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IN MEMORIAM**In Memoriam: Olga Zorzi Pugliese (1941-2025)**

With the passing of Olga Zorzi Pugliese on March 23, 2025, the international scholarly community lost one of its most distinguished and principled voices, a professor emerita of Italian Studies at the University of Toronto who shaped the fields of Renaissance humanism and Italian Canadian studies with exceptional intellectual clarity and unwavering moral integrity.

Olga Pugliese was a professor and scholar of Italian and Renaissance Studies. She was born in Toronto in 1941 to Giosuè Zorzi and Anna Cressatti, the youngest of four children. She attended West Preparatory School and Forest Hill Junior High and graduated from Northview Heights Collegiate in 1959. That same year, she enrolled at the University of Toronto, becoming one of the first women of Italian heritage to attend, and graduated in 1963 with a B.A. in Modern Languages and Literature. In fact, she recalled that “a French professor commented that it was strange to see an Italian female in university.” She received her M.A. in 1964 and her Ph.D. in Romance Languages and Literatures in 1969 from the University of Toronto. In 1969, she married Guido Pugliese, a fellow teacher and academic whom she met while working as a graduate student in the 1960s.

While still a graduate student at the University of Toronto, Olga Zorzi Pugliese was appointed as a Teaching Assistant (1964-65), and subsequently as a Lecturer (1967-69), teaching undergraduate courses in Italian language and literature. After completing her doctorate in 1969 and holding a position at Brock University, she was promoted to Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto. In 1973, she became the first Undergraduate Coordinator in the Department of Italian Studies and later served as Graduate Coordinator from 1984 to 1988. In 1995, she was promoted to Full Professor and went on to serve as Chair of the Department of Italian Studies and holder of the Emilio Goggio Chair from 1997 to 2002. While serving full-time in the Department of Italian Studies, she was also cross appointed as a Fellow of Victoria College, where she taught interdisciplinary courses in Italian Renaissance culture. From 2005 to 2009, she served as Director of the Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies. In 2012, Pugliese retired from the University of Toronto, concluding a distinguished 45-year teaching career.

Pugliese was a member of several associations in the wider Italian and Renaissance academic community including the Modern Language Association of America, the Northeast Modern Language Association, the Renaissance Society of America, the Sixteenth Century Society and Conference, the International Association for Neo-Latin Studies, and the Canadian Society for the Study of Architecture. She was a founding member of the Canadian Association for Italian

Studies where she served as president from 2005-08 and served as a Board Member for the Italian Canadian Archive Project from 2013-18. In 1976, she was a founding member of the Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies/Société Canadienne d'Études de la Renaissance (CSRS/SCÉR) and was its first Secretary-Treasurer from 1976-78. For her contributions to the Society and the field of Renaissance Studies, she received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the CSRS in 2008.

Pugliese served on several editorial boards including *Quaderni d'italianistica*, the official journal of the Canadian Association for Italian Studies, *Italica*, the official journal of the American Association of Teachers of Italian, as well as *Spunti e Ricerche*, *Studi rinascimentali: Rivista internazionale di letteratura italiana* and *Campi immaginabili: rivista quadrimestrale di cultura*. In addition to articles, editions and translations, she is the author of *Il discorso labirintico del dialogo rinascimentale* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1995), *Castiglione's The Book of the Courtier (Il libro del cortegiano): A Classic in the Making* (Napoli: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 2008) and *Rekindling Faded Memories: The Founding of the Famèe Furlane of Toronto and Its First Years* (Famèe Furlane of Toronto, 1996), co-written with Angelo Principe.

Aside for her work on Baldassare Castiglione, Pugliese established herself as a leading authority on early modern Italian literature *tout court*. Her essays on Ariosto, Aretino, and Machiavelli further demonstrated her commitment to examining the ethical, political, and rhetorical structures of Renaissance writing through meticulous philological analysis.

Yet her scholarly reach extended well beyond the early modern period: as co-author of the monograph *Rekindling Faded Memories*, she made a landmark contribution to the historiography of Italian immigration to Canada, reconstructing with archival precision and personal insight the social and cultural foundations of one of Toronto's most significant Friulian organizations, the Famèe Furlane of which she was a lifetime member and relentless supporter. Indeed, Pugliese was also active outside academia, especially in the Dante Alighieri Society of Toronto, the Fogolârs Federation of Canada, the Centro Canadese Scuola e Cultura Italiana.

Her research in the field of Italian Canadian Studies—and on Italian-Friulians in particular—included significant work on interwar antifascist networks, such as “Antifascisti friulani in Canada negli anni Venti e Trenta” (*Storia contemporanea in Friuli* 46, 2016) and “Anticlerical Tendencies Among Friulian-Canadian Antifascists” (*Oltreoceano* 14, 2018). Her final contribution to the field was a deeply personal work: *My Italian Canadian Family and How Its Ancestry Was Traced* (Welland: Soleil, 2024), a retrospective exploration of her own roots and family ties—a book in which she took great pride.

The name of Olga Pugliese is also indissolubly linked to the study of Italian Canadian mosaicist and painter Albert (Umberto) Chiarandini—

“Personalities, Landscapes, and Politics of Central Canada in the Paintings of Albert Chiarandini (Udine 1915-Toronto 2007),” in Anna Pia De Luca, *Investigating Canadian Identities* (Udine: Forum, 2010)—as well as to the broader legacy of Italian mosaicists in Canadian public art—further affirming her deep commitment to documenting and preserving Italian Canadian cultural memory. Her final public appearance took place at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto in June 2024, where she delivered a moving and insightful lecture on the 1933 mosaics in the museum’s rotunda (“Italian Creativity and Heritage in Toronto: The ROM Mosaic of 1933”), highlighting the enduring significance of Italian Canadian craftsmanship and cultural heritage (available online at <https://www.rom.on.ca/learn/resource-hub/italian-creativity-and-heritage-toronto-rom-mosaic-1933>).

Some years ago, a journalist described Pugliese as having “three souls”—Canadian, Italian, and Friulian—and indeed, she embodied all three. She lived and worked at the intersection of these cultures, nurturing and advancing each through her scholarship and public service. Together with her late husband, Guido Pugliese (1940-2016), she established a number of enduring scholarships for study in Italy, supporting students from Victoria College (University of Toronto), the University of Toronto Mississauga, and Western University. She also endowed an annual course in Italian Canadian Studies, now a permanent offering within the Canadian Studies Program at University College, University of Toronto.

What set Professor Zorzi Pugliese apart in the often ruthless and performative world of academia was not only the breadth of her knowledge, but the uncompromising honesty and unwavering ethical consistency with which she steadfastly conducted her intellectual life. She was known to all who worked with her as a mentor of rare generosity, a teacher who balanced rigor with genuine encouragement, and a colleague whose quiet moral authority illuminated every scholarly exchange.

She supervised and inspired generations of students, many of whom went on to academic careers shaped by her example of humility, precision, and intellectual curiosity. At the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, and within the broader community of Italianists, she was a pillar of scientific integrity and collegial commitment—always working with quiet diligence behind the scenes to uphold excellence and fairness, with the elegance and gentle tenacity that were, unmistakably, “so Olga.”

Her journey to the nowhere and the no-when is a profound loss to the humanities in Canada and humanity in general, but her legacy endures in her works, her students, and her unique ability to link cultural history, literature and erudition with civic responsibility, showing that a life in letters can be, above all, a life of meaning.

Matteo Brera, *University of Padua/Seton Hall University*

REVIEW ARTICLES

**From Console to Classroom: *Assassin's Creed*
as a Tool for Humanities Education**

Erik Champion, and Juan Hiriart, eds. *Assassin's Creed in the Classroom. History's Playground or a Stab in the Dark?* Boston/Berlin: de Gruyter, 2024. Pp. vi + 270.

As indicated on the back cover of the book, through the *Assassin's Creed* video games, this volume “explores the learning opportunities of playing, modifying, and extending the games in the classroom, on location, in the architectural studio, and in a museum.” This goal, which is achieved with resounding success, falls under a broader question that should be on the minds of all educators, and which is also posed to readers on the back cover: what do the humanities do with video games and what do video games do to the humanities? The book’s essays, from a variety of viewpoints (secondary and post-secondary educators; architectural historians; game designers; historians; scholars from North America, South America, Europe, Oceania; etc.), confirm that the *Assassin's Creed* (from here on abbreviated as *AC*) video games are doing a lot to and *for* the humanities. They offer a stimulating, immersive, and fun way for tens of millions of student-gamers to explore themes related to a variety of disciplines: history, art history, literature, language, culture, game studies, music, engineering, design, art, and even Italian Studies. We will first take a look at the book’s contents. Then, I will share specifically how *AC* can be used in Italian and Italian Studies classes as well as in study abroad courses. I will share reflections from my own such course offerings at Elon University over the past five years. Finally, a brief judgment of the work will be offered.

The volume offers an introduction and three subsections of essays. Section one focuses on “History through Play”; section two on “Cultural History, Tours and Tourism”; and section three on “Creation and Exhibition.” Marc-André Éthier and David Lefrançois, in Chapter 1, “Historical Video Games and Teaching Practices” (11-34), demonstrate how video games as both a medium and social practice can be used to teach history in Canadian secondary schools. They achieved some positive outcomes with their students (who improved their understanding of culture, daily life, social relations, and geography). But they underline an essential piece of information for educators interested in game-based learning: the games do not replace traditional learning, rather they complement it, as students still need guidance on how

to play critically and understand their historical value. Chapter 2, “Discovery Tour Curriculum Guides to Improve Teachers’ Adoption of Serious Gaming” (35-64), by Chu Xu, Robin Sharma, and Adam K. Dubé, looks at how the “Discovery Tour” element of newer *AC* installments—*AC Origins* (2017); *AC Odyssey* (2018); *AC Valhalla* (2020)—help make the games useful for educators and easier to incorporate into a wide variety of courses. “Discovery Tour” is a part of the game that does not require the player to participate in the virtual assassinations for which the series is known. It allows players to explore the digital environments and sometimes complete mini-quests through interacting with non-playable characters (NPCs). The chapter shares a groundbreaking fact for educators with any range of experience with (and level of interest in) teaching with historical video games. That is, Ubisoft, the publisher of *AC*, teamed up with academics to create a comprehensive curriculum guide, showing specifically how *AC Odyssey* can be used to address learning goals for the history and culture of ancient Greece. This guide provides ready-made, *prêt-à-jouer*, activities for instructors at the secondary level. However, many, if not all, of them can be adapted to fit into university curricula, too. Ylva Grufstedt and Robert Houghton author Chapter 3, “Christian Vikings Storming Templar Castles: Anachronism as a Teaching Tool” (65-90), and evince how through “anachronistic tension,” video games are powerful teaching and learning tools, even when they are not always historically “accurate.” More often than not, “[t]he game’s anachronisms are not a weak point [...], but instead provide useful tools for the exploration of history and its construction” (85), they conclude. I have also found this to be true in all my game-based courses: e.g., on Dante’s *Inferno* and *AC II* and the Italian Renaissance. Julien A. Bazile’s Chapter 4 (91-106), “Ludofforming the Past: Mediation of Play and Mediation of History through Videogame Design,” concludes section one, and treats video games as “boundary works” that intersect with a variety of academic disciplines.

Section two is opened by Nathan Looije’s fifth chapter on “Studying Greek Culture through Historical Characters in Assassin’s Creed Odyssey” (107-32). Juan Hiriart pens Chapter 6 (133-50), “Empathy and Historical Learning in Assassin’s Creed Valhalla Discovery Tour,” emphasizing the importance of video games in teaching social history, as well as in fostering empathy and care on the part of the players. Kevin Péloquin and Marc-André Éthier’s seventh chapter (151-68), “Ubisoft’s Ancient Greece Discovery Tour as a Pedagogical Tool for a School Trip,” covers how historical games can act as visualization learning tools in anticipation of school field trips. As I’ll cover in more detail below, this was the approach for my study abroad course. A pre-departure one semester-hour fall course in which students virtually “visited” Florence, Venice, and San Gimignano through the game prior to exploring the places *in situ* in Winter Term 2022.

Section three begins with Chapter 8 (169-88), “Discovering the Past as a Virtual Foreign Country: Assassin’s Creed as Historical Tourism,” by Angela Schwarz, that considers how student-players have historical experiences in video games, as well as how they interact with representations of the past. Hamish Cameron’s ninth chapter (189-202), “Classical Creations in a Modern Medium: Using Story Creator Mode in a University Assignment,” shows how students can use story creator mode to interact with the past in unprecedented ways. Then, the authors show how one can use story creator mode activities as a means to assess historical understanding in a couple different university history courses. Kira Jones shares her experience with a game-infused museum tour, discussing how *AC Discovery Tour* mode can be used to interact with Greco-Roman and Egyptian museum galleries in Chapter 10, “Assassin’s Creed @ the Carlos: Merging Games and Gallery in the Museum” (203-18). The penultimate chapter (219-38), “From the Sketchbook to Assassin’s Creed Valhalla: An Experiment in Architectural Education” is authored by Manuel Sánchez García and Rafael de Lacour and tells the story of how students can play games *as* architecture and use their immersive environments to design real or imagined sites. Erik Champion’s twelfth and final chapter, “Assassin’s Creed as Immersive and Interactive Architectural History” (239-59), focuses on how the *AC* series can be used to add “rich immersiveness and meaningful interactivity to architectural history” (239).

Although the volume does not offer a chapter that focuses exclusively on *AC* games that take place in Italy, several references made by the essay authors to these games provide a means for understanding how their points can be applied to the Italian context. *Assassin’s Creed II* (2009) and its sequel, *Assassin’s Creed Brotherhood* (2010), are set in Renaissance Italy. The story of *AC II* takes place predominantly in beautiful digital renditions of Florence, Venice, Monteriggioni (the home base of Ezio Auditore da Firenze, the game’s protagonist), and San Gimignano (with the final boss battle against Pope Alexander VI taking place in the Vatican, Sistine Chapel, and Rome). *AC Brotherhood* takes place primarily in Rome and its outskirts. After playing these games, many questions raised by the volume in question came to my mind. Is this just fun or is it also educational? Can the game be used to study history, language, literature, art? If I convince myself that “yes” is the answer to those questions, will students enroll in a class based on a video game with the specific goal of learning about the Italian Renaissance?

The answer turned out to be affirmative in all these cases, and I created the study abroad course at Elon University called “Renaissance Italy: Video Games versus Reality,” which consisted of two parts: a fall 2021 one-semester hour pre-departure class for all enrolled students (a full 17); and a four-semester hour study abroad course in Italy during Winter Term 2022. The

course learning outcomes—fused with the general outcomes of all global education courses at Elon University—helped me design the course and respond more precisely to the question of what students could and would learn. For instance, quoting the course syllabus: (1) “Students, by learning basic factual information about key figures, places, texts, and ideas of the Italian Renaissance, will understand the multiple dimensions of human experience within and across cultures, environments, and historical periods”; and (2) “Students, by learning about the role and potential of video games to shape players’ ideas of language, culture, and history will become aware of their responsibilities as a global citizen to analyze critically the ways—both good and bad—that cultural and linguistic otherness is represented in the medium and in the world around them. This is especially important since video games, for a few years now, have overtaken all other forms of entertainment media in popularity and worldwide sales.”

To these ends, during the pre-departure course, students watched playthroughs of *AC II* and analyzed the game footage weekly in groups. The main focus was on the game itself as a transformation of historical and architectural reality. The students would focus both on the literary elements (e.g., characterization, perspective, anagnorisis, etc.) of the video game narrative, presenting at least two per week; and the historical elements incorporated into the game (personages—the Medici, Da Vinci, Machiavelli; famous Renaissance artworks—by Botticelli, Raffaello, Verrocchio, etc.; architectural monuments—Palazzo Vecchio, the Doge’s Palace, the cityscape and towers of San Gimignano). Finally, each group of students would pose three critical questions about these elements and the “historical realities” we were concurrently reading about in academic articles and watching in documentary films. The in-country portion of the course was then dedicated to students investigating the various realities of the Renaissance through reading of primary and secondary sources related to literature and history; and to investigating *in situ* the real-life monuments and cities rendered digitally in the game. In the way of research, each student created an annotated bibliography during the pre-departure course with sources that would substantiate a final presentation in country.

Based on my own observations of the student experience and the work they turned in, the course (stateside and in-country) did well and, on the whole, achieved the desired learning outcomes. It is key to corroborate our own perceptions as teachers with those of our students to understand their experience but also to improve the course moving forward. This is a minor critique of mine of the *Assassin’s Creed in the Classroom* volume. There were some efforts made to document the student experience (e.g., Marc-André Éthier and David Lefrançois do a very thorough job in Chapter 1),

but there was no comprehensive look at this kind of data, which would have strengthened the findings by substantiating efficacy. That said, for instance, in the end-of-semester surveys for my pre-departure course, 86% of students indicated that they “learned a lot” and that they “learned actively through a variety of mediums.” 71% indicated that better learning took place “with the video game” than it would have without the game; and that the course and its approaches would “affect future thinking” (about literature, games, history, etc.). Virtually all of the students indicated “having fun” while learning and working, too. In the post-course survey for the in-country part, 100% of respondents agreed that they learned a lot; they learned actively through a variety of mediums and activities; and that the course and its approaches would affect future thinking. 80% agreed that the teaching and learning was better with the video game than it would have been without it.

As intimated above and in the volume in question, luckily, the students also tend to agree that video games—even though they make learning fun, cool, effective and meaningful—cannot replace seeing the original works for oneself through travel and with a critical eye toward history, literature, and monuments. The following student response captures this sentiment well: “There is a strong connection between the game and reality, however the game does not give you the ‘wow’ that you get in person. The game could never replace seeing with your own eyes. It was very cool and helpful however to compare the game to reality, and I learned very well that way.”

The present volume does a wonderful job of demonstrating how one can use traditional and innovative mediums, genres, and technologies—especially the *Assassin's Creed* series—to engage students with material that might not be inherently attractive or in vogue. As mentioned before, data from students about their experience and course efficacy could be more prominent in the volume. And it would be helpful to point out how these teaching approaches and experiences do not only have to take place in English. As my “Intensive Italian for Gamers” class at Elon University demonstrates, students are thrilled to play and learn from such popular games in Italian and other world languages—and it’s as easy as clicking a different language from the main menu in the game. (For instance, depending on the game and where it is purchased, one could click: French, German, Spanish, Japanese, and other languages.) Aside from these minor critiques, this work is the go-to, seminal work for educators interested in teaching with *Assassin's Creed* games. It is written in such a way that it is friendly not only to veteran gamers (such as yours truly) but to anyone, even novices, who might be interested in giving it a try. And the methodologies can be applied to the use of other games in other classroom contexts. In the same vein, the volume bears a unique and inspiring spirit of inclusivity (of disciplines, types of educators, types of educational

institutions, etc.) that makes it a pleasure to read. I commend Champion and Hiriart, and all of the volume's authors, on this remarkable achievement. And I await enthusiastically, like Ezio Auditore crouching atop *il Duomo*, for my next mission, which will be to read the sequel to this work should something of the sort indeed be in the works.

Brandon Essary, *Elon University*

Bridging Texts and Gazes: On Italy-China Encounters

Linetto Basilone. *The Distance to China. Twentieth-Century Italian Travel Narratives of Patriotism, Commitment and Disillusion (1898-1985).* Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019. Pp. 313.

Silvia Bertolotti, Silvia Calamandrei, and Rodolfo Taiani, eds. *Sguardi dal ponte. Il dialogo Italia-Cina e il viaggio del 1955 della delegazione culturale guidata da Piero Calamandrei.* Trento: Fondazione Museo Storico Trentino, 2022. Pp. 336.

In recent years, the comparative studies on Italy and China have undergone a notable resurgence, driven not only by China's rising international prominence but also by renewed scholarly interest in cross-cultural imaginaries and the entangled histories of two seemingly disparate nations (see, for instance, Shirley Ann Smith's *Imperial Designs: Italians in China, 1900-1947*. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2012). Italy and China, with their distinct civilizational heritages, shared experience of political upheaval in the twentieth century, and evolving positions within global power structures, offer a particularly rich terrain for examining how East and West imagine, misrecognize, and negotiate one another. At the core of this inquiry lies the question: how have Italian intellectuals, writers, and diplomats historically perceived—and constructed—China? And what methodological tools might help us reassess those encounters today?

Two recent volumes provide crucial, complementary answers. Linetto Basilone's *The Distance to China* offers a sweeping textual analysis of Italian travel accounts about China in the twentieth century. Silvia Bertolotti, Silvia Calamandrei, and Rodolfo Taiani's edited collection *Sguardi dal ponte* reconstructs a single pivotal moment of Cold War cultural diplomacy. While the former develops a long-term approach to Italian representations of China, the latter zooms in on a symbolic historical episode—the 1955 Italian cultural delegation to Mao's China. Both books, however, intersect around a shared epistemological insight: that representations of China are never neutral, and that cross-cultural understanding demands not only objectivity but awareness

of positionality, textuality, and affect. Together, these works document a century of evolving Italian perspectives on China and propose a compelling framework for an emerging field of research: the Italian Chinese Cultural Studies.

Basilone's *The Distance to China* is the first systematic study to chart Italian travel writing on China across the entire twentieth century. Expanding Smith's foundational *Imperial Designs*, Basilone situates travel narratives within five "chronological paradigms" (15) that mirror Italy's political transformations—from liberal imperialism and fascism to communist solidarity and postmodern skepticism. The result is not a history of diplomatic relations per se, but a genealogy of imaginaries.

The book's methodological cornerstone is what Basilone in the Introduction terms "The Politics of Textuality" (Chapter 1, 19-41), echoing Eric Hayot's *The Hypothetical Mandarin* (New York: Oxford UP, 2009) and Daniel Vukovich's *China and Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 2012). Rather than asking whether these texts accurately portray China, Basilone interrogates how Italian travelers constructed meaning through writing, often masking ideological assumptions as empirical description. In this light, figures like Luigi Barzini Sr. (*In Estremo Oriente*, 1904), Maria Antonietta Macciocchi (*Dalla Cina dopo la Rivoluzione Culturale*, 1971), Giorgio Manganelli (*Cina e altri Orienti*, 1974), and Tiziano Terzani (*La porta proibita*, 1984), emerge not just as witnesses but as textual producers embedded in specific ideological and cultural regimes.

One of Basilone's most original contributions lies in his analysis of forgotten or neglected figures such as the journalist Luciano Magrini (*La Cina d'oggi*, 1925 and *In Cina e Giappone*, 1927), the Catholic Giancarlo Vigorelli (*Domande e risposte per la nuova Cina*, 1958), and the sinologist Edoarda Masi (*China Winter*, 1982). Magrini, for instance, an anti-fascist and later founder of the Italo-Chinese Cultural Center (1954), is revealed to have subtly critiqued Benito Mussolini's regime through his 1920s China dispatches for *Corriere della Sera* (for a similar assessment of Magrini's work, see Charles Burdett and Derek Duncan, eds., *Cultural Encounters: European Travel Writing in the 1930s*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002). This microhistory of dissent, connected to broader cultural and geopolitical shifts, reflects Basilone's methodological cornerstone, a Foucauldian-Barthesian lens (the politics of textuality) that emphasizes how representations are shaped by—and shape—power.

Accordingly, Basilone never lapses into textual self-referentiality. He insists that travel narratives are simultaneously shaped by concrete material contexts—wars, colonial projects, ideological alignments. His analysis of the Italian concession in Tianjin during the fascist period, for instance,

draws on Maurizio Marinelli's reading of Tianjin as a performative space of *italianità* ("Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror: Colonial Italy Reflects on Tianjin," *Transtext(e)s Transcultures* 3, 2007, 119-50). Likewise, the pro-Maoist inflections in the 1950s and 1960s-70s—found in writings by Velio Spano (*Nella Cina di Mao Tze-Tun*, 1950), Piero Calamandrei (editor of "La Cina d'oggi," 1956, for the journal he created in 1946, *Il Ponte*), Franco Fortini (*Asia Maggiore*, 1956), and Gianni Rodari (*Turista in Cina*, 1974)—are interpreted as part of Italy's search for a new anti-fascist national identity and commitment. Basilone shows how the allure of China often reflected deeper Italian anxieties: about modernity, revolution, and the uncertainties of Western political models.

Perhaps the most poignant aspect of the book is its final chapter, where disillusionment replaces ideological fervor. In writers like Terzani and Vittorio Sereni (*Viaggio in Cina*, 2004), we find a tone of melancholic retrospection, a sense that the dream of a Chinese utopia had crumbled, revealing the abyss between revolutionary fantasy and postmodern awareness. In this, Basilone doesn't just chronicle a century of writing; he diagnoses the historical trajectory of Italian political desires, hopes, and disappointments.

If Basilone maps textual evolution across decades, *Sguardi dal ponte* freezes a single instant and multiplies its dimensions. The 1955 Italian cultural delegation to the People's Republic of China—led by jurist and *partigiano* Piero Calamandrei—becomes here both a historical episode and a theoretical model. The volume reconstructs the journey through essays, memoirs, archival photographs, and legal-political analyses, offering a kaleidoscopic view of an event that was at once symbolic, contingent, and transformative. The delegation's composition reflected the Italian left's interest, after WWII, in exploring alternatives to both American capitalism and Soviet communism, featuring prominent figures like philosopher Norberto Bobbio, psychoanalyst Cesare Musatti, writers Carlo Cassola and Franco Fortini, and painter Ernesto Treccani among its members.

The contributors of *Sguardi dal ponte* are as varied as the members of the 1955 delegation and include historians (Laura De Giorgi, "Attraverso la cortina di bambù. Il dialogo culturale sino-italiano negli anni della rottura diplomatica. 1949-1970," 29-42), legal scholars (Ivan Cardillo, "Il diritto cinese in Occidente e il contributo di Calamandrei," 21-28), writers (Renata Pisu, "Le sirene de *Il Ponte*," 43-47), and descendants of participants (the sinologist Silvia Calamandrei, "Un selfie degli anni Cinquanta," 11-20). Particularly striking is Silvia Bertolotti's long essay "Oltre le foglie dei salici" (49-116), which elaborates a semiotics of intercultural visibility. Analyzing a photo taken by Calamandrei in which Antonello Trombadori photographs a monk at Hangzhou's Lingyin Temple, Bertolotti teases out four interlocking gazes: the

two Italian photographers', the monk's, and the local spectators'. This becomes emblematic of the layered mediations that structure cultural contacts in general.

Where Basilone privileges textual analysis, *Sguardi dal ponte* foregrounds the interplay between text and image. Bertolotti's concept of photography's "inferential power" (53)—the capacity of visual material not merely to reflect but to generate knowledge, as well as possible worlds and encounters—offers a methodological advance. Her reading of the delegation's photographs, combined with Calamandrei's writings in *Il Ponte* (1956), helps reframe cultural diplomacy not as mere propaganda but, instead, as an active praxis of embodied encounters. This idea resonates with Calamandrei's own notion of "emotional sentiment" (in the article "La pittura" for *Il Ponte* 1956 issue on China)—a call to embrace subjectivity and affect as valid dimensions of cross-cultural understanding.

Equally compelling are the legal and political analyses. Ivan Cardillo's essay, for instance, reveals how Calamandrei's engagement with Chinese constitutional law contrasted sharply with the ideological agendas of American legal comparativism. Rather than evaluating China through Eurocentric criteria, Calamandrei attempted to understand it on its own terms—an approach that, in hindsight, seems both ethically and methodologically prescient.

Renata Pisu's and Silvia Calamandrei's personal recollections—of studying Chinese, growing up between two cultures, or traveling across a divided world—add layers of affective memory to the scholarly discourse. Their voices remind us that cultural diplomacy is not only the domain of states and intellectuals, but also of young people, students, and ordinary bodies navigating unfamiliar languages and landscapes.

The volume also revives the metaphor of the "bridge"—not just as a diplomatic trope, but as a heuristic model. In his "Presentazione" (9), Dario Franceschini quotes Calamandrei to suggest that peace lies not in dogma but in dialogue. This bridge, however, is not built from certainties but from questions, misunderstandings, and listening. It is, in other words, an ethical practice—an idea also echoed by Thomas Harrison in his recent exploration of the cultural history of the bridge as both an object and a metaphor (*Of Bridges: A Poetic and Philosophical Account*, U of Chicago P, 2021).

The 2020 monographic issue of *Il Ponte* testifies the validity of such understanding. This issue includes: articles by Silvia Calamandrei, Yang Lin, and Ivan Cardillo; an anthology of essays originally published in "La Cina d'oggi" (*Il Ponte*, 1956), by Lao Sce, Tsin Yen-den, Piero Calamandrei, Norberto Bobbio, Franco Fortini, Carlo Cassola, Umberto Barbaro, Cesare Musatti; unpublished materials and notes by Silvia Calamandrei, Piero Calamandrei and Maria Arena Regis on the 1955 journey to China.

Taken together, Basilone's and Bertolotti et al.'s volumes mark a methodological and disciplinary turning point. They propose a shift from comparative Orientalism to an approach that foregrounds historical entanglement, discursive mediation, and emotional resonance. Instead of asking how Italians "saw" China, these works ask what they projected, what they misread, and—perhaps more radically—how they were changed by the encounter.

This move mirrors broader trends in global cultural studies, postcolonial theory, and affect theory. Scholars like Naoki Sakai (*Translation and Subjectivity: On "Japan" and Cultural Nationalism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997), Dipesh Chakrabarty (*Provincializing Europe*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007), and Rey Chow (*Not Like a Native Speaker*. New York: Columbia UP, 2014) have long emphasized the impossibility of "pure" cross-cultural knowledge, arguing instead for an acknowledgment of translation, asymmetry, and co-implication. In this light, Italian Chinese Cultural Studies emerges not as a national subfield, but as a laboratory for rethinking cultural encounter in the age of shifting geopolitical hierarchies.

Moreover, both books respond—though differently—to the epistemic crisis of "objectivity." Basilone does so by problematizing referential truth in travel writing; Bertolotti et al. do so by elevating visual empathy and dialogic methodology. Both challenge the fantasy of transparent representation. In doing so, they offer not mere archives of memories but interpretive frameworks.

Finally, these works help reframe the Italy-China relationship beyond economics or diplomacy. They foreground the symbolic and imaginative labor involved in intercultural contact. They show that bridges are built not from capital or treaties, but from writing, walking, gazing, and feeling.

As Italy and China continue to redefine their roles in a rapidly transforming global order, the task of understanding their shared past becomes not antiquarian but urgent. *The Distance to China* and *Sguardi dal ponte* are foundational works in this project—not only for what they tell us about the twentieth century, but for how they suggest we approach the twenty-first. In different ways, both advocate for a scholarship rooted in curiosity and the recognition of difference—not as threat, but as opportunity.

In an age increasingly defined by nationalist retrenchment and epistemic polarization, these books offer a vital reminder: that to cross a bridge is not to conquer but to listen; not to explain but to translate; not to reflect the world as it is, but to imagine it otherwise.

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DANTE STUDIES

Francesco Ciabattoni. *Dante's Performance: Music, Dance, and Drama in the "Commedia."* Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024. Pp. 269.

Francesco Ciabattoni's *Dante's Performance* is an erudite and deeply researched scholarly exploration, as its title declares, of music, dance, and drama in Dante's *Commedia*. The study demonstrates how the poem captures the "culture of performance" (1), whether "liturgical drama, sacred songs, laud singing, and processions" (1) that were commonplace to medieval life. It demonstrates how Dante's magisterial poem transfigures his experience of popular and liturgical performances. The deep scholarship that undergirds this learned and original study also prompts further thought and inquiry.

Comprised of five chapters and a conclusion with eighteen illustrations, following the introduction, the study examines performance in the various canticles of the *Commedia*. The first chapter, "Medieval Theatre before and after Dante" (13-56), provides a brief history of medieval theatre before and up to Dante, situating *theatrum's* problematic moral status in the Middle Ages. It was problematic because of how theologians had condemned it beginning in the patristic era. As a result of their opprobrium, a certain negativity remained attached to the genre. But, as Ciabattoni points out, despite this biased reputation, all kinds of "civic and secular forms of theatre continued until the late Middle Ages" (15). Dante, without a doubt experienced a huge range of these performances in public and private spaces. In addition, he would have witnessed the music and drama that pervaded ecclesiastical and liturgical practice and daily life. Even if the Church maintained a suspicious attitude towards secular entertainment, it was not able to stop secular dance, music, and public performances.

Chapter 2, "Dialogue, Drama and Carnival in the *Inferno*" (57-96), responds to Giovanni del Virgilio's criticism that Dante's major work conjured street theatre. This chapter demonstrates instead how much Dante has incorporated other genres, transforming "drama, street performances, and public spectacles" (57) to render the antics, gyrations, and rantings of hell's occupants, whether devils or shades. Theatrical elements appear in moments such as in *Inferno* 3 where the allusion to the "Harrowing of Hell" suggests Dante's reference to "liturgical and paraliturgical forms of dramaturgy" (64). *Inferno* 9, a moment Ciabattoni titles "Drama Before the Gates" (69), provides another example of liturgical performance and the staging of the Harrowing of Hell.

Chapter 3, "Liturgical Drama in the *Purgatorio*" (97-136), as its title implies, examines the "prayers and liturgical references, including liturgical drama" (100) that pervade the second canticle, likened to a "colossale

monastero salmeggiante” by Francesco D’Ovidio (100). Sections on Bonconte da Montefeltro, on the Valley of the Rulers, on the Virgil and Statius encounter (*Purg.* 21), and on the last cantos of the canticle, successfully demonstrate the theatrical elements that drive the unfolding performance. Ciabattoni likens the Montefeltro interlude to the *conflictus*, a genre that rendered poetry dramatically, the Valley of the Rulers to a *laude*, and the encounter with Statius to Easter Monday rituals. Also, he teases out the liturgical and para-liturgical elements associated with religious processions in the last cantos of *Purgatorio*.

Chapter 4, “Dancing in the Afterlife” (137-88), argues originally and persuasively that Dante’s representation of the heavenly dancers in their “choreographed episodes in *Paradiso*” (137) are not breaking any moral or ecclesiastical rules. To the contrary, these episodes are in keeping with theological tradition and with “Franciscan devotional poetry” (137), and they remind us that Thomas of Celano speaks of St. Francis as moving “his feet as if dancing” (137). As Ciabattoni writes, Dante’s poetry departs “from the moralistic clichés propagated by preachers and from the philosophically rationalized distrust of the theologians and ecclesiastical authorities” (138). Instead, he expresses “an almost gleeful joy and jubilation, especially when we consider the choreography of the saints in *Paradiso* 10, 14 and 25, where the protagonists are astonishingly compared to women in a dance” (137). The chapter demonstrates how Dante recasts human dance in the afterlife using dance-related terms, such as “*ridda*” (*Inf.* 7.24), “*tresca*” (*Inf.* 14.40; *Purg.* 10.65), “*caribo*” (*Purg.* 31.132), “*caroles*” (*Par.* 24.16; *Par.* 25.99) and “*tripudio*” (*Par.* 28.124); and actual dancers, as David (*Purg.* 10.65), Matelda, “*la donna che balli*” (*Purg.* 28.53), the three theological virtues “*danzando*” (*Purg.* 31.132), the theologians (*Par.* 10.79), and St. John (*Par.* 25.104). Further, the gender-bending that has Beatrice as an admiral and St. John as a dancing maiden, Ciabattoni maintains, shows just how willing Dante was to “upend the highly gendered medieval system of authority” (188).

The final chapter, “Theatre, Dance, and Polyphony in the *Paradiso*” (189-235), argues that the third canticle “create[s] a poetic representation of heaven imitating the action, dance, and music of a live performance” (191). Ciabattoni underlines Dante poet’s repeated recourse to *excessus mentis* to characterize the Dante-character’s experience in heaven and the consequent “failure of rational language to represent the sublime” (192) as a fundamental element of the Poet’s transformation of the heavens “into a theatre where a sacred drama unfolds” (192).

Despite finding Ciabattoni’s book both an impressive work of scholarship combined with a learned argument, I do have one concern, which I do not attribute to the author. The study contains many unfortunate repetitions, sometimes of the exact same words. I attribute this to poor editing on the part

of the publisher. Too often nowadays, I would suggest since the advent of word processing, editing has become book production, not editing. The author of *Dante's Performance* has spent years researching this subject, work that included archival study of unpublished manuscripts. A brief look at the bibliography with well over five hundred entries in at least four different languages demonstrates the extent of the learning that undergirds the study. It deserved more serious copyediting on the part of the publisher. By focusing on an understudied aspect of the *Commedia*, *Dante's Performance* makes an important contribution to Dante studies. At a time when at least for the last fifty years or so in the United States the primary focus of Dante scholarship has been Dante as a theological and philosophical poet, to see a genre analysis that delves into how the poem transforms performative genres, while still engaging with the poem's ethical and theological ethos, is both original and provocative.

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Filippo Gianferrari. *Dante's Education: Latin Schoolbooks and Vernacular Poetics*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2024. Pp. 324.

It may be assumed that Dante's education continued throughout his life, but in this splendid book the focus is on its earliest phase, when the young Florentine, like anyone else who learned to read, would have done so through Latin. Essentially, this is undocumented, but in Chapter 1, "An Introduction to Literacy and Education in Dante's Florence" (18-51), building on previous work by such scholars as Paul Gehl, Robert Black and Suzanne Reynolds, Filippo Gianferrari examines surviving schoolbooks to establish that Latin was taught by a direct method: pupils were exposed to a largely constant sequence of relatively short Latin poems, diverse in genre and moralizing in content, so that an element of character formation accompanied strictly linguistic progress. Of these poems, as *Dante's Education* unfolds, the author concentrates on seven (though on page 8 he erroneously states eight); Enrico da Settimello's *Elegia*, Prosper d'Aquitaine's *Epigrammata*, a Latin selection of Aesop's fables, the *Disticha Catonis*, the *Ecloga Theoduli*, Statius's *Achilleid* and Claudian's *De Raptu Proserpinae*.

All these texts are shown to leave traces in Dante's writings. In Chapter 2, "Learning to Praise: The *Vita nova* as a Vernacular Reader" (52-96), Gianferrari identifies in *Vita nova* clear reminiscences of the *Elegia* and the *Epigrammata*, both of them prosimetra, and the latter employing prose to explain pre-existing poems. Parallels are perceived, for example, between the conversation with the "gentili donne" of *Vita nova* 10 (§18 in Barbi's ed.) leading to the praise style, and the prominence Prosper had given to praise of God as the supreme good guaranteed to the faithful Christian. In the case of the *Elegia*, narrative

parallels are identified, but Enrico's work is also found to be used structurally, as recurring references to it serve to signpost consecutive thematic stages, already featured in Enrico's text, from (Ovidian/Cavalcantian) love elegy through a Christianizing of elegiac lament to Boethian *planctus* and consolation.

The five remaining chapters zero in on various areas of the *Commedia*. Chapter 3, "(Un)like Aesop: Defining the *Commedia*'s Generic Monstrosity" (97-131), relates *Inferno* to the *Romulus Latinus*, the most popular "Aesop" in medieval grammar schools. Since fable and comedy were distinct genres that in the medieval view "should not" mix, the allusion to the fable of the frog and the mouse in *Inferno* 23.4-6 occasions a rich discussion of what Dante means when he calls his poem a "comedia": the poet enlists Aesop in order "to signal his deliberate blowing up of the traditional boundaries imposed on literary genres by medieval education and exegesis" (115). This is seen as consistent with the figure of Gerione, that "ver c'ha faccia di menzogna" whose depiction breaks Horace's rule (*Ars Poetica*, lines 1-31) about not creating unbelievable monsters that combine different natures because that prompts disbelief in the reader.

The first two cantos of *Purgatorio* (as well as *Convivio* Book 4 and *Monarchia* Book 2) and the figure of Cato are the focus of Chapter 4, "Pugna pro patria: Freeing Cato from His Distichs" (132-66) where Purgatory's guardian is considered in relation to the *Disticha Catonis*, an anonymous verse collection of proverbial wisdom and morality compiled in the third or fourth century AD, frequently associated with Cato of Utica and Christianized during its diffusion. Although Dante did not necessarily believe Cato to be the poem's author, the episode on the island's shore has enough features in common with the schoolbook to settle some age-old uncertainties regarding the poet's treatment of this character. An important contrast is drawn between the view of Cato promoted by Florentine political writers such as Brunetto Latini—as an icon of patriotism—and Dante's view of him as a champion of moral freedom that transcends geographical and political boundaries.

The *Eclogue of Theodulus* is an anonymous verse dialogue dating from the tenth century or earlier, in which Alithia (truth) argues against Pseustis (falsehood) with Phronesis (reason) as referee. It alternates between Biblical and pagan *exempla* in the same way as Dante does in the pride cantos (10 and 12) of *Purgatorio*, with some of the same pairings. As Gianferrari shows in his particularly original Chapter 5, "A Lesson in Cross-cultural Pastoral: The *Ecloga Theoduli* in *Purgatorio*" (167-207), the *Eclogue* thus represents an obvious formal and structural precedent for the first set of whips and bridles, though if Dante relies on it as an archetype he adapts it to his own harmonizing view of the relationship between Christianity and paganism. The scholar also explores conspicuous clusters of apparent borrowings from the Latin poem in *Purgatorio* 9 and 28, *Paradiso* 19, and Dante's own second eclogue.

With Chapter 6, “Re-dressing Achilles, Resisting Proserpina, Surpassing Virgil: The End of the Purgatorial Curriculum” (208-47), Gianferrari embarks on a complex metapoetic argument involving both the *Achilleid* and *De Raptu Proserpinae*, which in the school curriculum represented the epic genre, though both include strong elegiac themes; while it is conceded (221) that Dante may not have used the latter at school, he certainly knew it by the time he wrote the *Commedia*, and one of Gianferrari’s many merits is that of having made this clearer than scholars had previously realized. The core contention is that Dante aims to establish himself as the true emulator of Homer and Virgil, thus outdoing Statius and Claudian, who both failed to achieve that objective, Claudian by the essentially unheroic nature of his subject-matter, Statius by not completing his poem. This involves establishing the Dante *personaggio* as an *alter Aeneas* (*Inf.* 2.32), or, more pertinently, an *alter Achilles* (*Purg.* 9.34-42), but one who, thanks to his moral purification in Purgatory, does not seek sexual union with Matelda/Proserpina (*Purg.* 28.49-51) despite the temptation (“disvia”: line 38)—unlike Achilles, who raped Deidamia (a detail overlooked in medieval education, where Achilles was the hero), and unlike Pluto, who abducted Proserpina. Matelda represents an immediate test of Dante’s maturity, where he must “act upon what Statius and Claudian had taught him” (233); “epic and love can finally coexist, thanks to the process of moral re-education undergone by the poem’s new Christian hero” (243). Chapter 7, “Be Silent, Ovid’ (You, Too, Statius and Claudian’): Underground Voices in the Prologue to *Paradiso*” (248-57), shifts the spotlight to the opening cantos of *Paradiso*, where numerous strategic reminiscences of the *Achilleid* and *De Raptu Proserpinae* serve to consolidate Dante’s trouncing of their authors, thanks to a renewed understanding of poetic emulation.

The light this monograph casts on Dante’s early education is very welcome, while the elucidation of his literary debts to the seven selected schoolbooks is extremely impressive. What some readers may find less persuasive is a third strand running through the book: the idea that, in addition to all the poet’s manifold and well-known didactic objectives, he also aimed to teach his readers how to read. Thus, for example, he is said to have intended *Vita nova* as a sort of vernacular reader, parallel to the Latin readers with which all pupils learned the mechanics of reading, a “bridge text [...] between elementary and more advanced vernacular readings” (95). This theme recurs at various points but blossoms with some conviction in the epilogue, with the suggestion that the poet used and rethought the schoolbooks with which his readers were familiar (“quella scuola / c’hai seguitata”; *Purg.* 33.85-86) as common ground on which to re-educate them. After that, the volume is completed by a capacious bibliography and a comprehensive index.

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Elena Lombardi. *Ulysses, Dante, and Other Stories*. Berlin: ICI Berlin P, 2023. Pp. 310.

For us latecomers, providing an innovative approach to Dante and Ulysses after all these years might seem an onerous, if not impossible, task. When considering the twenty-sixth canto of the *Inferno*, the commentary tradition, and the scores of books and articles written over the centuries on the Ithacan's fate, it begs the question for the humble Dante scholar: *nihil sub undis novum*? As Elena Lombardi's latest work, *Ulysses, Dante, and Other Stories*, demonstrates, the answer is quite the contrary.

In what she describes as a work somewhere between “creative scholarship, post-scholarship, [and] punk scholarship” (275), Lombardi has engendered a refreshing approach to reading Dante. By presenting an intellectually dense exploration of the relationship between the episode of Ulysses in the *Inferno* and the literary tradition that both preceded and followed it, interwoven with a careful series of autobiographical asides, Lombardi simultaneously presents herself as an academic, mother, and reader. The result is not only a carefully considered and thoroughly researched academic text, but also one with purposeful (and apposite) overtures to the Joycean stream of consciousness.

Like any good radical, Lombardi reaches into the past to construct her future designs. But unlike Ulysses' *ametretos ponos*, her work is not destined to be a “labour without measure” (66). Beginning with “Incipit” (1-12), the author wonders if we should consider Ulysses “the ‘innocent’ victim of an overwhelming desire for knowledge, or a liar, a manipulator” (1). She quickly explains that we won't receive a satisfying answer to this, but rather that, “[a]s postmodern readers, all we can do is read this text together and point out its ambiguities, contradictions, and tensions” (2). Lombardi then offers a preliminary, tongue-in-cheek guide to both the *Commedia* and her book and, for those that might blanch at such a cavalier approach, a reminder that she is, “[a]n academic, profoundly in love with their subject matter, who has reached the age of irony” (11).

The first chapter, “Lectura” (13-45), follows the tradition of Dantean exegesis, blending close reading with broader reflections on the act of interpretation. Lombardi peppers the text with erudite philological readings as well as deeply personal musings. The synthesis of these perspectives offers the reader new modes of thinking, both those that produce novel readings—such as her claim that Dante's Ulysses represents “[t]he moment antiquity rockets into modernity through the pen of a disgraced medieval poet. When the circular turns linear, into a mad and genius tangent of desire heading towards the unknown” (33)—and those that shape our understanding of our own intimacy with the text: “[W]e need, readers, to inhabit this submerged perspective. We need to dive and hold our breath” for “the secret of our

reaction to this canto forever lies in that last line, under the firm yet fluid hold of the water” (45).

In “Sing me, o Muse, again” (47-90), intertextuality is the name of the game. Lombardi effortlessly paints a genealogical and philological portrait of the legacy of *The Odyssey*, *The Aeneid*, and *The Metamorphoses*, alongside contributions from Plotinus and Augustine. The thread connecting these texts, she argues, is *nostos* (homecoming): “The *nostos* pattern, of which the *Odyssey* is the most famous result [...] is a journey home, complicated by adventures and misadventures. [...] Someone leaves a broken home and establishes a new one in a foreign land (Aeneas). One is exiled and never finds a new home (Dante). Another leaves home one morning in Dublin. Journey (+) Home. Such is life, isn't it?” (76-77).

The third chapter, “To Pursue Virtue and Knowledge” (91-124), contrasts the “mismatch” of “grungy ‘canoscenza’ and uptight ‘virtute’” (92) in Dante and their influence on Primo Levi. Lombardi states that “[v]ery much like the original canto of *Inferno*, our response to Levi's ‘canto’ is forever buried under ‘the sea that closes over us.’ In the monumental silence of Levi's suicide almost forty years later” (111). Levi, she argues, shows us the limits of knowledge and virtue, and “the utter dead-end of making oneself understood” (102). The fourth chapter, “... And Maybe Sometime” (125-72), covers a medley of explorers, sailors, and navigators such as Lawrence Oates, Magellan, and Marco Polo, interrogating what it means to undertake a great journey. As scientific exploration continues without pause for thought, Lombardi ponders: “[W]hat is this boundless, lofty place I am in? what is this incommensurable loneliness; who am I? where does my short wandering, where does your immortal course tend to?” (170). “It Was Sunset” (173-212) functions as a premodern glossary of pilgrimage, followed by a reevaluation of Orpheus, paralleling the Greek hero with Dante and his beloved Eurydice with Beatrice: “Dante-Orpheus holds her tight. [...] In the space of writing, she is forever alive, forever renewed. Forever *nova*” (205). In the sixth chapter, “All in One Place” (213-63), Lombardi considers the figure of the siren in classical and medieval literature, and Rimbaud's *Le Bateau ivre*, which she sees as a descendant of Dante's Ulysses. Then follows a ludic analysis of medieval manuscript illuminations and their representation of navigation and textuality, serving to highlight their delightful, yet at times contradictory relationship with the text.

The “Colophon” (265-70) serves as a reflective pause, offering a metatextual commentary on writing and interpretation. Lombardi summarizes the writing process as an expedition, leaving a final send-off for her work: “Reception is a sea voyage; watch for storms, my tiny little vessel” (265). The “Narrated Bi(bli)ography” (273-305) provides an unconventional yet illuminating engagement

with sources, interweaving critical references with her own reflections: “[T]he literary endeavour and the literary pleasure are personal, at times even eccentrically so. [...] And so is literary scholarship” (274).

Lombardi’s writing is simultaneously scholarly and poetic, rigorous yet profoundly idiosyncratic, a work that mirrors the journey of Ulysses (without, like the much-turned man, going too far beyond). The book presents a compelling blend of literary history, rhetorical analysis, and private reflection, interspersed with deeply engaging and sometimes provocative readings of Dante’s text. While her frank, introspective approach may not be to everyone’s liking, her *Ulissino* (as she calls it) stands out as a critical and philosophical performance, one that seeks not only to analyse but to recreate the intellectual and emotional journey embedded within Dante’s *Commedia*.

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Elena Lombardi. *Ulysses, Dante, and Other Stories*. Berlin: ICI Berlin P, 2023. Pp. 310.

Nel presente volume Elena Lombardi propone una singolare forma di saggio che concilia la perizia accademica con la vitalità della passione per la letteratura. *Ulysses, Dante, and Other Stories* è incardinato su uno degli archetipi della letteratura occidentale, Ulisse, nell’interpretazione che Dante ne dà in *Inf.* 26. A partire dall’esegesi del testo dantesco l’argomentazione si sviluppa in maniera ecfastica, attraverso esempi tratti della letteratura classica e moderna, dalla cartografia, dall’arte scultorea, dalle miniature che costellano i manoscritti della *Commedia* e, non ultimo per importanza, dalle memorie ed esperienze personali dell’autrice. In tal modo il saggio offre una lettura inedita del mito di Ulisse, resa possibile dalle molteplici voci e dai frammenti collezionati al suo interno.

Grazie ad un approccio libero e spesso dissacrante, Lombardi conduce chi legge in un audace itinerario, profilando alcune risposte, necessariamente parziali, alle questioni che emergono dalla lettura di *Inf.* 26 e che risultano essere fondamentali anche per l’uomo moderno e post-moderno: che cosa sono la virtù e la conoscenza? verso quale fine tende il viaggio della nostra vita? quali rischi porta con sé il progresso? Alla luce di questi interrogativi, l’autrice fa parlare testi, immagini e ricordi personali, accostati in una “strange form of ‘presentness’” (278) che annulla i limiti generalmente imposti dalle necessità della cronologia e che ripaga il lettore attraverso uno sguardo vivifico ad ampio raggio sulla nostra cultura. Uno dei meriti del saggio è, infatti, il superamento dei confini disciplinari e del limite dell’oggettività, guadagnata a prezzo della soppressione dell’io autoriale. Lombardi esibisce il proprio io come fondamento interpretativo del saggio stesso. Questa impostazione, definita “theory of personality” (274),

fa del volume un potente invito alla lettura e alla rilettura libera da troppo rigide consuetudini. In ragione di questo approccio, infatti, sono chiamati a dialogare con le diverse incarnazioni letterarie di Ulisse testi e fonti della cultura passata che non si riferiscono esplicitamente alla sua figura. In tal modo, il volume soddisfa pienamente le istanze della collana editoriale in cui è collocato (Cultural Inquiry), aprendo uno spazio di ricerca e di sperimentazione in cui la riflessione critica, orientata verso le sfide e i problemi del nostro presente, fa interagire proficuamente diversi ambiti ed epoche della nostra tradizione culturale.

Il saggio è articolato in sei capitoli preceduti da una prefazione che introduce il lettore al tono peculiare in cui il volume è strutturato, oltre a fornire ai non specialisti un agile vademecum alla *Commedia* dantesca.

Il primo capitolo, "Lectura" (13-45), consiste, appunto, nel commento ad *Inf.* 26, con particolare attenzione alla figura di Ulisse. Il secondo capitolo, "Sing me, o Muse, again" (47-90), passa in rassegna le diverse sfaccettature che tale figura assume nella letteratura antica, partendo dall'eroe *polytropos* di Omero, passando poi per l'*Eneide* di Virgilio e le *Metamorfosi* di Ovidio, e ricordando ancora Plotino, Cicerone, Orazio e Seneca. Questo viaggio attraverso la letteratura classica è inframmezzato da richiami a quella moderna (Saba, Claudel, P. Roth, tra gli altri) e alle memorie dell'autrice. La lettura e l'interpretazione dell'antico è arricchita da quella del moderno, in una dialettica speculare che si riflette, infine, sul testo dantesco: il capitolo termina, infatti, con una sintesi delle differenze e delle continuità dell'Ulisse dantesco rispetto a quello classico.

Il terzo capitolo, "To Pursue Virtue and Knowledge" (91-124), è dedicato alla riflessione su che cosa sia virtù e che cosa sia conoscenza e se sia giusto perseguirle o, piuttosto, rinunciare ad esse. Questi interrogativi sottendono l'argomentazione che si dipana come un *fil rouge* attraverso la letteratura moderna e spazia dall'orazione sulla dignità umana di Pico della Mirandola all'orrido inferno del Lager descritto da Primo Levi.

Il quarto capitolo, "... And Maybe Sometime" (125-72), esamina il significato del mito odepórico nella modernità, riflettendo sul rapporto che sussiste tra l'Ulisse dantesco, un "discoverer" (127) che desidera "divenir del mondo esperto" (*Inf.* 26. 98), e l'uomo moderno. Quest'ultimo nasce con l'età delle scoperte geografiche, quando il viaggio non tende più alla virtù e alla conoscenza ma piuttosto alla gloria e alla ricchezza. Il desiderio di esperienza, intimamente legato all'azione di travalicare i confini, lega la figura di Ulisse non solo al moderno mercante-esploratore ma anche ad Adamo (*Par.* 26), il quale ha dato origine all'umanità nell'atto stesso in cui ha trapassato il limite. A conferma della imprevedibilità dei nessi che l'autrice rileva tra letteratura e realtà, tra antichità e modernità, il capitolo si conclude con il riferimento alla sonda spaziale dal nome "Ulysses", lanciata nel 1990 verso i poli del Sole (169).

Il quinto capitolo, “It Was Sunset” (173-212), affronta i temi sottesi alla figura dantesca di Ulisse: il pellegrinaggio, il desiderio e le implicazioni allegoriche del tema del viaggio. Viene anche ricordato un altro mito classico, quello di Orfeo, di notevole fortuna nella letteratura medievale e moderna. Infine, nel capitolo sesto, “All in One Place” (213-63), l’argomentazione si sposta sulla figura della sirena, richiamata nella *Commedia* in *Purg.* 19, e sui diversi significati che questo *monstrum* assume nell’antichità e nel testo dantesco: la *cupiditas*, la conoscenza, le lusinghe della finzione e, quindi, dell’arte poetica (a tal proposito viene richiamata anche la figura Gerione di *Inf.* 17). La seconda sezione di questo capitolo offre un’analisi della fortuna della metafora del viaggio per nave per indicare la scrittura e l’ingegno poetico, con il richiamo a *Le Bateau ivre* di Rimbaud, agli incipit di *Purg.* 1 e *Par.* 2 e alle miniature presenti nei codici della *Commedia*. Il volume si chiude con un’ultima sezione, “Bi(bli)ography” (273-305), in cui Lombardi ripercorre il saggio, evidenziando le ragioni che ne hanno motivato la scrittura.

In sintesi, il volume rappresenta un esperimento riuscito di scrittura saggistica che crea un punto di incontro per specialisti e non specialisti sul terreno comune della curiosità che non conosce barriere disciplinari. Grazie all’ecfrasi, che diviene strumento interpretativo, i testi fondamentali della nostra tradizione culturale sono illuminati da nuova luce e scandagliati da multiple prospettive. Inoltre, per la ricchezza di temi e di spunti, nonché per l’ampiezza e l’entrelacement dei riferimenti culturali, il saggio non potrà essere ignorato da chi si immetterà per “l’alto mare” (*Inf.* 26.100) delle molteplici riletture del mito di Ulisse.

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Sabrina Ferrara, and Gaia Tomazzoli, eds. *Lecturae Dantis Turonenses. Dante à Tours. Études réunies à l’occasion du septième centenaire de la mort de Dante (2021)*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2024. Pp. 312.

Il volume raccoglie i contributi del convegno svoltosi presso il Centre d’études supérieures de la Renaissance di Tours in occasione delle celebrazioni per il centenario dantesco nel 2021. Come viene opportunamente illustrato nell’introduzione da Sabrina Ferrara, la fortuna di Dante in Francia è perlopiù figlia della riscoperta tra l’età dei Lumi e il primo Ottocento, che andò a colmare quella che Jacqueline Risset definiva l’“histoire d’une absence”; assenza in realtà parziale, come dimostra, sotto il profilo della circolazione libraria e del collezionismo, l’ormai classico censimento dei testimoni manoscritti e a stampa delle opere di Dante in Francia di Paul Colomb de Batines (1845-48), a cui va aggiunto, per i soli manoscritti, il più rigoroso catalogo ragionato di Lucien Auvray (1892), senza dimenticare il contributo di alcune tappe cruciali della

fortuna dantesca in Oltralpe, prima fra tutte l'impressione della *princeps* del *De vulgari eloquentia* curata dal Corbinelli (1577), operazione politica di non scarso rilievo intorno alla corte di Enrico III.

Nell'introduzione (7-28) in cui sono offerti ragguagli sulle celebrazioni del centenario dantesco in Italia e Francia e, con un *focus* più mirato, sulla fortuna di Dante a Tours e in Touraine—viene inoltre chiarito, a mo' di premessa epistemologica, che il volume non riprende (a dispetto del titolo) il modello delle *lecturae dantis*, ma si concentra piuttosto su una selezione di casi di studio, per offrire una prospettiva ampia sui diversi orientamenti e prospettive d'indagine all'interno del variegato settore degli studi danteschi. Uno dei pregi indiscussi del volume è proprio quello di ampliare questo ventaglio fino a includere metodi di ricerca e tradizioni di studio non così di frequente in dialogo; varietà ermeneutica che si evince sia dall'eterogeneità delle affiliazioni accademiche dei contributori (Francia, Italia, Spagna, Germania, Polonia, Ungheria, USA), sia dai paradigmi critici di riferimento, che spaziano dall'approccio psicanalitico alla Francesco Orlandi fino alla semiologia e all'analisi transmediale, con particolare riguardo per le intersezioni e le contaminazioni tra letteratura, musica e arti figurative.

In totale il volume conta nove contributi. Nel primo saggio, “L'enigma di Francesca. Appunti per una psicoanalisi testuale delle opere dantesche” (29-103), Luigi Spagnolo affronta il Canto V dell'*Inferno* attraverso un'interpretazione psicanalitica di impronta freudiana, facendo ricorso al metodo delle libere associazioni, soffermandosi su alcune aporie del canto e ampliando la prospettiva ad altri *loci* della *Commedia*. Alcune proposte talvolta ardite dell'articolo (per esempio la lettura edipica di Francesca come *imago* materna) vengono utilmente bilanciate da una premessa sui limiti epistemologici del metodo, con il richiamo ai rilievi molto ragionevoli di Sebastiano Timpanaro sugli assunti di base dell'approccio psicanalitico, primo fra tutti l'intenzionalità delle associazioni freudiane.

L'articolo di Anthony Rousset, “Entre le visible et l'invisible: hier les paroles et les temps. *Inf.* I, 61-90” (105-46), presenta una più tradizionale lettura esegetica del canto I dell'*Inferno*, nella quale, attraverso riferimenti ai primi commentatori della *Commedia*, viene prestata particolare attenzione al rapporto tra visibile e invisibile e alla continuità tra passato e presente. La figura di Virgilio è qui interpretata come foriera di un “umanesimo paradossale”, o, sulla scorta di Pinchard, di un “umanesimo dell'oltretomba”, ossia di un umanesimo inteso, à la lettre, in riferimento alla capacità di dialogare con gli uomini del passato.

Il saggio di Maria Mašlanka-Soro, “La verità nulla menzogna frodi: alcuni miti virgiliani e la loro reinterpretazione nella *Commedia*” (147-62), si concentra sul tema (largamente esplorato dalla critica dantesca) della

ripresa e del riuso delle *auctoritates* classiche nella *Commedia*; in particolare, ne viene attenuata la dimensione di *aemulatio* in favore di quella polemica, soprattutto nei confronti delle *fictiones* ovidiane e delle aporie virgiliane nella rappresentazione veritiera della realtà.

Il contributo di Gaia Tomazzoli, “Pour un profil d’Yvonne Batard” (163-85), dedicato alla figura della studiosa francese (1900-82), si propone di riportarne alla luce il profilo intellettuale, ancora in parte sconosciuto al di fuori dei confini nazionali. Dopo avere tracciato una sintetica biografia e un quadro della formazione e degli interessi di Batard, Tomazzoli ne evidenzia la rilevanza per la critica dantesca in Francia e la singolarità dell’approccio orientato allo studio dei miti, dei temi e delle forme letterarie al di fuori dei paradigmi storiografici convenzionali, ma anche gli interessi interdisciplinari (quando questa prospettiva era ancora marginale negli studi romanzi), soffermandosi su alcuni casi di studio come le illustrazioni botticelliane della *Commedia*, oggetto della tesi di dottorato di Batard, e, soprattutto, il motivo letterario e iconografico di Apollo e Minerva nel poema dantesco, a cui la studiosa dedicò una nota monografia (*Minerve et Apollon: les images de la “Divine Comédie”*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1952).

“La prospettiva del tragico nel *Purgatorio*” (187-98) è invece il titolo e il tema centrale dell’intervento di Luigi Tassoni, che, ricollegandosi abbastanza fedelmente alla prospettiva adottata da Sabrina Ferrara in un suo precedente intervento sulla dimensione tragica dell’*Inferno*, delinea un’interpretazione del *Purgatorio* come luogo di catarsi e riconciliazione, dove il tragico si manifesta in modalità meno esplicite rispetto alla prima cantica, ma attraverso alcuni caratteri circoscrivibili: una struttura complessa, una *climax* ascendente, la tensione tragica e lo straniamento del *viator*.

Il contributo di Raffaele Pinto, “I ‘crini scemi’. Perché la prodigalità è un peccato? Purg. XXII, 19-54” (199-209), riflette su una questione afferente al tema dell’immaginario economico dantesco, occupandosi del problema della prodigalità come peccato nella *Commedia*. La visione dantesca della prodigalità viene qui letta da Pinto come prodotto non solo della contaminazione tra dottrina cristiana e aristotelismo, ma anche di una lettura del “vizio moderno” alla luce della transizione dai valori dell’etica feudale a quelli della nuova etica mercantile.

Il volume si chiude infine con tre saggi che ampliano la prospettiva verso la dimensione transmediale, seguiti da un breve contributo di Bruno Pinchard, “Dante, un jeu d’abîme” (289-98), che, tirando le conclusioni, invita a un costante esercizio di interrogazione della “Minerva oscura” dantesca. Il saggio di Franziska Meier, “Du Paradis terrestre de Dante au Parnasse de Raphaël. À propos de Sappho dans la *Stanza della Segnatura*” (211-34), si sofferma su un problema ampiamente dibattuto, ossia le fonti per la descrizione del

Parnaso di Raffaello nell'omonima vita vasariana, che generalmente si riteneva condotta sulla base dell'incisione di Marcantonio Raimondi, benché quest'ultima non includesse la poetessa greca Saffo, presente nella biografia del Vasari; secondo Meier, la descrizione vasariana riprende una tradizione letteraria che risale fino a Dante, ma venne poi recuperata (e modificata) da Petrarca. Del rapporto letteratura-musica si occupa Francesco Ciabattini nel saggio “La *Comédie* entre monodie et polyphonie” (235-58), che affronta la dimensione musicale della *Commedia* mettendo in rilievo il passaggio dalla monodia del *Purgatorio* alla polifonia del *Paradiso*, delineando il quadro di un'evoluzione che riflette la complessità crescente della visione dantesca. Il saggio di Alessandro Benucci, “Dante transculturel: voyage en *Enfer* avec la bande dessinée” (259-87), offre, infine, una vasta e dettagliata ricognizione della trasposizione dell'*Inferno* nella forma fumettistica.

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Joseph Luzzi. *Dante's Divine Comedy: A Biography*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2024. Pp. 218.

As the title evocatively suggests, Joseph Luzzi's book is not the usual biography of an author, but rather “a biography of [his] *magnus opus*” (11). By tracing the afterlife of a work as influential as Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, Luzzi attests to “its secular and spiritual impact” (11) on Western literature and culture. Confronted with the monumental task of summarizing the centuries-long reception of one of the foremost authors of the modern era, Luzzi limits the scope of his research to the Anglo-European context and focuses exclusively on “paradigmatic moments” (11), to distill the “essence” of that reception (12) with synthesis and concision.

The book is divided into ten chapters, each devoted to a specific “Dantesque topo[s]” (12). The first of these chapters “Inventing ‘Italian’ Literature” (21-36), dedicated to “Dante as champion of the vernacular in early Italian literature” (13), discusses the motives and implications of writing in the Tuscan vernacular instead of a cultivated, classic Latin. Moreover, it recounts the early debates on Dante's oeuvre by Boccaccio and Petrarch, who regarded the vernacular as unfit for high literary creation.

The second chapter, “*Comedia Proibita*” (37-56), explores the religious reproaches of Dante and his poem. From Guido Vernani, who dubbed Dante a demonic “vessel” in 1327, to censored and purified editions of the *Commedia* at the time of the Inquisition, Luzzi discusses the unorthodox aspects of Dante's work that led to the Church's ambivalent attitude towards the Florentine poet.

In chapter three, “Renaissance Visions” (57-78), Luzzi tackles the question of Dante's reception during the Renaissance, a period dominated by

Petrarchism. Moving across literary and visual arts, the chapter explores the fascinating imagery that emerges from famous printed editions of the poem, ranging from Boccaccio's illustrated cycle of the poem to Gabriele Giolito de' Ferrari's alteration of the title.

Chapter four, "The Lost Centuries" (79-94), accounts for the drastic decline of Dante's popularity between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. Unfit for the Counter-Reformation's rigidity, the Baroque's excessive aesthetics, and the Enlightenment's disdain for the Middle Ages, the *Commedia* was not published in Europe between 1629 and 1702 (78). Great prominence is given, in this chapter, to John Milton and Giambattista Vico, who both "promote[d] Dante's cause" during these dark times for the poet's European reception (89).

In chapter five, "Romantic Apotheosis" (95-107), Luzzi delves into the sudden revival of interest in Dante during the nineteenth century, as the Enlightenment gave way to the Romantic age. From Stendhal's remark on Dante as the epitome of the Romantic poet, to Madame de Staël's *Corinne*, to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Romantic writers looked to Dante as an enduring source of inspiration.

The sixth chapter "Transition and Translation" (108-23), examines the many translations that emerged from this "Dante-mania" (96), with a specific focus on Byron and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Chapter seven, "The Modernist Dante" (124-38), explores the afterlife of Dante's work in T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound and James Joyce. From *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* to *Ulysses*, these authors frequently quote passages from the *Commedia*, showing a diffused popularity of Dante among Modernist writers.

In chapter eight, "On Heroes and Hero-Worship" (139-49), Luzzi briefly discusses the lasting influence of the "heroic" image of Dante introduced by Romantic authors during the twentieth century, focusing on three unfortunate writers "for whom Dante became a matter of life or death" (142): Primo Levi, Osip Mandelstam, and Antonio Gramsci.

The ninth chapter, titled "Dante on Screen" (150-61), elaborates on the scarce number of cinematic adaptations of Dante's poem: from *L'Inferno* by Francesco Bertolini, the first feature-length film made in Italy, to the abandoned project of Franco Zeffirelli's *Inferno*, directors seem to view the *Commedia* more as a source of inspiration than as material for direct adaptation.

Finally, the last chapter, "Trigger Warnings and Papal Blessings" (162-75), examines the most recent developments in Dante reception across the twentieth century and the New Millennium. Contested by Italian human rights advocacy groups for its racist and offensive passages, the *Commedia* is still taught at school and has even received praise from several popes.

Overall, Luzzi's *Dante's Divine Comedy* appears more targeted toward the general public than toward academics and *Dantisti*: clear, informative and concise, the book serves as an engaging introductory reading for non-specialist readers and students with little to no prior knowledge of Dante or his reception. Abiding by his programmatic synthesis, Luzzi successfully fits an "oceanic amount of material" (11) into a mere two hundred pages, focusing on a selected number of authors without ever taking the reader's knowledge for granted—not even when it comes to the plot of *Frankenstein*. While admirable, this openness to a broader audience occasionally results in remarks that might appear reductive to academic readers: for instance, "a reader in the poet's own time" would hardly have regarded Statius's *Thebaid* as a "lesser instance" of the epic genre (28). Similarly, some of the more emphatic claims about Dante's novelty in writing about love in the vernacular risk underplaying the foundational contributions of the *troubadours* and the *scuola poetica Siciliana*; while these statements rightly highlight Dante's originality, they may inadvertently downplay key precedents bridging classical models and his poetic innovation. Finally, building on the linguistic themes presented in the first chapter, the chapter on the "lost centuries" might have included a discussion of Pietro Bembo's *Prose* and its influence on Dante's relative decline in popularity compared to Petrarch.

In conclusion, *Dante's Divine Comedy* offers an engaging and impressive synthesis of the poem's reception over the centuries, successfully balancing the rigor of an academic monograph with the clarity and appeal of a widely accessible book.

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MIDDLE AGES & RENAISSANCE

Johannes Bartuschat, Marco Nava, and Jonathan Schiesaro, eds. *La trattatistica d'arte nell'Italia del Cinquecento. Generi, pratiche, modelli*. Roma: Carocci, 2025. Pp. 284.

Il volume curato da Bartuschat, Nava e Schiesaro rappresenta un'operazione fondamentale nello studio della teoria dell'arte rinascimentale e della sua storiografia. Come affermano i curatori nella loro *Introduzione* (9-16), il volume rivolge un'attenzione critica al discorso sull'arte e degli artisti come prodottisi nel Cinquecento. Quest'attenzione pluridisciplinare passa per l'analisi di fonti, pratiche, testi, generi, nodi intertestuali che approssimino la comprensione dello statuto teorico dell'arte nel Cinquecento. Inoltre, questo

volume mette in rilievo anche la diretta esperienza degli artisti e la produttività del loro discorso. Nei dodici articoli i generi del trattato e del dialogo sono quelli privilegiati, ma hanno una ampia risonanza anche quelli dell'epigrafia, dei ricettari, dei versi satirici, della biografia e dell'oratoria funeraria. Come polo centrale e unificante i curatori riconoscono l'asse Firenze-Roma, con parziali focalizzazioni su Venezia.

Il contributo di Giulia Zaccariotto, "*Bellini, Giotto e Mantegna: componimenti poetici inediti in un manoscritto di Marin Sanudo*" (17-32) apre il volume e si focalizza sul manoscritto di Marin Sanudo Ms. Lat. Cl. xii.210 della Marciana di Venezia. L'analisi di alcuni componimenti latini ivi presenti, unita alla ricostruzione della rete intertestuale soggiacente, permette di determinare l'identità degli artisti citati in alcuni componimenti, in particolare Giovanni Bellini, Giotto e Mantegna.

Nel suo articolo "L'artista e il cortigiano: note culturali e filosofiche su B. Castiglione e l'emancipazione delle 'arti' belle" (33-50), Tommaso Ghezzani rivela il ruolo centrale dell'arte e degli artisti nell'idealizzazione cortigiana del reale. Queste caratteristiche sono piegate da Castiglione, secondo Ghezzani, verso una costruzione identitaria in cui "il cortigiano è [...] come un artista figurativo e il suo capolavoro più importante consiste in sé stesso" (34).

Prosegue con analisi filosofiche Baptiste Tochon-Danguy con il suo articolo "L'occhio della mente e l'intelletto dello scultore: fonti filosofiche e artistiche nelle *Lezzionii sulle arti* di Benedetto Varchi" (51-66). Il saggio procede a una rivalutazione teorica e filosofica della figura di Benedetto Varchi. In particolare, grazie a una dettagliata analisi della terminologia varchiana, vengono messe in evidenza le ascendenze platoniche, neoplatoniche e aristoteliche dello scrittore e la densità filosofica dei suoi scritti sull'arte.

David Zagoury, nel suo contributo "«Queste tue historie del Bugiale di Plinio»: umorismo ed eterodossia nella critica d'arte a stampa (1546-50)" (67-74), analizza la presenza di versi burleschi, di pasquinate, di forme eterodosse di trattazione artistica per ipotizzare l'influenza ancora poco indagata di una corrente burlesca e anticlassicistica all'interno della fioritura teorica della prima metà del Cinquecento.

Sia il contributo di Jonathan Schiesaro, "Un 'praticone senza cuiussi'? Anton Francesco Doni scrittore e teorico d'arte" (73-94), che quello di Diletta Gamberini, "«La mirabile invenzione del Laocoonte»: polimattia di riuso in una pagina del Disegno di Anton Francesco Doni" (95-108) sono focalizzati su Anton Francesco Doni. Schiesaro si prefigge l'obiettivo di rintracciare le attitudini teoriche del poligrafo analizzando la convergenza biografica con alcuni artisti, le sue inclinazioni teoriche testimoniate da alcune lettere e infine le caratteristiche del *Disegno* del 1549. Gamberini si concentra proprio su quest'ultimo trattato, tentando la ricostruzione delle "stratigrafie intertestuali"

del testo a partire dal concetto di “polimatia di riuso”. In particolare, Gamberini analizza l'esempio del Laocoonte come porta d'ingresso nel laboratorio intertestuale del Doni.

L'articolo di Sara Stifano, “Vasari, Condivi, Cellini: le “carezze torbide” di Cosimo i nelle biografie e autobiografie d'artisti” (109-34) si misura con il genere della biografia intellettuale. Comparando le biografie di Vasari, Michelangelo (scritta dal Condivi) e dell'autobiografia di Cellini, Stifano esplicita le varie rifrazioni delle figure mediche tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento.

In “Per una riedizione dell'*Orazione funebre di Michelangelo Buonarroti* scritta da Benedetto Varchi” (135-54) Frédérique Dubard de Gaillarbois si focalizza sull'episodio dei funerali di Michelangelo, notando una disparità di ricezione critica tra le fortunate *Esequie* giuntine, e l'*Orazione funebre* del Varchi, autore dell'apparato iconografico del funerale. Il contributo si inserisce nell'ottica della rivalutazione critica del Varchi a livello artistico, teorico e storiografico.

I contributi di Eliana Carrara, “Con questa voce sola si possono chiamare i veri disegni”: considerazioni sulle Regole del disegno di Alessandro Allori” (155-74) e di Marco Nava, “Per un'edizione dei Ragionamenti delle regole del disegno di Alessandro Allori” (175-94) sono dedicati alla figura di Alessandro Allori, pittore allievo del Bronzino e scrittore di un trattato sulle *Regole del disegno* (composto intorno agli anni Sessanta) ma rimasto manoscritto. Carrara analizza il trattato in relazione con il *milieu* culturale e teorico della seconda metà del Cinquecento (in particolare Vasari, Doni, Varchi e l'Accademia Fiorentina), mentre Nava fornisce delle specifiche storiche, filologiche e linguistiche del testo dell'Allori prodromiche all'edizione del testo.

Margherita Quaglino, nel suo articolo “Disegnare e colorire nei *Veri precetti della pittura* di Giovan Battista Armenini (1586)” (195-216), a partire da un'analisi linguistico-quantitativa del testo dell'Armenini del 1586, fornisce interessanti spunti di riflessione sulla composizione dell'opera in un particolare momento storico-culturale. La risultante natura pragmatica del testo contraddice l'ipotesi dello Schlosser, che vedeva nel trattato dell'Armenini un'opera teorica.

Con il contributo di Ilenia Pittui, “Intorno a Paolo Giovio, scrittore d'arte: genere e modello per una storia della storia dell'arte rinascimentale e ottomana” (217-30), la figura di Paolo Giovio, scrittore degli *Elogia*, è infatti come una figura chiave della storia dell'arte, da una parte precorrendo il modello biografico vasariano negli *Elogia*, dall'altro ponendosi come modello sovraregionale per la storiografia artistica, in particolare in area ottomana.

Il volume in analisi è un'operazione editoriale e scientifica di altissimo livello che getta luce su un campo di studi, quello della letteratura artistica

e degli artisti, quanto mai centrale nella storia del periodo rinascimentale italiano. Gli eventuali limiti di questa operazione, in particolare la selezione geografica dell'asse Roma-Firenze, la focalizzazione su autori prevalentemente attivi nella prima metà del Cinquecento, l'assenza di una riflessione mirata a quella che Andrea Gareffi e Gennaro Savarese (*La letteratura delle immagini nel Cinquecento*. Roma: Bulzoni, 1980) definivano "La letteratura delle immagini" (emblem, imprese e geroglifici), sono da considerarsi relativi all'impossibilità di far convergere in un solo volume l'enorme varietà di temi e testi inerenti lo stesso campo di studi. Pertanto, la presente raccolta di saggi si pone come un modello da seguire per altri volumi successivi, segnando l'inizio di una rinnovata attenzione alle questioni teoriche relative alla storiografia della storia dell'arte.

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Elizabeth Bernhardt. *Genevra Sforza and the Bentivoglio. Family, Politics, Gender and Reputation in (and beyond) Renaissance Bologna*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2023. Pp. 344.

As Elizabeth Bernhardt says in the "Introduction" of her volume, the case of Genevra Sforza de' Bentivoglio shows how a flawed tradition deeply rooted in misogyny has led to misrepresentations that continue to pervade modern historiography (17). It is therefore the aim of this volume to reconstruct the real Genevra. The longstanding legends and misconceptions surrounding her figure are due, on the one hand to the lack of records kept by the Bentivoglio family, and, on the other, to the *damnatio memoriae* campaign led by Pope Julius II against the Bentivoglios. This "fact-driven biography" (30) thus is based on documents scattered across thirty archives and libraries (listed in the "Abbreviations Table" at the beginning of the volume, 11), including, among others, the Gonzaga and Sforza families' records, and Genevra's personal correspondence.

The "Introduction" (18-22) gives an overview of the intricate history of Bologna and the Bentivoglio family between the XII and the XVI centuries (18-22), Genevra's scarce biographical information (23), and scholarship conducted between the 1930s and the present day (27-29).

The first chapter, "Genevra Sforza de' Bentivoglio (ca. 1441-1507): Lost and Found in Renaissance Italy" (37-71), recounts how Genevra was seen by her contemporaries according to published and unpublished local chronicles (such as the *Cronaca di Bologna*), as well as literary texts such as Sigismondo de' Poeti's *Colloquio tra Zanevra di Bentivoglio e Sismondo poeta, circa la Comparazione delle gemme e dell'oro col vero Amore* (FIML, Ash-Burnham, 737) and Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti's collection of notable women's biographies *Gynevra de le clare donne*. Bernhardt notes that Genevra was

described as the typical Renaissance lady: educated, well-esteemed, devout (as evidenced by her patronage of the Corpus Domini convent founded by the living saint Caterina Vigri), the patron of a paper production shop (*Tipografia Ginevera Sfortia*), and a prolific mother who provided her children with the finest education and later organised their advantageous marriages.

Chapter two, “Twice Bentivoglio. Genevra Sforza on the Marriage Market (1446-1454 and 1463-1464)” (74-108), reconstructs Genevra’s childhood and education (surrounded by erudite ladies such as her stepmother and well-known writer Costanza Varano, as well as her half-sister Battista Sforza), the whereabouts of her first husband, Sante Bentivoglio, and, most importantly, Genevra’s key role in building a tripartite alliance between Florence, Milan, and Bologna. Bernhardt describes how Condottiere Francesco Sforza conquered several cities in the Marche and instated his brother Alessandro as lord of Pesaro. To then overcome the opposition of the Pope (who was worried about his territories in Central Italy), Sforza arranged a convenient marriage between Genevra, Alessandro’s daughter, and the Tuscan-born Sante Bentivoglio, who was the de facto ruler of Bologna. Although primary sources do not report Genevra’s perspective, right after Sante’s death she personally wrote to her uncle, duke Francesco Sforza. She wrote to him again when, months later, Sforza proposed a quite unusual marriage between herself and Sante’s young relative, Giovanni II, the new ruler of Bologna, which caused tensions between Giovanni and the city government (*i Sedici*). Despite the scandal brought about by Genevra’s no longer virginal status and the fact that she was ten years younger than the groom, the marriage was agreed upon, reflecting Genevra’s key role in the balance of powers in Northern and Central Italy.

Chapter three, “Genevra Sforza and Bentivoglio Family Strategies. Creating and Extending Kinship on a Massive Scale” (109-79), deals with dynastic strategies, emphasising how “together Giovanni II and Genevra deliberately adopted a plan to establish the family once and for all with the help of as many children and allies as possible,” and how the strategy “may have come from her” (115) following the example of the Sforza, and in particular her uncle Francesco who fathered approximately thirty children. As the author notes, Genevra carefully chose her childrens’ names and godparents in order to reinforce their bond with the Sforza, in addition to carefully planning strategic marriages for them. The chapter, in fact, describes in great detail the marital alliances contracted between ruling families (Sforza, d’Este, Malatesta, Gonzaga, etc.) and important *condottieri*, to thereby grant protection to and bond several cities around Emilia-Romagna and Lombardia (Milan, Ferrara, Rimini, Mantua, etc.).

Chapter four, “Genevra Sforza in Her Own Words. Patron and Client Relationships from Her Correspondence” (181-216), explores Genevra’s

correspondence with rulers of Milan, Ferrara, Florence and Mantua to document her carefully woven net of relationships, especially that with the Gonzaga of Mantua, with whom Genevra took refuge in 1506. In several letters she assumed a political role on behalf of Giovanni: for instance, when she wrote to Lorenzo de' Medici requesting safe passage for a supply of grain during a food shortage in Bologna; when she agreed to help the lord of Cento; or when she sent appeals to the marquess of Mantua and the duke of Ferrara to help her husband Giovanni who was then held captive in Faenza.

Chapter five, "The Wheel of Fortune. Genevra Sforza and the Fall of the Bentivoglio (1506-1507)" (217-56), deals with the fall of the Bentivoglio rule (1506-07), detailing the movements of several protagonists (the Pope's troops led by Francesco Gonzaga, the fleeing Bentivoglio men, the Bentivoglio women left behind in Bologna, and Genevra's exile), based on the letters exchanged by the Gonzaga.

Finally, chapter six, "Making and Dispelling Fake History. Genevra Sforza and Her 'Black Legends' (1506-present)" (257-308), examines how the black legend about Genevra was spread by writers, often in close connection with the Church, both in the year of her exile and in later years. The author in fact analyses a variety of historical works between the sixteenth and twenty-first centuries that focus on Genevra's alleged vices (cruelty, arrogance, greediness) and undocumented crimes (poisoning her first husband Sante in order to marry Giovanni II, and provoking a civil war in Bologna). When analysing these sources, Bernhardt also compares Genevra with other Early Modern noblewomen who have suffered from misrepresentation as a result of their political power, which their contemporaries interpreted as a threat to the social and moral order.

The volume is additionally enriched with colour images and a very interesting series of tables outlining complex networks of political relationships and familial allegiances. These tables include the Sforza and Bentivoglio family trees (67); the chronology of Genevra's eighteen pregnancies (110); a list of legitimate and illegitimate Bentivoglio children (146-52); a list of baptisms in Bologna for which members of the Bentivoglio family served as godparents (153-61); accounts of the political destinies of the Bentivoglio children through weddings, titles, and appointments (162-67); a list of wedding festivities with details on the guests, gifts, and entertainment offered (168-71); ecclesiastical careers of the Bentivoglio offspring (172-74); a map of the political destinies of the Bentivoglio children in Italy (175); an account of letters exchanged between the Bentivoglio and Gonzaga families (187); and an overview of letters attributed to Genevra (208-15).

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Jane A. Bernstein. *Printing Music in Renaissance Rome.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2023. Pp. 264.

In *Printing Music in Renaissance Rome*, Jane A. Bernstein, Austin Fletcher Professor of Music Emerita at Tufts University, broadens her scholarship on Renaissance print culture by shifting focus from Venice to Rome. Building on *Print Culture and Music in Sixteenth-Century Venice* (2001) and *Music Printing in Renaissance Venice: The Scotto Press (1539-1572)* (1998), this volume completes “the picture of the sixteenth-century book trade on the Italian Peninsula” (Preface, xv).

Bernstein’s interdisciplinary approach makes this book essential for Renaissance music specialists and appealing to scholars of musicology, print culture, and religious studies. She examines the interplay between technological innovation, materiality, and repertory development, emphasizing the Church’s role in shaping the post-Tridentine music printing industry. While Venice catered to mass production, Roman printers emerged as adaptable and experimental, producing for specialized audiences and responding to ecclesiastical and local market demand.

Following a preface and introduction, the nine-chapter volume opens with “The World of Roman Music Printers and Publishers” (7-39), which maps key figures and networks in Roman music printing. “Methods and Materials” (40-52) is a technical overview of Renaissance printing processes. Bernstein’s vivid description immerses readers in a sixteenth-century print shop and introduces them to woodcut, copperplate engraving, and impression techniques. She details paper types, page formats, and mise-en-page, enhanced by illustrations and charts, offering crucial context for understanding later chapters.

The narrative transitions to the origins of music printing in Rome with “Sixtus IV and the Beginning of Music Printing in Fifteenth-Century Rome” (53-69). It examines the *Missale Romanum* (1476)—the earliest Italian printed music book with movable type—and considers the roles of the German printer Ulrich Han, the Franciscan community at Aracolei, and Pope Sixtus IV. Bernstein contends Sixtus’s patronage was part of a broader effort to unify the Franciscan order and standardize liturgical practice, highlighting the press’s role in consolidating power and extending religious reform. This chapter, along with Chapter 4, “Printing Palestrina’s Music in Sixteenth-Century Italy” (70-87), and Chapter 5, “Marenzio and His Printers in Rome and Venice” (88-106), draw on Bernstein’s earlier publications from 2007 to 2016, reflecting her sustained engagement with the subject.

Chapters 4 and 5 offer insight into how both Palestrina and Marenzio navigated the printing worlds of Rome and Venice. Bernstein challenges the assumption that Palestrina’s contemporary reputation matched his posthumous legacy as the savior of polyphony. While he enjoyed papal patronage,

Palestrina did not actively pursue international recognition through Venice's expansive print network. Instead, he chose to publish exclusively with Roman printers who specialized in producing large-size choirbooks required by the Church, reflecting his life-long reliance on ecclesiastical employers. Marenzio, on the other hand, occupied a unique position in Rome, composing for the domestic spheres of cardinals rather than the Church. His engagement with Venetian presses for madrigals allowed him to cultivate a broader, international audience. In contrast, his Roman publications—motets, spiritual madrigals, and *villanelle*—addressed local needs and reflected the city's more specialized print market.

The book's second half shifts focus to institutional and reform-driven publishing initiatives. Chapter 6, "Spanish Choirbooks, Tridentine Reforms, and the Roman Press" (107-25), details how post-Tridentine reforms influenced monumental liturgical choirbooks commissioned by Spanish composers Tomás Luis de Victoria and Francisco Guerrero. Bernstein emphasizes the collaboration between Pope Gregory XIII, the French type-designer Robert Granjon, and Vatican publisher Domenico Basa, illustrating the intersection of ecclesiastical authority and technological innovation.

"Printing the *Lauda spirituale*" (126-51) highlights the *lauda*, a devotional musical form promoted by Filippo Neri and the Congregation of the Oratory. Bernstein explains, "The changes that occurred both in this popular genre and in its manifestation in print reflect the shifting objectives of this important reform community" (127). The *lauda* books showcase evolving visual presentation styles and diverse musical formats, with editions spanning three decades.

Chapter 8, "Engraving New Music Repertories," highlights the transformative impact of copperplate engraving on music printing (152-74). This innovation liberated printers from the constraints of movable type, enabling the precise reproduction of virtuosic musical styles and facilitating the dissemination of previously improvisatory or "secret" compositions. Bernstein illustrates this shift through the works of Simone Verovio, among others, and Luzzasco Luzzaschi's *Madrigali... per cantare et sonare a uno, e doi, e tre soprani* (1601). The latter represents the sole surviving musical document from the *musica secreta* at the Este court in Ferrara, underscoring copperplate's role in preserving ephemeral performance traditions. Bernstein argues that this technology reshaped music books' design and accessibility, bridging the gap between live performance and the printed page.

The volume concludes with "Printing Musical Spectacle: Cavalieri's *Rappresentazione di Anima, et di Corpo*" (173-94), which Bernstein describes as "the most extravagant and complex music publication printed up to that time" (175). Cavalieri's *Rappresentazione* not only heralded new musical

forms but also exemplified a groundbreaking use of print to document performance, complete with staging instructions, libretto, and score (176-77). This publication, Bernstein argues, marked a watershed moment in the history of musical theater *and* music printing.

Bernstein's *Printing Music in Renaissance Rome* contributes to Renaissance musicology and print culture, offering rich insights into the intersections of technology, ecclesiastical authority, and musical repertoires. Her meticulous archival work sheds light on the material realities of music book production. By situating her analysis within the religious context of post-Tridentine Rome, Bernstein effectively demonstrates how Roman printers responded to local and broader ecclesiastical demands.

While Bernstein's archival research and technical insights are formidable, for readers interested in Renaissance music's broader literary or philosophical underpinnings, certain aspects may invite further inquiry. The *lauda*—a poetic genre with roots tracing back to the Duecento with Jacopone da Todi—receives limited attention regarding its textual lineage, and the influence of late-Cinquecento Aristotelian poetics on sacred music or theatrical forms remains underexplored. However, these specialized interests extend beyond Bernstein's primary focus on print culture and musicology. Her meticulous archival work and ability to clearly convey complex material ensure that *Printing Music in Renaissance Rome* remains a foundational contribution to the study of Renaissance print and musical culture. This volume will undoubtedly remain indispensable for musicologists, print historians, and scholars of Renaissance cultural production.

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Matteo Maria Boiardo. *Asino d'oro (da Apuleio)*. Ed. Matteo Favaretto. Novara: Interlinea – Centro Studi Matteo Maria Boiardo, 2021. Pp. 511.

L'edizione curata da Favaretto offre il primo testo critico dell'*Asino d'oro* apuleiano tradotto dal Boiardo e va ad arricchire la recente collana delle *Opere di Matteo Maria Boiardo* patrocinata dal Centro Studi Matteo Maria Boiardo e dal Comune di Scandiano. Il volume ha una struttura tripartita: il fulcro è costituito dall'edizione critica del testo (103-486), preceduta dall'"Introduzione" (9-93) e dalla "Tavola delle opere citate" (95-102), cui segue un utile "Glossario" (487-511).

L'"Introduzione" fornisce in maniera chiara i dati essenziali per la contestualizzazione dell'opera, soffermandosi su: datazione, paternità, fortuna, differenze rispetto al modello, e analisi linguistica. Il volgarizzamento dell'*Asino d'oro* si colloca sul finire degli anni '70 del XV secolo, momento in cui Boiardo aveva da poco terminato la revisione degli

Amorum libri e si stava dedicando all'*Inamoramento de Orlando*. Al tempo, Boiardo era già noto come volgarizzatore: sin dal 1468 si era adoperato infatti come traduttore di opere storiche. Antecedenti al 1471, come ha dimostrato Stefano Carrai (“La formazione di Boiardo. Modelli e letture di un giovane umanista”, *Rinascimento* 38, 1998, 345-504), sono i suoi volgarizzamenti: *Vita de alcuni electi capitani*, da Cornelio Nepote, e *La pedia de Cyro*, da Senofonte (ora editi rispettivamente da Fabio Romanini, 2020, e da Valentina Gritti, 2014). Boiardo fu inoltre traduttore delle *Historie* di Erodoto e della *Historia imperiale* attribuita a Riccobaldo. Diversamente da quanto accade per altri volgarizzamenti boiardeschi, nessuno dei manoscritti dell'opera tramanda il nome dell'autore in apertura (esplicitato soltanto nelle edizioni a stampa); ciò ha portato alcuni studiosi a dubitare della paternità dell'opera. All'inizio del secolo scorso Edmund G. Gardner e Giulio Reichenbach attribuivano a Matteo Maria Boiardo solo una revisione del volgarizzamento, e riconducevano la traduzione all'avo di lui, Feltrino (12). Le perplessità vennero sciolte nel nono decennio del Novecento grazie a Edoardo Fumagalli, il quale ha mostrato come il volgarizzamento appaia effettuato sul testo della *princeps* dell'opera latina di Apuleio, beneficiando di alcuni emendamenti, frutto di collazione con almeno un altro testimone. La data della *princeps* latina, 1469, sarebbe allora *terminus post quem* e permetterebbe di escludere Feltrino. In ogni caso il volgarizzamento di Apuleio ebbe presto grande fortuna e circolò nelle corti e nelle città dell'Italia settentrionale. *L'editto princeps* risale al 1518 e fu seguita da altre otto edizioni, stampate tutte a Venezia entro la metà del secolo (l'ultima è datata 1549), periodo storico in cui il volgarizzamento di Boiardo venne sostituito da quello del Firenzuola (1550).

A livello strutturale si segnala un'importante differenza rispetto al testo latino di Apuleio: Boiardo segue il testo dell'*Asinus aureus* fino al decimo libro, mentre le vicende narrate nell'undicesimo libro vengono presentate in forma riassunta e il corpo del testo è sostituito, come dimostrato da Acocella (*L'“Asino d'oro” nel Rinascimento. Dai volgarizzamenti alle raffigurazioni pittoriche*. Ravenna: Longo, 2001), con un finale ispirato al *Lucius* dello pseudo-Luciano, per il quale si disponeva della traduzione in volgare dal greco effettuata da Niccolò Leonicensino. Secondo Favaretto, “è verosimile che tale modifica sia stata apportata solo all'ultimo momento, forse sollecitata dalla pressione che il duca faceva su Boiardo perché terminasse la “coda” da inviare a Andrea da le Vieze” (15). A ciò si aggiungerebbero ulteriori fattori interni—frasi incomplete, ripetizioni, errori—che denuncerebbero una “mancata revisione finale del lavoro” (15). La prosa di Boiardo rivela inoltre l'innesto di formule proprie della poesia lirica e dell'epica, che il poeta di Scandiano aveva già impiegato negli *Amorum libri* e nell'*Inamoramento de Orlando*.

Favaretto procede poi descrivendo i testimoni principali dell'opera (18-21)—i due manoscritti, siglati P e N, e l'*editio princeps*, siglata S—e illustrando i rapporti tra questi (21-32). Sulla base della loro collazione l'editore stabilisce che i due manoscritti devono discendere da un antigrafo comune, collaterale della *princeps*, e che tutti e tre rimontano a un comune archetipo. (Per la collazione integrale dei testimoni si segnala un ricco contributo di Matteo Favaretto, "Per l'edizione dell'*Asino d'oro* boiardesco. Escussione completa dei testimoni", *AOUF* 17, 2022, 21-203). Fra i testimoni (i manoscritti e l'edizione a stampa) è stato scelto come base il testo della *princeps*, che si mostra più corretto ed è l'unico a tramandare la sezione introduttiva.

L'editore approfondisce l'analisi del testo attraverso *Note sulla sintassi* (32-49), e esamina nel dettaglio la "Veste linguistica" (49-84). Lo studio è stato condotto sul testo di S e segue le tradizionali categorie: "Grafia", "Fonetica" e "Morfologia". Allo studio linguistico fa seguito una breve sezione dedicata alle "Varianti formali dei mss. P e N" (84-89), nella quale viene offerto un saggio derivato dallo spoglio dei primi cinque capitoli. L'ultima sezione dell'"Introduzione" (90-93) illustra i "Criteri di edizione".

Si trova poi l'edizione integrale del volgarizzamento. Il testo critico abbraccia dieci libri e una conclusione; ciascuno di essi è ripartito in ampie pericopi o sezioni, marcate da numeri in neretto tra quadre, all'interno delle quali si ha una seconda numerazione posta in apice. Esso è inoltre dotato di un apparato a pie' di pagina, organizzato in due fasce. La prima fascia costituisce un apparato filologico, con correzioni alla *princeps* e varianti dei mss. P e N, mentre la seconda reca un commento apposto per una più piena comprensione del testo e contiene altresì parafrasi delle frasi che potrebbero risultare di più oscura fruizione.

Chiude il volume il "Glossario" nel quale si raccolgono numerosi termini la cui comprensione può essere meno immediata: ciascun lemma in corsivo è seguito da una spiegazione tra apici e dalla menzione dei rispettivi luoghi in cui figura.

In conclusione, l'edizione di Favaretto si segnala non soltanto per l'interesse del testo e l'importanza del suo autore, ma anche in quanto aggiunge importanti dati nel panorama della produzione culturale che ebbe luogo alla corte estense e approfondisce il *modus operandi* del Boiardo volgarizzatore. L'edizione del volgarizzamento ha il merito di valorizzare la figura di Boiardo anche come traduttore e offre un importante tassello per una più chiara definizione del panorama dei volgarizzamenti alla corte estense di Ferrara. Nella seconda metà del XV secolo si assiste infatti a un'intensa opera di traduzione in volgare di opere antiche, secondo un modello culturale incentivato già a partire dall'epoca di Niccolò II d'Este (Alessia Tommasi, *Il volgarizzamento del "De mulieribus claris" di Donato Albanzani*. In Stefano Zamponi, ed., *Intorno a Boccaccio*. Firenze: FUP, 2020, 129-68).

Alessia Tommasi, *Scuola Normale Superiore*, Pisa

John Christopoulos, and John M. Hunt, eds. *Making Stories in Early Modern Italy and Beyond: Essays in Honour of Elizabeth S. Cohen and Thomas V. Cohen*. Toronto: Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2024. Pp. 268.

This remarkable collection of essays offers compelling testimony to the intellectual legacy of Elizabeth and Thomas Cohen, whose work has left a significant mark on the field of Renaissance history, and more specifically, on microhistory. At the heart of their scholarship lies the powerful insight that “in the early modern era, stories—their creation, telling, functions, and reworkings—were among the most potent and enduring cultural artifacts” (9). The Cohens’ sensitivity to the manifold narratives deployed in early modern sources has been thoroughly embraced by the contributors to this volume. By placing storytelling as a “cultural artifact” at the center of inquiry, these essays are less concerned with events in themselves than with the stories constructed around them, revealing critical dimensions of Italian society and culture between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The substantial introduction (9-21) by John Christopoulos and John M. Hunt not only outlines the aims of the volume but also traces the scholarly trajectories of Elizabeth and Thomas Cohen, supplemented by a comprehensive bibliography of their work (23-30). The volume then presents twelve case studies, most of which focus on Italy, though several contributions extend beyond this geographical frame (Switzerland, England, the Ottoman Empire, and further).

The subjects of these narratives include women and men from diverse social, economic, and religious backgrounds. The methodological variety displayed in these essays is broad. Many draw from the lives of ordinary people—often hidden in the folds of legal archives—to disclose broader sociocultural dynamics; others test the concept of storytelling in different contexts, such as contemporary historiography (Konrad Eisenbichler), humanist literature (Barry Torch), popular narrative traditions (Irene Fosi), and religious prejudice (Kenneth Stow). Despite this diversity, the volume retains a coherent intellectual unity: as the editors aptly summarize, these essays “explore how stories wove into recognizable patterns that helped assign meaning and value, and how they were used to fashion and challenge [...] identities [...], to shape morality and regulate behaviour” (17).

While a loose chronological frame appears to structure the borders of the volume—beginning with Barry Torch’s study on Quattrocento friendships, and concluding with the essays by Eisenbichler, Fosi, and Stow, which stretch up to the contemporary era—the essays are otherwise arranged without strict chronological or geographical order. This thematic structure may initially seem disorienting, given the shifting contexts of the case studies. However,

the organization proves fitting for a volume concerned with discrete narratives rather than a systematic account of the early modern age. At the same time, the four thematic groupings outlined in the introduction (a study of friendship; five studies on women's agency; three essays on sexual scandals and their public ramifications; and three on enduring myths and tropes) prove not to be rigidly compartmentalized. Instead, several conceptual strands, which are often intertwined, recur throughout the whole collection: women's agency, the relationship between individuals and institutions, and the norms governing interactions across society.

Barry Torch's essay (31-47) explores the concept of expected mutual support in humanist friendship through the analysis of a translated book gifted by Theodore Gaza to Giovanni Andrea Bussi, papal librarian, in hopes of securing employment at the curia of Sixtus IV. Julia L. Hairston reconstructs lesser-known biographical aspects of the poet Tullia d'Aragona, interpreted in the light of a patrimonial dispute with the Orlandini family (49-64). Elena Brizio revives the figure Eustochia Bichi, a woman who, despite her constant support to her noble Sienese family, remained in the shadows of history (65-79). Alessia Meneghin draws on the *Libri dei butati*, which record operations at the Brefotrofio del Buon Gesù in Fabriano, to provide a comprehensive portrait of infant abandonment in Renaissance Italy (81-101). Sara Beam examines the 1683 trial of Jeanne Catherine Thomasset, a Swiss noblewoman accused of a double infanticide: as her voice remains unheard, the trial's records foreground the discourses of her female accusers and her male relatives (103-20). Marlee J. Couling's essay (121-37) brings us to 1690s Chester, delving into two trials against William Dennis, rector of Dodleston: one led by female witnesses, one based on male-driven narratives. Bernard Dov Cooperman recounts a 1543 adultery case within a Jewish family in Rome's Rione Sant'Angelo, preserved in what appears to be a lawyer's brief written by rabbi Isaac De Lattes under the pretense of being his client's letter (139-54). Claire Judde de Larivière also addresses marital infidelity, in a 1540s trial involving Zuan Francesco Lippomano and his wife, Lucrezia Zane, who was having an affair with bishop Ascanio Cesarini—revealing a complex sociolinguistic and spatial landscape in sixteenth-century Venice (155-72). Eric Dursteler's essay (173-95) opens with an accusatory letter written by Paolo Antonio Bon against Cornelius Haga, Dutch ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, shedding light on the little-documented sexual relationships between European diplomats and local women. Konrad Eisenbichler confronts the methodological issue of creative narratives in historiography through the myth of the "Valiant Women of Siena," stemming from a brief 1553 account which historians embellished over time with little care about documentation (197-221). Irene Fosi examines the literary genre of *Giustizie*, narratives of

public executions in Rome, exploring their changing functions over time—from assertions of papal authority to instruments of critique against the *ancien régime* (223-40). Finally, Kenneth Stow argues that the delegitimization of the state of Israel is rooted in old anti-Judaistic prejudices, according to which the Jews should not hold any position of power (241-54).

On one level, *Making Stories in Early Modern Italy and Beyond* is a captivating collection that recovers aspects long marginalized by mainstream historiography, particularly those taboos that shape everyday life, often excluded from dominant discourse. However, this work's most valuable dimension lies in its exploration of how discourse constructs social, cultural, and political dynamics in the early modern world, particularly as they relate to power relations across gender and social *strata*.

As such, the volume will be of significant value not only to historians, but also to all scholars in the field of Italian and Early Modern Studies. Underpinning it all is a methodological emphasis on storytelling as a foundational human practice—an approach whose results pay fitting tribute to the decades-long scholarly contributions of Elizabeth and Thomas Cohen.

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Stephen Clucas, and Simone Testa, eds. *Liberty, Irreverence, and the Place of Women in Early Modern Italian Culture: Essays in Honour of Letizia Panizza*. Cham: Springer, 2024. Pp. 320.

The OED defines *Festschrift* as “a collection of writings published in honour of a scholar, usually to mark a significant birthday, retirement, etc.” (“*Festschrift*, N.” Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford UP, September 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/5936451433>). Nowhere do the two volume editors reveal if there was a significant milestone to celebrate in Letizia Panizza's life or career; however, the essays here gathered show beyond any doubt that her scholarship, mentoring, and publications must be hailed: their impact, partially revealed here, is deep and pervasive.

The clarity of purpose in this volume emerges from chapter 1, “Introduction” (1-16), in which Stephen Clucas and Simone Testa offer some key observations. For one, they underscore her desire to go deeper: “throughout the course of her career she was constantly devoted to revealing the hidden motives, obscure backgrounds and sources of a wide range of authors” (3). They also note that “her approach to the Renaissance was always interdisciplinary” (3), which includes knowledge of (and sensitivity to) classical languages. Having chosen this volume because of Panizza's work on women writers (8-10), this reviewer learned a lot about other areas and was reminded of the foolish endeavor of limiting a true scholar's scope of interest.

The volume includes fourteen essays and a very helpful (and impressive) “Bibliography of Letizia Panizza’s Publications” assembled by Susan Haskins (295-301). Eleonora Carinci, Francesca Medioli, Sandra Cavallo and Chrysa Damianaki expand on Panizza’s interest in women’s writing. Martin McLaughlin, John Sellars, Hilary Gatti and Stephen Clucas concentrate on philosophical topics. Jane Everson, Alison Brown and Ambra Anelotti provide excellent examples of close readings of very different types of texts. Marta Fattori, Simone Testa and Brian Richardson widen such textual scope to trial documents, instructions to ambassadors, and a Florentine rustic comedy.

As the limits inherent in any review prevent an analysis of each essay, I will focus on one from each thematic cluster. Cavallo’s study of early modern women in various spaces “In the Out of the Baroque Palace: Noblewomen and Urban Space in Seventeenth-Century Rome” (53-73) is detailed and nuanced, moving the reader decisively beyond two separate and restrictive dualities: legal and conduct book limitations versus documents relative to noblewomen’s life experience; and the juxtaposition between private (i.e., domestic and thus feminine) and public (reserved to men) locations. She reminds us that “the noble house has rightly been described as a political space” (55), as “household occupations, far from condemning the lady of the house to seclusion, created many opportunities for interaction with the world outside the palace” (56). Her analysis of Palazzo Spada in Rome, complete with maps (59), support her conclusion that “the domestic and the social dimensions do not appear mutually exclusive; on the contrary, the household duties of noblewomen, far from isolating them, put them in frequent communication with the outside world” (58). Furthermore, she explores how Spada women interacted with others outside the Palazzo, in visits, participating in and hosting entertainments, exercising, and socializing in churches and convents. Noblewomen gathered and transmitted information “not just on health conditions, but on many other personal matters concerning relatives, acquaintances, or even prominent figures not known to them directly” (68). Far from being gossip, these news “can be seen to carry a political value” (69) and therefore to be prized by their family. Cavallo’s essay shows the merit of reading heretofore neglected texts, applying a lens that uncovers significance and starts to remove traditional bias.

Martin McLaughlin essay centers on Leon Battista Alberti’s translation of the most widely circulated portion of Welshman Walter Map’s *De nugis curialium* (c. 1181-93): *Dissuasio Valerii ad Ruffinum philosophum ne uxorem ducat*, the only translation by Alberti that is not of his own work (98). McLaughlin devotes thirteen pages to a close analysis of the Medieval original and of Alberti’s work, following in Panizza’s translations and her interest for both the *Quattrocento* and misogyny/phily; McLaughlin uncovers systematic

removal of “nearly all of the Christian, religious echoes and allusions in Map’s text” (114), proposing an earlier date for his translation (ca. 1432-34) (114).

In “Celebration. Commemoration and Compensation. Rare and Learned Ladies in the Italian Academies” (167-93), Jane Everson moves readers chronologically forward, as her attention concentrates on two volumes celebrating women of local and Italian renown after their passing: “*Il pennello lacrimato. Orazione funebre del signor Gio. Luigi Piccinardi Priore de’ Signori Leggisti nello Studio di Bologna con varie poesie in Morte della Signora Elisabetta Sirani, pittrice famosa . . .* published under the auspices of the Accademia degli Informi and the Accademia degli Apatisti, both of Bologna, at Bologna in 1665” (170) and *Le pompe funebri celebrate da’ signori accademici infeconidi di Roma per la morte dell’Illustrissima signora Elena Lucrezia Cornara Piscopia Accademica detta l’Inalterabile* (Padua, 1686). Everson acknowledges that the Bolognese painter and the Paduan scholar were “both rare and learned” as well as “unusually so, able to benefit from full membership of Academies” (190). In addition, she uncovers a double-edged sword in these funerary and celebratory publications: there were “designed to act as compensation for the academies in their loss, while simultaneously celebrating the institutions, members and cultures they express” (191). Explicitly connected with Panizza’s “pioneer” (168) work on women writers, this essay extends the time frame to the late *Seicento*.

Similarly, Simone Testa focuses on a non canonical text, one of the many gathered and published as *Thesoro politico* in 1589. After offering an exhaustive overview of the volume, Testa contextualizes Annibale di Capua’s mission to Venice on behalf of the Pope, starting in 1577 (260-61), before outlining the goals that secretary Giovanfrancesco Peranda set for di Capua; this is meant to be a confidential, mission-specific document to “promot[e] the interest of the Papal state” (261) at the Venetian court. Testa outlines how detached these instructions are from, say, Machiavelli’s (dating from the beginning of the sixteenth century) (263-64): “there is no dilemma raised between moral and immoral behaviour” (264). Its tone is grounded in what in the twentieth century we could have called Realpolitik: it is against Venice’s best interest to be at war against the Turk, Peranda explains to di Capua, for commercial and political reasons (265). Grounding this text within preceding and contemporary ones (e.g., Tasso’s dialogue “Il messaggiero”), Testa offers in-depth analysis of one specific writing while illuminating how it fit within its cultural frame.

In summary, Clucas and Testa are to be commended for putting together a volume in which all essays are explicitly connected with (and in celebration of) Letizia Panizza’s work and intellectual legacy. The image that comes to my mind is of a series of concentric circles, at first emanating from one point and

later from others—students and collaborators that become part of the scholarly community. This Festschrift allows many more than those included here to be inspired by and follow in Panizza's footsteps.

Maria Galli Stampino, *University of Miami*

Eva Del Soldato, and Maude Vanhaelen, eds. *Teaching Plato in Italian Renaissance Universities*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2024. Pp. 176.

The book is a significant contribution to Renaissance intellectual history as it offers a much-needed comprehensive investigation into an area of study neglected by modern critics: the reception and teaching of Plato in an academic environment historically dominated by Aristotelianism. Moving beyond isolated case studies and the Florentine legacy of Marsilio Ficino, the volume examines how Plato's dialogues (and not only the *Timaeus*, which had continued to be glossed since the Middle Ages) were engaged with, and reconciled—or opposed—to Christian theology in sixteenth-century Italian universities.

The scope is clearly defined in the extensive introduction to the four substantive chapters, each of them written by a different scholar. In the first chapter “Teaching Plato in Sixteenth-Century Italy” (21-57), Maude Vanhaelen, one of the two co-editors, questions the category of eclecticism used by critics when discussing the non-Aristotelian philosophies of the time. The analysis of the commentaries by Chrysostomus Javelli and Giovanni Battista Camozzi, professors at the Bolognese *studium*, as well as of the treatises by Francesco Piccolomini, who taught natural philosophy at the University of Padua, and his student Stefano Tiepolo, shows how the interpretation of Plato was based on a rigorous methodological and philological approach. Apart from the *Timaeus*, the academic lectures on the philosopher's dialogues by Agostino Vallier, Federico Pendasio, and the French humanist Marc-Antoine Muret, tend on the other hand to reveal either a primarily linguistic interest or a recognition of their limited suitability for scholastic-style university teaching by virtue of the absence of a clear and orderly structure.

In the second chapter “Teaching Plato in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Florence and Pisa. From Francesco Cattani da Diacceto to Girolamo Bardi” (59-89), Simone Fellina turns to the two Tuscan universities, where a chair of Platonic philosophy was created in 1576. Following Ficino's *restauratio platonica*, Francesco de' Vieri, also known as Verino the Second, and Jacopo Mazzoni worked to integrate Plato into the academic curriculum, often attempting to harmonise his doctrines with those of the Stagirite. Despite being filtered through an Aristotelian lens, Verino and Mazzoni's

efforts emphasised the ethical and pedagogical value of the Platonic dialogues, aiming at the same time to reconcile them with Christianity. Later figures such as Cosimo Boscagli and Girolamo Bardi continued this tradition: the first sought to demonstrate the didactic purpose of Plato's philosophy, whereas the latter stressed its scientific and moral relevance, while developing a markedly anti-Aristotelian reading.

The third contribution "Shifting Away from Aristotelianism towards Platonism. Paolo Beni's Project" (91-117) by Barbara Bartocci focuses on Paolo Beni, a theologian from Gubbio who undertook the ambitious endeavour of enhancing the status of Platonic philosophy within a Christian academic framework. Through his detailed commentary on the *Timaeus* and other writings, Beni intended to show that Plato's dialogues could serve as the foundation for a systematic and coherent doctrine—encompassing natural philosophy, metaphysics, ethics, and dialectic—which would be capable of challenging the prevailing Aristotelianism. Bartocci also illustrates how Beni reinterpreted Platonic philosophy in alignment with Christian religion, while arguing for Plato's doctrinal superiority over Aristotle.

The final chapter "Plato between Pavia and Milan in the Sixteenth Century" (119-48) by the volume's other co-editor, Eva Del Soldato, offers a geographically complementary perspective. In northern Italy, Platonism entered public disputes, private tutoring, pre-university institutions (the Scuole Cannobbiane in Milan), and intellectual milieus like the *Accademia degli Affidati* in Pavia, where a Platonic chair was also briefly instituted in 1606. However, these efforts to defend the theological value of Platonic philosophy and its compatibility with Christianity rarely led to substantive changes in academic instruction, and Aristotelianism remained dominant in university curricula, with professors such as Cesare Rovida, Francesco Vimercato and Ottaviano Ferrari referencing Plato's dialogues primarily to clarify Aristotle, rather than to affirm the former's authority.

The merits of this volume are manifold. It traces the trajectory of Platonic teaching while offering rich insights into the philosophical activity of the university professors involved and their networks. The four chapters converge in recognizing that Plato's presence in the intellectual debate of the time was more substantial and nuanced than critics had previously recognised. Each author demonstrates that, far from being marginal, Platonic dialogues were studied, taught, and discussed often with a keen awareness of their philosophical, theological, and rhetorical stakes.

As emphasised in the "Introduction" (9-10), another significant aspect emerging from this study is the influence of the Neoplatonic tradition: in contrast to Ficino who favoured the allegorical and mystical aspects of that tradition, sixteenth-century scholars drew upon ancient commentators

like Olympiodorus, whose exegetical techniques were better aligned with Aristotelian teaching. Particularly valuable is the attention given to the sources used, which include early printed books and manuscripts, some of the latter surviving as unique textual witnesses. This documentation contributes significantly to the reconstruction of a little-known chapter in the history of university philosophy. Yet, this same richness at times requires greater editorial transparency: in a few cases—as with Javelli whose “commentary constitutes the first known attempt to interpret Plato through Plato” (30), or of Camozzi who “adds passages from the Scriptures to illustrate some aspects of the *Alcibiades*” (36)—a more extensive citation of the consulted sources would have provided deeper insight into how the Platonic texts were analysed.

The volume deliberately omits a chapter on Ferrara and Francesco Patrizi's Platonic chair (1578-92) because of the loss of his lectures (“Introduction” 16). The brief reference to figures such as Giovan Paolo Muzzoli, cursorily mentioned on page 138 as a candidate for a Platonic chair in Bologna in the late 1580s, nevertheless points to areas that merit further scholarly investigation. From an editorial standpoint, the abundance of introductory sections is perhaps a little cumbersome: for instance, the opening of the first chapter (21-26) partly echoes the general introduction. In addition to these minor shortcomings, what seems to be missing, in my view, is a general overview of the defining features of this varied engagement with Platonic teaching—constrained by the pressures of Aristotelian systematisation and Christian doctrinal conformity. The volume nonetheless makes a notable contribution to the history of the Platonic tradition, as it illustrates key moments in the critical reappropriation of Plato's thought, and reminds readers of the long and arduous process required to move beyond deeply entrenched cultural frameworks. As such, it represents a foundational point of departure for future scholarship seeking to elucidate the character of early modern Platonism within the Italian academic context.

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Monica Farnetti, ed. “Queste rive ch’amai sì caldamente.’ Venezia per Gaspara Stampa.” *Pandemos. Rivista di scienze umane, politiche e sociali* 1 (2023). Online. Pp. 165.

This *focus* section of the online open access journal *Pandemos. Rivista di scienze umane, politiche e sociali* represents the proceedings of “‘Queste rive ch’amai sì caldamente.’ Venezia per Gaspara Stampa nel cinquecentenario della nascita (1523-2023),” held in Venice on 17-19 May 2023. The event included not only a conference (chaired by Monica Farnetti), but a movie screening, a music performance, a poetry reading, didactic workshops, and

a thematic tour. If past scholarship on Stampa often reduced the poet to her biography, flattening her multilayered production to conventional petrarchism, the common thread across the fourteen essays is the desire to emancipate Stampa from biographism, reclaiming her complexity and expanding her study to a broader range of disciplines.

So while Alessandro Scarsella, in “Paragrafi di uno spettatore. Sull’immagine della donna del Rinascimento nel cinema” (239-342), reflects on cinematic representations of Renaissance women, Alessandra Gavagni and Giorgio Rimondi (in “Musicare Gaspara Stampa,” 319-27) analyse the opera *Gaspara Stampa* (2014) composed by Thomas Oboe Lee; Francesca Mellone (“Le mani dicenti di Gaspara Stampa. L’incisione di Felicita Sartori nell’antiporta della II edizione delle Rime,” 303-17) examines the 1738 portrait of the poet by Felicita Sartori, and Marco Manotta (“Dialogo sul paesaggio. Gaspara Stampa e Andrea Zanzotto,” 269-79) explores Andrea Zanzotto’s tribute to Stampa in his *Ipersonetto* (*Le poesie e prose scelte*, a c. di Stefano Dal Bianco e Gian Mario Villalta, Mondadori, Milano 1999).

If Farnetti, in “‘Pietre che cantano’. Passeggiata veneziana sulle orme di Gaspara Stampa” (343-62), draws a map of Stampa’s places in Venice, Daria Percoco, in “Gaspara a Venezia, Gaspara e Venezia” (259-68), follows her through venetian cultural gatherings, in particular *Ca’ Venier*, and through poems written to her by prominent figures; while Johnny L. Bertolio (“Gaspara Stampa a scuola: canone o controcanone? L’aspirazione al ‘con’, la passione del ‘contro’,” 289-301) traces Stampa changing fortunes in Italian literary histories.

A collection on a prominent female poet and trailblazer, could not come without the voices of two contemporary poets, namely Antonella Barina and Lucia Guidorizzi. Barina (“Dimensione politica della genealogia del fuoco. Per Gaspara Stampa,” 363-76) reflects on Stampa’s role in the construction of a genealogy of intellectual women and the political value of the act of preserving the memory of female ancestors. Guidorizzi (“La parola dissepolta. Vita e poesia di due poetesse del Cinquecento: Gaspara Stampa e Isabella Morra,” 377-85) instead, connects Stampa and Isabella Morra, focusing on the aspiration, common to both poets, to transcend autobiographism and traditional style to express the complexity of their inner world.

But literary analysis has a central role in the collection. Adriana Chemello, in “La lunga durata di Gaspara Stampa” (219-35), on the one hand reconstructs Stampa’s leading role in Venice, analysing literary tributes devoted to her by intellectuals such as Sansovino, Della Casa, Parabosco. On the other she examines Stampa’s role as a pioneer writer, whose production was mediated by women, and became part of a tradition of female literary production retrieved

by women. Stampa's works were in fact published posthumously by her sister Cassandra, and later rediscovered by Luisa Bergalli and then Diodata Saluzzo, who, celebrating Stampa and the genealogy of female writers, find recognition for themselves as authors.

Farnetti (in "Gaspara Stampa o dell'emozione di sentirsi viventi. In forma di introduzione," 213-18) emphasises the poet's radical change to petrarchan tradition. By choosing Holy Friday, as the symbolic beginning of his love, Petrarch identifies love with sorrow and sin, and love poetry as an act of repentance. Stampa, on the contrary, positioning her first encounter with Collaltino di Collalto on Christmas day, interprets her love as divine incarnation, her lover as the Saviour, and herself as the chosen Virgin and the poet eternalising herself and her lover with her writing.

Similarly, Veronica Andreani ("Le 'meste rime' di Gaspara Stampa tra petrarchismo ed elegia," 237-47) points out that Petrarca's *Canzoniere* is a retrospective account of his sinful love dominated by repentance. For Stampa, instead, Love is the way to gain eternal glory as a poet. Collalto, in fact, is practically absent from Stampa's *Rime*, making the author the real protagonist. Moreover, providing multiple chronological and geographical references, Stampa's *Rime* constitute a narrative progression, where Collalto is not the beginning and the end, nor the sole focus.

Michela Rusi as well, in "Su Petrarca, Gaspara Stampa e il desiderio" (281-87), reflects on Stampa relationship with Petrarca, in particular on the theme of desire, reconnecting with the *Secretum*. If, for Petrarch, love stems from his desire for Laura and for glory, Stampa recognises desire as an autonomous force, and her poetry as a broader intellectual research, which should not be reduced to the mere celebration of Collalto or the elegy of their unhappy love.

Finally, Giorgio Forni, in "Emozione, fede e gelosia nelle 'Rime' di Gaspara Stampa" (249-57), explores the spiritual element and its connection with Stampa's encounters at Casa Venier, and with conflicting religious groups (a more ascetic and bourgeois movement, represented by Barnabiti and Angeliche, and a more evangelical and aristocratic one), both influencing Stampa's production, and determining a new and heroic conception of jealousy.

This volume, therefore, represents a valuable contribution to the studies on Gaspara Stampa, which, thanks to its multidisciplinary approach, is not limited to literary criticism or literary history, but also includes connections with music, the arts, cinema, and pedagogy.

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Matteo Favaretto, ed. *La tradizione prosimetrica in volgare da Dante a Bembo. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi (Venezia, 26-27 giugno 2023)*. Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2024. Pp. 280.

The volume, edited by Matteo Favaretto, presents the proceedings of the conference *La tradizione prosimetrica in volgare da Dante a Bembo*. The event took place in Venice on 26-27 June 2023, within the framework of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie research project (G.A. 843284) *InProV: An Inventory of the Prosimetra in Vulgar Tongue in the Early Centuries of Italian Literature (1250-1500)*, conducted at the University of Notre Dame and Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Featuring an introduction by Favaretto and seventeen contributions by scholars from both Italian and international institutions, the volume—available in open access at <http://doi.org/10.30687/978-88-6969-821-7>—investigates the prosimetrum, a literary form that resists straightforward definition. Critical bibliography on Italian examples remains significantly more limited than that concerning medieval Latin texts, and definitions often do not go beyond the etymological formulations found in medieval *Artes dictandi* or modern manuals of prosody. The volume therefore aims to examine “qualsiasi testo in cui l'evidente alternanza di parti in prosa e componimenti poetici obbedisca a una precisa volontà autoriale secondo un rapporto di reciproca dipendenza” (4), with the awareness that the prosimetrum does not constitute a literary genre, but rather one of the possible forms of literature, alongside texts written entirely in prose or verse.

By engaging in dialogue with the online inventory of vernacular prosimetra available at www.unive.it/inprov, the volume makes a significant contribution to the study of a literary form too often marginalised in scholarly discourse. It does so by recognising the wide variety of genres and themes encompassed by the prosimetrum, while concentrating on early Italian literature, in particular works composed between c. 1250 and 1500. In doing so, it offers a more focused chronological perspective than that adopted by the earlier conference on literary form, whose proceedings were published in 2000 (*Il prosimetro nella letteratura italiana*. Trento: U of Trento P).

The papers collected here offer a rich and multifaceted exploration of the prosimetrum, combining literary analysis with studies of manuscript transmission and reception. The contributions not only shed new light on individual works, but also engage in dialogue with one another, offering a broader view of the form and revealing shared features.

The opening contribution, by Marco Berisso (“‘Ti parlerò per prosa’: il *Tesoretto* come prosimetro mancato,” 13-21), examines the “prosimetro mancato” of Brunetto’s *Tesoretto*, a work originally conceived to include passages in vernacular prose but ultimately realised without them, leaving the prosimetric plan at the level of theoretical intention. From the reflection

on a text positioned at the margins of the form, the volume turns to a series of studies that explore the prosimetrum from different perspectives. One major area of inquiry concerns literary models and intertextual dialogues. Luca Carlo Rossi (“Quale modello per la *Vita Nova*?” 23-31) analyses the structural and thematic models underlying the *Vita Nova*, while Francesca Battera (“Un prosimetro a tema religioso. *Il Trattato d'una angelica cosa mostrata per una divotissima visione* di Giovanni Gherardi da Prato,” 123-37) traces the influence of earlier works and offers an original contribution on the structure of Giovanni Gherardi's *Trattato d'una angelica cosa*. This reflection on models and hypotexts extends to works with different functions: Nicola Esposito (“Suggerzioni cortesi ed elementi di letteratura cavalleresca nelle ballate del *Pecorone*,” 77-90) investigates the courtly and chivalric elements in the ballads in the *Pecorone*, uncovering their roots in novellas as well as ancient and medieval historiography; Michele Rossi (“‘Nel vulgar sermone’: Filelfo traduttore di Ovidio, tra prosa e terza rima,” 157-69), in turn, shows how Filelfo's commentary on Petrarch's *Canzoniere* weaves classical sources into the vernacular, creating a dialogue between ancient (Ovid) and—relatively to him— early? modern (Dante, Petrarca, Boccaccio) classics.

Another compelling aspect of the volume is its examination of the production and circulation of prosimetra. Among the various contexts considered, that of Florence offers particularly rich material. Luca Lombardo (“Consolarsi in volgare. Rifacimenti boeziani nella Firenze di Dante,” 33-47) observes the reception of Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae* in the city during the thirteenth-century, especially within legal-notarial intellectual contexts, while Sara Catalano (“Copisti per passione della *Comedia delle Ninfe Fiorentine* di Giovanni Boccaccio,” 49-59) analyses the fifteenth-century manuscript tradition of the *Comedia delle Ninfe Fiorentine*, focusing on copies produced by non-professional scribes from noble families. The study of the manuscript tradition also touches on the very structure of the prosimetrum: Marco Landi (“Sannazaro e la scelta del prosimetro: riflessi sulla tradizione manoscritta,” 235-51) examines incomplete codices of *Arcadia* that preserve only the eclogues, detached from the prose framework, and Francesca Florimbii's study of *Nicolosa bella* attributed to Gianotto Calogrosso (“Ancora sulla *Nicolosa bella*: novità sul testo e sull'interpretazione,” 171-84) raises questions of authorship and textual integrity. Xavier Espluga's analysis of Felice Feliciano's correspondence (“Noterelle sulle lettere ‘prosimetriche’ di Felice Feliciano,” 185-201) reveals significant intersection with his poetic works and underscores the challenges involved in establishing dates and identifying historical figures. In turn, Claudia Berra's investigation of the

redactional evolution of the *Asolani* (“Gli *Asolani*, un prosimetro nel tempo,” 253-72) demonstrates how Bembo—from his early days as a young humanist to his rise as a prominent literary figure—gradually refined its language in line with the *Prose* over the course of its composition. Berra’s study also suggests promising directions for future research.

The relationship between prose and poetry, and the ways in which they interact across the works examined, emerges as a central theme. Several studies focus on the integration of poetic passages into the prose framework of *novellistica*. Elisa Curti’s study of the *Decameron* (“Le ballate delle donne nel *Decameron*,” 61-76) considers ballads within the narrative frame, focusing on those sung by female characters. Flavia Palma (“Canzonette piacevoli’ e ‘qualche moralità’. Il *Novelliere* di Giovanni Sercambi tra versi e novelle,” 91-104) examines the verses of Sercambi’s *Novelliere*, revealing the relationship between the characters’ social and narrative roles and the purpose of the verses. Monica Marchi (“‘Sentisti, et in rime et in prose, dire alcune cosette di mio’. Lo strano caso del prosimetro dello Pseudo Sermini,” 105-21) shows how prose and verse interact in Pseudo-Sermini’s collection, creating coherence in an otherwise heterogeneous corpus. Alessio Decaria (“‘Senza la prosa tua non ti mostrare’. Forma e ragione della *Pistola* di Domenico da Prato, ‘nella quale è una canzone morale e una canzonetta da ballo’,” 139-55) analyses the narrative and exegetical functions of two poetic texts interwoven into three extensive prose sections of the prosimetry included in Domenico da Prato’s *Primo canzoniere*. The dialogue between verse and prose is further explored through two cases of self-commentaries: Bernhard Huss’s study of Lorenzo’s *Comento* (“Esegesi pluriprospectiva nel *Comento de’ miei sonetti* di Lorenzo de’ Medici,” 203-19) reveals how apparent philosophical contradictions operate as a deliberate strategy to consolidate authority, while Sergio Di Benedetto’s examination of Benivieni’s self-commentary (“‘Epsi amorosi miei versi insieme con la exposition di quelli’: sul *Commento* (1500) di Girolamo Benivieni,” 221-33) highlights the autonomy of the prose from verse, guiding readers toward a moral and spiritual interpretation.

The proceedings gather significant contributions on the features of the prosimetry, its tradition, and its reception, highlighting the significance and enduring influence of this hybrid form in early Italian literature. Complementing the *InProv* project website, which provides a comprehensive inventory of prosimetric texts, the volume focuses on exemplary case studies that trace the form’s development from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, thereby addressing a field that had yet to receive the scholarly attention it merits.

Martin McLaughlin. *Leon Battista Alberti. Writer and Humanist*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2024. Pp. xv + 377.

Martin McLaughlin's *Leon Battista Alberti* offers an overview of the major themes and sources underpinning much of Alberti's vast and varied literary corpus. The book follows a mostly chronological structure with each chapter devoted to one or a small number of texts. This book provides a welcome addition to the scholarship on Renaissance humanism by bringing together, summarizing, and analyzing so many of Alberti's writings. It introduces this fascinating figure as well as provide crucial literary contexts for both Alberti's best- and lesser-known vernacular and artistic writings.

The book is divided into four sections. Part One, "Alberti's Life and Humanism" (13-74) begins, in Chapter One, with a short biography of Alberti before turning, in Chapter Two, to the ways that Jacob Burckhardt distorted Alberti's *Autobiography* to portray Alberti as a "Renaissance Man." In the third chapter, McLaughlin compares Alberti's writings with those of Petrarch to argue that Alberti marked "a real change in the direction of humanism" (71). Part Two, "The Early Latin Works" (75-118) begins a series of chapters devoted to the introduction and analysis of all of the major, and most of the minor, writings from Alberti's corpus. Chapter Four explores Alberti's first surviving work, his Latin comedy *Philodoxeos fabula* written before 1424. McLaughlin compares the first and second (1434) versions of this work to show how Alberti revised the work to emphasize moral allegory. The next chapter moves into the late 1420s and early 1430s, during which Alberti wrote his *De commodis litterarum atque incommodis* and his *Vita S. Potiti*. Already in these early works McLaughlin identifies the themes that will frequently appear across Alberti's oeuvre: an extensive use of classical sources, especially newly found classical sources; the importance of originality and humor; misogyny; and foci on virtue, family, and reputation.

The book's second half continues the chronological framework. Part Three, "Elevating the Vernacular" (119-86), contains three chapters on three distinct vernacular works from the 1430s and 1440s. Chapter Six explores the classical underpinnings of the *De familia*, especially the influence of Xenophon. The section then turns to the *Theogenius* in Chapter Seven and the *Profugiorum ab erumna libri* in Chapter Eight. For each work McLaughlin provides a basic summary, shows its major classical influences, and traces the presence of several consistent themes: Alberti frequently made use of newly available Greek authors, emphasized the importance of rhetorical clarity, and frequently resorted to humor across his works. Part Four, "Expanding the Confines of Latin" (187-276), looks at several Latin treatises that pushed the generic boundaries of fifteenth-century humanism. Chapters Nine and Twelve dig into Alberti's two technical artistic treaties, the *De pictura* and the *De re*

aedificatoria, respectively. Chapters Ten and Eleven look at Alberti's major humorous works, his *Intercenales* (Chapter Ten) and the *Momus* (Chapter Eleven). Once again, McLaughlin emphasizes Alberti's use of classical writings, his emphasis on originality, his willingness to find knowledge in a wide range of sources, his humor, and his desire to write in a clear style.

This book provides a solid analysis of the themes and sources throughout most of Leon Battista Alberti's writings. The book is particularly noteworthy for its inclusion of works often separated out across modern disciplines and subfields. Alberti's *De familia*, for example, commonly appears in historical works interested in questions about gender or broader social themes. But that text and those discussions are often separate from specialist discussion of works like the *Momus*. Even more pronounced have been the separation of art historical studies on Alberti's *De pictura* and *De re aedificatoria* from intellectual or general historical studies on Alberti and his other works. McLaughlin's study seamlessly integrates all of these different Latin and vernacular texts with valuable insights into how these wide-ranging works reveal several commonalities. As such, this book should become a foundational study for future studies of Alberti and his writings.

The book also opens up future studies to explore broader contexts outside of McLaughlin's focus. For example, the book does an excellent job comparing Alberti's writings to other humanists, especially earlier writers like Petrarch or later sixteenth-century examples. Those comparisons help McLaughlin convincingly show that Alberti was an idiosyncratic writer. Future studies that compare Alberti with his near contemporaries—men like Matteo Palmieri, Biondo Flavio, and Poggio Bracciolini, for example—may add new insights into areas where Alberti was most distinct and innovative versus areas where he shared commonalities with his peers. In another example, the chronological set up of the book makes clear how Alberti's writings and ideas changed over time as Alberti worked with new classical sources. A path for future work could tease out other sorts of literary contexts, such as Alberti's possible use of more recent or intermediary sources from the medieval period. In a final example, McLaughlin's careful reconstruction of Alberti's reading and use of classical sources provides a good foundation for future studies that focus more on the biographical contexts of his works as well as the potential role of other people in helping to shape some of Alberti's writings. For example, Alberti was instrumental in the organization of the literary competition of the Certame Coronario in Florence in 1441. But the Certame Coronario was also a ritualized event in Florence, sponsored in part by Piero de' Medici and including many of the more prominent people in the papal curia and the Florentine government. In what ways did Alberti himself shape the event and in what ways was such an event shaped by its political and

cultural context? Studies of those sorts of contexts will add to McLaughlin's rich analyses to piece together the complex puzzles throughout Alberti's wide-ranging oeuvre.

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Ilaria Molteni, and Valeria Russo, eds. *Inventing Past Narratives. Venice and the Adriatic Space (13th-15th Centuries)*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2024. Pp. 108.

Inventing Past Narratives: Venice and the Adriatic Space (13th-15th Centuries) is an ambitious and thought-provoking collection that illuminates how Venice deliberately shaped its historical identity. The volume's strength lies in its interdisciplinary methodology, weaving together philology, historiography, art history, and literary analysis to expose the mechanisms of historical invention. Rather than rediscovering a long-lost history, Venice strategically manipulated and selectively preserved elements of the past to reinforce its political and cultural dominance. The volume successfully illustrates the complexity of Venetian historiographical practices with impressive depth and specificity. Its five essays effectively demonstrate how Venice did not merely inherit its historical memory but actively shaped it through deliberate decisions. A crucial concept introduced in the volume is "accurate dissimulation" (11)—the strategic crafting of historical narratives that amplify Venice's prestige while concealing weaknesses. This theme is evident throughout the case studies, which illustrate how historical myths, prophetic traditions, and artistic interpretations were retooled to serve contemporary needs. The essays demonstrate how these narratives functioned as instruments of power, celebrating Venice's triumphs and masking its crisis moments. The volume highlights how these mechanisms of historical invention were not unique to Venice but were part of broader historiographical practices in the medieval and early modern Mediterranean, reinforcing its relevance beyond Venetian studies.

Francesca Gambino's analysis of the Charlemagne legend, in "About the Time Charlemagne Invaded the Laguna and Venice Returned Frankish Fire with Bread" (48-63), reveals how Venice positioned itself between the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy, utilizing myth to assert its political autonomy. This legend served a dual purpose: reinforcing a sense of historical legitimacy while distinguishing Venice from other competing powers. Similarly, Niccolò Gensini's work on the *Prophecies de Merlin*, "'Bons Mariniers' Between History and Prophecy. Venice, Venetians, and the Mediterranean Sea in the *Prophecies de Merlin*" (64-77), demonstrates how prophecy functioned as a powerful tool for ideological reinforcement, portraying Venetian expansion as justified and divinely ordained. This study emphasizes how medieval

historiographers exploited prophetic discourse to maintain the city's dominant status in the Mediterranean. Giuseppina Brunetti's examination of Dante's death in her article "Morte a Venezia. Per la morte di Dante: l'invenzione e i documenti" (78-87) presents another example of historiographical manipulation, challenging the widely accepted belief that Dante died while on a diplomatic mission to Venice. Through rigorous archival research, Brunetti reveals how this narrative was a later historiographical construction, crafted to integrate Dante into Venice's political mythos. The volume's final essay, "Clash of Titans. Venturi, Kondakov, and the Staging of Late Medieval Venetian Painting in the History of Art History" (88-103), extends the discussion into modern times, demonstrating how nationalistic agendas shaped interpretations of Venetian art history, revealing the ongoing persistence of historical fabrication into the 20th century. The cases of art historians Adolfo Venturi and Nikodim Pavlovich Kondakov exemplify how historiographical debates were often deeply enmeshed in national and political ideologies, reinforcing selective interpretations of Venice's artistic legacy.

One of the book's greatest strengths is its ability to demonstrate the flexibility and adaptability of historical narratives to different political and cultural contexts. It convincingly argues that history is not a fixed record of the past but rather an evolving construct shaped by contemporary needs. The methodological rigor displayed throughout the essays is impressive, offering readers an insightful perspective on the interconnected nature of historiography and political power. Incorporating visual and material culture alongside textual sources adds an extra dimension to the book, allowing for a more holistic view of Venice's self-fashioning.

While the volume effectively reveals these historiographical strategies, it does not fully engage with broader theoretical frameworks that could further enhance its analysis. A deeper dialogue with collective memory theory would offer a more systematic understanding of how these narratives were created, maintained, and transmitted across generations, embedding themselves into Venetian cultural consciousness. Similarly, the book could more explicitly address counter-narratives or alternative voices that may have resisted these historiographical fabrications. Although it successfully demonstrates how Venice constructed its past, it does not significantly explore whether internal or external challenges questioned these dominant narratives. Examining competing perspectives from rival states, dissident Venetian voices, or marginalized communities could further nuance the discussion by revealing the limitations and contested nature of these myth-making processes.

Additionally, the volume could have more explicitly addressed the ethical dimensions of historical fabrication. While it effectively exposes the mechanisms by which Venice shaped its past, it does not fully interrogate

the broader implications of these practices concerning contemporary historiographical issues. In an era where historical revisionism and political mythmaking continue to influence national identities and collective memories, a more direct engagement with the ethical responsibilities of historians in deconstructing these narratives would have added an important layer of contemporary relevance. Whether the manipulation of history for political purposes is an unavoidable reality or a challenge that must be actively confronted remains an open question, and this volume could have further examined the tension between historical interpretation and historical responsibility.

Despite these minor limitations, the book's focus on the mechanics of historical invention is both timely and significant. It invites scholars to reconsider the nature of historical truth and the extent to which the past is actively constructed rather than passively inherited. The concept of "accurate dissimulation" (11) is particularly valuable, offering a nuanced way to think about how political entities manipulate historical memory. Future research might build upon this idea, integrating theoretical perspectives from memory studies to further explore these narratives' long-term impact. The book raises important methodological questions regarding the role of interdisciplinary approaches in historiographical analysis. By incorporating insights from literature, art history, and philology, the volume sets a compelling model for future studies in historical fabrication.

Inventing Past Narratives is a valuable contribution to Venetian historiography and medieval studies. It effectively reveals the deliberate processes through which Venice crafted its historical image, showcasing the fluid boundaries between history and myth. Scholars of historiography, medieval political culture, and Venetian studies will find much to appreciate in this work, which raises essential questions about the creation and perpetuation of historical narratives. By highlighting how historical narratives are consciously shaped and disseminated, this volume promotes a more critical approach to medieval historiography, one that recognizes the complexity and intentionality behind the stories societies choose to tell about themselves.

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Pasquale Sabbatino, ed. *Il teatro tra Quattrocento e Seicento. Studi in onore di Konrad Eisenbichler*. Napoli: Federico II UP, 2024. Pp. 232.

La *Festschrift* è l'entusiastico tributo della "comunità" accademica "internazionale" a Konrad Eisenbichler, "studioso raffinato e critico acuto" (7) le cui ampie ricerche sul teatro sacro di confraternita, nell'ambito "drammaturgico-spettacolare fiorentino" (14) tra il quindicesimo e il

diciassettesimo secolo, si pongono quali preziosi e imprescindibili punti di riferimento.

Il volume, rispettivamente presentato (7-9) da Sabbatino (a cui pertiene anche la curatela) ed introdotto (11-15) da Gianni Cicali, si apre con Nerida Newbiggin, che in “Deception, Gender, and Sainthood in the Plays of Santa Eufrosina and Santa Marina” (21-36) analizza due “*sacre rappresentazioni*” (21) rinascimentali, la prima, fiorentina, d’ autore ignoto (1495) e la seconda, manoscritta, del senese Domenico Tregiani (1589), criticamente edita dalla stessa studiosa nel 2022. Temi centrali e condivisi delle due opere sono la simulazione continuata, da parte di due giovani religiose, dell’identità maschile, tramite travestimento; e la loro elevazione agli onori degli altari, seguita, *postmortem*, all’agnizione della loro identità femminile. Si contestualizzano le due *pièces* nell’ambito della cultura agiografica del tempo (ancora legata alle fonti medievali di Jacopo da Varazze e Domenico Cavalca); e si indaga sulle caratteristiche delle “confraternite laiche” (32) fiorentine, più inclini a perpetuare stereotipi tradizionali, al contrario delle corrispettive organizzazioni senesi, le “accademie” e le “congreghe” (32), in cui prevalse una più innovativa vena drammatica.

Francesca Bortoletti, in “Memoria, identità e materialità dello spettacolo sacro nella Ferrara di Ercole I d’Este” (37-59) esamina il teatro sacro ferrarese che, sotto il governo del succitato duca (1471-1505), ne rispecchiò in pieno le istanze autocelebratorie. Si delineano le dinamiche con cui la committenza dell’Estense trasformò “la drammaturgia sacra” (42) in efficace *instrumentum regni*, come mostrato dal “trattato encomiastico” (48) *De Triumphis religionis* dell’umanista Sabadino degli Arienti.

Del “sistema spettacolare promosso dal granducato mediceo” e del “sostegno culturale” e finanziario ad esso fornito da ‘stranieri’ impiantati “in città” (61) parla Anna Maria Testaverde in “L’altra corte di Firenze: gli Orsini di Bracciano tra residenze, cerimonialità, spettacolo” (61-78). Si indaga sulla potente famiglia laziale che già in epoca laurenziana si legò al granducato tramite alleanze matrimoniali. Partendo dal “contratto di nozze” (61) tra Isabella de’ Medici, figlia di Cosimo, con Paolo Giordano Orsini I (1553), si descrivono le feste, sia “civi[che] che cortigian[e]”, sponsorizzate dal duca di Bracciano, ed atte a garantire “la promozione autocelebrativa familiare” (62). Si enuclea, altresì, la “tendenza” orsiniana “a recuperare [l’] arte” antico romana “del giostrare [...] con cavalli armati e maschere” (63-65) che sarà proseguita anche dagli eredi.

Gianni Cicali, in “Giovanni Angelo Lottini e la stagione secentesca della drammaturgia sacra fiorentina” (79-93) si occupa del servita laico (1549-1629) che, nel pieno fiorire della “drammaturgia sacra ‘controriformata’” (80), produsse varie opere, tra cui il *Sacrificio di Abramo*. Lo studioso esamina la

“consolidata evoluzione drammaturgica” (86) dell’opera e la sua “macchinaria [...] di matrice barocca” (85); e si sofferma, poi, sul suo doppio finale, che offre una “versione economy” (90) della messa in scena, evitando macchine ed “effetti speciali” (91) tramite l’espunzione della ‘fisicità’ dell’atto sacrificale.

Matteo Leta, in “Note sulla rappresentazione dei Turchi nella commedia rinascimentale” (95-109) analizza “alcuni esempi [...] del conflitto con i Turchi” nelle commedie italiane prodotte “tra Cinquecento e inizio Seicento” (95). Si constata che l’argomento ossessionò “l’immaginario della Penisola” (95) coinvolgendo autori quali Matteo Bandello, Ludovico Ariosto, Niccolò Machiavelli, Pietro Aretino, Giovan Francesco Loredan, Sforza degli Oddi, Anton Francesco Grazzini e Niccolò Negri. Leta puntualizza come lo stereotipo negativo dell’“Ottomano” (100) compaia sino alla vittoria della Lega Santa a Lepanto (1571) e divenga, posteriormente, ambivalente “strumento” che arricchisce “il genere comico” e crea “divertenti allusioni oscene” (108).

“Pietro Carnesecchi dans une comédie de Pietro Aretino”, di Michel Plaisance (111-24) rilegge *Il filosofo* aretinesco (1546), commedia finalizzata alla *captatio benevolentiae* dell’*upper echelon* vaticano post-tridentino e imperniata sul protetto di Papa Clemente VII, il fiorentino, di “straordinaria bellezza” (116) Pietro Carnesecchi, caduto poi in disgrazia ed in odore d’eresia alla morte del pontefice e in ultimo decapitato ed arso dal tribunale dell’Inquisizione.

Johnny L. Bertolio, in “Specchi e riflessi queer nei drammi pastorali da Torquato Tasso a Isabella Andreini” (125-38) analizza i rimaneggiamenti del mito di Narciso e il “motivo del rispecchiamento” (126) nella *Mirzia* dell’aquilano Marcantonio Epicuro (1472-1555), nell’*Aminta* tassiana (1573) e nella *Mirtilla* (1588) di Isabella Andreini. Si individuano in particolare, in quest’ultima favola pastorale, il timore-desiderio “di cadere nella tentazione di Narciso” e di innamorarsi “della propria immagine riflessa” (128), sublimando [l’impulso] “nella forma di un amore impossibile, di radice apparentemente narcisistica e in realtà omosessuale” (134).

Maria Galli Stampino, in “Testo e contesto: poesia, religione e ideologia in due scritti di Lucrezia Marinella” (139-56) esamina un poemetto dell’autrice veneziana (1571-1563) “dedicato” alla “traslazione dell’icona cosiddetta di ‘San Luca’” e “incluso” (140) nelle *Rime sacre* (Venezia 1603). Si ritrova nello scritto un intersecarsi “di romanzesco e [...] sacro” (140) e si comparano “alcuni luoghi geografici” e “la tempesta di mare” (143), che appaiono in esso, col loro riciclaggio avvenuto, in un posteriore poema epico marinelliano (1635).

Rosalind Kerr, in “Commedia dell’Arte’s Transnational Legacy of ‘Living Theatre’ Mediated in the Scenarios and Scripts of Flaminio Scala” (157-68) rivendica il valore imprescindibile della ‘commedia improvvisa’ che scavalca le barriere nazionali dell’Europa tardorinascimentale e barocca e si proietta verso una transnazionale modernità. Ne sono esempio la poliedrica figura di

Flaminio Scala (1552-1624) e il suo *Teatro delle favole rappresentative* (1511), raccolta di cinquanta “scenari” che testimoniano l’appassionata difesa scaliana della Commedia dell’Arte di contro a quella erudita.

Pasquale Sabbatino, in “Ritratti di Napoli nel secondo Cinquecento e l’Europa di Bruno negli anni parigini” (169-86) scruta la progressiva trasformazione urbana e socio-politica della “Napole ientile” quattrocentesca (174) nell’antifrastica “Napoli-metropoli [...], tumultuosa [...] e sgargiante” (170), in cui Giordano Bruno visse gli anni formativi. Si dimostra, attraverso la lettura della commedia bruniana *Il Candelaio* (1582), come la città partenopea divenga per il Nolano, durante il suo soggiorno francese, il “simbolo” cupo e degradato del “caos universale” (185).

In ultimo Ambra Moroncini, con “Italian Renaissance Echoes in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*” (209-27) enumera possibili fonti italiane della tragedia shakespeariana (tra le quali: Francesco Guicciardini, la Commedia dell’Arte e Giordano Bruno).

Composito ed accurato studio, sceverante, in armonioso equilibrio, i nodi e le intercapedini che connettono in un *unicum* cultura materiale e immaginario letterario della prima età moderna, la miscellanea si rivela utilissimo strumento sia per gli specialisti di letteratura rinascimentale e barocca che per quelli di drammaturgia che vogliano affondare nelle multiple pieghe di un’epoca complessa e contraddittoria, eppur traboccante di fondativi impeti innovatori, quale quella presa in esame.

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Michele Savonarola. *A Mother’s Manual for the Women of Ferrara: A Fifteenth-Century Guide to Pregnancy and Pediatrics*. Ed. Gabriella Zuccolin, transl. Martin Marafioti. New York: Iter P, 2022. Pp. xi, 254.

Gabriella Zuccolin, a scholar of women’s medicine in early modern Italy, has already published several studies on the writings of Michele Savonarola, a doctor born in Padua around 1385 and who passed away in Ferrara in 1466. This English translation of the critical 1952 edition of Savonarola’s *De Regimine Praegnantium et noviter natorum usque ad septennium* edited by Luigi Belloni (55-217), has now been additionally supplemented by Zuccolin with important textual variants from a manuscript that was unknown to its first editor (52). Furthermore, in her excellent “Introduction” (1-53), Zuccolin discusses relevant contextual factors for a fuller appreciation of Savonarola’s work, foremost being Savonarola’s decision to write in colloquial vernacular based on his noble “desire to save future mothers and their unborn children” (2).

However, probably for this very reason, when compared to the physician’s Latin production, this treatise “did not enjoy great popularity” (46). Yet

by using vernacular prose, Savonarola gave voice, “for the first in Western Europe,” to the “midwife and the birthing mother” (4). When presenting Savonarola’s biography, Zuccolin highlights his apprenticeship in medicine at the University of Padua, then a center of anti-Aristotelian studies, where he received a humanist training (7). After twenty years of practice and teaching at the *studium*, Savonarola then moved to Ferrara under the patronage of the Este family who valued both his “scientific prestige and [...] commercial skills and interests” (9).

Zuccolin afterwards analyzes Savonarola’s writings, variously focused on medicine, religion, history and courtly life (all of which are listed in the “Bibliography” (219-23), under “Primary Sources”). Her conclusions touch on three major changes in medicine over the fifteenth century: the rise of practical medical genres, the relevance of courtly medicine (encompassing astrology, alchemy, physiognomy, politics, and history), and the increasing role of vernacular speech as the language of science (10). However, as per common custom in Italy, several of Savonarola’s works were printed in dual vernacular and Latin editions (10). Zuccolin thus describes Savonarola’s *corpus* as a “unified pedagogical program” (10), shaped according to the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum*, the most famous treatise for the education of the noblemen (11).

The detailed comparison between this work and Savonarola’s writings composed in Ferrara (11-13), leads Zuccolin to assume that the *Secretum secretorum* provided the doctor with a “template of topics” (13), such as morality and politics, the rules of health or *regimina sanitates* (12), as well as alchemy and physiognomy as the “science of human passions” (13). This broadened academic horizon reflects the rise of the “court physician” (14) trained both in scholarly disciplines and humanist culture, and thereby an expert in subjects like diplomacy, political and financial counseling, and astrology (14). For this reason, the *Mother’s Manual* does not limit its scope to procreation, but also includes moral, social, and practical concerns about family life (as in the popular genre of “*libri della famiglia*,” 15).

In the subsequent sections of the “Introduction,” the author sketches a history of midwifery and gynecology in the early modern period, ultimately stressing how these evolved into true scientific practices beginning in the fifteenth century with Savonarola acting as a forerunner of this process (16). Since the midwife profession was not recognized in either antiquity or the medieval period, it could therefore encompass both gynecology and obstetrics (17). By the twelfth century, the role of the midwife began to be limited to “uncomplicated births” (18), while the rest of women’s medicine was allocated to male practitioners. Savonarola’s treatise follows this trend, but also separates the two disciplines and ultimately limits its scope to obstetrics

(19). After pointing out the differences between this and one of Savonarola's prior Latin works, *Practica Maior*, Zuccolin then examines the treatise's three sections. The *Regimine* is not a "literal translation into the vernacular" (21) because it includes chapters on children's care and upbringing, which reveals that Latin and vernacular were, in fact, complementary to one another (23).

In the first of the three sub-treatises in which his work is divided, on procreation and conception (23-30), Savonarola begins by condemning premature conception from both scientific and socio-economic standpoints (24), while also exhorting readers with "frank language" (25) and a refined rhetorical strategy, to align their sexual behavior with Christian teachings (24-25). He then delves into the much-debated question of the role of the woman's seed in procreation (26), while also giving advice on intercourse (27). Savonarola's practical inspiration plays a definitive role in the subsequent part about the conditions to "attain a successful pregnancy" (28), and interpret its internal and external signs (29-30). It is notable that all Savonarola's advice about medicine, ingredients, and diet are differentiated according to the mothers' social status, although Zuccolin acknowledges his preference for the "noble court ladies and the rich wives" (30).

The second sub-treatise deals with birth and post-partum conditions (30-37), starting with advice on diet, exercise, and sexual practice (30-32). Savonarola then transitions to advising women and midwives on best birth giving practice and how to prevent miscarriages (32-34), in addition to discussing the delivery of the infant and the care of the mother (35-37) who he describes as often "abandoned to their own devices" (34).

The third one tackles instead the best practices for how to raise a child until the age of seven (37-45), following the renewed pedagogical interest among humanist thinkers sparked by the discovery of Quintilianus' treatises (38). Zuccolin recalls prior writings by Savonarola on the subject (39), in which he vehemently argued against wet nursing as an unnatural and non-Christian act (39-40). Now, instead, he gives advice on children's education as a means to prevent the squandering of family assets (40), and on how to choose a proper wet nurse (40-41) and midwife (43). Zuccolin concludes her "Introduction" by pointing at how Savonarola both follows strict *auctoritates* in terms of pediatrics, Avicenna above all (42), and praises the "*pratica comuna*" (43) of women with frequent references to their expertise (45).

By shedding a light on Savonarola's contradictory appreciation of women's role in medical practice, Zuccolin has made an exceptional scholarly contribution to the study of early modern Italian medicine, providing insight into the transition away from traditional Medieval scholastic approaches instead towards a practice-driven humanist mindset.

Gur Zak. *Boccaccio and the Consolation of Literature*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2022. Pp. x + 216.

Gur Zak's *Boccaccio and the Consolation of Literature* explores Boccaccio's nuanced and often contradictory approaches to literary consolation for grief and loss, particularly in love. Building on Zak's previous work on Petrarch, this study examines how Boccaccio, situated between classical and contemporary traditions, grapples with the effectiveness of philosophical redirection. Zak analyzes key strategies employed by Boccaccio toward this end: distraction, confession, rhetorical agency, and stoic detachment. He argues that Boccaccio's works, including the *Decameron* and lesser-known prose, present these strategies not as a definitive system but as complementary and challenging perspectives, adaptable to the reader's needs. Zak meticulously analyzes Boccaccio's frequent literary and philosophical allusions, revealing the depth of his engagement with these traditions. Challenging interpretations that focus solely on the *Decameron*, Zak emphasizes the intertextual relationships within Boccaccio's entire oeuvre, highlighting a pedagogical intent to empower readers through rhetorical training which will allow them to cultivate agency in the face of fate. He positions Boccaccio not as a destroyer of tradition, but as a builder of a new, compassionate, and worldly ethics grounded in Aristotelian principles (see "The *Filocolo* and the Polyphony of Consolation," 25-30; "The *Decameron* and the Consolation of Storytelling," 88-95).

The consolation of literature as a remedy for emotional pain has already been masterfully explored by Zak in his 2006 book *Petrarch's Humanism and Care of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP). While, in *Humanism*, Zak demonstrates how Petrarch's morally charged writing explicitly seeks to better his reader's mind (if not his lot) through the refinement of the intellect and pursuit of spiritual over earthly goods, he now examines the sometimes contradictory stances Boccaccio takes with regard to the use and effectiveness of such philosophical redirection in overcoming grief and loss, especially in matters of love and heartbreak. Zak shows, however, that Boccaccio's different prescriptions for varying degrees of catharsis and introspection, acceptance and defiance, though they may appear to clash, in fact work in counterpoint to one another, and should be employed according to the needs and constitution of the reader.

An eminent scholar of medieval studies and comparative literature, Zak grounds his project on extensive knowledge of Boccaccio's cultural and historical context. His comparative analysis of the theme of consolation in Boccaccio's writings puts them in dialogue, not only with each other, but with the legacy of this same theme in classical literature. While providing a chronological and cohesive survey of Boccaccio's perennial interest in literature's role in recovering from sorrow, Zak guides the reader through

Boccaccio's life-long interrogation of the topic. By parsing Boccaccio's references and allusions to Dante, Petrarch, and Boethius, as well as to other currents in theology and philosophy, Zak privileges the reader with precious insight into Boccaccio's worldview and the society that he critiques.

Over the course of five interlocking chapters— Chapter 1, “The *Filocolo* and the Polyphony of Consolation”; Chapter 2, “The *Filostrato*, the *Elegia*, and the Consolation of Tragedy”; Chapter 3, “‘Il senno di consolazion sia cagione’: The *Decameron* and the Consolation of Storytelling”; Chapter 4, “The *Corbaccio*, Dante, and the Disavowal of Love”; Chapter 5, “Boccaccio after Petrarch: The Polyphony of Consolation in the Later Writings”—Zak identifies key approaches used by Boccaccio in his exploration of consolation. These include distraction and diversion through the pursuit of pastimes which assuage the pain of loss (including reading); unburdening oneself to a friend (as per Aquinas's commentary on Book IX of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*); the assertion of one's agency through the very wit and rhetorical skill developed by reading; and the complete disavowal of attachment to earthly desires such that one may, in true Stoic fashion, reject sorrow along with them. Zak shows that each of Boccaccio's prose works tends to emphasize one of these approaches over the others. There is no definitive “winner” in the contest of strategies of consolation for Boccaccio—rather, Zak's book demonstrates how these strategies (and their philosophical underpinnings) complement and challenge each other.

By examining Boccaccio's works in reference to each other and by perceiving often subtle and nuanced allusions to both Boccaccio's contemporaries and classical authors, Zak brings into focus references that the non-specialist is bound to find obscure, such as the retelling of St. Eustache's hagiography embedded in the *Decameron's* story of Beritola (2.6.10), along with an allusion to Aquinas's discussion of the consequences of excessive sorrow on human reason. Zak's methodical parsing of Boccaccio's allusions is perhaps the single most important reason to read this book (see “The *Decameron* and the Consolation of Storytelling,” 100-05).

In lieu of biographical detail, Zak contextualizes Boccaccio's writing within the current of southern European medieval literature. He presents Boccaccio as an intermediary between French literary trends and those of the Italian peninsula, as well as between contemporary and classical philosophical traditions. Allusions to these traditions are strewn throughout Boccaccio's texts, and Zak masterfully reveals how these various currents are adapted by the author. In this way, he shows that Boccaccio's genius lies not just in applying an encyclopedic knowledge of literature and philosophy to his own writing, but in his use of storytelling

to apply these strategies to hypothetical situations and take each of them to its logical conclusion as a pedagogical technique which functions through trial, error, and reinvention.

Zak's analysis of Boccaccio's literary program offers a *mise-au-point* with regard to how Boccaccio's works are often discussed in Anglo-American scholarship, which, as Zak acknowledges, tends to myopically focus on the *Decameron* without taking into account its intertextual relationships to the rest of Boccaccio's work, let alone the author's sources and inspirations. By addressing Boccaccio's vernacular writings (as well as some of his Latin ones), Zak also shows that the *Decameron's* example of therapeutic storytelling can only be fully understood if examined in dialogue with his other works also explicitly dedicated to the theme of consolation. When considered together, a certain pedagogical impetus emerges as a *filo rosso* interwoven throughout Boccaccio's oeuvre. Zak's book handily establishes this broader ethos as key to the authorial intent of portraying storytelling as a means of practical and accessible rhetorical training, and thus, for the development of a certain amount of agency. By developing rhetorical agency, Boccaccio's paradigm of consolation breaks with the medieval model of simply accepting one's fate and rather advocates for creative adaptation and reinvention within the context of the reader's own circumstances and story.

Zak's close reading also discerns how Boccaccio highlights the problems and pitfalls of various consolatory strategies. For example, he discusses how the self-defeating and rhetorically flawed arguments between Fiammetta and her Nurse complicate both the unrealistic Stoicism of the latter and the solipsistic catharsis of her charge. Zak discusses this kind of philosophical counterpoint between Boccaccio's stories within the *Decameron* as well, such as in his comparison of Andreola's tact versus Ghismonda's haughtiness in defending their illicit and ill-fated affairs (as discussed in "The *Filostrato*, the *Elegia*, and the Consolation of Tragedy," 57-63).

Zak's close reading not only highlights the tensions between differing consolatory strategies but also demonstrates how Boccaccio continually reimaged consolation as a pedagogical practice. By situating Boccaccio in dialogue with classical, medieval, and contemporary traditions, Zak reframes consolation as central to the author's entire literary project. The book ultimately succeeds in showing how Boccaccio's works, from the *Filocolo* to the *Corbaccio*, forge an ethics of resilience rooted in Aristotelian and Thomistic thought, making this study essential for scholars of medieval literature, philosophy, and Italian studies.

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SEVENTEENTH, EIGHTEENTH, & NINETEENTH CENTURIES

Alexander U. Bertland. *Myth and Authority. Giambattista Vico's Early Modern Critique of Aristocratic Sovereignty*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2022. Pp. xiii + 334.

Bertland's study is a reading of the *New Science* as a book about politics: Vico's reconstruction of Roman law and religion conveys in fact a criticism of the aristocratic regime in Seventeenth century Naples. In "Approaching the *New Science*" (1-39), Bertland's goal is set: investigating "poetic wisdom" (4) as the "underlying epistemological structure" (5) to explain oligarchy's domination (17). Vico's endeavor is contextualized along that of early-modern thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hume, and Gianfranco Gravina (18-27), all in "search for universal patterns in history" (12).

After evoking some recent studies paving the way to a similar interpretation of Vico's masterpiece (27), he discusses the concept of divine providence which delivers signs that humans are free to "accept or decline" (37). In "Giambattista Vico: Early Modern Philosopher" (41-79), Bertland challenges both the traditional images of Vico as a "isolated thinker" (41), promoted by the 1976's Berlin's study (48-51), as well as of a philosopher of the state of nature (as Rousseau, 58-9) since human nature is always connected to "civil life" (55), and does not precede it. Lastly, he shows how Vico stands out from the early promoters of capitalism, like Adam Smith (61) because, for him, the path to civilization is not based on practical advantages (62), since those can't check the giants' "selfish desire" (68) into "human cooperation" (68). This can only happen in fact by divine intervention, as with the terror instilled by thunder, identified with Jove (69). Religion is therefore the first civilizing force (69), and poetic wisdom transforms the giants into "poets" (77) because they start interpreting natural events as divine signs. This leads them to take themselves as God's agents (78) and impose a self-imposed discipline on all relations (78).

In "Imaginative Universals" (81-118), Bertland evokes the important 2010 essay by David Marshall on Vico's rhetoric (85), to explain how poetic wisdom, discovered by the philosopher between the *New Science's* first two editions (88), allowed him to embrace an image of Homer as the direct expression of ancient Greece' "world moral view" (92). This recalls the figure of *antonomasia* (95), considered a proper way of "thinking and knowing" (99) although not very flexible. The imaginative universal of Ulysses, paragon of prudence, cannot in fact account for all shades of prudence (101). This "poverty of speech" (112) eventually becomes an obstacle to civilization (108). In "Feudalism" (119-52), Bertland begins by stressing that emperor

Constantine represented for Vico the culmination of human history since the two greatest civilizations merged (119-20). After the fall of Rome (121), the divine providence gave humans a chance for civilization to be reestablished in modern Europe (122). However, in Naples's provinces under the Spanish rule (1504-1714), the barons remained the legal rulers (being also able to collect taxes, 128-29) of most parts of the kingdom (127) because of how Spain heavily relied on their resources, despite the popular revolts (126). In Naples, therefore, a "strict class division" (130) was enforced, along a "system of oppression" (139). Lawyers, called "*togati*" (142), secured the barons' authority, despite, among them, many, like Vico, questioned the regime, calling for a monarchical rule (149).

In "Secret Laws" (153-92), Bertland addresses Vico's criticism of the secret laws imposed by nobles (153). Both "rituals and ideas" (154), they require absolute discipline, as it appears in Vico's account of how the heroes established their rule on the "*famuli*" (166-67). He then examines the 1709 work *Study Methods*, where Vico recalls the origin of the secret laws by comparing ancient and modern methods of study in jurisprudence (170) and stressing their different degree of adaptability (171-72). The balance is however in the middle (175), as Roman history shows: useful at the origin to settle the state (176-77), a modern monarch should make the secret laws "public" (180). In Rome they were secret because laws and gods coincided, which is exemplified by his discussion of the right to usucapion (190-91). In "The Roman Pantheon" (193-225), Bertland examines the poetic universals as instruments provided with a civilizing power (196-97). For instance, Apollo's pursuit of Daphne expresses the sacrality of marriage (197-98); Diana protects both marriages and of the burials (200-01); Apollo rides Pegasus as a "ritual" and not for transportation (198). Compared to Rousseau's account of social evolution (199), Vico therefore prioritizes spiritual factors (195) over material concerns (200).

Bertland recalls Schaeffer's interpretation of "*sensus communis*" (205) as the natural base for the evolution of humanity (208), leading to philosophy's domination (or "vulgar wisdom," 212). Poetic wisdom, characterized by linguistic poverty, is instead responsible for contradictory messages. Bertland sketches a parallel with schizophrenia, and the concept of "overinclusion" (invented by Remo Bodei, 213), describing the presence of opposing and unrelated meanings within an idea, as in Vico's interpretation of the myths of Cadmus (211-12), Juno and Hercules (215-19).

In "Poetic Wisdom and Class Conflict" (227-71), Bertland evokes how Servius Tullius, by creating the census, intended to transfer the money raised by taxes to a central pool (229-30). This created instead the conditions for the acknowledgement of the plebeians' legal status (230). Another contradictory

result of divine providence was the creation of Mars: by protecting the burial sites the primacy of religion on sacred ground is in fact reversed (235), since superstition is more relevant than “physical security.” (238) For this reason, the less noble giants (“*famuli*,” 241) will seek on their “free will” (240) the protection of the noble giants by entering their “asylums” (244), leading to feudalism (242). To reverse this relation, the plebeians will invent their own religion as an imitation of noble religion (250), its “naked version” (251). The first plebeian god was Venus, because they also wanted to have their own weddings (254) despite not yet bound by law (256). Other plebeian imaginative universals are the Roman jurist Ulpian, for the change he brought to emphyteusis (258); Solon, for his rejection of inequality (269), and Aesop, for his morality (270).

In the final chapter (“Is Vico Right?,” 273-91), Bertland strives to set Vico at the center of early modern thought by stressing his “cross-cultural method” (285). He ends his analysis by objecting to Roberto Esposito’s reading of Vico for not addressing the “critique of poetic wisdom as a structure of feudalism” (287).

With extreme rigor and acuity, Bertland paves the way to a new political interpretation of the *New Science*, based on the careful comparison and historical contextualization of the book’s three editions. He successfully demonstrates that the Neapolitan philosopher is the forerunner of later revolutionary trends of thought.

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Francesca Cadel, and Paola Nastri, eds. *Italy in the Second Half of the 19th Century. Bridging New Cultures*. Wilmington: Vernon P 2024. Pp 248.

What can we learn about society and politics of post-Unification Italy from the grainy black and white photographs taken by *verista* Giovanni Verga? Or from the children’s literature and women’s magazines published in Italy during the second half of the 19th century? This volume convincingly argues for using sources from a variety of genres because they offer much to discover about the socio-political situation and the search for a national identity that characterized the later decades of the 1800s in Italy. As the book makes clear, the availability of these materials today is also a result of the penchant of the past two hundred years or so to collect and categorize in archives materials beyond those documenting or commenting on historical events; such exploration has allowed us to review, expand, enrich (sometimes deny or correct) previously established historical information.

In this volume we find eleven thought-provoking articles that enhance the story of Italy in the exciting turbulence of its early nation building. In her “Introduction” (xv-xvii), Paola Nastri writes that this collection was born of

the desire to honor the interdisciplinary perspectives from which to view the later 19th century in Italy, all “contributing to highlight the many and different facets of the period in which the interaction of literature, the arts and culture, become vital forces for great changes in the literary, political and cultural Italian landscape of the time” (xv). The volume, with contributions from experts in Italy, Canada and the USA, is arranged under four general headings, “Books and Magazines for the Education of School Children and the Birth of New Publishing Companies” (4 articles, 3-81), “Emancipation of Women and Innovative Modernity in Female Characters” (3 articles, 85-148), “Theater, an Archivist and Historian” (2 articles, 151-95) and “Giovanni Verga and the South of Italy” (2 articles, 199-236).

The organizational framework of the book immediately calls to the admirable breadth of this project; the articles are spread across time, across the space of Italy (and beyond), across class, race, and gender; they incorporate perspectives from letters, stage, books, popular magazines and photographs, the latter two still newly emergent media at the time. Remarkably, each article also constitutes itself as an in-depth study of its particular focus, explicating aspects of the ongoing macro developments in Italian nationhood as they are complemented by stories on the micro level.

Susan Amatangelo captures this complementarity in her study (“Viewing the South: The Role of Verismo and the Illustrative Arts in Shaping Post-Unification Italian Culture,” 199-218), showing how Verga’s inexpert photographs mentioned above, together with the illustrations for the 1880 edition of his *Vita dei campi*, bring a fruitful understanding of how images ideologically supported Verga’s written descriptions, evincing how his literary language carried within itself a documented, not just an imaginary, reality. Similarly, Cristina Carnemolla’s keen analysis of the short story “Fantasticheria” (1879) entitled “The South as an Idyllic Nightmare: Giovanni Verga’s ‘Fantasticheria’ (1879),” 219-36) shows how Verga creates a linguistic estrangement that works to separate the North and South of Italy even as the country was ostensibly united. An ineluctable consideration for most serious authors of the day, the concept of “Italian” language is studied in several other chapters as well. Eleonora Buonocore’s article “Carolina Invernizio’s *Nina, La poliziotta dilettaante*: Bridging Mystery and Serial Romantic Novels,” 129-48) describes how Carolina Invernizio carefully considers her linguistic choices so that her words, especially in the novel *Nina, la poliziotta dilettaante*, (1909) result in forging the amalgam of crime stories and romance novels. Invernizio, among the first “proper crime writers in Italy” (130), participates in a new genre for a new nation, importantly one that comes from the pen of a woman writer. As the century drew to its end, women were no less involved in public nation building, in exploring roles beyond being wives and mothers,

as Loredana Palma describes in her essay on female emancipation at the time, titled “Un contributo al dibattito sulla questione femminile tra Otto e Novecento: Aurelia Folliero De Luna Cimino e Fanny Salazar Zampini” (85-104). Maria Cristina Alberti shows the evolution of this attempt in her essay comparing Pisana of Nievo’s *Le confessioni di un italiano* and the much later Edda described by Giani Stuparich in *Un anno di scuola* (“L’evoluzione della figura femminile fra tradizione e innovazione in *Le confessioni di un italiano di Ippolito Nievo e Un anno di scuola di Giani Stuparich*,” 105-28).

The studies by Ernesto Livorni (3-24), Rossana Dedola (25-40), Sabrina Fava (41-66) and Letterio Todaro (67-81) concentrate on how repeated linguistic tropes and themes in literature for children were able to shape a sense of *italianità* in the new nation even if the divisive discrepancies between North and South could not be avoided. As the four scholars show, realizing the dream of a unified Italy required new educational policies, and new texts and readings that could shape the youngest generations. De Amicis’ *Cuore* (1886) and Collodi’s *Le avventure di Pinocchio. Storia di un burattino* (1883) aimed to instill new progressive attitudes extolling acceptance of “sacrifice and dedication of one’s own life to others” (7); new publishers like Luigi Sailer founder of the magazine *Le prime letture*—dedicated to nurturing literacy at school and at home (44) and the development of a moral rectitude (44)—underscored the aims of De Amicis and Collodi, as did the educational texts released through Biondo publishers of Palermo. Biondo became successful in offering pedagogical perspectives intended for the children of southern Italy introducing them to new authors like Ida Baccini, Luigi Capuana, Edmondo De Amicis, Anna Vertua Gentile, Emma Perodi and Emilio Salgari (using the pseudonym Capitano Guido Altieri).

Part Three explores unconventional arenas in which Italy’s nation-building project unfolded. Antonella Valoroso’s study of Adelaide Ristori (1822-1906) (151-78) provides a fascinating history of the actress who, through her appearances on international stages successfully transformed her art into a political instrument and served as de-facto ambassador of the new Italian polity and culture (152). Lisa Ferrante Perrone’s essay (179-95) is a reflection on the role of archives. Using the archives of statesman Gino Capponi, the author describes how Capponi, who began his archival collection at age 18, used his resultant connection to the Italian past to forge an Italian future beyond the 1800s. Like Ristori, Capponi too is an ambassador of the newly unified Italy for future generations.

Admirably researched and detailed, this text would benefit from an index. Nonetheless, it will certainly attract serious readers of Italian History and will undoubtedly serve to inspire further academic explorations of the fascinating years of Italian post-Unification.

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Pasquale Palmieri. *A Criminal Hero: Justice, Politics, and Media Culture in Eighteenth-Century Naples*. London: Routledge, 2025. Pp. 148.

Pasquale Palmieri holds a magnifying glass over the eighteenth-century Neapolitan legal system in his careful examination of the uproar generated by the trial and confinement of Leopoldo di San Pasquale. An Augustinian friar, Leopoldo was accused of heresy, fraud, and sexual misconduct by the order in 1757, but it was not until 1763, when Leopoldo charged the Augustinians with keeping him confined in deplorable conditions—burying him alive in an outdoor pit—that the case sparked the eighteenth-century equivalent of a media frenzy in the Kingdom of Naples. Palmieri deftly analyzes the myriad commentaries, memoirs, records, novellas, opinions, and counter opinions that Leopoldo's case generated in order to shed light on the power struggles between church and state, between the ruling Bourbons looking to extend their influence over the Neapolitan courts and the kingdom's religious orders reluctant to cede control over cases that had traditionally fallen within their ecclesiastical purview. Palmieri's microhistorical study homes in on an individual case to add texture to the traditional, macrohistorical understanding of print and media culture in eighteenth-century Italy. Less a neatly definable "public sphere" in which common subjects were given equal opportunity to express their voice, Naples of the mid-eighteenth century, as Palmieri argues, was more of an arena, dominated by discordant voices, in which royal and religious authorities fiercely competed for influence through the manipulation of the media, often in reaction to the court of public opinion. What resulted is a changing perception of justice. No longer representational in which crimes were duly punished before an unquestioning audience, justice was now subject to interpretation and input through the written word.

In keeping with its microhistorical focus, Palmieri's study opens with a close contextualization of the charges imputed to Leopoldo and the inhumane method of his imprisonment in a pit dug in the courtyard of the convent of Santa Maria della Verità. The study's initial chapter, "Buried Alive: Leopoldo and the Style of the Holy Office (1757-1767)" (10-33), analyzes the sensational account of Leopoldo's confinement as recorded by the lawyer Francesco Pecchedena in a memoir of the Augustinian friar addressed to Ferdinand IV. Pecchedena, as Palmieri demonstrates, was a savvy interpreter of both Neapolitan law and the city's readership, and his detailed account of Leopoldo's imprisonment led to the intervention of secular authorities, as well as a public outcry. The furor over the friar's treatment forced religious authorities to counter claims of mistreatment through published defenses, thus situating the growing debate over the abuses of ecclesiastical power within a malleable media sphere that subordinated truth to a flurry of claims and counter claims and their subjective interpretations by authorities and

common people alike. Palmieri's study is uninterested in an ascertainment of Leopoldo's guilt or innocence and instead probes the textual evidence for signs of a legal culture in transition. In this shifting legal culture, the traditional exercise of justice was no longer sufficient to convict or absolve a person without multiple minds weighing in.

Palmieri further reads these signs of a new perception of the law in the study's second chapter, "Justice, Literature, and Public Space" (34-66), which looks at the relationship between justice and the growing body of crime literature. This literature took the form of published criminal proceedings, accounts of famous historical trials, and novels, and often presented ambivalent portraits of criminals, thus muddying the moral codes that had traditionally reinforced categorical distinctions of good and evil. Palmieri asserts that the sensationalizing and fictionalization of the legal system and its actors on the part of Naples's media culture transformed justice into a form of entertainment for Neapolitans at the same time as it valorized their opinions and ushered Neapolitan judicial concerns, with all their attendant political implications, into a more accessible public sphere.

In his third chapter, "A Participatory Tale: Verbal, Visual, and Written Forms of Communication" (67-96), Palmieri interprets the literature inspired by Leopoldo's contentious case as taking cues from fictional narrative and thus becoming a "Leopoldeid", where truth and fiction blended together. The scholar widens his focus to examine contemporary criminal cases, including that of the purported prophetess and holy woman Isabella Milone, and the emergent media culture that conferred celebrity and a mythical dimension on persons of dubious morality, including Leopoldo. In the study's final chapter, "Literary Communication and the Building of a Political Culture" (97-120), Palmieri rounds out his analysis by examining how the intense interest in the friar's case was fomented by preexisting frustration with royal and religious authorities, frustration exacerbated by their insufficient response to the deadly famine and epidemic that struck the kingdom the same year in which reports about Leopoldo's cruel confinement were first published. Palmieri identifies in the newspaper articles, accounts, and other texts detailing Leopoldo's case the expression of public discontentment with both the Bourbons and ecclesiastical authorities and the demand for Enlightenment reforms, along with conservative efforts to censor the publication of common dissent and exploit the persuasive potential of media to shore up support for either church or state.

Palmieri's study exposes the tangled web of eighteenth-century Neapolitan media culture, with its intermingling of different genres and power contests. A concise but rich and deeply researched analysis, it cleverly avoids condemning or exonerating its main subject. Instead, through its insistence on transmediality, the study documents the effect that words, written, printed,

published, and disseminated, had on people's understanding of justice and criminality. Eighteenth-century Neapolitan media culture humanized malefactors and upended beliefs concerning the incontrovertibility of such concepts as truth, goodness, and wickedness. It stands to reason, then, that Neapolitan authorities, both government and ecclesiastical, would seek to exercise control over this burgeoning media culture by turning it into an instrument of persuasion and surveillance. Palmieri affirms, however, that their efforts were not completely successful.

Although Palmieri's microhistorical analysis deliberately restricts its geographical and temporal scope by largely focusing on a single individual, the scholar's transmedial approach is relevant to examinations of the intersection between media culture and power systems, both within Italian studies and beyond. In our current moment, dominated by false news and in which the political landscape bears witness to the increasingly elusive nature of truth, Palmieri's study feels particularly timely.

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Norma Romanelli. *Les grammaires de l'italien à l'usage des Français (1660-1900) "Pour entretenir noblesse"*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2024. Pp. 478.

Norma Romanelli's book is a "remaniement" (19) of her 2019 doctoral dissertation in Theoretical, Descriptive, and Automatic Linguistics at the Université de Paris Cité, under the direction of Bernard Colombat and Giuseppe Patota. Her research on linguistic theories, French and Italian grammar, and Italian grammar books for French speakers (17th-19th centuries) is reinforced by extensive foreign-language teaching experience in several prestigious Parisian institutions.

Studies on Italian grammar books for French speakers typically begin with de Mesmes's *Grammaire italienne composée en François* (1549) and end in the mid-17th century, when French classicism reacted against Marinism. This shift, coinciding with Cardinal Mazarin's death in 1661, marked the decline of the Italian language's prominence in France. Romanelli extends this framework to 1900, arguing that "no systematic study has yet been dedicated to Italian grammar books for French speakers post-1660" (19). The *terminus ad quem*, 1900, coincides with the academic institutionalization of Italian in France and the first "agrégation" exam in the subject. The book's explicit goals are to "assess the relationship established in the grammars under study between norm and usage, as well as how this relationship is developed within a network of cross-influences shaped by two grammatical traditions" and to identify traces of the authors' reflections on their own language and the role they attribute to it in terms of linguistic ideology (22).

The first part of Romanelli's study, "Pour une histoire externe des grammaires à l'usage des Français" (25-173), consists of three key chapters: "Le corpus" (25-65), "Grammairiens et destinataires" (67-110), and "Intentions et méthodes, modèles linguistiques et ideologies" (111-73). Chapter 1 outlines the study's selection criteria and methodological framework, following Colombat's concept of a "representative corpus" that "reflects the state of knowledge or techniques put into play at a specific moment in time" (27). The primary corpus consists of 14 grammar books published between 1668 and 1893, beginning with Placide Catanusi, Giovanni Veneroni (1678, 1709), Annibale Antonini (1726, 1728, 1746), Gaetano Carcani (1802), and concluding with Celestino Michelin-Bert. Romanelli situates these works within a broader grammatical network, identifying two related corpora—contemporary Italian and French grammar books—that interact with the primary corpus. Chapter 2 provides biographical and bibliographical details on the grammarians, contextualizing their social backgrounds, professional trajectories, and presence in France. The sustained female target audience across three centuries is particularly striking. Another noteworthy aspect is that, unlike the earlier period, all the authors are Italian, except for Giovanni Veneroni (Jean Vignerón), who falsely claimed Florentine origins but was from Verdun, and Michelin-Bert, who was Swiss-born. Nearly all grammarians taught in Paris, engaged with diverse social strata, and published their works to advance their professional standing.

The third chapter examines discursive strategies, particularly the role of translation as a pedagogical tool. Romanelli highlights how translation-based exercises dominated grammar instruction, with Veneroni serving as an authoritative reference for later grammarians, who were compelled to position themselves in opposition to him: "In other words, the frequent mentions of the competition's mistakes represent a tool for self-positioning and self-valorization within a very competitive publishing market" (171). While the contrastive approach favored translation from French to Italian, allowing access to prestigious literary traditions, it also reinforced a divide between written and spoken Italian. Grammarians such as Vergani and Carcani echo Muratori and Cesarotti in criticizing the *Crusca* for privileging an archaic literary Tuscan over contemporary linguistic realities (160-67).

The second part, "La construction d'un modèle grammatical. Une analyse épistémologique et historique" (177-371), reconstructs the grammatical model developed in these texts through three key linguistic categories: articles, verbs, and syntax. Each chapter examines the descriptive and prescriptive mechanisms employed by the grammarians and the extent to which their works reflect intersections between French and Italian linguistic traditions. Chapter 4, "L'article" (177-236), explores how definite

and indefinite articles were conceptualized in relation to grammatical case and prepositions. Since articles were absent in classical Latin, early Italian grammarians struggled to classify them. Definite articles, derived from the progressive weakening of Latin demonstratives, posed a theoretical challenge. Romanelli highlights how French grammatical traditions influenced Italian models, as nearly all authors—except Niccolò Giosafatte Biagioli and Gaetano Carcani—adopt the French distinction between definite and indefinite articles.

Chapter 5, “Le verbe” (237-306), focuses on verb forms and tenses, particularly the emergence of the conditional and the *passé composé/passé simple* distinction. While Latin lacked a conditional tense, early Italian grammarians who were drawing on Greek and Latin paradigms, debated how to classify and justify its use. Similarly, the *passé composé* gradually replaced the *passé simple* in spoken usage but remained a literary tense in written Italian. Romanelli traces how different grammarians—depending on their theoretical stance and target audience—offered heterogeneous approaches to these verbal forms.

Chapter 6, “Aspects de la syntaxe” (307-71), examines how syntactic structures were theorized and conceptualized. Early grammarians approached syntax through morphology, thereby framing it around the parts of speech. Some grammarians explicitly noted Italian constructions with no direct equivalent in French, often classified under sections labeled “idiotismes” or “italianismes” (370). The book concludes with two valuable appendices: “La matière des grammaires” (377-88), providing a synoptic overview of the corpus’ contents, and “Sources des exemples littéraires” (389-97), cataloging the literary citations used by the grammarians.

Romanelli’s study ultimately offers insight into the fundamental instability of linguistic categories. Language must be reified, in other words treated as countable and finite, for practical and institutional purposes. Yet this framing remains at odds with linguistic reality. Romanelli’s corpus exemplifies this paradox: the authors attempt to define Italian’s structure while actively borrowing explanatory models from French. This tension is further reflected in the figure of Jean Vigneron, under the alias Giovanni Veneroni, whose legitimacy was constantly challenged for being non-native despite his authority as a grammarian. In this sense, *Les grammaires de l’italien à l’usage des Français* is both a historical study and a case study in linguistic epistemology, offering a valuable contribution to discussions on language standardization, interlinguistic transfer, and linguistic authority.

**TWENTIETH & TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES:
LITERATURE, THEORY, CULTURE**

Erminia Ardissino. *Poesia in forma di preghiera. Svelamenti dell'essere da Francesco d'Assisi ad Alda Merini*. Roma: Carocci, 2023. Pp. 486.

Nel suo volume *Poesia in forma di preghiera* Erminia Ardissino esplora un aspetto cruciale della letteratura italiana: il rapporto tra espressione poetica e dimensione religiosa. La studiosa si focalizza, in particolare, sulla poesia che assume la forma della preghiera e, viceversa, esamina i momenti in cui la preghiera si fa poesia. Si analizza qui il fenomeno attraverso una prospettiva storico-critica diacronica, indagando sul modo in cui il linguaggio della preghiera si intreccia con quello poetico attraverso i secoli. L'autrice adotta un approccio critico-metodologico delimitando chiaramente il proprio oggetto d'indagine in una lunga e ricca introduzione (13-38): e chiarisce che l'inchiesta non si muove lungo un asse ermeneutico confessionale o strettamente religioso, bensì privilegia il percorso letterario e culturale, e offre un'interpretazione originale e stimolante di testi già noti, che sono approfonditi entro nuovi margini interpretativi. Tale approccio permette al lettore di comprendere il valore estetico e poetico della preghiera letteraria, la quale, a differenza della preghiera devozionale, “non richiede segretezza e silenzio [...] né richiede una comunità o rituali necessari per un atto liturgico, ma lettori che vogliono beneficiare dell'universalità della letteratura” (19).

Il volume si articola in quattro ampie sezioni: le “Origini”, la “Rinascita”, il periodo compreso “Dalla fioritura barocca alla secolarizzazione ottocentesca”, e infine “La preghiera nell'età della morte di Dio”. Ognuna di esse è accompagnata da una ricca bibliografia, mentre l'assenza di una sezione conclusiva dedicata a un riepilogo generale non compromette, comunque, la coerenza dell'indagine, in quanto ogni parte di essa presenta una struttura autonoma che guida chi legge nel cogliere le linee fondamentali di sviluppo del genere.

Nella prima sezione (49-165), Ardissino si sofferma sul periodo che va dal Medioevo al XIV secolo, evidenziando come la poesia religiosa nasca dall'incontro tra vivide e differenti tradizioni scritturali, liturgiche e culturali. L'analisi si apre con Francesco d'Assisi, figura centrale nella formazione della poesia come preghiera presente nella letteratura italiana. Il *Cantico delle creature* e i testi-preghiera dell'*Officium Passionis Domini* di Francesco sono interpretati come un modello fondativo in cui l'invocazione si trasforma in poesia e viceversa, attraverso l'esaltazione della lode e del ringraziamento a Dio. Si sottolinea che con Francesco si inaugura una tensione tra preghiera e poesia che sarà d'esempio nella scrittura sacra, per risultato e canonicità, in

quanto, riprendendo la prospettiva degli studi di Pozzi, nel *Cantico* si realizza “quella tensione [...] dove la poesia è solo apparentemente strumento, ma si impone dando invece forma peculiare alla preghiera, la quale a sua volta si impone per determinare il significato (72).

Un altro importante capitolo (103-31) di questa sezione è dedicato alla *Commedia* di Dante, in particolare all'analisi della presenza della preghiera nel poema, già oggetto di studi critici fondamentali in quanto, come ricorda Ardissino nel riportare le parole di Giuseppe Mazzotta, nel poema dantesco la preghiera “cannot be reduced to the status of a mere theme” poiché essa “is a fundamental language-experience that shapes the poet's imagination” (“The Book of Questions: Prayer and Poetry”, *Dante studies*, 129, 2011, 26). Nell'analisi, da cui emerge la ricca esperienza e familiarità critica con il testo dantesco, si fa centrale la dimensione della poesia-preghiera come occasione per un dialogo teologico condiviso con il lettore e particolare rilievo è dato da Ardissino alla “preghiera danzata” del *Paradiso*, in cui il movimento e la musica delle sfere celesti si intrecciano con la poesia in una dimensione coreutica e sensoriale.

A conclusione del capitolo dedicato alle origini della poesia in forma di preghiera tra Due e Quattrocento, Ardissino sigilla il discorso con un'analisi in chiave petrarchesca (137-68), tracciando un parallelo tra l'*Officium* di Francesco d'Assisi e i *Penitentiales* di Francesco Petrarca. La studiosa riprende inoltre alcuni punti fondamentali della devozione petrarchesca espressa nei trattati *De otio religiosorum* e *De vita solitaria* e li colloca a fondamento dell'estetica della poesia-preghiera maturata dal poeta. Quest'ultima, maturata durante la svolta degli anni Quaranta, porta Petrarca a eleggere il testo sacro come “ipotesto di riferimento”, accostato ai classici, a fine di promuovere nuovi valori e nuove possibilità interpretative (143). La preghiera davidica favorirà la conquista e la definizione di uno spazio privato nella relazione con Dio; tale luogo definisce una diversa percezione dell'io rispetto alla classicità: non più orientato al dominio di sé attraverso l'autocontrollo, bensì volto a una ricerca interrogativa e personale di Dio che si connota esteticamente in esempi di scrittura in forma di preghiera (153). In questo senso, Petrarca rappresenta il fondamento di ciò che l'autrice definisce come una personalizzazione della preghiera liturgica, che tuttavia conduce inevitabilmente a una laicizzazione del sapere cristiano teso a superare i limiti della Chiesa del tempo.

La seconda parte del volume è dedicata al Cinquecento, un periodo di rinnovamento della poesia religiosa e, dunque, anche della sua elaborazione estetica nel campo della preghiera poetica. Ardissino esplora le riscritture dei Salmi in volgare e l'uso del lessico petrarchesco per interpretare immagini e temi biblici. Il contesto storico è caratterizzato dalle tensioni religiose della Riforma protestante e cattolica, nonché della Controriforma, che influenzano

profondamente la produzione letteraria. Firenze emerge come un centro di snodo cruciale, dove la domanda di traduzioni bibliche e poetiche si scontra con le restrizioni imposte dalla censura tridentina. Un capitolo (231-62) è dedicato alla poesia femminile, con un focus su autrici come Vittoria Colonna, Laura Battiferri degli Ammannati, Chiara Matraini e Francesca Turini Bufalini. La studiosa sottolinea come queste poetesse utilizzino la forma della preghiera poetica per esprimere un'intensa spiritualità personale e collettiva, mettendosi in relazione e ascolto con i cambiamenti epocali in cui vissero. Particolarmente interessante è l'analisi dettagliata delle poesie sul *Rosario* di Francesca Turini Bufalini. Quest'ultima non solo dimostra una profonda consuetudine con la devozione al Rosario, che emerge anche come pratica quotidiana, ma sviluppa una poetica degli affetti e della familiarità dai risvolti lirici che faranno eco successiva: Ardissino stabilisce qui un percorso d'indagine per un confronto proficuo con la produzione poetico-religiosa della poetessa Maria Alberghetti.

La terza parte abbraccia il periodo che va da Torquato Tasso all'Ottocento ed è divisa in tre capitoli intitolati "Rime sacre, salmodie e divozioni. Tasso, Campanella, Marino" (265-95), "Preghiera, poesia e musica. Dalla lauda all'oratorio" (301-22), "Manzoni e dintorni (Tommaseo, Porta, Belli)" (327-58), nei quali si sceglie di approfondire alcune opere in cui il rapporto tra testo poetico e liturgico risulta particolarmente vivo, prolifico ed emblematico. Nell'opera di Tasso, viene messa in luce la rilevanza della poesia-preghiera di natura sensoriale: la produzione sacra del poeta è analizzata attraverso il confronto con l'oratoria e i metodi comunicativi tipici della predicazione del tempo. Questo connubio si traduce in una poesia ricca di memorie petrarchesche e autocitazioni e nella predilezione per la "poesia delle lacrime", che consente di condividere il dolore delle figure bibliche ed evangeliche in continuità con la tradizione della lauda. L'analisi prosegue con Tommaso Campanella (276-88), in particolare con le *Salmodie*, che oscillano tra due estremi: da un lato, la disperata constatazione di un Dio sordo, quasi prefigurazione dell'incarnarsi del dubbio cinquecentesco e nelle idee libertine che si diffonderanno nel secolo successivo; dall'altro, una piena resa al mistero divino. Come sottolinea l'autrice, questa tensione esistenziale conferisce alle sue poesie una drammaticità che si discosta nettamente dalla gioia celebrativa presente nell'opera campanelliana più nota, *La città del sole*. La sezione dedicata a Marino ("Devozioni", 289-95) esplora la sua produzione sacra, sottolineandone l'importanza come modello di riferimento fino al Settecento. Tra gli esempi analizzati, spiccano le poesie tratte dalle *Rime* del 1602 e dalle *Divozioni* incluse nella sezione sacra della *Lira* del 1614. In questi testi, come ad esempio nella celebre canzonetta *Il sudore di sangue*, la pietà scenografica si esprime attraverso un "artificio elocutivo esasperato" (290), che mescola

elementi della litanìa a un virtuosismo retorico volto ad una scenografia della pietà. Tra i temi centrali si trovano il peccatore recalcitrante, il dubbio radicale sull'esistenza di Dio e un riferimento importante al salmo 13, che si colloca nell'alveo della *theologia negativa*, una tradizione già accolta da Tasso e sviluppata ulteriormente da Marino ulteriormente sviluppata.

Il capitolo include inoltre una seconda sezione (301-25), dedicata alla trasformazione della lauda seconda metà del XVI secolo alla sua evoluzione in forma di oratorio. Gli autori esaminati comprendono Serafino Razzi, le preghiere in forma poetica di Metastasio e le canzoncine spirituali di Alfonso Maria de' Liguori. Si sottolinea come quest'ultimo abbia lasciato un'impronta duratura nella devozione popolare e nel repertorio oratorio, tanto che molte delle sue preghiere sono ancora oggi parte del canone comune (321).

Nell'ultima parte dal titolo "La preghiera nell'età della morte di Dio" (363-471), Ardissino si concentra su una rosa di autori del Novecento, oltretutto Giuseppe Ungaretti (363-89), Giorgio Caproni (393-414), Giovanni Giudici (415-38) e Alda Merini (441-71). Mentre Ungaretti utilizza la forma della preghiera per esprimere temi come quelli della colpa, dell'esilio e della ricerca di Dio, Caproni sviluppa una poetica che problematizza la presenza del divino attraverso una *ateologia* che non nega Dio, ma lo interroga incessantemente. L'analisi si conclude con Alda Merini, la cui poesia rappresenta un punto di fusione tra corporeità e trascendenza, prendendo in esame ad esempio opere come *Orazioni piccole e Magnificat*, nelle quali si esplora la preghiera come atto di creazione poetica e spirituale, capace di trasformare l'esperienza quotidiana in un dialogo con l'assoluto. Nell'opera della poetessa milanese la studiosa individua il compimento di quella tensione che ha costituito uno dei nodi centrali d'analisi dell'intero saggio, e tale movimento risuona nelle parole della stessa Merini riprese dai versi del componimento *La mia poesia è alacre come il fuoco* (Alda Merini, *Fiore di poesia (1951-1997)*, a cura di Maria Corti, Torino, Einaudi, 2014, 224): preghiera è qualcosa che "trascorre tra le dita come un rosario" mentre chi scrive si fa simbolicamente "manto di metallo di una lunga preghiera", proteggendo e legittimando la sacralità dell'esperienza estetica.

Attraverso il suo approccio rigoroso e innovativo, Ardissino offre un contributo fondamentale alla comprensione della poesia-preghiera nella letteratura italiana, qui per la prima volta presentato in forma sincretica ma sistematica. Come si evince, il pregio del volume consiste nell'aver tracciato delle linee interpretative fondative sulla storia di questo genere, che è terra ancora sostanzialmente inesplorata ma che, grazie al pionieristico lavoro di Ardissino, si rivelerà fruttuosa area di ricerca anche per i critici che vorranno esplorarla in futuro.

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Anna Baldini, and Michele Sisto, eds. *Lo spazio dei possibili. Studi sul campo letterario italiano*. Macerata: Quodlibet, 2024. Pp. 384.

Nella stessa collana che nel 2023 aveva accolto *A regola d'arte. Storia del campo poetico italiano (1902-1936)* di Anna Baldini—impostasi già da circa un decennio come una delle più attente studiose di Pierre Bourdieu—è uscito nel maggio del 2024 *Lo spazio dei possibili. Studi sul campo letterario italiano*, a cura della stessa Baldini e di Michele Sisto. Si tratta di un saggio importante, che si inserisce nel solco degli studi bourdieusiani traghettati in Italia da Anna Boschetti nei primi anni Duemila, e poi fioriti in seno alle numerose (per quanto frammentarie e in buona parte episodiche) iniziative a tema quali le *Giornate Pierre Bourdieu*, avviate a Torino nel 2005 e proseguite in città diverse negli anni successivi, e in numerosi altri convegni, bandi, traduzioni e pubblicazioni a più mani dedicati al pensiero del sociologo francese.

L'urgenza di una radicale storicizzazione degli studi letterari e in generale umanistici, cioè di una contaminazione metodologica tra l'analisi critico-testuale e l'indagine storico-sociologica, invocata da Bourdieu nella forma di un "politeismo metodologico" (*Meditazioni pascaliane*, 1997, in italiano nel 1998), comincia dunque a produrre risultati interessanti anche in Italia.

Vi sono stati lodevoli studi che hanno tentato di rispondere a quest'urgenza a partire da prospettive metodologiche variegata, rispondenti ad altrettanto variegati intenti e più o meno esplicitamente ispirate alle teorie bourdieusiane. Si tratta, per esempio, di volumi quali *La letteratura circostante* (2018) di Gianluigi Simonetti, e *Nello splendore della confusione* di Stefano Giovannuzzi (2019). Ivi, l'interesse degli autori verteva sull'individuazione di concorrenti fattori autonomi ed eteronomi agenti nella strutturazione del campo letterario contemporaneo. *Lo spazio dei possibili* ha il merito di radicarsi esplicitamente nel rigoroso (per quanto "politeistico") perimetro di ricerca tracciato da Bourdieu, nel tentativo di verificarne la produttività indagandone alcune delle applicazioni scientifiche e degli esiti più rappresentativi nel contesto italiano.

A una breve ma efficace introduzione dei curatori ("Teoria dei campi e storia letteraria. Sviluppi della ricerca in Italia e all'estero", 7-30), che mira a fare un bilancio della teoria dei campi all'estero e in Italia e a giustificare le scelte critiche dei curatori, seguono tredici brevi e agili saggi, tutti, tranne due (Di Battista, Spampinato), già pubblicati, e significativamente quasi tutti in altre lingue (francese, inglese e tedesco), a segnare il ritardo dell'accademia italiana nella ricezione e acquisizione delle teorie di Bourdieu. L'ordine cronologico secondo il quale essi sono disposti dà luogo a una pur intermittente storia del Novecento e in misura minore del contemporaneo. La scelta dei saggi ambisce inoltre a produrre un effetto di uniformità

metodologica che affonda le sue radici nella comune necessità di “integrare in unico discorso quanto avviene ai due poli della produzione letteraria: le azioni di autori, critici ed editori interessati principalmente all’elaborazione dei valori letterari autonomi con quanto si scrive e si pubblica sotto l’influenza di principi eteronomi” (9), secondo la strada tracciata dal Bourdieu di *La distinzione. Critica sociale del gusto* (1979, tradotto in italiano nel 1983) e di *Le regole dell’arte* (1992; in italiano nel 2005). Questo approccio si apre a interessanti ibridazioni con la *network theory* e con l’intervista qualitativa nei saggi di Daniela La Penna (“Alberto Carocci fra *Solaria* e *La Riforma letteraria. Habitus e embeddedness* nel campo letterario fiorentino”, 127-56) e in quello di Luca Pareschi (“L’editor e l’esordiente. La selezione di narrativa nel campo editoriale contemporaneo”, 293-322).

I curatori intendono a questo proposito bilanciare l’omogeneità metodologica attraverso l’eterogeneità dei contenuti proposti, per il bisogno di evidenziare “l’uniformità di un percorso” (30) nella diversità degli oggetti trattati. Si passa così da saggi dedicati ad autori (e contesti) canonici, quali quello di Fabio Andreatta su Pirandello (“La conversione di Pirandello al cinema. Campo letterario e campo cinematografico”, 87-106) e quello di Gisèle Sapiro su Elsa Morante (“Le traduzioni di Elsa Morante in Francia. Il ruolo delle case editrici nella produzione della *World Literature*”, 247-64), a proposte di lavoro su autori minori e poco studiati quali il succitato su Carocci di La Penna, e su Bontempelli, per mano di Rosario Gennaro (“Il doppio legame di Massimo Bontempelli. Traduzione e legittimazione letteraria tra Parigi e il fascismo”, 107-26). Allo stesso modo, sono presenti contributi focalizzati soprattutto su esperienze nazionali, quali quelli di Baldini sull’avanguardia fiorentina (“‘Alleati e nemici’ dell’avanguardia fiorentina. Le riviste come strumenti di lotta”, 33-54) e quello di Flavia Di Battista sull’ermetismo fiorentino (“L’ermetismo fiorentino e i suoi ‘ismi’. Traiettorie di un’avanguardia”, 157-82), così come saggi incentrati primariamente sui rapporti di mediazione con l’estero, come quelli di Barbara Julieta Bellini sulle traduzioni di Ernaux e Carrère in Italia (“Il romanzo francese in Italia. Tradurre l’*extrême contemporain*”, 323-48) e di Riccardo Bonavita sui rapporti tra l’opera di Fortini e le sue traduzioni di opere poetiche straniere (“La traiettoria di Franco Fortini da Éluard a Brecht. Tradurre per creare una nuova posizione”, 203-14).

Ciascuno degli scritti raccolti disegna alcune delle molteplici configurazioni storico-letterarie di quello che Bourdieu chiama appunto “lo spazio dei possibili”: una sorta di bagaglio di potenzialità inattuata che gli attori del campo letterario impegnati nella manipolazione del capitale simbolico cercano di realizzare stravolgendo e riprogrammando le “regole dell’arte”. Lungi dall’essere stabili, tali regole—disposte in un assetto

di imperativi, precetti, divieti (*nòmoi*) interiorizzati nella forma di un “habitus”—sono “continuamente negoziate” (8) attraverso quel gioco di alleanze e conflitti che costituisce il vero motore della storia letteraria.

Questa continua negoziazione è quanto possiamo osservare ripercorrendo alcuni dei contributi contenuti nel volume, in particolare quelli interessati a rileggere la storia di certi “ismi”. Da questa prospettiva, Anna Boschetti inquadra il Futurismo all’interno della concorrenza transnazionale innescata dalla figura di Marinetti tra gli innovatori suoi “seguaci” operativi nei contesti francese, slavo, tedesco e angloamericano. Flavia Di Battista esamina l’ermetismo fiorentino secondo un’ottica che privilegia proprio quei “gesti” (inchieste, saggi, discorsi) interpretabili come esplicite “prese di posizione” all’interno del campo. Salvatore Spampinato interpreta invece la neoavanguardia poetica alla luce dell’influenza della categoria di straniamento (a cavallo tra matrice formalista e formulazione brechtiana) sul contesto poetico italiano degli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta. In tutti questi movimenti si ripetono quelle “strategie di lotta simbolica” messe in atto da nuovi gruppi di attanti nel campo.

Quanto emerge da una lettura progressiva dei saggi è che la dinamica di rinnovamento dei campi culturali procede in modo tale per cui alla costituzione di alleanze segue la loro rottura, che promuove un singolo individuo o un gruppo più ristretto, destinati a essere a loro volta “smobilitati” dai futuri nuovi entranti. Bourdieu ha definito questa dinamica nei termini di “logica della rivoluzione permanente” (*Homo academicus*, 1984, in italiano nel 2013), la quale si radicalizza in particolare a partire dall’Ottocento. Essa è innescata dalla capacità di alcuni autori (si tratta innanzitutto di personaggi anomali, il cui percorso è sovente caratterizzato da traiettorie di vita e di studio a cavallo tra mondi culturali e sociali diversi) di percepire possibilità nuove e di attuarle, andando quindi ad arricchire e a riconfigurare *lo spazio dei possibili* della letteratura.

Nella modernità e in maniera ben più cogente nella contemporaneità, a questa competizione fra consacrati e nuovi entranti, “ortodossi” ed “eterodossi”, prenderanno parte fattori non solo letterari, ma anche e sempre più invasivamente fattori storici, sociologici, economici, cioè “eteronomi”. I contributi dedicati alla più stretta contemporaneità hanno il merito di evidenziare con efficacia argomentativa gli influssi esercitati dal campo economico su quello artistico-letterario. Quello di Michele Sisto sul web (“Il web letterario italiano. Genesi e struttura di un sottocampo”, 265-92), rileva per esempio il crescente impatto in letteratura di siti, blog e riviste online a partire dal nuovo Millennio come risposta all’erosione degli spazi in cui era solita esercitarsi l’autonomia del letterario. Quello già menzionato di Pareschi sulle strategie di lancio degli autori esordienti si interroga—e interroga

direttamente gli editori, nella forma di un'inchiesta-sondaggio a più voci—sull'esistenza o meno di una dicotomia fra qualità e mercato vale a dire fra valore letterario e successo commerciale.

È proprio il contemporaneo che ci chiama e in certa misura sfida a incrementare le ricerche ispirate alla sociologia di Bourdieu. Se gli studi ispirati alle teorie del sociologo francese sembrano infatti coprire piuttosto bene la prima metà del Novecento (specialmente nei suoi autori e contesti più canonici) e affacciarsi con una vivace curiosità al primo ventennio del nuovo Millennio, non si può dire lo stesso—come notano gli stessi curatori (28)—per il periodo che va all'incirca dagli anni Settanta alla fine del secolo.

Insomma, malgrado tanto sia stato già fatto come ho già sottolineato, tanto resta ancora da fare nella direzione di una riqualificazione del metodo di indagine bourdieusiano sul e nel contesto accademico italiano. *Lo spazio dei possibili* si unisce all'animato coro di queste iniziative già citate con il merito non solo di operare nella direzione già indicata, ma anche di indicarne l'insufficienza e di suggerire l'opportunità, se non l'urgenza, di ricerche ulteriori.

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Silvia Ballarè, Ilaria Fiorentini, and Emanuele Miola, eds. *Le varietà dell'italiano contemporaneo*. Roma: Carocci, 2024. Pp. 228.

Gli autori forniscono una prospettiva aggiornata e completa sullo stato contemporaneo della lingua italiana, presentando una carrellata di contesti d'uso e la variazione della lingua in questi. Molto significative sono le descrizioni dei corpora riportate in appendice, strumenti utili allo studio della lingua in senso variazionista.

L'italiano standard e relative fasi di standardizzazione (*Le prose* di Bembo del 1525 che indicano la norma scritta da imitare; il *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* del 1612, che fissa il lessico scritto; la “questione della lingua” manzoniana e la seconda standardizzazione del 1861; il processo di ristandardizzazione della lingua del XX secolo e la diffusione capillare dello standard) sono oggetto del capitolo I “L'italiano standard” (Emanuele Miola, 17-32). Nel capitolo II “L'italiano neo-standard” (Nicola Grandi, 33-48), invece, si affronta la questione dell'immediatamente successivo italiano neo-standard, lingua viva caratterizzata dalla compresenza dell'italiano neo-standard letterario e dell'italiano regionale colto medio. A determinare il passaggio da italiano standard a neo-standard giornalistico, nuovo modello di riferimento vicino all'italiano parlato, furono l'aumento dell'alfabetizzazione, la diminuzione della competenza nelle lingue italo-romanze regionali e l'aumento dell'italofonia per via della scolarizzazione di massa.

Alberto Sobrero definisce “l’italiano regionale” (capitolo III, Massimo Cerruti, 49-66) come “l’insieme delle varietà dell’italiano diversificate in relazione all’origine e alla distribuzione geografica dei parlanti” (“Italienisch: Regionale Varianten / Italiano Regionale” in *Lexikon der Romanistischen Linguistik*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1988, 732). Viene sottolineato per l’appunto che un parlante nativo di italiano non è un parlante di uno standard astratto, ma di una ben precisa varietà sociogeografica la quale, a sua volta, è articolata in varietà sociolinguistiche colte e popolari che variano sia diatopicamente sia in base a fattori extra-linguistici. Tre tendenze degne di nota: l’infiltrazione di fenomeni del parlato colloquiale nel registro formale (“ristandardizzazione”); la “dedialettizzazione” cioè la progressiva scomparsa dei tratti sociogeograficamente più marcati; l’utilizzo a livello nazionale di varianti primariamente regionali dal forte valore identitario.

Il concetto di “italiano popolare” affrontato nel capitolo IV (Federica Guerini, 67-80) si riferisce alla varietà adoperata da parlanti anziani poco colti o incolti, i quali, riporta Tullio De Mauro, sebbene non posseggano un’adeguata competenza linguistica in italiano, lo adoperano in contesti circoscritti spinti da necessità comunicative (“Per lo studio dell’italiano popolare e unitario” in *Lettere da una tarantata*. Bari: De Donato, 1970, 47, citato da Guerini 67). Cortelazzo espande la definizione di De Mauro proponendolo come “l’italiano imperfetto acquisito da chi ha per madrelingua il dialetto” (*Lineamenti di italiano popolare*. Pisa: Pacini, 1972, 11; Guerini 67). L’italiano popolare è determinato dall’interazione di tre meccanismi: l’onnipresente interferenza con la lingua materna del parlante (dialetto italo-romanzo), l’ipercorrettismo tendente allo standard e i processi di semplificazione linguistica e di allontanamento dai tratti che più ricordano il dialetto italo-romanzo. Con italiano colloquiale (capitolo V, Silvia Ballarè, 81-98), invece, ci si riferisce a una varietà diafasica che appare in interazioni tra parlanti alla pari.

“L’italiano dei giovani” (capitolo VI, Ilaria Fiorentini, 99-114) è una varietà subentrata durante una recente fase di standardizzazione alla quale è seguito il formarsi di un livello substandard come lacuna lasciata dalla regressione dei dialetti. Più che da particolari elementi morfosintattici o fonologici, l’italiano dei giovani è costituito da una base di italiano informale sulla quale si innestano delle creazioni lessicali (neologismi, forestierismi perlopiù inglesi e spagnoli, vocaboli utilizzati dai mass media, strati dialettali) e adempie a funzioni identitarie, ludiche e di autoaffermazione sociale dei parlanti.

Più che una varietà, “l’italiano dei nuovi media” (capitolo VII, Giuliana Fiorentino, 115-30) è una modalità d’uso della lingua che comprende molteplici registri e sottocodici. Si tratta, dunque, di variazione diamesica e

diafasica. Nella comunicazione mediata dal digitale (*Computer Mediated Communication*) ci si distacca dagli usi della lingua scritta standard secondo variabili tecniche o sociolinguistiche dipendenti dall'occorrenza comunicativa. In generale si parla di *netspeak*: una varietà percepita socialmente per effetto del determinismo tecnologico.

“L'italiano giuridico” (capitolo VIII, Jacqueline Visconti, 131-44) si contraddistingue per il carattere performativo dei suoi enunciati. Questa varietà è importante in quanto presente nelle formule testimoniali del giudicato di Capua, primi documenti in volgare dal linguaggio nitido e rigoroso. Lo stretto legame tra democrazia e comprensione della lingua del diritto è innegabile, per cui all'aspetto storico di questa varietà si contrappone una crescente spinta verso la trasparenza. A questo proposito si veda il criterio della vincolatività. Il 90,4% delle pubblicazioni in ambito giuridico sono in italiano, ma il contatto con altre lingue è sempre stato essenziale per la formazione del lessico giuridico (si pensi a calchi strutturali e semantici, prestiti da inglese, francese, tedesco e latino).

“L'italiano di nuovi italiani” (capitolo IX, Yahis Martari, 145-60) è utilizzato da parlanti superdiversi che culturalmente e sociolinguisticamente si ritengono italiani, almeno in parte. La dimensione scolastica è quella più adatta a catturare questa varietà dato il carattere superdiverso delle giovani generazioni urbane. Infatti il numero di studenti con cittadinanza non italiana costituisce ormai l'unica componente in costante crescita della popolazione scolastica dal 1984 (dati MIUR, 2023). Le seconde generazioni comprendono anche tutti quei cittadini italiani rimpatriati permanentemente che sono nati all'estero da genitori italiani (si pensi agli italovenezuelani o agli italoargentini).

La lingua italiana all'estero (“L'italiano all'estero”, capitolo X, Margherita Di Salvo ed Eugenio Goria, 161-74) deriva da una storia di emigrazione di lungo periodo iniziata dopo l'unità, la cosiddetta “grande emigrazione”, e che continua finora. L'italiano all'estero è un insieme di pratiche linguistiche distanti nel tempo e nello spazio, di cui fanno parte sia la lingua dominante nel paese ospitante sia le molteplici risorse linguistiche a disposizione di migranti e discendenti. Di solito in queste comunità la prima generazione è costituita da bilingui sequenziali, la seconda sviluppa una competenza tendente alla semplificazione e la terza sopravvive con il solo lessico familiare cristallizzato immerso nella lingua dominante. In questi contesti si sono sviluppati filoni di ricerca sulle lingue ereditarie (si veda ad esempio Naomi Nagy. “Lexical Change and Language Contact: Faetar in Italy and in Canada”, *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 15, 2011, 366-82) le quali sembrano seguire traiettorie simili: attrito linguistico, semplificazione di grammatica e lessico.

Sotto la designazione di “italiano contemporaneo” (capitolo XI, Bruno Moretti, 175-90) (cioè italiano popolare, parlato colloquiale e neo-standard) Bruno Moretti raccoglie quei fenomeni sociolinguistici che hanno marcato la lingua negli ultimi decenni, come l’adozione dell’italiano come lingua materna e lingua parlata informale dopo il dominio della dialettologia. Una peculiarità della situazione italiana è la notevole produzione di pubblicazioni in risposta ai dubbi linguistici dei parlanti. Sebbene i pareri degli specialisti possano incidere sulla fissazione della norma o sui cambiamenti linguistici in progresso, in definitiva stabilizzazione e trasmissione dipendono dagli effettivi comportamenti linguistici dei parlanti.

Molto significative sono le descrizioni dei corpora riportate in appendice, strumenti utili allo studio della lingua in senso variazionista. Queste risultano particolarmente utili in quanto offrono al lettore una panoramica di risorse rilevanti, sia per finalità di ricerca nel settore sia per un primo approccio conoscitivo da parte di chi non abbia ancora familiarità con l’ambito disciplinare.

Grazie all’approccio adottato da ciascun autore, che si concentra su tematiche linguistiche di particolare rilevanza per l’italiano contemporaneo, il volume si configura come una risorsa didattica ideale per corsi universitari di sociolinguistica dell’italiano attuale. Il testo risulta altresì di interesse per studiosi e specialisti del settore linguistico, offrendo un aggiornamento rigoroso sui principali trend sociolinguistici che coinvolgono la lingua italiana nella sua evoluzione recente.

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Adele Bardazzi. *Eugenio Montale. A Poetics of Mourning*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2023. Pp. 246.

In her first monograph, *Eugenio Montale. A Poetics of Mourning*, Adele Bardazzi undertakes a study of Montale’s entire work that seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of Montale’s eschatology, focusing on the “relationship between the poetic subject and his ‘care ombre’” (1), his absent beloved.

Bardazzi’s goal is twofold: to offer a systematic treatment of the dialogue with an absent interlocutor that characterizes so much of Montale’s corpus while rethinking the very notion of lyric poetry through the lenses of mourning studies. On the one hand, Bardazzi explores what she considers an inherent aspect of Montale’s poetics: the “continuity between life and death, loss and recovery, immanence and transcendence, absence and presence,” which makes Montale’s poetry inherently dialogical and “essentially liminal” in a perennial balance “between the tangible, visible world and what lies beyond, the afterlife” (1).

On the other hand, the exploration of the role that mourning plays in Montale's poetry "offers new ways of thinking about the lyric as a non-linear space that allows for non-linear ways of experiencing and thinking about mourning" (16). In other words, Bardazzi proposes understanding lyric poetry as a form characterized by an inherently unattainable dialogue between a speaking subject and an addressee (the reader or, in Montale's case, his absent interlocutors) and as "the space in which it is possible to dwell in loss, rather than overcoming it, and thereby catch a glimpse of the beyond, the realm of the dead" (18). By analyzing Montale's corpus through this dialogic lens, Bardazzi aims at showing the continuity within Montale's poetics, challenging, at least in part, a consolidated scholarly tradition that sees in *Satura* a turning point in Montale's trajectory and, more broadly, the (beginning of the) end of the lyric. On the contrary, Bardazzi suggests, focusing on Montale's "poetics of mourning" shows the coherence within his work even as his poetics "alters its register and distances itself from certain tendencies" (22) characteristic of traditional lyric poetry.

The exploration of the liminality and impossible dialogism of Montale's poetry begins with the analysis of the liminality of the poetic subjectivity itself in the first chapter ("The Self as 'Ombra,'" 33-47). Following Contini, Bardazzi shows how Montale's "interest in what lies beyond the visible world" (36) is motivated by the "overwhelming and paralysing state of crisis" (38) that characterizes the poetic subject and, more broadly, the living world altogether. In a world characterized by an insurmountable disharmony between self and the world, Bardazzi notes how the poetic subject desires the effacement and dissolution of his own subjectivity.

The dialogue with the beloved shade, as a consequence, becomes a privileged way to investigate an alternative dimension of life and meaning, invisible to the living yet attainable through the dialogue with the afterlife. As Bardazzi puts it, "it is in the radical and incorporeal form of the 'ombra' [shade] that Montale searches for a point of contact with the intangible 'nulla' [nothingness], in which a more veracious state of affairs can be found," even at the cost of "dissolving into an 'ombra'" (47) himself. The dialogism of Montale's poetry, therefore, stems from the liminality of the poetic subjectivity itself, that "enables the lyric 'I' to draw closer to the dimension" of the afterlife, often inhabited by his preferred interlocutors (49).

Among these interlocutors, a preferential role is played by the many female figures that inhabit Montale's *oeuvre* (whose absence, it is important to note, is not always due to their death). In the second chapter ("Addressing Shades: Esterina, Arletta, and Mosca," 49-133), Bardazzi shows how "it is the absent female interlocutor who [...] enables the poetic subject to come into contact with the beyond" (48). While this aspect of Montale's poetry has been

extensively studied, Bardazzi attempts to overcome the scholarly tendency to compartmentalize the female interlocutors into different categories to provide “a full understanding of the female figure” in Montale’s poetry (51). More specifically, Bardazzi analyzes the presence of female interlocutors (Esterina, Arletta, and Mosca) through the lenses of two archetypes inherited by the feminist philosophy of Adriana Cavarero: the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice and the myth of Persephone. Through extensive close reading, Bardazzi suggests that the female interlocutors: 1) like Persephone, represent a mediation between life and death, and become custodians of a chthonic wisdom which the poetic subject craves to reach and experience; 2) at the same time, like Eurydice, they offer the poetic subject/Orpheus the opportunity to make poetry, becoming “the ‘pretext’ for the development and articulation of the poet’s ‘text.’” As Bardazzi argues, “it is through the dialogue *in absentia* that a process of elaboration of the poetic subject’s own self becomes possible” (51).

After establishing the centrality of the dialogue with an absent interlocutor, Bardazzi zooms in, focusing specifically on the dialogue with the dead maiden Arletta (in chapter 3, “The Dialogue with the Dead: Elegy and ‘Demi- Deuil,’” 135-89) and with the dead parents (in chapter 4, “Shades and the Afterlife: Montale’s Poetic Eschatology,” 191-220), to analyze “how the poetic subject relates to grief and bereavement” (135). For the dialogue to remain a thematic constant throughout Montale’s work, the poetic subject needs to resist both the traditional form of mourning (as conceptualized by Freud) as well as its opposite: melancholia. In Montale, the poetic subject never reaches the end of the mourning process, unable to fully detach itself from the memory of the deceased and to accept the end of the relationship with the beloved.

On the contrary, Montale’s poetics “opens onto a never-ending and intermittent mourning, in which poetry reaffirms its relevance” as a form of impossible communication and offering a third way to approach the experience of loss (145). Adopting Derrida’s notion of “demi-deuil,” Bardazzi suggests that Montale’s poetry is characterized by an “oscillation between grief and bereavement, on the one hand, and forgetfulness and replacement of the lost object, on the other” (147), made possible by the (partial) universalization of the individual experience of loss through the language and mythology of lyric poetry, enabling the subject to mediate the grief and remember his beloved without succumbing to melancholic necessity of replacing them.

If the poetic subject’s experience of loss can be understood in these terms, however, the same cannot be said for the representation of the experience of the beloved shades. According to Bardazzi, “the dead are presented as fundamentally melancholic subjects,” unable to sustain the continuous presence of the memory of the past. Consequently, in the case of the shades,

“forgetfulness must overcome remembrance, allowing the dead subject to ‘move on’ (also on a literal level), thereby forever severing ties with the earthly world” (194). Yet, eventually Bardazzi shows us how even the dead seem not to fully be able to forget the living, highlighting one more time the inherent liminality of Montale’s poetry.

By choosing to approach a well-studied subject (Montale’s dialogue with the shades) through new lenses and theoretical approaches, Bardazzi’s book represents an interesting contribution to the scholarship on the most important Italian poet of the twentieth century. The most convincing aspect of the monograph is the strong unifying framework adopted by Bardazzi, which allows the scholar to juxtapose extremely detailed and extensive close readings of case studies with an overarching argument that appears both convincing and compelling.

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Vitaliano Brancati, Franco, and Vito Laterza. *Carteggio 1952-1954*. Ed. Giorgio Nisini. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2024. Pp. xxii + 66.

Il carteggio tra Vitaliano Brancati e Franco e Vito Laterza, curato in quest’edizione da Giorgio Nisini, si è svolto in gran parte nella primavera del 1952. Lo scrittore siciliano si rivolse agli editori pugliesi per pubblicare il pamphlet *Ritorno alla censura*, insieme alla sua commedia *La governante*. *Ritorno alla censura* era nato a causa della mancata approvazione de *La governante* da parte del Ministero della Cultura per trattare, partendo dalla propria esperienza, il tema della censura in Italia. Il pamphlet fu pubblicato insieme alla commedia nel 1952 proprio da Laterza, in seguito al carteggio qui recensito. L’edizione è composta da due sezioni: la prima è costituita da un’introduzione che spiega e contestualizza le lettere riportate nella seconda.

L’introduzione (v-xx) è divisa in tre capitoli. Il primo ci informa sul contesto culturale dei tre interlocutori citando articoli del tempo sul tema della censura nel dopoguerra (vi), che Brancati considerava in continuità con quella fascista (vi-vii). Il secondo racconta la genesi de *La governante* e la sua vicenda editoriale, dalla delusione per la mancata concessione del nulla osta per rappresentarla (xiii) al rifiuto di pubblicarla con Bompiani ed Einaudi, colpevoli di aver preteso dei tagli, inaccettabili per Brancati, a *Ritorno alla censura* (xiv-xv). Il terzo offre dettagli sullo sviluppo dei rapporti tra Brancati e i Laterza, uniti dal medesimo intento di difesa della libertà di espressione.

Nella seconda sezione sono riportate le quarantuno lettere che compongono il carteggio, da cui comprendiamo come Brancati abbia scelto l’editore Laterza per il coraggio di non piegarsi alle istituzioni: “Lei è il solo

editore liberale, indipendente dal Governo democristiano e dal sottogoverno comunista” (4). Questo scambio epistolare ricostruisce un percorso editoriale che in appena due mesi portò alla pubblicazione di *Ritorno alla censura* e de *La governante*, manifestando il comune obiettivo di denunciare l'evidente ingiustizia della censura subita dall'autore. Vi vengono rivelati dettagli interessanti come i precedenti titoli pensati per il pamphlet (12) e le strategie adottate per la sua divulgazione, in particolare la selezione dei giornalisti adatti a recensirlo (16, 20-21). La corrispondenza mostra inoltre come i rapporti tra Brancati e Laterza non si esauriscano con la pubblicazione dei due testi, ma proseguano attraverso proposte di progetti mai realizzati, come quello di un volume su Charlie Chaplin per la collana “Biblioteca dello Spettacolo” (38-41; per l'interesse di Brancati per Charlot si veda Domenica Perrone, *I sensi e le idee. Brancati, Vittorini, Joppolo*. Palermo: Sellerio, 1985, 32). Le ultime lettere dell'edizione, successive alla morte di Brancati, consistono nella richiesta della moglie Anna Proclemer ai Laterza, per conto di Valentino Bompiani dei diritti necessari ad inserire *La governante* nell'*Opera Omnia* dello scrittore e nella risposta affermativa degli editori pugliesi.

Il carteggio risulta di grande interesse per diverse ragioni. In primo luogo, si inserisce in una serie di edizioni di corrispondenze degli editori Laterza con intellettuali di spicco nel panorama letterario italiano del Novecento (fra gli altri Corrado Alvaro, Vito Laterza, *Carteggio 1952-1956*, a c. di Giorgio Nisini. Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2019), che permettono di comprendere il loro ruolo di prim'ordine non soltanto per la pubblicazione di opere, per dirla con Brancati, “alte e severe” (3), ma anche di lavori connotati dall'impegno civile, che mostrano l'esistenza di problematiche concrete dal punto di vista politico e sociale. La divulgazione di questo scambio epistolare consente infatti di inserire Brancati in una tradizione di scrittori militanti che comprenderà Scotellaro, Sciascia e Ortese (xvii), tutti pubblicati nella collana “Libri del tempo” (dove i Laterza decisero di collocare *Ritorno alla censura*) e accomunati dalla consapevolezza che la caduta del Fascismo non avesse decretato la fine di questioni critiche come la corruzione amministrativa, il divario economico tra Nord e Sud o la censura.

Il carteggio con Laterza si rivela inoltre prezioso in quanto conferma che il Brancati maturo, spesso identificato semplicemente come esponente dell'antifascismo, sia in realtà molto di più. Dopo gli errori di gioventù che ne avevano fatto un seguace di Mussolini, egli infatti si dimostra immune da eccessivi coinvolgimenti ideologici e guarda con sospetto qualsiasi schieramento politico, anche quelli, come il comunismo, apparentemente opposti al regime da poco concluso (32). La corrispondenza con i Laterza delinea il profilo di un Brancati che professa la religione della libertà non solo con le dichiarazioni (“Amo la libertà per tutti, e specialmente per i giudici”,

37) ma anche con atti decisi che incrementano la consapevolezza del lettore riguardo al rigido e soffocante controllo a cui era sottoposto il mondo della cultura nei primi anni Cinquanta. Emblematica in tal senso la decisione di corredare l'articolo di presentazione di *Ritorno alla censura* nella rivista *Cultura Moderna* con l'immagine del frontespizio della *Mandragola* di Machiavelli contrassegnata (come *La governante*) dal veto del Ministero della Cultura (27). Il carteggio, tuttavia, mostra anche l'esistenza di una rete di intellettuali che si opponevano alla censura lavorando a favore della libertà d'espressione. Non si tratta soltanto dei tre interlocutori: Brancati fa riferimento alla propria partecipazione ad una conferenza dell'Associazione per la Libertà della Cultura, una lega in lotta per modificare le leggi sulla censura, a capo della cui sezione italiana c'era Ignazio Silone, con il quale l'autore dice di essere in contatto (33-4). Si può notare infine come le lettere qui pubblicate mostrino un impegno nella battaglia contro la censura che prosegue anche dopo la pubblicazione del pamphlet e de *La governante*, persino in seguito alla morte di Brancati stesso. Le lettere testimoniano infatti come Anna Proclemer abbia continuato a prodigarsi per rappresentare la commedia, ricevendo un secondo veto del Ministero della Cultura (49).

In conclusione, si ritiene che *Carteggio 1952-1954* costituisca un'importante novità sia per gli studi brancatiani, in quanto conferma l'impegno costante dell'autore nella lotta per la libertà e il suo coinvolgimento in circoli culturali mossi dagli stessi obiettivi, sia in generale per quelli di letteratura italiana contemporanea e storia dell'editoria, poiché mostra la rilevanza di Laterza nel favorire la rinnovata attenzione per una serie di delicate questioni politiche e sociali venute a galla in seguito alla caduta del regime fascista.

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Clotilde Bertoni, ed. *Autrici oltre i canoni. Arendt, Beauvoir, Ginzburg, Sontag, Ernaux*. Roma: Carrocci, 2024. Pp. 126.

In un clima di “crisi dell’impegno intellettuale” (9), per la quale Bertoni intende la diffusione di una “*Cancel Culture* miope e distopica” (9; corsivo nel testo), urge recuperare quegli agenti culturali che hanno influenzato il pensiero critico del Novecento. Su questa “Premessa” (9-16) Bertoni propone un ripensamento critico dell’impegno intellettuale contemporaneo reinserendovi la prassi intellettuale di cinque autrici—Hannah Arendt, Simone de Beauvoir, Natalia Ginzburg, Susan Sontag e Annie Ernaux—per le quali il metodo ha impostato l’opera di un’intera vita. Il volume ne propone un’analisi comparata che non parte dal presupposto di tracciare una linea esegetica di controcanone, bensì si propone di collocare il loro pensiero entro un rapporto dialogico

che ne sussuma le tensioni letterarie nell'ottica in un comune ed eterogeneo impegno intellettuale. La trattazione di autrici così differenti intende comporre un profilo sfaccettato dell'*engagement* politico-culturale europeo che ha poi accolto, nel suo lascito organico, forme dell'impegno intellettuale contemporaneo come quella del femminismo.

Il primo saggio, "Tra *spazio pubblico* e *sfera privata*: Hannah Arendt e la questione della responsabilità politica" (17-30), di Chiara Agnello, si focalizza sull'idiosincrasia esistente tra la prassi sociale e l'opera filosofica di Arendt. Partendo dai carteggi, Agnello ripercorre l'itinerario delle cellule germinali che hanno mosso l'impegno sociale degli anni Quaranta e, contemporaneamente, quello privato di rottura con ogni forma di istituzionalizzazione del soggetto. Da qui, il riconoscersi come apolide e il rifiuto della filosofia arendtiana di aderire a una concezione compassionevole dell'azione sociale. Agnello sottolinea questa contraddizione, che si risolve in una "*prassi vivente*" (21; corsivo nel testo) che impone una dialettica tra linguaggio e azione, le due misure con cui, secondo Arendt, ci si inserisce nel mondo e sulle quali è necessario fondare il pensiero critico. Agnello districa, nella sua analisi del pensiero arendtiano, i fili che intrecciano teoria e prassi e illustra molto chiaramente i motivi di un impegno sociale della filosofa che, pur muovendosi nello spazio pubblico, si rifà a ragioni che rimangono private.

Segue l'intervento di Clotilde Bertoni, "Inquietudini dell'*engagement*: Simone de Beauvoir scrittrice" (31-56). Di fronte alla imprescindibile presenza di Beauvoir nel pensiero critico del Novecento, necessario è ricordarne il volto letterario, ormai quasi dimenticato nell'ombra gettata dal pilastro del *Secondo sesso*, e sul quale Beauvoir ha fondato l'assetto pregnante del suo *engagement*. Dell'impegno politico e culturale beauvoiriano Bertoni recupera il "controcanto" (34), ovvero quel principio di problematizzazione sul quale la stessa Beauvoir fonda i suoi romanzi e racconti. La disamina si snoda in una concisa rassegna letteraria che va dai racconti di *Lo spirituale un tempo* sino a quelli di *Una donna spezzata*, con particolare attenzione ai *Mandarini*. Il contributo di Bertoni suggerisce l'urgenza di recuperare il metodo con cui l'autrice sistematicamente lavorò e visse. Nonostante la misura con cui Beauvoir si è imposta nella costruzione di un senso comune del femminile, Bertoni ritorna agli scandali personali e letterari che la hanno coinvolta, immeritabilmente o meno, nel tentativo di ricondurre l'attenzione all'impegno letterario redarguendo la violazione dell'autorità della Beauvoir scrittrice.

Focalizzato su un "profilo intellettuale della scrittrice" (57) è il capitolo successivo, di Maria Rizzarelli, "Splendida, meravigliosa, libera inutilità": la scrittura e le antinomie dell'impegno secondo Natalia Ginzburg" (57-75). In questo caso si parla di una scrittrice il cui *engagement* trova il proprio spazio d'azione nella scrittura pubblicistica, terreno usato in diverse occasioni

per inserirsi nel discorso culturale extra letterario. Lo scopo dell'analisi è quello di approfondire le contraddizioni interne alla prassi di Ginzburg per sottolineare la coesistenza di adesione all'impegno politico e rifiuto di quello intellettuale. Partendo dalle dichiarazioni della stessa Ginzburg, Rizzarelli ne segue la polemica sulla figura e il ruolo degli intellettuali. Purtuttavia, e su questo Rizzarelli si sofferma con una contestualizzazione storica sul dibattito culturale italiano degli anni Settanta, l'esperienza e il pensiero di Ginzburg finiscono per sovrapporsi con la figura gramsciana di intellettuale nell'impegno morale della parola e nel suo essere sintomo della condizione sociale. Per cui, riconoscendo il linguaggio astratto che caratterizza gli scritti di Ginzburg, ne viene messa in luce la concretezza di un discorso critico aderente alla sua prassi culturale di "salvaguardia linguistica" (70).

Segue il saggio di Giulio Iacoli, che nel quarto capitolo, "Forme di un pensiero radicale. Sulla critica rapsodica di Susan Sontag" (77-94) dedicato all'opera saggistica della scrittrice, si propone di "andare oltre l'icona-Sontag" (78) per riscoprirne l'acume critico racchiuso e concentrato in quella forma perentoria di scrittura che la caratterizza. Soffermandosi doverosamente sullo stile di Sontag, al fine di un riconoscimento della profondità culturale dei suoi scritti, Iacoli ne riconduce le suggestioni alle lezioni di Barthes e Benjamin e si muove tra i testi sontaghiani per mostrarne la dialettica formale interna. Si parte dall'impostazione frammentaria di *Note sul "Camp"* sino alla sua dissoluzione degli scritti raccolti in *Sotto il segno di Saturno*, e si pongono in relazione le annotazioni lapidarie del pensiero radicale con l'accoglienza, da parte dell'autrice, di uno "stile più aperto e conversevole" (79). Infine, Iacoli non manca di ricondurre la forma al suo principio tetico attraverso le interviste e le pagine del diario.

Chiude il volume il saggio di Roberta Coglitore, "Annie Ernaux e l'impegno come forma di sperimentazione" (95-123), che verte sulla scrittura ernausiana come forma di denuncia pubblica delle ingiustizie sociali e come tentativo di sperimentazione linguistico-letteraria. Si parla, infatti, di *engagement d'écriture* proprio perché è in quest'ultima che si sedimenta la responsabilità politica di chi scrive. Il discorso di Coglitore si dipana sulla relazione tra politica e letteratura, e le sue forme di manifestazione negli scritti e nella vita di un'autrice ben consapevole del carico sociale insito nelle parole. Viene, dunque, sottolineato lo stretto rapporto tra sociologia, storia e letteratura, della quale si mette in luce l'istanza autobiografica quale sintesi tra il particolare—e le sue specificità come la classe e il sesso—e l'universale, riconoscendo l'influenza delle letture di Beauvoir e Bourdieu. A titolo esemplare viene posta la riedizione degli scritti ernausiani raccolti nel volume *Écrire la vie*, di cui si analizzano la struttura, il contenuto e gli esiti della responsabilità politica di una scrittura necessariamente *engagée*.

I cinque interventi, pur nella loro impostazione autonoma, trovano un filo dialogico comune nella trattazione della forma dei testi. È nella strutturazione dei testi e della lingua che le cinque autrici, seppure in modi e misure diverse, concentrano e manifestano l'aspetto più impegnato della loro scrittura. I testi vengono posti al centro di questo dialogo, analizzati, contestualizzati e definiti nel loro corpus entro le contraddizioni o le sinergie dialettiche che caratterizzano l'opera intellettuale di Arendt, Beauvoir, Ginzburg, Sontag ed Ernaux. Il loro accorpamento in volume le mette inevitabilmente in relazione, avviando una lettura comparata progressiva e composita utile al recupero delle coordinate metodologiche di una prassi critica. In ultima istanza, il volume mira a riaprire un discorso sulle contraddizioni interne di quest'ultima per rimetterne al centro quelle stesse rotture che le autrici hanno usato quale fonte motrice della propria prassi. Complessivamente il volume sviluppa pienamente le proprie premesse, e le soddisfa in un ritratto dell'*engagement*, profondamente avvertito come imperativo deontologico delle autrici prese in esame, mai riducibile ad una sola forma, eppure sempre saldo nelle strutture portanti della sua unitaria impostazione ermeneutica.

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Clodagh Brook, Florian Mussnug, and Giuliana Pieri. *Intermedia in Italy. From Futurism to Digital Convergence*. Oxford: Legenda. Pp. 234.

This book explores intermediality in Italy by analyzing artistic trends and historical periods that are often studied separately. As the authors note in the introduction, increasingly close relationships between artistic practices have driven creativity since the early 20th century. In the period under analysis (1920s-2020s), they find artists who “rethink the ways arts and media [...] interconnect” (2) and challenge previously accepted boundaries dividing arts and media. The intermedial shift transformed both the production and consumption of culture. Following narratologist Werner Wolf, the authors locate this intermedial turn within the Modernist era.

Intermediality, first theorized by artist Dick Higgins in the 1960s, is a free space between media where new art is created—transcending rigid categories. Until recently, Italian Studies lacked an “overarching frame” (2) of intermedia due to the dominance of the “‘individual scholar’ model” (2) and the absence of a Postmodern, “anti-essentialist academic foundation” (2-3). The authors aim to address this gap by focusing on “the periphery of arts and media” (2-3) and the in-between spaces where new forms emerge.

This approach, the authors argue, is vital for Italian Studies at a time when global challenges require cultural critics to “redefine what we do” (6). Intermedia rejects “an absolutist conception” (6) of truth, favoring a perspectival

view that resists relativism by drawing on elements from multiple disciplines. This decentralized approach allows for the exploration of fields that are “familiar enough [...] but not settled into pre-existing paradigms” (6-7). In the 21st century, conversations around technology and new media have evolved into discussions of convergence—not just as multimedia (media coexisting) or transmedia (media shifting), but as media “inclining together” (8).

While Italian Studies has engaged with art and media since the 1960s, only in the past decade has the focus shifted from the literary tradition to “the in-between” (19) spaces of intermediality. This shift demands a move away from narrow, monodisciplinary research towards a more comprehensive picture of intermedial encounters: intermedial art exists between forms, challenging both the centrality of the object of study and traditional critical approaches towards it. To illustrate this evolution, the authors focus on seven key years in intermedia.

In the first chapter, “1915: Revolution” (33-62), the focus is on Futurism and its “sinfonia poliespressiva” (polyexpressive symphony), as a merging of arts and media to transcend individual expressive limits and create an “intermedia Futurist universe” (47). The movement sought to redesign all forms of art and everyday customs to the point that its totalitarian impulse toward a new, unified art aligned Futurism with the Fascist regime.

“1932: Gesamtkunstwerk” (63-86) examines the Modernist ideal of the “total work of art,” which critiques the status quo while seeking to reintegrate art and society. Architecture became a key intermedial space where Fascism merged with earlier theories to embed its policies into Italian cultural life. For instance, the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution in Rome (1932) showcased a “multi-layered juxtaposition” (77) of media. Fascism here embraced a sensory overload of intermedia as a culturally binding force, an impulse that remained central in postwar artistic experiments.

“1963: Experiment” (87-114) focuses on the rise of *Novissimi*, a poetry movement resisting the commodification of language. Their aim was to balance mass consumerism with literary high culture through “unprecedented attention to different artistic media” (91), inspiring new analogies between literature, painting, and music.

The Neoavanguardia (analyzed in “1972: Collapse,” 115-42) aimed to liberate art from outdated norms, and instead advocate for radical, political creativity through “poor” materials, spontaneous performance, and public engagement. Art was to reflect lived experience, often created outside mainstream institutions (universities, media, the Church, museums) through intermedia. Like the Futurists, they relied on technology (electronic music, computer poetry) to forge new paths.

Then (“1994: Hybridity”, 143-70), the 1990s brought the rise of electronic media and “intermedial *normality*” (144). Intermedial experimentation

from the '60s had become mainstream: in a globalized, transnational Italy, hybridization was the norm. “Media natives” (152) were shaped by the aesthetic plurality of consumer capitalism, especially through television, which modeled how disparate elements could coexist. With neoliberalism empowering consumer choice, intermediality became commercial and lost much of its earlier political charge.

The translation of Henry Jenkins’s *Convergence Culture* in 2007 (171-94) marked Italy’s delayed but enthusiastic embrace of digital platforms as spaces for artistic collision. During the Berlusconi era (2001-06), the Internet became a haven for left-wing and radical artists—“a utopian embrace of digital culture” (172). Borrowing from American models, Italian artists used convergence as a tool for countercultural expression in opposition to mainstream media. A key example is the Wu Ming collective, which combined the materiality of books with the immateriality of digital platforms to empower its readers. More broadly, convergence enabled “a complex world in which multiple arts can cohabit” (188).

The final chapter (“2020: Contagion,” 195-222) asks whether the COVID-19 pandemic sparked new creative possibilities. While television transformed disaster into a “mediated event,” the virus itself “cannot be pictured” (204-05) and resists the society of the spectacle. The pandemic accelerated hybrid distribution in cinema and TV, dissolving traditional boundaries and creating “a new galaxy of intermedial dialogues” (214). We now live in “a post-cinematic landscape where film can no longer be disconnected from other art forms and media” (214).

The book ends without a traditional conclusion—intentionally so. The authors argue that it’s no longer possible to confine artistic discourse within the “recognizable disciplinary and technical boundaries” (216) of early 21st-century art. Today’s intermediality is “networked and interlinked, fluid, and perhaps even oceanic” (216), both in media and geography. In fact, they provocatively suggest that researching this new form of intermedia might be more appropriate through music, photography, virtual reality, or film as opposed to the written word.

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Alessandro Cabiati. *Baudelaire and the Making of Italian Modernity: From the Scapigliatura to the Futurist Movement, 1857-1912*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022. Pp. 285.

Baudelaire and the Making of Italian Modernity: From the Scapigliatura to the Futurist Movement, 1857-1912, by Alessandro Cabiati, is an important new study, both for scholars of European poetry and for scholars of literary

modernity. Its most essential contribution, however, is to introduce English readers to the poetry of the Scapigliatura itself, which Cabiati convincingly argues throughout his book brought literary modernity into Italian literature, and was a forerunner of the twentieth-century avant-garde, particularly Italian Futurism. The author demonstrates that the innovations of the Scapigliatura can be traced back to the works of Charles Baudelaire, particularly the 1857 publication of *Les Fleur du Mal*.

In his first chapter, Cabiati painstakingly traces the genealogy of the Scapigliatura writers, and mounts impressive evidence for his claims about Baudelaire's formative influence upon them (1-34). Even scholars not especially interested in Italian poetry will find Cabiati's discussion of literary modernity enlightening, and his development of a reading of the poets of the Scapigliatura serves to refine Italian literary history in striking ways. In particular, his discussion of Italian literary history's tendency to collapse the poets of the Scapigliatura into either Romanticism or Decadentism, and therefore misread them, allows him to situate the Scapigliatura in its rightful place: not as mere Romantic epigones, but as avant-garde forerunners (15).

Having developed in his first chapter a strong definition of modernity, and having demonstrated the Scapigliatura's rightful place in its development in Italian literary history, Cabiati moves into a close engagement with the work of Arrigo Boito and Emilio Praga in his second chapter (35-90). This chapter demonstrates how strong of a close reader Cabiati is, and how much his argument benefits from the detailed analysis of poetic texts. Additionally, this chapter presents Boito, as avant-garde poet, in ways that will greatly deepen the understanding of readers who might think of him primarily as a librettist and composer. Cabiati powerfully evinces the central role Baudelaire had in Boito's and Praga's development of modern themes. As he points out, as just one example, "Baudelaire's *Fleurs* provided Boito with an unprecedented source of poetic material for his aesthetic portrayal of various types of excess related to overconsumption, intoxication, debauchery, ennui, rebelliousness towards religion, eroticism, and moral and physical corruption" (95).

Cabiati's third chapter, "Allegory and Modernity in the Scapigliatura," continues the book's close engagement with the work of Arrigo Boito, offering a powerful reading of Boito's *Re Orso*, and introduces another key writer of the Scapigliatura, Giovanni Camerana (91-138). Cabiati's reading of *Re Orso* is a highlight of the book as he convincingly places it in an antiromantic, modern vein that blurs the "boundaries between psychological and supernatural domains, hallucination and apparitions; in other words, between a modern medical and a religious-paranormal understanding of ghosts, demons, and spirits of the dead" (111). This reading enables Cabiati to connect Boito not only to Baudelaire, but also to a proto-modern writer like Edgar Allan Poe,

and to the medicalized modernity of T.S. Eliot. As the discussion moves to Camerana, we are provided with a powerful reading of “Ad Arrigo Boito,” where Camerana’s phrase *fior di duolo* inevitably calls to mind Baudelaire’s *flowers of evil* (119).

Cabiati continues in chapters four (139-78) and five (179-220) his careful analysis of the three Scapigliatura poets: Boito, Praga, and Camerana. Throughout these close readings Cabiati unpacks the ways these poets used techniques such as allegory, analogy, and synesthesia to further the modern themes of their key works. His analysis culminates in chapters six (221-70) and seven (271-78), where he demonstrates how those techniques played a foundational role in the development of Futurism. Cabiati, especially in chapter six, moves beyond surface-level comparisons between the Scapigliatura and Futurism, which he points out are not uncommon in scholarship, and offers a systematic analysis of the movements’ correspondences. As Cabiati remarks, the Scapigliatura’s influence on the poems in the first Futurist anthology, *I poeti futuristi*, has been particularly overlooked. His analysis of F.T. Marinetti’s introduction to this anthology, along with Marinetti’s “Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista,” details how Futurism owes much to the Scapigliatura for its emphasis on the “ugliness, violence, and irreverence of modern life” (223).

This excellent book is one that should bring into much clearer focus a group of writers too-long neglected, especially in English-language scholarship. While Baudelaire and Marinetti are well-known figures in discussions of European literary modernity, this study powerfully shows his readers why Arrigo Boito, Emilio Praga, and Giovanni Camerana belong in those same discussions. Cabiati does so while emphasizing their poetic works in ways that readers will not be able to ignore. Indeed, part of his accomplishment in this book is providing a wealth of translations of poems by Boito, Praga, and Camerana that are otherwise difficult for English-only readers to access. These poets deserve as wide an audience as possible.

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Francesca Cadel. *Dai Quaranta ai Settanta. Un percorso di “Scorciatoie”: da Umberto Saba al Moro di Pietro di Donato.* Milano: Mimesis, 2024. Pp. 394.

This book invites us to traverse the Italian post-war era through the eyes of four remarkable literary figures: Umberto Saba, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Elsa Morante, and Pietro Di Donato. Spanning the tumultuous years from the 1940s to the 1970s, this monograph intricately intertwines the cultural and political contexts that shaped a nation grappling with its identity during the Cold War. Cadel sets the stage against a backdrop marked by the scars of World War II

and the dynamic tensions of the Cold War. Each of the selected authors offers a unique perspective, weaving a rich tapestry that reflects the complexities of Italian society as it navigates themes of identity, politics, and morality. By homing in on these four figures, the text not only highlights their individual contributions, but also attempts to shed light on the interconnectedness of their works within a broader socio-political framework.

Umberto Saba's *Scorciatoie e raccontini* (1946) is at the center of the first chapter, "Umberto Saba" (19-78), and serves as the cornerstone of this exploration. Cadel captures how Saba's prose resonates with the subtleties of everyday life in the post-war sociopolitical and literary landscape. His emphasis on personal and collective memory reverberates throughout, interpreting the horrors of war, the Holocaust, the Resistance, and the ensuing political polarization through a psychoanalytical lens. While this approach is captivating, it does seem to overlook other crucial historical factors rooted in politics, economics, and ideology.

The second chapter, "Pier Paolo Pasolini" (79-178), is the best chapter of the book. Cadel showcases her knowledge of the life and works of the Italian intellectual, who emerges as a pivotal figure in the author's narrative. Particularly, the examination of *Petrolio* (1972-75), published posthumously in 1992, reveals Pasolini's profound awareness of the sociopolitical tensions of his time. Cadel delves into the theme she calls "misto" (11), a concept that captures the hybrid identities and conflicting ideologies that defined post-war Italy. Pasolini's engagement with the contradictions of modernity—especially his reflections on power, sexuality, mass conformism, and politics—positions him as a critical voice amid the rising tide of neofascism in the 1970s. Moreover, Cadel highlights Pasolini's indefatigable critique of the political establishment, particularly his condemnation of the *realpolitik* that took hold after the war. Through references to his poetry and prose, and his visits to the US, we see how Pasolini's work serves as both a celebration and a lament for the intricate tapestry of Italian identity.

The third and fourth chapters, "Elsa Morante" (179-242) and "Pietro Di Donato" (243-358), are devoted to Morante's *Aracoeli* (1982), which is examined alongside the Italian American writer's unpublished script *Moro* (1979). The latter reflects on the harrowing events surrounding the former Italian Prime Minister's kidnapping and murder by the Red Brigades in 1978. Cadel connects Morante's exploration of personal and collective trauma to Di Donato's historical narrative, suggesting that both authors provide essential counterpoints to the dominant discourse of their era. Di Donato's engagement with media portrayals of the Moro case enriches the text, showcasing literature's vital role in shaping public discourse during political upheaval.

Throughout the work, Cadel weaves thematic threads such as anti-communism, the legacy of the Resistance, and the cultural hegemony of the United States in Italy. By connecting these themes to the discussed texts, she attempts to foster a deeper understanding of how literature not only reflects but also resists sociopolitical realities.

The exploration of the “misto” (11) concept serves as a critical lens through which we can examine the hybrid nature of post-war Italian identity. Cadel argues that this ambiguity is not merely a stylistic choice but a necessary response to the complexities of a society in transition. This perspective invites us to reconsider the significance of these literary works as reflections of their historical moment.

In conclusion, while Cadel’s book offers a good examination of the Italian post-war literary landscape, it is important to note that her voice occasionally feels muted in the analyses, particularly with regard to Saba and Morante. The extensive reliance on quotations and extremely lengthy footnotes from critics and other writers raises questions about the decision not to engage more deeply with the literary works studied. Ultimately, the book serves as a valuable compilation of sources; however, it may leave readers yearning for a more distinct analytical perspective on the influential figures and their works. Additionally, the inclusion of the interview with Wilson McLean, along with Di Donato’s entire play on Aldo Moro that Cadel translated into Italian, contributes to a project that often feels rhapsodic.

Sergio Ferrarese, *William and Mary*

Valerio Cappozzo, ed. *Giorgio Bassani poète*. Paris: Cahiers de l’Hôtel de Galliffet, 2024. Pp. 205.

Il volume è frutto del convegno parigino tenutosi nell’ottobre del 2021 presso l’Istituto Italiano di Cultura e organizzato a immediato ridosso dell’edizione critica feltrinelliana delle *Poesie complete* bassaniane, assemblata da Anna Dolfi e prefata dalla figlia dello scrittore, Paola. Il simposio si è prefisso di gettare piena luce sul *côté* lirico di Giorgio Bassani (1916-2000), che, rampollato negli anni giovanili, divenne la fertile *humus* da cui germogliarono i suoi capolavori in prosa.

Come spiegato nell’introduzione, “La rupture du silence” (9-17), l’annosa tendenza a relegare la lirica bassaniana in cono d’ombra ha di recente ceduto il passo alla sua riscoperta filologica che ripercorre “la genèse de chaque composition” (10) rapportandola sia alla parallela produzione in prosa che al germinare delle scuole poetiche coeve. Al rinnovato interesse per il *corpus* lirico bassaniano, già manifestato con la raccolta di saggi intitolata *Dal particolare all’universale. I libri di poesia di Giorgio Bassani*, a curatela di

Cappozzo (Ravenna: Pozzi, 2020) si sono aggiunte due traduzioni: la prima, in francese, di un florilegio lirico pubblicato negli atti del colloquio: *Giorgio Bassani, Poèmes*, dai Cahiers de l'Hôtel de Galliffet (2021) e la seconda, in inglese, intitolata *The Collected Poems* (New York: Agincourt, 2023).

L'inchiesta parte con lo sbalzare un "cammeo" dello scrittore che già nel 1981, interloquendo con Anna Dolfi, le dichiarava la sua essenza più autentica: "Je suis, si tu me permets, un poète, essentiellement un poète" (11). Gli otto saggi qui riuniti sono legati da un filo che avvolge le coordinate spazio-temporali della lirica bassaniana, tra le luci radenti della prima giovinezza e lo strazio abissale seguito alla Shoah, dopo la quale il poeta abita i *loci* della memoria e della testimonianza.

Anna Dolfi, in "Dislocazione degli spazi e immagine dell'io poeta" (19-31), esamina, nelle "scansioni" liriche, la presenza "di due personaggi almeno in parte diversi" che si "moltiplica[no] specularmente [...] in un continuo dialogo con un altro da sé" (20). Si sottolinea che, a partire dalla silloge d'eco dantesca, *Te lucis ante* (1947), Bassani diviene lo "psicopompo" che scava "tra le rovine per riportare alla luce le storie dei morti" (26) e che sviluppa una nuova *pietas* attraverso cui "leggere il mondo" e "accompagnare una vita ormai diversamente tramata dalla e nella morte [...] vissuta dentro la tragedia bellica" (22).

Di "un ricongiungimento" alla corrente del "crepuscolarismo", e di una "desolata dimensione psichica" presente nella "prima sistemazione organica" (33) intitolata *L'alba ai vetri* (1963), parla Marco A. Bazzocchi, ne "Gli occhi di Mosè: sguardi di Bassani tra poesia e prosa" (33-50). Si puntualizza come il dettato poetico si faccia qui eterotopico "spazio di confine" (34) in cui l'archetipo medievale (ed eliotiano) del Re Pescatore trasmuta in una figura inetta e assonnita, di monarca "ferito di una terra desolata" (50). L'*entre-deux* dove l'autore "si cala" dentro la sua "scrittura" ed al tempo stesso se ne "sottrae" (37) annulla il *limen* sottile che separa prosa e poesia. È così che "la solenne immagine" del "Mosè legiferante" (46-47), già evocata nella prosa di "Passeggiata prima di cena" (1953), riemerge nella diciottesima lirica di *L'alba ai vetri* come cifra ieratica e "distante" di una "tradizione" identitaria (47) mai rigorosamente abbracciata.

Jean Nimis, in "L'opera in versi di Giorgio Bassani: gravitazione poetica e breccie nel tempo" (53-81), analizza la "poetica dell'immagine con un'attenzione specifica all'opera in versi" (54). Utilizzando l'intuizione di Sophie Nezri-Dufour (contenuta ne "Lo spazio bassaniano: metafora e concretizzazione di un'idea dell'esistenza", *Chroniques italiennes*, 29.2, 2014, 233-51), Nimis individua nella lirica "Ars poetica" (in *Te Lucis ante*), i prodromi di un impeto afasico: "E non resti di me che un grido, un grido lento/senza parole. Nessuna mai parola" (55). L'immagine-concetto si moltiplica

in sequenze frattali di spazio-tempo in cui la rappresentazione diviene onda gravitazionale di potenti *verba imaginalia*. Si veda, ad esempio, “Ut pictura” (*In gran segreto*), ove le parole-paesaggio rompono le “brecce” del tempo lineare ed immettono in una circolare acronia.

Martina Piperno, in “Catabasi, testimonianza e responsabilità. Della poesia in *Epitaffio* e *In gran segreto*” (83-100), mostra come nelle due raccolte (1974 e 1978) ricorra “il motivo catabatico di ispirazione dantesca” (89) intrecciato a dense venature orfiche. Si rileva come il *descensus ad inferos* (e il necessario ritorno) siano deontologicamente legati alla *parrhesia*, tecnica di socratica memoria, che impone il “fondamentale” dovere di “dire la verità” a qualunque costo (88).

Angela Siciliano, ne “I libri di poesia nella biblioteca del giovane Bassani” (103-23), compie un’incursione nei lacerti librari sopravvissuti al 1943, rivelando le “postille intertestuali” (110) dei primi abbozzi poetici e l’attività traduttoria dal francese, già spaziente da Ronsard ai simbolisti.

Sull’*ars declamatoria* bassaniana si sofferma Valter Leonardo Puccetti in “Bassani dicitore e notaio dell’assenza” (125-38), informando che nel 1991 il poeta recitò “sei” delle sue “poesie” nel corso di “un incontro” universitario a Trento (125). Ci si focalizza sulla “dizione bassaniana [...] davvero unica [...], ritardante e sospesa” (125-26), così come definita sull’*Unità* nel 1979, e si riscontra la “minuta tecnica” di “descrittività notarile” (128) in due poesie, “Valzer” (*Epitaffio*) e “Orly” (*In gran segreto*), in cui “la disposizione versale e grafica” (127) produce un effetto straniante e quasi prossimo all’entropia.

In “Giorgio Bassani: *In rima* in inglese” (141-63), Peter Robinson, che insieme a Roberta Antognini ha tradotto e curato il già citato *Collected Poems*, rievoca la sua prima casuale (e poi appassionata) attrazione per la poesia bassaniana ed espone le numerose asperità che la traduzione della sua tessitura lirica presenta, come ad esempio, “lo sforzo di combinare suono e significato” (151).

Valerio Cappozzo, in “Amare il mondo vedendolo come è. Pier Paolo Pasolini e la poesia di Giorgio Bassani” (165-86), sintetizza in diacronica traiettoria il sodalizio intellettuale tra Bassani e Pasolini che, dal 1947 sino ai primi anni sessanta, si è arricchito di espressioni di stima reciproca, estendendosi anche a orizzonti postumi. Si pensi, in particolare, al tributo *in memoriam* che Bassani rese a Pasolini nel corso delle sue *Lezioni americane* (Cappozzo ed., Ravenna: Pozzi, 2016) tenute in ambito statunitense e canadese “a partire dal 1976” (185). Come finemente intuisce l’autore del saggio, il nodo di tale *sodalitas* si rinviene nella comune visione del ruolo del poeta, che non cambia “il mondo attraverso avanguardismi di maniera, ma al contrario” (come recita, nel 1974, la recensione pasoliniana ad *Epitaffio*), affronta “la sfida più ardua, quella di ‘Amare il mondo vedendolo come è’” (186).

Conchiude la raccolta “Per parlare di Bassani. In conversazione con Anna Dolfi” (189-205), curato da Roberta Antognini e Peter Robinson, apporto prezioso di dati biografici e filologici offerto da una delle maggiori esegete bassaniane. Di agile e chiara consultazione, i testi qui raccolti si pongono quale punto fermo e imprescindibile per la comprensione della genesi e dell’evoluzione lirica di Bassani. Essi sono pietra miliare per il suo inquadramento a tutto tondo nella temperie novecentesca in cui la sua voce si erge, in limpidezza e unicità, e funge da anello di congiunzione e di trapasso fra la stagione ermetica e quelle sperimentali delle neoavanguardie.

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Marco Ceravolo. “Illuminare un po’ l’inferno”. *Simbologie del non umano in Dino Buzzati e Anna Maria Ortese*. Roma: Carocci, 2024. Pp. 204.

Il volume di Marco Ceravolo adotta un approccio interdisciplinare che unisce la passione filologica della ricerca d’archivio con filoni di studio riconducibili al postumano, quali l’ecofemminismo e gli *animal studies*. Tale approccio getta nuova luce su due autori in apparenza distanti, Dino Buzzati e Anna Maria Ortese, accomunati però, come viene sottolineato nell’“Introduzione” (11-20), da “una poetica zoofila e antispecista” (11), dove le figure animalesche assurgono ad “archetipi del dolore universale” (11). L’autore analizza i due scrittori in altrettante distinte sezioni per trovarne il *trait d’union* nel capitolo “Convergenze” (169-77). Seguono tre Appendici contenenti altrettanti inediti ortesiani ritrovati da Ceravolo e la “Postfazione” (187-90) di Eloisa Morra che sottolinea il merito della ricerca dell’autore, capace di dare nuova linfa a due classici del Novecento italiano.

La prima sezione del libro, “Dino Buzzati. Narrazioni e visioni di un ‘borghese stregato’” si apre con il capitolo “Preservare e punire” (25-39), in cui Ceravolo adotta il filtro dell’ecofemminismo per analizzare il romanzo *Il segreto del bosco vecchio* e la sua dicotomia interna cultura/natura, incarnata dal binomio costituito dal colonnello Procolo e il dodicenne Benvenuto. L’autore riconosce il carattere precocemente non-antropocentrico ed ecologista del romanzo buzzatiano, ma ne evidenzia anche i limiti, denunciando l’impossibilità di operare uno smantellamento ecofemminista del binomio cultura/natura, che nel romanzo rimangono separati.

“Diaboliche, animalesche e vittime seducenti” (41-68) adotta la stessa lente critica ma prende in esame la figura femminile nella narrativa e nell’arte buzzatiane. Le donne sembrano “figure soglia” (42) destinate ad abbracciare il non umano, senza tuttavia mai raggiungere la figurazione rizomatica di “divenire-donna” che travalica i confini dell’umano e ha caratterizzato il pensiero ecofemminista. Ispirato dalla ricerca di Carol J. Adams, al contrario,

Ceravolo sottolinea come l'animalizzazione buzzatiana delle donne sia attribuibile a una prospettiva patriarcale, che solo in apparenza sfida la centralità dell'umano.

In "Possono ragionare? Possono soffrire?" (69-89), infine, Ceravolo disamina la simbologia animale e l'etica animalista nella prosa e nel giornalismo buzzatiani, notando l'importanza dello sguardo animale che sembra anticipare il pensiero di Derrida e sottolineando le parole dello scrittore contro le sofferenze animali che riecheggiano quelle di Peter Singer. Ciononostante, ancora una volta l'autore evidenzia l'ambiguità di Buzzati, che, sebbene condanni il consumo di carne, ammette però di non riuscire ad abbracciare il vegetarianismo.

La seconda parte del volume, "Anna Maria Ortese. Lo scrittore-donna, la bestia che parla", si apre con il capitolo "Contro il padre, contro Dio" (93-112), dove Ceravolo disamina l'ultimo romanzo di Ortese, *Alonso e i visionari*, concentrandosi sul significato simbolico dell'animale. Il puma, infatti, rappresenta l'ultima delle creature ortesiane volte a celebrare il non umano. In tal senso, il puma Alonso simboleggia la natura contro cui si scaglia Antonio Decimo, strenuo difensore della ratio umana. La morte e la resurrezione di Alonso rivelano la sua natura cristologica, di cui Ortese dà però una "non antropocentrica reinterpretazione" (109). Secondo l'autore, quindi, il puma si staglia come archetipo del dolore universale che travalica i confini tra umano e non umano.

In "O Bambina, o Terra, o Madre sconsolata" (113-40), Ceravolo indaga uno degli aspetti più dibattuti dalla critica ortesiana, ossia il rapporto della scrittrice con il femminismo, segnato da un profondo disinteresse a cui Ortese contrappone l'impegno nella lotta per gli ultimi. L'autore respinge una lettura ecofemminista della narrativa ortesiana giacché per la scrittrice "la donna non è inclusa nel ventaglio delle categorie concepite in quanto minoranze" (118), una visione forse riconducibile all'incapacità di Ortese di cogliere le manifestazioni del sistema patriarcale in cui vive.

Infine, "Illuminare l'inferno" (141-68) considera la stagione dell'impegno ortesiano, analizzando una lettera mai spedita a Oriana Fallaci dove Ortese si schiera, tra le altre cose, contro la vivisezione, con termini che sembrano anticipare di qualche anno le teorie di Tom Regan. Nella seconda parte del capitolo, l'attenzione verso gli ultimi viene declinata in difesa di due americani cherokee condannati a morte. In tal senso, Ceravolo suggerisce che Ortese annulli la differenza tra umano e non umano, laddove entrambi simboleggiano gli ultimi con i quali la scrittrice si è sempre schierata e nel cui sguardo Ortese trova la sua patria.

Nelle "Convergenze" finali, l'autore tesse un fil rouge tra Buzzati e Ortese che ha il proprio trait d'union nel Leopardi descritto da Calvino come pensatore

in termini “extra-umani” (*Sono nato in America*. Milano: Mondadori, 2022, 236). Pertanto, l’opera di Ceravolo ha il merito di esplorare una confluenza finora poco scandagliata tra due protagonisti del Novecento italiano attraverso la lente, altrettanto poco perlustrata nel mondo accademico italiano, del non umano. Le opere di Buzzati e Ortese, nella loro diversità, vengono lette in una nuova prospettiva ecologica, che sembra anticipare il dibattito sui diritti animali di Peter Singer e Tom Regan, ma anche il pensiero postumano di Rosi Braidotti, così come le teorie di altri pensatori, quali Agamben, Derrida, Deleuze e Guattari. Nonostante le loro ombre e contraddizioni, che Ceravolo non esita a sottolineare, le opere di Buzzati e Ortese mostrano una presa di distanza dall’antropocentrismo e la necessità di rappresentare un Altro non umano che condivida i dolori degli umani. In tal senso, il messaggio etico proposto dai due scrittori riecheggia l’etica postumana di Braidotti, fondata su “un profondo sentimento di interconnessione tra il sé e gli altri, inclusi i non umani e gli ‘altri della terra’” (*Il postumano*. Roma: DeriveApprodi, 2014, 53).

La monografia di Ceravolo ha il merito di illuminare una strada ancora troppo poco battuta dalla critica. Con un solido impianto critico e filologico ma di godibilissima leggibilità, il volume è un ulteriore tassello negli studi di italianistica sul non umano che negli ultimi anni ha segnato la ricerca, tra gli altri, di Serenella Iovino, Elena Past e Deborah Amberson. In conclusione, *“Illuminare un po’ l’inferno”* fornisce un contributo innovativo alla critica buzzatiana e ortesiana e offre un interessante approccio metodologico che fonde la ricerca d’archivio con il quadro teorico dell’ecofemminismo e degli *animal studies*.

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Dalila Colucci, and Leonarda Trapassi, eds. *Forme del reale. Iconotesti narrativi nell’Italia contemporanea*. Firenze: Franco Cesati Editore, 2024. Pp. 219.

Come spesso accade quando si recensisce un lavoro composito e ben articolato a cavallo tra diversi contributi, è opportuno dare a chi legge delle linee guida su cui orientarsi. Si parta da una prima e necessariamente provvisoria definizione di “iconotesto”: “luogo creativo impuro dove testo e immagine non solo convivono ma si mescolano, sulla base di una continua dislocazione semiotica fondata spesso su conflitto e intraducibilità”, come si legge nell’introduzione delle curatrici, “Una questione di immaginario: le narrazioni della realtà nell’iconotesto contemporaneo” (9-22, 10). Provvisoria, si è detto, perché come termine ombrello “iconotesto” riporta a gradi di significazione non sempre immediati e spinge a una riflessione estesa sulle potenzialità di questo dispositivo. O almeno, per la maggior parte è ciò che accade in questo

volume: tramite una riflessione che parte dalla fenomenologia dell'iconotesto (presente nella sezione uno, "Modalità iconotestuali, tra finzione e realtà", 23-79), dove i vari autori hanno *grosso modo* in comune il *background* scientifico cui fare riferimento, come nello specifico i contributi sull'argomento di Giuseppe Carrara, Michele Cometa e Andrea Cortellesa, si giunge a un complesso e articolato esercizio di costante controprova, ossia un processo tramite cui l'iconotesto viene sondato nei suoi *leitmotive* e analizzato nella sua potenza immaginifica (sezioni due e tre, "Viaggi e paesaggi d'artista", 80-112 e "(Post)memoria, (auto)ritratto, (doppia)esposizione", 113-62) per analizzare le forme del reale che da questo traspaiono. Tuttavia, la parola chiave cui il titolo del lavoro rimanda è indubbiamente "narrativo" perché, data la natura multiforme e intermediale dell'iconotesto, non può non sorgere spontanea la domanda se questi possa non essere di per sé narrativo. La precisazione, però, è frutto di un presupposto essenziale: l'iconotesto, inglobato dalla "dialettica coesistenza di testo e immagine" (10), è un dispositivo narrativo specifico, uno snodo semiotico che si muove sulla "consustanzialità di fondo tra testo e immagini" ("La valigia di Gerda: fotografie e racconto in *La ragazza con la Leica*", Leonarda Trapassi, 125-36, 125), è perciò essenziale specificare che qui si parla del rapporto tra immagini e testo in ambito letterario nel senso più esteso, e dunque non solo la narrativa ma anche, ad esempio, la poesia, la "prosa in prosa" o "post-poesia" o "poesia di ricerca" ("Anti-narrazioni del Duemila. Su alcuni usi del fototesto nella 'prosa in prosa' (e non solo)", Marilina Ciaco, 69-78, 69), o la saggistica. E di letteratura qui si sta parlando, nelle sue forme per cui "il repertorio di relazioni agenti tra parola e immagine" ("Questo posto appartiene alla luna, alla notte, alla mano sinistra". Un viaggio d'artista visto e scritto: Ontani, Silva, Trevi a Bali", Viviana Triscari, 91-100, 93) è sondabile.

I contributi presentati all'interno del volume sono accomunati dal medesimo desiderio di rintracciare nei *case studies* proposti forme possibili del reale, e per forme possibili sia chiaro che si intende anche forme, di contro, impossibili. Più che il visivo qui si cerca il visionario, essendo la letteratura sempre in bilico tra realtà e finzione, e si costruisce un dialogo tra immagini e testo che non sembra esaurirsi nel mero completarsi a vicenda ma, riprendendo le parole di Giorgio Falco nella testimonianza di Maria Teresa Carbone, sfocia volentieri in una "guerra fredda" ("Inventare il possibile", 187-94, 189) tra mondo esterno (quello della fotografia, ad esempio) e mondo interno (quello delle parole). Ma a volte gli iconotesti si notano proprio per la loro assenza e succede che, in un più ampio dibattito sul ritorno alla realtà nella letteratura italiana contemporanea, Raffaello Palumbo Mosca nel contributo al volume "Presenze e assenze di fototesti nella *non-fiction* italiana (pochissime le presenze)" (35-45), noti come la "quasi totale assenza di dispositivi iconotestuali" in specifici lavori presi in

considerazione come *Gomorra* di Roberto Saviano (2016) o *Lezioni di tenebra* di Helena Janeczek (1997) suscitò perplessità e conduca a considerazioni sul mancato raggiungimento dello scopo che questi testi si prefiggono: “cambiare” (35) la realtà. È anche vero che, per riportare le parole di John Berger citate nel saggio di Linda Garosi “Parole, ritratti, ricordi: fotografia e postmemoria in alcuni romanzi del nuovo millennio” (115-23), “sebbene qualsiasi fotografia [...] conservi traccia documentale di una cosa vista in quanto strumento capace di registrare il reale, gli eventi riprodotti dall’immagine restano ‘misteriosi’ e difficilmente comprensibili” (116).

È per questo, ovvero per le complessità che si presentano a chi voglia affrontare l’argomento, che il volume è impreziosito dalla sezione numero quattro, intitolata “Sopralluoghi d’autore” (175-212), dedicata alle testimonianze di artisti di rilievo come Guido Mazzoni (“Fotografia diffusa”, 177-86), Maria Teresa Carbone (“Inventare il possibile”, 187-94), Tommaso Pincio (“‘Vedere è un esercizio di memoria’. Intervista a Tommaso Pincio”, Dalila Colucci e Leonarda Trapassi, 195-200) e Giorgio Vasta (“‘Il miracolo delle mani vuote’. Intervista a Giorgio Vasta”, Dalila Colucci e Leonarda Trapassi, 201-12), che con la fotografia e la letteratura hanno un rapporto profondo. Questi contributi non fanno che sottolineare la natura multiforme del prodotto iconotesto, presentando possibilità che non sono incasellabili in una sola categoria ma che, di volta in volta, lasciano la discussione aperta verso diversi esiti. E infatti il pregio di questo volume è indubbiamente quello di sollevare degli interrogativi, nel senso che, più che cercare di dare risposte univoche a ogni costo, i vari contributi esplorano in che modo gli iconotesti presi in esame si facciano portatori di intenti e scopi differenti che non sono sempre dire la verità. Si prende un abbaglio a credere che un’immagine sia necessariamente garanzia di verità e l’invito implicito sembra essere quello a non cadere nella trappola del visivo quanto a scoprire, invece, le potenzialità del visionario.

Certo, a tratti sembra un po’ di rileggere le stesse cose, soprattutto, come si diceva in apertura, in merito alla fenomenologia dell’iconotesto e alle fonti secondarie da cui provengono alcune definizioni, ma questo è in parte dato dal bisogno di settare un terreno comune su cui muoversi e su cui, a maggior ragione, far muovere il lettore. Se è vero che gli iconotesti funzionano, per riprendere le parole del menzionato Giuseppe Carrara in “Per una fenomenologia dell’iconotesto narrativo ipercontemporaneo” (*Comparatismi*, 2, 2017, 26-55), “secondo una loro propria retorica” (31) risulta maggiormente comprensibile come mai gli autori dei contributi qui presentati indugino così a lungo sulle premesse del discorso, facendo di queste i prodromi per una ricerca mirata sulle potenzialità stesse della realtà e delle sua narrabilità, in un perfetto dialogo tra “teoria, analisi e creazione” (11).

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Dalila Colucci. *Italian Futurism and the Poetry of Materiality: The Tin-Litho Book L'Anguria Lirica*. Leiden: Brill, 2024. Pp. 228.

Incentrata su *L'anguria lirica*—il secondo libro di latta, stampato nel 1934 con design e testo poetico di Tullio d'Albisola e litografie di Bruno Munari per le Edizioni Futuriste di *Poesia*—, la monografia si configura come il primo studio esaustivo dedicato a questo straordinario esempio di sperimentazione artistico-letteraria, fornendo un contributo essenziale alla comprensione delle dinamiche intermediali e delle innovazioni formali proprie dell'avanguardia futurista. Proponendosi di colmare le lacune interpretative del libro, a lungo relegato al margine degli studi specialistici per la sua stessa unicità formale, *Italian Futurism and the Poetry of Materiality: The Tin-Litho Book L'Anguria Lirica* ne ricostruisce in modo dettagliato la storia e il significato culturale attraverso cinque capitoli e una fitta rete di connessioni intertestuali (che spaziano dalla *Divina Commedia* a *La cucina futurista*, dall'arte sacra di Fillia alle innovazioni grafico-pubblicitarie di Nicolay Diulgheroff e Munari), dimostrando come le specificità materiali ne influenzino i codici lirici e figurativi.

Il primo capitolo, “From Free-Word Tables to Tin-Litho Books: the Publishing Industry, Intermedia Innovations, and Second Futurism” (15-46), presenta *L'anguria lirica* come primo esempio di libro-oggetto capace di trascendere le innovazioni tipografiche del paroliberismo, superando al tempo la tradizionale staticità del formato-libro spesso attaccata da Marinetti. Dopo averne rintracciato i precedenti negli *unica* editoriali di Ardengo Soffici (*BİFŞZF+18. Simultaneità e Chimismi lirici*, 1915), Arturo Martini (*Contemplazioni*, 1918) e Fortunato Depero (*Depero futurista*, 1927), il capitolo restituisce il ricco fondale tecnico-artistico all'origine del libro di latta, richiamandone il legame con figure chiave del Secondo Futurismo ligure quali Farfa e Giovanni Acquaviva, come pure con la fabbrica savonese Lito-Latta, che ne consente la stampa su metallo. Colucci inserisce infine *L'anguria* nel contesto politico-culturale degli anni Trenta, anticipandone il problematico dialogo con tematiche centrali di Futurismo e fascismo—l'arte sacra, l'arte culinaria, l'aeropittura—e provando così la complessità di quella che definisce un'opera d'arte totale.

Il secondo capitolo, “A Futurist Kind of Love: Staging *L'Anguria Lirica*” (47-77), è dedicato invece alla dimensione poetica del libro, a partire da un'attenta disamina dell'attività letteraria e artistica di d'Albisola. Oltre a esplorare il rapporto dell'autore con le donne e l'amore, ponendo la sua attività ceramistica e poetica in dialogo con quella di altri artisti d'eccezione (Farfa e Lucio Fontana, tra gli altri), in questa parte Colucci si concentra sull'analisi testuale del poema, riassumendone i contenuti articolati in cinque “tempi”. Un confronto diretto con *Ode all'anguria* di Paolo Buzzi (1931),

con cui condivide alcune isotopie semantiche—violenza, ebbrezza, dominio maschile sul femminile—rivela altresì un antecedente significativo e pone in rilievo la matrice futurista dell'immagine della donna-anguria. Il capitolo indugia poi sull'intreccio di riferimenti religiosi presenti nei versi, associando la particolare collocazione cronologica del poema nella Settimana Santa del 1933 alla sovversione del mistero della transustanziazione, reinterpretato—per mezzo di un ardito richiamo alla *Divina Commedia*, che la studiosa identifica quale modello strutturale e tematico del poema di d'Albisola—attraverso una potente metafora alimentare ove il corpo di Nelly, trasformato in un frutto succoso e sanguigno, diviene oggetto di un atto poetico di assimilazione che ereticamente rielabora motivi sacri ed erotici.

Il terzo capitolo, “The Passion and Resurrection of Poetry: a Polymorphic Poetics of Creation” (78-109), esamina quindi la complessa interazione tra corpo femminile, cibo e poesia all'interno dell'opera tramite il raffronto tra *L'anguria lirica* e *La cucina futurista* (1932). Pur insistendo sulla trasfigurazione della donna in oggetto edibile destinato al consumo maschile—il che caratterizza le avventure culinarie descritte da Marinetti e Fillia—il poema di d'Albisola finisce infatti per mettere in discussione ogni subordinazione di genere, riconoscendo alla sfera muliebre una forza trasformativa, collocata al cuore del processo creativo. Qui si indaga pure il rapporto tra l'arte sacra futurista e il libro di latta, il quale suggerisce una critica alla spiritualizzazione della macchina promossa dal Manifesto del 1931 proponendo un'estetica più complessa, capace di integrare principi meccanici e immateriali, ispirata alla spiritualità materialistica di Fillia, a sua volta radicata nella volontà di fare della tecnologia uno strumento di emancipazione poetico-sociale. La fine del capitolo si sofferma sulla chiusa del poema, interpretata come (ri)nascita concettuale del libro di poesia, in cui la latta, elemento polimorfico e rigenerativo, si fa metafora di un'estetica post-umana e la poesia stessa appare materia vibrante e mutevole, superando la sua staticità.

Il quarto capitolo, “A Polymaterial Generation: Aluminum, Tin, and Other Matter” (110-32), affronta più da vicino il fondale industriale e pubblicitario de *L'anguria*, nata nel pieno di un'intensa fase di ricerca e sperimentazione sui materiali metallici. L'autrice ripercorre in tal senso le collaborazioni tra d'Albisola, Munari e Diulgheroff, evidenziando il ruolo cruciale di latta e alluminio quali emblemi autarchici dell'Italia fascista attraverso un'analisi di riviste, giornali e corrispondenze. Particolare attenzione è riservata all'*Almanacco dell'Italia Veloce* (1931), concepito come pubblicazione promozionale dedicata alle arti, alle invenzioni e alle industrie, rimasta però incompiuta; e al concetto di polimaterismo, introdotto da Boccioni (1912) e successivamente sviluppato da Prampolini (1944), fondato sull'interazione di materiali eterogenei e per ciò stesso centrale nella concezione de *L'anguria lirica*.

Al quinto capitolo, “Visual Storytelling and the Hybridism of Material Lyricism” (133-71), spetta infine un esame dettagliato e interdisciplinare del rapporto testo-immagine, che considera le undici illustrazioni di Munari anche rispetto a quelle prodotte da Nino Strada per la coeva versione cartacea de *L'anguria*. Da quest'ultima—come dagli entusiasmi tecnologici del Futurismo—Munari si distanzia giocosamente con le sue immagini, spesso dedicate alle metamorfosi di un soggetto femminile attivo in una serie di macchine tanto fantasiose quanto inutili, ove il principio di equivalenza ontologica tra tecnologia e natura prevale sulla funzionalità futurista.

All'analisi così saldamente condotta, *Italian Futurism and the Poetry of Materiality* aggiunge una magnifica appendice a colori—come le numerose altre illustrazioni che arricchiscono il volume—, che regala al lettore la riproduzione integrale delle due edizioni de *L'anguria*, precedute dalla prima traduzione inglese del poema. Il risultato è una visione critica finalmente rigorosa e completa del libro di latta e della sua poetica materiale, che Colucci colloca al crocevia tra realtà e immaginazione, riconoscendone non solo il valore poetico-visuale, ma l'*agency* cre-attiva (178): ossia l'ambizione ad agire poieticamente sul reale, destinata a influenzare tutte le avanguardie poetiche successive.

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Nicola Di Nino, ed. “Con lievi mani”. Sulle traduzioni di Cristina Campo nel centenario della nascita. *Cahiers d'études italiennes* 36 (2023). UGA (Université de Grenoble Alpes), 2023 (online).

Il numero monografico digitale su Cristina Campo (1923-77) si concentra sull'esperienza traduttiva dell'autrice, sfiorando solo di scorcio la sua notevole produzione creativa (si pensi tra le altre, alle sillogi poetiche *Passo d'addio*, 1956, *Diario bizantino*, 1977; e a *Fiaba e mistero e altre note*, 1962 e *Il flauto e il tappeto*, 1971, per la prosa).

Il volume si schiude con la presentazione di Nicola Di Nino (1-35). Essa traccia a larghe linee l'itinerario esistenziale e intellettuale di quella che fu all'anagrafe Vittoria Guerrini, di colto ceto borghese, “riservata” e “schiva” (1), di salute altalenante e formazione autodidatta, la cui opera fu relegata ai margini sino alla riscoperta postuma, avvenuta nel tardo Novecento.

Alla presentazione segue la prima sezione, intitolata *Campo e le traduzioni dal tedesco*, composta da cinque contributi. Raffaella Bertazzoli, in “Cristina Campo ed Eduard Mörike tra poesia e traduzione” (1-77) riferisce “l'incontro sentimentale e culturale” di Campo con l'“illustre germanista” Leone Traverso, “legato al circolo dell'ermetismo fiorentino” (15) e, in seguito, la sua folgorazione “mistica” romana per l'eclettico Elémire Zolla, di cui divenne compagna di

vita. Si esamina la traduzione campiana (1948) di *Erinna an Sappho* (1864) del romantico tedesco Mörike e si sottolinea come venga privilegiato, nella versione italiana, un ritmo che riecheggia l'originale con “preziosismi lessicali [e] latinismi”, tramati in una “*dispositio* inversa ricca di iperbati e anastrofi” (59, 58). Vincenza Scuderi, con “Cristina Campo traduttrice di Hofmannsthal” (1-39) mostra come la scrittrice interiorizzi radicalmente il dettato poetico del “piccolo corpus” (33) tradotto e trasponga il costruito mitopoietico hofmannsthaliano in un italiano di spontanei “endecasillabi e settenari” (31). Sotera Fornaro, in “Le traduzioni da Hölderlin” (1-49) si focalizza sugli “appena quattro [...] frammenti di traduzione dal poeta svevo” (1) e sulla reverenza che Campo nutriva per la lirica hölderliniana sentita come “liturgia, lamento di passione” e parola “salvatrice” (44). L'intervento di Daniela Marcheschi, “Cristina Campo traduce Christine Koschel” (1-39) ragguaglia sull'attrazione campiana per l'opera della poetessa di Breslau (1936-2024). Ammirata dalla volontà della Koschel di “perseguire” (25) un rinnovamento poetico autentico e concreto, lontano dai clangori dell'industria culturale, Campo aderisce ancora una volta, completamente, al testo da tradurre e lo fa coincidere “con la propria ricerca poetica”, secondo “quel principio di equivalenza nella differenza delle lingue [...] formulato [...] nel 1959 da Roman Jakobson” (27). Anna Maria Tamburini, in “Gli echi dalle *Elegie Duinesi*” (1-53) si intrattiene sull'influenza che le rilkiane *Duineser Elegien* (1923) ebbero sulla produzione poetica campiana. Si mostra come i riverberi di Rilke divennero più intensi durante “la relazione” (2) amorosa e intellettuale con Leone Traverso, traduttore delle *Elegie* nel 1937. Tamburini rileva come nel suo scritto “In medio coeli” (1962), Campo venga “illuminata” dalla numinosa bellezza del *mysterium tremendum* che si manifesta nella figurazione rilkiana dell'angelo, come pure dai “cammei” che Rilke dedica alle “eroine d'amore” (29), e in particolare a Gaspara Stampa (1523-1554), poetessa a Campo assai cara.

La seconda sezione, incentrata su *L'incontro con Simone Weil*, si apre con “Trasposizioni di immagini. Le traduzioni da Simone Weil”, di Chiara Zamboni (1-69) che inquadra la prima, entusiastica ricezione campiana (1952) della visione speculativa della pensatrice francese (1909-43), da cui poi si distanzierà nel decennio successivo. Zamboni chiarisce che le traduzioni da Weil approntate fra il '53 e il '59 nascono dalla pratica, comune ad ambedue le intellettuali, di “porre legami per analogia” (7), cioè per “trasposizione” (6); metodo, questo, attraverso il quale “idee essenziali [...] possono essere trasposte [...] dalla politica alla poesia, all'arte, alla vita” (8).

La terza sezione, imperniata su *Il dialogo con la mistica di Juan de la Cruz*, contiene, di Adele Ricciotti, “La mistica di san Giovanni della Croce nella poetica di Cristina Campo” (1-52). La ricognizione fa il punto sulle magistrali traduzioni campiane dalle liriche del mistico spagnolo (1542-91)

assemblata per la curatela zolliana de *I mistici dell'Occidente* (1963). Ricciotti evidenzia che la perfezione raggiunta dalla traduzione è il diretto distillato sia dell'apofatica "via negationis" (4) che della "spoliazione di sé" (7), attinte da Campo dalla specola gnoseologica di Weil e dalle riflessioni della spagnola María Zambrano (1904-91).

Nella quarta sezione, *Lo spirituale e il mondano: le versioni dall'inglese*, Anna Botta in "Cristina Campo, Emily Dickinson, and Marianne Moore: The Poetry of Vibrant Kinship" (1-45) interpreta l'opera traduttiva campiana alla luce delle recenti teoresi neomaterialistiche che annullano il *limen* tra "umano" e "non umano" (1). La studiosa crea un *trait d'union* fra l'"orizzontalità" della "sensibilità ecologica" (4) ed esistenziale neomaterialista (che libera la materia dalla sua presunta inferiorità,) e la verticale ascesa al divino di Cristina Campo, che evade dalla heideggeriana *Geworfenheit* (gettatezza), ma intende altresì annullare l'antinomia tra corpo e spirito per unificarla in un'"antica sensualità trascendente" (7). Małgorzata Ślarzyńska in "Le poesie di John Donne: percorsi traduttivi ed ermeneutici" (1-63) parla della travagliata gestazione delle traduzioni donniane, commissionate da Einaudi (1964). Apparse solo nel 1970, esse son divenute oggetto di giudizi contrastanti, perché considerate da alcuni come la prova più alta della Campo traduttrice e giudicate invece, da altri, come singolarmente parziali, in quanto offrono una dimensione unicamente religiosa e spirituale del poeta metafisico inglese (1572-1631) ignorandone gli aspetti sensuali. Nicola Di Nino in "L'equilibrio tra 'water' e 'marble language'. Le traduzioni da William Carlos Williams" (1-76) delinea le fasi della traduzione campiana del poeta imagista americano (1883-1963) iniziate nel 1958 presso Scheiwiller e proseguite, in tandem con Vittorio Sereni, nell'antologia Einaudi (1961). Ci si sofferma sulla sorvegliata selezione lessicale che adatta il fluido metro dello statunitense ("water language"), favorito dalle "lente maglie della grammatica inglese" (15), alla solida e cogente intelaiatura del costruito italiano ("marble language").

Compagnono, in coda di volume, la *Testimonianza* di Pietro Gibellini, "Tradurre l'intraducibile Campo. Lettera a Nicola Di Nino" (1-11), seguita da due sezioni di *Inediti*: la prima, con tre lettere di Vittorio Sereni; e la seconda, intitolata *Antologia di poesie per Cristina Campo* e costituita da nove componimenti in versi scritti da alcuni dei più rappresentativi poeti contemporanei. Di elegante ed eclettica scansione, lo studio restituisce intatta la policroma variegatura della vasta opera traduttoria della Campo. Grazie a tale sistematica, unitaria e sfaccettata inchiesta, Vittoria Guerrini, intellettuale di raro valore, negletta ed elusa in vita dall'*intelligentsia* a lei coeva, viene ora proiettata di diritto sulla scena, non del tutto ancora sondata, dei contesti culturali italiani, mitteleuropei ed internazionali, del secolo breve.

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Patricia Gaborik, ed. *Pirandello in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2024. Pp. 352.

As the title of this collection of essays preannounces, the main objective of the editors was that of laying bare as many nuances as possible of one of the more complex Italian artists of the twentieth century. *Pirandello in Context* looks at the writer's many masks, analyzing his biography, oeuvre and style from several perspectives. One of the most refreshing aspects of this collection is the way essays are organized, in six thematical parts, providing a multifaceted account of some of the most controversial aspects related to the Sicilian author. Starting with "Places" (1-50), Beatrice Alfonzetti recalls Luigi Pirandello's ties with his birth region in "Sicily" (3-10) exploring how his family relationships and his environmental and mythical heritage have been pivotal in his artistic life. The move to Rome, his ambivalent experience of the city and the events that will become part of his later works are examined by Simona Costa in "Rome" (11-17), who lays the groundwork for Michael Subialka and his chapter "Germany" (18-26) on Pirandello's connection to the country, where the author's "international trajectory" (18) becomes evident. While in Bonn, his contacts with German thinkers, philosophers and written sources shape his theatrical production. Anna Frabetti follows with her recount of Pirandello's French years, in the chapter "France" (27-34) focusing on the influence of writer and translator Camille Mallarmé and her Fascist-imbued idea of Latinity. The late American days are tackled by Marella Feltrin-Morris in "The United States" (35-42), who focuses on Pirandello's disappointment towards America, despite the "magnificent welcome" (37) he was granted, and Stefano Boselli completes the geographical section with "Latin America" (43-50) and the Sicilian playwright's attraction to southern part of the continent.

The second part, "Institutions" (51-84), opens with Francesca Billiani's analysis of Pirandello's influential role on Modernism, in "Publishing" (53-59), interlacing it with the concurrent expansion of the publishing industry and the author's collaboration with three leading publishing houses. In "Little Theatres" (60-68), Mirella Schino unfolds the history of Teatro d'Arte di Roma and the playwright's experience as director of an "exceptional theatre" (60), linking it with the world, the European and then the national scene, functioning as apt introduction for Stephen Elliot Wilmer's report on Pirandello's proposal to Mussolini, hoping to establish a National Theatre after his frustrating attempts to run his small independent theatre. Although his dream was never achieved, Wilmer's claim in his chapter "National Theatres" (69-76) is that the Duce seemed to have good intentions, yet economic depression and military expenditures came in the way. Closing this section, Guido Bonsaver focuses on "The Royal Italian Academy" (77-84), envisioned by Mussolini to raise Italy's profile on the European scene. Pirandello's appointment for the Class

of Letters was not met with enthusiasm and was followed by only a few events presided by the author. Nevertheless, the Academy successfully supported his nomination for the Nobel Prize.

“Interlocutors” (85-144), the third part, starts off with Pietro Frassica’s “Marta Abba” (87-94), an analysis of Pirandello’s complex relationship with the actress and muse. The correspondence shows the playwright’s love and idealization of the woman, but also great respect for her artistic insights and suggestions. In “Massimo Bontempelli” (95-102), the main editor of this volume, Patricia Gaborik, focuses on Pirandello’s connection with the homonymous author, their shared visions and their mutual impact on each other’s work. Anna Harwell Celenza’s chapter “Gian Francesco Malipiero” (103-110) is an account of the author’s link to the composer, highlighting Pirandello’s less-known musical stories and some difficulties arising during their shared projects. Anna Frabetti, in “Georges Pitoëff” (111-19) examines his influence on Pirandello, highlighting how “Pitoëff’s conception of theatre and creative autonomy were echoed in the metatheatrical nature of the text” (113). Michael Rössner focuses on “Max Reinhardt” (120-28), whose production of *Six Characters* in Berlin created misunderstandings between the two artists, although also resulting in Pirandello’s increased fame in Germany. John A. Bertolini analyses the parallels between the Sicilian playwright and “George Bernard Shaw” (129-35), also underlining main differences such as “Shaw’s freedom from the bitterness that Pirandello feels at our buffoonish position” (132). Lastly, Pierpaolo Antonello’s reflection on links between the author, “Benedetto Croce and Adriano Tilgher” (136-44), makes us ponder Pirandello’s philosophical approaches, between historicism and irrationalism, intuition and scientific knowledge.

“Tradition and Trend, Techniques and Forms” (145-202) unfolds with Walter Pedullà’s “Humor” (147-54), an analysis of it as common denominator of Pirandello’s production, through which he proposed an idea of literature that is reflective and philosophical, through laughter. Antonella Ottai reflects on the playwright’s use of dialect, in “Dialect Theatre” (155-62) and the collaboration between Pirandello and Eduardo De Filippo. The “Metatheatre” (163-69) aspect of the stage is explored by Mary Ann Frese Witt, with her analysis of the plays Pirandello himself called “trilogy of theatre in theatre” (168). The logical follow-up is provided by William B. Worthen and his “The Fourth Wall” (170-78) focusing on how curtains, lights and proscenium play a pivotal part in the offstage and onstage theatrical technicity, and Stefano Jossa offers, in his “The Anti-Character” (179-86), a reflection on Pirandello’s main “challenge to contemporary theatre” (180) embodying the concept of duplicity. Lastly, Michael Bell unravels in “Myth” (187-94) the peculiar use of myth of the Sicilian writer, more akin to “magical realism” (192), whereas Gabriele

Pedullà focuses on the “interiorizing of” (196) “The Fantastic” (195-202) in Pirandello, anchored to humor, Sicilian folkloric traditions and “time-worn beliefs” (200).

Part V, “Culture and Society” (203-72) starts with Daniela Bini’s “History” (205-11), highlighting Pirandello’s and Nietzsche’s shared concept of it as bringing humanity to “paralysis” (206). Lisa Sarti reflects on how the playwright leveraged on his stardom, in her chapter “Celebrity” (212-18), although reflecting on the “corrosive effect” of fame on the “artist’s integrity” (213). Michael Syrimis analyses Pirandello’s rapport with “Cinema” (219-26), used as a tool to “reassess a deep-rooted sociocultural dynamic” (222) and Michael Subialka, in “Modernity” (227-34) ponders the author’s approach to modernity’s technological progress, treated with a humorous ambivalence. Gaborik enlightens the readers with a chapter on how “Fascism” (235-42) affected Pirandello’s life and production. Daniela Bini, in “Women” (243-49), focuses on the author’s dual concept of women, which will be applied to many of his female characters. Robert Pogue Harrison and Laura Wittman, in “Religion” (250-56), reflect on Pirandello’s *oeuvre* as meditation on belief, on the light of his claimed connection to Catholic Modernism. Valeria Paola Babini’s compelling chapter “Madness” (257-65) examines the correlation between literature and psychology in Pirandello’s work, deeply affected by subjectivity and mental illness, whereas Thomas Harrison unravels the concept of “Suicide” (266-72), showcasing differences in Pirandello’s male and female characters.

Part VI, “Reception and Legacy” (273-98), closes with Giulio Ferroni’s “Critical Foundations” (275-82), a reflection on the saturated field of criticism on Pirandello and the consequent Pirandellianism. Cindy Rosenthal, in “Avant-Garde Theatre after Pirandello” (283-90) ponders the author’s legacy and the evolution of theatre post-Pirandello, while Robert S. C. Gordon, in “Cinema after Pirandello” (291-98) examines overlaps between stage and auditorium, leading to a tendency to link Pirandellian metatheatre to meta-cinema.

Ultimately, *Pirandello in Context* stands as both a scholarly milestone and a testament to the continued vitality of Pirandello’s work in contemporary critical discourse. By assembling contributions from a diverse range of scholars, the volume not only broadens the scope of Pirandello studies but also deepens our understanding of his relevance across disciplines and periods. This collection is particularly valuable for scholars in Italian studies, comparative literature, and theatre history. As such, it stands as a significant contribution to Pirandello scholarship and a model for contextual literary analysis.

Alessandro Giardino. *The Caravaggio Syndrome. A Novel.* Transl. Joyce Myerson, and Alessandro Giardino. Foreword Ara H. Merjian. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2024. Pp. xxiii + 180.

It is particularly encouraging that a prestigious academic publishing house such as Rutgers UP has dedicated space to novels and creative fiction. This initiative represents a refreshing departure from the norm, as Italian creative writing—particularly the novel—is frequently overlooked despite its significant contribution to global discourse. While Italy’s literary past enjoys a well-established prestige and position within the canon, contemporary literary production often remains fragmented among minor publishers and a *mare magnum* of publishing ventures. Rutgers UP, however, has commendably provided Italophile international readers with a bold and discerning selection of new voices through the captivating series “Other Voices of Italy” (OVOI). The series’ editors—Alessandro Vettori, Sandra Waters, and Eilis Kierans—serve as reliable guarantors of the quality and significance of the works selected.

Alessandro Giardino’s novel, featuring a foreword by Ara H. Merjian, perfectly embodies the OVOI mission of elevating new voices in Italian literature. Originally published in Italian by Magmata (2021) and translated into English by the author, a Professor and Department Chair at St. Lawrence University, and Joyce Myerson, this novel exemplifies the value of authors writing from an in-between state of worlds, cultures, and epochs.

Publishers must cultivate their readership carefully, which is why few have ventured into publishing novels that defy expectations of adventurous, tourist-driven, or even supernatural plots. One such example is that of the hidden “codes” in Caravaggio’s works as seen in Dan Brown-style art-historical novels. Readers seeking such sensationalism from Giardino’s novel would inevitably be disappointed. For instance, the “syndrome” referenced in the novel’s title is used in the etymological sense of “convergence, running together,” and interconnectedness. This theme manifests not only between Giardino’s contemporary characters, but also carries over into these characters’ interactions with historical and cultural figures such as Tommaso Campanella and Michelangelo Merisi. In doing so, Giardino’s novel is astutely constructed and beautifully written, marking the remarkable debut of a young intellectual whose narrative artistry is complemented by the complexity, sophisticated structure, and undeniable allure of his work.

The novel’s thematic core of syndrome-as-convergence connects characters from its very first section (7-27). Here, academia and intellectual life are depicted in their unglamorous uncertainty and precariousness—a life of silent sacrifice and intense intellectual labor that is rarely acknowledged, even within academic circles. However, as Giardino emphasizes, dedication to liminal and lesser-known aspects of culture can yield immense courage

and satisfaction to those who pursue it. To this effect, Tommaso Campanella assumes a more prominent role than Caravaggio in the novel, as his philosophical ideas and struggles provide an intellectual foundation for the painter's art. Yet Campanella's influence also shapes the novel's convergence of destinies in a masterfully constructed interplay of spiritual affinities, soul-searching, and personal motivations.

The complexities of Campanella's philosophy are rendered through a well-researched attempt to reproduce the philosopher's seventeenth-century language and culture, while also not sacrificing the novel communicativeness. Through Campanella, the novel also explores Naples' past, particularly its Baroque grandeur during the *Secolo d'oro*. This account avoids folkloric representations in favor of a profound engagement with Neapolitan cultural and intellectual heritage. These historical elements seamlessly connect with the scholar-protagonists of the present, whose intersecting lives and pursuits unfold across a triangular geography encompassing New York State, Naples, and Paris which structurally mirrors that of the novel's major characters.

Like Caravaggio and Campanella, each character—and the protagonist Leyla above all others—seem to be restless souls striving to carve out a space of authenticity for themselves, free from the burdens of the past, and working towards a better future. The challenges they face, whether imposed by others or derived from their own past traumas, make the prospect of escape tempting yet ultimately unfulfilling. Leyla's predicament is poignantly encapsulated in a passage that reads: "Participating in a job interview to feel seductive was the ultimate proof of her existential degeneration, of the debasement into which she had been sinking" (20). On the other hand, Campanella's intellectual resilience in his prison cell parallels not only Caravaggio's escapes, but also his creations.

The way they meet, how they fall in and out of love, the life events they go through, the travels, the abandonments, the births and deaths are all parts of a plan that, as the author seems to suggest, is rooted in a sort of unscripted masterplan which can be traced back to Caravaggio's masterpiece *The Seven Works of Mercy*. This picture full of mystery and grace never ceases to fascinate both the characters who devote their scholarship to it as well as the reader who admires the image as they contemplate the characters' fate.

Leyla, a Caravaggio scholar, reflects that, "[e]very detail of a [Caravaggio] painting opened a gateway into another universe. Each protagonist was tangled up in a story that belonged to him or her alone" (26). This reflection serves as a metaphor for the characters' fragmented yet interconnected lives, shaped by their aspirations and struggles. The novel suggests that horizontal convergence among them is destined for failure, while vertical convergence—the influence of history and philosophy—imposes its own patterns, sometimes with ironic undertones. "Upon reading the books of Tommaso Campanella, lent to him by

Leyla, he wondered if sexual appetite could propel the quest for the absolute in someone who did not believe in God” (59). Nonetheless, in spite of its ironic touches, the novel ultimately presents a profound intellectual challenge and a rich fusion of cultural forms—prose, poetry, photography, and painting—that enhance its philosophical and visual depth. In this way, *The Caravaggio Syndrome* becomes a true homage to knowledge and storytelling.

Ultimately, the fictional words attributed to Campanella—“Will it travel across time and space” (73)—encapsulate the novel’s essence and leave readers pondering its impact. One can only hope that it will, as the novel undoubtedly possesses all the qualities to do so.

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Massimo Lucarelli. *Un’idea modernista di Barocco. Studio sul secondo Ungaretti*. Fano: Aras Edizioni, 2022. Pp. 384.

Nel 1950 De Robertis ha acutamente affermato che “i tre quarti della poesia di Ungaretti” si collocano sotto il segno del Barocco, “ma i semplicisti l’han fermata all’altro quarto restante, che è il primo, per non scomodarsi a capire di più” (37-38). Attraverso la sua corposa monografia, Lucarelli—che certo semplicista non è—ci scomoda (si fa per dire) con il rigore e la passione che lo caratterizzano, per accompagnarci a scoprire o riscoprire i tre quarti meno noti della produzione ungarettiana, ossia quelli successivi ai capolavori degli anni Dieci. E lo fa scandagliando il rapporto tra il poeta e il Barocco, che di questa seconda fase costituisce senza dubbio la chiave di volta. Per citare le sue parole: “l’attenzione è focalizzata non tanto sulle possibili analogie tra Ungaretti e il pensiero, la letteratura e l’arte dell’età barocca, quanto sull’idea di Barocco che Ungaretti matura nel corso degli anni, su come questa idea agisca in sede poetica e critica, su come essa vada evolvendosi in seguito a certe letture e a certe esperienze culturali e biografiche” (11).

A mo’ di introduzione, Lucarelli ripercorre il lungo e tortuoso dibattito che si è svolto, dagli anni Venti ad oggi, in seno alla critica intorno al tema del Barocco ungarettiano. Si evidenzia anzitutto come sia stato Gargiulo, nel 1924, a suggerire un nesso tra certe soluzioni simbolico-espressive attestate già nel *Porto sepolto* (1916) e uno stile barocco, inteso, però, nel senso spregiativo di concettoso all’eccesso. Si dà poi conto delle difese di interpreti quali Debenedetti, Contini e il già menzionato De Robertis, volte a fugare l’accusa di oscurità ventilata dal collega. D’altra parte, questa stessa imputazione ricade sull’autore ad opera di Flora, che stronca il *Sentimento del tempo* (1933) tacciandolo *apertis verbis* di barocchismo. Soltanto dopo l’apparizione del *Dolore* (1947) e di *Terra promessa* (1950) si registra una conversione nell’uso di questa etichetta, che transita da negativa a positiva. Il merito appartiene,

ancora una volta, a De Robertis, il quale per primo ha individuato l'esistenza di un peculiare Barocco dell'autore, che non rappresenterebbe un vizio, bensì la cifra o il fiore della sua lirica. Sulla scia di tale intuizione, le figure che in seguito sono intervenute nel dibattito—Piccioni, Anceschi, Sanguineti, Mengaldo, Ossola e Guglielmi, per ricordare i maggiori—hanno riconosciuto nella categoria di Barocco il centro nevralgico della poesia di Ungaretti posteriore all'*Allegria* (1919) e hanno cercato di definire quali significati essa assumesse ai suoi occhi. Di ciascuno Lucarelli restituisce la posizione, in maniera dettagliata benché sintetica, sottolineando, tuttavia, come la critica non sia ancora riuscita a “indagare esaurientemente l'origine e la progressiva stratificazione della complessa idea ungarettiana di Barocco” (347).

Perciò—esaurita questa storia ragionata del problema—il capitolo centrale ricostruisce, grazie a una raffinata analisi intertestuale, una costellazione di riferimenti che possono aver influito sulla concezione di Barocco sviluppata dall'autore. Il primo mediatore è d'Annunzio. Egli, che risulta “tra i principali interessi letterari di Ungaretti già negli anni egiziani” (88)—e di cui Lucarelli sorprende numerose vestigia disseminate lungo il *Porto sepolto*—sembra avergli instillato, in particolare tramite *Il piacere*, “una certa idea di Barocco, legata alla sensualità e a Roma” (89). Un secondo intermediario è Malaparte, che nel 1922 aveva propugnato su *Valori plastici* una rivalutazione del Seicento per tanti aspetti consonante con l'interpretazione di quel secolo messa a punto da Ungaretti. Un terzo è Croce. Nonostante la valorizzazione ungarettiana dell'età barocca contrasti con la condanna crociana, Lucarelli dimostra, sulla base di riscontri inequivocabili, che sei brani del *Sentimento del tempo* sono debitori di altrettanti sonetti inclusi nei *Lirici marinisti* (1910). Ne consegue che l'antologia curata da Croce sia una fonte per Ungaretti, giacché “porta alla luce poesie barocche che lasciano il segno” (132) nella sua seconda stagione creativa. Ma la recensione delle influenze non si limita al panorama nazionale. Infatti Ungaretti—che è stato collaboratore di *Commerce*, la principale rivista del modernismo europeo—da questo osservatorio privilegiato potrebbe aver assistito agli sforzi di Larbaud, Lorca e Eliot per promuovere gli scrittori secenteschi delle rispettive tradizioni, e averne tratto ispirazione per un analogo esercizio. Non pago, Lucarelli spinge la sua sonda nel campo delle arti musicali e figurative, indicando come i “tentativi di barocco esacerbato” (169) condotti da Picasso e Stravinskij, ma anche da De Chirico, possano aver inciso sulla rilettura ungarettiana dell'esperienza barocca.

Infine, il terzo e ultimo capitolo riporta in ordine cronologico tutti i testi dove Ungaretti ha parlato del Barocco, e li commenta per mostrare come la sua idea in proposito si sia progressivamente arricchita. La rassegna comprende raccolte poetiche, traduzioni, prose e saggi da cui emerge “non solo e non tanto un interesse verso la letteratura e l'arte barocca, quanto, soprattutto,

una profonda rielaborazione personale di una categoria critica” (349). Per l’Ungaretti storico, il Barocco risale a Michelangelo e Tasso, coincidendo con la risposta artistica allo sconvolgimento spiritual-gnoseologico prodotto dalle conquiste scientifiche. Ma non basta. Istituyendo un parallelismo tra lo *shock* culturale successivo alla rivoluzione copernicana e quello successivo alla Prima Guerra Mondiale, l’Ungaretti scrittore trova nel Barocco un modello per la propria lirica. In altri termini, negli autori che durante il XVII secolo avevano fronteggiato una crisi analoga a quella che anche lui, a inizio XX, stava attraversando, il poeta intuisce una tradizione a cui ancorarsi e da revitalizzare, per superare il dramma moderno della perdita di assoluto, di certezze e del valore religioso delle parole. Pertanto Lucarelli approda all’efficacissima formula di “modernismo barocco” (351).

Mentre raccomandiamo questo volume a chiunque si occupi di letteratura contemporanea—ma anche a coloro che s’interessano di Cinque-Seicento, di storia delle idee e d’intertestualità—non ci resta che augurarci che l’autore dia seguito al proposito, espresso nelle conclusioni, di allestire un commento sistematico al *Sentimento del tempo*. Sarebbe il miglior modo di mettere a frutto le tesi qui sostenute, verificando capillarmente come la raccolta incarni “un’idea modernista di Barocco”, oltreché un contributo ormai improrogabile a quanti—studenti, studiosi o semplici lettori—desiderano avventurarsi nei tre quarti più in ombra dell’opera ungarettiana.

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Giulia Martini. *L’apocalisse dialogica. Scambi di battute nella poesia italiana del Novecento*. Roma: Carocci, 2024, Pp. 428.

Giulia Martini attua in questa estesa monografia una ricognizione della forma-dialogo nella poesia novecentesca, specola da cui leggere esperienze di autori e autrici con poetiche anche molto diverse. La tesi alla base del lavoro di Martini è che il dialogo in poesia abbia nel Novecento una funzione “antidialogica” (13) cioè che rifletta una più ampia crisi “insita nella relazione tra l’io e il mondo” (15). Lo studio si inserisce in modo originale all’interno del campo di indagine sull’io lirico, grazie anche ad una prospettiva transdisciplinare che ibrida un attento *close reading* dei testi—con gli strumenti classici dell’analisi letteraria: stilistica, retorica e pragmatica—con nozioni che provengono dal campo degli studi conversazionali, includendo, solo per citarne alcune, le teorie costruttiviste e costruzioniste della soggettività (van Langenhove e Harré in particolare), la teoria patica dell’enunciazione di La Mantia e la psicoanalisi lacaniana.

La monografia si divide in quattro parti: la prima consta di tre capitoli, i quali fungono da macro-introduzione al dispositivo dialogico e permettono di

orientarsi nelle sue varie forme, nonché di rintracciarne l'origine archetipica. Il primo capitolo, "Parametri generali" (25-49), circoscrive la definizione di "dialogo". Individuate le sue principali caratteristiche (responsività, intenzionalità tra parlanti, imprevedibilità dello scambio), se ne illustrano le possibilità di manifestazione (a dialogicità totale o parziale). Nella parte finale del capitolo, si esplora la differenza tra soggetto dell'enunciazione (chi parla realmente) e soggetto dell'enunciato (la voce interna al testo). All'interno del secondo capitolo, "Introduzione al concetto di apocalisse dialogica" (51-91), si sviluppa la nozione di "apocalisse dialogica", che costituisce per l'autrice la rappresentazione della "comunicazione disfunzionale" agita dal dialogo, non più scambio armonico ma sintomo di una crisi, comunicazione "patologica" che rinvia al "malfunzionamento della comunicazione stessa" (51). Attraverso l'efficace metafora del "gioco del quindici" (che consiste nello spostamento di alcune tessere onde arrivare ad un certo ordine), Martini mostra come il dialogo dovrebbe produrre significato tramite una sequenza di "mosse": nella poesia del Novecento, invece, si verificano anomalie—esemplificate attraverso alcuni procedimenti stilistici (saturazione, fissità, straniamento, loop)—che rendono il dialogo irrisolvibile e bloccato, analogamente a un gioco rotto. La comunicazione patologica prevede quindi quella che Paul Watzlawick definisce una "squalificazione della comunicazione" (60), evidenziando un'impossibilità di scambio che passa per l'opacità (la difficoltà di attribuire e comprendere correttamente gli enunciati all'interno dello scambio dialogico) o la disconferma, talvolta anche a causa di temi "intrattabili" (80): primo fra tutti, la morte. Il terzo e ultimo capitolo di questa sezione, "Un modello di dialogo ideale" (93-112), si concentra sulla funzione modellizzante della *Commedia*, che funge da metro comparativo per analizzare le disfunzioni dialogiche nei testi che saranno affrontati successivamente.

"Matrici dell'antidialogo" (115-42) è il capitolo che apre la seconda parte, dove è l'opera di Pascoli (con testi da *Myrica*, *Canti di Castelvecchio* e *Poemetti*) ad essere presa in analisi. Ciò che ne emerge è che essi costituiscono il germe della comunicazione patologica, secondo le ricorrenti dinamiche di irrelatività, false risposte e opacità. Si prosegue nell'itinerario con il quinto capitolo, "Colloqui?" (143-74), in cui Martini, prendendo spunto da Buber, suggerisce che, nei *Colloqui* di Gozzano, più che di scambi autentici, si tratti di *chiacchiere*, ossia forme simulate di comunicazione che nascondono un'incapacità di relazione autentica (143). Gozzano in effetti corrode il parlato, che risulta manieristico e parodico, svuotandolo, e svuotando così anche il soggetto lirico, in un atteggiamento in cui Martini coglie i segnali della crisi di quest'ultimo, che attraverserà in effetti tutto il Novecento. La parte conclusiva del capitolo è dedicata ad altre forme dialogiche crepuscolari (Corazzini, Moretti e Palazzeschi).

Fondamentale risulta il sesto capitolo, “Dentro *Nel magma*” (177-220), che inaugura la parte terza, dedicata ai dialogismi in cui si fa evidente l’esplosione della crisi. Qui si mette a fuoco la trasformazione dialogica nell’opera luziana, con un’attenzione particolare a *Nel magma* (1963), definito una “rivoluzione copernicana” (177) del dialogismo novecentesco. Se all’inizio della sua parabola Luzi è refrattario al dialogo, a partire da questa raccolta diventa una forma centrale, che vede rappresentati disaccordi e diverbi, attraverso battute adespite, opache e parodiche. È una “discomunicazione fatica” (190), segnata da negatività e disagio, dove l’empatia è distorta e porta a incomprensione e isolamento. Il settimo capitolo, “Strumenti malati” (221-59), è dedicato a Sereni, i cui dialoghi sono caratterizzati, in base alle raccolte, da un parlare al negativo, dall’agone dialettico, dal *loop*, dall’ellissi. La poesia di Sereni è un campo attraversato da forme sempre più patologiche di comunicazione, fino alla negazione del dialogo stesso. Se nel capitolo ottavo, “Intendersi – per celia...” (261-77), Martini analizza *Satura* di Montale, evidenziando le disfunzioni del dialogo orientato all’argomento metafisico, e che prevede anche sagaci punte di ironia, il nono è dedicato ai rari ma significativi dialoghi in Fortini (“Fortini, le voci amiche”, 279-301). È particolarmente interessante perché nell’opera di questo poeta lo scambio dialogico finisce per ricostituire il sé attraverso interlocutori empatici. Il dialogo qui è infatti posizionale, finalizzato a “autoaffermazione, di un riposizionamento autenticante dell’io” (290). La quarta e ultima parte tratta scritture più recenti: principalmente De Angelis, Bordini e Cavalli. Nel capitolo decimo, “La parabola dell’opacità” (305-52), dai dialoghi opachi e frammentari di *Somiglianze* si passa agli scambi più articolati e cooperativi, dove “l’espedito mimetico indica e intende aprire a una possibilità di crescita epistemico-morale” (320), pur nel mantenimento di una certa opacità, fino ai *Dialoghi con le ore contate*. Il capitolo si chiude con una riflessione sul rapporto di De Angelis al dialogismo luziano. Nel capitolo dedicato a *Strategia* di Bordini, “Forme dialogiche del contrasto amoroso” (353-82), si analizza l’intreccio di elementi dell’antico genere del contrasto con una marcata componente surreale e grottesca, che dà luogo a un “depistaggio sistematico” della conversazione (353). La metafora del pugilato, impiegata da Bordini per rappresentare la dinamica relazionale tra i parlanti, viene approfondita alla luce delle teorie di Goffman, in particolare per quanto riguarda la natura strategica delle interazioni. L’ultimo capitolo del lavoro di Martini, “Il felice niente del dialogo” (383-402), esplora la poesia di Cavalli, in cui attraverso la tecnica dello “scarto dell’interlocutore” (383), ovvero il suo rifiuto, si mette in moto un uso particolare dell’antidialogismo, che prevede l’investitura poetica. Il libro si chiude su una disamina di *Noi*, di Alessandro Broggi, modello di “dialogo ideale” (406), opposto e speculare alla *Commedia*, da cui l’autrice era partita.

Lo studio di Giulia Martini risulta convincente per via della lettura rigorosa e innovativa che fa del dispositivo dialogico, attenta al suo manifestarsi sia rispetto alla forma che assume nei testi che ai temi in esso suscitati, ed è arricchita da un apparato critico ampio e transdisciplinare. Strumento senz'altro prezioso per un commento puntuale ai testi, questa monografia riesce nel far *dialogare* tra loro poeti e voci critiche (giovani e già storicizzate), orientandosi verso una teoria lirica del dialogo, che conferma e approfondisce alcuni aspetti del valore etico e conoscitivo della poesia.

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Chiara Mazzucchelli. *Bastimenti d'inchostro. La Grande emigrazione nella letteratura siciliana (1876-1924)*. Palermo: Kalós, 2024. Pp. 152.

It is through the works of selected Sicilian writers that Chiara Mazzucchelli explores a topic often considered taboo in anthologies to avoid challenging the glorification of post-unification Italy: the mass emigration from Sicily and the Italian South. With *Bastimenti d'inchostro*, the author produces a fundamental overview to convey the impact of this exodus which, according to Salvatore Ferlita, “[ha] marchiato a fuoco la vita della povera gente” (11). Indeed, Mazzucchelli notices how the Sicilian migration between the 19th and the 20th centuries didn't just consist in “una semplice questione di pressione demografica” (25). The author actually argues that the phenomenon should be primarily read as an act of collective working-class protest against their rulers.

After Giolitti's government brutally repressed proletarian insurrection attempts, the Sicilian *Fasci* found expression in emigration. In this context, the intellectual “Italia pensante” was uttered to owe more care for the concerns present in the “Italia faticante” and the “Italia errante” (33), which was relocated everywhere and nowhere at the same time, displacing *sicilianità* in foreign contexts. Ignoring the needs of the lower classes led to a fragmented community in conflict, thus contributing to a diaspora that plagued the island and endangered the maintenance of its social structure. Consequently, the metaphor of Sicily as a warm nest, safe cliff, or natural home frequently appeared in the literary works of Giovanni Verga and Maria Messina, and to some extent also in those of Luigi Capuana and Luigi Pirandello. The imagery supported an anti-migration stance aimed at preserving the land from the devastating effects of migration.

After analysing the socio-cultural context in the chapter “La grande omissione” (21-46), Mazzucchelli presents the emigration perception for Giovanni Verga's production in the section “Il coltello del palomaro” (47-57), then for Maria Messina's in “Pareva la guerra” (59-85), for Luigi Capuana's in “Oh, la patria” (87-107) and finally for Luigi Pirandello's in “Pïo pïo pïo” (109-

36). Mazzucchelli acknowledges Verga's intention to support "sicilianness" as a means to resist the so-called diver's knife which strives to remove the island's oysters from their world, as specified in the *Malavoglia* (53). This metaphor well applies to the Sicilian culture support in opposition to the Northern Italian hegemony which followed the Unification. In this way, the forefather of Verism is acknowledged for transforming the "maledizione dell'isola" (47) into a blessing of resilience and determination of the self. For Verga, the essence of his land was upheld in the face of those who viewed the Southern people as violent and irrational, "a differenza degli italiani del Nord che affrontavano il nuovo disegno politico con disciplina e acume" (48). Despite being looked down as inferiors, the Sicilians drew on their common origins to foster a shared awareness that transcended discrimination. Mazzucchelli reminds us how in Verga's novel *I Malavoglia*, the characters who leave their homeland never achieve self-realization. Instead, they only lose themselves while seeking fortune in a cruel environment that rejected and exploited them. In this respect, Mazzucchelli agrees with Antonio Di Grado's description of Sicily reclaiming the space denied to it through literature. Here the island becomes an idyllic "isola di carta" (49) where its atavistic diversity critiques the wrongdoings from the *continente* and to other abroad places.

Rediscovered after half a century, Maria Messina's writings are also examined by Mazzucchelli in her book to profile an author who ultimately broke with the male gaze tradition on Sicilian emigration in literature. Indeed, Messina chose to focus on the sorrow of women who were abandoned by their children and husbands who decided to emigrate. Experiencing the same ill treatments as those leaving, along with identity loss, her characters come to the conclusion that "Il meglio è che ciascuno resti dove è nato" (67). Messina's tale *La Merica* is just one of her many literary works depicting entire Sicilian villages mourning their beloved family members who about to leave forever, conveyed with unverbose lyricism. This atmosphere resembled a war-like situation, turning local women into martyrs of emigration, known as "vedove bianche" (69). Consequently, emigration is portrayed as an illness, a perilous experience without positive outcome, luring the young toward a sickening perdition, much like a "mala femmina" (71) would.

Nevertheless, both Luigi Capuana and Luigi Pirandello expressed more favourable views on the Sicilian exodus, acknowledging that the "emigrati di ritorno" (102) provided valuable contributions upon their return to Sicily. They helped boost cultural and economic renewal, which was otherwise hindered by the gap between the North and South of Italy. As part of the "borghesia illuminata" (90), Capuana promoted a unified country with a common language, while still preserving the "folklore dell'isola" (92) to describe the life conditions of the "piccoli scapestrati siciliani" (93). Furthermore,

Mazzucchelli mentions Capuana's novel *Gli "Americani" di Ràbbato* to highlight the dual perspective of emigration overseas, where young Italians could easily be misled to illegality by unscrupulous groups like the "Mano Nera" (100). Similarly, Pirandello captured the terrible loneliness faced by his compatriots in the short story *Nell'albergo è morto un tale*, while recognizing that the "Grande emigrazione" (112) often represented the lesser evil to escape misery and address the backwardness in the South as addressed by the *questione meridionale*.

In conclusion, Chiara Mazzucchelli brilliantly captures the struggles of Sicily between the 19th and 20th centuries by presenting the complexity of various perspectives on a significant phenomenon that transformed Sicily over time. After years of neglecting emigration in Italian literature, she skilfully rediscovers how canonical writers addressed the topic, welcoming returning emigrants like the American melting pot theory embraced those left out by other systems' deficiencies. It is admirable that, despite the way emigration caused "una frattura insanabile nella realtà e nelle relazioni sociali dell'emigrante" (132), Sicily attempted to reintegrate its people. When publishing *Gli "Americani" di Ràbbato* (1912), "La patria... è sempre la patria" (102) becomes the pivotal message Capuana expresses to safeguard Sicilianness beyond migration. The literary cases examined in the book demonstrates how Unification distorted the image of the South by "alimentando luoghi comuni e stereotipi negativi" (99). Besides, Mazzucchelli explains the bond created by the "sindrome dell'insularità" (56), which keeps Sicily in its natives' hearts and vice versa under any circumstance, thus securing that the welcoming nest of literature never allowed an actual dispersion of the self.

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Marco Medugno. *Literature of the Somali Diaspora. Space, Language and Resistance in Somali Novels in English and Italian*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2024. Pp. 248.

Building on the troubled Somali literary history, and on the quite recent development of Somali prose after the formalisation of orthography in the 1970s, *Literature of the Somali Diaspora: Space, Language and Resistance in Somali Novels in English and Italian* by Marco Medugno explores the endurance of Somali literature in the diaspora, and the ways in which authors can recreate and narrate their country from abroad. The author focuses on Somali novels written in two specific languages, English and Italian, with the intent of adopting a transnational and comparative approach to Somali diasporic literature, and especially to texts published post-2000

which are concerned with the civil war and its aftermath. In acknowledging that diasporic spaces are “sites of confluence and convergence—of people, languages and cultures” (4), Medugno successfully moves beyond the physicality of said spaces in order to investigate their constant movement and transformation, without necessarily focusing on the dichotomy between “home” and “abroad.” Rooted in postcolonial studies, transnationalism, diaspora studies and literary geography, the present study investigates the ways in which Somalia can become a metaphor, the dream of a country dreamed from afar.

The first chapter (27-68) identifies key places in the Somali diasporic imaginary, focusing on symbolically relevant *loci* in both Mogadishu and Rome, as represented in the literary works by Nuruddin Farah, Afdhere Jama, Garane Garane, Ubx Cristina Ali Farah, Igiaba Scego and Shirin Ramzanali Fazel. The strength of this chapter lies in the way in which each section explores a real and fictionalised place that plays a fundamental role in diasporic imagination. Some of these places can be considered liminal spaces, such as the airports in Mogadishu and Rome, or the Stazione Termini (the main train station in Rome). The latter plays a particularly complex role, given the entanglement of several stories of immigration, racism and resilience that take place there. On the other hand, airports seem to be particularly amalgamated with local practices, even though they appear to represent and coagulate the main troubles of the diasporic subject: “through visas, passports, dual citizenship, immigration and anti-terrorism laws, airports have become the testing ground for diasporic identities moving to the Global North” (39). Particularly enlightening is Medugno’s discussion on the Italian colonial past, especially in relation to Garane Garane’s novella *Il latte è buono*. The author highlights the cultural amnesia that affects Italy when faced with the memory of the Fascist rule in the *corno d’Africa*, and the ways in which “Italians seem to completely ignore Somalia’s existence” (41). In juxtaposition to liminal spaces such as train stations and airports, the market in Mogadishu also plays a significant role in the Somali diasporic imagination, particularly so in the works by Nuruddin Farah and Cristina Ali Farah. According to Medugno, the literary representation of places like the Bakhaaraha and Tamarind Markets in the Somali capital city, with their structure and organisation, allows us to trace Somalia’s national formation and fragmentation, both in pre-colonial and postcolonial times. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which Siad Barre—the politician and revolutionary who was responsible for the major Somali *coup d’état* in 1969—instrumentalised markets in favour of clan ideology in order to strengthen his power.

Still focused on spatiality, but with a larger opening towards literary-oriented readings, the second chapter (69-104) focuses on literary

cartographies of Mogadishu. Even though the *corpus* chosen by the author for this analysis is formed by authors that are characterised by individual stylistic features, this chapter highlights how literary representations of Mogadishu represent a bond unifying all these authors. Building on Robert Tally's studies on spatiality and Édouard Glissant's "archeological approach," Medugno shows how Somali diasporic novels can be read as a narrative map of Mogadishu. The concept of mapping is in itself problematic, given that it is reminiscent of colonial cartography and strategies of conquest. The way in which Mogadishu is geographically and topographically represented in the *corpus* of this book shows the friction between Somali identity and the enduring presence of Italian toponymy. Italian colonialism, indeed, "involved education, politics, architecture, urban planning and [...] a reconfiguration of space as a way of exerting control over colonial subjects" (75). Medugno explores this tension extensively, while paying particular attention to Garane Garane's novella in comparison with colonial texts. Particularly relevant to this analysis are also Nuruddin Farah's novels *Links* and *Crossbones*, which Medugno interrogates in order to better understand the presence of multilingualism in the Somali diasporic prose (105-40). This chapter builds on the discussion on the role and use of Italian language in diasporic novels and on the significance of spatiality in the making of the postcolonial self. The literary analysis of these works is deepened by the comparison with Dante Alighieri's *Commedia*, and with the echoes and reverberations between the texts. Also relevant is the beginning of a discussion on the use of the spoken word in diasporic prose, continued in the following chapter (141-62). Here, the author explores the way in which the Somali oral tradition, which was prevalent until the formalisation of orthography in the 1970s, entwines with the written word, and investigates the role of orature in the literature of the Somali diaspora. Medugno makes an important clarification in addressing the previous scholarship on the topic of orature, often intended as a mere aesthetic aspect that could confirm an author as "African." According to Medugno, it is necessary to contextualise the *corpus* in its multicultural references and not simply basing the analysis on vague "African" references. The literary analysis of Garane's *Il latte è buono* is particularly interesting insofar as it shows the encounter of Italian and Somali languages in the novella, and the ways in which the choice of leaving some words untranslated is a political gesture: the word that cannot be translated can acquire a higher status, demanding the reader's attention, and it does not necessary have to belong to a proverb or an idiomatic sentence, as it was often thought in the past. To conclude Medugno's analysis, the final chapter (163-202) interrogates the presence and the meaning of *resistenza* and *impegno* in postcolonial Somali novels in Italian. These two concepts—particularly relevant in Italian Marxist theory and in Italian

twentieth-century history—also seem to play an important role in Somali diasporic literature in the Italian language, particularly in Igiaba Scego's novel *Adua*, which exposes patterns of discrimination, cultural alienation, and friction between two different iterations of trauma.

In *Literature of the Somali Diaspora*, Marco Medugno offers a richly layered and methodologically rigorous exploration of Somali diasporic literature in both English and Italian, through a carefully selected *corpus*. By weaving together postcolonial theory, spatial analysis and a deep engagement with orature, Medugno shows how Somali authors in the diaspora map a homeland both remembered and re-imagined. His work illuminates the persistent relevance of colonial legacies, the symbolic importance of space, and the linguistic hybridity that characterises Somali diasporic prose. The comparative approach across languages, geographies and literary traditions broadens the scope of Somali literary studies. Furthermore, it invites further research into other multilingual diasporas. This study by Marco Medugno is a valuable contribution to postcolonial and diaspora studies, and it highlights the ways in which literature can reframe identity and reclaim history from afar.

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Stiliana Milkova Rousseva, and Saskia Elizabeth Ziolkowski, eds. *Natalia Ginzburg's Global Legacies*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024. Pp. xi + 277.

Questo volume, curato dalle studiose Stiliana Milkova Rousseva e Saskia Elizabeth Ziolkowski, raccoglie vari saggi su Natalia Ginzburg (1916-1991) che da qualche anno riscuote una rinnovata attenzione a livello globale. Il volume risponde dunque all'esigenza di attualizzare il discorso critico su di essa alla luce delle nuove tendenze critico-letterarie che la posizionano, oggi, in primo piano nella produzione culturale del Novecento. Le curatrici precisano infatti come “[t]his volume does not serve as a reintroduction, but brings together new, interdisciplinary approaches to Ginzburg and makes available in English important Italian research” (3).

Nel primo capitolo introduttivo, intitolato “Introduction: Global Ginzburg—Reading Natalia Ginzburg in the Twenty-First Century” (1-14), le curatrici pongono la ricezione favorevole della scrittrice all'interno di un rinnovato interesse in ambito anglosassone. Non solo infatti di lei hanno scritto autori importanti come Sally Rooney o Colm Tóibín, ma il successo di Elena Ferrante ha potuto riflettersi sulla rilettura di autrici italiane, fra cui la Ginzburg. Associando studiosi anglofoni e italiani, il volume intende dunque porre il lavoro di Ginzburg all'incrocio delle maggiori traiettorie di indagine letteraria per aprirsi a nuovi approcci: pratiche traduttive, “world literature”, studi transnazionali, identità di genere fluide, “queer studies”, “speech act

theory”, “intersectional feminism”, studi sul trauma, topografia, ebraismo (4). Le studiose riconoscono infatti come Ginzburg abbia saputo raccontare la Storia, il fascismo, le leggi razziali, la Seconda guerra mondiale, l'esilio e le difficoltà dell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra attraverso il punto di vista di personaggi marginali e storie famigliari individuali (2).

Curiosamente, l'“Introduction” appartiene al Primo capitolo che, in realtà, oltre all'Introduzione suddetta, comprende anche altre sezioni intitolate “World Literature and World Making”, “Female bodies, Voices, and Gazes”, “Identity, Topography, and Forms” che saranno poi le sezioni in cui l'intero volume è stato suddiviso, ciascuna delle quali composta da vari capitoli ognuno scritto da una studiosa/uno studioso.

In questo primo capitolo, dunque, si riassumono o introducono le sezioni da cui il volume è composto. Troviamo poi la Parte Uno del volume che inizia con il Capitolo 2, intitolato “Publishing Natalia Ginzburg in the Anglophone World” (17-38), in cui Teresa Franco rende conto delle vicende traduttive in inglese dei testi della Ginzburg. Nel Capitolo 3, intitolato “Ginzburg's Worlds: The World-making Power of the Short Story” (39-64), Silvia Caserta si concentra sui racconti brevi della Ginzburg, da non considerare erroneamente alla stregua di opere minori. Nel Capitolo 4, intitolato “Born Untranslatable? On the Translation, Reception and Transnational Circulation of Ginzburg's *Family Lexicon*” (65-88), Cecilia Schwartz descrive e analizza la traduzione, circolazione e ricezione di *Lessico famigliare* nel contesto svedese accostandolo per esempio all'opera di Grazia Deledda. A questo punto inizia la parte Due del volume che esordisce con il Capitolo 5, intitolato “Women's Bodies in Natalia Ginzburg's Fiction” (91-110), nel quale Giovanna Faleschini Lerner evidenzia l'interesse di Ginzburg non tanto per il femminismo come ideologia, piuttosto per l'idea del femminile come valenza corporea, anticipando quello che Elizabeth Grosz ha definito “femminismo corporeo” e Iris Marion Young's “fenomenologia incarnata”. Nel Capitolo 6, intitolato “The Female Voice as a Form of Resistance: Natalia Ginzburg's Speech Acts” (111-36), Serena Todesco analizza il tema della vocalità non solo attraverso le opere della narratrice, ma anche le sue interviste radiofoniche. Nel Capitolo 7, “From Closet to Absence: Queering Family Roles and Gender Norms in Natalia Ginzburg's *Valentino* and *Happiness, As Such*” (137-58), Enrica Maria Ferrara individua nei romanzi *Valentino* e *Caro Michele*, due opere nelle quali i ruoli di genere sono rappresentati in modo innovativo. È specialmente nella seconda (il cui titolo inglese è stato reso con *Happiness, As Such*) che l'identità di genere è vista come costruito sociale così come la famiglia tradizionale, in un'epoca, gli anni Settanta, in cui mascolinità e patriarcato venivano fortemente messi in discussione. Il Capitolo 8, intitolato “When a Film is Beautiful, I Remember It”: Natalia Ginzburg at the Movies”

(159-80), Maria Rizzarelli prende in considerazione gli articoli che la narratrice pubblicava su varie riviste e nei quali recensiva i film cui aveva assistito o meglio raccontava la sua esperienza di spettatrice davanti a opere cinematografiche che erano state in grado di colpire la sua immaginazione. La Parte Terza del volume inizia con il Capitolo 9 intitolato “Topographies of Trauma, Loss, and Mourning in Natalia Ginzburg’s Early Works” (183-204), nel quale Stiliana Milkova Rousseva analizza la presenza del topos della città (Torino nello specifico) nel lavoro della scrittrice. Il paesaggio urbano diviene così una sorta di topografia del trauma, della prigione, del silenzio e del sacrificio. Nel Capitolo 10, intitolato “Narrative Modes in Elsa Morante and Natalia Ginzburg’s Family Novels” (205-30), Stefania Lucamante indaga invece le relazioni intertestuali tra le due maggiori autrici del nostro Novecento. Nel Capitolo 11, “Neither Rich, Nor Poor, Neither Jewish, Nor Catholic: The Legacies of Natalia Ginzburg’s Negations” (231-54), Saskia Elizabeth Ziolkowski spiega come la scrittrice rigettasse, a livello testuale, categorie o posizioni d’autorità autoriale. Nel Capitolo 12, “Natalia Ginzburg’s Essay ‘The Jews’ and its Trials” (255-71), Domenico Scarpa prende in esame l’editoriale della *Stampa* scritto dall’autrice nel 1972, in occasione degli eventi di Monaco e dei Giochi Olimpici, per concludere che si tratta di un testo al contempo autobiografico, riflessivo e politico.

Questo ambizioso volume riesce nell’intento di proporre una complessa e variegata disamina del lavoro e della figura di Natalia Ginzburg, utile per comprendere come questa autrice sia così amata anche oggi dal pubblico. Forse un’organizzazione più chiara del volume avrebbe giovato alla sua fruizione, trattandosi appunto di un lavoro così articolato. In conclusione, ci viene restituita la complessità del pensiero di una scrittrice che ha saputo raccontare la contemporaneità in modo assolutamente originale. Per tale motivo questa raccolta risulta una lettura importante per gli studiosi di letteratura italiana contemporanea nonché di letterature comparate.

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Pietro Milone. *L’oltraggio di Pirandello e Dante. Dio, inconscio, fantasmi, poesia*. Pesaro: Metauro, 2023. Pp. 407.

L’“oltraggio” a cui fa riferimento il titolo della monografia di Pietro Milone su Luigi Pirandello, è un dantismo concernente l’ineffabilità della *visio Dei*: *Da quinci innanzi il mio veder fu maggio / che ’l parlar mostra, ch’a tal vista cede, / e cede la memoria a tanto oltraggio* (Par. 33.55-57). Milone elegge questo dantismo a cifra interpretativa dell’opera di Pirandello, egli stesso studioso di Dante.

Dopo la serie di prodigiose antitesi contenute nella preghiera di San Bernardo alla Vergine, la terza Cantica si sofferma sulla visione finale “come

superamento di ogni limite della percezione [...], del linguaggio e della memoria” (301). Tuttavia, come ha scritto Lino Pertile, “a differenza dei mistici Dante non viene annientato dalla visione [...], perché [...] lo scopo ultimo della visione dantesca è il poema” (“*Paradiso XXXIII: l'estremo oltraggio*”, *Filosofia e critica*, 6, 1, 1981, 7).

D'altra parte, in una novella di Pirandello del 1902, *Quand'ero matto*—rappresentativa del “superamento dei limiti della [...] coscienza” (344), messi in discussione nel secolo del positivismo dallo psicologo Alfred Binet (1857-1911) in *Altérations de la personnalité* (1892)—il narratore e protagonista Fausto Bandini reca testimonianza della propria trascorsa follia. Quest'ultima, scrive Pirandello, consisteva in un vedere “oltre la vista naturale”, ovvero in una “divina visione” che accoglieva in sé “la vita del mondo” e “l'Essere nella sua unità” (*Tutte le novelle*, a c. di Lucio Lugnani, vol. 1, 1884-1904. Milano: RCS libri, 2007, 766-767). Pirandello tornerà sull’“oltranza” di un'esperienza come quella di Bandini—in bilico tra il divino e lo psichico, tra il “dio di dentro” e il “punto vivo” dell'essere umano—nella conclusione di *Uno, nessuno e centomila* del 1925 (a c. di Giancarlo Mazzacurati. Torino: Einaudi, 2014, 163-65 e 189-91).

Milone osserva che lo “spossezzamento” (342) del protagonista di *Quand'ero matto* ha anche un carattere morale. Questo spossezzamento è proprio del *pazzus* francescano caro al Pirandello della revisione del 1925 del romanzo *Si gira...* (1916), revisione dal titolo *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore* (Antonio Sichera, *Ecce homo! Nomi, cifre e figure di Pirandello*. Firenze: Olschki 2005).

Nella novella *Quand'ero matto*, la bontà della follia di Bandini, secondo Milone, “coincide con un altruismo e una pietà empatica che possiamo [...] dire naturale” (342). Il riferimento di Milone all'empatia è esatto, dal momento che, scrive Pirandello, quando Bandini decide di “rientrare” nella propria coscienza, egli lo fa “per vedere gli altri in [sé stesso] com'essi si vedevano, per sentirli [in sé stesso] com'essi in loro si sentivano e volerli com'essi si volevano” (*Tutte le novelle*, vol. 1, 767).

Si può aggiungere, come ha dimostrato Davide Savio (“La coscienza degli altri in noi. Pirandello *bricoleur* e la filosofia morale di Alfred Fouillée”, *Pirandelliana*, 14, 2020, 23-36), che alla base dell'inflessione altruistica a cui Pirandello sottopone l’“oltraggio” dantesco, vi sono non solo le pagine di Binet, ma anche e soprattutto quelle del filosofo Alfred Fouillée (1838-1912), autore nel 1889 di *Fondements psychologiques et métaphysiques de la moralité*.

La metodologia del libro è illustrata nell'introduzione, “La forma necessaria del critico fantastico” (9-21)—*Un critico fantastico* è il titolo d'un articolo di Pirandello, pubblicato in *Nuova antologia* (1905), sul

romanzo *L'illustrissimo* di Alberto Cantoni (1841-1904). Nell'“Introduzione”, Milone sostiene la necessità d'intrecciare filologia ed ermeneutica, proprio come Pirandello aveva fatto nel saggio *L'umorismo* (1908). Analogamente a Pirandello, infatti, Milone struttura il suo libro in una Prima Parte (“Pirandello, Dante e l'oltre: il poeta e la fantasia”, 23-221) e in una Seconda Parte (“Il dio di Pirandello e il Dio di Dante: pensiero della realtà e fantasma poetico”, 223-391). Nella Prima Parte, Milone ricostruisce le tracce più visibili della presenza di Dante in Pirandello. Nella Seconda Parte, l'autore s'affida a una maggiore libertà interpretativa e mostra come l'“oltraggio” di *Par.* 33 informi di sé anche quegli aspetti dell'opera di Pirandello in cui la presenza di Dante non è richiamata esplicitamente. Così facendo, Milone sfrutta una fantasia creatrice che l'Agrientino, tramite l'insegnamento di Francesco De Sanctis su Dante, equipara al *deus in nobis* (un'altra fonte di Pirandello concernente il ruolo della fantasia, è *l'Essai sur le génie dans l'art* del filosofo Gabriel Séailles, pubblicato nel 1883).

Nella Prima Parte del suo libro, Milone ricorda che fin da studente Pirandello annotava la terza Cantica della *Commedia*, essendo intrigato “dalla capacità della nostra fantasia a intendere i canti celesti, che la parola non può esprimere” (Giuseppe Bolognese, *Introduzione* a Luigi Pirandello, *Chiose al Paradiso di Dante*. Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 1996, 19 nota). Questa fase giovanile di Pirandello è collegata alle successive teorizzazioni ed espressioni della sua “visionarietà” (ad esempio, il saggio “L'azione parlata” del 1899 e la genesi novellistica dei *Sei personaggi* del 1921), da un'osservazione di Annamaria Andreoli. Secondo quest'ultima, leggendo la *Commedia* e disegnando su taccuini e lettere delle teste talvolta caricaturali di uomo, Pirandello si concentrava sulle “vicende dei Personaggi”, cercando di “vedere la scena” degli episodi messi in versi da Dante, e andando così *oltre la vista naturale* (“Alla scoperta di una biblioteca”, in *I libri in maschera. Luigi Pirandello e le biblioteche*. Roma: De Luca, 1996, 47).

Sempre nella Prima Parte del volume, l'autore scrive che il primo scritto critico su Dante di qualche rilievo, è *Il Libro di Giobbe e la Divina Commedia* (in *Prometeo*, 1885). Questo scritto affrontava i temi del male, della giustizia terrena e divina, sullo sfondo dell'evoluzione del culto ottocentesco di Dante. Entro le coordinate della rivisitazione di tale culto maturava in Italia una riflessione sul rapporto tra pensiero filosofico e poesia (si pensi alla figura di Francesco Paolo Perez, 1812-92), in contrasto con l'erudizione del metodo storico-positivo—un tema che di lì a poco avrebbe coinvolto Pirandello direttamente. È il caso, ad esempio, del carattere filosofico del romanzo *Il fu Mattia Pascal* del 1904, ma anche, oltre al saggio *L'umorismo* del 1908, degli articoli di *Arte e scienza* dello stesso anno, tra cui *Per uno studio sul verso di Dante*.

Quest'ultimo saggio è il primo dei tre articoli su Dante firmati da un Pirandello ormai maturo studioso. Il secondo è una *Lectura Dantis* fiorentina del 1916 (su *Inf.* 21), confluita due anni dopo nella *Rivista d'Italia* (con il titolo *La commedia dei diavoli e la tragedia di Dante*). In questo saggio, Milone coglie il tentativo di Pirandello di una lettura umoristica delle Malebolge, che al tempo stesso tenesse conto della temperie “infernale” (la Prima guerra mondiale) in cui si svolse la *Lectura Dantis*. Il terzo e ultimo articolo su Dante del Pirandello professore è una recensione a *La poesia di Dante* di Benedetto Croce (*L'idea nazionale*, 1921). In questo scritto, Pirandello ritorce contro Croce l'obiezione che la *Commedia* non sia poesia in senso proprio, ma una finzione a freddo di carattere essenzialmente teologico. Per Pirandello, infatti, la distinzione di fantasia e teologia, poesia e sistema, equivale in realtà a una relazione dialettica, espressione sia del *deus in nobis* sia della riflessività di un poeta che, come ha scritto Pertile, non si lascia sopraffare dalla potenza della sua visione.

La Prima Parte del volume di Milone si conclude con l'analisi della presenza di Dante nelle novelle *Il guardaroba dell'eloquenza* (1909) e *Quando si è qualcuno* (1933). Nella prima, Dante è evocato per criticare la vuota retorica di stampo dannunziano. Nella seconda novella, Dante simboleggia la libertà “oltraggiosa” di una fantasia, che non si sottrae alla possibilità della rappresentazione.

Nella Seconda Parte di *L'oltraggio di Pirandello e Dante*, Milone fa dell'“oltraggio” di *Par.* 33, come s'è già accennato, la chiave d'accesso alla poetica pirandelliana dell'*oltre* (come la definirebbe Giacomo Debenedetti), in tutte le sue sfaccettature, anche quando Dante non è tematicamente presente. Queste sfaccettature dell'“oltraggio” includono l'oltranza dello stile (sino alla messinscena del mito nell'incompiuto *I giganti della montagna*) e la critica feroce, anch'essa d'impronta dantesca, della società post-risorgimentale (il romanzo *I vecchi e i giovani* del 1913, ma anche una commedia demolitrice della ipocrisia borghese, come *L'uomo, la bestia e la virtù* del 1919).

In questa parte del suo libro, Milone utilizza la chiave interpretativa con cui ha accostato le vicende di Bandini in *Quand'ero matto* (1902), per leggere con originalità altri testi di Pirandello. Tra questi ulteriori testi pirandelliani, si possono menzionare le novelle *Stefano Giogli uno e due* (1909), *Il treno ha fischiato* (1914) e *La distruzione dell'uomo* (1921); l'opera teatrale *Lazzaro* (1929); lo scritto *Quando manca la data di morte* (1935).

L'opera di Pirandello, nell'interpretazione di Milone, è rappresentativa di quella che lo psicanalista cileno Ignacio Matte Blanco (1908-95) chiamava “bi-logica” (*L'inconscio come insieme infiniti: saggio sulla bi-logica*. Torino: Einaudi, 1981): la follia non esclude la ragione ma vi si combina, il dato di realtà s'accompagna alla fantasia e alla sua forza creatrice.

L'oltraggio di Pirandello e Dante. Dio, inconscio, fantasmi, poesia è un volume d'interesse per chi studia Pirandello in una prospettiva comparativa, ma anche per chi segue la fortuna di Dante nella modernità (occidentale), senza arrestarsi a Giovanni Pascoli, Thomas Eliot, Ezra Pound o Eugenio Montale.

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Giorgio Nisini, and Massimiliano Tortora, eds. *Gadda. Tra caso unico e modello*. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2024. Pp. xvi + 312.

Il volume *Tra caso unico e modello*, a cura di Tortora e Nisini, è l'esito del terzo dei *Colloqui d'Italianistica* organizzato dalla Fondazione Camillo Caetani in occasione del cinquantesimo anniversario della morte di Carlo Emilio Gadda (21 maggio 1973), *Tra modello e caso unico: Gadda e/nella letteratura italiana del Novecento (influenze, ricezione, rapporti culturali)*. I *Colloqui* prevedevano due momenti, uno seminariale, che si è tenuto a Roma presso il Palazzo Caetani il 17 maggio 2023, nel corso del quale hanno conferito insigni gaddisti come Giorgio Patrizi, cui i curatori hanno scelto di dedicare il volume. Successivamente, gli studiosi presenti al seminario hanno convogliato le loro ricerche nei contributi che hanno dato corpo al volume.

Nel panorama della ricca ma non sterminata bibliografia gaddiana, i curatori intendono mostrare che, dopo aver tentato di piegare Gadda a esigenze storico-letterarie, la via migliore per comprendere la sua opera sia invece arrendersi all'aporia per la quale egli è sia "anticipatore delle istanze sperimentali" degli anni Sessanta-Settanta, sia "attardato con il suo ostinato recupero di formule moderniste tipiche di inizio secolo", condizione che fa comunque di lui "la *crux desperationis* di ogni periodizzazione letteraria del Novecento". Il titolo del volume, che rielabora quello dei *Colloqui*, mette al centro la figura dell'autore in quanto caso unico, proprio per comprendere la sua complessità di essere umano e, dunque, di scrittore. Il volume cerca quindi di mettere a fuoco Gadda in quanto autore, trattandolo come se fosse lui stesso uno dei suoi personaggi, che sono prima di tutto persone reali, che l'autore poi "trasforma, avvolge in un bozzolo, gnomerizza", come nota Arnaldo Liberati dichiarandosi un "gaddofilo".

Il volume è organizzato in tre macro sezioni precedute dall'introduzione dei curatori e da due contributi che hanno lo scopo di delineare la cornice critica entro cui si dipana il resto dell'analisi. Nel primo intervento, Paola Italia, in "Gaddamachia, tra vita e opere" (3-12), attraverso un focus sul *Giornale di guerra e di prigionia* di recente edizione (Milano, Adelphi, 2023), ricorda la complessità e la difficoltà dei tentativi di integrazione delle varie parti gaddiane, tanto dell'opera quanto dell'autore, soprattutto a causa della

sua dualità intrinseca di archiviòmane che allo stesso tempo invocava l'oblio dei suoi materiali. Gadda percepiva il futuro come una sfida alla perfezione, postura che gli impediva di vivere e che traduceva nelle sue opere-relitto, mai terminate. Infatti, nel corso del secondo intervento, "Gadda 1963" (13-28), Cristina Savettieri approfondisce proprio le caratteristiche di intempestività di Gadda in relazione a uno di questi "relitti", *La cognizione del dolore*, la cui facies è di essere "non l'esito di un programma di poetica ma il frutto di una catastrofe storica" (23).

A seguire, le tre sezioni: "Gadda e la tradizione del moderno" (29-106); "Gadda e i contemporanei" (107-236); "Ricezioni gaddiane" (237-96). La prima sezione si apre con il saggio di Matilde Passafaro, "La parabola di Cesare dal *Giornale* al *Pasticciaccio*" (31-46), che fa il punto sulle nuove riflessioni in merito all'influenza già nota di Cesare nell'opera gaddiana. Segue Alessandro Iacovetta con "L'ombra lunga di Giordano Bruno" (47-60), che evidenzia le tangenzialità riguardo al concetto filosofico di conoscenza. Edoardo Bassetti ragiona invece ancora sulla barocaggine gaddiana, attraverso "Un'attualizzazione dei precursori a posteriori, da Caravaggio e Pasolini" (61-76). Infine, Alessandro Urgesi fornisce prove della presenza dell'economista e sociologo Pareto in "Vilfredo Pareto come fonte della *Meditazione milanese*" (77-92), mentre Edoardo Panei argomenta "L'influenza crociana nella poetica del Racconto italiano" (93-106).

La seconda sezione è inaugurata dalle riflessioni di Samuele Petrocchi sui comuni tratti di una linea espressionista tra Gadda e il pittore Lorenzo Viani: "Gadda e Viani: tratti di una linea espressionista" (109-24). Segue poi il contributo di Edoardo Barghini che in "Gadda e il canone delle memorie di guerra" (125-40), descrive le peculiarità gaddiane in relazione all'ideologia di regime nella Grande Guerra. Invece, Carolina Rossi in "L'autore in pubblico. Gadda e Vittorini" (141-60) si interroga sul ruolo di Elio Vittorini, non solo come editore ma anche come scrittore, all'interno del "fenomeno Gadda". Lucia Battistel si sofferma poi sull'interpretazione di Piero Bigongiari in merito alla prosa "radicale" dell'*Adalgisa*, in "Una prosa radicale. Sulla recensione bigongiariana dell'*Adalgisa*" (161-74). Giuseppe Marrone in "'A Firenze sono ancorato col cuore'. Sul rapporto tra Carlo Emilio Gadda e Alessandro Parronchi" (175-90) esplora il rapporto tra Gadda e Alessandro Parronchi, poeta e studioso di storia dell'arte, conosciuto a Firenze, dove l'autore entra in relazione anche con Contini e Montale. Sara Mele e Giulia Sanguin approfondiscono poi proprio il Gadda saggista e critico della poetica dei due autori, in "Una 'ricchezza che saprà vincere ogni ostacolo'. L'esercizio critico dell'Ingegnere, tra Montale e Contini" (191-206). Dino Leoni si concentra invece sulle analogie tra il romanesco gaddiano e quello pasoliniano di *Ragazzi di vita* in "Il verismo in romanesco di Gadda: un confronto con

Ragazzi di vita di Pier Paolo Pasolini” (207-20). Infine, in “‘Baroccaggine’ e cosmo. Dialogo con Witold Gombrowicz” (221-35), Matilde Piu si esprime ancora sulla “baroccaggine” gaddiana ma attraverso la specola interpretativa dell’opera grottesca dello scrittore polacco Witold Gombrowicz.

La terza e ultima sezione inizia con “La ricetta del risotto in un’antologia scolastica: il contributo di Calvino alla ‘canonizzazione’ di Gadda” (239-54), che è l’esplorazione di Daniela Santacroce di un testo calviniano metaforico inserito in un’antologia scolastica. Segue poi “Funzione e disfunzione. Gadda tra gruppo 63 e Gruppo 93” (255-66), l’analisi di Samuele Maffei del ruolo di Gadda all’interno della poetica delle neoavanguardie del Gruppo 63 e del Gruppo 93. Successivamente, in “Funzione-pasticciaccio nel giallo di Amara Lakhous” (267-80), Giulia Marziali illustra l’influenza tematica e linguistica del *Pasticciaccio* nei gialli di Amara Lakhous, scrittore italiano di origine algerina esponente di spicco della cosiddetta letteratura italiana della migrazione. La sezione e il volume si chiudono con “‘La realtà è un rizoma’. Convergenze parallele tra Gadda e Pecoraro” (281-96), in cui Niccolò Amelii illustra i punti di contatto in ambito scientifico e filosofico tra Gadda e Francesco Pecoraro, scrittore italiano che ha esordito nel 2013.

Qual è il rapporto di Gadda col tempo? Questa è la domanda principale che il volume sembra porsi e porci. Dunque, ne analizza il passato attraverso qualche carotaggio sulle fonti; il presente, mettendolo in relazione con altri autori contemporanei; il futuro, non nel senso dello “stigma della perfezione”, come lo intendeva lui, ma esplorando ammiratori d’oggi ed epigoni, dichiarati e non.

Tutti i saggi apportano un contributo innovativo e forniscono una nuova chiave di lettura per diversi aspetti della vita e della poetica gaddiana, indagando ambiti culturali inusuali, come quello dell’arte e dell’economia. Probabilmente, però, la parte più interessante risulta essere l’ultima sulla ricezione, sia perché gli studi si sono concentrati meno su questo aspetto—compresa la ricezione all’estero, ma soprattutto perché attesta una riconoscibilità dell’autore, nonostante—o proprio grazie a—quella sua inafferrabilità e dualità che si diceva lo rendessero difficilmente incasellabile in una storia letteraria canonica, così da riuscire a essere contemporaneamente caso unico e modello.

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Eloisa Morra. *Poetiche della visibilità. Percorsi fra testo e immagine nella letteratura italiana del Novecento*. Roma: Carocci, 2023. Pp. 206.

“Sin dal dopoguerra chi di mestiere metteva in fila parole è stato costretto, volente o nolente, a fare i conti con la pervasività del visivo” (9). Questa è la premessa al centro di *Poetiche della visibilità. Percorsi fra testo e immagine*

nella letteratura italiana del Novecento, in cui Eloisa Morra si pone l'obiettivo di indagare le contaminazioni tra parola ed immagine nelle opere di tre massimi scrittori italiani: Gadda, Celati, e Anedda ("Premessa", 9-19).

La scelta degli autori deriva proprio dall'intenzione di registrare un cambio di paradigma avvenuto dopo la seconda guerra mondiale. Se già all'inizio del Novecento le tecnologie del visivo erano divenute materia di indagine da parte dei maggiori autori italiani (Morra nomina giustamente Pirandello e D'Annunzio), è nella seconda metà del secolo che la dimensione visiva diventa una parte centrale della sperimentazione poetica letteraria. Studiare il rapporto di questi autori con il visivo, secondo Morra, significa cercare di capire come essi abbiano cercato non tanto di "riprodurne i congegni formali", quanto piuttosto ragionato "sull'imprendibile (sull'invisibile, verrebbe da aggiungere), cioè sui processi generativi della scrittura" (10), tentando altresì di mettere "in discussione la dialettica tra l'insita affermatività del visivo e l'ambigua immaterialità della testualità" (11). Morra cerca dunque di capire come queste commistioni servano a "trafigge[re] il reale mostrandone la natura multiforme, contraddittoria" (13), e cioè il suo essere terreno privilegiato per investigare "quanto di più vicino al nocciolo duro" delle poetiche dei tre autori (14). Studiare queste intertestualità visive, insomma, per comprendere come ognuno di questi autori guardi il mondo e tenti di riprodurlo sulla pagina.

Nel caso di Gadda, Morra si concentra sul riutilizzo delle memorie visive riconducibili alle ossessioni pittoriche dell'ingegnere (il classicismo rinascimentale di Raffaello e dei pittori lombardi, Giorgione, Caravaggio), spesso mediate dalla lezione di Roberto Longhi ("Galleria Gadda", 21-74). L'analisi delle maggiori opere gaddiane mostra come "le evocazioni verbovisive assumono un ruolo decisivo nell'inverare una topologia della mappa mentale dell'autore" (29), in particolar modo per materializzare le pulsioni erotiche che sottendono tanta narrativa dello scrittore milanese. Il rimosso sembra tornare alla luce attraverso una traduzione visiva e un uso delle memorie pittoriche "in chiave parodica e straniante" (34) che rende possibile render giustizia della complessità del reale attraverso la giustapposizione dei maestri prediletti alla prosaica realtà del presente. Ne risulta una "libera *contaminatio* tra modelli visivi e letterari" (38), una sorta di pluristilismo intermediale, che secondo Morra rappresenta una delle cifre distintive dello stile gaddiano. Non c'è da stupirsi, dunque, che la seconda metà del volume si concentri sulle influenze, tanto linguistiche quanto visive, di Scialoja sull'autore del *Pasticciaccio*.

Nel capitolo dedicato a Celati—i cui "temi cari," secondo Morra, "si sviluppano tutti a partire da un dialogo con le arti della visione" (76)—l'attenzione si sposta su opere meno studiate, quali un poemetto

sperimentale del 1962, *Descrizione d'una giornata di Vera Evans*, e due iconotesti pubblicati in collaborazione con il fotografo Carlo Gajani: *Il chiodo in testa* e *La bottega dei mimi* (“Galleria Celati”, 75-120). L'analisi del poemetto rivela come “lo sguardo di Celati si distingue come complanare più che genealogico, spaziale più che storicista” (80), sviluppandosi attraverso la giustapposizione di scene ed immagini, piuttosto che attraverso lo svolgersi narrativo della trama. Il risultato è descritto da Morra come una “poesia-sinestesia” (81), in cui Celati, in maniera non troppo dissimile da Gadda, combina contemporaneamente registri stilistici e intermediali. Nei due fototesti, invece, la compresenza della fotografia agisce su più livelli fino ad influenzare la struttura della scrittura stessa, che sembra partecipare della frammentazione prodotta dalla disseminazione delle immagini, frammenti anch'esse della cattura del reale. Ciò che attraversa tutti i testi analizzati è, da una parte, la presenza di una forte memoria visiva degli artisti più amati da Celati (alcuni capolavori del fauvismo, la pittura di Botticelli, la poetica di Giacometti); dall'altra, l'oltrepassamento del logocentrismo e della centralità della trama.

Nel terzo e ultimo capitolo (“Galleria Anedda”, 121-67), Morra individua nella poetica di Anedda “una *inventio* [...] intrinsecamente ibrida, mescida di generi e forme” (122), che si sviluppa in particolar modo in due tendenze principali. La prima è l'utilizzo della memoria visiva come “copertura e occultamento dei motivi biografici più dolorosi”, con i riferimenti pittorici che mediano il rapporto tra l'io poetante e l'esperienza dolorosa della perdita e del lutto, garantendo la possibilità espressiva di fronte a temi “impossibili da affrontare in modo frontale” (124). L'altra è l'uso che Anedda fa dei dettagli, frammenti di dipinti celebri evocati a più riprese nelle collezioni degli anni Duemila. Morra rileva come il dettaglio divenga “spiraglio per accogliere discorsi *altri*, che da esterni all'opera ne diventano parte, modificandone per sempre la nostra percezione e strappando le testimonianze visive al passato per riportarle alla dimensione della contemporaneità” (136). Il *trait d'union* di queste commistioni mediali, secondo Morra, si può rintracciare nelle parole della stessa Anedda, che spiega come la sua opera sia caratterizzata dal tentativo di “dare concretezza alla scrittura” (162). Di conseguenza, il capitolo si chiude con l'analisi dell'installazione in tessuto e tecnica mista *Antologia 2010-2012*, opera in cui Anedda materializza, letteralmente, questo desiderio di concretezza.

Nell'analisi comparata dei tre autori (“Conclusioni”, 169-74), Morra individua una rottura generazionale che intercorre fra le pratiche di Gadda, da un lato, e di Anedda e Celati, dall'altro: per lo scrittore milanese, “ogni sguardo rivolto al figurativo nei suoi lavori è socialmente situato”, e la tradizione pittorica è ancora associata ad una dimensione quasi sacrale

dell'arte da blasfemizzare. Anedda e Celati, al contrario, “operano all'interno di una cornice in cui [...] l'arte visiva era diventata una delle tante merci da assimilare” (172), e di conseguenza mostrano un rapporto con il visivo meno mediato e più soggettivo. Ciò che sembra legare i tre autori, però, è il tentativo di oltrepassare i limiti della parola, incorporando forme di intermedialità per poter ampliare le possibilità espressive della scrittura, moltiplicarne gli sguardi e gli orizzonti di senso, e produrre un'intensificazione dello sguardo. Per tutti e tre gli autori sembra dunque valere ciò che Morra scrive della scrittura di Anedda: “non essendo più lineare e leggibile, la realtà non può essere che interpretato (*sic*) attraverso forme ibride [...] basate sulla messa in discussione della leggibilità prestabilita” (166), attraverso, cioè, connessioni trasversali, rese possibili, parafrasando Gadda, da accoppiamenti giudiziosi di parole e memorie o testimonianze visive che risultano, quasi sempre, poco ortodosse ma per questo più significative. Il pregio maggiore del volume sta proprio nell'abilità di accostare poetiche diverse per rintracciare questo profondo bisogno conoscitivo condiviso, senza per questo cancellare le peculiarità dei tre autori. I tre “percorsi” operati da Morra sono infatti rigorosissime avventure filologiche alla ricerca di memorie visive (spesso occultate dagli autori stessi), con il fine ultimo di comprendere meglio come testo e immagine contribuiscano, insieme, alla comprensione del mondo.

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Ramona Onnis, and Manuela Spinelli, eds. *Raccontare i corpi delle donne*. Firenze: Franco Cesati Editore, 2024. Pp. 253.

Scaturito da una sessione del XXV convegno AIPI “Raccontare la realtà. Italia ieri e oggi”, tenutosi a Palermo nell'ottobre del 2022, il volume curato da Ramona Onnis e Manuela Spinelli racchiude una serie di contributi dedicati al discorso, quanto mai attuale, delle molteplici rappresentazioni del corpo delle donne. A fronte di una contemporaneità sempre più difficile da sintetizzare con formule facili, *Raccontare i corpi delle donne* invita a una riflessione polivalente sulla corporeità femminile veicolata dalla cultura italiana dagli anni Ottanta a oggi, includendo esempi provenienti da vari ambiti. Oltre a diverse analisi di testi letterari, il volume presenta interventi su cinema, *pièces* teatrali, giornalismo d'inchiesta, documentari, serie televisive, nonché testi di musica leggera. Adottando una cornice metodologica multidisciplinare, i saggi si suddividono in cinque sezioni: “Corpi e stereotipi di genere”, “Corpi e violenza”, “Maternità”, “Resistenza alle norme”, e “Trasgressione alle norme”.

Nella prima sezione (25-54), il saggio sui romanzi di Gesualdo Bufalino e Vincenzo Cerami (Erica Ciccarella, “Contagio, sensualità e morte: i corpi malati delle donne in *Diceria dell'untore* (1981) di Gesualdo Bufalino e in *La*

lepre (1988) di Vincenzo Cerami”, 25-34) offre un’analisi del corpo femminile malato che diviene oggetto di desiderio erotico, mentre il contributo sul romanzo *La lunga attesa dell’angelo* (2008) di Melania Mazzucco (Maria Luisa Sais, “Corpo e identità femminile: la difficile costruzione di sé in *La lunga attesa dell’angelo* di Melania G. Mazzucco”, 35-43) esamina la fissità della condizione subalterna di Marietta Tintoretto. Particolarmente apprezzabile poi l’analisi di Carlo Baghetti nel saggio successivo (“Verso una lettura di genere delle *labour narratives*? Stereotipi sessisti nell’opera di Vitaliano Trevisan”, 45-54), dedicato ai *labour narratives* e, nello specifico, a *Works* di Vitaliano Trevisan (2016), il cui narratore interno rivela uno sguardo tanto tragico quanto impietosamente misogino.

La sezione sulla violenza (57-95) si apre con una disamina del noir italiano e della figura della *femme fatale* nelle storie del *Commissario Montalbano* (Gerardina Antelmi, “La rappresentazione della morte delle donne nella serie televisiva del commissario Montalbano”, 57-66), dove lo sguardo maschile si intreccia con la sessualizzazione della morte. Segue uno studio di Monica Cristina Storini (“Polimorfie corporee nel noir di Alda Teodorani”, 67-76) sulla fisicità auto-distruttiva della protagonista del racconto *Sacramenti* (2008) di Alda Teodorani, nota per essere controcorrente rispetto a qualsiasi incasellamento in categorie preesistenti. I due successivi saggi illustrano, rispettivamente, la rivisitazione dei miti tesa alla decostruzione degli stereotipi di genere e il drammatico tema delle braccianti sfruttate dal caporalato. Nel primo saggio di Francesca Chiara Guglielmino (“Riscrivere il corpo femminile attraverso il mito: la figura della prostituta in *Sogni di Clitennestra* di Dacia Maraini e in *Medea per strada* di Elena Cotugno e Fabrizio Sinisi”, 77-86) si evidenzia la rilevanza delle riscritture dei miti in *Medea per strada* (spettacolo teatrale andato in scena per la prima volta nel 2016) e nella *Clitennestra* reinventata da Dacia Maraini ne *I sogni di Clitennestra* (1981). In particolare, Guglielmino esamina in che modo il mezzo teatrale e scenico coniughi l’aspetto tragico-performativo al messaggio politico. Michela Sacco-Morel (“Donne braccianti: presenza silente di corpi femminili martoriati e annichiliti”, 87-95), invece, analizza un libro-inchiesta (*Morire come schiavi* di Enrica Simonetti, 2016) e un cortometraggio (*La giornata* di Pippo Mezzapesa, 2017), entrambi dedicati al caso di cronaca di Paola Clemente, bracciante morta di fatica nel 2015. L’autrice esamina come queste narrazioni, pur con modalità diverse, restituiscono visibilità ai corpi delle braccianti, denunciando la struttura socio-economica che consente tali degenerazioni sociali.

La sezione sulla maternità (99-145) comprende quattro saggi: il primo (Eleonora Conti, “Di figlia in madre: rispecchiamenti e costruzione dell’identità in alcune scrittrici italiane contemporanee”, 99-110) offre una

panoramica di testi di varie scrittrici che hanno raccontato, negli ultimi anni, le madri per definire il rapporto con le soggettività, spesso ferite, delle figlie (Di Pietrantonio, Castaldi, Di Grado, Terranova, Caminito, oltre al romanzo *Génie la matta* della francese Inès Cagnati (edito nel 1976 e ora tradotto anche in Italia). Conti ben spiega come sia la ricerca del corpo materno con il suo portato di meccanismi rituali di riparazione o di oblio il fulcro creativo dei romanzi. Gli interventi di Iris Chionne, Ramona Onnis e Enrica Bracchi aprono alla possibilità di un dialogo tra il tema della maternità e quello della riproduzione, sia essa mancata, cercata, o rifiutata. Il corpo, ancora una volta, diventa il centro di una estenuante indagine simbolica, politica, culturale. Ciò avviene nelle raccolte di Elisa Biagini (Chionne, “Il corpo ‘perno del mondo’ di Elisa Biagini: uno sguardo fenomenologico”, 111-20), dove affiora la dimensione politica di un corpo lirico trasfigurato in modalità poetica. Similmente, nel romanzo di Eleonora Mazzone *Le difettose* (2012, riedito nel 2021), l'autrice del saggio (e co-curatrice del volume) Ramona Onnis (“Ventre guasto. Corpi, infertilità e tecniche di procreazione”, 121-32) evidenzia l'importanza socio-culturale di narrare il dolore, il dubbio e la continua rinegoziazione del proprio io nel percorso arduo della procreazione assistita. L'intervento di Bracchi (“*Tu dentro di me: corpi e maternità surrogata*”, 133-45), invece, si dedica al tema della maternità surrogata esaminando *Tu dentro di me*, l'esordio di Emilia Costantini (2009). Oltre a fornire un prezioso sunto del quadro legislativo, Bracchi si interroga sul valore della narrazione che invita a riflettere su tutti gli aspetti e i soggetti coinvolti. La questione resta quanto mai aperta.

Le ultime due sezioni narrano di “resistenza” (149-83) e “trasgressione” alle norme (187-243), richiamando in molte parti l'introduzione, dove le curatrici affermano che il corpo delle donne “è anche un terreno di lotta sul quale si gioca l'autodeterminazione e il divenire soggetto di una parte dell'umanità” (14). La resistenza alle norme è quella dei romanzi di Goliarda Sapienza e Giacomina Limentani descritti da Stefania Lucamante (“Ragionare sul proprio corpo: riflessioni e consonanze in *Il filo di mezzogiorno* di Goliarda Sapienza e *In contumacia* di Giacomina Limentani”, 149-57), secondo la quale la scrittura del corpo di queste autrici, poiché alimentata da un fine estetico, restituisce un ordine al disordine esistenziale, psichico, post-traumatico. Nel saggio di Barbara Kornacka (“Una vecchia donna libera e felice? Riflessioni sul romanzo *Timira* di Wu Ming 2 e Antar Mohamed”, 159-71) compare il tema della vecchiaia del corpo femminile in *Timira* (2012) romanzo ibrido scritto da Wu Ming 2, Antar Mohamed e la madre di quest'ultimo Isabella Marincola, dove è la protagonista la stessa Isabella o Timiraprova a rovesciare lo stigma sociale “della vecchia donna inerte e passiva” (171) e finisce per incarnare una peculiare forma di pratica di ribellione alla discriminazione, in

ultima istanza, una lotta per la libertà. Nel saggio di Barbara Sturmar (“Scritto sul corpo”. La traboccante vitalità della disabilità fisica nella narrativa di Barbara Garlaschelli, 173-83) dedicato ai romanzi di Barbara Garlaschelli (*Sirena*, 2001, e *Non volevo morire vergine*, 2017) troviamo il corpo disabile e le sfide che comporta una sua rappresentazione non vittimistica. Ciò permette la creazione di un nuovo modo di stare al mondo, ribaltando un’idea di perfezione fisica come unico lasciapassare sociale.

Sul versante della trasgressione, il volume offre infine sei interventi eterogenei. Il primo (Giacomo Di Muccio, “Ed era il mio corpo, ed ero io. Il corpo queer in *In tutti i sensi come l’amore* di Simona Vinci”, 187-94) offre l’analisi del concetto di corpo *queer* nel romanzo di Simona Vinci *In tutti i sensi come l’amore* (1999), dove la costruzione del genere si basa su un ordine di valori non etero-normato. Due saggi consecutivi affrontano un tema poco presente nella critica letteraria femminista e di genere, ovvero il corpo rivisto attraverso l’immagine artistica di cantanti come Mina e Monica Naranjo (Carmela Simmarano, “Il corpo femminile nel testo cantato: da Mina a Mónica Naranjo”, 195-203), e Donatella Rettore (Gaspare Trapani, “Una questione di *Chimica*: confini corporei e identitari nella poetica di (Donatella) Rettore”, 205-13). Il primo si concentra sulla potenzialità di un corpo femminile che, nel riappropriarsi di storie ed esperienze narrate dai testi delle artiste, contrasta lo stereotipo di una corporeità femminile oggettificata; il secondo analizza le performance e i testi di Rettore evocando quanto già visto per il saggio su Simona Vinci, ovvero l’idea che la femminilità possa essere costruita tramite strategie performative e potenzialmente liberatorie.

Il saggio di Monica Biasiolo (“‘Il mondo aveva smesso di essere un posto meraviglioso. O anche solo interessante’. Ripensare la sirena in Laura Pugno”, 215-24) adotta la prospettiva postumana per esaminare il romanzo di Laura Pugno *Sirene* (2007), dove l’abuso del corpo femminile si sovrappone alla prevaricazione del corpo non conforme della creatura de-umanizzata e sfruttata. Anche nel saggio di Lavinia Mannelli (“‘Parlo poco e guardo bene’. La donna postumana in tre scrittrici italiane contemporanee”, 225-33), dedicato ai romanzi di Vallorani, Vinci e Pugno (anche qui compare *Sirene*), persiste l’idea di un rovesciamento simbolico, laddove la passività del corpo ibrido (non normato) man mano diventa il punto di svolta testuale per una riflessione di carattere politico-sociale che critica la devastazione ecologica e lo sfruttamento della natura in senso lato. Significativo, dunque, che siano ancora una volta corpi femminili posti al centro di tali rappresentazioni in cui i confini tra specie—come tra i sessi—non appaiono più tanto evidenti, né scontati.

L’ultimo saggio (Irene Cacopardi, “La dama uscita dal computer: un bellissimo mostro di fantascienza”, 235-43) analizza il romanzo di Carmen

Covito, *Benvenuti in questo ambiente* (1997), dove il corpo femminile affronta una sfida identitaria in quanto corpo virtuale, frutto di invenzione digitale e, dunque, manipolabile da lei stessa (nel caso del romanzo, dal figlio Ugo che asseconda la volontà della madre). Nel contrastare l'idea di normalità, emerge il tema del gioco sul proprio corpo, favorito dal progresso tecnologico e da una dimensione performativa spiccata.

Un volume come *Raccontare i corpi delle donne* si inserisce in un dibattito attraversato da impulsi teorici costantemente messi alla prova da un magma che coinvolge la scrittura, il cinema, l'immaginario visivo, psichico e materialistico nelle sue molte diramazioni e complessità. Se la critica accademica talvolta opera per automatismi, anche gli stessi itinerari teorici corrono il rischio di apparire stancamente ripiegati su sé stessi in mancanza di una prospettiva tesa a guardare alle singolarità testuali. Resta cruciale provare a leggere i testi con occhi nuovi, soppesando l'aspetto teorico all'interno di una cornice di lettura quanto più possibile articolata e scevra di preconcetti. Una visione che somigli alla distanza—a mio parere benefica—tra l'opera d'arte e chi la osserva, di modo che, a seconda del movimento calibrato del lettore, ciascuna narrazione, film o altra opera possano moltiplicare le proprie zone d'ombra e i propri “punti di luce”. Muovendosi nel solco di un approccio polisemico e polivalente, le autrici e gli autori di questi saggi hanno saputo tastare il terreno del dibattito per esercitare uno sguardo composito d'insieme su argomenti di cruciale attualità.

Serena Todesco, *Independent Scholar*

Daniele Maria Pegorari. *La conoscenza amministrata. Calvino, Pasolini, Volponi e la cibernetica sociale*. Milano: Mimesis, 2025. Pp. 284.

Con questa appassionante monografia, Daniele Maria Pegorari mostra come la visione predittiva sulla progressiva tecnicizzazione e disumanizzazione della società odierna sia già stata ampiamente anticipata dalle pagine novecentesche di Italo Calvino, Pier Paolo Pasolini e Paolo Volponi. Lo studioso parte da un assunto, per nulla scontato, ovvero che la fine del secolo breve sia da ricercare cronologicamente ben anteriormente all'anno Duemila, ovvero “già a partire dai centrali anni Ottanta” (9), ragion per cui “è agli effetti di un intero quarantennio che oggi dobbiamo saper guardare con lucidità, per comprendere quali nuovi assetti anche politici si stiano ormai strutturando” (9). In tale campo, la letteratura contemporanea, italiana e non, è stata fortemente profetica e Pegorari lo dimostra proprio attraverso questi tre autori cardine, tutti scrittori che nel tempo sono stati grandemente ammirati, analizzati e (probabilmente nemmeno a buona ragione) addirittura iconizzati tanto dalla critica quanto dai lettori. La *tecnocrazia*—figlia del “lento dissolvimento delle

forme liberaldemocratiche ereditate dall’Otto e dal Novecento” (10)—prende, dunque, avvio proprio una decina d’anni dopo la morte di Pier Paolo Pasolini e si manifesta in quella che vien definita quale una “società amministrata” (10), (fenomeno questo, già intuito dalle menti filosofiche e sociologiche della Scuola di Francoforte un trentennio prima), in cui ci si vede quotidianamente “regolati da una cibernetica sociale” (10).

Decisamente felice appare la scelta di titolare le quattro sezioni del volume, a loro volta divise in una decina di capitoli in totale, utilizzando i mirati rimaneggiamenti dei titoli delle più note opere dello scrittore ligure (*Ultimo viene Calvino; Pasolini dimezzato; Volponi rampante; Il lettore inesistente*); ed è lo stesso autore a spiegarne, in fase di avvio, le motivazioni. A seguito di una dettagliata sezione introduttiva—in cui Pegorari parte proprio dal concetto di “società amministrata” per analizzare a fondo tanto la letteratura contemporanea quanto dinamiche sociali più ampie e complesse della nostra epoca, della quale proprio le voci dei tre autori presi in esame si fanno “preveggenti”—un primo e centrale problema del volume ruota da un lato intorno alla spinosa questione legata al concetto di *post-verità* e dall’altro intorno alla comunicazione di massa che un tempo “poteva più agevolmente essere veicolata e controllata attraverso le politiche scolastiche e bibliotecarie” (29), mentre, con l’avvento della tecnocrazia e la conseguente nascita della rete: “*polis* virtuale, informale, derealizzante” (29) tanto il produrre quanto il fruire informazioni si ammantano di una complessità su svariati livelli, frutto della produzione di segni e non più della consistenza di significati, generati proprio dalla Rete; ciò poiché “le reti su cui viaggiano le informazioni [...] riducono il soggetto all’immobilità, mentre il flusso dei dati lo attraversa” (29). Rispetto a ciò, spiega ancora l’autore, aveva già visto lungo Calvino, con *Le città invisibili*. Proprio da Italo Calvino prende avvio la prima sezione: “Ultimo viene Calvino” (47-141), poiché non solo egli si è fatto portatore, nella sua opera, dell’annoso problema della narrabilità del mondo ma anche perché “interrogarsi sul rapporto fra mondo scritto e mondo non scritto [...] ha portato lo scrittore, lungo un quarantennio, a cogliere con acutezza quale processo stesse trasformando l’uomo occidentale in un soggetto virtuale, privato di peso e trasferito in una dimensione vieppiù informazionale” (47). Quanto a Pasolini, protagonista della seconda sezione: “Pasolini dimezzato” (145-75), Pegorari mira innanzitutto a demitizzarne l’immagine mediatica, a smontare cioè sin dal principio quella “rielaborazione iconica” che lo ha reso “personaggio e figura, prima e ancor più che scrittore” (145), in particolare al termine delle recenti celebrazioni per il centenario della nascita. Una tale prospettiva, infatti, “vanifica la potenza della parola dell’artista che è stato celebrato, il cui obiettivo avrebbe voluto essere lo scardinamento del senso comune [...], un grido d’allarme contro il cinismo del potere” (146) e la

contraddittorietà intrinseca dell'economia di tipo capitalistico. Proprio con *Petrolio e Scritti corsari*, infatti, si afferma con potenza quello “spartiacque decisivo [che] è il Sessantotto” (147), specie nella visione pasoliniana della borgata, dallo scrittore preferita in tempi antecedenti al fatidico anno delle grandi rivoluzioni nazionali e “descritta con cruda violenza nei suoi romanzi degli anni Cinquanta! (147). Segue la sezione terza: “Volponi rampante” (179-216) dedicata a Paolo Volponi, emblematico indagatore, che nel romanzo *La macchina mondiale* (1965), traccia l’“autobiografia distopica di una follia” (195). Egli lo fa a ridosso della “crisi di fiducia nell’utopia comunitario-olivettiana” (181) nell’epoca odierna che appare come “quella dei nani sopravvissuti ai giganti” (183) ma in cui si materializza un protagonista antifrasticamente nominato Anteo.

Il volume si chiude con un’interessante e lucida sezione intitolata “Il lettore inesistente” (219-79) e dedicata all’analisi della ricerca accademica in campo umanistico e letterario. Tale disamina è posta nel contesto dell’epoca presente già minuziosamente scandagliata dalle visioni presagistiche degli scrittori novecenteschi. Affrontati sia l’effetto distorsivo dell’*impact factor* che la ricaduta della sua strumentalizzazione economica sulla critica letteraria, l’autore si misura col problema dell’attività recensoria, genere svalutato e sottovalutato, per poi concludere aprendo a sua volta la questione legata all’appiattimento dell’empatia letteraria, ovvero a un limite dell’esperienza empatica cui “è necessario sfuggire, altrimenti rimane fortemente in dubbio che la letteratura possa coadiuvare nello sviluppo di una società multiculturale, democratica e solidale, all’altezza delle sfide del nostro tempo” (245).

Il libro di Pegorari è denso, corposo, forsanche provocatorio nelle sue incontestabili verità, eppure scorre agevolmente, lasciando da ultimo al lettore un vago senso di inquietudine sulla sorte futura della letteratura e della critica mondiale, oltre che, più specificamente, italiana. Vi è certamente, in questo libro, la risposta (o, almeno, la parte estremamente convincente di una risposta molto più ampia) all’annosa questione dell’utilità della letteratura o, meglio ancora, alla drammaticità della sua estrema ed acquiescente riduzione ai valori di una società capitalistica che rischia di condurla all’estinzione definitiva, senza che ci se ne renda conto, quasi alla stregua di una triste e inconsapevole “rana bollita” (per citare la ben nota metafora che descrive la particolare condizione di chi, inconsciamente, si adatta lentamente a situazioni insostenibili, senza presagire alcun pericolo né dar segno di reazione, finché non diventa troppo tardi per agire e salvarsi, proprio, per l’appunto, alla stregua di una rana sita in un pentolone d’acqua che va riscaldandosi man mano, fino a raggiungere il punto d’ebollizione). E, difatti, non ultima e, certamente, ancor più degna di ammirazione, è l’intenzione di Pegorari di “consegnare a questo libro” una serie di considerazioni nate dalla lunga pratica dell’insegnamento,

da quella sensibilità derivante “dall’ascolto delle irrinunciabili istanze di felicità che provengono dai nostri giovani e dal loro stupore dinanzi a quello che si può scoprire leggendo i grandi autori [...] non appena si gratti sotto la superficie della critica più consueta” (10).

Il volume è, in definitiva, tanto utile quanto necessario, a fini critici e didattici e apre a una serie di riflessioni socio-cultural-letterarie di primissimo piano in un panorama, come quello contemporaneo, già tristemente presagito in tempi non sospetti da chi, come Volponi, Calvino e Pasolini aveva intuito le catastrofiche potenzialità della tecnocrazia.

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Barbara Pezzotti. *Mediterranean Crime Fiction. Transcultural Narratives in and around the “Great Sea.”* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2024. Pp. 230.

In this volume, Barbara Pezzotti postulates a Mediterranean crime fiction that encompasses not only European authors but also those from the southern and eastern shores, problematizing “the traditional postcolonial framework of centre and periphery [...] by giving each component equal weight and significance” (2). In doing so, Pezzotti organizes the analysis around six distinct yet interconnected thematic areas, focusing primarily on the past four decades and bringing into dialogue series of novels by Andrea Camilleri (Italy), Jean-Claude Izzo (France), Manuel Vázquez Montalbán and Alicia Giménez Bartlett (Spain), Petros Markaris (Greece), Yasmina Khandra (Algeria), Driss Chraïbi and Abdelilah Hamdouchi (Morocco), Batya Gur (Israel), and Esmahan Aykol (Turkey).

The first chapter (28-56) revolves around the figure of the Mediterranean detective. Despite obvious and inevitable differences among characters, common features are their liminality and transculturality. They are “in-between characters insofar as they belong to disadvantaged social classes, ethnic groups or cultures” (29) and they often need to negotiate and redefine their sense of belonging within the dominant national culture. Identifying their multilingualism and intellectual curiosity as examples of transculturality—to the extent that their knowledge of the Mediterranean often proves instrumental in solving the case—Pezzotti emphasizes how these multifaceted and fluid identities lead to a Mediterranean approach to literature that overcomes the boundaries of national traditions.

The second chapter (57-95) examines the relationship between characters and urban spaces. On the one hand, Mediterranean crime fiction critiques the depersonalizing transformation of cities produced by capitalism and gentrification, emphasizing the detective’s sense of alienation. On the other hand, it highlights how Mediterranean port cities are capable of creating

internal spaces of resistance and transculturality. The detective's walking in the city thus becomes an emotional journey, and thanks to the act of investigation, a time travel that takes the form of "critical nostalgia" (68), aiming to show that often the villain is not just an individual or a criminal organization, but the political-economic system itself.

The third chapter (96-119) focuses on the "political dimension" (103) of food as a means to reassert the Mediterranean as a contact zone and transcultural space, promoting the idea of a "supranational identity" (107). Drawing again on the idea of the Mediterranean as *Mare Nostrum* and as an in-between space—based in particular on Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity—Pezzotti goes beyond the portrayal of the gourmand-detective and analyzes the act of eating and drinking in Mediterranean crime fiction as a collective experience that fosters inclusion and facilitates communication among different cultures.

The fourth chapter (120-45) is dedicated to describing Mediterranean crime fiction also as "a chronicle of disillusionment" (120). Moving back and forth between past and present, the Mediterranean detective acts like a historian. By investigating a specific crime, the detective carries out a broader inquiry into the history of an entire society. The dysfunctional aspects of the present can in fact be understood only in relation to "the events that led to flawed decolonisation or democratisation" (121). Mediterranean crime fiction examines the construction of national identities—from the transition to democracy in post-dictatorship European countries (Vázquez Montalbán, Markaris) to the complex process of decolonization in those of the southern shore (Khadra, Hamdouchi)—through a cynical and disenchanting perspective.

The fifth chapter (146-71) is closely connected to the previous ones and shows how Mediterranean crime fiction explores the concept of identity through a multilayered analysis "that develops at three levels: national, postcolonial and supranational" (147). Pezzotti argues that the idea of "internal Orientalism" (147) is key especially in analyzing the relationship between regional, national, and supranational identities in Camilleri, Vázquez Montalbán, and Izzo. For writers from the North African shore (Chraïbi, Khadra), along with postcolonial issues, the relationship between Berber and a purported Arab national identity is a central theme, while Israeli crime fiction (Gur) highlights the divisions and power dynamics within the Jewish community itself.

Lastly, the sixth chapter (172-201) analyzes how female characters and gender dynamics are represented. Using Laura Mulvey's concept of male gaze, Pezzotti argues that in Mediterranean crime fiction women are often scrutinized and sexualized, "their body parts vivisected and objectified by the male detective" (195). Although violence against women is a recurring

theme, it is almost never represented as gender-based violence, but more often associated with sociopolitical issues, racism, or individual criminal acts. Even in series by women writers (Giménez Bartlett, Aykol) featuring female detectives, opting for a post-feminist perspective, violence against women is never linked to a real critique of patriarchal society.

Overall, this book is an extremely compelling and necessary study, especially for its engagement with the current historical context. Elegantly alternating between distant and close reading, Pezzotti places the Mediterranean at the center of her analysis as a multifaceted contact zone, following Iain Chambers' definition. She examines it through the lens of the crime genre not only as a space of conflict and social issues, but also as a transcultural space of shared stories and traditions that bring people closer together, rather than divide them.

Following the path of her previous works, Pezzotti reaffirms the importance of crime fiction as a socio-politically engaged genre, capable of depicting social changes, contradictions, and power dynamics. Drawing on David Damrosch's theories and viewing the crime genre as world literature, she also broadens the 1990s idea of "Mediterranean noir" to include the southern and eastern shores, demonstrating how Mediterranean crime fiction reconfigures the traditional postcolonial model based on the concepts of center and periphery.

Furthermore, the choice to focus on a small number of popular authors, whose works have been translated into multiple languages, perfectly serves the main scope of this book, which is to examine how specific local and national issues can be brought into conversation and "speak to a larger set of Mediterranean concerns" (3). This makes this volume not only a highly valuable study, but also an ideal starting point for further analyses and contributions.

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Elena Porciani. *Elsa Morante, la vita nella scrittura*. Roma: Carocci, 2024. Pp. 352.

Nella sua "Introduzione" (13-26), Elena Porciani offre la chiave di lettura di *Elsa Morante, la vita nella scrittura*, ovvero l'analisi della complessità del fare creativo della scrittrice, con l'uso del dato biografico con cautela e solo laddove funzionale alla complessità del campo d'azione letterario (16). La mappatura iniziale delineata da Porciani (21-26), coerente con il percorso critico fin qui condotto dalla studiosa, si propone di promuovere un'interpretazione rigorosa e aggiornata dell'intero corpus e di ricostruire la parabola intellettuale di Morante, al fine di adiuvare ulteriori studi in grado di liberare la sua opera da letture eccessivamente biografiche.

Il primo capitolo “1912-1930: la preistoria” (27-46), si basa sulla fonte principale delle notizie relative all’infanzia e l’adolescenza della scrittrice, il *mémoir* pubblicato da Marcello Morante nel 1986, *Maledetta benedetta. Elsa Morante e sua madre* (Garzanti). Porciani ci mostra che la consapevolezza della scrittura come destino personale è già presente nelle sue primissime prove, rivelando un’identità autoriale in formazione, seppure segnate da “acerbità espressiva” (44). L’ultima parte del capitolo introduce la figura di Guelfo Civinini, personaggio chiave nel percorso di riconoscimento della giovane Morante nel panorama culturale dell’epoca.

In “1931-35: gli esordi” (47-68), secondo capitolo di questa ricostruzione musiva, Porciani si concentra sui numerosi trasferimenti che scandiscono gli anni giovanili di Morante, mettendo in luce le difficoltà materiali e la quotidiana lotta per l’autosostentamento, esplicitati nelle corrispondenze: “preferisco continuare a lottare, sia pure saltando qualche pasto” (Daniele Morante, ed., *L’amata. Lettere di e a Elsa Morante*. Einaudi, Torino 2012, 9-10). Il quinquennio del titolo è identificato come momento di svolta e come fase degli esordi letterari dell’autrice.

Il titolo del terzo capitolo “1936-41: la molteplicità” (69-94), si concentra sia sulla sfera più materiale, con riferimenti alla dimensione erotica, tanto disprezzata dall’autrice; sia su una dimensione più immaginifica, tra il sogno e l’inconscio. Si enumerano eventi decisivi per il suo percorso biografico e creativo, tra cui spicca l’incontro “fatale” (Adriano Sofri, ed., *Festa per Elsa*. Palermo: Sellerio, 1985, 2011, 171) con Alberto Moravia. Parallelamente, Morante avvia una fase di sperimentazione stilistica che la vede confrontarsi con forme diverse dal racconto tradizionale, tra cui la prosa saggistica, la scrittura diaristica e il modellamento della “psicologia morbosa” (88) di alcuni personaggi.

Il quarto capitolo “1942-48: il romanzo” (95-126) apre con i primi incontri con il mondo editoriale, con i contratti con la casa editrice Einaudi. Accanto all’attività letteraria, emergono in questi anni anche riflessioni sempre più lucide sull’ideologia fascista e sulla figura del Duce, maturate in un contesto storico di crescente tensione e disillusione. La parte conclusiva del capitolo getta nuova luce sulla produzione narrativa degli anni Quaranta, una fase finora spesso trascurata dalla critica, incentrata su “culto della giovinezza, suggestioni simboliste, convinzioni umanistiche e immagini religiose” (110).

Nel capitolo a seguire, “1949-57: la realtà” (127-64), si approfondisce la complessa relazione con Luchino Visconti. Il titolo del capitolo preannuncia un orientamento ancorato alla dimensione del reale, con la “dimensione concretamente *engagée*” (134) dell’autrice, palesata da articoli pubblicati su *Rosso e Bianco*, nei quali si riconoscono influenze letterarie che spaziano da Catullo a Tolstoj, da Baudelaire a Dostoevskij. Di particolare interesse risulta

la sezione intitolata “La genesi di Arturo” (151-56), densa di spunti critici e interpretativi riguardanti sia l'autotranstestualità del romanzo che una cronologia aggiornata, basata sul nuovo documento acquisito nel 2016 dalla Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma.

Nel sesto capitolo, “1958-63: la crisi” (165-200), leggiamo che, nonostante il grande successo de *L'isola di Arturo*, Morante si ritrova in una condizione esistenziale di sospensione, dominata da una pressante *urgency of life* e da una *pesanteur* esistenziale (168). In questo clima prende forma *Alibi*, la prima raccolta poetica di Morante, in cui Porciani ravvisa significative risonanze tematiche e stilistiche con *Menzogna e sortilegio*. Il capitolo si conclude con il ricordo dell'*annus horribilis* morantiano, segnato dalla fine formale della relazione con Moravia e da una profonda crisi esistenziale nel momento in cui raggiunge i cinquant'anni.

Nel settimo capitolo “1964-68: l'irrealtà” (201-32), la ricercatrice riesce a collocare Morante entro un orizzonte etico-filosofico internazionale, con l'influenza di Simone Weil, che introduce un nuovo orizzonte etico e spirituale: il sincretismo religioso. L'analisi delle dinamiche relazionali e dialettiche con altre figure chiave del Novecento, tra cui Pasolini e Praz, è alla base dell'analisi stilistica di alcuni componimenti poetici tratti da *Il mondo salvato dai ragazzini*, che offrono al pubblico lettore un nuovo quadro stratificato della ricezione critica dell'opera.

L'ottavo capitolo “1969-74: la storia” (233-64), si concentra sul nuovo progetto narrativo de *La Storia*, con due scritti chiave, *Piccolo manifesto dei comunisti (senza classe né partito)* e *Il beato propagandista del Paradiso*, che secondo Porciani costituiscono “i presupposti ideologici ma anche strutturali” del romanzo (243). Il focus dedicato alla creazione del personaggio di Davide Segre, le complesse riflessioni sulla scelta del titolo, il suggestivo accostamento con l'*Iliade* proposto da Cesare Garboli e le persistenti influenze del pensiero di Simone Weil sono spunti di riflessione per l'ulteriore ricerca comparatistica, bibliografica e filosofica.

Il nono capitolo “1975-82: il disincanto” (265-94) si apre con un'analisi della cosiddetta “querelle morantiana”. Il “disincanto” evocato nel titolo del capitolo trova fondamento nei dubbi crescenti che Morante nutre sul valore e sulla funzione della poesia, ma anche in una visione del mondo segnata da un pessimismo radicale, che poi troverà espressione nelle pagine di *Aracoeli*. Questo nuovo orientamento esistenziale e poetico sembra in parte riconducibile allo shock causato dalla notizia dell'omicidio di Pasolini nel 1975, evento che lascia una traccia profonda nella sua produzione.

L'ultimo capitolo “1983-85: l'addio” (295-300) si concentra sulla percezione della vecchiaia. In queste pagine, Porciani restituisce con delicatezza l'immagine di un'autrice ormai lontana dalla scena pubblica,

ma ancora presente sul piano umano e intellettuale. Numerose sono state le possibili “eredi” di Morante, come sottolineato da diverse studiose (Stefanua Lucamante, Tiziana de Rogatis, Katrin Wehling-Giorgi). Tra i nomi papabili spicca Elena Ferrante; tuttavia, ogni tentativo di successione mette in evidenza più le assonanze inevitabili che una reale continuità poetica o stilistica. Il volume si chiude con grande efficacia evocativa citando il componimento *Con Elsa in Paradiso* di Patrizia Cavalli, che suggella una riflessione sulla figura di Morante e sulla sua irripetibile presenza nella letteratura del Novecento.

In conclusione, alcuni potrebbero trovare i rimandi interni piuttosto ridondanti e non sempre necessari, ciò nonostante, il volume è un contributo di notevole rilievo negli studi morantiani, grazie all’intercalare di note biografiche rilevanti ed estratti di opere con rispettive analisi, che non si limitano a consolidare il canone critico morantiano, ma aprono nuove piste interpretative, garantendone la vitalità e l’attualità nel dibattito accademico. L’attenzione a fonti inedite, l’uso calibrato di riferimenti filosofici e il dialogo costante con la critica passata e contemporanea lo rendono uno strumento imprescindibile per chi si occupa di letteratura italiana del Novecento, di storia culturale e di teoria della narrativa.

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Giovanni Raboni. *Raboni-Manzoni*. Ed. Fabio Magro. Dueville: Ronzani Editore, 2024. Pp. 125.

Apprestandosi a leggere per la prima volta questa ripubblicazione del volumetto *Raboni-Manzoni* di Giovanni Raboni, curata da Fabio Magro per Ronzani Editore, difficilmente il lettore potrebbe aspettarsi che, di lì a poco, sarà reso partecipe dell’intrigante continuazione di un “gioco” (27) raboniano. Procediamo, però, per gradi.

Raboni-Manzoni, a cura di Fabio Magro, è primariamente la riproposizione dell’omonima plaquette di Giovanni Raboni, pubblicata nel 1985 per la casa editrice romana Il Ventaglio. Il libello—trentadue pagine nella veste originaria—era stato l’esito di un’iniziativa promossa da Vito Riviello e Giorgio Weiss, i quali, nell’ambito del progetto culturale *Paso Doble*, intendevano porre editorialmente a contatto un poeta contemporaneo e uno scrittore del passato con cui questi avvertisse particolare affinità: Raboni aveva individuato Alessandro Manzoni. Ne era risultata un’agile pubblicazione che raccoglieva dieci poesie di Raboni, selezionate dall’autore tra le proprie allora già edite, accostate a passi scelti dalla *Storia della colonna infame* di Manzoni. Le due sezioni erano separate da uno scritto in cui Raboni illustrava le ragioni delle sue varie selezioni: innanzitutto del perché di Manzoni; quindi, dei criteri che lo avevano guidato nella scelta delle proprie dieci liriche e della *Storia*

manzoniana. Vale la pena soffermarsi su alcuni elementi di vicinanza a Manzoni che Raboni riconosceva alla propria opera poetica in quell'occasione, poiché questi rientrano tra le norme d'ingaggio del gioco raboniano che Magro continua nel paratesto dell'edizione Ronzani. Così Raboni: "I temi dell'ingiustizia, della persecuzione, del processo iniquo, dell'innocenza ingiustamente perseguitata e punita; l'immagine, esplicita o implicita, della città come teatro della peste, come contenitore di ogni possibile contagio fisico e morale [...]: tutte queste cose [...] vengono, non ho dubbi, da Manzoni, sono le prove, le stigmate della mia passione manzoniana, della mia manzonità" (26).

Ma veniamo al capitolo "Appendici" (41-102), vera novità della recente ristampa. Terminata la riproposizione integrale di *Raboni-Manzoni* (11-40), l'interrogativo che guida il curatore è il seguente: se la plaquette aveva fotografato la "funzione Manzoni" (26) attiva nell'opera di Raboni fino al 1985, questa fedeltà persiste nelle fasi seguenti della produzione del poeta? "Appendici" è un tentativo di risposta: nei due paragrafi che compongono il capitolo, intitolati "Altri luoghi" (43-76) e "Su/per Manzoni (e Milano)" (77-102), Magro propone alcuni scritti raboniani successivi a tale data, nei quali egli avverte ancora la presenza di Manzoni, dando quindi seguito al gioco di abbinamenti avviato da Riviello e Weiss per *Paso Doble*. Il primo dei due paragrafi, "Altri luoghi", raccoglie venticinque testi tratti dai libri di versi di Raboni: non si tratta, in verità, solo di poesie, ma sono incluse anche due prose, provenienti dalle raccolte *Versi guerrieri e amorosi* e *Ogni terzo pensiero*. La proposta avanzata in "Altri luoghi" è tanto più appassionante in quanto il legame manzoniano non è qui né esplicito né citazionistico, ma risponde a quelle modalità di ripresa delle quali Raboni aveva tracciato le coordinate in *Raboni-Manzoni*: comuni denominatori tra i testi selezionati sono dunque il clima di sospetto, persecuzione e continua minaccia, un senso d'inquietudine diffuso e la presenza di Milano vissuta come città della peste e del contagio fisico e spirituale. Il secondo paragrafo del capitolo "Appendici", "Su/per Manzoni (e Milano)", riporta nove prose raboniane che sono, invece, di più semplice decodificazione manzoniana, perché tratte da interventi, interviste e conferenze in cui il poeta riflette apertamente sul suo rapporto di triangolazione con Manzoni e Milano.

Il volume si chiude con il denso saggio postfatorio di Magro intitolato "Intelligenza della pietà" (105-22), articolato in tre sezioni: nella prima, il critico ritorna sul rapporto tra Raboni e Manzoni e sulle scelte originariamente operate dal poeta nella plaquette; nella seconda, il curatore motiva la selezione delle poesie raboniane che continuerebbero la funzione Manzoni nei modi cui si è già dato conto; nella terza, sono proposti ulteriori incontri poetici che, secondo Magro, possono aver agito sulla ricezione—e sul superamento—di Manzoni da parte di Raboni, e cioè Eliot e Pound, ma soprattutto Baudelaire.

Tramite il moderno modello di Baudelaire, Raboni va oltre Manzoni: il che non significa, è ovvio, rinnegarne l'eredità (e ne è prova tutta l'opera in esame), ma piuttosto accoglierla in modo dialettico e vivo, non solo epigonico. Dopotutto, era stato Raboni stesso a porre nei termini seguenti il suo rapporto con il predecessore milanese: “Manzoni *deve* esserci, non può non esserci nelle mie poesie—esserci, è chiaro, come un tenue, degradato riflesso, o solo come un rimorso” (25-26).

La curatela di Fabio Magro a *Raboni-Manzoni* è un'operazione originale e pienamente riuscita. Il vero centro del libro non risiede tanto nella riproposizione integrale della plaquette raboniana, per quanto primaria e fondamentale, ma nella proposta avanzata dal curatore nel paratesto: nel paragrafo “Altri luoghi”, i testi scelti dall'opera di Raboni—la cui manzonità si fa più persuasiva a ogni rilettura—verificano la persistenza dell'eredità di Manzoni nel poeta milanese, attiva proprio in quelle forme non pacificate e totalmente risolte (di tenue, degradato riflesso o rimorso) alle quali lo stesso Raboni faceva riferimento. Se è vero che, nell'affrontare questa pubblicazione, il lettore non può esimersi dalla faticosa e, per chiari motivi, irrisolvibile domanda: “Raboni avrebbe condiviso la scelta?”, non si vedono le ragioni che potrebbero far pensare a una risposta negativa. In definitiva, si può certamente ritenere che chi vorrà dedicarsi in sede critica all'opera poetica di Raboni troverà in *Raboni-Manzoni*, a cura di Fabio Magro, nelle proposte avanzate dal curatore in “Altri luoghi”, negli interventi raboniani raccolti e riordinati in “Su/per Manzoni (e Milano)” e nell'accurato saggio critico “Intelligenza della pietà”, materia di essenziale lettura.

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Niccolò Scaffai. *Poesia e critica nel Novecento. Da Montale a Rosselli.* Roma: Carocci, 2024. Pp. 240.

Niccolò Scaffai's book, entitled *Poesia e critica nel Novecento. Da Montale a Rosselli* is a collection of essays written between 2014 and 2023, the fruit of many years of research, dedicated to the poetry of Italy in the second half of the 20th century. In particular, the volume investigates the complex web of relationships that link poetry and criticism in the work of some of the most important twentieth-century authors, for whom—the scholar argues—poetry was not only the genre of lyrical expression, but also (and above all) “la sede di elaborazione di un pensiero critico” (“Introduzione. Sguardi di rimando,” 11-18, 11). Scaffai observes that writing in verse itself often represents a self-critical exercise; almost an examination of conscience. The poets analysed in this volume are Vittorio Sereni, Franco Fortini, Amelia Rosselli, Giovanni Raboni, Giorgio Orelli and Federico Hindermann. Poets who did not simply compose both critical works and works in verse, but wrote:

[L]ibri poetici [che] sono anche forme critiche: senza questa intrinseca unione, la poesia stessa, il suo stile, il rapporto tra i suoi oggetti e l'espressione non avrebbero avuto ragione d'essere. Non si tratta di mettere in luce solo la componente metaletteraria esplicita nei testi di poetica in cui direttamente un autore può fare i conti con il proprio modo di comporre, o istituire un confronto ed eventualmente un conflitto più o meno dichiarato con i modelli. In una certa misura, infatti, è lo stesso scrivere in versi che s'instaura ed evolve in dialogo con l'esame critico (che è spesso anche autocritico). L'incontro, non sempre fortuito ma spesso anzi cercato, di cui si occupa questo libro è quello tra poeti, e tra questi e la critica: sia nel senso che i poeti di cui parleremo sono stati anche critici più o meno notevoli, sia nel senso che lo sviluppo e la comprensione delle rispettive ragioni formali, storiche, ideologiche (da parte dei lettori ma anche degli autori stessi) sono derivati anche dalla fedeltà di e a certi critici e alle loro categorie.

(“Introduzione. Sguardi di Rimando,” 11-12).

In the twentieth-century panorama traced by Scaffai, a role of great importance is played by Eugenio Montale, who becomes almost a *stella fissa* around whom the constellation of subsequent poets revolves. In fact, in a very brief epigram (three lines introduced by an ironic title: *C'è un Montale per tutti*) Giorgio Caproni declared that “Ciascuno ha il suo Montale, ritagliato a misura. / Vale quello che vale, / secondo natura e statura.” Caproni's humorous epigram was written in 1976, eighty years after the Genoese poet's birth, and it emphasises both the variety of Montale's work (which, in the period between *Ossi di seppia* to the *Diario del '71 e del '72*, had changed in tone, and with respect to the models and forms used by the poet) and the centrality of Montale's poetic lesson for our 20th century.

The volume is divided into two parts, the first (“Incontri e codici,” 19-103) is devoted to lyric poetry, the second (“Oggetti e Tradizioni,” 105-201) to the critical writing of these masters of the last century. In addition to the “Introduzione” and copious “Note” (203-20), the volume consists of twelve chapters, plus a “Bibliografia” (221-32) and an “Indice dei nomi” (233-38). Montale's presence is hegemonic in the 20th century. In fact, “Non possiamo non dirci montaliani,” wrote Giovanni Raboni. Montale's, however, is not a religion with apostles and priests, but a legacy destined for those who recognize themselves as having made an autonomous critical choice to be the recipients of a language, a style, an ethic. The constant comparison with Montale's lessons gives a strong internal coherence to the collection, even in the essays dedicated to authors who are apparently more distant from his model on a formal and poetic level. Scaffai never attempts a “verifica dei debiti” (“Introduzione,” 14) nor a mechanical search for sources: rather, the study of intertextual relations reconstructs the multiple forms of Montale's legacy, which develops according to complex ramifications and sometimes

reveals itself through antitheses and oppositions. This is the case for Franco Fortini (Chapter 9, “Forma e responsabilità: *I Saggi italiani* di Franco Fortini,” 127-42), which is addressed in the section devoted to “Fortini e Montale” (133-36). It is also true of the complex mechanisms of adhesion and distance put in place by Giovanni Raboni, whose evolution between *Le case della Verna* and *Barlumi di storia* leads to a greater inclination towards self-narrative, which owes not a little to *Satura*, a turning point for Montale.

Opening the volume (and it could not have been otherwise) are two essays on Vittorio Sereni—Chapter 1, “‘Ognuno riconosce i suoi’: Sereni e Montale” (21-35) and Chapter 2, “‘L’orizzonte preconstituito’: Sereni di fronte all’ermetismo” (37-47)—the heir par excellence of Montale’s legacy, to whom the Genoese poet offered more than a technique, but “una chiave per leggere l’universo” (23). The key that directs Sereni’s gaze, inherited from his master, consists precisely in a new way of looking at and deciphering reality. The poem in which Sereni most closely approaches Montale’s imagery is rightly identified as the splendid lyric *Ancora sulla strada di Zenna*, a central point in *Strumenti umani*.

Another strength of the book is its emphasis on the influence of Montale’s *Occasions* on the later tradition. Suffice it to mention the attention that two exceptional readers, Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo and Luigi Blasucci, devote to the second *plaque*, whereby Mengaldo sees in Montale’s crossing of the d’Annunzio model “capofila o radice di un nuovo albero genealogico novecentesco” (Chapter 11, “Percorrere il finito in tutti i sensi: *sulla Tradizione del Novecento* di Mengaldo,” 163-83, 169), while Blasucci identifies in it the most decisive inheritance, that is, the ability to authorize the entry of the object into poetry without ironic lowering (Chapter 12, “Gli studi montaliani di Luigi Blasucci,” 185-201). This produced an explosion, an example of which is the work of Giorgio Orelli, to whom a beautiful chapter is dedicated (Chapter 4, “Un’altra fedeltà: Orelli e Montale,” 59-75) that sheds light on “la portata stilistica complessiva” of the adherence to the *Occasioni* by means of timely insights and minute textual “accertamenti” (60), that distinguish between the reuse of the epiphanic module and the recourse to the nominalization of the *realia*.

A very important testimony to Montale’s fortune among Swiss poets is provided by the essay dedicated to the lyricism of Federico Hindermann (Chapter 2, “‘Nello specchio ustorio dell’istante’: Hindermann e Montale,” 77-91). We are faced with a profound assimilation of Montale’s model, both in poetic form and in ethos, which lasts until the later years of Hindermann’s works.

Finally, the case of Amelia Rosselli is extraordinary and of great interest (Chapter 6, “Amelia Rosselli: il dramma delle lingue, la perla della tradizione,” 93-103). In Rosselli’s work, the confluence of poetry and criticism—which is also present in Sereni, Raboni, Orelli, and Hindermann—takes on a character of necessity that is both personal and cultural, involving not only expression

but also identity, linking individual history and general history. These convergences are not resolved in autobiography, but through relationships with the fathers of the poetic tradition. The tradition is recognized through the assimilation of the language of the fathers—first and foremost Montale—and is necessary to create the existential space of poetry (103). Scaffai identifies a special attitude which Rosselli has towards her models: the function of “paradoxical” recognition, on which critical and poetic dialogue is based (93). Recognizing these models in Rosselli’s poetry is both impossible and necessary: “le tracce lasciate in Rosselli dai ‘suoi’ poeti (da Montale, ad esempio), sono estranee, postume e tuttavia profondamente assimilate: come il granello di sabbia trasformato in perla nel mantello dell’ostrica” (94).

The book offers a valuable example of a distinctive approach to literary criticism, one that alternates broader methodological perspectives with micro-analyses aimed at shedding light on the deepest stylistic and philological underpinnings, in a tightly woven effort of understanding and interpreting the lyric works under examination. Critics must always be aware of the microscopic background of poetry when writing criticism about poetry. In the twentieth century, the century of the shattering of experience or even the cracking of the poetic voice, the critic does not renounce broad strokes, but uses literary sources and biographical sources in such a way as to increase the intelligibility of the text, always offering an acute and profound reading.

Within this conceptual horizon, Scaffai gives us a series of timely insights, subjecting the text to close scrutiny. He continuously moves from the micro-textual level—with the focus on a single poem—to the macro-textual one—concentrating on the reconstruction of the composition of a section or an entire book, and zooming out even further to reflect on the overall poetics of an author—without ever forgetting the biographical and existential component. The book bears witness to the very close relationship between poetry and criticism in the 20th century, by demonstrating not only that poets can be great essayists and critics of poetry, but also, that the structures of their poetry can allow the critical consciousness of being a poet to speak: by acknowledging points of reference in the flow of tradition, thus placing themselves within it.

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Elisa Segnini, and Micheal Subialka, eds. *Gabriele D’Annunzio and World Literature: Multilingualism, Translation, Reception*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2023. Pp. 401.

Gabriele D’Annunzio and World Literature is an ambitious volume that seeks to reframe d’Annunzio’s literary legacy in a transnational context. By exploring how his works were translated, adapted, and received in different

linguistic and cultural settings, the book challenges the traditional Italian-centric view of his oeuvre and situates it within broader global literary networks.

The volume is divided into four thematic sections—d'Annunzio's engagement with world literature ("A Poetics of Fusion: Cultural Appropriation, Multilingualism, Translingual Writing," 27-120) the role of translators in mediating his work ("Translators as Transcultural Negotiators," 121-98), his global reception in the *fin-de-siècle* ("D'Annunzio's Global Fin-de-siècle Reception," 199-248), and his complex legacies across different regions and time periods ("Complex Legacies," 249-344).

The book makes a compelling case for d'Annunzio as a writer whose influence transcended national boundaries. However, it also raises key questions about the limitations of this influence and the degree to which the author can be fully integrated into the canon of world literature. By juxtaposing d'Annunzio's literary cosmopolitanism with his overt nationalism, this scholarly anthology highlights the contradictions that have shaped his international reputation. While it succeeds in offering fresh perspectives on d'Annunzio's literary and cultural impact, it also reveals the tensions between his Decadent aesthetics, his engagement with foreign traditions, and the politically charged afterlife of his work.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the book is its exploration of how d'Annunzio engaged with literary traditions beyond Italy. The first section examines how he incorporated foreign influences into his writing, often reshaping them to serve his own aesthetic and ideological purposes.

In "D'Annunzio and the Greek and Latin Classics," (29-47), Pietro Gibellini traces how d'Annunzio's fascination with ancient texts—especially Ovid, Virgil, and Euripides—shaped his literary imagination. Gibellini notes for instance that d'Annunzio's *Fedra* (1909) is not merely an adaptation of Euripides' *Hippolytus*, but a radical rewriting that infuses the original with Nietzschean and Decadent themes and aligns with his vision of the *superuomo*.

Mariko Muramatsu's "D'Annunzio and Japonism" (48-66) offers another perspective on the writer's cosmopolitan borrowings. The author demonstrates how d'Annunzio's engagement with Japanese aesthetics—particularly through his reading of Judith Gautier's *Poèmes de la libellule*—led him to experiment with Japanese poetic forms. Muramatsu argues that while d'Annunzio was fascinated by Japanese art and literature, his approach was ultimately shaped by European exoticism, reinforcing the notion that his cosmopolitanism was often an act of appropriation rather than genuine cultural synthesis.

Elisa Segnini's chapter, "Il Piacere as a Multilingual Text and its Afterlife in Translation" (67-84), further complicates this picture. Segnini examines how d'Annunzio used multilingualism in *Il Piacere* to position Italy as a

cultural equal to France and England. The protagonist, Andrea Sperelli, frequently shifts between Italian, French, and Latin, reinforcing his elite status and cosmopolitan sensibility. Yet, as Segnini notes, the novel's multilingualism also serves a nationalistic function: it asserts the superiority of Italian culture by presenting its aristocratic protagonists as the true inheritors of European artistic refinement.

Two chapters in this section discuss d'Annunzio's multiform quasi-demiurgic mastery of language. "'The essence of the race': *La figlia di Iorio* and Italian Dialects" by Sarah Zappulla Muscarà and Enzo Zappulla (85-101) explores the ability of the Vate to construe a universal literary identity rooted in a regionalist linguistic *koine* in one of his most well-known theatrical pieces.

Filippo Fonio continues the discussion of d'Annunzio's complex languagescape ("The 'Latin sister': D'Annunzio's Relationship to the French Language," 102-20) by focusing on the "socially-oriented dimension of communication" (120), that informed d'Annunzio's "bilingualism" in Italian and French, which contributes to reframe the perception that his French writings would be qualitatively secondary to his Italian works.

The second section of the book focuses on the figures who played a key role in transmitting d'Annunzio's work to foreign audiences. It highlights the complex negotiations involved in translating his highly stylized prose and poetry, as well as the ideological tensions that shaped these translations.

Clive Thomson's "Gabriele D'Annunzio and Georges Hérold: Virility, Machismo and the Homoerotic" (123-40) provides a fascinating case study and shows how d'Annunzio's French translator was instrumental in introducing his work to a broader European audience. Thomson shows that Hérold's admiration for d'Annunzio's virile, hyper-masculine persona was complicated by his own homosexuality. As a result, Hérold's translations often softened d'Annunzio's misogynistic and militaristic rhetoric, making his work more palatable to French readers.

Annalisa Ciano's chapter on André Doderet similarly highlights the power dynamics inherent in translation ("After Hérold: André Doderet, The (In)visible Translator," 141-59). Doderet, unlike Hérold, actively promoted d'Annunzio's nationalist image, framing him as a champion of Latin cultural supremacy. This shows how translation was not merely a linguistic act but a political one, shaping how d'Annunzio was perceived abroad.

Stefano Evangelista's "'An Artist in Translation': D'Annunzio, Arthur Symons and Symbolist Drama" (160-79) examines d'Annunzio's influence on Arthur Symons, framing him an accomplished mediator infallible at navigating between cultures.

D'Annunzio's collaboration with Karl Gustav Vollmoeller, particularly in German translations, and the authors' shared fascination with classical culture

and modern technology is treated in the well-documented contribution by Adriana Vignazia ("Gabriele D'Annunzio and Karl Gustav Vollmoeller: From Classical Culture to the Attractions of Motor Power," 180-98).

The third section traces the Vate's influence across different cultural contexts. Noriko Hiraishi's "Fin-de-Meiji as Fin-de-Siècle: D'Annunzio and Japanese Literature" (201-20), examines the writer's reception in Japan, arguing that his decadent aesthetic and portrayal of gender influenced early 20th-century Japanese literature. Assumpta Camps' chapter on his impact on Catalan Modernism reveals a similar pattern: d'Annunzio's construction of feminine archetypes played a key role in shaping nationalist literary discourse in Catalonia ("D'Annunzio's Feminine Archetypes, Nationalist Ideology and Catalan Modernism", 221-31).

However, not all receptions were positive. Arturo Larcati's chapter on Austria explores how d'Annunzio's pro-war rhetoric made him a deeply polarizing figure in German-speaking Europe. While some intellectuals admired his literary achievements, others saw the *Comandante* as a propagandist for Italian imperialism ("Gabriele D'Annunzio and the Austrian Reception after Italy's Entry into the War," 232-48).

The final section addresses the ways in which d'Annunzio's reputation has evolved. Sandro Abate analyzes d'Annunzio's reception in Argentina, tracing how he moved from an elitist symbol to a mass cultural figure tied to nationalist discourse ("D'Annunzio and Argentina: From Elitism to Mass Nationalism," 251-66).

Guylian Nemegeer and Mara Santi argue that, while he was initially celebrated as a European literary icon in the US, the Vate's later association with fascism led to his marginalization in American academia ("Gabriele D'Annunzio in the United States: Politics and Stereotypes," 267-84). Elga Loretto and Sofie Lurie investigate how d'Annunzio's image evolved in Russia from revered poet to nationalist symbol, and later to an emblem of fascist aesthetics ("The Myth of Gabriele D'Annunzio in Russian Culture, 1890-2010: From 'Songs of the Native Land' to the 'Winged Cyclops,'" 285-304). Similarly, Hussein Mahmoud and Christine Samir Girgis's chapter on the author's reception in the Arab world traces how his image shifted from that of a great Italian poet to a problematic figure associated with colonial aggression ("From 'Great Italian Poet' to 'Fascist Writer': D'Annunzio and Arabic Culture," 305-15).

Russell Scott Valentino explores d'Annunzio's cultural and political legacy in the Adriatic region, particularly in relation to Fiume and Italian nationalist memory ("Morlach's Blood in Fiume's *Mensa*: D'Annunzio and the Intimate Adriatic," 316-29). Finally, Ikuho Amano's essay "Infatuated with *Il Vate*: Mishima's Transnational Mimesis of D'Annunzio as Decadent Poet,

Patriot and Celebrity” (330-44), explores Yukio Mishima’s deep admiration for Gabriele d’Annunzio, whom he emulated as a decadent artist, nationalist, and public persona. Using the concept of “transmesis,” Amano shows how Mishima translated D’Annunzio’s aesthetic and political ideals into postwar Japan, culminating in his theatrical final coup and ritual suicide.

Segnini and Subialka round off the book by reflecting on the continued relevance of d’Annunzio’s work on a global scale. Their “D’Annunzio in the Twenty-First Century” (345-57) revisits the history of their editorial endeavour and its accomplishments while highlighting, on the one hand, the significant innovations brought by the Vate to the world cultural milieu and the reception of his works globally. On the other hand, they point out the existing gaps in scholarship.

D’Annunzio and World Literature undoubtedly offers plenty of fresh insight into d’Annunzio’s global reception. While the book successfully demonstrates that his works circulated widely, it also underscores the limitations of d’Annunzio’s transnational appeal due to his reputation being tarnished by cultural and political forces beyond his control, e.g. his alleged *sine causa* support of fascism, which has now—and at long last—been approached seriously from a historiographical perspective in the scholarly anthology “*Un condottiero senza seguaci*”. *D’Annunzio e l’Italia fascista: problemi aperti, nuove indagini, strumenti di ricerca* (Roma: Silvana editoriale, 2024).

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Maurizio Serra. *Malaparte: A Biography*. Transl. Stephen Twilley. New York: New York Review of Books, 2025. Pp. 736.

When he was considered the most brilliant pen of the Fascist regime, the Italian writer Curzio Malaparte (1898-1957) longed for an appointment as ambassador under Mussolini. His aspirations were not surprising: beyond his literary career, Malaparte cultivated an image of himself as a man of action, politics, and history. He also maintained close ties with France, where he spent extended periods and whose cause he had embraced early in life. At only sixteen, he volunteered in the Garibaldi Legion, a unit of Italian soldiers who joined the First World War before Italy’s official entry. Given this dual vocation—political and literary, Italian and French—Maurizio Serra emerges as the ideal biographer. Serra himself is both diplomat and man of letters, with deep connections to France: in 2020, he became the first Italian elected to the prestigious Académie française. He had already established himself as a distinguished biographer of figures such as Gabriele d’Annunzio, but with *Malaparte: A Biography*—originally published in French in 2011—he achieved his most significant recognition, the Prix Goncourt for biography.

The book is organized into five chapters, attempting to periodize Malaparte's tumultuous life through the prism of twentieth-century history. Serra interprets Malaparte's trajectory as a series of encounters with political regimes, wars, and cultural transformations. Serra sets the tone in the introduction with the telling title "The Woes of Narcissus" (1-24). This key metaphor frames Malaparte's existence as dominated by narcissism: a desire to remain perpetually at the center of attention magnifying his role in the events of his time. The Narcissus motif becomes Serra's interpretive lens for understanding both the writer's contradictions and his creativity.

The first chapter, "The Beginnings of a Bonaparte (1898-1924)" (25-110), is the densest. Serra reconstructs Malaparte's origins emphasizing his fraught relationship with his father and the symbolic weight of his chosen name. Born Kurt Erich Suckert in Prato, Tuscany, the young man effectively invented himself as Curzio Malaparte—a gesture not merely literary but existential. Serra portrays this act as the creation of a new personality fueled by insatiable ambition. Malaparte's courage in combat during the First World War is highlighted as both formative and fatal: the respiratory disease that would eventually kill him was contracted during these years. Yet Serra stresses that Malaparte's battlefield experiences also provided him with a lifelong repertoire of heroic self-images and tragic memories to embellish and recycle.

The rise of Fascism offered Malaparte both opportunity and frustration. In the second chapter, "Fascism and High Society (1925-1933)" (111-232), Serra shows him striving to win Mussolini's recognition as a surrogate paternal figure. For a time, he succeeded: Malaparte was rewarded with prestigious positions, including the directorship of *La Stampa* newspaper. Yet Malaparte's adoration was above all to himself: this egocentrism ultimately alienated Mussolini, who eventually exiled him to Lipari. Malaparte, in turn, seized upon exile as another occasion for self-dramatization, transforming himself into a martyr of independence.

The third chapter, "Between Kremlin and Swastika (1934-1943)" (233-380), covers Malaparte's extraordinary mobility during the years of the Second World War. Here Serra highlights both the journalist's privileged access to Europe's corridors of power and his questionable reliability as a witness. Malaparte claimed to have observed some of the century's most traumatic events first-hand, yet Serra carefully distinguishes between what he truly experienced and what he artistically reconstructed. Out of this ambiguous mixture emerged *Kaputt* (1944), Malaparte's masterpiece of war literature, where the horrors of Europe under Nazi occupation are refracted through grotesque imagery and surreal anecdotes. By the early 1940s Malaparte managed to distance himself from Fascism without fully renouncing his earlier admiration for Mussolini, a paradox Serra interprets as another manifestation of his opportunistic narcissism.

The fourth chapter, "Chronicles of the Plague (1944-1946)" (381-476), follows Malaparte in the chaotic transition from Fascist Italy to Allied occupation. Having attached himself to the American army, he retraced his own homeland, journeying from Naples back to Tuscany. These experiences furnished the material for *La pelle* (*The Skin*, 1949), a novel that amplified the grotesque and the carnivalesque to portray the degradation of Naples under occupation. Both *Kaputt* and *The Skin* anticipated later forms of autofiction: Malaparte blurs the boundaries between testimony and invention, author and narrator, in ways that modern readers now find strikingly contemporary.

The final chapter, "From Paris to Mao (1947-1957)" (477-612), depicts a man searching for new stages on which to perform himself. Malaparte's postwar attempts included establishing a literary career in France, experimenting with cinema, and cultivating a relationship with Communist China. It was in that country where he was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer, and complex negotiations were required to repatriate him. Even in illness, however, Malaparte sought to stage-manage his own ending, commissioning journalist Franco Vegliani to record his last months as though they were yet another performance.

The conclusion, "Capri, or the Bird that Swallowed Its Cage" (613-30), brings the reader into Malaparte's legendary Casa come me, perched dramatically on a cliff in Capri. Here Serra meditates on whether Malaparte ever succeeded in removing the mask of the flamboyant intellectual to live as just a man. The metaphor of the bird and the cage encapsulates both Malaparte's dazzling creativity and his perpetual entrapment in his own self-mythology.

As Serra's biography demonstrates, Malaparte remains one of Italy's most controversial figures. He liked to call himself the *arci-italiano* (hyper-Italian), surely embodying in excess the vices stereotypically associated with his compatriots. Serra's greatest achievement lies in showing how Malaparte's relentless narcissism coexisted with a remarkable literary gift. As he writes: "He also knew how to re-create the essence of what he did not see but perceived, combining historical clear-sightedness and a properly 'animal' instinct. In so doing, he succeeded in making us participate in what he himself did not participate in" (343). This judgment captures the paradox of Malaparte's oeuvre: it is at once unreliable and unforgettable, historically suspect yet artistically essential. Serra's book is not merely a biography but a meditation that restores to Malaparte his full ambivalence: opportunist and visionary, sycophant and rebel, narcissist and artist.

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Teresa Spignoli, Gloria Manghetti, Giovanna Lo Monaco, and Elisa Caporiccio, eds. “Il tramonto d’Europa”. Ungaretti e le poetiche del secondo Novecento. Firenze: Firenze UP, 2023. Pp. 198.

Il volume “*Il tramonto d’Europa*”. *Ungaretti e le poetiche del secondo Novecento* curato da Teresa Spignoli, Gloria Manghetti, Giovanna Lo Monaco ed Elisa Caporiccio fa parte della serie *open access* di Firenze UP, “Biblioteca di studi di filologia moderna”. La serie si occupa di raggiungere con i suoi testi un vasto pubblico grazie sia all’accesso libero dei suoi progetti sia alla sua natura fortemente interdisciplinare.

La collettanea trae le sue origini da un convegno che si sarebbe dovuto tenere presso il Gabinetto G.P. Vieusseux nel febbraio 2020, poi annullato a causa della pandemia da COVID-19. La conferenza si è dunque trasformata nel presente volume.

Teresa Spignoli nella sua “Introduzione” (7-9) espone eloquentemente la natura del testo. Scritta per celebrare l’opera di Ungaretti a cinquanta anni dalla sua scomparsa, la raccolta analizza l’ultima produzione dell’autore in chiave diacronica, intra- e intertestuale. Lo scopo principale è quello di mettere in evidenza la ricezione di Ungaretti come poeta, critico e traduttore, dunque la sua influenza sulle successive generazioni di poeti e il suo rapporto con le poetiche del secondo Novecento.

La prima parte del volume è, quindi, dedicata alla ricezione e influenza dell’opera ungarettiana sui poeti e le poetiche operanti dagli anni Cinquanta agli anni Settanta del Novecento. Il secondo gruppo di interventi indaga la produzione del poeta in chiave non solo comparatistica, ma anche intermediale. L’ultima parte passa in rassegna, con rigore filologico, recenti fonti d’archivio proponendo così nuove possibili letture dell’opera del poeta.

La prima sezione è aperta dal saggio “La poesia di Ungaretti e le evoluzioni della critica novecentesca” (15-32) di Eleonora Conti. In questo contributo Conti indaga l’evoluzione della poetica e della produzione ungarettiana, prendendo le mosse dalla relazione del poeta con la critica. L’analisi della ricercatrice è rafforzata dalla suddivisione dell’opera di Ungaretti in cinque decenni. Il contributo “Tra ‘nuova allegria’ e ‘frattura abissale’: la poetica di Ungaretti negli anni Cinquanta” (33-49) di Teresa Spignoli si sofferma sull’ultima produzione ungarettiana e la pone in relazione alle poetiche coeve—con particolare attenzione alle antologie del tempo e alla ricezione pasoliniana di Ungaretti. Degna di nota è l’argomentazione di Spignoli sulla natura del linguaggio ungarettiano nella raccolta *Terra promessa* (1950). Si prosegue poi con “Ungaretti e i dati di realtà nel secondo Novecento: interpretazioni e letture di Raboni, Sereni e Luzi” (51-62) di Francesco Sielo. Prendendo le mosse dalla considerazione di Giovanni Raboni “che vede Ungaretti tra i pochi poeti affermati ad aver recepito le

[...] giovani generazioni” (53), Sielo analizza, in una struttura argomentativa assai convincente, la reciproca influenza tra l'ultima produzione di Ungaretti e quella di Vittorio Sereni e Mario Luzi. In linea con il saggio precedente, Giovanna Lo Monaco in “Un maestro d'inquietudine. Ungaretti, Sanguineti e il Gruppo 63” (65-78) rileva l'influenza ungarettiana nell'opera di Sanguineti e l'apertura e il sostegno di Ungaretti nei confronti delle Neoavanguardie—soprattutto del Gruppo 63. La sezione è conclusa dal contributo di Stefano Giovannuzzi, “Ungaretti e i ‘giovani’: una riflessione sulla poesia negli anni Settanta” (79-94). Lo studioso sottolinea, in modo brillante, la somiglianza, in forma di citazione indiretta, tra le metafore di *Allegria* (1931) e quelle di matrice deleuziana, e dunque “rizomatiche” (89), dei poeti degli anni '70.

La seconda sezione è aperta dal saggio di Mario Domenichelli “Ungaretti attraverso metafisica e barocco: Góngora, Shakespeare, Baudelaire, Mallarmé” (95-104). Il testo pone in relazione l'influenza e l'attenzione del poeta per l'arte barocca, la quale ispira sia le traduzioni ungarettiane di Shakespeare e Góngora, sia la lettura di Ungaretti della modernità attraverso la sua analisi di Mallarmé. In “La poetica della conchiglia. Tra Ungaretti e Joyce” (105-22), Monica Venturini, in un testo di ottimo valore comparatistico, pone in dialogo tre componimenti ungarettiani—*La conchiglia*, *Dono* e *È ora famelica*—con le liriche del primo Joyce, analizzando similarità, differenze e traduzioni indirette dall'autore irlandese. Del saggio sono degni di nota sia il lavoro filologico sui testi che l'attenzione per il carteggio con la poetessa-avvocato (n. 1940) Bruna Bianco. Di spiccato carattere intermediale, intertestuale e comparatistico è l'esemplare “L'‘impronta’ di Ungaretti e il linguaggio visivo di Dorazio” (123-41) di Alexandra Zingone. Il contributo esplora il rapporto tra l'opera di Ungaretti e quella del pittore Piero Dorazio che produrrà la raccolta postuma *La luce* (1971). Nel contributo sono degni di nota sia l'attenzione alle fonti primarie come fondamenta dei ragionamenti sulla pittura sia l'analisi della luce come comune punto di riferimento dei due artisti. L'ultimo saggio della seconda sezione è “‘Che il tempo torni ad essere tempo’. Note sull'ultimo Ungaretti teorico e critico della letteratura” (143-53) di Antonio Saccone. Il ricercatore compie una lettura intratestuale degli scritti teorici ungarettiani collegando i primi saggi sul Futurismo con l'ultima produzione critica del poeta, soffermandosi poi sulla centralità del concetto di tempo nella poesia di Ungaretti.

La terza e ultima sezione è composta da “‘In principio era il verso’. Giuseppe De Robertis e le varianti di Ungaretti” (155-70) di Antonio D'Ambrosio e “Ungaretti nella seconda metà del Novecento attraverso l'archivio di Leone Piccioni” (171-88) di Silvia Zoppi Garampi. Entrambi i saggi, arricchiti da innumerevoli esempi, pongono l'opera ungarettiana in relazione al lavoro sui testi del poeta da parte di De Robertis e Piccioni.

Per concludere, *“Il tramonto d’Europa”*. Ungaretti e le poetiche del secondo Novecento è un testo pienamente riuscito nei suoi intenti. Come si può evincere dal valore dei singoli contributi, la collettanea rappresenta un decisivo apporto alla storia della critica ungarettiana. Una rivalutazione dell’ultima produzione del poeta è il *fil rouge* che lega i saggi, i quali, con diversi approcci, riescono pienamente a far risaltare una parte dell’opera di Ungaretti sinora sottovalutata. Mantenendo una forte componente intratestuale tra i diversi saggi, il volume risulta altamente accessibile e di facile lettura anche per un pubblico non esperto. Così, il *“Tramonto d’Europa”* dà linfa vitale alla critica ungarettiana, offrendo possibilità di analisi che guardano al futuro.

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Valeria Taddei. *Epiphanies in the Modernist Short Story. Italian and English Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 2024. Pp. 229.

Valeria Taddei’s study offers a perceptive and well-structured analysis of a literary device traditionally associated with Modernism. Navigating a crowded field of scholarship, Taddei presents a fresh and compelling transnational perspective by linking English-speaking and Italian authors through the shared use of epiphany. Focusing on four authors—Luigi Pirandello, James Joyce, Federigo Tozzi, and Katherine Mansfield—the author provides a theoretically grounded comparative study that enriches both national traditions and the broader understanding of European Modernism.

This essay has a triple aim: first, to describe how Modernist authors conceived epiphany as a formal and philosophical tool; second, to relate their interpretation to major intellectual currents of the 20th century; and third, to argue for a broader, international definition of Modernism—one that allows for the inclusion of Italian literature without framing it as a derivative of Anglophone models. The introduction (1-30) offers a concise genealogy of the concept of epiphany, tracing its development from early Christian mysticism to its adoption by Romantic poets and eventual transformation during the Modernist period. In just a few pages, Taddei outlines the semantic shift from divine revelation to aesthetic insight.

The first chapter (31-81), on Luigi Pirandello, situates his short stories within the philosophical and literary milieu of late 19th-century Italy. Taddei uses the essay *L’umorismo* (1908) as a key to understanding Pirandello’s poetics, arguing that epiphany functions as a heuristic device suited to demystify the “intricate tangle of contrasting instances” that is reality (35). Drawing on Debenedetti’s notion of the *oltre* (“beyond”), Taddei interprets Pirandello’s short stories as vehicles for revealing the illusion of a

stable and coherent self: her analysis is supported by references to German Romanticism (notably Schlegel), Bergsonian vitalism, and poets like Leopardi and Baudelaire, all of whom inform Pirandello's vision. Taddei argues that Pirandello's epiphanies should be divided into two opposite poles: the negative (ironic demystification of a social construct) and the positive (lyrical ecstasy of the metaphysical revelation). Particularly compelling is the section on Pirandello's mysticism: Taddei argues that his Catholic upbringing was later reshaped by his interest in Spiritualism and the works of William James, who advocated a third path between lofty idealism and dry positivism. This spiritual eclecticism finds its way into Pirandello's fiction, where epiphanic moments reveal not eternal truths but the relativity of perception and the illusion of the 'self'.

In the second chapter (82-128), Taddei examines James Joyce's theoretical and practical approach to epiphany, beginning with his early reflections in *Stephen Hero*, where the term is first introduced as a literary and philosophical concept. Taddei contends that critics "have often failed to distinguish" or even detect the presence of "two different veins in the interpretation of epiphanic moments" in Joyce: one rooted in St. Augustine's *quidditas* (or "whatness"), and the other in Duns Scotus' *haecceitas* (or "thisness") (90-91). This distinction is vital to understanding the development of Joyce's concept of epiphany from *Stephen Hero* to *Dubliners*. Early in his career, Joyce walked the streets of Dublin in search of moments that revealed hidden meanings beneath appearances. Later, as Taddei demonstrates, he abandoned this Romantic understanding of epiphany, embracing a "proto-phenomenological sensibility" focused on presence, particularity, and immediacy (108). Going against the "symbol-decipherers" eager to impose allegorical readings, Taddei invites the reader to embrace the ultimate indeterminacy of Joyce's epiphanies.

The third chapter (129-214) deals with Federico Tozzi, arguably the least known among the authors treated in this book. Taddei maintains that Tozzi's provincialism should not be considered as a limitation but rather as proof of his Modernist sensibility: not even the lack of theoretical articulation of the epiphany as a literary device manages to hinder his participation in the epistemological crisis of the early 20th century. Again, Taddei distinguishes between two models of epiphany: the psychological (when Tozzi focuses on inner mental states, often bordering on the pathological) and the spiritual (when the author looks for insights beyond rational consciousness). Both are informed by his reading of William James, whose influence is evident throughout Tozzi's short stories. Taddei also revives and deepens the comparison between Tozzi and Joyce, first proposed by Debenedetti, focusing on their shared poetics of daily minutiae. Unlike the previous chapters, this section privileges textual analysis over cultural context, allowing a closer

engagement with Tozzi's work. Particularly effective is the close reading of *Una recita cinematografica* (1908), in which the author cleverly parodies Pirandello.

The final chapter (177-215), devoted to Katherine Mansfield, returns to a broader intellectual and philosophical frame. Taddei explores how Mansfield's aesthetic sensibility intersected with psychological and philosophical currents, tracing her engagement with thinkers such as Hegel, Wilde, Chekhov, Bergson, and Freud. Moreover, Taddei's compelling theorization of Mansfield's "poetics of insights" facilitates the comparison with the other authors present in the book. One of the most noteworthy contributions of this chapter is the focus on Mansfield's "lexicon of special moments," a distinctive vocabulary that enabled the author to innovate the short story genre while conveying fleeting, almost inarticulable states of awareness (183). Taddei also investigates Mansfield's engagement with psychoanalysis, not as a science, but as a literary tool that could confirm or deepen the artistic representation of the "self."

What emerges from this exploration of Italian and English short stories is a compelling and intriguing sense of ambiguity. Taddei convincingly demonstrates that four authors with virtually no contact with one another acquired a shared set of literary tools for confronting the instability of modern subjectivity. Epiphanies are intrinsically elusive and hard to detect and define; nevertheless, Taddei's categorization brings a sense of order that might be replicated with other samples, even outside of English-speaking and Italian literature.

Thanks to her smooth blending of philosophical explorations, intriguing anecdotes, and lucid textual analysis, Taddei makes a complex topic accessible to both scholars and non-specialists. Overall, her volume provides evidence for the idea of an "independent" Italian Modernist tradition, while also opening the way for further inquiry into the transnational dimensions of the Modernist short story.

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HISTORICAL & CULTURAL STUDIES, MISCELLANEOUS STUDIES

Teresa Agovino, and Matteo Maselli, eds. *Armi e armature nella letteratura italiana*. Firenze: Franco Cesati Editore, 2024. Pp. 258.

This collection of fourteen articles organized in chronological order critically examines the role of weapons and armor in Italian literature from its origins

to the present day. In their note (11-12), the editors Teresa Agovino and Matteo Maselli explain that the compendium was inspired by a panel on the evolution of arms in Italian literature organized by themselves and the late Giorgio Patrizi (Università di Roma “La Sapienza”) for the annual conference of the Associazione degli italianisti (AdI) in 2022. Patrizi, who proposed the volume, was asked to write the introduction but unexpectedly passed away in 2023.

In the Introduction (13-17), Floriana Calitti notes specific themes in the articles that come to the fore. Calitti observes the centrality and long history of the dialectic between arms and letters in Italian court culture, as we see in *Il libro del cortegiano* and the *Decameron*, and the important themes in both classical and Italian literature with the wordplay *amore* and *morte* (such as with the figure of Cupid) and with the battle or “hunt” for love (*la “caccia” d’amore*). Real weapons range from those used in hand-to-hand combat to the atomic bomb, with pistols, canons, rifles, etc. in between. Calitti notes a particular turning point with the arrival of the arquebus in the fifteenth century, which Ariosto strongly decried “[...] perché degrada l’onore dei combattimenti alla pari e rende inutile la prodezza dei cavalieri antichi” (16).

The essays are divided into two parts: the first, “Dalle origini all’Ottocento,” comprises those on the origins of Italian literature through the nineteenth century; the second, “Novecento e anni Duemila,” those on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Maselli and Agovino open the volume with their two articles, entitled respectively, “Venne a la porta, e con un verghetta / l’aperse”: l’arma angelica e la *conversio* spirituale nella *Commedia*” (21-32) and “Lecito a ciascuno / è ciò che si guadagna con la spada”. Sulla centralità delle donne armate nel *Morgante*” (32-48). Centering on the sword, the most archetypal of medieval weapons, Maselli shows how its meaning in the *Commedia* changes based on the context and this complex transformation of meaning impacts the narration. In the second, Agovino analyzes two main categories of women in Luigi Pulci’s romantic epic *Morgante*: 1) disarmed women and helpless girls, and 2) princesses bearing arms; the author also includes a part dedicated to Amazons and giantesses and another to Lucrezia Tornabuoni who commissioned the poem.

Five more articles follow. Jennifer Gómez Esquinas, in “Coverta d’arme fiammeggianti accese”: l’armatura di Alfonso d’Ávalos nel duello contro il dio Marte nelle *Metamorfosi* di Cariteo” (49-65), studies how Il Cariteo (sobriquet of Benedetto Gareth, c. 1450-1514) mythologizes the young captain Alfonso d’Ávalos through his armor, which, following classical tradition, serves to describe and exalt him as hero. In “Il ricordo incancellabile del sole”. La simbologia dei riflessi sugli scudi” (67-79), Federica Maria Giallombardo explores the representations of shields in the history of art and literature from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century, citing examples of their complex

symbolism and many forms. Tommaso Gennaro examines the spatial and temporal dimensions of duels involving firearms from the fourteenth century to the present (in contrast to those in which duelists fought in direct contact and without firearms) in “‘Durerà ancora tanto?’. Duelli d’altri tempi e altri tempi dei duelli” (81-94). Giampiero Giuseppe Marincola, in “‘Con livree, con insegne e con cimieri’. Armi e armature della ‘pace’ nel canto XX dell’*Adone* di Giovan Battista Marino” (95-110) argues that Marino does not seek the exclusion of war from his epic poem *Adone* (1623) so much as a reworking of the constituent elements of what he considers a weakened heroic epic tradition in favor of new narrative material focused on peace. Next, in “‘Mejjo er coltello’: Le armi nei sonetti e nella Roma di Belli” (111-29), Pietro Gibellini directs his attention to Giuseppe Gioachino Belli’s “monument” of over two thousand Roman sonnets depicting the common people of Rome and their many firearms and edged weapons. Finally, Raffaella Bertazzoli, in “‘Coltelli e coltellacci: per una semantica dell’uso delle armi nell’opera di Giovanni Verga” (131-53), reveals two typologies in Verga’s use of weapons: the duel with saber or pistol in the Scapigliati novels, and the knife or cutlass in the veristic phase.

The second part, “Novecento e anni Duemila,” includes six articles. In “‘Un disguido bombardamentale’. Le armi fanta-ironiche di Primo Levi e Juan Rodolfo Wilcock” (157-68), Roberta Colombo compares the converging content and stylistic sensibilities of Levi and Wilcock, particularly their ironic and caustic narration. Next, Giuseppe Marrone in “‘Le armi della ‘parte sbagliata’ nei romanzi di Giorgio Soavi, Giose Rimanelli e Carlo Mazzantini” (169-83) looks at those voices which for various reasons chose or found themselves fighting in the ranks of the “Salò Republic” (1943-45), as well as the special relationship between fascist youths and their weapons. In “‘Giovanni Giudici e le armi di Achille” (185-200), Silvia Longhi writes of Giudici’s daring and countercurrent book *Salutz* and the influence of the troubadour genre of the *salut amoroso* which inspired the mask of the troubadour-knight. Salvatore Francesco Lattarulo in “‘Ma la rivoltella era in cima ai suoi pensieri’: il gioco adulto delle armi ne *Il conformista* di Alberto Moravia fra transgressione e normalità” (201-16), examines the passion for real weapons that takes hold of Marcello Clerici, the protagonist of Moravia’s *The Conformist*, from an early age and how he gradually passes from vegetal kingdom to animal kingdom to harming his own kind. In “‘Riscritture ‘bellicose’. *Inferno* di Ruijters e il videogioco *Dante’s Inferno*” (217-29), Daniela Bombara and Ellen Patat analyze several transmedia rewritings in which Dante takes on the surprising role of fighter and handles instruments that wound and kill. Finally, in “‘Armature e ‘identità cangianti’ nella poesia italiana recente” (231-46), Samuele Fioravanti focuses on the representations

of weapons in recent Italian poetry (1979-2019), suggesting that weapons can be interpreted as artefacts that influence the performances of the bearers as well as their desires, aspirations, and identities.

Rino Caputo concludes the volume with a helpful afterword (247-48) noting the novelty and success of the editors' heuristic perspective and defining the volume as "una proficua risultanza di 'critica tematica'" (247) that follows other contemporary critical-literary studies focusing on themes (and symbols).

Sarah Faggioli, *Villanova University*

Guido Bartolini, and Joseph Ford, eds. *Mediating Historical Responsibility: Memories of "Difficult Pasts" in European Cultures*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024. Pp. 379.

Mediating Historical Responsibility explores how "difficult pasts"—those not easily narrativised as they risk revealing the implication of a mnemonic community—can be mediated by cultural products in such a way as to elucidate the concept of responsibility. In a generous introduction (3-31), editors Guido Bartolini and Joseph Ford outline a range of perspectives on responsibility across the fields of memory studies, complicity studies, human rights, and legal studies. Drawing on this scholarship, as well as on the insights gleaned from the subsequent chapters, they present a conceptualisation of historical responsibility grounded in both human interconnectedness and in the relationship between human beings, events and structures. This focus builds on the scholarship of Mark Sanders who, in his work on complicity, emphasises the term's etymology: "a folded-together-ness (*com-plic-ity*)—in human-being" (*Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid*. Durham: Duke UP, 2002, 5), as Michael Rothberg similarly does in his work on implication: "we are 'folded into' (im-plied in) events that at first seem beyond our agency as individual subjects" (*Implicated Subject*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2019, 1). The volume investigates the ways in which cultural products expose and enact this enfoldedness, questioning whether certain mediations of memory lead to an acceptance of historical responsibility.

Building on the authors' contributions, Bartolini and Ford outline three levels at which the connections between memory, mediation, and responsibility can be explored. The first considers the responsibility of those who *produce* narratives of the past. Second, responsibility can be thematised at the diegetic level of narrative, allowing for audience identification with protagonists who grapple with different kinds of implication. Third is the relationship constructed between the cultural text and the audience, which can potentially encourage the latter to undertake active and responsible memory

work. Nevertheless, the editors emphasise that only *certain* media are effective in triggering a sense of responsibility. Factors such as the complexification of memory, a resistance to narrative closure, the creation of discomfort in the audience, and the amplification of marginalised perspectives play a decisive role in the extent to which critical cultural products contribute to the “never-ending process” of assuming responsibility (19).

The volume consists of sixteen chapters divided into five sections, all of which deal with European responsibility for past injustices. The first section, “Responsibility and the Mediation of History” (35-104), offers rich theoretical insights into the process of mediating responsibility across fiction (Hanna Meretoja and Juliane Prade-Weiss), historiography (Daniel Bloxham), and film (Max Silverman). Meretoja, in her chapter, “Memory as Interpretation: A Hermeneutics of Agency, Historical Responsibility, and Jenny Erpenbeck’s *Heimsuchung* [*Visitation*]” (35-53), assumes a phenomenological-hermeneutical approach, perceiving cultural memory as an interpretative activity. Fiction, by making us aware that “in each historical world multiple futures were open and that every historical world is constituted by human actions, choices, and social practices that can be challenged and transformed” (38-39), can lead us to contemplate how we might have done things differently, challenging the notion of historical processes being inevitable, and emphasising individual agency.

Section two, “Legacies of Colonialism” (107-73), comprises three chapters dealing with the afterlives of British and Italian colonialism: “*End of Empire* [Channel 4, 1985] and the Public Memory of Decolonisation in Britain” by Emiliano Perra (107-25); “Why Care about the Violence of the Past? Addressing Collective Responsibility in British Debates about Colonial Violence during the Mau Mau Insurgency” by Itay Lotem (127-49); and “Haunting Debris: The Transnational Legacies of Italy’s Colonial Past in Addis Ababa” by Charles Burdett and Gianmarco Mancosu (151-73). Burdett and Mancosu’s chapter is based on fieldwork carried out in Ethiopia in 2015 and 2016. Drawing on Ann Laura Stoler’s term *debris* (Stoler 2013), they explore “the entanglement between material and immaterial legacies of empires that still permeate postcolonial societies” (153). Through the concept of haunting, they explore how Italy’s “arrested” decolonisation results in the persistence of the colonial past in the present, not only in Italy, but also in its former colonies (160). They reflect on the varying fortunes of settler Italians after the colonial period, from those who inhabited positions of privilege to those who lived in destitution, particularly the few who remained in Ethiopia after the Derg military coup (1974), unwilling to return to Italy where they feared difficulties re-integrating. These elderly Italians, caught between the colonial past and not quite postcolonial present, *themselves* became the “ghosts of empire” (169).

Section three, “Genocides” (177-239), also consists of three chapters: “The Holocaust and Decolonisation in Contemporary Ukrainian Commemorative Culture, Literature, and Art” by Uilleam Blacker (177-95); “Symbolic Responsibility: Holocaust Memory in Romania through Radu Jude’s Archival Documentaries” by Diana Popa (197-216); and “Between Guiltless Responsibility and Current French Interests: Uncovering Motive in Media Coverage of the Duclert Report in *Le Monde* and the *Rwandan New Times* and *Pan African Review*” by Caroline Williamson Sinalo (217-39). Williamson Sinalo offers an analysis of how the 2021 report on France’s involvement in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, led by historian Vincent Duclert, was covered in French and Rwandan online newspapers. By including Rwandan voices in her analysis, Williamson Sinalo ensures a “multinarrative methodology” which offers vital insight into European historical responsibility from a non-Western perspective (224).

Section four, “Memories of Dictatorships and World War II” (243-92), contains three chapters: “Memory Unboxed: Reckoning with German Memories of the Second World War in Nora Krug’s *Heimat: A Germany Family Album* (2018)” by Claire Gorrara (243-60); “‘Democratic Memory’, Public History, and Responsibility in Spain” by Alison Ribeiro de Menezes (261-78); and “Communism without Guilt: Autobiographical Family Narratives of Communists in Poland” by Katarzyna Chmielewska (279-92), dealing with the memories of Nazism, Francoism, and Polish Communism through a graphic novel, a virtual museum, and dominant and alternative narrative plots respectively. Ribeiro De Menezes’s chapter explores the relationship between memory and democracy in the context of Spain’s “Law of Democratic Memory” (2022). She questions the extent to which the recently launched Virtual Museum of the Spanish Civil War, of which she is co-creator, provides a forum for public history, which can potentially “open up plural vistas of the past” (275).

The final section of the volume, “Fighting Racism and Rethinking Belonging” (295-363), includes a chapter on the memory of the Bosnian and Yugoslav wars in fiction in Germany entitled “Remembering Migration, Rethinking Belonging: Saša Stanišić’s *Herkunft [Where You Come From]*” by Stijn Vervaeke (295-318) and a chapter on a creative response to right-wing terror in post-migrant German society: “Archive of Solidarity after Hanau: Remembering Right-Wing Terror, Racism, and Antisemitism in Germany” by Meryem Choukri and Lara Saadi (319-39). It concludes with Gaia Giuliani’s chapter, “Private Memory, Postmemory, and Public Memory in a Battlefield” (341-63). Giuliani, like Burdett and Mancosu, connects unsettled memories of Italian colonialism to intolerant attitudes towards migrants in sections of contemporary Italian society. Perceiving the Mediterranean as “a battlefield

of public and private memories, memories of traumas, postmemories of colonisation, and a responsible co-construction of the future” (359), Giuliani contributes to the growing scholarship on the Black Mediterranean. She observes that the private, familial memories transmitted to young Black and Brown Italians are often neglected in the public sphere, while the migrant Other is frequently depicted in mainstream media as a “projection of memories of colonisation onto the future, which are reverted as if the colonised will take over the former coloniser” (345). Nevertheless, Giuliani points to a growing number of cross-media counter-narratives that contest this mainstream memorialisation.

Bartolini and Ford’s impressive volume, as well as cementing and furthering the scholarship on historical responsibility, contributes to Italian cultural memory studies by offering an invaluable comparative perspective that illuminates similarities and differences in European countries’ (in)ability to deal with their pasts. Furthermore, it offers a range of interdisciplinary theoretical tools that can be applied across media to examine the intersections of memory, cultural production, and responsibility.

A limitation, acknowledged by the editors in the introduction (7-8), is the volume’s focus on responsibility through a predominantly Eurocentric lens. The inclusion of more voices from Europe’s former colonies would have contributed to a wider understanding of what European historical responsibility entails. Another area that could perhaps be expanded upon is that of scales of memory. Lotem, in his chapter on British colonial memory, comments that in countries that have opened official debates on their contested pasts, such as Germany and France, there is a lack of evidence that it resulted in less racism and more social inclusion (148), raising the question of the effectiveness of top-down approaches to memory. As Ann Rigney argues, attention to what happens “in the intimacy of reading and viewing is as crucial to analysis as larger scale social and cultural developments” (“Remaking Memory and the Agency of the Aesthetic”. *Memory Studies* 14.1, 2021, 10-23, 12). The volume’s inclusion of such a wide array of media could have led to a more explicit elaboration of the concept of interscalarity, or how memory travels between scales.

However, the editors’ inductive approach to theorising historical responsibility initiates a dialogue which will undoubtedly be continued. The volume provides an extremely useful resource for those working on the relationship between cultural production and historical responsibility, and its introduction is accessible to those encountering the topic for the first time.

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Damiano Benvegnù, Marta Cariello, Matteo Gilebbi, and Graziella Parati, eds. *Waste and Discard in Italy and the Mediterranean. Theories, Practices, Literature and Film*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2024. Pp. viii + 306.

This work investigates the notion of waste through its social, cultural, and political dimensions within modernity, with a particular focus on Italy and the Mediterranean. Structured in five sections, the volume combines theoretical frameworks with analyses of representations of waste in literature, cinema, and artistic exhibitions. Drawing on new materialist concepts such as Jane Bennett's "vibrant matter" and Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann's idea of "material agency," the book seeks to extend material relationality into the socio-political domain. While firmly situated within Discard Studies, it also intersects with Mediterranean Studies, given the numerous case studies of waste that have been done in the region. The entanglement between waste and the Mediterranean is underscored by Marco Armiero's assertion that the region has become the epitome of the "Wasteocene," due to the accumulation of discarded human bodies (Marco Armiero, *Le montagne della patria. Natura e nazione nella storia d'Italia. Secoli XIX e XX*. Torino: Einaudi, 2021). The work also engages Postcolonial Studies, examining how waste functions as a marker of colonialist hierarchies between the Global North and South.

The first section, "Theories" (15-52), develops a theoretical foundation which explores human-nonhuman entanglements and their ethical implications for the viewer or reader. Essays by Pasquale Verdicchio, "Migration, Environment, Representation: A 'sea change into something rich and strange'" (17-34), and Graziella Parati, "Flotsam: Bodies, Trash, and Mediterranean Migrations" (35-52) frame this ethical appeal by challenging the binary of "migrant body as waste" (30). Verdicchio emphasizes the need for narrative reconfiguration rather than historical repositioning, arguing for a process of "re-storying" (30). This act of giving a name and a story to the bodies, even in their physical absence, challenges Cartesian dualisms and exclusionary right-wing politics. Parati analyzes the video game *Flotsam* (2019), linking its floating trash cities to Mediterranean deaths, and warning against the normalization of such tragedies. Invoking Franz Fanon and Italian feminist thinkers (Adriana Cavarero, Lea Melandri, Luisa Muraro), she calls for a politics of care (45). The game's use of flotsam is read through Jane Bennett's materialist lens (Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke UP, 2010): the flotsam seems to have an *agency*, since its parts are not merely dead but are part of affective, meaningful assemblages. Both contributions foreground the inseparable ethical and material interconnectedness of human and nonhuman bodies within the Mediterranean space.

Part two, "Practices" (53-120), centers on practices involving waste, with three essays exploring the preservation and resignification of discarded matter.

Rebecca Falkoff's "We'll Always Have Florence: Asbestos, Abatement, and Obsolete Objects at the Piazza dei Ciompi Market" (55-74) discusses the relocation of Florence's Piazza dei Ciompi market due to asbestos roofing removal, interpreting the operation as a sanitization of urban vitality for tourism. The exclusion of vendors and their relocation to a marginal area equate historical memory with aesthetic waste. Sophia Maxine Farmer's "Conserving Fascism's Legacy: The Politics of Waste, Preservation and Erasure" (75-100) addresses fascist monuments in Italy, framing their removal or retention within waste discourse. As an alternative, he proposes an "eco-driven artistic intervention" to avoid discarding these monuments and to promote their integration into the complexity of post-fascist Italy (86). Dylan Gilbert's "Polluted Lands, Poisoned Futures: A Trans-Corporeal Case Study of Scanzano Jonico's Antinuclear Protests" (101-20) draws on Stacy Alaimo's "trans-corporeality" to examine anti-nuclear protests in Scanzano Jonico (2003), revealing how body and land co-construct each other in the face of radioactive waste. While each essay addresses the community's role in redefining waste, Gilbert's is the most event-specific and descriptive.

The third section, "Literature" (121-230) examines the representation of waste in literature, focusing on both its metaphorical impurity and tangible materiality. Carmine Di Biase's "Solid Waste Comes to Life in Alessandro Casola's *A Munnezza*" (125-40) analyzes Alessandro Casola's play *A Munnezza*, featuring a sentient solid-waste character who is married to another character named "Consumo", which means "waste" (126). This allegory critiques the centrality of the human in the Wasteocene and portrays the female subject as discarded, resonating with feminist and ecofeminist critiques. Here, following Bennett, anthropomorphism becomes a counter-anthropocentric gesture. Anna Chiafele's "Carlotto's *Perdas de Fogu*: Toxicity and National Security in the Mediterranean Basin" (141-68) studies Massimo Carlotto's novel (2008), highlighting how unproductive zones (Sardinia) are equated with waste and their populations marginalized. The novel performs an "eco-prophetic lament" (146), making ecological injustice visible and advancing the socio-ecological vision of the Wasteocene. Graphic depictions—polluted fetuses, bleeding wounds—exemplify trans-corporeality, where toxicity transfers from body to discourse. Chiafele's analysis is stylistically clear and argumentatively strong. Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi's "On the Logic of Disposability: *Gomorra*'s Invisible Risks" (169-86) offers a more narrative take, exploring the logic of availability and invisible risks in Saviano's *Gomorra*, where capitalist desire obscures the toxic origins of consumer goods. Her Marxist reading links the Camorra's operations to the Anthropocene's social-natural fracture. Martina Lovato's "Trash as a Marker of the Third-World Condition in Sonallah Ibrahim's *Dhat*" (187-208) examines

trash as a wartime signifier in Ibrahim's novel, showing how waste embodies socio-political decay and national decline in Egypt. Using McLuhan's "claim to truth" (190), she positions garbage as a tool for interpreting Mediterranean crises. Vasiliki Petsa's "'A washed pig returns to the mud': The Working-Class in Greek Literature in the Interwar Years and the 1980s" (209-30) extends this discussion to post-war Greek literature, analyzing depictions of the female body as pollution, invoking Kristeva and Douglas to explore dirt's symbolic function (209-10).

Section four, "Film" (231-78), turns to cinema, asking how ecocinema might depict the Wasteocene through "underexposed and damaged realities" (231). Laura Di Bianco's "Currents in Italian Cinema of the Wasteocene: *The Vice of Hope* by Edoardo De Angelis" (233-54) sees the polluted waters of the Volturno in De Angelis' film as a metaphor for reciprocal violence between human and environment. The film's porous bodies evoke toxic intimacy between femininity and nature, continuing the volume's theme of linking waste to gender (240). Ilaria Puliti's "Aesthetics of Toxicity: Disposable Ships and Car Wrecks in Frammartino's *Il dono*" (255-78) analyzes Michelangelo Frammartino's *Il dono* (2003), focusing on rural Calabrian waste and its ecocritical potential to challenge the region's "imperfect modernity" (274). Her contribution proposes waste as a means of rethinking regional identity through exposed degradation.

Section five, "Afterword" (279-86), with Gabriele Geminiani's "The Museum of the Rediscovered Objects and Its Inspiring 'History of the Vanquished'" (281-286), presents *Micro—The Museum of Rediscovered Objects*, a site reflecting on the agency and poetic materiality of ephemeral discarded items.

Overall, the volume contributes to advancing both Discard Studies and Mediterranean Studies, proposing an alternative conceptualization of waste through the lens of Italian and Mediterranean cultural production. It addresses the pressing ecological challenges of the present, understanding waste not as external to culture but as one of its essential material expressions. The book frames this engagement as a biopolitical and ecocritical act, extending beyond disciplinary boundaries. Methodologically grounded in new materialism, with strong ecological and feminist inflections, the essays—even when focused on literature or cinema—foreground the socio-political significance of embodied waste. While some pieces apply established theoretical models (e.g., Di Biase's anthropomorphism), all contributions participate in constructing an embodied understanding of waste as a core element of contemporary existence. This collective project, both scholarly and interventionist, positions research itself as a situated practice within broader social discourse.

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Lauren Braun-Strumfels, Maddalena Marinari, and Daniele Fiorentino, eds. *Managing Migration in Italy and the United States*. Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2024. Pp. 215.

Managing Migration in Italy and the United States is a scholarly anthology offering an in-depth examination of migration policies, historical responses, and the interplay between Italy and the United States as sending and receiving nations. By presenting a collection of essays from distinguished scholars, the book explores transnational migration from multiple perspectives, particularly focusing on legal, political, and institutional frameworks.

The volume is divided into three thematic sections—"The Freedom to Move Then and Now" (17-76), "Policing the Threat of Italian Migration" (77-132), and "From the Regional to the Transnational" (133-202)—each addressing critical aspects of Italian migration and its regulation over time. Through the study of archival and secondary sources from both Italy and the U.S., the book contributes significantly to migration studies, policy debates, and historical analyses of transatlantic migration.

The first section of the book explores the historical tensions between the liberal economic ideals of free movement and the increasing governmental control over migration. The essays in this part trace the evolution of migration policies in both countries, particularly between 1901 and 1921, when critical immigration laws were enacted. Mark I. Choate's essay ("Liberal Economics or Racial Exclusion: Competing Political and Cultural Narratives in Italian American Transatlantic Migration," 19-36) examines how Italian and American policymakers initially supported migration as an economic necessity but later shifted toward restrictive measures, leading to a collapse in the liberal consensus on migration by 1924. Matteo Pretelli ("Serving the Patria? Italian Americans, Returning Migrants, and the Politics of Citizenship in Liberal and Fascist Italy," 37-54) investigates how Italian Americans and returning migrants navigated questions of citizenship, particularly in the context of Italy's 1912 citizenship law, which mandated military service for returnees and naturalized individuals. Eleanor Paynter ("Creating Crises: Risk, Racialization, and the Migration-Security Nexus in Italy and the US," 55-77) analyzes how migration was increasingly framed as a security risk in both Italy and the U.S. Paynter argues that risk and racialization became key tools in migration debates, linking migration policy to national security concerns.

The second section of the book addresses how Italian migrants were perceived as a threat and subsequently subjected to increasing scrutiny and regulation. The authors explore the intersection of migration and law enforcement, illustrating how migration control became an integral part of national security policies. Matthew Guariglia's chapter ("Italian Immigration

and the US Turn to International Policing,” 79-90) examines how U.S. officials, social scientists, and law enforcement agencies linked Italian migrants to organized crime, justifying stricter policing measures. The author argues that these perceptions laid the foundation for modern-day “crimmigration” (12)—the blending of immigration enforcement with criminal justice systems. Alice Ciulla (“Managing Political Migration in US-Italian Relations: The Case of Vincenzo Vacirca,” 91-109) focuses on the political policing of Italian migrants, using the cases of Pietro Allegro and Vincenzo Vacirca—two Italian political exiles targeted by both the U.S. and Italian governments. This chapter highlights the role of deportations in suppressing radical political movements. Marie-Christine Michaud (“Italians, Racial Nativism, and the Quota Laws in the United States,” 111-32) delves into the quota system implemented in the 1920s, showing how eugenics and racial nativism shaped policies that disproportionately affected Italian migrants. Her analysis sheds light on the ways anti-Italian sentiment influenced immigration restrictions and how these debates reverberated across the Atlantic.

The final section shifts the focus to regional case studies, emphasizing the impact of migration on diplomatic relations and labor markets. The essays in this section highlight how migration shaped—and was shaped by—regional economies, labor demands, and diplomatic negotiations. Lauren Braun-Strumfels and Clara Zaccagnini (“Testing the Limits of Italian and US Migration Law: The 1904 Liguria Incident in New Orleans,” 135-53) analyze the 1904 *Liguria* incident in New Orleans, where over 1,400 Italian passengers were initially denied entry into the U.S. The authors argue that this lesser-known event reveals the inconsistencies in American immigration enforcement and the evolving relationship between U.S. officials and the Italian government. Daniele Fiorentino (“Theodore Roosevelt’s Foreign Policy and the ‘Problem’ of Italian Immigration,” 155-70) explores how Roosevelt’s foreign policy shaped Italian migration during his presidency. He illustrates how migration was often a point of tension in U.S.-Italy relations, particularly as Italy sought to protect its citizens abroad while the U.S. sought greater control over its borders. Guido Bonsaver and Alice Gussoni (“From Sicily to Louisiana: Early Migration and Historiographical Issues,” 171-89) provide an in-depth analysis of Sicilian migration to Louisiana, offering new perspectives on labor recruitment networks and the role of emigration agents in facilitating migration.

Finally, Linda Reeder’s epilogue (“Managing Migration, Surveillance, and Mobility,” 190-202) offers a critical reflection on how migration policies shape and reflect national identities and state boundaries. Reeder contextualizes the essays in the volume within broader debates on immigration control, state surveillance, and the politics of mobility. She highlights how U.S. immigration

policy, rooted in political, economic, and racial tensions, intersects with global geopolitical debates. Additionally, Reeder emphasizes how the transnational framework of the anthology connects historical migration patterns with contemporary border enforcement and surveillance regimes. Her epilogue underscores the legacy of exclusionary practices and their ongoing impact on mobility and rights.

One of the greatest strengths of *Managing Migration in Italy and the United States* is its transnational approach. By examining both Italy and the United States as key players in migration management, the book moves beyond a U.S.-centric analysis. It highlights how migration policies were not just shaped by American lawmakers but also by Italian officials attempting to regulate and protect their emigrants. The book draws on an impressive range of archival materials, including records from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the U.S. National Archives, and private collections. These sources provide fresh insights into migration policy and enforcement, offering a more nuanced view of the historical forces that shaped migration regulation.

If we were to want to find room for improvement, while *Managing Migration* excels in its historical analysis, it could have done a bit more to connect its findings to contemporary migration debates. Although some chapters hint at the modern-day relevance of historical migration policies, a dedicated section exploring the present-day implications of these historical trends would have strengthened even more this well-researched, insightful, and timely contribution to migration history.

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Silvia Contarini, and Claudio Milanese, eds. *Anni Settanta: la grande narrazione*. Firenze: Franco Cesati Editore, 2024. Pp. 219.

This volume edited by Silvia Contarini and Claudio Milanese offers a fresh perspective on the 1970s, moving beyond the clichéd notion of the “years of lead.” In these eighteen essays, the editors refer to these contributions as “pezzi,” which collectively create a complex reassembly—both memorial and cultural, collective and individual. This collection encourages a re-examination of the diverse cultural, political, and artistic expressions of the decade, showcasing the varied visions and creative forces that shaped “la Grande narrazione” of Italy’s long 1968. With its array of critical approaches, the volume presents a new mosaic of this transformative period, highlighting the vital and innovative aspects of il Movimento’s grand era. Organized into an introduction and three thematic sections “Reminiscenze”, “In quei tempi” and “Linguaggi”, the book explores a wide range of significant themes crucial for understanding the intricate landscape of the era.

The first section, as its title suggests, focuses on texts written retrospectively, recalling various aspects of political life of those years. It opens with an article by Federica Capoferri, whose insightful analysis of Edoardo Albinati's novel *La scuola cattolica* delves into the violence perpetrated by far-right elements born and raised in an affluent neighborhood of 1970s Rome, particularly focusing on the harrowing Circeo massacre of 1975, executed by Angelo Izzo, Gianni Guido, and Andrea Ghira. Drawing on Albinati's autobiographical pages, the study weaves personal experiences with collective memory, offering a profound reflection on a time marked by neofascist brutality and misogyny. The following article, authored by Maria Bonaria Urban, focuses on Marta Barone's novel *Città sommersa*, whose narrative unfolds through the eyes of Marta, the daughter of Leonardo Barone, an activist and pacifist in extra-parliamentary groups in 1970s. The article highlights the indiscriminate repression of the judicial system during that era, which unjustly imprisoned Leonardo. Marta's journey of rediscovery reveals her struggle with a father devoted to the care of the disenfranchised members of society, as she reconnects with his tumultuous legacy amidst the backdrop of a politically turbulent Turin. Monica Jansen presents a compelling examination of Sergio Luzzatto's biography of Guido Rossa, the union leader assassinated by the Red Brigades. This analysis offers a human portrait of Rossa, depicting him not merely as a martyr of political violence, but as an exceptional mountaineer, nature lover, photographer, and artist. Alba Castello studies Giorgio Vasta's *Tempo materiale*, focusing on the testimony of a young boy from Palermo regarding the events of 1978, underscoring the often-blurred lines between fiction and historical reality in the novel. Marco Amici provides a glimpse into the Italian punk phenomenon through Marco Philopat's *Costretti a sanguinare* (1997), a hybrid narrative that intertwines oral storytelling and fiction, revisiting the Italian punk movement (1977-1984). The first section closes with Fabrizio Miliucci's article on Carlo Bordini, author of *Memorie di un rivoluzionario timido* (2016), which reflects on the 1970s, which is characterized more by personal choices, influenced by social changes, than political militancy.

The second section shifts to politically engaged novels and films. Nanni Balestrini, a prominent politically committed writer in the 1970s, is explored through two critical contributions: Alda Tosatti's analysis of *Le ballate della signorina Richmond* and Vincenzo Binetti's examination of *Vogliamo tutto*. Tosatti highlights Balestrini's linguistic experimentation through collage, which merges political slogans with theoretical texts to create a collective, mythic language. Binetti describes *Vogliamo tutto* as a hybrid work which blends historical documentation with epic poetry. Two articles contrast opposing poets: Marie Thiron resurrects the work of Ferruccio Brugno,

the worker-poet of the 1970s, while Ugo Fracassa analyzes the divergence between Pasolini and Montale, the latter transforming into a conservative intellectual in post-war Italy. Finally, Giulio Ciancamerla explores Valentino Orsini's film *Uomini e no*, adapted from Vittorini's novel, emphasizing how the film allows the director to relive his experiences during the Resistance, shaped by his cultural and artistic vocation. In the article "Perspectives from the Margin: Queer Developments in the New Neapolitan Dramaturgy," Emanuele Broccio offers an in-depth analysis of the influence of FUORI (UNITARY HOMOSEXUAL FRONT) in the struggle for the affirmation of LGBTQ+ rights. The author focuses on the exploration of emotions and political aspirations that were represented through a significant corpus of queer dramaturgy in the 1970s. Following this, Sonia Bertoccio contributes an enlightening article on feminism, analyzing the evolution of women's literature. Bertoccio highlights a crucial shift: from the 1970s, when women rejected their identification with the process of social reproduction, to the 1980s, when motherhood was rehabilitated as a positive value. Finally, Paola Nigro dedicates her work to examining Gianni Rodari's *Novelle fatte a macchina*. Through his tales, Rodari experiments with alternative languages and offers incisive satire of Italian society during that time, characterized by a consumerist culture and the predominant influence of the media, particularly television.

The third and final section opens with an article by Ulla Mussara Schröder, which investigates Umberto Eco's critique of society. The author, analyzing the themes developed in famous works of the Italian intellectual written in the late 1970s, highlights Eco's lesson in centering critical discourse on the verification of messages through the tools of semiotics, especially when such messages originate from structures of power. Cosimo Burgassi and Giulio Vaccaro provide an engaging reading of Moro's writings during his captivity and the communications from the Red Brigades, emphasizing the linguistic variations in the discourse of the armed group. Luca Mozzachiodi presents a compelling essay on the expulsion of Lama from Sapienza University in 1977, highlighting the generational gap between the union leader and those whom Asor Rosa referred to as the *non garantiti*—namely, students, the intellectual precariat, and marginalized individuals, who grouped together under the name of the Indiani metropolitani. Lama's paternalistic discourse infuriated elements of Autonomia Operaia and led to clashes with the *garantiti*, that is workers, teachers, and tertiary sector employees. The final contribution to the volume is authored by Antonio Spampinato. His article highlights how the 1970s were an important period in reading and interpreting the Constitution in a positive fashion as well as the role of magistrates and the State in promoting a positive jurisprudence. This contribution, while quite insightful, overlooks a

critical aspect: how does the author address the State's abuse of power, which undermined both the spirit and letter of the constitutional framework in its repression of dissent and violation of individual civil rights during the 1970s? Additionally, how has the Italian judiciary enabled the application of the Teorema Calogero to prosecute hundreds of activists based on unsubstantiated and widely discredited claims of ties to armed groups?

In conclusion, the volume edited by Silvia Contarini and Claudio Milanese stands as a significant contribution to the contemporary discourse surrounding the 1970s in Italy. The editors and contributors deserve commendation for their rigorous scholarship and innovative approaches, making this volume an essential resource for scholars and readers alike. It not only challenges prevailing narratives but also invites a re-examination of the intricate landscape of the 1970s, ensuring that the diverse and often tumultuous experiences of that time are neither forgotten nor oversimplified.

Sergio Ferrarese, *William and Mary*

Yvonne Elet. *Urban Landscape in the Third Rome. Raphael's Villa and Mussolini's Forum*. Florence: Edifir, 2023. Pp. 263.

Any object can tell a story, when we take the time to observe it and to study its layered contents within its context; every story has multiple facets and meanings. This, in a simplistic way, is the foundation and backdrop for Yvonne Elet's engaging, deeply researched, wonderfully illustrated, cogent monograph concerning, to quote the volume's subtitle, "Raphael's villa and Mussolini's forum." An early modern art historian, Elet arrives at the topic she examines here by way of the historical convergence among the unfinished Villa Farnesina, the work done to render it habitable and hospitable by the married couple of Count Carlo Dentice di Frasso and Dorothy Caldwell Taylor, and the Fascist project to turn the area by the Tiber below the villa into a showcase for the physical prowess and political and emotional *esprit de corps* of the Balilla, the boy organization of the regime. One of Elet's main merits is her sensitivity to various levels of meaning and magnitude: from the historical to the urban planning, from the political to the symbolic, she presents a complex, yet highly readable, account of events that took place mostly between 1925 and 1943.

The location of the Villa is virtually unmatched in its significance: as Elet explains, it lies "precisely where two ancient consular roads, via Cassia and via Flaminia, meet at the north edge of Rome, immediately before the Milvian Bridge," where "in 312 CE, Constantine defeated Maxenzius—a historic victory spurred by a vision of the cross, which led to his control of Rome and his conversion to Christianity" (8). Consequently, "in 1517, Pope Leo X Medici [...] commissioned Raphael to design a monumental pleasure villa and Vatican

outpost [...] to welcome visiting dignitaries en route to a ceremonial entry into Rome and the Vatican” (8). The strategic and symbolic import of this area was clear to the Fascist regime, too, in its quest to refashion Rome in its third reincarnation: after the Rome of classical antiquity and that of the popes, the fascist one (skipping over the brief period of Rome as capital of the unified Kingdom of Italy). While Hitler wanted to create a Third Reich, Mussolini concentrated on the only location that mattered historically and symbolically.

Elet's volume is tantamount to the biography of an area of Rome: delving into public and private archives, newspaper collections, and designs, she starts by considering the connections between *giardino all'italiana* and cultural expressions in the new capital, Rome (chapter 1, “Urban Landscape in the Gateway to the Eternal City,” 48-61), then she zooms into Villa Madama, its plans and realization, and its earliest restoration funded by French artist and engineer Maurice Bergès and his wife, Maria Clotilde D'Annunzio Bergès, under the direction of neoclassical architect Pio Piacentini (chapter 2, “The Landscape of Villa Madama,” 62-111). In 1925, the Dentice di Frasso-Taylor couple bought the villa and its land, launching into a thorough restoration and modernization that turned them into an important meeting place for Italian and international political and business figures: invitations to parties, horseback rides, and other entertainment were much sought after.

Elet commendably summarizes both personal and political events in a few pages, at the end of chapter 3, setting the stage for what to this reader was the most fascinating chapter, devoted to “Recreating the Villa Gardens” (142-71). Elet weaves the couple's decisions regarding the garden's reimagining (more than a restoration, given that they had not been completed in the sixteenth century, and that three hundred years had lapsed) within the larger framework of urban planning (the idea that Rome should be surrounded by a series of green spaces) and of the ideological and historical work then afoot to bring to the fore the uniquely Italian nature of a specific type of garden. At the same time, Elet underscores contributions by British garden designer Norah Bourke Lindsay (156-59) and the hybrid nature of this garden: “with general plans following Raphael's ideas, recreated by a French designer for a French client, updated for an Italian nobleman and an American heiress by an architect-urbanist working in a modernist style for the Fascist Governatorato, softened with natural, English-style plantings by an Anglo-Irish garden designer—[it] further complicates dichotomies of Italian/Anglophone or rationalist/traditionalist gardens, as well as contemporary tensions between historicist and modernist principles of garden redesign” (167).

Chapter 5, “The Forum Englobes the Villa” (172-89), further expands the area under study and the complexity of the fate and symbolic utilization of Villa Madama by concentrating on the massive project for a Fascist forum

downhill from the villa. Gathering both architectural and garden-related elements, Mussolini's regime aimed for "the Fascist realization of an imperial forum" (175) that would highlight the weight placed on physical fitness and create spaces for various types of spectacles. The last chapter, "The Gateway to Rome: Garden and Theater" (190-203), concentrates on the years 1937 and following, after the Italian government's taking over of Villa Madama and made plans for its "physical integration and recontextualization that sought to associate the villa with the [Fascist] forum to dignify the site and grace it with a *longue-durée* history, and also a boast of surpassing the villa's unfinished state" (196). Elet brings to bear critical insights concerning how the regime utilized spectacles and performance, further emphasizing the role played by both the villa and its gardens in political and symbolic terms.

The brief "Epilogue" (204-13) ties both the story of the Dentice di Frasso/Taylor couple and of the villa and forum in the post World War 2 and post Fascist era: separation of the former and "dismemberment" (206) of the latter. As the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is now headquartered in a massive building realized as part of Foro Mussolini, "Villa Madama's gardens have continued to serve the function of a representational space of the Foreign Ministry down to the present" (208).

Elet's study is a model of in-depth, wide ranging archival research, paired with an inter- and multi-disciplinary scope that acknowledges their relative *longue durée*; its argument and conclusions are clearly articulated and, I would even say, inescapable. The visual apparatus is necessary: Edifir is to be commended for producing a rich volume that informs readers and expresses the full range of the author's case. Those visiting or even just going through the current "dissonant zone comprising the ministry garden park, wrapped around a sporting complex, with a Fascist heritage site in the middle, all accessible via a disorienting tangle of traffic-snarled roads running along the Tiber" (208) will appreciate it more fully after reading this monograph.

Maria Galli Stampino, *University of Miami*

Beatrice Falcucci. *L'impero nei musei. Storie di collezioni coloniali italiane*. Pisa: Pacini, 2025. Pp. 377.

L'impero nei musei. Storie di collezioni coloniali italiane investigates the material heritage of Italian colonialism by analysing how artefacts from Italian African colonies were exhibited in Italian museums. The book analyses the collection of colonial objects, how they entered the museums, what purposes they served and how they were organized into displays. Through this focus, the study articulates a perspective on the relationship between Italy, Italians, and the colonies, tracing its development through the liberal and Fascist periods, and its survival after the empire.

Falcucci develops the introduction (“‘Altered Views’ e le eredità di colonialismi e imperialismi,” 9-19) and the first chapter (“La materialità dell’impero,” 20-43) to articulate an understanding of the Eurocentric system of knowledge as capable of distorting what it studies in colonial contexts, and how analysing these distortions helps us to know the colonizer rather than the colonized (9-10). Therefore, this investigation outlines how colonial museums disseminated the empire within Italy and articulates insights about the nature of the Italian empire and its impact on national identity (17). The book develops chronologically, the second chapter (“Musei e collezioni durante la prima età liberale,” 44-117) describes the first Italian missions in the Horn of Africa, how the explorers accumulated materials to demonstrate the success of their mission, and the role of societies, like the Società Geografica Italiana, in promoting colonial expansion and enhancing its material legacy. Nonetheless, as explored in the third chapter (“Il nuovo secolo e l’invasione della Libia: dalla “missione Eritrea” alla mostra di Genova,” 118-48), showcasing the colonies within Italian fairs became more professional only a few years after the Italian defeat in Adwa (1896), as the exhibit in Genoa (1914) demonstrates. This new attention peaked with the creation of the Italian Colonial Museum in Rome, inaugurated in 1923, and subjected to the Ministry of the Colonies, as it served as a propaganda platform for Italian colonialism (146-47). The book’s largest section, chapter four, (“I musei coloniali del fascismo,” 149-294) explores the Fascist period. First, this chapter analyses the Italian Colonial Museum of Rome, its history, collections, and role in involving the masses in colonial propaganda (151). This section also engages with the colonial societies and their activities, indicating how Fascism subjected their actions to the central government and how they worked to create discourses and myths to legitimize Italian imperialism (e.g., 184). Moreover, the chapter describes the widespread distribution of colonial artefacts through central and peripheral Italian museums, with a focus on the role of ethnographical and anthropological museums, which were particularly useful for the regime’s racial discourse, and the military ones. This analysis also investigates how various local museums about Risorgimento represented colonial expansion as a chapter of the national unification (291-92). The fifth chapter (“La natura dell’oltremare,” 295-348) focuses on the impact of colonialism on natural exhibits, mainly zoological, botanical, mineral, and tropical medicine. The regime emphasized the natural richness of the colonies to attract Italian investment in Libya and the Horn of Africa, glorified Italian labour as capable of transforming African soil (297), and supported its autarchic project. The last section (“L’impero nei musei tra passato e presente,” 349-75) explore the history of the collections after the empire’s end, and outline contemporary approaches to these collections, focusing on the projects developed in Milan, by the MUDEC, and in Rome, within the framework of the Museo delle Civiltà.

In recent years, the scholarship on Italian colonialism has featured a growing attention to the cultural production of the Italian empire (e.g., Gianmarco Mancosu, *Vedere l'impero, l'istituto luce e il colonialismo fascista*. Milano: Mimesis, 2022; Francesco Casales, *Raccontare l'Oltremare, storia del romanzo coloniale Italiano*. Firenze: Le Monnier, 2023), which also involved its material heritage (e.g., Carmen Belmonte and Laura Moure Cecchini, eds. Special Issue "Visual and Material Legacies of Fascist Colonialism Modern Italy." *Modern Italy* 27, 4, 2022; Beatrice Falcucci, "'The Issue of the Mediterranean and the Colonies Has Now Moved to the Forefront of Cultural Life': Curating Museums and Curating the Nation in Fascist Italy's Colonies." *Modern Italy* 25.4, 2020, 421-37); this book contributes to this focus by articulating a detailed genealogy of Italian colonial exhibits and museums, offering an insightful perspective on the colonies' impact on the metropole. To approach Italian colonial exhibits, this research considered more than a hundred museums, having to problematize the notion of what is a colonial object. To reflect the complexity of these collections, the author refers to them as also colonial (33), as they were often involved in heterogeneous exhibits. Building on this framework, Falcucci outlines the collections of objects, providing names, geographical and chronological data, and the moment of exhibition, identifying the institutions that hosted these artefacts, how they were displayed, and often, what happened to them after the empire's collapse. Through this genealogy, the book highlights the diffusion of colonial discourse, examining a network of peripheral museums across Italy to reveal the deep entanglement of local and colonial histories in various communities. (e.g., 268).

This research investigated a large and heterogeneous corpus of primary sources, formed mostly by various national and local archives, travelogues, memoirs, interviews, periodical publications and visual culture. The analysis of these sources engages with postcolonial theory, as it illuminates these objects' meanings, and what they demonstrated and supported within Italian colonial expansion, but also involves Museum studies, with reflection on the role of museums for national identities (26) and the strategies of showcasing. Thanks to these aspects, the book displays cataloguing and analysis qualities that make it a necessary starting point for future studies on the museum heritage of Italian colonialism. Alongside these elements, the book further develops a scholarly understanding of the relationship between science and imperialism, as it indicates how colonial discourse informed a specific epistemology in the colonies, outlining how Italian imperial culture impacted the construction and exhibition of scientific knowledge. Specifically, the text describes the process through which, within a scientific ambition, the colonised subject is fixated on a specific role and indicates how this fixation can serve different purposes within the colonial discourse.

To conclude, this work significantly advances the knowledge about Italian colonial culture. The book's impact unfolds at least in three directions: it provides a concrete understanding of how colonial expansion was represented as the continuity of the process of national unification; it indicates how, despite the organizational issues, the materiality of the Empire reached the Italian peripheries, cataloguing many of these projects, and it demonstrates the persistence of the museums after the empire. This last point is particularly significant, as it provides a nuanced understanding of the post-Fascist amnesia surrounding colonialism, demonstrating how these museums continued to preserve and transmit imperial memory through their collections well into the 1950s and 1960s (358), allowing for a further problematization of Italian colonial memory.

Pietro Dalmazzo, *Durham University*

Daniel A. Finch-Race, Emiliano Guaraldo, and Marco Malvestio, eds. *Italian Science Fiction and the Environmental Humanities*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2023. Pp. 240.

The book is divided into four parts, titled: "Visions of Annihilation," "Degeneration and Retropia," "Scaping Eco-Flux" and "Rethinking Environmental Politics and Ethics," and presents a series of cross-disciplinary analyses of Italian science fiction, through the guiding lens of the environmental humanities.

"A Post-Apocalyptic Garden of Eden: Marco Ferreri's *Il seme dell'uomo* (1969)" (15-30), outlines recurring themes that shed light on Ferreri's eco-political approach to his film, elsewhere considered an "anomaly" (15) by Emiliano Guaraldo. Traditional elements of science fiction are employed to unravel subjects such as "gendered violence, the struggle for reproductive power" (24), and ultimately connect them to the ecological functions of nature.

Michele Maiolani, in "Cultural and Ecological Extinction in Primo Levi's Science Fiction" (31-44), focuses on Levi's short stories "Recuenco: La nutrice" and "Recuenco: Il rafter," recognizing them as perfect ground upon which to analyze his approach to environmental matters (32). Levi overlaps ecological themes with anthropological discourse (32), whereby human cultures that initially come into contact with one another, ultimately undergo a process of estrangement despite their potential environmental and cultural extinction.

In "Spaceships in the Anthropocene: Peter Kolosimo and the End of (Our) Times" (45-60) Marco Malvestio clarifies the conflicting factuality and invention of pseudo-archaeological non-fiction through an investigation of Kolosimo's work and how elements such as alien life, environmental change,

and archaeological mysteries. He invites the reader to question Earth's history (59), in light of Schmidt and Frank's Silurian Hypothesis, to ponder on whether an industrial civilization had existed before humans and how would we detect evidence of it today.

Starting section 2, "Italian Science-Fiction Writers against the Economic Boom in the 1960s" (63-76) presents Daniele Comberiat's reading of Dino Buzzati's hybridization through the trans-humanistic concept of "utopia of the machine" (68). The scholar ponders "the ethical questions underlying human actions" (70) in Emilio De Rossignoli's novel, and the links between "industrial development, environmental exploitation and dynamics of gender, class, and race" (73) in Lino Aldani's fiction works.

In "Barbarism, Animalization, and the End of the World: Fantasies of Regression and Mutation in Italian Science Fiction" (77-94) Simona Micali unravels the atavistic concept of "mimetic violence" (78) highlighting its capacity to undermine solidarity and support. Micali's focus on recent representations of the apocalypse as an underlying "condition" (86) is thought-provoking. The last section explores the idea of a catastrophe as a second opportunity, while also reflecting on alternative, less anthropocentric species such as mutants, cyborgs, or animalized characters.

Florian Mussgnug's "Against Eco-Fascism: Space and Place in Tullio Avoledo's *Furland*" (95-110) interprets this satirical dystopia as a criticism of eco-fascist themes such as "racism, authoritarian governance, [...] sustainability discourse" (101-2). Mussgnug claims that Avoledo adopts speculative fiction to offer his readers "a radical alternative" (100), while concurrently showing his concerns on ultranationalism and its embryonic yet existent threats to environmental justice.

In "Eco-Horror: Human-Animal Encounters in Italian Science-Fiction Films" (111-27), Robert A. Rushing emphasizes how "eco-horror" movies provide examples of the more terrifying, and ultimately inhuman, aspects of human beings. Particularly interesting is Rushing's reflection on fast violence and sensational visibility, in which he concludes that slower ecology issues are difficult to convey through televisual language. The scholar provides an analysis of films from the 1980s, in which the untenability of maintaining a strict dichotomy between "innocent humans and monstrous animals" (122) is revealed, as animals exhibit human-like behaviors while humans display animalistic traits.

Section 3 starts with "Bonsai Children, Enchanted Gardens: Nature as Artifice in Paolo Zanutti's *Dystopian Fairy Tale*" (129-48), in which Valentina Fulginiti expands on the hybridity of Zanutti's novel and claims that climate fiction without science fiction is, indeed, possible. The last part of the chapter focuses on Zanutti's depiction of children as not fully human, hence as

belonging to the world of pure nature. This corroborates Fulginiti's argument that Zanotti's "radical view of childhood as the Other" (132) can provide a way to rethink humankind.

Matteo Gilebbi, in "Uncanny Spaces in Inhuman Times: The Art of Giacomo Costa" (149-64), reflects on post-apocalyptic representations of a world without humans in Costa's artwork. The digital artist's megalopolises often show alien structures originating from the city itself, all of which are characterized by an uncanny absence of humankind that Gilebbi considers a meaningful parallel to the literary genre of "New Weird" (156).

"Herbert Pagani's *Mégalopolis: A Rock Opera between Dystopian Science Fiction and Ecological Utopia*" (165-85) is Eleonora Lima's analysis of the eclectic artist's concept album and theatrical show, inspired by Roberto Vacca's essay on imminent catastrophe (*Il medioevo prossimo venturo*. Milano: Mondadori, 1971, 133-41). Lima focuses her article on the three constants of Pagani's work: his environmental commitment, his love of dystopia, and the transmedial nature and hybrid style of his approach.

In the chapter "Ecofeminist Care at the End of the World: Collaborative Survival in Niccolò Ammaniti's *Anna* and Maria Rosa Cutrufelli's *L'isola delle madri*" (187-200), which opens Section 4, Raffaella Baccolini and Chiara Xausa analyze the two novels, both of which are set in futuristic Sicily, to reflect on the concept of motherhood as a guide to survival on the one hand, and "disease of emptiness" or "sterility" (195) as a side effect of an ecological crisis on the other.

Enrico Cesaretti, in "Green Traces: Vegetal Imagination in Italian Science Fiction from Gilda Musa to Solarpunk" (201-18), reflects on novels that showcase John C. Ryan's concept of "botanical imagination" (*Plants in Contemporary Poetry: Ecocriticism and the Botanical Imagination*. New York: Routledge, 2018). In doing so, Cesaretti also questions gender roles, concluding with an analysis of more contemporary, hopeful, and utopian solarpunk speculative short fiction that remains focused on vegetal imagination.

In "All We Need Is Love?: Eros, Agape, and Koinonia in the Time of Mass Extinction" (219-34) Danila Cannamela reflects on a lack of love as a commonality across damaged environments, and ultimately explores a shift towards love as the primary means to achieve survival.

Finally, Daniel A. Finch-Race's "Industrial Wonders and Pitfalls in Agostino della Sala Spada's *Nel 2073!* (1874) and Emile Souvestre's *Le monde tel qu'il sera en l'an 3000* (1846)" (235-51) reflects on how speculative literature from late nineteenth-century Italy and France mutually treat themes of domestic automation and copy culture and highlight utopic or dystopic views of industrialization and mass machinery.

The volume concludes with “Solarpunk, or rather Solartivismo: An Interview with Francesco Verso” (253-62), conducted by Arielle Saiber, that elaborates Verso’s approaches to science fiction, his inspirations and major themes in solarpunk writing, and the genre’s reception in Italy and elsewhere.

This work represents a significant and timely contribution to the emerging and still “green” field of environmental and ecological studies, particularly considering science fiction had received relatively little attention in Italy until approximately a decade ago. What stands out most is the breadth of themes and interdisciplinary approaches the authors employ, offering a nuanced source of reflection on complex environmental issues.

Selene Genovesi, *Edge Hill University*

Ignacio G. Galán. *Furnishing Fascism: Modernist Design and Politics in Italy*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2025. Pp. 344.

Ignacio G. Galán’s *Furnishing Fascism: Modernist Design and Politics in Italy* is a highly original contribution to the cultural history of interwar Italy as well as to studies on the Fascist dictatorship, design and architecture. This is no mean feat in its own right. For, within fields, such as Fascism studies, architecture during the regime and arts and politics under the regime, which have received significant critical attention from a myriad of angles spanning history, cultural history, art history, *Furnishing Fascism* is a much needed and welcome contribution insofar as it focuses on the everyday objects and how they are used to build a sense of national unity with “diverse and often contradictory strategies” (1).

In *Furnishing Fascism*, Galán returns to some well-known and amply researched topics, such as “the relations between design and power and between modernism and fascism” (2), but he does so by focusing on the often neglected sphere of the everyday. Populated by ordinary objects, the “arredamento” silently shapes our private existences in meaningful and often politically powerful ways. Furthermore, in the author’s own words: “I analyse how, in Italy, furnishing coordinated the emphases of modernist design with the project of fascism” (3). To this end, the book zooms into the exploration of how the household, understood as an “‘arrangement’ and ‘ordering’ of spaces” (3), molded the Italian national identity under Mussolini’s regime. If architects created the spaces and infrastructures of the home, designers created the objects which populate them, their furnishings. Because of its ability to enter the recesses as well as the openings of domesticity, according to the author, furnishing could mediate the anxieties of the era, of modernity, and be therefore turned it into a “privileged technology of modernism,” a technology which connected identity-making personal processes to those of the nation

(3). The study markedly taps into primary sources spanning architects' and designers' archives, journals, posters and original images, which provide a comprehensive, useful and comprehensive wealth of documents.

Furnishing Fascism is divided into five main chapters, arranged chronologically and covering the whole of the Ventennio. The chapters deal in turn with specific themes, positioning interior furnishing within the national and, at times, international landscape. To what extent did home furnishing drive the processes of modernization of the national market; which interior elements were represented in print media; and how was interior furnishing deployed in cinematic settings from the early 1920s to the late 1930s? ask the first three chapters while the last two chapters look at the creation of interiors for the newly-founded Italian empire and explore the relationship between modern objects and tourism on an international scale from the late 1930s to the early 1940s.

More specifically, the first chapter (19-62) focuses on the Domus Nova furniture line, designed by Gio Ponti and Emilio Lancia for the Milanese department store La Rinascente—as baptized by Gabriele d'Annunzio when senator Borletti acquired it in 1917—and subsequently showcased at the 1927 Monza Biennale. In his reading, Galán aptly stresses the role of the market in creating a national taste, echoing those international modernist debates which tried to make home furnishing available on a mass scale (27). The new Italian house had to be furnished with new types of objects (not yet typologies) meant for everyone and not just the elites. As the author argues, the project of a new Italian house was not simply national, it was, rather, multifaceted, because its *italianità* combined tradition with modernity, the local with the international, the elite with the popular. In this respect this “ordinary” aesthetic project was political, responding to a regime that engaged in extensive building of *case popolari* and urban planning.

In a similar vein, chapter two (63-113) centers this time on the role print media (*Casabella*, *Domus*, *Corriere della Sera*) had in shaping and disseminating a new style, or better a new taste for the nation. The picture that emerges is once again a varied one. Galán is right in assuming that modernist aesthetics in Fascist Italy were neither aligned with the regime's cultural policies nor were necessarily a manifestation of modernity as progress; rather, they floated in the “contingent arrangements and shifting interiors articulated in design publications with their shifting information” (112).

A similar discourse which connects interiors and cinematic sets unfolds in chapter 3 (115-59). Architects Carlo Enrico Rava and Carlo Molino together with art critic Edoardo Persico understood cinematographic interiors of films, such as Mario Camerini's *I grandi magazzini* (1935) or Gennaro Righelli's *Patatract* (1931), as stylistically staged aspirations through the furnishing of

objects populating peoples' imagination within a nation which the regime wanted to consolidate by sharing an imaginary sense of "civiltà italiana".

The last two chapters shift from the nation to the Empire first and to the Mediterranean later. Chapter four (161-96) traces the exchange patterns between Italy and the African colonies in staged official exhibitions, such as the Turin World Fair or the 1928 National Exposition held in the same city. In these contexts, foreign objects are displayed within their original contexts to emphasize their "exoticism" and, in Franz Fanon's words, to "compartmentalize" them (*The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove P, 2004, 3, cited on 196) and as such assimilate them within the national landscape through modernist designs. The last chapter (197-238) expands the book's geographical reach to look at the relationship between architecture (and home furnishing) and tourism, especially in holiday homes designed by Ponti, Rudofsky, Bo and Pagani and spread across the Italian Mediterranean coast and in some of the colonies, such as Libya. It demonstrates how the architecture of the home, with its travelling objects, was used to disseminate a sense of Italian *civiltà* with the explicit expansionistic aim at cultural and political territorial appropriation.

This rich and compelling book deals with an impressive variety of artefacts and addresses a clear gap in the literature on inter-war Italy. If I were to make an objection, it would be to its use of theory. Sometimes, theoretical points are not really worked within the arguments as they should have been. The richness of the topic and the fascinating objects analyzed perhaps called for a "less is more" stylistic approach in prose writing. That being said, this is an important and compelling study which I hope will encourage further and much-needed research along similar lines.

Francesca Billiani, *The University of Manchester*

Lorenza Gianfrancesco, and Neil Tarrant, eds. *The Science of Naples. Making Knowledge in Italy's Pre-Eminent City, 1500-1800*. London: UCL Press, 2024. Pp. 276.

Il volume raccoglie i contributi di un *workshop* tenutosi nell'aprile del 2018 all'UCL, e incentrato sul ruolo di Napoli quale polo di ricerca scientifica trasversale a confini disciplinari, nazionali e ideologici. Tra incursioni specifiche su istituzioni e protagonisti della scena intellettuale locale del tempo, eventi storici dirompendi assunti come casi studio, curiosità inedite e ricostruzioni di reti culturali internazionali, il libro accompagna il lettore di capitolo in capitolo in questo processo di *making knowledge* e si rivela preziosissimo nel panorama della storiografia della scienza in Italia. Nato dall'esigenza di colmare una lacuna nella produzione anglofona, il volume

riunisce saggi di studiosi italiani e internazionali che, con approcci e sensibilità diverse, restituiscono un'immagine ricca e sfaccettata della vita culturale partenopea. Volendo superare un certo marginalismo riservato dagli studi alla scienza napoletana dell'epoca, la tesi di fondo dei curatori è chiara: dimostrare che Napoli fu un laboratorio vivace di saperi, sperimentazioni, reti intellettuali e pratiche scientifiche, capace di dialogare con i grandi centri europei e di attrarne gli studiosi. Insomma, una *leader of learning* (16) della conoscenza scientifica in età moderna, e in particolare in quel periodo di fermento intellettuale e *curiositas* naturalistica stimolato dalla rivoluzione scientifica.

Il libro si articola in quattro sezioni tematiche. La prima è dedicata agli spazi di formazione del sapere e alle istituzioni scientifiche napoletane. Ad aprirla è Daniela Caracciolo (29-59), con un saggio su Ferrante Imperato e il suo *book of nature* in forma di collezione enciclopedica dei “segreti” e dei *monstra* della natura. La sua *Historia Naturale* e il suo “Museum” (39-40) vengono analizzati non solo come testimonianze della passione collezionistica, ma come luoghi e strumenti di elaborazione concettuale e tassonomica. Il contributo mette in luce la tensione tra meraviglia e classificazione, spettacolarità e razionalità scientifica, da cui scaturisce un “novel method” che rompe con la tradizione solo in funzione di correggerla e arricchirla con la modernità (35-44).

Segue un articolo di Felix Waldmann (61-79) sull'insegnamento della scienza politica all'Università di Napoli nel Settecento, con particolare attenzione alle figure di Celestino Galliani e Antonio Genovesi. Waldmann contribuisce a chiarire l'avvicinarsi degli insegnamenti nell'istituzione universitaria e la formazione indiretta di un dibattito sulla scienza politica nel Regno.

La seconda sezione esplora il rapporto tra scienza, ambiente e catastrofe naturale, attraverso tre contributi che si distinguono per impostazione e respiro. Alfonso Paoletta analizza l'opera *De aëris transmutationibus* di Giambattista Della Porta (83-102), letta alla luce delle scosse telluriche che colpirono Napoli nel 1583: un esempio di come l'esperienza locale possa stimolare ipotesi generali sulla fisica terrestre. A seguire, Lorenza Gianfrancesco dedica un intervento ben documentato all'eruzione del Vesuvio del 1631 (103-30). Tracciando una genealogia del discorso geologico e della rappresentazione del disastro naturale, si mostra come, nel vaglio delle varie ipotesi, il dibattito trascorra dalla filosofia naturale allo sviluppo delle scienze della terra, e della vulcanologia in particolare. Il terzo articolo, di Silvana D'Alessio (131-60), si concentra sulla peste del 1656 e sull'impatto che ebbe nel modificare le concezioni mediche del contagio, con *novatores* e galenisti ortodossi a confronto, rendendo un po' più certi alcuni aspetti del tema dell'“uncertainty of medicine” (148-52).

La terza sezione, forse la più eterogenea, collega Napoli al mondo moderno europeo e globale, attraverso tre casi-studio. Il primo, di James Clifton (163-86), esplora la percezione tedesca dei *Kunst- und Naturalienkammern* napoletani, evidenziando come la città fosse vista—almeno fino al tardo Seicento—come un riferimento per la museologia scientifica. Il secondo, di Daniel Canaris (187-207), è tra i più originali: esamina l'opera *Parere* (1681) di Leonardo Di Capua, analizzando come l'autore usasse la medicina cinese non come semplice curiosità esotica, ma come leva critica nei confronti del galenismo europeo. Il terzo, di Frank James (209-37), si spinge fino all'Ottocento e ricostruisce la cooperazione (e le tensioni diplomatiche) tra scienziati britannici e autorità borboniche nelle operazioni sui papiri di Ercolano, che giocarono un ruolo piuttosto significativo nel quadro degli scambi internazionali.

La quarta e ultima sezione è costituita da un unico contributo, di Gennaro Rispoli, dedicato al celebre Ospedale degli Incurabili e alla sua rivalutazione in museo (241-68). In una sorta di reportage, l'autore accompagna lo sguardo in una vera e propria visita guidata tra cortili, farmacie storiche, strumenti chirurgici e affreschi. Il testo chiude simbolicamente il volume, suggerendo che la memoria della scienza napoletana non è solo materia d'archivio, ma promotrice attiva di conoscenza.

Il punto di forza del volume risiede nella sua capacità di combinare approcci disciplinari diversi—storia delle istituzioni, storia sociale della medicina, storia dell'ambiente, epistemologia—, senza rinunciare a una coerenza d'insieme. Si evita consapevolmente una narrazione teleologica del progresso scientifico: i saggi non mirano a mostrare quanto Napoli abbia anticipato o imitato modelli altrui, ma insistono piuttosto sulle forme locali di costruzione del sapere, sulle reti intellettuali, sulle contaminazioni tra mondi diversi (accademie, botteghe, corti). Microcosmi moderni che emergono come spazi aperti alla sperimentazione e al dibattito multidisciplinare.

Il valore storiografico del libro consente al lettore una mappa aggiornata e ricca della scienza napoletana tra XVI e XVIII secolo, fornendo uno strumento agile ma solido per ripensare il ruolo di Napoli nella storia culturale e scientifica europea. L'ultima parola, tributata all'Ospedale degli Incurabili, ha un valore esemplare. È come se il libro volesse ricordare che la scienza, oltre a essere oggetto di studio, è anche parte del tessuto urbano e materiale di una città. Non a caso, il museo descritto da Rispoli è popolato di affreschi, strumenti medici, architetture, perfino presepi: testimonianze che fondono specificità disciplinare e vita culturale *tout court*.

The Science of Naples è un volume che, come esplicita il sottotitolo, produce conoscenza. In viaggio nella Napoli scientifica d'età moderna, tra sapere teorico e pratica medica, collezionismo e memoria storica, scambi

internazionali e realtà locali, il libro dimostra, con rigore e passione, che a rendere *pre-eminent* la città nel contesto italiano fu proprio il sapere, la conoscenza: la scienza.

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Umberto Grassi. *Bathhouses and Riverbanks: Sodomy in a Renaissance Republic*. Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2021. Pp. 291.

Umberto Grassi's *Bathhouses and Riverbanks: Sodomy in a Renaissance Republic* adds an important chapter from the Republic of Lucca to the groundbreaking work on sexuality and sexual practices held in the archives of early modern Florence and Venice. Thanks to studies published over the past forty years such as Michael Rocke's 1998 *Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (Oxford UP) and Guido Ruggiero's 1985 *The Boundaries of Eros: Sex Crime and Sexuality in Renaissance Venice* (Oxford UP), we have become conversant with the flesh and blood experiences of Renaissance culture alluded to in Botticelli's Neoplatonic Florentine tableaux and outlined in Veronica Franco's Venetian courtesan letters and poems. While the copious records kept by magistrates of decency in Italian cities document the sexual desires, drives, and negotiations that united the bodies, wallets, and imaginations of men and women of all ages and stations in life, the set of records examined by Grassi expand our understanding of the content of those documents. The statistical information Grassi has provided in easy to consult appendices (247-51) and the detailed glossary of terminology (253-56) allow the reader to check the theoretical discussion against the facts while deciphering the terminology found in the records.

As Grassi explains in the Introduction (13-29), he was granted access to the judicial records of the Republic of Lucca's Office of Decency (*Offizio supra l'Onestà*), an institution analogous to those investigating sodomy in Venice and Florence. However, the Lucchese archive offers a distinctive advantage: its chronological span—from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century—enabling Grassi to trace the evolution of sexual mores, attitudes, and discourses over an extended period. Notably, the overlap between these records and the historical context of the Protestant Reformation and the Council of Trent allows Grassi to explore how anxieties about Protestant heresy, as articulated by Inquisitorial tribunals, intersect with concerns about deviant sexual practices. The documents frequently conflate these domains, revealing the ways in which religious and sexual transgressions were mutually imbricated in early modern moral regulation.

The Lucca documents bring forth a far more nuanced social texture with merchants, professionals, textile workers, weavers, leather workers and prostitutes, whose paths crossed socially and sexually, debunking two myths that emerged from earlier studies and had prevailed until now. First, the idea that sodomitic behavior, especially homosexual sodomitic behavior, was uniquely attributable to the moral decadence of the ruling classes; second, the long-held belief that homosexuality was located at the margins of society, rather than being an integral part of sexuality in all social classes. The phenomenon of cross-class mingling that surfaces in the Lucca Office of Decency records also sheds light on the many sites where sexual activity that was considered transgressional took place. Far from being an exclusively urban practice, sexual trysts now emerged for the tracing from the new terrain of backstreets, market squares, and multiple countryside venues, further corroborating the evidence that the entire spectrum of sexual partnerships was characteristic of sexuality in the early modern period. Thus, homoerotic behavior was by no means a form of minority culture, but rather a central element of the dominant male cultural paradigm in the early modern period, just as it was in antiquity. However, beyond the quantitative data emerging from the Lucca Office of Decency on relationships that were deemed to be a threat to the social fabric of the Republic, the qualitative content of the records compiled from 1570 onward constitutes the most valuable source of insight into the history of human sexuality that the evolution of sexual monitoring in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries affords us over this more extensive chronological span. For the first time in such documents we are made privy to the expression of emotions between partners that hint at relationships and entanglements that demonstrate the variety of human connections and their complexity beyond traditional paradigms of courtship and marriage.

The Lucca files also defy the heretofore held notions about the generational nature of same-sex male relationships that cast adult male nobles who could not yet marry as predators of young boys for the fulfillment of their sexual needs until marriage with the betrothed female could take place. Instead, a diversity of generational relationships between men across the mercantile and artisanal classes paints a far more nuanced picture of same-sex attraction, desire, and its fulfillment in the Lucca archives. Moreover, the inclusion of women in these files—chapter 5 is entitled “Women”—makes this a far less clinical study with the full complement of genders and age groups represented in scenarios of engagement that attest to the dilemma of sex, desire, and survival that played out across broad swatches of the social spectrum. Women appear in the chapter “Women” (89-110) devoted to them to be sure, but throughout the book as well, with a range of sexual prospects, pursuits, and problems that unite their lives with the men in same-sex

relationships that have made up the bulk of the Florentine and Venetian Office of Decency documents. Instead, in the Lucca files, we hear the testimonials of men *and* women who have borne the brunt of sexual violence and been raped anally and vaginally, often repeatedly, with extensive injuries to their genitalia, resulting in infections, surgeries, shame and death. They express emotion over the trials they have endured, and in many cases regret over betrayals, hurt over sexual rejection or insensitivity. We hear the voices of girls, women, boys, and men who were sodomized against their will, or, in many heterosexual relationships, preferred anal sex, as a means of avoiding pregnancy but also seeking pleasure. The records also reveal, at times, the complicated gestures, words, and approaches that are all part of the human process of seeking closeness and its inevitable consequences.

Grassi explicitly delineates what differentiates his book and his perspective in Chapter 7, “Sexual Acts, Homoerotic Feelings” (131-48), where he takes up the methodological problems that historians of sexuality have faced when studying sexuality from a judicial perspective that necessarily frames it as a criminal activity. By focusing on the sex act and glossing over the motivation, sexuality studies had been stuck in prosecution and punishment narratives. Alan Bray’s work on homoerotic friendship is cited as the watershed in opening up sexuality studies to desire and the forms of its expression, with Lilian Faderman and Adrienne Rich expanding the role of friendship in female homoerotic bonds. The expansion of methods that queer theory has introduced together with evolving, scientific studies of emotion and its interdependence with rationality have additionally filled out the historian’s toolbox. The chapter ends with the most provocative proposal of his consideration. Does a preference for anal sex necessarily make the male who seeks it homosexual? It behooves us to quote directly from the last line of this chapter: “Sodomy and homosexuality do not overlap, but they were, and still are, dangerously close friends” (148).

The final chapters of the book (Chapters 9-12) take up the relationship between sites of religious heterodoxy in Italy and sexual transgression, a new and promising line of research that is particularly relevant to Lucca, which was an important locale for reformed religious practice and thought. Grassi investigates the heterodoxy of the pro-Reformation teachings of the Augustinian convent of San Frediano in Lucca with a chapter on sodomy at San Frediano. Grassi’s research shows how sodomy and heresy were conflated in twelfth-century Lucca, with sodomites and heretics considered sects to be eliminated. Grassi deftly weaves the history of heresy and sexuality in Lucca through archival sources, culminating in the measures adopted by the Council of Trent to stem both heterodoxy and sodomy as what had become a conflated form of straying from orthodoxy. Ultimately, though, the Republic of Lucca

succeeded in steering clear of the rigidity of Tridentine Catholicism, with opposition to reformist zeal imbuing all levels of society and keeping at bay any attempts to establish an inquisitorial court at Lucca.

In his closing chapter, Conclusion (237-45), preceded by a page entitled “Closing Note” (235) that tells of the decline of the Office of Decency in the eighteenth century, Grassi underscores how the remarkably nuanced Office of Decency archives of the Republic of Lucca offer a more comprehensive platform for understanding sexuality in all of its expressions, in particular the practice of sodomy among men and women. The holistic consideration of family histories, homoeroticism, emotions, and generational experiences of sexuality that the Lucca records reveal make this study a definitive benchmark in sexuality studies, one that embraces a more perspicacious view of human sexuality than earlier studies that echoed the legal barriers and repressive measures taken to suppress and eradicate unorthodox sexual practices that were seen as the root of societal ills at every level.

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Ali Humayun Akhtar. *Italy and the Islamic World. From Caesar to Mussolini*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2024. Pp. 288.

Ali Humayun Akhtar’s *Italy and the Islamic World: From Caesar to Mussolini* provides an in-depth history of the Italian peninsula’s interactions with the Islamic world, covering everything from the Roman frontier provinces to the late Ottoman and fascist periods. The book spans over two thousand years and aims to show how the Mediterranean has served as a connecting space rather than a dividing one. Akhtar emphasizes how political rivalry, trade, cultural exchange, and religious coexistence are all parts of the same story. Using sources like Latin inscriptions, Arabic documents, maps, coins, and architectural remains, the author challenges the common tendency to separate “Europe” from its Islamic neighbors.

The book begins with Italians in the Levant not as transient crusaders or traveling merchants, but as long-term residents in Alexandria, Cairo, Beirut, and Istanbul. Venetian, Genoese, and Florentine merchants, diplomats, and interpreters managed multiple legal systems, learned Arabic or Turkish, and sometimes crossed religious boundaries. A Venetian Muslim dragoman in Cairo married to a Florentine woman shows a world where cross-cultural unions were noteworthy but not rare. Such examples challenge strict binaries of “East” and “West,” highlighting the permeability of identities within a shared Mediterranean space.

From this late medieval hybridity, Akhtar traces back to antiquity. Roman provinces, such as Syria and Arabia Petraea, become key to imperial trade and

politics, producing figures like Emperor Philip the Arab, who represented the integration of local and imperial interests. The book explores how Byzantine reconquests, papal consolidation, and Islamic caliphates transformed Mediterranean geopolitics, prompting the papacy to negotiate with both Constantinople and Damascus.

North Africa—especially Tunisia—has been a key contact zone long before the Crusades, when Italian fleets traded and raided in Carthage and other Maghrebi ports. Norman Sicily, inheriting administrative practices from earlier Islamic rulers, emerges as a multilingual state connecting Latin, Greek, and Arabic worlds. The commercial reach of Pisa, Genoa, and Venice, extending from Iberia to Crusader Syria and into Safavid Persia, was closely tied to warfare: military campaigns secured trading rights, and merchants financed armed ventures when they were profitable.

Akhtar's chapters on Genoa and Venice during the Habsburg–Ottoman rivalry highlight the practical approach of Mediterranean trade. Both republics traded across religious boundaries and kept strong connections with Muslim states even during wars. Florence—less prominent in maritime history—appears through its Levantine trade, which Akhtar connects to the economic roots of the Renaissance. The idea that Mediterranean trade supported Florence's cultural renaissance is one of the book's most convincing points.

The narrative shifts in the nineteenth century to Livorno, which was declared a free port under the Medici. Its openness fostered a cosmopolitan environment where Muslims, Jews, and Christians from across the Mediterranean coexisted, challenging nationalist ideas of a culturally uniform Italy. Italian communities in Ottoman and North African cities, often with hybrid identities, served as cultural bridges until nationalism, colonial shifts, and fascist policies under Mussolini dismantled these networks. The epilogue examines the enduring influence of these connections across music, literature, architecture, and family history, offering a counter-narrative to stories that focus solely on division and conflict.

One of the book's key contributions is its choice not to view conflict as the main explanation. Crusades, sieges, and imperial rivalries are woven into a larger story of economic interdependence and social exchange. The focus on port cities—such as Pera, Livorno, and Alexandria—emphasizes the importance of multilingualism and cultural fluency alongside military strength.

Akhtar's thematic coherence is impressive given the timeline. Recurring motifs—hybrid communities, pragmatic trade, and fluid boundaries—link episodes from ancient times to the twentieth century. The combination of political, economic, and cultural history, enhanced with visual sources, creates a rich and approachable narrative.

Methodologically, the book's interdisciplinary scope is a strength. Incorporating material culture—such as coins, maps, and architecture—brings vibrancy to the narrative, although its analytical integration could be improved. More discussion on how material sources influence or complicate textual narratives would strengthen its methodological contribution.

In terms of historiography, *Italy and the Islamic World* addresses and updates a tradition of Mediterranean history linked to Braudel and Abulafia, while also engaging with work on cross-cultural trade and diaspora networks like Goitein's studies of the Cairo Geniza. Where Braudel's *longue durée* often emphasizes structural forces to explain cultural interaction, Akhtar highlights individual actors and communities. His focus on hybridity aligns with recent scholarship in connected histories, though without using their explicitly theoretical language.

Akhtar succeeds in challenging teleological stories of European dominance or inevitable conflict. The Italians in his account—sailors, merchants, translators, settlers—are not representatives of an isolated “West,” but participants in a shared world. By expanding the scope from Rome to Mussolini, he demonstrates that migration, mixed communities, and cross-cultural exchanges are persistent features of Mediterranean life.

In sum, *Italy and the Islamic World* is a valuable contribution to Italian and Mediterranean studies. Its combination of narrative sweep, thematic focus, and evidentiary richness makes it an engaging read for both historians and general readers. While future work might expand the non-European archival base and refine the historiographical framing, Akhtar's study persuasively reminds us that the histories of Italy and the Islamic world are not parallel but deeply interconnected.

Mohammad J. Jamali, *University of Toronto*

Martino Marazzi. *Through the Periscope. Changing Culture, Italian America*. Albany: SUNY P, 2023. Pp. 191.

Martino Marazzi's *book* is a masterful exploration of the cultural transformations and literary narratives that define the Italian American experience. Across its chapters, Marazzi navigates historical shifts, linguistic evolutions, and the literary reappropriation of Italian identity in America. The book offers a compelling lens into the ways Italian Americans have reshaped their cultural footprint over time.

In the first chapter, “A Hard Rome's A-Gonna Fall: Roman Sonnets, Sicilian Sulfur, and American Ballads” (11-30) Marazzi sets a rich foundation by juxtaposing historical and literary elements that define the Italian American experience. He draws connections between Roman sonnets and Sicilian sulfur

miners' experiences, weaving them into the analysis of American ballads that reflect migration struggles. The author's ability to intertwine in his literary examination of poetry, labor history, and cultural shifts makes this chapter both enlightening and emotionally resonant.

The discussion of how poetic traditions have been repurposed in immigrant narratives is particularly compelling in "Changing Culture: European Immigrants and New York City Literature, 1870-1940" (Chapter 2, 31-43) where Marazzi dives into the vibrant literary landscape of European immigrants in New York City between 1870 and 1940. This section of the book illustrates how literary contributions of Jewish, Italian, Polish, and other European immigrant writers who used fiction to document and interpret their changing realities, shaped a unique urban literary culture. Through meticulous textual examination, Marazzi analyses forgotten literary voices such as Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), a seminal work that challenges the conventional American success narrative, or Anzia Yezierska's *Bread Givers* (1925), which focuses on the difficulties faced by immigrant families as they attempted to reconcile old-world traditions with new-world aspirations. Marazzi's discussion of New York as a dynamic literary hub is both comprehensive and nuanced, offering fresh insights into the city's multicultural literary heritage. Beyond fiction, the author explores the role of ethnic journalism in shaping public discourse and community identity. He points out that newspapers such as *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* served as vital platforms for political engagement and literary experimentation. Indeed, ethnic periodicals provided a space for serialized novels, poetry, and social commentary, allowing immigrants to maintain connections with their homelands while also fostering a sense of collective belonging in America.

"Our Brother Dante": Dantesque Reappropriations in Italian America" (Chapter 3, 45-75) discusses how Italian American writers have engaged with Dante's *Divine Comedy* as a tool for cultural continuity and reinvention. Marazzi analyzes various literary works that reference Dante, from Efram Bartoletti's *Nostalgie proletarie* (1919) to V.A. Castellucci's *Le avventure di Dante in America* (1935), from Pietro Di Donato's *Christ in Concrete* to Bonifacio Grandillo's *Il messo di Dio* (1936), a prophetization of Mussolini and his role as a "providential" quasi-divine envoy presenting himself—and presented in migrant literature—as *the* champion of Italianness. Marazzi demonstrates here how in Italian American literature the poet, in particular, serves as both a symbol of cultural pride and a framework for expressing at the same time exile, loss, and a stronger willingness to adapt to the new country.

In the fourth chapter, Marazzi shifts focus to the theme of literacy and orality in Italian American culture ("All the Words That Are (Not) Fit to Print: Notes on the 'Illiterature' of the Italian Emigration," 79-96) and introduces the concept

of “illiterature,” highlighting the ways in which Italian immigrants navigated a literary world often beyond their formal education. Once again, this chapter is particularly engaging as it sheds light on an often-overlooked aspect of immigrant expression, namely the role of Italian language periodicals in preserving and promoting immigrant narratives. These newspapers served as crucial spaces for the expression of community identity, activism, and intellectual exchange. Marazzi details how newspapers and literary journals helped Italian immigrants engage with both their heritage and their new environment, fostering a sense of cultural continuity amidst displacement. Notable publications such as *La Follia di New York* are explored by the scholar as examples of media that provided a platform for political discourse, labor rights advocacy, and literary contributions. Marazzi highlights how periodicals often navigated between the Italian and American cultural landscapes, offering bilingual spaces where debates on identity, assimilation, and transnationalism flourished. Furthermore, he emphasizes the editorial struggles, censorship issues, and the role of these newspapers in shaping Italian American literary expression, making them indispensable to the intellectual history of the diaspora.

Marazzi thus critically examines the perception of Italian American literature as overly traditional or nostalgic (“Questioning the Traditionalism of Italian American Literature,” Chapter 5, 97-102) explores the idea of traditionalism in Italian American literature and challenges the notion of a fixed canon. The author examines how Italian American literary tradition has been shaped by a mix of cultural inheritance and adaptation to American society. It discusses the role of first-generation writers in shaping this tradition, the relationship between Italian American identity and literary production, and the ways in which Italian American literature has evolved beyond rigid traditionalism. This chapter also questions whether a distinct and cohesive Italian American literary canon exists, emphasizing the dynamic and evolving nature of cultural identity in literature exists.

In “Kings of Harlem: Garibaldi Lapolla and the ‘Grand’ Gennaro” (Chapter 6, 103-17), Marazzi provides a focused analysis of Garibaldi Lapolla’s literary work that highlights themes of migration, assimilation, and identity struggles within the Harlem setting. Marazzi’s close reading of Lapolla’s book enriches our understanding of Italian American urban narratives and their place within the broader landscape of American literature.

A discussion of the complex identities of Italian Americans and their negotiation between acceptance and denial of their heritage is offered by Marazzi in “I Am(s): Strategies of Acceptance and Denial” (Chapter 7, 119-27). The author also underscores the need for institutional recognition of Italian American studies and critiques the resistance of traditional academia to integrating migration narratives into cultural discourse.

The final chapter (“Reading Robert Viscusi,” 129-40) is a tribute to a pivotal figure in Italian American literary criticism. Marazzi discusses Viscusi’s influence on Italian American studies and his reinterpretation of key themes in the literature of the diaspora, providing a fitting conclusion to the book’s overarching themes of cultural continuity and reinvention dynamically contributing to shape Italian American identity in the context of mobility—both physical and intellectual.

Through the Periscope is a work of scholarship that offers a fresh and multidimensional perspective on Italian American literature, while proposing itself as a tool to help reader reflect “on the deep popular identity of the new [Italian] nation” (143). Marazzi’s ability to blend historical analysis, literary criticism, and cultural theory in a comprehensive and thought-provoking narrative makes this book a must-read for anyone interested in migration studies, ethnic literature, and Italian American heritage.

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Lorenzo Prencipe, and Matteo Sanfilippo. *Breve storia statistica dell'emigrazione italiana (1861-2024)*. Roma: Centro Studi Emigrazione Roma, 2025. Pp. 119.

Con un testo sintetico, accompagnato da una ricca e articolata “Appendice statistica” (81-119), che rielabora specialmente i dati delle serie storiche dell’Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, Lorenzo Prencipe e Matteo Sanfilippo delineano le principali vicende delle emigrazioni che hanno coinvolto l’Italia dall’Unità nazionale a oggi e soprattutto forniscono in modo sistematico le cifre indispensabili per quantificare i flussi e comprenderne l’andamento nel corso del tempo. Se, infatti, le migrazioni costituiscono il fenomeno più rilevante della storia sociale italiana postunitaria, la loro dimensione numerica diventa un elemento imprescindibile per attestarne l’importanza e conoscerne gli sviluppi.

A quest’ultimo fine, il termine *a quo* del 1861 rappresenta una piccola forzatura. La nascita dello Stato unitario, infatti, si configura come un innegabile momento di svolta nella storia nazionale. Nondimeno, gli stessi autori riconoscono che, per i successivi quindici anni, il volume dell’esodo dall’Italia (poco meno di due milioni di persone, delle quali circa 800.000 ripatriarono) è il risultato di stime, perché le partenze cominciarono a essere registrate con continuità soltanto dal 1876. Inoltre, da un punto di vista metodologico, in termini di attendibilità delle fonti, secondo Prencipe e Sanfilippo, esisterebbe una costante sottostima da parte delle statistiche nazionali che renderebbe più verosimili i dati forniti dai Paesi di destinazione. Questo problema, come ricorda la monografia, affligge ancora oggi l’Anagrafe

degli Italiani Residenti all'Estero, alla quale—sebbene siano tenuti a farlo per legge—molti espatriati non si iscrivono per mantenere l'accesso al sistema sanitario italiano e sottrarsi all'onerosità dell'espletamento delle pratiche burocratiche di registrazione. D'altro canto, occorrerebbe non sopravvalutare neppure l'affidabilità delle cifre elaborate dalle nazioni meta dei migranti italiani. L'esempio più significativo è quello degli Stati Uniti: nei decenni degli sbarchi di massa dall'Italia tra la fine dell'Ottocento e i primi anni Venti del Novecento, considerarono ogni arrivo come un trasferimento definitivo, anche se una buona metà degli italiani finirono per rientrare nella terra d'origine e molti, dopo averlo fatto, tornarono più volte a lavorare in Nord America nell'arco della vita.

Prencipe e Sanfilippo propongono una periodizzazione convenzionale: i flussi di massa tra l'ultimo quarto dell'Ottocento e la Grande guerra rivolti soprattutto verso le Americhe (prima quella settentrionale e successivamente quella meridionale), gli anni tra i due conflitti mondiali con gli espatri indirizzati in prevalenza verso destinazioni europee a causa della normativa restrittiva statunitense, la ripresa dell'emigrazione nel secondo dopoguerra grazie ai trattati bilaterali sottoscritti specialmente con alcune nazioni dell'Europa occidentale sul modello degli accordi firmati dal regime fascista con la Germania nazista nel 1938 e basati sul principio dell'invio di manodopera all'estero in cambio della possibilità di importare risorse energetiche quali *in primis* il carbone. Tuttavia, come conclusione di quest'ultima fase e dell'apertura di un'epoca che si estende fino al termine del Novecento, gli autori adottano il 1976, anziché il tradizionale 1973 (l'anno della riproposizione di un saldo migratorio positivo in conseguenza dei rimpatri provocati dalla recessione economica in molti Paesi di destinazione) in quanto, invece che ai ritorni, attribuiscono maggiore importanza al successivo cambiamento delle caratteristiche degli espatriati dal 1977: tecnici e lavoratori specializzati di società italiane che operano all'estero, studenti e docenti universitari.

Il volume presta costantemente attenzione al rapporto tra migrazioni interne e flussi internazionali. Inoltre, riguardo al secondo dopoguerra, non trascura di segnalare la presenza di migranti italiani irregolari specialmente in Francia, triplicati dai circa 30.000 nel 1946 ai pressappoco 90.000 alla fine del decennio, e in Svizzera, dove alla metà degli anni Settanta del Novecento si ipotizzava la presenza di 30.000 minori tenuti letteralmente nascosti in casa dai loro genitori perché ai lavoratori stagionali stranieri era vietato farsi accompagnare dai familiari. Questi episodi, comunque frequenti, vengono, però, collocati in una prospettiva temporale molto più estesa e in una dimensione numerica altrettanto vasta, per cui si stimano oltre quattro milioni di espatri clandestini tra il 1876 e il secondo dopoguerra.

L'emigrazione assistita postbellica viene, invece, collocata nel più ampio contesto dell'importanza della mobilità internazionale dei lavoratori, non solo per la ripresa economica italiana ma anche per la ricostruzione dell'Europa occidentale nel suo complesso, come attestato dalla crescente tutela degli espatriati da parte di organismi come il Consiglio d'Europa e l'Organizzazione Internazionale del Lavoro.

La trattazione dei flussi nel primo quarto di secolo del Terzo Millennio ribadisce come, malgrado i luoghi comuni sulla trasformazione dell'Italia da Paese di emigrazione a terra di immigrazione, gli espatri siano proseguiti in maniera costante e rilevante, salvo la stagnazione del biennio 2020-2021 a causa della pandemia del COVID-19, con quasi 1.700.000 partenze tra il 2001 e il 2023, a fronte di meno di un milione di rimpatri. L'Inghilterra viene indicata come la destinazione preferita (ma, a questo proposito, sarebbe stato preferibile che lo studio avesse scomposto il dato aggregato di più di 285.000 espatri, prendendo in considerazione il periodo precedente e quello successivo alla Brexit), seguita da Germania, Svizzera e Francia. I dati presentati aiutano a smentire altri stereotipi sulle migrazioni odierne perché mostrano che le regioni dell'Italia settentrionale e centrale prevalgono sul Meridione per numero di espatriati e la Lombardia è quella che registra il maggior numero di partenze. Confermano, invece, l'emorragia di giovani laureati che intendono mettere a frutto all'estero i titoli di studio conseguiti in Italia. Questo drenaggio di capitale umano verso Paesi stranieri, però, trova un corrispettivo nel trasferimento di neolaureati dal Sud al Centro-Nord, rispecchiando quanto si era già verificato negli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta del Novecento. Tuttavia, il volume sottolinea pure che la diaspora attuale non è composta esclusivamente da giovani cervelli in fuga ma anche da lavoratori di mezza età in esubero e da anziani in cerca di Paesi con un basso costo della vita dove massimizzare il potere d'acquisto della propria pensione.

Un breve profilo degli italiani che vivono attualmente al di fuori dei confini nazionali, a cui è dedicato l'ultimo capitolo ("Le caratteristiche demografiche della popolazione italiana residente all'estero", 73-78), conclude l'agile e utile compendio di Prencipe e Sanfilippo.

Stefano Luconi, *Università di Padova*

Andrea Sartori. *Assaliti dalle mille luci del cielo. La cultura della percezione*. Macerata: Quodlibet, 2023. Pp. 184.

Il libro di Andrea Sartori, *Assaliti dalle mille luci del cielo* (Quodlibet, 2023), è un excursus che intreccia riflessioni teoriche e spunti quasi sociologici. Si tratta dunque di un saggio sul regime spettacolarizzato dell'immagine digitale nella società nordamericana contemporanea, e usiamo qui il termine

“saggio” in senso critico letterario, proprio perché il metodo scelto da Sartori è quello che sostiene interventi di carotaggio critico che non hanno la pretesa di costruire grandi strutture ermeneutiche. Sottotraccia rispetto alla critica generale della sfera mediatica emerge anche un’analisi che individua schegge, riflessi puntuali e repentini della ricaduta del regime dell’immagine sull’ambiente accademico USA, mondo che Sartori conosce bene avendo vissuto e studiato a lungo dall’altra parte dell’Atlantico.

Scritto in una prosa agile e gradevole, il volume di Sartori si divide in due sezioni principali e una coda. Nella prima parte, intitolata “Techno Life” (37-91), Sartori si sofferma su alcuni dispositivi della società dello spettacolo, come il self-tracking, mettendo in luce l’importanza del ruolo della percezione monodimensionale dei media grazie all’analisi di romanzi come *Americana* e *Rumore Bianco* di Don DeLillo, e *L’uomo senza qualità* di Robert Musil. La seconda parte, intitolata “Pensiero” (95-149), rielabora ciò che rimane oltre la visione totale e iper-monetizzata del mondo massmediatico. Qui Sartori saggia le conseguenze di certe posizioni derivanti dall’empirismo, in particolare, lo scetticismo di George Berkeley che sublima e allo stesso tempo svuota di contenuto la dimensione percettiva—svuota nel senso che appiattisce la portata riflessiva dell’esperienza del vedere.

È qui che Sartori si cimenta in una serie di riflessioni sul legame tra essenzializzazione delle identità (vizio che l’autore già ritrova nei cultural studies, soprattutto nelle declinazioni più tarde), e politiche identitarie (la *identity politics* USA, o meglio l’uso neoliberale di tale posizione), e ripercussioni delle iniziative legate alla *Diversity Equity Inclusion* (DEI) in campo universitario nell’ottica della sensazionalizzazione dell’immagine che domina la vita associata contemporanea. Ne emerge una critica che non tralascia quasi nessuno dei principali indirizzi metodologici in voga nell’accademia americana e che il resto dell’occidente ha spesso importato quasi meccanicamente. Il testo procede per fulminee incursioni che, seppur stimolanti, meriterebbero più spazio, soprattutto per quanto riguarda il loro sviluppo storico; ad esempio, nel caso della disamina dell’*identity politics* sarebbe stato utile considerare il lavoro di una studiosa come Barbara Smith, co-autrice del famoso *Combahee River Collective Statement* (1977, <http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html>), che dimostra l’importanza del nodo complesso dell’identità nei movimenti politici radicali americani, tema successivamente annesso e fuorviato dalla critica mainstream neoliberale.

In ogni caso, bisogna sottolineare che questo testo adotta un punto di vista *altro* rispetto alla vulgata del mondo accademico; cioè mantiene un orizzonte di senso che non si limita a citare la lotta di classe come una delle tante prospettive dell’eclittismo critico dominante nei dipartimenti delle scienze umane USA, ma come il grande interdetto di questi approcci.

Tuttavia, la critica di Sartori a questo tipo di eclettismo critico potrebbe essere fraintesa in Italia, paese incline al sospetto verso l'innovazione delle correnti critico-letterarie americane, considerate meno rigorose e solide di quelle europee. Questo libro non ricalca il sovranismo intellettuale ormai di moda nella nostra penisola, cioè non vuole denunciare le derive dell'accademia statunitense con un fine restaurativo o revisionista. Al contrario, la critica riguarda le distorsioni generate da quella che Marx in *La Sacra famiglia, ossia Critica della critica critica contro Bruno Bauer e consorti* chiamava "critica critica", ovvero quegli avviticchiamenti che depotenziano l'efficacia e l'impatto sociale del discorso teorico *engagé*, fatto quanto mai problematico nella dimensione universitaria che storicamente è fucina di importanti lotte sociali.

È d'obbligo quindi accennare alla congiuntura storico-sociale del mondo universitario trattata da Sartori in *Assaliti dalle mille luci del cielo*. La congiuntura è quella del tramonto del neoliberismo cosmopolita che oggi cede il passo al neoliberismo suprematista dove tutto ciò che non piace viene indistintamente etichettato come *woke* e quindi da smantellare. A forte vocazione bellica, questi modelli rappresentano rispettivamente l'ala *liberal* cosmopolita dell'establishment democratico e quella trumpista nativista del partito repubblicano. Sotto il neoliberalismo cosmopolita, l'accademia americana si presenta come promotrice del libero mercato delle idee, anche se è in realtà governata da una ideologia di fondo ben coesa che gli americani chiamano *corporate*, cioè aziendalista. Ai vertici dell'università si trovano infatti i *board of trustees*, veri e propri consigli di amministrazione di una normale impresa privata formati da figure legate al mondo dell'economia che credono ciecamente nelle politiche di austerità.

È questa ideologia che ha portato avanti una ristrutturazione basata su tagli a risorse, aumento dei carichi di lavoro e parallela iper-espansione del comparto amministrativo. Tanto che oggi nel paradiso dell'impresa privata regna la burocratizzazione totale che il capitalismo imputava al vecchio blocco sovietico. Tale burocrazia si è incaricata di attuare (dall'alto) le direttive moralistiche criticate nel libro di Sartori seguendo i criteri tipici della competitività commerciale.

L'università neoliberale cosmopolita, se da un lato ha aperto (giustamente) uffici dedicati alla DEI dall'altro ha tagliato cattedre e ha precarizzato il lavoro universitario, aumentando simultaneamente gli studenti nelle aule mentre spostava miriadi di mansioni amministrative sul corpo docente. Seguendo il mantra dell'innovazione fine a sé stessa, sono stati imposti cambiamenti a modalità e programmi di studio che dovevano poi essere costantemente rendicontati all'amministrazione secondo il meccanismo infernale (perché serialmente infinito) dell'*assessment*. Anche tra i più autentici sostenitori

dell'approccio DEI non poteva che sorgere il dubbio che si trattasse perlopiù di un'operazione di facciata in linea col regime dell'apparire descritto nel libro. Del resto, l'austerità neoliberale non permette certo di ripensare una nuova e più democratica e plurale università. Si è trattato insomma di un'altra rivoluzione passiva, rivoluzione infatti smascherata nella primavera del 2024, quando le proteste studentesche contro i crimini di guerra commessi in Palestina dal governo israeliano con armi americane vennero repressi quasi ovunque dalla polizia su richiesta delle stesse università.

Il libro di Sartori è stato scritto prima di tutto ciò, ma il vuoto formalismo di questa ideologia non poteva trovare più lampante testimonianza che nel cortocircuito tra censura, repressione e discriminazione di quelle istituzioni che si erano erette a paladine dell'inclusione e della diversità come principi universali. Qui si annunciava già il passaggio alla fase attuale del neoliberalismo cioè a quella suprematista, fase che tra i vari obiettivi della sua guerra politico-culturale ha proprio l'università, istituzione che difficilmente sarà difesa (e migliorata) dagli apparati amministrativi fautori della DEI in salsa *corporate*. Se al contrario quella lotta la condurranno, reimmaginandone metodi e obiettivi, coloro che studiano e lavorano nei campus magari nasceranno pratiche (più che norme) meno formalistiche e più emancipatorie di quelle attuali.

Andrea Righi, *Monash University*

Giampaolo Sasso. *La camera a nebbia anagrammatica. Teoria e pratica dello studio anagrammatico del testo poetico*. Bologna: Edizioni Pendragon, 2023. Pp. 788.

Il senso del saggio di Giampaolo Sasso è espresso nel titolo *La camera a nebbia anagrammatica*: la camera a nebbia è un dispositivo del fisico britannico Charles Wilson che permette di visualizzare particelle di radiazioni ionizzanti non osservabili ad occhio nudo. La loro traccia è data da gocce molto piccole formate dalla condensazione improvvisa di alcool o vapore presente nella camera attraversata dalle radiazioni. Una metafora efficace a mostrare i modi con cui gli anagrammi strutturano la forma e la semantica dei testi.

Gli anagrammi sono, dunque, una sorta d'intramatura: fanno vedere come un testo si genera e i significati che vi vengono mantenuti e non per sola intenzione, ma in virtù della lingua stessa: è soprattutto la lingua poetica che porta alla luce le potenze/latenze del linguaggio, fa intravedere il non detto nel detto e suggerisce come si forma il pensiero quando pensa e che cosa lo fa pensare. L'anagramma fornisce di questo una mappatura. Da qui il saggio di Sasso ove s'intersecano il piano linguistico, psicologico, neuroscientifico, e di quella che in senso lato possiamo chiamare filosofia della mente.

Il saggio muove dall'anagrammatica di De Saussure e anche da un suo fallimento o meglio da un suo non proseguimento. Dei quaderni di Saussure sull'argomento rimasti inediti l'edizione critica è stata curata da Starobinski (1971) che ne ha anche rilanciato il tema. Per Saussure le possibilità combinatorie della lingua sono di una tale quantità da non risultare computabili; il suo problema era di accertare se queste sequenze si dessero per caso o fossero intenzionali o volessero comunicare un linguaggio segreto. Lo si comprende anche da una lettera del 19 marzo 1909 inviata a Pascoli, in cui gli chiedeva, appunto, degli anagrammi che aveva trovato nelle sue poesie latine (*Catulloscalvos, Iugurtha*), senza averne risposta.

Saussure scopre gli anagrammi nei testi più antichi della poesia latina, nei poemi di Nevio, Ennio e in particolare nel "verso saturno". Da lì, poi, nei metri della poesia greca ove determinante è il materiale fonetico: radici, accenti, composizione delle parole, sillabe brevi lunghe o *anceps*. Saussure esplorava quel che chiamava *harmonie phonique* perché in fondo per lui il fascino degli anagrammi risiedeva nel fatto che violano l'ordine del discorso, negano la linearità dei significanti: in certo senso interrompono il nesso rigido significante-significato. Tenuta ferma, dunque, la genialità dell'idea, Saussure non possedeva uno strumento capace di approfondire questa natura combinatoria delle lingue. Ma con l'arrivo della rivoluzione informatica il programma saussuriano poteva essere ripreso. Sasso ha perciò ripreso e proseguito la ricerca e favorito, anche, dalla sua formazione di ingegnere ha potuto mettere a frutto gli strumenti informatici allo scopo. E ha modificato l'originaria concezione dell'anagramma di Saussure, una sequenza discontinua di lettere e sillabe, definendo l'anagramma come una rigorosa relazione tra tratti sequenziali di lettere che si ricombinano a distanza ponendo in rapporto le parole del testo.

Esporre in breve sintesi il saggio di Sasso non è facile e non tanto per la mole del libro, ma perché nella sua indagine anagrammatica chiama in causa, a partire da Saussure, tutta la linguistica del Novecento e non solo. Gli anagrammi, infatti, non sono solo dati fonetico-grafici, ma sono eventi mentali: c'è un nesso stretto tra pensiero linguistico e *flusso di coscienza*. Di qui, uno slittamento dal piano linguistico a quello mentale, cosa che Sasso riesce a fare anche in ragione della sua stessa professione psicoanalitica. La ricerca porta infatti alla luce la forza *espressiva* del linguaggio che si pone, in certo senso, al di qua ed insieme al di là della mera denotazione della coscienza.

Il saggio presenta l'anagramma e le sue modalità combinatorie in termini fortemente teorici, e ne chiarisce l'importanza soprattutto nel testo poetico proprio in ragione dell'estrema attenzione del poeta alla struttura ritmica-timbrica che favorisce il rilevamento inconsapevole delle sequenze

anagrammatiche. La combinatoria di sillabe e suoni risulta quindi per niente arbitraria, ma legante e obbligatoria: fa emergere una sorta di sottotesto del testo, ma nel senso che l'analisi anagrammatica porta alla luce gli *strati profondi* del testo, ne saggia, come dire, l'*intensità*. In questo senso Sasso parla di nuclei anagrammatici a partire dai quali vengono a manifestarsi mano a mano formazioni di ordine più complesso. Ma di questo il lettore potrà rendersene conto solo leggendo e constatando come l'analisi anagrammatica si sviluppa *in re*. Infatti nel saggio ciò dà luogo ad una sorta di *schematizzazione grafica* dell'ordinamento degli anagrammi interno ai testi: delle correlazioni e, quindi, dei processi di significazione che generano. Tutto questo messo in vista *in vivo*: nell'analisi dei più disparati autori (Foscolo, Leopardi, Montale ecc.) e letterature (Orazio, Baudelaire, Apollinaire, Racine, Blake ecc.).

Per dare semplicemente un'idea di come Sasso lavora, traggo un esempio proprio dal saggio e dai noti versi d'apertura di *A Silvia* di Leopardi: "Silvia rimembri ancora / il tempo della tua vita mortale / quando beltà splendea / negli occhi tuoi ridenti e fuggitivi...". Tra le parole di questi versi emergono diversi anagrammi, tra cui il più significativo vincola la relazione "mor-tale – b-eltà", così che risulta evidente il nesso tra *mortale* e *beltà* che esprime come la *beltà* sia destinata a svanire; e, per Silvia, la giovinezza sia destinata a non essere vissuta: tema ribadito da "il limitare / di gioventù salivi", ove convergono in "li-mitar-e" i due anagrammi di "v-ita m-o-rta-le", a precisare "il limite della vita-giovinanza", di cui Silvia è il simbolo.

Una delle ragioni per cui presentare il saggio di Sasso non è semplice è dato dunque proprio dal modo stesso in cui è costruito. Proceede *per exempla*, consiste in un'analisi di testi su testi a cui molti altri se ne potrebbero aggiungere. È un saggio aperto e ciò dà conto della sua stessa mole. Infatti, una volta definito il piano teorico, Sasso procede *per dettaglio* e mostra come l'anagramma funziona *in re*, in ciascun testo: come lo costituisce ed insieme lo costruisce, puntualizzando come l'anagramma sia la chiave determinante per capirne la complessità e confrontarsi con le tesi che vengono espresse nel libro.

Salvatore Natoli, *Università di Milano Bicocca*

Chiara Zampieri, Martina Piperno, and Bart Van den Bossche, eds. *Modern Etruscans: Close Encounters with a Distant Past*. Leuven: Leuven UP, 2023. Pp. 187.

Is it possible to overcome the sense of distance that we feel from the ancient past? The history of the Etruscans, the pre-Roman inhabitants of the Italian peninsula, remains steeped in mystery due to gaps in the documentary and archaeological record. This fascinating volume, edited by Chiara Zampieri, Martina Piperno, and Bart Van den Bossche, explores how the lost Etruscan

past has sparked both scientific inquiry and fantasy. A product of the “Modern Etruscans” research project (launched in 2019 at the University of Leuven), the book features nine cross-disciplinary case studies tracing the emergence of Etruscology—the study of Etruscan culture and history—during the modernist era (c. 1890-1950). Because this ancient civilization has frequently been marginalized in classical studies, this volume fills a gap in our knowledge of the afterlife of the Etruscans. One of the volume’s most valuable contributions is that it invites us to reflect on what it meant to study the ancient past at the dawn of classical studies as we know them today.

The methodological assumptions at the heart of this volume are informed by the field of classical reception. In fact, one of the volume’s main goals, as the editors write in the introduction, is to “actively renegotiate the idea of ‘classical reception’ in favour of a more dynamic and dialogical engagement with the past” (13). Rather than viewing scholars and artists as passive observers of ancient culture, the volume emphasizes their active role in imagining and constructing knowledge about the distant past. To this end, the essays probe the boundary between two contrasting yet interconnected epistemological frameworks: scientific knowledge (such as archaeology) and aesthetic knowledge (as expressed in literature or art, for example). As the volume demonstrates, these intellectual paradigms are often at odds in the modernist period, though they just as often influence and shape each other. By bringing together literary studies, art history and intellectual history, the scholars are able to illuminate the interplay between archaeological investigation and cultural practices. Accordingly, one of this volume’s main strengths is its interdisciplinary approach.

Although each scholar examines a facet of Etruscan material culture, the two opening essays in this volume lay a foundational framework that continues to resonate in the later contributions. In “Etruscans, Victorians, and After: The Modern Sense of Beauty” (23-42), Francesca Orestano investigates the Victorian fascination with Etruscan relics, showing how Romanticism shapes a metaphysical interpretation of Etruscan culture as mysterious and dark. Similarly, in “The ‘Walking Apollo’: From Archaeological Dissemination to Literary Knowledge” (43-62), Chiara Zampieri examines the discovery of the Apollo of Veii statue in 1916, highlighting how early twentieth-century specialists disseminate knowledge of Etruscan culture through texts enhanced by literary registers. Together, these two contributions demonstrate how the aesthetic appreciation for ancient material culture often surpasses the influence of scientific or empirical methods in the modernist period. By beginning from the material culture, the scholars are able to explore how the remnants of the Etruscan past inspire encounters with the past that are immediate, sensory, and captivate the imaginations of their observers.

These discussions of Etruscan material culture open the way for one of the most compelling observations that arises from this volume: in the early twentieth century, the Etruscans emerge as a symbol of exotic otherness. While some modernist responses to the mystery associated with the Etruscans are positive, others are anxious and ambivalent. For example, in “Cooking by the Book: Travel Writing and Etruscan Food Culture in the Interwar Period” (63-80), Bart Van den Bossche explores echoes of the ancient idea of the Etruscans as an immoral people “hooked on the pleasures of life” (64). Examining travel writing by Corrado Alvaro, Alberto Savinio, Vincenzo Cardarelli and D. H. Lawrence, he shows how discussions of Etruscan food culture often convey cultural anxieties related to modern nation-building. The association between Etruscans and funerary culture also contributes to their othering in modernist thought. In “The Demonisation of the Etruscans: From Alfred Grünwedel to German Schoolbooks” (97-114), Martin Miller argues that some scholars in early twentieth-century Germany deploy pseudo-scientific methods to demonize Etruscan civilization, connecting the ancient Etruscans to cult practices, magic and satanic rituals. One of this volume’s most crucial insights is to interpret Etruscan material culture not only as an object of scientific investigation, but as a malleable canvass onto which modernist thinkers project contemporary political and cultural discourses.

Another fascinating theme that runs through the volume is the spatiality of the Etruscan past, especially the primary site of archaeological inquiry, the tomb. For example, in “The Problem of Distance: Giorgio Bassani, The Etruscans and the Limits of Compassion” (147-62), Martina Piperno explores the symbolic meaning of Etruscan necropolises through the lens of Giorgio Bassani’s prologue to his work *Giardino dei Finzi-Contini*. She interprets Etruscan tombs as *lieux de mémoire*, spaces packed with symbolic values that empower the author to reflect on distance and compassion in response to the tragedies of the Holocaust. In “Etruscan Studies and the Infernal Landscape in Vincenzo Cardarelli’s prose d’arte” (127-46), Gennaro Ambrosino uses the metaphor of excavation to investigate how the Italian journalist Vincenzo Cardarelli fuses archaeological findings, personal and collective memory, and the landscape of Etruria in his *prose d’arte*. Overall, the volume illuminates how sites of excavation have the power to shape how writers and artists interpret and use the ancient past. As the scholars demonstrate, the Etruscan tomb is often a workshop in which artists and writers formulate their personal and national identities.

Together, the findings of this volume confirm an old truth in the study of the reception of the classical world, that contemporary viewers are always responsible for shaping the meaning of the ancient past. Nevertheless, by privileging the rich material archive left behind by the Etruscans, the

scholars are able to add novel insights in a variety of areas, especially in their discussions of the symbolic afterlife of particular sites and artefacts. The volume situates the emerging field of Etruscology in dialogue with the broader ideological and cultural forces that have historically shaped the field of classical studies. As such, it is a valuable resource not only for those interested in the Etruscan past, but all scholars who study the use and reuse of the classics in the modern age.

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JEWISH STUDIES

Rachele Bepaloff. *La Sfida della Libertà. Gli Anni Americani*. Ed. Claude Cazalé Bérard, Cristina Guarnieri, and Laura Sanò. Roma: Castelvechi, 2024. Pp. 398.

This is the second of four planned volumes of the Jewish-Ukrainian thinker Rachel Bepaloff's work being published in its entirety by Castelvechi, primarily under the editorship of Claude Cazalé Bérard, Cristina Guarnieri, and Laura Sanò, who previously collaborated on the first volume. The contribution of these two scholars is to accompany the publication of writings from the "American years" that Rachel Bepaloff wrote between 1943 and 1949. Their contribution is noteworthy in attempting to give substance to a series of interventions that are rather heterogeneous in context, quality, and writing style.

Despite the subtitle, these are writings conceived within a deeply French cultural environment, and indeed the authors with whom Bepaloff engages are French. Her tone is more characteristic of a pamphlet, an invective, or a philosophical manifesto, rather than a fully developed intellectual dialogue, but should not preclude this volume from finally gaining the scholarly attention that it deserves. Rather, it highlights the limitations of academic discourse, as perceived by Bepaloff. Philosophy appears to be a discipline that must be transdisciplinary—engaging with literature, poetry, and art—if not employing a specific way of writing that should eventually allow the articulation of, following Sartre's blueprint, "una filosofia della libertà [...] una filosofia che si figura l'essere come un'avventura individuale e fa dell'azione la sola misura della realtà umana" (217). In her incisive postface (347-73), Sanò contends that Bepaloff's appeal stemmed from her allure, which she terms "bellezza dell'abisso" (350), signifying both her inner and outer beauty and encapsulating an existential and intellectual enigma—the art of living: "la

cosa più difficile per Rachel Bepaloff è stata [...] capire come amare la vita, comprendere appieno di quale amore investirla, senza voltare lo sguardo di fronte alla straziante contraddizione di cui essa può essere portatrice” (352). In the same vein, Guarnieri emphasizes Bepaloff’s difficulty to come to terms with “la dismisura dell’esilio” which, however, led her to believe that the US might be “una nuova Sion” (5-12). It is debatable whether Bepaloff was truly successful in loving life while finding a form of theological and political prosthetics for her internal exile in America. Ultimately, she never wavered from a profound affinity for tragedy, which she conceptualizes as an ontological dimension. I would contend that “non può essere formulato in termini etici: è il modo di presentarli, la struttura e la trama, il trattamento della daurata e la qualità del pathos” (154). However, this sentiment is never considered pathological. Bepaloff is convinced that artistic detachment from reality, a concept she expresses in Nietzschean terms, is not a permanent condition: “nel minuto del distacco assoluto, resta solo un potere infinito di attaccamento a qualcosa di fondamentale nella natura, negli esseri, nelle cose” (148). This kind of “realism” is the reason for her “tragic” understanding of life. This understanding is genuine and honest, but also harsh. It is real, but not necessarily obvious to everyone. In this sense, tragedy is a sort of transcendental horizon that cannot truly be escaped. As Bepaloff insightfully notes about Camus, “il narratore ha perduto la chiave del proprio segreto, è diventato estraneo alla sua stessa vita. Possiede solamente dei fatti, e i fatti non sono nulla” (222).

While I’m not entirely convinced of the necessity of publishing all these brief writings, the mediation work of Guarnieri, Sanò, and Cazalé Bérard remains significant, as evidenced by their choice of the emphatic title “La sfida della libertà.” There is no doubt that the philosophical center of this collection of essays is a confrontation with French existentialism (Sartre and Camus in particular), which appears as determined as it is somewhat disconnected from contemporary debate. Many observations regarding a philosophical diagnosis of existentialism emerging from Bepaloff’s writings are valid, but they perhaps stop short of becoming truly instructive for readers eighty years later, when the long existentialist wave has already run its course and its influence has diffused into numerous other currents of greater scope and impact, such as structuralism and post-structuralism.

It is perhaps not coincidental that Sanò devotes several pages of her afterword to reviewing Bepaloff’s observations on the incipient State of Israel, which in 1943 still had to overcome the dark Nazi night, but somehow appeared necessary in the near future, after the “punishment” of Hitler (51), as Bepaloff observes with a subtly incongruous remark carrying a vague biblical moralizing tone. The most interesting pages are passages on incipient

Zionism, and the question of whether the religious and national dimensions would really be separated from each other, especially considering the question of the holy, which stems from the Biblical prophets (47). It is striking, however, that Bespaloff never returned to her surprisingly prophetic reflections on the State of Israel; the nation's founding in 1948 and the ensuing Arab aggression go unmentioned, as she chose instead to concentrate on Montaigne, Camus, and Sartre (177-304).

While I can only praise the three editors and collaborators for the accuracy of their work on this substantial text, I remain somewhat uncertain about the necessity of its timeframe. Nevertheless, some undoubtedly insightful and pointed pages manage to reward the reader who approaches this still relatively understudied thinker.

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Guido Bianchini. *Sulle Tracce di Abramo. Resti di Ebraismo in Jacques Derrida*. Roma: Inshibboleth 2024. Pp. 440.

This extensive monograph is decidedly meritorious. It offers a reading of deconstruction from a Jewish perspective or, more precisely, from a viewpoint that places Judaism at the center of inquiry, with all the paradoxes implied by this gesture, especially within a deconstructive framework. This approach is particularly valuable, as it navigates the complex interrelationship between philosophical methodology and cultural-religious identity, providing insights that extend beyond conventional disciplinary boundaries.

The volume's starting point ("Judaism Terminable and Interminable," 14-18) is Stefan Moses's distinction between *normative modernity*, represented by the famous Jewish-German historian Gershom Scholem (1897-1982), the Jewish-German philosopher Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929), and the Jewish-Lithuanian philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1906-95), and *critical modernity*, represented by the Jewish-German philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), the Jewish-Rumanian poet Paul Celan (1930-70), the Jewish-German philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906-75), and the Jewish-French poet Edmond Jabes (1912-91) (16-17). This binary categorization establishes a theoretical framework through which Jewish thought in the modern era can be understood as operating along different philosophical trajectories. In response to the exclusive alternative proposed by Moses, who argues either for normative modernity or critical modernity, Bianchini considers the deconstructive strategy that embraces both normativity and criticality within the same strategic approach, insisting on "la compresenza e la simultaneità ambivalente di entrambi i fili" (18). This implies accepting and simultaneously critiquing what is adopted as an identity paradigm—a dialectical process

that characterizes Derrida's intellectual engagement with tradition. In reality, Bianchini repeatedly cautions us that for Derrida, "Jewishness" (*ebraicità*) matters more than "Judaism" (*ebraismo*); where the latter, with an almost Protestant touch, is nonetheless an institutional product of a religion, the former represents an identity that is always divided, complex, wounded or carved by that same wound which the post-Freudian French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901-81)—who is curiously never mentioned here—considers the hallmark of psychic life. In this sense, "Jewishness" is an identity platform for "vigilanza e salvaguardia della propria ineludibile erranza" (37).

This distinction between institutional religious practice and cultural-existential identity forms a crucial analytical lens through which Derrida's relationship with his Jewish heritage can be understood. This extremely dense volume is perhaps somewhere excessively long but nevertheless well-written, filled with numerous observations that would require a different occasion to be discussed in detail, but which I wish to at least briefly mention here. The richness of content reflects the complexity of the subject matter, offering multiple entry points for further scholarly inquiry and intellectual engagement with Derrida's corpus and its relationship to Jewish thought.

The volume is appropriately divided into three major thematic units: language ("Lingua," 35-130), law ("Legge," 131-247), and land ("Terra," 249-379). Through these fundamental categories, Bianchini successfully brings forth precisely what "remains of Judaism" after a work of deconstruction: namely, having deconstructed "Judaism" in its fundamental theological-political components as a "religion" that, according to etymology, connects language, law, and land, what remains is precisely a "Jewishness" or that existential cipher that "remains"—but one could say: survives—deconstruction (58).

These three categories serve as analytical frameworks through which the author excavates the core elements that persist beyond deconstructive critique. Consequently, the mother tongue (which, however, is never Hebrew for Derrida) remains as a residue of a primordial unity with the mother, which is always already divided because it is the "matrix" of a dimension fundamentally alien to concept, such as the feminine *chora* ("place") as opposed to the masculine *logos* ("word") or, more accurately, allow to "ibridare ebraicamente il logos" (75). This linguistic analysis reveals how Derrida's understanding of language is fundamentally tied to absence rather than presence, to difference rather than identity—a position that aligns with his broader philosophical project while simultaneously reflecting certain aspects of Jewish intellectual tradition—towards "una X senza alcuna identità in sé" (110).

On the other hand, the deconstruction of logical-dialectical and juridical legalism demonstrates that law always becomes the battlefield between legal

rigor and the appearance of the Face of the Other, as Derrida learns from Levinas's reading of the Talmud, the fundamental text of Jewish law that is not interpreted as legal codex but rather as a sort of receptacle for modern ethics. The ethical implications of this tension are profound, suggesting that law cannot be reduced to mere technical application but must remain open to the fundamental alterity represented by the Other's presence. As Bianchini astutely argues, "l'erranza ebraica [viene letta] come un desiderio di permanere nella estraneità" (149). Nevertheless, Bianchini warns us that deconstruction shows that not even the opening to the Face ever manages to open to that ethical irreducibility that one would expect as final and resolute. This resistance to ethical closure demonstrates how Derrida's thought consistently resists teleological resolution, maintaining instead an openness that characterizes his philosophical approach: "Derrida non pone mai in questione la necessità delle leggi e della loro funzione normativa ma solo io fatto che esse debbano configurarsi come dispositivi e meccanismi di assicurazione e rassicurazione identitaria" (244). On the contrary, Bianchini shows how Derrida deconstructs the notion of the political without falling into the unpolitical, all too evident in Rosenzweig, for example. This nuanced position allows Derrida to engage with political questions without either accepting conventional political frameworks uncritically or rejecting political engagement altogether.

At the end of the third part, Bianchini therefore attempts to translate the late Derrida into a political vision that moves from the deconstruction of Marxism to a vision of constructing a community to come (251-66). In this case as well, it involves a deconstruction of "messianism" that is "emptied" of its immediate religious and institutional meaning and relaunched in political form as "messianicity," or a "messianic form" without a specific "religious-institutional" content but still connected to a special notion of holiness: "si potrebbe definire il gesto derridiano come una sorta di de-secolarizzazione del messianico" (316). This reimagining of political community through the lens of a secularized messianism represents one of Derrida's most significant contributions to contemporary political thought. Despite all appearances, this unit offers only a philosophical and especially Eurocentric perspective on the application of "Jewishness" as a political paradigm, and carefully avoids exploring its possible, radical application to the case of Zionism and the State of Israel. In this respect, the tone of the third part is probably more conservative than actually intended, and would certainly merit a dedicated discussion elsewhere.

As was already noted, Bianchini's overall approach is based on the simultaneous acceptance of normative modernity and critical modernity, whose difference was stipulated by Stefan Moses. Although deconstructed by Bianchini, this distinction still contains criticalities that are important to

consider, especially if one wants to follow “the traces of Abraham” in Derrida’s work—that is, the nature of institutional “Judaism” and personal “Jewishness.” It should be noted that, in Moses’ eyes, normative modernity is represented by Scholem, Rosenzweig, and Levinas, of whom only the latter actually referred to the Talmud as the legal core of Judaism (but on whose perception of the Talmud essentially as a form of biblical commentary there would be much to object to in another context). These nuances in the representation of Jewish thought highlight the complexity of positioning Derrida within any singular tradition of Jewish intellectual history. In many respects, it seems to me that Bianchini’s work has above all the merit of leading to the point from which to restart, possibly on different textual and philological bases, for a different understanding of Judaism and particularly of Talmudic Judaism. The volume thus serves not only as an exegetical work on Derrida’s relationship to Judaism, but also as a prolegomenon to future scholarly inquiries that might approach the question from alternative methodological perspectives, potentially yielding new insights into both Derrida’s thought and Jewish intellectual traditions.

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Camilla Caporicci, ed. *The Song of Songs in European Poetry (12th-17th Centuries). Translations, Appropriations, Rewritings.* Turnhout: Brepols, 2024. Pp. 295.

I had long been interested in the Biblical Song of Songs like Psalm 45, belonging to the *maschil* genre in Hebrew literature of mature women instructing virginal brides-to-be as their pillow book, discussed by Asphodel P. Long, author of *In a Chariot Drawn by Lions: The Search for the Female in Deity* (Freedom, CA: Crossing P, 1993), and also as a major source used by Dante in his *cantiche dei canti*, his Songs of Songs, of the *Commedia*, perhaps from the acquaintance of Dante’s circle (Cino da Pistoia, Bosone da Gubbio), with Manoello Giudeo, who would write a *Commedia* in Hebrew at Dante’s death (Immanuel Romano, *L’Inferno e Il Paradiso*, ed. Giorgio Battistoni, transl. Emanuele Weiss Levi, Firenze: Editrice La Giuntina, 2000), knowing that the Song of Songs, the *Shir HaShirim* in Jewish liturgy is sung: <https://mechon-mamre.org/mp3/t3001.mp3>. But, though I searched throughout this learned volume of essays on *The Song of Songs in European Poetry (Twelfth to Seventeenth Centuries), Translations, Appropriations, Rewritings*, edited by Camilla Caporicci, the result of the 2020 similarly titled conference on the Song of Songs at the University of Padua, I did not find these observations there. Instead, Caporicci’s interest appears to be how this highly eroticized text became allegorized and handled through time, the arguments also presented throughout this collection of essays likewise sedately academicized.

Part 1, on the Medieval Voices, opens with Leor Jacobi who discusses the Palestinian, Ashkenazi readings of the *Shir HaShirim*, “‘The Song of Songs: Gaze upon her’: Antique Hebrew Liturgical Poetry from the Medieval Mainz Rite” (25-42). Perhaps a contribution on the *Shir HaShirim* mystical Sephardic reception, in its ambience of Arabic erotic lyricism, could also have been included, which is hinted at in the later essay by Simone Turco, “The Allure of Canonical Fleshliness: The Song of Songs as Hermeneutic *intermédiaire* for Ranter Libertarianism and Counter Ethics” (253-66). This section’s second essay, by Greti Dinkova-Bruun, discusses “Versifying the *Cantica canticorum* in the Context of Peter Riga’s *Aurora*” (43-57). Brindusa Grigoriu’s essay, “‘Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my beloved among the young men’: Revisiting the Song of Songs with Tristan and Ysolt” (59-80), could have benefitted from Mikhail Bakhtin (*Rabelais and His World*, transl. Hélène Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993) and Gerhart B. Ladner’s observations concerning the vernacular as mocking the Latin, on the “law of Christ as turned inside out like a sleeve” (“*Homo viator*: Medieval Ideas of Alienation and Order,” *Speculum* 42, 1957, 233-59, 248). Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead discuss Richard Rolle’s confluence of the sacred with the erotic (so similar to the poetry of John of the Cross and John Donne) in both Latin and Middle English, in “The Song of Song’s Lyricism in Late Medieval England” (81-104).

Part 2 is on “Poetry and Music: The Italian Tradition,” and opens with Lino Pertile’s “The Good Sorrow: the Song of Songs in Dante’s *Comedy* and Contemporary Popular Piety” (107-27), which concentrates on suffering and the consummation on the Cross, more suitable for a discussion of Erich Auerbach’s perception of *Paradiso* 11 on Francis (“St Francis of Assisi in Dante’s ‘Commedia’.” *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*. New York: Meridian, 1959, 79-98), than on the *Purgatorio* 30.11, “*Veni, sponsa di Libano*”’s meeting with Beatrice, which echoes the Jewish liturgical wording for the encountering by Bride and Bridegroom. Matteo Navone discusses “The Song of Songs in Sixteenth-Century Italian Lyric Poetry” (129-44). Marina Toffetti, “*Laetitia et solatio*: Singing the Canticles and Female Spirituality in the Early Seventeenth Century” (145-62), comes closest to the core of this collection, as does Gabriele Taschetti, “Motets on the Song of Songs in the Collection *Symbolae diversorum musicorum* (Venice, 1621) Edited by Lorenzo Calvi” (163-86), in this section where one so wishes the brilliant Dante scholar, instead of discussing Protestant penance, had celebrated the glorious three-fold Motet of *Purgatorio* 30.10-21, sung in the Latin of Christian Jerome of the Song of Songs and the Gospel, and of pagan Virgil’s *Aeneid*. See and hear <https://rb.gy/l5ebyw> and 26, and <https://www.florin.ms/DantPurgXXX.html>. Yvonne

Rokseth (*Polyphonies du XIIIe siècle: Le manuscrit H 196 de la faculté de médecine de Montpellier*. Paris: Oiseau Lyre, 4 vols, 1936-39), had studied the form of the motet in her edition of the Montpellier manuscript as, like the Song of Songs, presenting the Bakhtinian contrariety of bawdy vernacular yoked with sacred liturgical Latin but this is an aspect that sadly goes unmentioned in this scholarly collection of essays.

The lengthy Part 3, “Rewriting and Appropriating the Song of Songs in the British Isles,” gives us the Protestant context. Fabio Ciambella presents “A Corpus-based Analysis of the Song of Song’s Early Modern Translations (1535-1611)” (189-203), concentrating on the translators’ lexical choices into English of the Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Rachel Stenner discusses “William Baldwin’s *Canticles or Balades of Solomon* and the Beginnings of English Petrarchism” (205-22). Tibor Fabiny presents “A Reading of Joseph Hall’s Paraphrase of the Song of Songs (1609)” (223-35). Carmen Gallo contributes “From the ‘broken Altar’ to ‘The Banquet of Love: The Song of Songs in George Herbert’s *The Temple* (1633)” (237-52). Simone Turco writes on “The Allure of Canonical Fleshliness: The Song of Songs as hermeneutic *intermédiaire* for Ranter Libertarianism and Counter-Ethics” (253-66). And finally women’s voices are heard again in Adrian Street’s “Women Prophets, Dissent, and the Song of Songs in Seventeenth-Century England” (267-88).

Several of these essays discuss music connected to the Song of Songs. None relate it to Psalm 45: “1(Maschil, A Song of loves.) My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer [...] 13The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. 14She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee”. For in such a context one would have loved also an essay on the exquisite embroideries by American Puritan women collected by Anita B. Schorsch, presenting precisely that ambiguity of severity/flamboyance, that profound religiosity of this “Holy of Holies” text where it is allegorized by Hebrew and Christian writers, while yoked to outrageous pornography, brilliantly trammelled within the pillow book of “Holy Matrimony,” of the Sabbath as Queen, as Bride.

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Giovanna Cordibella, and Martina Mengoni, eds. “Esemplari umani”. *I personaggi nell’opera di Primo Levi*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2024. Pp. viii + 274. Published in the long-running “Italian Modernities” series and available gratis in digital format, “Esemplari umani” consists of fifteen analytical essays on the literary characters that populate Primo Levi’s memoirs, short stories

and novels. While making no claim to completeness—covering all of Levi's major and minor characters would be a vast undertaking—the volume fills a significant void in Levi studies as the first and only one focused entirely on how and why the author created his imagined persons. The high-quality essays in this unique collection are further elaborations of papers presented virtually at a 2021 conference sponsored by the University of Bern during the Covid-19 pandemic. As such, they testify to the creativity and persistence of humanities scholars during a challenging period.

In their introduction, “Le dimensioni umane: figure, esemplari, eroi a rovescio” (1-26), volume editors Giovanna Cordibella and Martina Mengoni suggest that studying Levi's works through his characters offers “un ingresso privilegiato” (4), one that sheds light on his literary debts to British and German novels, on the tensions that course between his factual testimonial writing and his works of science fantasy, and on the techniques he used to create the most important character in his largely autobiographical oeuvre—his “personaggio-io” (20). The volume is divided into four parts roughly corresponding to different character types that Levi employed, from the “flat” sketches of real individuals encountered in Auschwitz and during his nine months as a displaced person (part 1, “Dal vero e dal vivo: persone, figure, ritratti,” 29-90), to somewhat fuller characters based on actual people, like Mordo Nahum (“the Greek”) in *La tregua* (1963), and Libertino Faussonne in *La chiave a stella*, a composite of several individuals (part 2, “L'avventura della finzione: eroi, nomadi, imposture,” 91-168). An important point made in Robert Gordon's essay (“Collins, Simpson, Müller: i nomi ‘vuoti’ e la testimonianza di Primo Levi,” 199-215) is that, apart from his “personaggio-io,” Levi's characters are not truly well-rounded, and their experiences do not alter their identities, unlike those in many modern novels (200). The last two sections of the volume, shorter than the first two, include essays related to Levi's “personaggio-io” and its various alter egos, such as Coleridge's Ancient Mariner (part 3, “Prime persone: un altro modo di dire io,” 169-214), and essays on the entirely fictional figures of alienation that populate Levi's science fantasy stories (part 4, “Fatti strani: umani, animali, oggetti,” 215-61).

A key concept in the volume is the so-called “ambigeno” character, a term Levi coined in his short story “Lavoro creativo,” where it is defined as “persona e personaggio insieme” (*Opere* 1.757; quotations from Levi's works refer to *Opere complete*, Torino: Einaudi, 2016-18), that is, an actual person or historical figure who is represented as a literary character. Sandro, a figure strength and integrity who appears in the “Ferro” chapter of *Il sistema periodico* (1975), is one of Levi's most memorable “ambigeno” characters and the subject of a rich essay by Roberta Mori (“Sandro/Sandro Delmastro: storia di un ‘ambigeno,’” 107-24). “Ferro” ends with a beautiful meditation on the

limits and powers of literature in relation to characters based on real people: “è un’impresa senza speranza rivestire un uomo di parole, farlo rivivere in una pagina scritta... [Di Sandro] non resta nulla; nulla se non parole, appunto” (*Opere* 1.896). Although words cannot capture the fullness of real people, especially remarkable ones like the actual Sandro Delmastro, a partisan killed by the Fascists, words can offer a kind of immortality otherwise unavailable to mere mortals. In this vein, Mori concludes: “nessuno è più vivo del giovane pieno di vigore ritratto in ‘Ferro’, nessuno è più morto di lui, vittima di una guerra combattuta quasi ottanta anni fa” (124).

Daria Biagi’s essay (“Mordo Nahum, l’avversario,” 93-105) discusses another memorable “ambigeno,” the aforementioned Mordo Nahum, a tough, unscrupulous Salonika merchant featured in *La tregua* who was modeled on the actual Leon Levi (96). Biagi notes, as do other scholars included “*Esemplari umani*,” that Primo Levi was both intentional and playful when creating his characters’ names. Thus, Biagi surmises, “Mordo” refers to *mordere* and/or the German noun *Mord*, meaning “murder” (97). The aggressive name seems to reflect the character’s Hobbesian view of the world in opposition to the pacifist and perhaps naïve perspective of the narrator of *La tregua*, a version of Levi himself.

Two stories in Levi’s *Vizio di forma* collection (1971), the aforementioned “Lavoro creativo” and its companion piece “Nel parco,” further explore the possibilities of “ambigeno” characters, taking them in a Pirandellian direction, as Robert Gordon points out in the essay named above (199). In the first piece, an entirely fictional character, who now aspires to write his own stories, pays a visit to a certain Antonio Casella, the writer who created him. He explains to Casella that he and other well-known literary characters live in a park until they slowly fade away as the books that brought them to life are no longer read. In “Nel parco,” discussed by Gordon and also in an essay by Anna Baldini (“L’autore e i personaggi: Antonio Casella, scrittore ambigeno e falsario,” 185-98), Antonio Casella comes to live in the park as the “ambigeno” literary character of his own autobiography, written merely to achieve a kind of immortality. The subtext is that Levi hopes he has made himself a character in his own works for more legitimate reasons than Casella did, as Baldini explains: “Oggi definiremmo Casella uno scrittore di autofiction, ma per Levi è chiaramente un falsario: Casella incarna insomma quello spettro autoriale che ossessiona Levi in quanto autore di testi autobiografici e testimoniali?” (189).

While there is not sufficient space here to discuss all fifteen essays, one other piece must be mentioned. Kraus, the only character for whom a chapter of *Se questo è un uomo* (1947, 1958) is named, unless one counts “L’ultimo,” is the subject of Domenico Scarpa’s essay (“Gli occhi dell’uomo Kraus,” 43-60). As Scarpa suggests, Kraus’s chief function at this late point in the memoir

is to show by contrast that Levi is now enrolled among “the saved,” among the would-be survivors who callously disidentify with “the drowned,” with those destined to die, the uncomprehending Kraus among them. As Scarpa notes, the “Kraus” chapter is “l'unico episodio di *Se questo è un uomo* in cui Levi guarda come dall'alto: da una posizione dominante” (45). Scarpa's careful analysis of how character functions in Levi's first memoir is typical of the strong scholarship in this essay collection, a volume which will be very useful to Levi scholars and of interest to a broader readership as well.

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Robert S. G. Gordon. *Primo Levi magico. Meraviglia, mistero, cosmo.* Roma: Carocci, 2024. Pp. 110.

Primo Levi magico di Robert Gordon—la seconda monografia pubblicata per Carocci dallo studioso dell'Università di Cambridge dopo *Primo Levi: le virtù dell'uomo normale* (2003)—si colloca entro un recente e corposo filone di studi volti alla riscoperta di aspetti meno noti della figura e dell'opera di Primo Levi. Pensando solo ad alcune iniziative degli ultimi cinque anni, nel 2020 lo stesso Gordon e Gianluca Cinelli curano il volume *Innesti. Primo Levi e i libri altrui* (New York e Londra: Peter Lang), in cui si amplia la riflessione su Levi prendendone in considerazione il rapporto con altri scrittori e intellettuali, da Darwin a Kafka, da Ovidio a Lorenz; uno degli interventi plenari presso una Summer School dedicata a Levi nel luglio 2021, non a caso intitolata *Transnational Perspectives*, è incentrato sulle rappresentazioni di Levi nel graphic novel (Pietro Scarnera, *Una stella tranquilla. Ritratto sentimentale di Primo Levi*. Roma: Coconino Press, 2013; Matteo Mastragostino e Alessandro Ranghiasi, *Primo Levi*. Padova: Beccogiallo, 2017, nuova ed. 2023); nel settembre 2022 prende avvio *LeviNeT – Primo Levi's Correspondence with German Readers and Intellectuals* (www.levinet.eu), il progetto ERC diretto da Martina Mengoni presso l'Università di Ferrara che si propone di mappare, digitalizzare e ragionare sull'estesa corrispondenza di Levi con intellettuali e lettori tedeschi; nel 2023 viene lanciato il progetto *Primo Levi. A Digital Commentary*, coordinato dalle università di Cambridge e Notre Dame, a partire dal commento collettivo del capitolo di *Se questo è un uomo* “Il canto di Ulisse” (levidigitalcommentary.org); lo stesso anno viene pubblicato un numero monografico di *Enthymema* (n. 33) interamente dedicato alla fantascienza di Levi, curato da Eleonora Lima, Michele Maiolani e Marco Malvestio. Sono tutti lavori che, per modalità, impianto e oggetto, rivelano una tendenza tanto all'approfondimento (si veda anche la pubblicazione della *Bibliografia di Primo Levi* ad opera di Domenico Scarpa, Torino: Einaudi, 2022) quanto alla diversificazione delle piste critiche su Levi.

Attraverso molte delle suddette iniziative, Gordon ha contribuito in maniera importante alla conoscenza di questo Levi poliedrico (Marco Belpoliti, *Primo Levi di fronte e di profilo*. Milano: Guanda, 2015). In linea con questa temperie critica, *Primo Levi magico* è un libro incentrato sullo scrittore-scienziato più che sullo scrittore-testimone; un libro che punta non tanto a ribaltare, quanto a stemperare l'immagine comune di un Levi illuminista e iper-razionalista, osservatore pacato e moraleggiante, per restituire invece rilevanza a interessi ed esperienze che, da una parte, hanno ispirato altri momenti della scrittura leviana—il fantastico, la divulgazione scientifica, la poesia—e dall'altra, hanno anch'essi contribuito a dar forma alla riflessione su quella stessa esperienza del Lager più nota al grande pubblico.

Come indicato nella "Prefazione" (9-13), il volume raccoglie e rielabora una serie di saggi pubblicati tra il 2017 e il 2023. La prima parte del libro (15-49)—articolata lungo i tre assi di meraviglia, mistero, magia—mostra una maggiore tenuta interna rispetto alla seconda, ed è più in linea con l'ipotesi di fondo di un Levi magico tutto da esplorare. Ben lontana dal sacro, l'idea di "pensiero magico" evocata da Gordon mira a cogliere piuttosto l'atteggiamento di curiosità e apertura caratteristico di Levi nell'accostarsi a idee altre e al mondo nella sua materialità: "La magia, cioè, funziona a un livello profondo di pensiero e di conoscenza e ha un potere notevole di congiunzione: collega la forza cognitiva della scienza con il potere d'incanto e di rito della religione" (37). Attraverso il senso del magico, dunque, Gordon tesse un filo rosso tra una serie di interessi disciplinari (l'antropologia), narrativi (il fantastico e la fantascienza) ed etico-filosofici (l'atteggiamento dell'uomo di fronte alla morte e al potere) che paiono accomunati da un'incertezza di fondo, in cui stupore, creatività e sgomento si intrecciano in maniera complessa e cangiante. I tre concetti di meraviglia, mistero e magia vengono usati per declinare i modi in cui questo sentimento del mondo emerge dall'opera di Levi, e per identificare le forme e i motivi narrativi attraverso cui è stato rappresentato di volta in volta.

Nella seconda parte del libro (51-102), anch'essa tripartita, la connessione tra magia e fortuna fa da spunto per analizzare la questione del caso, parola-chiave legata in maniera cruciale e ambivalente al problema della sopravvivenza e che proprio a Gordon deve un importante approfondimento critico già nel 2010 con la prima delle "Lezioni Levi" promosse dal Centro Internazionale di studi ("*Sfacciata fortuna.*" *La Shoah e il caso*. Torino: Einaudi). Gordon approfondisce il contesto di questa riflessione, inserendola non solo in un dibattito apertamente "inconsapevole" con la filosofia contemporanea sul rapporto tra etica e caso (55-56), ma anche in dialogo più ampio con la concezione di causalità nella tradizione occidentale, che dal post-Illuminismo attraversa profonde trasformazioni nel Novecento con l'avvento della probabilità e del principio di indeterminazione (58-59). Il capitolo sul

cosmo (64-97)—tema già toccato nella monografia del 2003 in cui Gordon si sofferma soprattutto sulla questione della prospettiva—adotta come chiave di lettura il rapporto di Levi con la divulgazione scientifica, offrendone una panoramica dello sviluppo attraverso i decenni; una trattazione sottile delle ricadute testuali (un fronte su cui *L'altrui mestiere* gioca un ruolo di primo piano); e una convincente collocazione rispetto ad alcuni casi di divulgazione culturale di successo dell'epoca, tra cui la pubblicazione nel 1957 del libro per ragazzi del pedagogo olandese Kees Boeke, *Cosmic Views: The Universe in 40 Jumps*, che a sua volta ispirò due cortometraggi d'animazione nel 1968 con *Cosmic Zoom* di Eva Szasz e nel 1977 con *Powers of Ten*. Anche qui (e lascio alla sensibilità del singolo lettore se intenderlo come un pregio o un limite) non si tratta di ricostruire una fondata genealogia di idee—Gordon ammette che “Levi conoscesse o meno i lavori di Boeke, Szasz o degli Eames non è tanto qui il punto” (71)—, quanto di inserire Levi in un contesto culturale nient'affatto neutro ed evidenziarne quindi lo stretto legame con il presente, oltre che con un passato segnato indelebilmente da Auschwitz. L'ultimo breve capitolo, “Cose” (97-102), inquadra un prodotto marginale ma affascinante dell'attività di Levi: le figure in filo di rame, costruite per diletto personale, raccolte per la prima volta in una piccola mostra nel 2019 presso la Galleria d'arte moderna di Torino. Per quanto il gancio con il tema magico sia labile—il suggerimento è che in questi oggetti Levi concretizzi “quell'ethos congiunto tra *l'homo faber* e *l'homo ludens*, tra ‘magia’ e materialità” (97)—, le informazioni circa la loro fabbricazione e le riflessioni di Gordon sul rapporto tra curiosità, materialità e creazione restano contributi preziosi.

Se la tensione tra i capitoli si allenta sensibilmente nella seconda parte, è lo stile argomentativo di Gordon a conferire, per contro, forte coesione e leggibilità al libro nel suo insieme. Lo studioso combina l'esposizione discorsiva delle ipotesi di lavoro, cogliendo efficacemente i problemi ed enucleandone sinteticamente i punti chiave, con la loro esplorazione attraverso numerosissimi esempi, che accompagnano il lettore lungo percorsi sempre diversi. Per esempio, la questione della meraviglia è indagata attraverso cinque figure di scienziato che costellano la narrativa leviana; il senso del mistero si articola in una rassegna ragionata dei suoi luoghi e tempi; il tema della causalità è discusso nelle individuazioni concettuali di inversione e sproporzione. Questa impostazione non solo consente una verifica puntuale e una discussione sempre radicata nei testi, ma permette anche di rivedere, alla luce di questo focus eccentrico, il ruolo di opere rimaste finora ai margini dell'analisi critica, come *La ricerca delle radici* (1981). La chiarezza espositiva e la struttura snella del libro ne garantiscono l'interesse per un pubblico specialistico, ma lo rendono altrettanto fruibile per usi didattici o consultazioni puntuali (fermo restando che la trattazione presuppone una certa conoscenza pregressa dell'autore).

Parlare di un Levi magico, dunque, non vuol dire sovrascrivere o contrapporlo al Levi testimone. Gordon non propone una tesi inattaccabile, ma una lettura in controluce—nonché un'affascinante operazione di contestualizzazione culturale—di una serie di riflessioni, sentimenti e motivi, irregolari ma persistenti, che formano “un sostrato sottile ma pervasivo” nella scrittura leviana (38). La mappa che emerge in filigrana suggerisce un altro profilo di Levi, forse minore, ma che sovrapposto agli altri che ne sono stati tracciati negli anni contribuisce a formare un ritratto più pieno e dinamico, a tutto tondo, di un autore che sembra avere ancora oggi molto da dirci.

Marzia Beltrami, *Università IULM*

Mara Josi. *Rome, 16 October 1943: History, Memory, Literature.* Cambridge: Legenda, 2023. Pp. 192.

Writing mere months after the liberation of Rome, Armando Troisio (*Roma sotto il terrore Nazi-fascista (8 settembre-4 giugno 1944)*. Rome: Mondini, 1944), was among the first to commemorate the sacrifice of those who gave their lives in the struggle for freedom, the “autentici umili eroi” who were, in Troisio’s telling, “i veri continuatori dei martiri del Risorgimento” (144). Their ranks include not only the anti-Fascist partisans but also those who perished as a result of “le persecuzioni contro gli ebrei,” to which Troisio devoted a chapter of his book, attempting to reconstruct the events and the outcome of the 16 October 1943 round-up of the Jews of Rome (171). Completed less than a year after this tragic date, however, Troisio’s account offers more questions than answers: “Sulla sorte subita dagli ebrei deportati non si è riusciti a sapere nulla di preciso. [...] Quanti sono [...] gli ebrei vittime della barbarie nazista? Quanti i deportati? [...] Quanti ne ritorneranno?” (177).

Today the fate of the Roman Jews captured by the Nazis is not only better known but differently remembered. Whereas Troisio venerated them as martyrs to the cause of Italian national liberation, we tend instead to memorialize them as victims of the Shoah, the genocide of the Jews of Europe. The sources of this shift in cultural memory, argues Mara Josi, can be located in literature. Approaching the 16 October round-up as “a powerful case study of how such emblematic events move from being local and little-known or understood to becoming sites and sources of cultural memory,” Josi demonstrates how “literary texts have emerged as a major medium of the production of its memory” (2).

Part I of the monograph is devoted to a theoretical and methodological overview. Chapter 1, “History, Memory, Literature: A Triangular Relationship” (11-19), maps the field of memory studies, describing the major insights of Halbwachs, Assmann, Bloch, Febvre, Erll, Rigney, Landsberg,

and others before making the case for literature's unique—and as yet only partially recognized—value for the formulation of cultural memory. Josi emphasizes what she calls literature's "aesthetic and affective dimensions," which constitute a powerful mnemonic, able to convey knowledge, inspire identification, and inculcate memory across time and across cultures (16). Chapter 2, "16 October 1943: The Roman Round-up" (21-39), argues for the importance of this literary emphasis in the analysis of the cultural memory of the Holocaust in Italian culture, which is said to have "arisen from communal, collective, and literary representations of the event, as much if not more than from historiography" (22).

Part II proceeds to establish this claim through the exploration of four literary case studies. Chapter 3 (43-67) examines Giacomo Debenedetti's *16 ottobre 1943*, first published in the Roman journal *Mercurio* in December 1944, then reprinted as a book by OET in 1945. Josi insists that this brief narrative has become the Ur-text and Debenedetti "the keeper of the memory" of the round-up because of its personal, intertextual, and trans-historical character (64). Chapter 4 (69-100) reconsiders Elsa Morante's *La Storia: romanzo* (Einaudi, 1974), which draws on Debenedetti's account as a "hypotext" (70), but which widens the scope considerably, transforming the events of 16 October into a "synecdoche [...] for the wider history of the Holocaust" (88). Chapter 5 (101-24) turns to Rosetta Loy's *La parola ebreo* (Einaudi, 1997), whose critical examination of Italian Fascism and anti-Semitism make it "a benchmark for reflection on the involvement of the Catholic Church in the war, in the Holocaust, and specifically in the Roman round-up" (121). Chapter 6 (125-50) explores Anna Foa's *Portico d'Ottavia 13* in its original format as popular history (Laterza, 2013) and in its subsequent re-elaboration as a graphic novel for young readers (Laterza, 2015), both of which, argues Josi, foster "identification and projection" (146), encouraging readers to "remember and reflect on the round-up as an event which exemplifies the Italian Holocaust" (148). In Josi's analysis, the four texts explored in Part II represent both accounts of a historical event and vectors of cultural memory, with precise if often overlapping functions described, through a conceptual schema adapted from Rigney, as "objects of recollection," "relay stations," "stabilizers," "catalysts," and "calibrators" (27). In the Conclusion (151-55), Josi assesses the implications of these various roles for literary representations of the Roman round-up, arguing that the texts she has studied serve "not only as the products of recollection or imagination, but as bearers of historical knowledge, active ingredients in the process of forging cultural memory" (151).

The monograph thus enables scholars better to appreciate how individual creative interventions have shaped and re-shaped the collective understanding

of the Holocaust in Italian culture. In *Roma sotto il terrore Nazi-fascista*, Troisio commemorated 16 October 1943 as the “data [...] che segna un nuovo, e purtroppo non ultimo titolo di vergogna per la Germania nazista” (175). Across the eight intervening decades, the cultural memory of this date has developed significantly, expanding to include, as Josi demonstrates, detailed knowledge of the Holocaust, an awareness of Italian Catholic anti-Semitism, intimations of Jewish and Biblical history, the accretion of personal narratives and micro-histories, perceptions of the links between past and present, and much else as well. In this way, Josi explains, it has become “the representative event of discrimination and persecution in the Italian territories under German occupation” (3). It has achieved this status, she argues, thanks largely to literary texts that operate “as bearers of historical knowledge and channels of memory, [...] active ingredients in the process of forging cultural memory” (3).

Rome, 16 October 1943: History, Memory, Literature is likewise a bearer of historical knowledge. With its ample catalogues of the texts, plays, films, and television programs depicting the round-up of Roman Jews, and with its analysis of how these portrayals intervene in history and shape memory, Josi’s monograph adds to our understanding of this representative event.

Charles L. Leavitt IV, *University of Notre Dame*

Miriam Kay. *La più antica immaginazione. Leopardi e l’ebraico. Venezia: Marsilio, 2023. Pp. 192.*

This monograph is particularly admirable, considering it originated as a doctoral thesis. Its primary contribution lies in demonstrating that Giacomo Leopardi approached Hebrew through three distinct avenues: learning the language, producing translations, and developing philosophical notes in his famous *Zibaldone di pensieri*, also known as *Zibaldone*, which was written between 1817 and 1832, and published posthumously between 1898 and 1900. Kay meticulously documents the various phases of Leopardi’s Hebrew language acquisition, which were not without significant errors, thus revealing the uncertainty and partiality in his reception of Hebrew. Interestingly, Leopardi surreptitiously elevated Hebrew to the status of a poetic language precisely because it appeared incapable of conceptual expression, due to its lack of inflection.

Leopardi thus repeats himself in the highly distinctive synthesis of his philosophy of language, which on one hand represents a typical outcome of the Italian tradition, while on the other critically bypasses the French tradition to connect with a line of semantic thought and anthropological-linguistic openness that extends from Leibniz’s pioneering research to Johann Gottfried von Herder and Wilhelm von Humboldt. This constitutes

the most interesting section of the volume, though it would have merited a more critical treatment. However, the monograph would be more accurately titled: *Leopardi and Biblical Hebrew*. What emerges most prominently from this text—whose documentary component is particularly valuable—is the absence of the rabbinic dimension, which is not adequately explored within the work. Leopardi accesses the concept of rabbinic literature and Hebrew only imperfectly and with some uncertainty, primarily through his reading of Buxtorf's dictionary, from which he extracts several lemmas. The theological and conceptual framework through which Leopardi approaches Hebrew remains somewhat limited, reflecting a cultural environment influenced by the Catholic conception of Jews as an exclusively biblical people. This demonstrates the fundamental limitation of Hebrew reception in Leopardi's work, while also illuminating the atmosphere of cultural life in the Papal States, their perception of Judaism, and the cultural resources available in the early nineteenth century.

The reference to Herder's philosophy is especially noteworthy, as he represented one of the most acclaimed and innovative scholars available at that time. Leopardi assimilates Herder's theory of national character associated with languages and reveals an "Orientalist" tendency in his reception of Hebrew, which nevertheless remains limited, antiquarian, and in certain ways traditional. From this perspective, Hebrew is indeed "the most ancient imagination," but Leopardi is unable to fully transcend this somewhat dated perception of Judaism.

To fully appreciate the significance of Leopardi's engagement with Hebrew, one might consider the intellectual environment of early nineteenth-century Italy. During this period, the study of ancient languages was often undertaken through a primarily theological lens, particularly in regions under ecclesiastical influence. While shaped by these contextual elements, Leopardi's approach represented an admirable attempt to explore linguistic diversity beyond the classical Greco-Latin tradition dominant in Italian education. Kay very thoughtfully identifies three methodological approaches in Leopardi's Hebrew studies, but perhaps understates the progressive nature of this tripartite engagement. Leopardi's transition from mere language acquisition to philosophical reflection, however incomplete, indicated an intellectual trajectory that moved beyond simple philological interest toward a more profound engagement with linguistic theory.

The monograph elegantly demonstrates that Leopardi's understanding of Hebrew was fundamentally influenced by both his educational background and available resources. His reliance on Buxtorf's dictionary—a standard but already somewhat dated resource—reflects the limited tools accessible to scholars outside major European intellectual centers. This becomes

particularly evident in Leopardi's treatment of Hebrew as primarily a biblical language, with minimal recognition of its post-biblical development or rabbinic traditions.

This bible-centric approach to Hebrew represents not merely a personal limitation of Leopardi's but reflects the broader cultural perspective of Catholic Italy regarding Judaism. The conception of Jews as the "people of the Bible" without fuller acknowledgment of nearly two millennia of subsequent cultural and intellectual development reveals an institutional perspective that characterized much of European intellectual engagement with Jewish traditions outside specialized academic circles. Perhaps the most intellectually stimulating aspect of Kay's analysis concerns Leopardi's integration of Hebrew into his broader philosophy of language. By positioning Hebrew as a language allegedly incapable of conceptual expression, Leopardi paradoxically elevates it as poetically superior—an intriguing inversion that would benefit from deeper philosophical investigation. This conceptualization aligns with Leopardi's broader aesthetic preference for the primitive, the ancient, which are "signoreggiate dall'immaginazione" as sources of authentic poetic expression.

Kay astutely identifies Leopardi's intellectual lineage in this regard, connecting him to Leibniz, Herder, and Humboldt rather than contemporaneous French linguistic theory. This intellectual affiliation deserves expanded analysis, as it positions Leopardi within an emerging German tradition of viewing languages as expressions of national character and cultural worldviews—a perspective that would become increasingly influential throughout the nineteenth century. The monograph's greatest contribution lies in its detailed documentation of Leopardi's engagement with Hebrew texts and concepts. However, the author might have more thoroughly examined the broader implications of this engagement for understanding the cultural landscape of the Papal States. The intellectual constraints evident in Leopardi's approach to Hebrew serve as a window for understanding the broader parameters of scholarship in regions where theological orthodoxy influenced intellectual exploration.

This monograph provides valuable documentation of an underexplored aspect of Leopardi's intellectual development. Its primary strengths lie in its meticulous attention to the textual evidence of Leopardi's Hebrew studies and its placement of these studies within his broader philosophical framework. While the analytical framework could perhaps benefit from greater depth, particularly regarding the rabbinic dimension of Hebrew and the broader implications of Leopardi's approach to Oriental languages, the work nevertheless establishes a thoughtful foundation for future scholarship. The author has provided a valuable contribution to Leopardi studies, illuminating

not only his engagement with Hebrew but also the broader cultural and intellectual context that characterized early nineteenth-century Italian scholarship. This monograph graciously invites further exploration of how provincial intellectual environments shaped the development of comparative linguistics and religious studies in pre-unification Italy.

Federico Dal Bo, *University of Modena and Reggio Emilia*

Giulia Po DeLisle, and Susan Briziarelli, eds. *The Literary and Human Legacy of Clara Sereni*. Wilmington: Vernon P, 2025. Pp. 266.

The cover of the volume on Clara Sereni, edited by Giulia Po DeLisle and Susan Briziarelli, features a handwritten page from Sereni's *Diaries*, now housed at the Gabinetto Vieusseux in Florence, discussing "I giovani" and "la pazzia giovanile," which indicates "Il volere che il mondo sia un po' meno storto di quello che è". This cover, so symbolic of both a "personal" and "political" identity, embodies the dynamics of the second half of the Italian Novecento and the first two decades of the new Millennium—the lifespan of Clara Sereni (1946-2018), one of the most talented writers in contemporary Italian literature. The cover also reflects the contents of this edited volume—filled with memories of political comrades, researchers, friends, interviews with filmmakers, and essays by Anglo-American and Italian scholars of Jewish Studies, Gender Studies, Italian Literature, Italian history, and Motherhood and Disability Studies. In addition, Po DeLisle and Briziarelli's book, in its multifaceted portrait of Sereni, conveys Sereni's Gramscian poetics of "pessimismo della ragione, ottimismo della volontà." In Sereni's works, as highlighted by scholars in the volume (54, 197), Gramsci's motto, inherited from a family with firm political commitments and complex contradictions, informs the writer's vision of the world. Like in a signature recipe, Sereni combines it with a feminist and personal perspective on women's roles in family, culture, and politics, giving voice to her commitment to tradition and revolution. From the pages in this collection of essays, in its three parts' articulation—Legacies, Essays, and Translations—we gain not only a direct insight into Sereni's writing—particularly through the last section dedicated entirely to some of the writer's unpublished translations—but also access to the legacies she left behind, along with specific readings and interpretations of her wide-ranging works, from her food memoir *Casalinghitudine* (1987) and her pioneering writings on disability and mental illness in *Manicomio Primavera* (1989), to her collection of stories and her autobiographical reflections, such as expressed in *Il gioco dei regni* (1993) and *Via Ripetta 155* (2015).

From her childhood as the daughter of an antifascist and communist father, the niece of a Zionist forefather, and the descendant of a lineage of

strong Jewish women, to her youth as an aspiring folk singer, then to her adulthood working and sentimental partnership with a screenwriter and filmmaker, to her own literary writings, Sereni embodies the journey of a woman who has navigated many paths in Italian history over her 72 years. The first and second sections of the volume collect a series of three testimonials and eight essays, showing the complexity of Sereni by discussing how she inherited the legacy of the Resistance in Italy, fought in the ideological battles of the Seventies, contributed to the awakening of Italian feminism, identified her personal and public genealogies, and explored her Jewish identity. She also faced the struggles of a “madre handicappata” (220) with a mentally ill son, during a time when the dignity of neurodiverse individuals was beginning to be recognized and liberated through the work of Franco Basaglia, the neuropsychiatrist who, with the 180 Law in 1978, led to the shutdown of mental asylums in Italy.

The kaleidoscopic depiction of Sereni’s figure is evident in the essays that comprise the book’s central section. Chapter 4, by Giovanna Miceli Jeffries (41-65), is about the crucial connection for Sereni between literature, ethics, and politics. Chapter 5 by Giulia Po DeLisle (67-91) investigates the significance of music for Sereni. In chapter 6, L. Scott Lerner’s essay on *Il gioco dei regni* (93-110) explores the Jewish Family Saga of the Sereni family on both the paternal and maternal side. Chapter 7, by Margherita Losacco (111-38), examines the earliest reception of the same novel by a psychoanalyst (Silvia Vegetti Finzi), a literary theorist (Cesare Segre), and a politician (Bruno Visentini). Simonetta Milli Konewko writes in chapter 8 about *Casalinghitudine*, food studies, and women’s domestic spaces. Nicole Paronzini’s chapter 9 (159-78) is a comparison, in the spectrum of the kitchen as a symbolic space caught between feminist agency and patriarchal depotentiation, between Clara Sereni and Susanna Tamaro. Self, humor, and irony in Sereni’s later works are the themes of Mirna Cicioni’s chapter 10 (179-200). Finally, motherhood and disability in Sereni’s work are the focus of Susan Briziarelli’s chapter 11 (201-18). This wide-ranging exploration of Clara Sereni’s work showcases her intersectionality by investigating Sereni’s literature, life, and legacy, fostering a discussion about a writer who has garnered increased attention in the United States only recently.

Known internationally for *Casalinghitudine*, translated into English as *Keeping House* by Giovanna Miceli Jeffries in 2005, Sereni is the author of many books deserving the same attention devoted to her bestselling food memoir. This edited volume could promote further analysis, recognition, and translation of Sereni’s texts, while enlisting the academic interpretations of several scholars from a wide range of disciplines. Furthermore, Po DeLisle and Briziarelli offer a glimpse into Sereni’s writing process by including four short

stories in the closing section of the volume. Two of these stories—“Triumphal March” (221-24) and “Important Moments” (225-28)—are translated by Susan Briziarelli. They come from *Manicomio Primavera* (*Spring Asylum*, a line from a poem by Sylvia Plath), a book about motherhood and children with disabilities published in 1989, when such topics were still taboo in Italian literature. *Manicomio Primavera* marks another milestone and breakthrough in genre, much like *Casalinghitudine* did at its release, as the first of its kind. The other two stories in the “Translations” part are: “Atrazine” (from *Eppure*, 1995), about a couple caught between petit bourgeois décor and trauma, translated by David Ward (229-32), and “Clac-Clac” (from *Il lupo mercante*, 2007), translated by Giulia Po DeLisle (233-40), exploring youth, climatic tragedy, and desire.

In conclusion, the volume acts as an essential toolbox for understanding Sereni’s complexity, caught between the legacy of the Resistance, the drama of the Cold War, the trauma of the Lead Years, the rise of feminist consciousness, the needs of neurodiverse populations and their caregivers, and the rediscovery of food traditions. Her philosophy of *Ultimismo* inspired Sereni’s writing—aligning with the *Ultimi*, often referenced in this book: the marginalized, the silenced, the erased from history—intertwining the personal and the political and “the pessimism of the intellect and the optimism of the will” (197).

Stefania Benini, *Franklin & Marshall College*

Gershom Scholem. *Qabbalisti Cristiani*. Ed. Saverio Campanini. Milano: Adelphi, 2024. Pp. 167.

Excellently edited by Saverio Campanini, the volume accompanies the first Italian translation of Gershom Scholem’s three interventions with an extensive essay that clarifies not only the circumstances—sometimes charmingly anecdotal—that led Scholem to approach Christian Kabbalah and to restore to it scientific and speculative dignity, but also the sometimes obscure ramifications of this intersection. This volume collects three lectures that Scholem delivered throughout his lifetime on Christian Kabbalah, that complex intersection between Judaism and Christianity, which began to take shape during the Renaissance and continued until the era of German Romantic philosophy. The collection represents a significant contribution to our understanding of how Jewish mystical traditions were appropriated, reinterpreted, and sometimes fundamentally transformed within Christian theological frameworks.

A central thread throughout Scholem’s work is his determined effort to extract Kabbalah from the margins of academic inquiry and establish it as a field worthy of genuine scholarly attention. Prior to Scholem, Kabbalah had been

largely dismissed by the academy as an embarrassing collection of superstitions and magical formulations unworthy of serious intellectual consideration. Scholem's revolutionary contribution was to demonstrate that Kabbalistic texts represented sophisticated theological and philosophical systems that demanded rigorous analysis. This project of legitimization required Scholem to challenge prevailing academic paradigms, particularly those established by the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Science of Judaism) movement. The proponents of *Wissenschaft* had largely dismissed mystical and esoteric elements of Judaism as irrational aberrations that detracted from what they considered the rational core of Jewish thought. While Scholem positioned himself in direct opposition to the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, characterizing its approach to Jewish mysticism as inadequate and overly rationalistic, contemporary scholarship suggests this opposition may have been overstated. Although Scholem's critique of the nineteenth-century academic movement's treatment of Kabbalah became foundational to modern Jewish studies, we now know there were significant exceptions to his characterization. As George Kohler demonstrates in *Kabbalah Research in the Wissenschaft Des Judentums (1820-1880): The Foundation of an Academic Discipline* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), the systematic study of Kabbalah was actually established by the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* itself, challenging Scholem's narrative of complete neglect. Today's interpretation no longer necessarily maintains such a stark division between Scholem's approach and that of his nineteenth-century predecessors, recognizing instead a more complex relationship between these scholarly traditions and acknowledging the genuine contributions of earlier German-Jewish academics to the field of Kabbalistic studies. By applying the methodologies of modern historical-critical scholarship to Kabbalistic texts, Scholem not only demonstrated their historical significance but also revealed their profound philosophical sophistication. Scholem's relationship with the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement was fundamentally oppositional. While he adopted their commitment to philological rigor and historical contextualization, he rejected their rationalist bias and their tendency to devalue mystical elements within Judaism. The scholars of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* had largely embraced a progressive narrative that viewed Judaism as evolving toward increasingly rational forms of expression, with mysticism representing a regrettable regression. For Scholem, this perspective fundamentally misunderstood the dynamic interplay between rational and mystical elements within Jewish thought. Rather than viewing mysticism as peripheral to Judaism, Scholem insisted that it represented a central creative force that had repeatedly revitalized Jewish tradition. By rejecting the tenets of *Wissenschaft*, Scholem opened space for a more nuanced understanding of Jewish intellectual history—one that recognized the pivotal importance of mystical traditions alongside more rationalist currents.

Equally important to Scholem's project was his rejection of the common characterization of Christian Kabbalah as merely a Christian byproduct—a view common among scholars associated with *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. These scholars had often dismissed Christian Kabbalah as a fundamentally misguided appropriation that revealed nothing of significance about either Judaism or Christianity. Scholem challenged this dismissive stance by demonstrating that Christian Kabbalah represented a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that deserved serious scholarly attention. He recognized that Christian engagement with Kabbalistic texts had produced genuine insights alongside misinterpretations, and that the history of Christian Kabbalah revealed important dimensions of intellectual exchange between Jewish and Christian communities during the early modern period. By treating Christian Kabbalah as worthy of serious scholarly consideration, Scholem established a framework for understanding how mystical traditions could function as sites of intercultural dialogue, even as they were also subject to appropriation and misinterpretation.

Despite Scholem's groundbreaking contributions, Campanini's editorial commentary highlights important limitations in Scholem's approach. As Campanini observes that Scholem was less concerned with exposing crude falsifications in Christian Kabbalah than with noting its origins among converts whose motives were suspect, though his argument falters since betrayal cannot consist in revealing false secrets (137). This penetrating observation identifies a fundamental tension in Scholem's work. On one hand, Scholem recognized that Christian Kabbalah was not merely a collection of misunderstandings but included genuine engagement with Jewish mystical traditions. On the other hand, his narrative emphasized the role of Jewish converts to Christianity in transmitting Kabbalistic knowledge, subtly suggesting that Christian Kabbalah originated in a kind of betrayal or transgression. Campanini's critique reveals how Scholem's position becomes logically unstable: if Kabbalah contains authentic mystical wisdom (as Scholem maintained), then its transmission to Christians cannot be dismissed as mere betrayal or falsification. Yet Scholem seemed reluctant to fully acknowledge the implications of this logic, perhaps because doing so would undermine the distinctiveness of Jewish mystical traditions that he sought to establish. This tension reflects broader questions about religious boundaries and intellectual exchange. To what extent can mystical traditions transcend the religious communities that produce them? Can esoteric knowledge be meaningfully transmitted across religious boundaries without fundamental distortion? Scholem's "balancing act" between affirming the authenticity of Kabbalah and questioning its Christian appropriations reveals the complexity of these questions.

Campanini astutely identifies unexpected ambiguities and solidarities even among intellectuals who would gravitate around pan-Germanic circles of the early twentieth century. This contextual framework provides readers with valuable insights into the intellectual milieu in which Scholem was operating and the broader significance of his scholarly contributions to understanding the complex relationship between Jewish and Christian mystical traditions. The importance of this collection lies not only in its meticulous documentation of an often overlooked aspect of religious intellectual history but also in its revelation of how mystical traditions can function as sites of both cultural appropriation and genuine interfaith dialogue. Scholem's nuanced approach, despite its limitations, invites contemporary scholars to reconsider the complex dynamics of religious exchange beyond simplistic narratives of influence or supersession. By bringing critical attention to the multifaceted phenomenon of Christian Kabbalah, this volume contributes significantly to our understanding of how religious traditions interact, appropriate, and transform one another's intellectual resources—a process that continues to shape interfaith relations today.

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FILM & MEDIA STUDIES

Luca Barra, Cristina Formenti, Mariapaola Pierini, and Francesco Pitassio, eds. *Italian Contemporary Screen Performers. Training, Production, Prestige*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025. Pp. 303.

There is a vivid image etched in the minds of many Italians who watched *Grande Fratello* (the Italian edition of *Big Brother*) in the early 2000s: a young and muscular Pietro Taricone covering part of the living room to create “some romantic privacy” and have intercourse with another contestant. It was shocking—and, most importantly, it happened live on television. This moment may have contributed to Taricone's recognition and recognizability, inspiring him to pursue a career in acting. Taricone never had the chance to prove himself fully, as he died tragically only a few years into his career in 2010, but *Grande Fratello* became a springboard for several other contemporary Italian actors, including soap-opera star Flavio Montrucchio and, notably, Luca Argentero. As Giancarlo Lombardi puts it: “His [Argentero's] charm lies in understatement [...], he embodies a new kind of accessible masculinity for Italian audiences” (42). The central question posed by this book concerns how and when Italian stardom began to shift, positioning the Italian experience

as both unique—and at times limited—by its peculiarities. It moves beyond, viewing screen actors merely as public figures or celebrities instead of presenting them as media laborers.

The transformation of the Italian media industry since the late 1990s—marked by decentralization, the rise of serial television, and the emergence of streaming platforms—has redefined acting careers. In many cases, these careers are now experiencing a crisis of visibility, especially when compared to the golden age of Cinecittà. As Luca Barra notes in the introduction, “the classic hierarchy that elevated theatre and cinema above television in the prestige afforded to an acting career [...] is now much less apparent. Many Italian actors move freely and seamlessly between these dimensions” (12). Few Italian actors today successfully cross the national borders, and when they do, the results are not always favorable. A case in point is Sergio Castellitto’s role in *Conclave*, which leaned heavily into a stereotyped portrayal of the *italiano medio* within the Vatican court. Conversely, there are more neutral or successful transnational examples, such as Pierfrancesco Favino’s role in *The Chronicles of Narnia* saga, where his Italian origin was entirely irrelevant to his character and quite refreshing.

The book emphasizes that an actor’s image is the product of collective labor, involving casting directors, coaches, agents, PR professionals, and more. The editors structure their analysis around three key phases: training and early career, career management in a changing media landscape, and promotion and validation mechanisms. Among the systemic issues highlighted are the lack of coherent training structures and poor alignment between education and career entry, along with limited diversity in terms of race, age, and socio-economic background in Italian casting practices. A notable point was raised by actress Carolina Crescentini (*Boris*) during an interview on the *Tintoria* podcast. She criticized Italian drama schools for forbidding students from taking on any kind of work, whether advertising gigs or major acting roles, while enrolled. This, she argued, not only prevents actors from learning how to navigate a set, but also further discourages underrepresented and underprivileged talents who cannot afford not to work. Thanks to this study, it becomes clear that many of today’s Italian stars are also the product of interpersonal influence, often working together across low-budget and high-profile films (it is the case of Marco Giallini and Valerio Mastandrea or the cast of *La meglio gioventù*). The book refreshingly spotlights several figures, including Matilda De Angelis and Tatiana Lepore who exemplify the diversity and evolution of Italian screen performance.

In “Matilda De Angelis: Naked Ambition” (231-39), Silvia Vacirca examines how the actor of *The Law According to Lidia Pöet*, *Citadel: Diana* and *The Undoing* represents a new generation of Italian celebrities, whose careers are shaped as much by transmedia exposure as by acting

talent. De Angelis is portrayed as a calculated, “spreadable” (231) star, with a public persona crafted through social media aesthetics and postfeminist empowerment narratives. Mariapaola Pierini’s chapter on Tatiana Lepore (“Tatiana Lepore: The Role of the Acting Coach between Creative Mediation and Functionality,” 97-105), a pioneering Italian acting coach, stands out as one of the book’s most significant methodological contributions. While actors often receive the acclaim, Pierini shifts the focus to the invisible labor behind performances. Lepore’s role in shaping emotional delivery and guiding on-set dynamics illustrates the vital, often overlooked contribution of acting coaches, similar to the work of casting directors like Laura Muccino.

This volume is a valuable and refreshing contribution to the study of transnational and transmedial exchanges. It provides rich insight into both emerging and established figures in the Italian screen landscape, making it an essential reading for scholars of contemporary media, performance, and Italian culture.

Clara Ramazzotti, PhD Candidate, *The Graduate Center, CUNY*

Jonathan J. Cavallero. *Television Directors, Race, and Gender. Written Out of the Story*. London: Routledge, 2024. Pp. 238.

When thinking about a TV series, and when media outlets share and discuss the latest television obsessions, the first—and often only—name the audience encounters is that of the showrunner. This figure is presented as an almost heroic creator, someone capable of turning us into compulsive fans and shaping office conversations for years to come. Jonathan J. Cavallero’s new study challenges this traditional, showrunner-centric model of authorship by asserting that “television directors [...] have been undervalued, disparaged, and ignored by TV scholars who have consistently framed television as a writer’s or producer’s medium” (1).

Cavallero invites readers to consider another side of the massive collaborative effort behind television production. While acknowledging the undeniable importance of the writer, he emphasizes that the director plays a crucial role in setting the show’s tone, particularly in pilot episodes and season finales. Just as a character evolves over time, so too does the visual and stylistic identity of a show. What distinguishes Cavallero’s work is his insistence on the aesthetic contributions of those “artists who have been viewed as having secondary or negligible importance in classical Television Studies,” with the aim of “reframing the image of media industries” (7). This, he argues, is not only a theoretical correction but a political re-evaluation: excluding directors from critical consideration, especially those from marginalized backgrounds, erases vital contributors to the formal and ideological shape of U.S. television.

Once the director's role is clarified, Cavallero turns to another set of underexamined factors: race and gender. Unsurprisingly, women and BIPOC directors have worked in television for decades, yet they remain largely invisible in both academic and popular discourse. While the book focuses on five case studies, its framework could easily extend to include more, such as the season one's finale of *Jane the Virgin* (directed by Zetna Fuentes) or the pilot and later episodes of *Reservation Dogs* (directed by Sterlin Harjo). Cavallero demonstrates how directors have used visual techniques—shot composition, blocking, camera angles—not only to support, but sometimes to subvert, the dominant ideologies embedded in scripts.

His analyses of Paris Barclay's work on *NYPD Blue*, where Barclay was an unprecedented figure on the show being a Black, gay director on a mainstream cop show, and Lorraine Senna's episode of *The Sopranos* are especially effective in illustrating how directorial vision can introduce alternative perspectives on race, gender, and power within otherwise conventional narratives. In the chapter "*NYPD Blue*: Paris Barclay, Blackness, Whiteness, and the Cop Show" (133-73), Cavallero observes that "people of color were better represented in less prominent positions" (135), namely the direction of one episode in a procedural. This reflects a broader trend in television at the time, in which diversity was neglected, and racism remained pervasive. Behind the scenes—rather than in front of the camera—was often the only place where some inclusion could occur. Gender disparity was another persistent issue, even in prestige television. As Cavallero notes, echoing the experience of Ida Lupino: "*The Sopranos* is a landmark program," and yet "the production team was dominated by White male voices. [...] Of the series' 24 directors, only one, Lorraine Senna, was a woman" (175). He further notes that *The Sopranos* frequently referenced the cinematic traditions of Scorsese and Coppola, and that Senna's episode, "Down Neck," "confirms this general pattern" (187). Importantly, Cavallero does not romanticize the role of the director. He is keenly aware of the limitations they face and does not overstate their creative freedom. Instead, he acknowledges the industrial constraints, production hierarchies, and genre conventions that shape and sometimes restrict their work. Direction, he argues, should be understood as a site of negotiation—between vision and limitation, collaboration and constraint—rendering the television director both a subject of and an agent within media power structures.

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the book is its historiographic excavation. Cavallero reconstructs an alternative genealogy of television history by foregrounding underrecognized directors such as Frances Buss Buch, Ida Lupino (who directed, often without credit therefore without royalties, more than fifty episodes in the 1950s and was notably the only

woman to direct an episode of the original *The Twilight Zone* series), Reza Badiyi, and Debbie Allen. Through meticulous research, supported by interviews and production notes, he offers a valuable counter-history that de-centers the White male canon of U.S. television. This act of recovery is not merely additive; it is reparative, revealing how television's aesthetics and ideologies have been shaped, often subversively, by those whom the industry has historically marginalized.

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Edward Lamberti, and Michael Williams, eds. *Call Me by Your Name. Perspectives on the Film*. Bristol: Intellect, 2024. Pp. 244.

Lamberti and Williams' edited volume on the 2017 film *Call Me by Your Name*, directed by Luca Guadagnino and based on André Aciman's homonymous 2006 novel, aims to "engage with well-established critiques of the film," to ultimately "take our understanding of *Call Me by Your Name* in new directions" (1). The fruits of this collaborative endeavour, published seven years after the film's release, are a delightfully nuanced reflection on the manifold lines of inquiry it has since inspired.

The volume is divided into three sections: "Style," "Themes," and "Reception." Adam Vaughan opens with "Temporary Paradise: Queer Space, Time and Pastoral Visions in *Call My by Your Name*" (17-33), reading the film as a queer pastoral text and evaluating its Arcadian natural setting where external hurdles—the harsh judgement of 1980s Italian society or the burgeoning spectre of AIDS—do not hinder the developing romance between 17-year-old Elio (Timothée Chalamet) and visiting graduate student Oliver (Armie Hammer). From there, in "'But You Know, There Have Been Queer Characters from the Very First Film': *Call Me by Your Name* and the Long Shadow of James Ivory" (34-57), Claire Monk examines the legacy of the film's producer (also the director of 1987 queer cult classic *Maurice*) "[...] beyond purely textual affinity and authorship," toward "a still-less-considered area of Merchant Ivory influence... specifically the multi-faceted strategies adopted in the 1980s promotion of *Maurice*" (47). Stuart Richards then shifts attention back to the content of the film in "'Is It Better to Speak or Die?': Adaptation and Elio's Interiority" (58-75), which avoids value judgements typically associated with text-to-film adaptation to, by contrast, analyze how the film meaningfully diverges from its source material to convey Elio's internal thought process.

Elio's interiority is further elaborated by Kingsley Marshall in "Music as Narrator in *Call Me by Your Name*" (76-90) on how diegetic music (Classical pieces Elio transcribes and plays on the piano, and the many 80s hits heard on

radios, TVs, and in *discoteche*) as well as the film's non-diegetic soundtrack (namely Guadagnino's privileged placement of Sufjan Stevens' songs authored for the film) convey Elio's internal monologue to viewers—or better yet, listeners. Sarah Artt in turn assesses the indebtedness of the film's sound design to body genres such as pornography for its skillful deployment of aural elements that evoke erotic sensation in “Sex Sounds: On Aural Explicitness in *Call Me by Your Name*” (91-109). Lamberti then concludes the first section with “*Call Me by Your Name* and the Ethics of Distance” (110-28), which relates viewers' experience of effectively “hanging out” with Elio to a form of Levinasian proximity that ethically distances viewers from the protagonists' private—and ultimately unknowable—physical and romantic connection.

The second section, “Themes,” leads with Daniel Paul's chapter contribution, “*Call Me by Your Name*, Chrononormativity and the (Queer?) Future of Italian Teen Film” (131-50), about how the film subverts both linear, normative time as well as the themes of social or physical death that have long driven queer representations in Italian cinema, in favor of nostalgia, fantasy, and queer futurity. Then, in “Plato to Elio: Ancient and Modern Sexualities in *Call Me by Your Name*” (151-70), Nikolai Endres breaks from prior comparisons of Elio and Oliver's romance to Greco-Roman pederasty by relating the protagonists' relationship to Plato's *Phaedrus*. In doing so, Endres highlights the at times amicable, consistently reciprocal, and ultimately fluid nature of their romance. Michael Williams further engages with (re) significations of the classical queer canon in “‘Daring You to Desire Them’: Digital Classicism, Star Bodies and *Call Me by Your Name*” (171-97). Williams addresses the film's mediation of Elio and Oliver's mutual erotic desire through Hellenistic bronze male sculpture and meaningfully considers the proliferation and significance of fan art that superimposes the actors' bodies onto ancient statuary. Jacob Engelberg in, “Call Me Bi Any Other Name: Anal Monstration, Formal Bisexualization, Gay Indigestion” (198-224), then goes on to denounce early critiques of the film's “gay or queer credentials” (198) as intrinsically informed by the same normative, monosexual epistemological frameworks that have long prevented positive filmic depictions of bisexuality. Engelberg instead interprets the film as “an affirmative visualization of male bisexual possibility” (206).

The volume's final section on “Reception” starts with Ruby Cheung's evaluation of the global success and geopolitical hierarchies of the film's release in “*Call Me by Your Name* and Film Festivals” (227-52), supported by a reference table data of its (primarily North American and European) film festival screenings and distribution. Subsequently, both Francesca Sobande's “Tell Tim Chalamet to Tweet at Me: Situating Timothée Chalamet's Social Media Presence and Perceived (B)Romance with Armie Hammer” (253-69)

and Jonathan A. Cannon's "The Sexiest Risk-Taker? Armie Hammer, White Masculinity and *Call Me by Your Name*" (270-84) mutually recognize how the lead actors' off-screen reputations, celebrity personas, and privileged positions as white heterosexual men influenced the film's popular reception. While Sobande primarily focuses on extradiegetic marketing influences such as Chalamet's sporadic social media presence, crafted soft boy image, and bromance with Hammer, Cannon instead evaluates the simultaneous charm and risk-taking that inform Hammer's self-presentation and filmic oeuvre, while also addressing the potential ramifications of rape allegations made against Hammer in 2021. The volume concludes with a co-authored contribution, "'Finally, a Gay Movie without a Bad Vibe': Queer Nostalgia, Affection and Gender identity in *Call Me by Your Name*" (285-311), by Vinicius Ferreira, Victor Schlude, and Gêsa Cavalcanti, which surveys Brazilian viewers' comments on YouTube reviews of the film as a means to analyze audience reception of the recent "queer nostalgia boom" (286).

As the first comprehensive attempt to seriously investigate *Call Me by Your Name*'s legacy on Italian and international film, this volume is refreshingly unafraid to challenge early (and at times hastily made) critiques of the film. Informed by voices from film, media, and communication studies, this volume would be an invaluable resource for humanities scholars interested in continuing the conversation. In all, this volume has surely secured itself a position as a reference point for fans and scholars of the film for years to come.

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PEDAGOGY & TEXTBOOKS

Maria Letizia Bellocchio, Giuseppe Cavatorta, and Borbala Gaspar. *Italian in Wonderland. Open Education Digital Platform (OER) for Basic and Intermediate Italian Culture and Language Courses.* The University of Arizona. Online.

Italian in Wonderland (<https://italianinwonderland.arizona.edu/>), the University of Arizona's brand-new open education digital platform for beginners and intermediate students, is a very welcome addition to the unfortunately limited portfolio of online resources available for Italian in the academic context. The platform currently comprises four modules for the Intermediate 1 level and four modules for the Intermediate 2 level, while another eight modules for beginners should become available in autumn 2025 and in spring 2026. Both students and teachers will be able to use

this innovative platform as a “course book” that is much more flexible than traditional textbooks, or to select ad hoc those activities which best suit their linguistic and cultural needs and interests.

In his foreword to *Technology-Mediated Language Learning and Teaching*, David Rixham writes that “the need for multilingual and culturally competent individuals has never been more urgent,” and that “technology-mediated language learning offers a compelling solution in this regard” (Vurdien, Ruby, and Wendy Chambers, eds. *Technology-Mediated Language Learning and Teaching*. IGI Global, 2024, xviii). Accordingly, a platform like *Italian in Wonderland* gives students access to first-class language education whenever and wherever they require it, while at the same time enabling educators to provide a learning environment which is “more engaging, inclusive and effective” (ibid.).

Italian in Wonderland does offer learners and instructors an impressive variety of authentic and multimodal materials: within the Intermediate 1 course, students will come across articles, videos, songs, photographs, posters, adverts, social media posts, etc., on the subjects of the “world of work,” “visual arts,” “design” and “mobility in Italy”; in the Intermediate 2 module, the focus is on the “environment,” “immigration,” “fashion” and “cuisine.” As its authors explain, each module stimulates and nourishes four different “types of activity”: “experiencing, conceptualizing, analysing, and applying” (Maria Letizia Bellocchio, Giuseppe Cavatorta, and Borbala Gaspar. “*Italian in Wonderland*, an OER Digital Language and Culture Learning Platform Bridging Lower and Upper Division Levels”. *Italica* 101.1, 2024, 25).

With the module on “Italian cuisine,” for instance, students begin their journey by immersing themselves in a vast lexical pantry of spices, aromatic herbs, meat cuts, and fruits. After exploring pillars of Italian food and drink culture (e.g., pizza, pesto, DOP/DOC products, culinary festivals), students can focus on grammatical forms which are often used in this context (verbs “fare” and “lasciare” plus infinitive or passive constructs), as well as understand how different genres (restaurant reviews, cookbooks, documentaries) work, and which socio-cultural or historical meanings they have. In addition to providing homework exercises, extra materials for teachers (for instance, shareable Google documents and Padlet canvases) and a mock exam (which helps students recap the vocabulary, grammar and cultural points linked to the module’s theme), each module invites students to apply their knowledge to a practical project: in module 16, for instance, one would choose a traditional Italian recipe and modify it using ingredients common within their own state or region.

Thanks to its colourful, multifaceted and expansive collection of resources and activities, this digital platform does conjure up a “wonderland” in which

students will likely develop their linguistic skills and cultural expertise in fun and interactive ways. On the one hand, the platform's multifaceted nature mirrors the myriad of stimuli today's students are accustomed to, as well as Italy's extremely rich and diverse linguistic and cultural expressions. On the other hand, *Italian in Wonderland* is very neat and user-friendly: not only does the homepage have a useful "user guide," but also the main page of each module has an "all tags" table through which students and teachers have direct access to specific materials (audio files, readings, presentation slides, discussions, writing exercises). By clicking on one of the links in the "all tags" table, one gains access also to the resources already available for beginners. In these modules, too, the authors' holistic approach is evident and greatly differs from that of more traditional course books, which normally center around for instance grammar, and treat it as a "compartment" separate from real-life situations. To give an example, Lesson 4 of Module 1 employs a virtual tour of the campus of La Sapienza University to introduce the gender of nouns and indefinite articles; students virtually travel across this site and view a library, a department, a classroom, and so on. In a similar way, Lesson 9 of Module 1 explores the topic of countries, nationalities, and regional provenance—something of fundamental importance in Italian society—using the song "Inno nazionale" by Luca Carboni.

Italian in Wonderland certainly gives students agency—the agency to take countless paths to understanding Italian language and culture in independent, creative and experiential manners. Once the modules for Beginners become fully available, users of the platform will have the opportunity to learn Italian seamlessly and progressively, something that is harder to do when using more traditional textbooks. Another advantage an online platform offers is the fact that its content can be updated quickly and efficiently; this flexibility should allow the authors, for instance, to proofread its pages and correct a few typos which are currently present. Given that linguistic and cultural openness is one of the platform's founding criteria, it would be desirable to add materials on the recent attempts to make Italian a more inclusive and unbiased language. For example, where appropriate, the pages or slides of *Italian in Wonderland* could employ non-discriminatory greetings such as "benvenuti" and "ciao a tutti."

Bellocchio, Cavatorta and Gaspar are to be congratulated for having designed a polymorphous educational instrument which vitally recognises and sustains the fundamental and ever-changing relationship between language learning and intercultural competence. It is to be hoped that their innovative work will inspire the creation of other similar platforms, as well as boost the number of students wanting to learn *la dolce lingua* and to know *il Bel Paese* both in the United States and elsewhere.

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Clelia Caraccia, and Andrea Martelli. *Letteratura*. Roma: Edilingua, 2024. Pp. 88.

Il volume *Letteratura*, di Clelia Caraccia e Andrea Martelli, è inserito nella collana *Italiani: personaggi che il mondo ci invidia*, dell'editore Edilingua, casa editrice indipendente nata a Roma nel 1996, e attiva nel campo dell'italiano come lingua straniera e seconda. La collana si rivolge a studenti—di livello B1-B2 (Quadro Comune Europeo) / ACTFL Intermediate High and Advanced Low/Mid—che studiano la lingua italiana come L2/LS, e comprende anche i volumi *Arte, Dante, Cinema, Moda e design*. Ogni volume, a eccezione del monografico su Dante, è dedicato a quattro personaggi che si sono distinti nel loro settore. Il volume sulla letteratura presenta Alessandro Manzoni, Luigi Pirandello, Andrea Camilleri e Umberto Eco.

L'insegnamento dell'italiano come L2/LS, anche—ma non solo—in un contesto universitario che prelude a studi specialistici (di Master o di Dottorato), pone l'annosa questione del modo migliore per mediare tra apprendimento comunicativo e apprendimento contenutistico. Il primo incide sullo sviluppo di quello che James F. Lee e Bill Van Patten chiamano “sistema linguistico implicito” (*Making Communicative Language Teaching Happen*. Boston: McGraw-Hill Education, 2003), ovvero l'insieme di conoscenze linguistiche interiorizzate e automatizzate che permettono a un parlante di utilizzare una lingua in modo spontaneo e naturale, senza dover ricorrere a un'analisi conscia delle regole grammaticali. Il secondo—l'apprendimento contenutistico—permette al sistema linguistico di cimentarsi in esperienze cognitive e comunicative che non necessariamente riguardano la vita quotidiana o i più comuni contesti di conversazione, ma quell'ambito che, con un termine generale, viene definito “cultura”.

Il volume *Letteratura* di Caraccia e Martelli è uno strumento che i docenti di italiano come lingua seconda e straniera possono adottare per introdurre gli apprendenti ad aspetti della storia e della cultura d'Italia, che sono di pertinenza d'un *Content-Based Language Teaching* (CBLT), di cui è stato pioniere Bernard Mohan (*Language and Content*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1986).

La decisione dell'editore Edilingua di dedicare la collana a dei “personaggi”—e non a dei temi o a degli eventi, per esempio—è già di per sé una scelta didattica e di campo, che si riflette sulla struttura e la ripartizione interna dei singoli volumi, incluso quello sulla *Letteratura*. Come aveva intuito proprio Pirandello da studente, quando leggeva la *Commedia* di Dante e chiosava i volumi della sua biblioteca con i disegni di teste, anche caricaturali, di uomo, concentrarsi su un “personaggio”—a partire da Dante stesso—significa cercare di “vedere la scena”, e calare quel che si legge in una forma visibile, nella realtà (Annamaria Andreoli, “Alla scoperta di una

biblioteca”, *I libri in maschera. Luigi Pirandello e le biblioteche*. Roma: De Luca, 1996, 47).

Nel testo di Caraccia e Martelli, la metodologia corrisponde al contenuto, come nel caso di Pirandello, e questa corrispondenza permette di “vedere la scena”. È ciò che accade con l’episodio del matrimonio a sorpresa dei *Promessi sposi* (1827, 1840) di Manzoni (13-20), con *La giara* (1909) di Pirandello (29-36), ma anche con un racconto giallo tratto da *Un mese con Montalbano* (1988) di Camilleri (45-52) e un riassunto de *Il nome della rosa* (1980) di Eco (61-68). Quattro brevi *graphic novel*, infatti, concludono ciascuno dei quattro capitoli, le cui pagine iniziali comprendono una cronologia dei principali episodi della vita degli autori (e degli eventi storici che vi fanno da sfondo), e gli aspetti salienti della poetica e dell’ideologia d’ognuno. In tutti e quattro i casi, è il “personaggio” a essere al centro della presentazione: Manzoni con la sua nevrosi e attenzione per gli umili e le ingiustizie da questi patite, Pirandello e la sua tormentata vita familiare, Camilleri e la sua radicata e quasi mitica “sicilianità”, Eco e le sue idee sempre controcorrente concernenti la cultura popolare.

L’operazione svolta da Caraccia e Martelli è efficace sotto almeno due profili. “Visualizzare” il linguaggio significa, in primo luogo, “visualizzare” i significati, ovvero agevolare quel *binding* cognitivo di forma e contenuto che, secondo Tracy D. Terrell, permette l’acquisizione d’una lingua (“Acquisition in the Natural Approach: The Binding/Access Framework”, *The Modern Language Journal*, 70.3, 1986, 213-27, 214). In secondo luogo, come specifica lo stesso Terrell, il nesso tra una forma visibile (come quella offerta dai fumetti) e la parola non indica solo un processo cognitivo, ma anche un processo *affettivo*. È quest’ultima caratteristica del *binding* nell’ambito dell’insegnamento di L2/LS a rendere il *graphic novel* uno strumento didattico particolarmente appropriato. Questo *medium* ha infatti un effetto *motivante* ed *immersivo*, che lo rende idoneo a un apprendimento di contenuti (e di “cultura”) quando il controllo formale della lingua è ancora in via di sviluppo. D’altra parte, già nel 1993 Scott McCloud scriveva che i fumetti non erano più prodotti di nicchia ma *mainstream*. Quest’affermazione, nel corso del tempo, s’è arricchita di significato e nuovi contenuti. Infatti, i fumetti e i *graphic novel*, sostengono Talia Hurwich e Meryl Jaffe, sono ora riconosciuti come testi complessi che contengono un vocabolario avanzato, rispetto ai quali gli insegnanti possono strutturare attività didattiche e *task* di vario tipo (*Worth a Thousand Words: Using Graphic Novels to Teach Visual and Verbal Literacy*. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey Bass, 2018).

A questo va aggiunto che gli esercizi proposti in appendice al volume (69-87) ricalcano le caratteristiche del *medium* scelto per la didattica. Essi, infatti, si concentrano alternativamente sul lessico, sui modi di dire, sulla

scansione cronologica della narrazione, sugli abbinamenti di personaggi e azioni, proponendo anche cruciverba e attività di riempimento delle “nuvole” a complemento di ogni vignetta.

Studenti e docenti di italiano come L2/LS troveranno in *Letteratura* un punto di riferimento per l'esplorazione di un argomento che solitamente intimidisce chi inizia ad apprendere una lingua, ma che in questo caso è presentato in maniera sintetica (e necessariamente selettiva), efficace, ma anche attenta alla qualità e alla profondità delle conoscenze “contenutistiche” in gioco.

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Alberto Regagliolo, ed. *Italian as a Foreign Language: Teaching and Acquisition in Higher Education*. Wilmington: Vernon P, 2023. Pp. 363.

Conceived for instructors who navigate the increasingly interdisciplinary and employability-driven terrain of tertiary Italian, this collection answers the editor's call for a curriculum that is at once “functional, practical, adapted and organized” (xxiii). It targets lecturers, graduate-teaching assistants, and program directors charged with shepherding learners from *ab-initio* to C2 while embedding Italian in disciplinary content. In an ecosystem still dominated by communicative textbooks pitched below B2, *Italian as a Foreign Language* positions itself as a bridge between specialist metalanguage and task-based professional practice.

The volume is divided into two complementary clusters. Part I (Chapters 1-8) supplies analytic scaffolding in the fields of phonetics, diachrony, morphology, dialectology; Part II (Chapters 9-15) demonstrates how Italian can function as a medium for situated Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) projects. The hinge between the halves is deliberate: theory before praxis, metalanguage before meaning-making.

“Part I: Pedagogical Approaches & Methodological Proposals” opens with Chapter 1 (3-14) by Olga Broniś that outlines a four-week articulatory “clinic” in which spectrographic analysis of speech and pronunciation and subsequent feedback replace rote imitation. Josh Brown's Chapter 2 (15-36) threads historical linguistics through programs otherwise allergic to diachrony, offering sample syllabi for philology and digital text-mining. In Chapter 3 (37-58) authors Stefania Chiapello's and Carmen González's telecollaborative case study reports measurable gains in pragmatic mitigation after a semester-long tandem between students in Italy and countries of target languages (such as English and Spanish). Chapters 4 (59-86) and 5 (87-104) foreground multimodal literacy: Sara Dallavalle illustrates how learners decode panel

grammar in comics and with Marta Kaliska they dissect stance-marking in press and journalistic headlines. In Chapter 6 (105-28) Irene Lami turns to morphology, coupling frequency lists with “neologism auctions” that gamify derivation and compounding. Adam Ledgeway’s Chapter 7 (129-64) resituates dialectology as sociolinguistic reflexivity, complete with field-work templates; in Chapter 8 (165-212) Alberto Regagliolo pushes into taboo pragmatics, analyzing blasphemy and parody within legal-ethical frames. Across these essays recur explicit metalanguage, task banks, and appendices that invite immediate classroom transfer.

In “Part II: Italian through Projects and Case-Studies,” Chapter 9 (215-32) by Cinzia Bacilieri embeds CEFR-aligned outcomes inside an Art History module, its time-on-task charts partitioning specialist and general skills with rare transparency. In Chapter 10 (233-50) Rosalba Biasini and Francesca Raffi pilot A2-level interlingual subtitling, documenting listening-accuracy gains while acknowledging copyright hurdles. Chapter 11 (251-70) by Eliana Maestri fashions the classroom as a “Third Space” where students translate migrant narratives and annotate affective responses. Humor and redundancy underpin lexical uptake in Stefano Maranzana’s Chapter 12 (271-90) *Peppa Pig* experiment, whereas Leonardo Masi’s Chapter 13 (291-304) pairs geolinguistics with map-based storytelling to enact a “spatial turn.” Chapter 14 (305-18) by Ilaria Salonna adapts process drama to lower the affective filter and sharpen prosody; in Chapter 15 (319-30) Valentina Tibaldo reimagines the essay as a metacognitive scaffold for emotional and intercultural literacy. Authentic artefacts, reflective diaries, and CEFR mediation descriptors stitch these projects together, modelling constructive alignment for curriculum designers.

Three vectors cut across the collection. First, *task-based interdisciplinarity*: learners annotate art works, subtitle films, or dramatize scenarios, thereby mobilizing Italian as workplace discourse. Second, *explicit linguistic reflection*: phonetic diagrams, dialect maps, and word-formation tables prompt metalinguistic awareness that communicative manuals often sidestep. Third, *critical sociopolitical reflexivity*: chapters on press discourse, dialect prestige, and taboo language expose power asymmetries encoded in Italian. Didactic infrastructure is rich through the provided color-coded spreads, iconography for skills recycling, QR links to corpora, and ready-made rubrics.

Methodological pluralism is the collection’s primary strength: every essay provides ready-to-use task banks for lecturers who face time constraints. Constructive alignment is exemplary; several authors map activities to CEFR can-dos and provide transparent assessment matrices: one notable example is the two clearly laid-out figures that break down the percentage of class time spent on either general language skills or those specialized for the field of art

history (222-23). Perhaps most valuable is the sociopolitical depth: whether interrogating the semiotics of insult (Chapter 8) or dialect hierarchies (Chapter 7), contributors refuse to treat language as neutral code, thereby enlarging the ethical horizon of IFL pedagogy.

The evidence chain is at points, however, uneven. Some chapters offer pre-/post- testing or control groups, with the strongest presence of evidence being found in Chapter 1's vast study on students' responsiveness to phonetic and articulatory instruction and the detailed methodologies and results of Chapter 3's numerous student-centered telecollaborative assignments. More often, however, practitioner testimony frequently substitutes for systematic SLA data. Digital analytics, a growth area in post-pandemic teaching, receive scant attention: learning-management dashboards, adaptive feedback loops, and mobile eye-tracking remain absent. Finally, the institutional lens is conspicuously Euro-centric: programs in Latin America, Asia, or Africa will need to retrofit the proposals to markedly different resource ecologies.

Yet, Regagliolo's anthology distinguishes itself on two counts. First, it privileges experimentation over prescriptive sequencing, inviting instructors to assemble bespoke modules rather than adopt a turnkey coursebook. Second, it embeds critical discourse analysis—absent from many mainstream texts—thereby aligning language teaching with contemporary debates on social justice and decoloniality.

Italian as a Foreign Language merits a place on the program director's shelf. Its wide mix of phonetic clinics, field-work ethnographies, and LSP modules demonstrates a curriculum where disciplinary content and linguistic form develop together. While instructors seeking robust analytics or global-south perspectives must look elsewhere, the collection offers an indispensable repertoire for redesigning post-pandemic courses that aim beyond generic communicative competence. Recommended for MA-level teacher-training seminars and for departments intent on integrating Italian into art history, geography, media studies, or performance, this volume serves as a vehicle for the profession-ready literacy.

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