re-orient our antipathies toward non-racist rather than racist reactions (Sullivan 32, Kegley 7). I searched for antipathies in JSTOR and Reader's Guide Retrospective. In 1904 University of Chicago sociologist W.I. Thomas gave a widely held definition. Antipathies are instinctual, he said, deeply embedded in our evolutionary make-up, so deep in fact, that reason and effort cannot touch them (607-610).ⁱ

Working with this understanding of antipathies, white writers at the time proposed various solutions to keep whites' antipathies from being irritated by contact with blacks. Royce's support for the white supremacist, colonial regime in Jamaica fits in well as one way of accommodating this. When Royce's essay is placed in historical and linguistic context, it is very difficult to claim he was anti-racist.ⁱⁱ

Addams and Social Control: I'm trying to write a piece on Addams's speeches and essays on black-white race relations, most of them presented to black audiences. In her essay, "Social Control," published in *Crisis*, Du Bois's NAACP journal, Addams laments how white prejudice "results in a social segregation of each race, and puts the one race group thus segregated quite outside the influences of social control represented by the other." She notes that "colored girls" exhibit a "lack of inherited control" (22). Thomas Philpott and Peter Ascoli are among historians who have a dim view of the sort of race relations they take Addams to be suggesting (Philpott 299-300, Ascoli 163). The source of the term, "social control," was Addams's contemporary, sociologist E.A. Ross. In *Social Control* Ross talks about immigrants in the most offensive, ear-burning sort of way that Gabaccia points out. But Ross also says that "social control" can refer to education, moral ideals, and legislation to regulate businesses that exploit the very immigrants he wished weren't here (see Chapter 30).

My phrase file has a line from Harriet Bartlett, who wrote, "The [social] survey is also seen to be a method of social control, since its aim is to bring about intelligent action" (331). I like Bartlett's use of the term; it is so very pragmatist. I haven't worked out yet just what Addams means. I want her to be saying that "social control" means taking intelligent steps toward social reform, and that the community should extend the same forms of social control to African-Americans that she wanted extended to all Chicagoans— fair-housing provisions, non-

racist hiring practices, decent wage and rent requirements, equal educational opportunities, and an inclusive social fellowship that Addams sees as essential to solving any social problem. Now I'm willing to be disappointed, but I'm pretty sure that Philpott and Ascoli don't have it right, and whatever Addams meant is something more interesting than today's intuitions could invent.

Doing keyword searches raises new questions, Gabaccia says. Philosophers could use keywords to shift questions in a way that leads to new insights. My keyword searches shifted me from asking, "What did Mead, Royce, and Addams think?" to "What did their words communicate to their audiences?" and "In what conversations were they taking part?" This showed me that some terms philosophers take to be philosophical concepts, or to which we assign contemporary definitions, in fact functioned as clichés or rhetorical tropes in the past. We need to sort this through before launching into philosophical analysis.

What's an Advocate to Do with the Words She's Given?

I had always assumed that "immigrant" was a straightforward, descriptive term. I knew that the folks Chicago settlement workers worked with were denigrated, but I didn't know that the term "immigrant" itself carried the denigration. Some settlement workers sought to elevate perceptions of immigrants in the eyes of native-born Americans. I will identify some strategies they used to do this, using the vocabulary available to them, fraught though it was.

I admit to being nervous. Words do matter, but at some point one must choose in order to get on. Today I'll use the terms "Americans" and "immigrants." Here, by "Americans" I mean native-born whites, that is, Anglo-Saxon-ish and probably Protestant, middle and upper class people, with restrictionist tendencies. By "immigrants" I mean mostly people born in Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe, including parts of Russia, many of whom were Catholic or Jewish,

some of whom had no intention of settling in the U.S., and who had ties of affection and financial responsibility with people in their countries of origin. Mostly I'm talking about Chicago between 1880 and the 1920.ⁱⁱⁱ If Gabaccia has better terms to substitute for "American" and "immigrant" in this context, I'll be grateful.

I will focus on texts by two settlement workers, Jane Addams and Grace Abbott. Addams we all know. Grace Abbott resided at Hull-House, and worked as Director of the Immigrants' Protective League. Gabaccia quotes Abbott in her paper, so including her in this discussion seems a collegial thing to do. Addams and Abbott had decades of experience working with immigrants in Chicago. They knew them in a daily, visceral sort of way. I'll point out three strategies they used to change American perceptions of immigrants: casting them as bearers of gifts, as mirrors for self-critique, and as connectors to the wider world. Abbott and Addams used these strategies not only to change the emotional valence of "immigrant," but also to change Americans' perceptions of themselves.

Immigrant Gifts: To American audiences, Abbott and Addams spoke of immigrants as bringing gifts from which Americans could benefit if only they would receive them. Immigration historian John Higham, after an appreciative discussion of the "immigrant gifts" doctrine, writes that settlement workers' specific examples of such gifts turned out to be fairly negligible, in most Americans' scheme of things (119-123). True enough, Abbott writes of immigrant festivals, dances, games, and crafts that brought the liveliness and beauty Anglo-Saxon Puritanism had long tried to keep out (276). The substance of the gifts deepens, however. Addams, a leader in the Arts and Crafts movement, was motivated in part when she saw the exquisite work of immigrant embroiderers, goldsmiths, silversmiths, and woodcarvers, and bemoaned the waste as these artists spent their days at unskilled factory work ("Hull House and its Neighbors" 450-

451). The immigrants also brought intellectual turns of mind as gifts that could stretch narrow American imaginations. Addams explains how the deep appreciation of history that many immigrants had could be a corrective for what she calls “the tin finish of American life,” the assumption that all things can be started anew (“The New Social Spirit” 21). She watched Jewish neighbors with minds long trained by Talmudic study turn their well-honed intellects to Chicago’s social problems (*Newer Ideals* 39-40). Some of the immigrant gifts, if taken seriously, could have widespread economic and legal repercussions. Abbott regrets that European intensive farming techniques were little appreciated in a landscape Americans saw as virtually endless (274-75). Addams uses rural Italian village life and the Slavic mir system of communal land ownership to challenge U.S. patterns of isolating farmers on individually owned, 160-acre land grants (*Newer Ideals* 38-40). Addams and Abbott saw that immigrants could offer far more to Americans than colorful, weekend entertainment.

As Mirrors for Critique: Upending Anglo-Saxon assumptions of superiority were part of Addams and Abbott’s strategy when they spoke of gifts the immigrants brought. They held up immigrants’ experiences as mirrors through which Americans could examine their practices more critically. Abbott notes that what Americans called “assimilation,” some immigrants had already experienced while living in the Russian and Austrian empires. They gave it a different name; they called it oppression, and had experienced its cruelty (276-77). In 1908, when the Chicago police chief killed Lazarus Averbuch, a Russian Jew who had fled pogroms in Kishineff, Addams documented how Chicago police tactics mirrored those of the Czar, and how Russian thuggery against political dissidents resembled lynchings in the U.S. (“The Chicago Settlement” 158-60, 163). Abbott expands the mirror in her comment, “If we can learn to listen to those who have suffered from a denial of self-government in Europe, we may be able to avoid

American imperialism and to give to the Filipino, the Porto (sic) Rican, The Negro of Santo Domingo and of the United States, the rights to self-government that we have thus far denied them” (281). Addams names “the political ideals of the Celtic, Germanic, Latin, and Slavic immigrants” as she chides Americans for holding an Anglo-Saxon template for assimilation. She labels this pattern imperialist, writing, “Is the American attitude toward self-government like that of the Anglo-Saxon towards civilization, save that he goes forth to rule all the nations of the earth by one pattern, while we remain at home and bid them to rule themselves by one pattern?” (*Newer Ideals* 28, 62). If Americans would turn the immigrants’ gifts inward, they would find much to rectify.

Linking the U.S. to the Wider World: In the final section of her paper Gabaccia reviews how a nation’s terminological choices for those coming from outside its borders contribute to forming its self-identity. Abbott and Addams thought about borders and identity a lot, threading their reflections through a question Gabaccia posed last summer. “What if we ask not about how migration builds the U.S. (or any other single nation), but rather about how migration connects a nation to the wider world?” (“Foreign Relations”).

These connections were obvious to Abbott and Addams. In 1911 Abbott traveled throughout urban and rural areas of Central Europe, experiencing the cultures and economic and political conditions from which immigrants came to Chicago (Costin 81-84). Hull-House established a branch of the Post Office on its premises so that immigrants’ remittances and letters had a better chance of reaching the intended destinations, thus sustaining connections across borders (Addams, *Twenty Years* 175). Addams had a bit of fun subverting the usual meaning of “international mind.” Instead of appending it to the usual international business, legal, and scientific elites, she identified Italian migrant workers who followed the harvest from South

America up to the north as prime examples of people with international minds. She explains, “The result of this constant migration of labor is a network of personal acquaintance and kindly relationship on an international basis. . . . There is doubtless forming at the very base of society a new conception of international relations” (“Patriotism and Pacifists” 166).

Addams and Abbott’s vision of connections between immigrants and the wider world was not mere wishful thinking; it was built on solid experience. To show this, I’d like to reposition Addams. Philosophers position her with the founding classical American pragmatists. Historians and sociologists position her with the progressives, and as a leading figure in the settlement and social work movements. An alternative is to think of her as a node in many complex, overlapping networks of immigrant societies and endeavors. Chicago *was* an immigrant town. From a population of less than 5000 in 1840, to 500,000 in 1880, doubling by 1890, and doubling again to two million by 1910, Chicago grew as the immigrants came (Gibson). Immigrants established innumerable organizations for mutual aid, recreation and culture, worship, help for new arrivals, and independence movements for those in country of origin. Addams collaborated with these organizations; she knew their leaders and they often called on each other to address specific problems. Thus positioned, Addams’s mental map of the U.S. became one of dense connections to the wider world. Here are two examples. When Lazarus Averbuch was killed, Addams responded quickly to raise funds so the shooting could be investigated, the body given a proper Jewish burial, and police brutality against Averbuch’s sister stopped. She could do this because for the previous two decades she had been building close working relationships with Julius Rosenwald, Julian Mack, Emil Hirsch, Hannah Solomon, and others in the Jewish community. They worked together to sustain innumerable organizations for Jews and Chicagoans at large.^{iv} Rosenwald, Mack, Hirsch, and Solomon, for example, were

trustees of the Immigrants' Protective League, among many others (Immigrants' Protective League).

A second example: American immigrant communities played a central role in European independence movements; Abbott names Irish, Bohemian, Polish, Lithuanian, Croatian, and Ukrainian movements as examples (270). By World War One, Chicago was the second largest Bohemian city in the world, and the financial center for the Czech independence movement. The movement was headed by philosopher Tomáš Masaryk, who in 1918 became the first president of Czechoslovakia. Addams hosted Masaryk when he lectured in Chicago in 1902. His wife, Charlotte Garrigue Masaryk appreciated the copy of *Democracy and Social Ethics* that he brought back to her. Addams became close to their daughter, Alice, when Alice spent a year in Chicago gathering material for her history of the Bohemian people. When the Austrian government in 1915 imprisoned Alice Masaryk, probably because her exiled father was out of reach, Addams and Abbott worked with the Bohemian National Alliance to gather 40,000 signatures and sent them to the U.S. State Department in protest. Congressional Representative Adolf Sabath (who shows up in Gabaccia's paper, footnote 48), a Bohemian Jewish immigrant himself, was a central figure in this drama. Addams and Abbott's connections continued after the war as Alice Masaryk established schools of social work and the Czechoslovakian Red Cross, both heavily influenced by her on-going collaborations with the Chicago settlement network.^v

Addams and Abbott's vision of America and of American national-identity was shaped by their immersion within these immigrant networks. Their vision was much richer than that suggested by a "nation of immigrants." To them, America *was* an international nation, not only in the sense that people from elsewhere dwelt here, but because thick fibers of care, imagination,

thought, and concrete activity ran back and forth in continuous exchange. We see this most poignantly in a speech Addams gave shortly after the U.S. entered the war. To her neighbors with family members on the side of the Central Powers, the war was “exquisite torture,” and their sufferings a reminder that the U.S. was tied by blood to every nation of the world (“Patriotism and Pacifists” 158). Abbott hoped that the intimate connections her Chicago neighbors maintained with families throughout Europe could serve as a resource for finding a way toward settlement of war (279).

What happened to their vision? World War One interfered; restrictive immigration legislation in the 1920s reinforced American isolation and its self-identity as exceptional rather than cosmopolitan. We still, though, have their words. Yes, they used words that carried denigration. They may have believed some of that content, yet they struggled to change the valence. Their struggles and their strategies are gifts for us to think with, as we address issues of migration, international connection, and national- and self-identity today.

ⁱ See also George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, p. 321, for a discussion of how widespread this understanding of antipathies was in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

ⁱⁱ For an extensive analysis that places Royce’s essay in historical and linguistic context, see Fischer, “Locating Royce’s Reasoning on Race.”

ⁱⁱⁱ Because I am talking about the immigrant groups with whom Addams and Abbott worked most extensively before World War One in Chicago, I have omitted significant migrations to other parts of the United States, including from China, Japan, and Mexico.

^{iv} Addams's involvement in the Lazarus Averbuch affair and her connections with the Jewish community are documented in Fischer, "Interpreting a Murder with Addams and Mead," unpublished manuscript.

^v This story is documented in Betty M. Unterberger, "The Arrest of Alice Masaryk" 91-106; and in Fischer, "Tomás Masaryk and Jane Addams on Humanitarianism and Cultural Reciprocity."

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