

Book Reviews

Sherry Roush. *Hermes' Lyre, Italian Poetic Self-Commentary from Dante to Tommaso Campanella*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002. Pp. 249.

Sherry Roush defines poetic self-commentary as a “unified work of poetry and the poet’s own paraphrase, gloss, or other ostensibly interpretive prose intervention,” (5) and challenges the belief that self-commentary is peculiarly authoritative. The reason for such a belief is that poets would have a unique knowledge of their poetry’s truth. Self-commentary would be an approximation to commentary, leaving out the fact that the self of the author might be different from the narrator’s. Writers of self-commentaries appear very concerned about what exceeds them. Roush’s research then departs from an assumption, i.e. the “poet’s inspiration participates in the transcendent Spirit infusing the ultimate Author and His Word” (13), which would underline a “Trinitarian view of the poetic text” (13): 1) Poetry; 2) Self-commentative prose; 3) The *quid*, e.g. the acknowledged otherness of the poetic inspiration. The poet’s own commentary could be considered as a privileged interpretation, however, in order to avoid a one-dimensional, limited view of the poetic work, the critic cannot accept it as the ultimate word. Poetic self-commentary demands understanding rather than explanation, and the “hermeneutic purpose shifts from learning some supposed actual intent of the work, or defending what the critic sees as a valid interpretation...to valorizing the process of poetic contemplation and enrichment.” (14)

The first part of the book studies the emergence of exemplary vernacular forms in the late thirteenth to mid-fourteenth centuries, focusing on Dante and Boccaccio.

In his *Vita Nuova*, Dante develops a poetic vision that points to a transcendent purpose and destination. Dante does not simply provide an autobiographical explanation of his works. As textual clues suggest, he “may be looking to the Gospel text for an interpretive paradigm,” (33) finding his model in Christ’s clarification of the parables of the kingdom. In *Convivio*, Dante came to use the same phraseology of the multiplication of fish and loaves (*John 6*), calling the readers to renewed exegetical meditation. Dante, in a sense, sees himself as Jesus Christ, who received the message from God and then distributed it to all mankind.

Giovanni Boccaccio inaugurated the self-gloss form of poetic self-commentary in his *Teseida*, as he understood the “potential of the margins and the valorizations of these liminal spaces of the text.” (52) Prose and poetry in Dante’s *Vita Nuova* and *Convivio* are written in the first person. Boccaccio, on the other hand, uses the first person for the epic narration and the third person for the self-commentary, seeking to imitate the classical auctoritates, without revealing that he himself had written the marginal notes (which were attributed to Boccaccio only in 1929 by Giuseppe Vandelli). By writing self-gloss, Boccaccio indicates that “there are further levels to the poem’s

significance” (63). Boccaccio’s earthly vision of the poetic text stands in contrast with Dante’s, and they represent two different approaches to autohermeneutics.

The second part of the book analyzes the humanistically innovative and spiritually charged backdrop of high Renaissance Florence, focusing on Lorenzo de’ Medici and Girolamo Benivieni.

In his *Comento alli miei sonetti*, Lorenzo de’ Medici formally follows the Dantesque precedent. While Dante’s *Vita Nuova* was under the role of the god of love, Lorenzo invokes Apollo, god of light and reason, and states that by “his self-commentary he hopes to spare others the task of trying to expound the true sense that is known only to him.” (76) There are several points of reference in Lorenzo’s *Comento*: Dante, Ovid, Petrarch, Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Cristoforo Landino. Dante’s example, though, offers Lorenzo the best opportunity of communicating his poetic message about love, death, and spiritual progression. Lorenzo’s *Comento* is particularly concerned about the continual process of coming to know oneself.

Girolamo Benivieni’s *Canzoni e sonetti con commento* first circulated without the prose apparatus. Benivieni attempted to recast his youthful lyrics praising earthly love into an encomium of divine Christian love, often invoking Dante’s journey in the *Comedy*, as he “wishes to teach his readers the correct path so that they may avoid the errors he committed.” (100) Like Dante-pilgrim, Benivieni finds that at the midpoint in his life, he has lost his spiritual way, and moves from the soul’s narrow escape from damnation to salvation in heavenly Jerusalem in a hundred canzoni, which parallel Dante’s one hundred canti. Benivieni makes use of Lorenzo’s *Comento* as well. Dante’s and Lorenzo’s vision exceed the quantitative formulation of the poetry and the self-commentary, as for them the essence rests “in the dialogue with the Other.” (113) Benivieni, on the contrary, denies the possibility of the Other’s power to transform his lyrics. He destroys the spheres of possible significance, seeking to render all the ambiguity in a “system of fixed (in this case, moralized) meaning.” (113)

The third part of the book considers the unorthodox Catholic Reformation environment of the turn of the seventeenth century, focusing on Giordano Bruno and Tommaso Campanella.

Giordano Bruno’s *Eroici furori* is written in the form of a Socratic dialogue, which gives room to Bruno’s penchant for syncretic thought, the representation of the many and the One, the *coincidentia oppositorum*, and other paradoxical notions. The dialogue is a “space of divergent perspectives in which readers must negotiate for themselves a position to take,” (132) where moderation and passive reception of knowledge are put aside in favor of a sort of frenzy, with the implicit demand that readers actively participate in the dialogic process.

In his *Scelta di poesie filosofiche*, Tommaso Campanella adopts the form of the self-gloss to indicate the nature of prophecy. The choice of a different pen name (Squilla) distances the historic Campanella. The poet is “emptied out of an actual identity to become the mere instrument of enunciation of the divine message. This distancing allows for that opening onto a voice from beyond, a prophetic voice.” (149)

In this seminal study, Roush succeeds in showing that the practice of poetic self-commentary presupposes and underlines the fact that poetic language always means something different from what it expresses, a *quidditas* that has to be understood rather

than explained. A given sense is always partial, and there is an otherness beyond the immediacy of knowledge. True sense hides itself in numerous different possible meanings—as the divine Logos, come out from God, hides himself in the multiplicity of human words, to go back to Roush’s Trinitarian view of the poetic text—meanings that even the writer did not foresee. Those meanings call for what Roush calls ‘process of understanding,’ which I argue is another name for spiritualis explanatio.

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Keala Jewell, ed. *Monsters in the Italian Literary Imagination*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2001. Pp. 325.

Edited by Keala Jewell and written by scholars representing a broad range of interests, the 15 essays which make up this intriguing and entertaining volume are wide-ranging in scope, and take an interdisciplinary approach. Revolving around the broad theme of monsters in the Italian literary imagination (Italian literature is indeed rich with monsters), the essays focus directly and indirectly on how monsters, seen as part of a web of beliefs, can “legitimate” a vision of life. Central to the volume is the inevitable human-monster relationship, a kind of specularly involving a duality of self-versus-other.

The 15 essays are grouped into four parts: “Modern Horrors,” “Monsters and Conception,” “Monsters and Poetics,” and “The Monster as Discourse.” In her Introduction, “Monsters and Discourse on the Human,” Jewell argues that monsters are part of a ‘discourse’ or ‘modeling system’ by which we make sense of the world. The irrational nature of the monster can be seen to have a logic when the monster is viewed as part of an all-encompassing, inclusive system that contains all types of beings. The monster is an underlying presence in the cultural imagination because it is one of the elements which construct the social order, a strategy by which chaos becomes cosmos. Reading Jewell’s introduction, we become aware of the ambivalence and paradox inherent in monsters. On the one hand, they represent the supernatural, the enigma of the unknown: prodigies are often referred to as ‘monstrous.’ At the other extreme, monsters have come to be associated with pathologies and deformities: the term ‘monstrosity’ is often used to describe the abnormal.

Despite the contradictions and paradoxes, or indeed perhaps *because* of them, monsters are archetypes, myths that inform the collective imagination, and are therefore part of the knowledge systems that enable us to define ourselves as a culture. The individual essays are an elaboration of this process. To cite just a few examples:

In her essay “Monstrous Murder: Serial Killers and Detectives in Contemporary Italian Fiction,” Ellen Nerenberg relays a series of questions posed by James Kincaid in regard to serial killers, among them: Why do we construct them as we do? What do they represent for us? What needs do they bring into being and then serve? The same questions can be applied to monsters. Indeed, in Italy, where the term ‘serial killer’

doesn't exist, the police team that deals with these types of crimes is called S.A.M., the *Squadra anti mostro* or anti-monster squad. Monsters, in this case serial killers, are constructed as a conceit for the monstrosity and atrocity of violence, and represent the modern 'monstrous' which is horrific and evil. They are a threat to order and a deviance from the norm, and as such serve our need to define that order and delineate that norm through a process of juxtaposition or contrast.

Naomi Yavneh, in her essay "Dante's 'dolce serena' and the Monstrosity of the Female Body," provides another example of definition by contrast, though from another era. Focusing on the monstrosity of Dante's 'dolce serena,' Yavneh notes, among other things, that female sexuality posed a danger to the reigning order: a regressive, monstrous and even infernal threat. Indeed, Western tradition at least since Aristotle has considered the female an abnormal form of the male, and as such 'monstrous.' Juxtaposed to the male norm, a woman's body was considered aberrant, grotesque, a monstrosity.

A third example of this type of juxtaposition can be found in Virginia Jewiss's essay "Monstrous Movements and Metaphors in Dante's *Divine Comedy*." Recalling Bernard of Clairvaux's questioning of the presence of disturbing monstrous representations in the margins of medieval manuscripts ("What is that ridiculous monstrosity doing, an amazing kind of deformed beauty and yet a beautiful deformity?..."), Jewiss proposes to transfer the study of marginal monsters back to the text itself. Still, the link between monsters-margins-marginality is hard to ignore. Indeed the "startling array" (as she puts it) of monsters lurking in the margins would seem to emphasize their marginality in the society since the illuminator would have been well aware that the margin was the place for glosses and annotations, that is, for marginal commentary. The margin was also the place for disagreement and dispute, the place to juxtapose one view with another.

I will end with one further example of an attempt to elaborate on the themes of paradox, juxtaposition and marginality, namely Ginevra Bompiani's essay, "The Monster as a Refugee." Reflecting on the paradox of prodigy versus brute, the monster as the product of dreams versus fears, Bompiani poses the question: How does a prodigy become an unspeakable horror? What stands between the prodigy and the animal? She finds the answer by viewing the monster as a composite or hybrid, and by focusing on the link that connects the two polarities. Indeed what stands between the prodigy and the brute is the outcast or refugee: the exiled outsider who stands apart from humanity. Seen this way, monstrification becomes a way of differentiating and branding individuals or groups, and the monster becomes a political creature, a product of human decree. Standing in contrast to the monster as outcast, banned and rejected by a self-defending community, is the 'good' monster, the result of respect for the hybrid, for inclusion of what is different.

Although Jewell's Introduction suggests a conceptual unity for the essays within each of the four organizational groupings (for example, we are told that the pieces in the first grouping, "Modern Horrors," reflect the uncertainty and instability of the modern world of post-humanist crisis, a world in which God is dead and we have moved from monstrous to monstrosity), the unison was not always all that evident. Still, the diversity of voices, themes, and times (from Dante's *Commedia* to contempo-

rary detective fiction, from medieval manuscripts to “monstrous” modern science) is perhaps a strength rather than a weakness, adding to the richness of the collection. In the end the overall theme of utilizing monstrification as a tool for self-definition provides the needed consistency: by explaining the monster-as-enigma, we bring order to our world, by marginalizing the less-than-human others, we define ourselves against them.

Each of the 15 essays has its own section of “Notes,” generally extensive and helpful, as does the Introduction. Moreover, there is a general Index that is quite valuable, as well as brief biographical sketches about the individual contributors.

ANNE MILANO APPEL

Michael W. Cole, *Cellini and the Principles of Sculpture*. Cambridge, UK, Cambridge UP, 2002. Pp. 246.

Anyone who opens this dense and erudite book hoping to learn about the manual processes, techniques, or principles of composition involved in the physical realization of Cellini’s sculpture will be disappointed. The book rather attempts to illuminate the poetic and theoretical rationalizations (not intended here pejoratively) that artists and observers conceived to explain what it was that sculptors did when they made sculpture. Drawing on a vast knowledge of ancient and contemporary literature and philosophy, and using as primary sources Cellini’s *Autobiography* and treatises on gold-smithing and sculpture, Cole explores how Cellini and his contemporaries applied their knowledge of alchemy, medicine, mysticism, ancient and contemporary poetry, and philosophy, among other intellectual pursuits, to their understanding of the performance as well as the end result of sculpting; in short, the ways sculptors’ acts “contributed to their vocational identity, informed their thinking about the cultural roles they played, and affected the kinds of imagery they made.” (13)

The first chapter, “Salt, Composition and the Goldsmith’s Intelligence,” begins to answer the question by considering the sources and meaning of the gold, enamel and ebony *Saltcellar* of 1543, made for King Francis I. This ingenious object, designed to be rolled and passed around the king’s table, was both functional and a “conversation piece:” Salt and pepper became not merely the condiments that the little sea vessel and miniature temple, set along the flanks of intertwining allegories of Sea and Earth, contain for the enhancement of the meal, but substances that themselves evoke such cosmic considerations as the elemental products of material existence and the workings of heavenly providence. If the head that embellishes the nef is, as has been suggested, a self-portrait, then one must fancy, with Cole, the diners chuckling as they “picked” Cellini’s brain, literally enacting the salty expression *pigliare il sale* (to acquire knowledge/learn), with the conversation turning to hydrodynamics, geology and alchemy.

The second chapter, “Casting, Blood, and Bronze,” turns to Cellini’s monumental bronze *Perseus and Medusa* in the Piazza della Signoria, Florence. The sculptor’s

activity is interpreted within the context of the Paragone debate concerning the relative merits not only of sculpture and painting; but extended now to stone-carving (championed by Michelangelo) and metal casting. If the challenge of the marble carver, in competition with the ancients, was to execute a complex figure from a single block of stone, the challenge to the bronze sculptor was to cast his figure in a *single* pour. The act of casting becomes a heroic endeavor. But beyond even that, it involves the creative act of inspiring the metal in the casting process; for, based on ideas going back to antiquity, Cellini and his contemporaries conceived of bronze in its liquid state as containing within it a living spirit such as is infused in all created things. In an ironic contrast, the addition of the Medusa, with its preternaturally voluminous blood pouring out of her head and neck (in a commission not originally intended to include her figure) gave the sculptor the opportunity to display the *sapping of life* more vividly than that seen in Donatello's *Judith*, for which the *Perseus* was conceived as a pendant. Finally, in a fascinating and persuasive take on the physical context of the *Perseus*, Cole suggests that the bronze figure "thematized the petrification of the beholder in a material that was perspicuously *not stone*": The two stone statues in the same piazza—Michelangelo's *David* and the *Hercules* by Cellini's arch-rival Bandinelli, are in effect petrified beings who gaze at the *Perseus*. (69)

Chapter Three, "The Ars Apollinea and the Mastery of Marble" considers the fact, which Cellini could not ignore, that marble held a privileged position in the hierarchy of media both in antiquity and to his contemporaries. The sculptor, who had never been trained in marble-carving, felt the challenge and set out, not on commission, to execute a group of *Apollo and Hyacinth*. The work is generally considered one of Cellini's least successful; but rather than offer a critique of its evident faults, Cole attempts to secure its place as an iconographically rich and even successful exposition of thematic relationships having to do with dichotomies of master/subject—Apollo/sun—healing/harming, based on various literary traditions. As plausible as some of these associations may be, some readers will object that the sculpture simply doesn't work! More persuasive is his discussion of the marble *Crucifix* that Cellini executed for his own tomb. The subject came to him in a vision, and this work, of dazzlingly white marble against a black stone crucifix, is replete with symbolic associations of sun and light based in part on Dantesque imagery.

The next section expounds on contemporary conceptions of the relationship between art and virtue. Given Cellini's disreputable personal life, which brought him to incarceration on more than one occasion, it is no wonder that in his autobiography the sculptor asks to be judged for those deeds that "resemble the virtues." Those virtues do not, however, involve the usual ethical battles between right and wrong; rather, its sense conflates virtuosity and virtue, in short the act of doing something worthwhile well. The making of good art exemplifies these attributes and Cellini's autobiography can be read as the sculptor's "presentation of his case." (118) Cellini claimed that after his vision of the Sun-God, the Lord outfitted him with an aura, evidence to Cellini of his own redemption, one based on the virtue of his art and the brilliance of his mind. To the question of what the virtue of his art consisted, Cole responds that it is *disegno*, that central term in sixteenth-century art theory and criticism. The rest of the chapter is a discourse on the contemporary meaning of the term and its relationship to Cellini's

design for the Seal of the Accademia del Disegno whose members were required, significantly, to have attributes of both virtuosity and virtue.

The concluding chapter offers an overview of the impact that Cellini's principles, as exemplified in his work and writings, had on his successors both in Italy and abroad. Cole suggests that notions of sculpture as muscle vs. sculpture as bone (exemplified by the rivalry and stylistic divergence of Bandinelli and Cellini), or the insistence on the evocation of light (as seen later in the work of Bernini), or the use of metaphors of conquest (embodied in the mental and physical mastery over material) had continued relevance and that Cellini, unique in his discussion of such principles, spoke for and to his own time and his successors.

An appendix considers the authorship of the marble *Ganymede* in the Bar-gello, a sculpture that does not figure significantly in the rest of the book so it is not clear why the author included this discussion. The figure was designed by Cellini but, based on documentation presented here, was executed by a Flemish stone-carver, Willem de Tetrode, to be distinguished from another Flemish Guglielmo mentioned in the documents as a goldsmith.

This book will be difficult reading to anyone not conversant with the vast literary productions of and sources for sixteenth-century humanists, scientific intellectuals, and theoretically-inclined artists. The author assumes the reader's basic acquaintance with the literature on Cellini and with the sculptural processes that engaged him (there is not even a basic outline of the casting process that might put in perspective the difficulties of casting a large figure in a single pour). The reasoning behind the relationships of Cellini's art and ideas, and intellectual and literary traditions is as convoluted, as "mannerist," as fraught with rhetorical conceits as is the sculpture of Cellini and his fellow mannerists, and many of the assertions, frequently answers to rhetorical questions, are speculative, though not thereby necessarily to be doubted.

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Diane Cole Ahl, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Masaccio*. Cambridge UP, 2002. Pp. 280.

Jeryldene M. Wood, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Piero della Francesca*. Cambridge UP, 2002. Pp. 268.

Vasari (1511-74) mentions in several places the fascination of Northern Italian artists with the problem of perspective. Paolo Uccello is chided by his friend Donatello: "Ah, Paolo, with this perspective you are losing the substance for the shadow" and his wife, asking him to rest at night, received the reply "Oh, what a delightful thing is this perspective."

Two of the early masters of perspective were Masaccio (1401-28) and Piero della Francesca (1416-92) who, despite the praise of Vasari as innovators, were relegated to

the second rank of artists until the last century, perhaps because of the austerity and economy of their draftsmanship. I can still remember the first time I saw Masaccio's *Trinity* and his fresco cycle in the Brancacci Chapel many years ago, which in some ways was a transforming experience. I had a similar experience somewhat later at San Francesco in Arezzo, viewing the *Legend of the True Cross* cycle of Piero della Francesca.

The Cambridge Companions offer contemporary assessments of these painters and will become indispensable guides to art historians, teachers, and students. They examine each artist from many perspectives and provide a thorough context, analysis, and criticism of their work. Some of the chapters that deal with the mathematics of perspective may be too complicated for the layman, but they make it clear how advanced both artists were for their time and how much practical mathematics both artists understood. Each work draws on the multiple talents of many scholars in individual chapters. Diane Ahl, Timothy Verdon, and J. V. Field have made important contributions to both works and the result is impressive.

Masaccio and Piero della Francesca worked from a Medieval rather than a Renaissance frame of reference, using religious rather than themes from classical antiquity. The fresco cycles of both artists depended heavily on the *Golden Legend* of Jacopo de Voragine (ca. 1230-1298), a curious collection of legends of the life of Jesus and the saints which was immensely popular at the time. Jacopo's entry for the feast of the Finding (invention) of the Holy Cross contains many incidents of curious provenance over which Jacopo offers the disclaimer "Whether any of this is true we leave to the readers' judgment, because none of it is found in any authentic chronicle or history."

Masaccio (1401-28), who was born Tommaso di ser Giovanni di Mone Cassai, got his name ("Slovenly Tom") because of his untidy habits. According to Vasari, he was the founder of Fifteenth Century Florentine painting. Yet despite the assertion of Vasari, he was not a "solitary genius" but operated within a creative milieu that was at a crossroad between Medieval and Renaissance. Collaboration, rather, was more a fact of life and important to the effective operation of a workshop as explained by Perri Lee Roberts who focuses primarily on the cooperation between Masaccio and Masolino. Roberto Bellucci and Cecilia Frosinini give a more detailed account of Masaccio in context and time indicating the influences, collaboration, and provenance of his work.

Two generations prior to Masaccio, Florence had been decimated by the plague but had regained some of its population. The authors point out quite convincingly, however, that it was not an egalitarian city as the eminent Renaissance historian Hans Baron had suggested, but was controlled by a few families of wealth who sponsored most of the artistic production. As a consequence, artists depended on these families for commissions, and were not nearly as independent as it is romantically assumed.

A number of factors affected Masaccio's work, especially his innovative approach to perspective. But it was the development of sculpture and architecture that figured most prominently. Brunelleschi, Ghiberti, and Donatello were earlier contemporaries whose work influenced the figures of Masaccio. This premise seems obvious when one looks at Orsanmichele, that interesting and beautiful multi-purpose building with a marvelous array of figures in external niches.

The background material on Florence in two chapters by Anthony Molho and Gary M. Ralke are useful in describing the actual city, its attitudes, and change from a Medieval to a Renaissance community.

The individual chapters on the Brancacci Chapel by Diane Ahl and Timothy Verdon's on the theological implications of the *Trinity* fresco at Santa Maria Novella are indispensable for the understanding of these works, both of which can stun the viewer with their simple complexity and the brilliance of their colors. Leon Battista Alberti and later critics admired these works greatly and Vasari tells us that "Because of Masaccio's work, the Brancacci Chapel has been visited from that time to this by an endless stream of students and masters." But it is only in recent times that his work has been assigned its proper importance.

Piero della Francesca, who was somewhat younger, worked chiefly in the region of Arezzo, which has his most famous fresco cycle—the *Legend of the True Cross*. Piero spent most of his life in Sansepolcro or not far from there and most of his major work is in that town, Urbino, or Arezzo. His painting has a haunting quality that keeps drawing the viewer back to see exactly what it is that makes him different from other painters. Like Masaccio, the background landscapes and cityscapes are more than mere atmosphere or diversion. The textual contrasts of clothing and accessories, too, with rich colors and the sparkle of jewelry and metals are a particular skill of Piero.

The True Cross cycle in the Franciscan Church was related to the career and miracles of Blessed Benedetto Sinigardi of Arezzo who became Provincial Minister of the Holy Land. The cycle contains several incidents described in the *Golden Legend* which make for dramatic depiction despite their very doubtful accuracy as the author previously indicated. The richness of Piero's work has caught the imagination of painters and critics despite the disrepair of the work, which only recently has seen some restoration.

Other major works are studied in some detail and will provide even the casual reader with a greater appreciation of the artist's genius. Discussion of some of his smaller works will provide greater insight into Piero's creativity and influence on subsequent painters. Piero Della Francesca was also a mathematician of some renown and his works, especially those on geometry, circulated widely in the early Renaissance.

The Companion to Piero adds a chapter by Philip Jacks on perspectives of an "ideal city" and discussion of three imaginative cityscapes in Urbino, Berlin, and Baltimore, which may be from the hand of Piero, even though they are "without definitive stylistic traits." Certainly, aspects of these ideal cities appear in many of the works of Piero, including several altarpieces and the *Flagellation of Christ*.

Both Companions give new light on the work and environment of Masaccio and Piero della Francesca and despite a few inconsistencies, will be the standard by which other works on these artists will be judged. Unfortunately, all the reproductions of the artists' work are in black and white, which make it difficult for the student who has never seen the works to appreciate the richness and subtlety of the colors of both

artists. The Cambridge University Press is to be congratulated for making available in English these fine studies of great and influential early Italian Renaissance artists.

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Janis Bell and Thomas Willette, eds. *Art History in the Age of Bellori: Scholarship and Cultural Politics in Seventeenth-Century Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. Pp. 396.

The trajectory of Giovan Pietro Bellori's life—a son of farmers, he became papal Commissioner of Roman Antiquities and librarian to Queen Christina of Sweden—is testament to the socially transformative powers of a literary career. A new anthology, *Art History in the Age of Bellori*, foregrounds the political maneuvering that such a career entailed. Bellori's writings, and in particular his *Lives of the Artists* (1672), have continued to be read and valued in large part because they have been considered objective, a documentary record of art production and reception in seventeenth-century Rome. Not so, the essays collected in this volume tell us. The eleven authors take away this impartial status but give us new reasons to revisit the works of Bellori. Reading for signs of partisanship and the harnessing of art criticism as a means of self-promotion allow us to experience the texture of antiquarian study and art scholarship in Bellori's Rome and in the international republic of letters.

This book has its origins in a conference of the same name held at the American Academy in Rome on the tercentenary of Bellori's death. The printed version includes a selection of primary documents and has changed and expanded the roster of contributing scholars in order to comprise sections on "Bellori and the Republic of Letters in Seventeenth-Century Rome" and on "Bellori's *Lives*: History, Criticism, Theory." Self-made men of letters often began their careers as secretarial ghostwriters for their patrons, a mold that Bellori's writing rejected (Giovanna Perini). Louis Marchesano distinguishes Bellori's investigative practices from his rhetorical ones, asking us to read Bellori in the context of seventeenth-century expectations for civil discourse and not by the standard of modern classical scholarship. Tomaso Montanari attributes to Bellori a hand in planning a series of medals with allegories of the life of Queen Christina, whom he served as antiquarian. A comparison of Bellori's illustrated monograph on Trajan's column to earlier and later publications on the monument shows the uneven development of visual versus literary investigations of ancient military history and the rivalry among scholars (Ingo Herklotz). Bellori's tasteful flair for packaging his publications explains the long-lasting influence of his work on portrait medals, which was recognized even in its own day as being otherwise unoriginal (Eugene Dwyer). Ekphrasis had an important role in both Bellori's writings on ancient and modern painting, writes Hetty Joyce, who discusses his discursive strategies for dealing with a lack of examples of the former.

The second part of the book presents new material on the best known of Bellori's works, the *Lives of the Artists*. Janice Bell and Claire Pace provide a nuanced reading of the (not always complimentary) allegorical engravings associated with each artist, which they say follow the logic of portrait medallions and were certainly designed by Bellori himself. The next two essays show Bellori's savvy reworking of ancient literary devices. In Bellori's hands ekphrasis makes artistic works equivalent to the deeds of heroes in ancient biographical writing and by extension elevates the genre of his artist biographies (Martina Hansmann). By adopting the term *scherzo* from ancient poetics to describe works of art, Bellori's writing itself enacts a *scherzo*, at once a "jest" and a "literary conceit" (Anthony Colantuono). As a champion of disegno, Bellori has not been thought to have a color theory, an oversight remedied by Janis Bell. A second edition of the *Lives* was published in 1728, not in Rome, as the title page states, but in Naples, and with the addition of an unsigned biography of a Neapolitan artist—an attempt to use the Bellori imprimatur in establishing a civic history for Naples (Thomas Willette). Even in its afterlife, the *Lives* remained a player in cultural politics.

Taken together, these studies build up a composite portrait of Bellori's intellectual life and personal motivations, in the absence of any surviving correspondence. At the same time, Bellori's works on antiquarianism and modern art serve as documents about the intellectual life and cultural politics of an entire age. The effects of social status, patronage, and civil discourse on the early modern sciences have recently received attention, as for example in Steven Shapin's *A Social History of Truth* and Mario Biagioli's *Galileo Courtier*. By exploring how methodologies of antiquarianism and art criticism interacted with cultural pressures, *Art History in the Age of Bellori* contributes another chapter to the social history of early modern disciplines.

Another useful apparatus of this volume is Janis Bell's lengthy introduction, which gives an overview of the life and work of Bellori and an assessment of his critical reception from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries. In addition to situating the essays to come as responses to and departures from previous scholarship, this introduction declares one of the primary values of the volume: the book is a useful new reader in the historiography of the history of art. While the essays seek to place the work of Bellori firmly within the context of seventeenth-century political and intellectual history, this volume should therefore also be of interest for students of art historical, archaeological, or antiquarian methodology.

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Alfredo Luzi, a cura di. *Microcosmi leopardiani, biografie, cultura, società*. Vol. I, Vol. II. Fossombrone: Metauro Edizioni, 2000. Pp. 869.

Nel descrivere il luogo che gli aveva dato i natali Leopardi, come ognuno sa, si esprime con una mai risolta ambivalenza: da una parte ne mise in risalto il paesaggio bellissimo e memorabile (l' 'ermo colle,' la 'torre antica,' 'le vie dorate e gli orti') e la

gentilezza ispiratrice del popolo umile ('la donzella,' 'la vecchierella,' 'il zappator,' per non parlare delle famosissime, e pur sempre umili, fanciulle amate e morte); dall'altra, massime nel parlare delle classi sue pari, egli marchiò il suo 'natio borgo selvaggio' con bollature infamanti e (ahimè!) altrettanto memorabili. Fece lo stesso, a dire il vero, anche con la sua seconda patria, terra di paesaggi grandiosi e poeticissimi ma, al contempo, patria di grotteschi filosofastri nonché di "pulcinelli e b[aroni] f[ottuti]." Di queste ambivalenze, per quanto ne so, i napoletani non se ne fecero mai un gran problema. I recanatesi invece, e con loro anche i Marchigiani, ne ebbero certamente a soffrire. Nel tempo il loro (ri) sentimento si espresse in varie guise e divenne talora anche materia di narrazioni divertenti, come, per esempio, il saggio di Mario Picchi intorno alle storie di casa Leopardi.

Il presente voluminoso lavoro a cura di Alfredo Luzi *Microcosmi leopardiani*, rappresenta una reazione dotta, ben articolata e assai interessante all'ambivalenza leopardiana nei confronti della sua patria marchigiana. Interessante in primo luogo perché proveniente da iniziative e contributi per la maggior parte indigeni. *Microcosmi leopardiani* sono il risultato di un convegno ospitato dal Centro Nazionale Studi Leopardiani di Recanati e occasionato dal bicentenario. Il convegno tuttavia, a differenza di innumerevoli altri convegni del 1998, era stato pre-parato da un progetto di ricerca, proposto dall'assessorato alla cultura dell'amministrazione provinciale di Macerata, che aveva il fine di esaminare il rapporto fra il poeta e la sua regione, e di "ricostruire i legami interpersonali, le corrispondenze epistolari, le adesioni a gruppi e accademie, che costituiscono lo spazio dinamico entro il quale si è definita la personalità dello scrittore, e il terreno che ha alimentato il processo genetico della sua poesia." (p. XIII)

I risultati sono raccolti in tre sezioni ben pianificate e organiche. La prima, intitolata "Interventi e saggi" (pp. 3-246), contiene vari studi storico-critici. Alcuni hanno carattere teorico o generale, come il saggio di Franco D'Intino "La 'scrittura non letterata,' Leopardi e il genere epistolare," che propone, di un genere per sua natura poco formalizzato, uno scavo attento specialmente a ciò che potrebbe essere sfuggito alla coscienza dello scrittore.

L'analisi precisa e ben documentata di Ermanno Carini sulle traduzioni poetiche di testi latini e greci praticate dall'amico della famiglia Leopardi Saverio Broglio d'Ajano conduce alla tematica del libro. Infatti, fra i vari classici, il Broglio tradusse anche Anacreonte e Saffo, sui quali si cimentò anche il Leopardi giovane. Carini istituisce una comparazione acuta non solo dei risultati, ma anche delle posizioni teoriche assunte dai due poeti. Così si comincia a delineare il tema specifico che il libro propone, ossia il rapporto fra Leopardi e la cultura recanatese e marchigiana.

Più diretto e d'ampio respiro è l'intervento di Franco Foschi, "Storia e cultura nell'ambiente leopardiano del primo Ottocento," che mi sembra anche il più importante saggio del libro, in quanto imposta criticamente il senso complessivo della ricerca. Le Marche, afferma Foschi, partecipano in quel periodo all'evolversi della cultura europea, e allo stesso tempo presentano contraddittoriamente sacche di resistenza conservatrice. Figura emblematica di tale contrasto è il conte Monaldo. Le sue stesse posizioni reazionarie, lungi dall'isolarlo come personaggio puramente provinciale e locale, lo pongono in un contesto addirittura europeo. Collaboratore di giornali di Modena e di Lugano, autore di successo (i famigerati *Dialoghetti!*), interlocutore dell'*Antologia*,

Monaldo ha rapporti con amici e avversari ben lontani dal suo borgo. E Giacomo, d'altra parte, viene piazzato ben presto in una dimensione nazionale proprio attraverso la rete di relazioni costruita dal padre. Si pensi per esempio all'editore milanese Stella. Ma già nell'area più prossima c'erano personaggi di tutto rispetto, come i Broglio d'Ajano, mezzi giacobini e mezzi carbonari, parenti illustri e certo non provinciali come i Mamiani e gli Antici, ecclesiastici dotti e illuminati come l'alsaziano Vogel e il messicano Torres, grandi professionisti come Puccinotti. E questa società comprese benissimo ed espresse benevolenza e simpatia verso il giovane poeta. A cominciare dallo stesso conte Monaldo, il quale seppe articolare un giudizio ideologico coerente, benché negativo, sulle due famose canzoni nazionalistiche e patriottiche, e seppe anche apprezzare il valore di altre produzioni. Ma allora, che senso ha la feroce qualificazione leopar-diana del 'borgo selvaggio'? Si tratta, dice Foschi, di un mito, del quale possiede le motivazioni e gli impieghi creativi. Un mito "amato come l'immagine dell'infanzia felice e odiato come una terribile prigionia, [esso] è in realtà il simbolo della motivata insoddisfazione del più alto interprete di quel tempo contro l'immobilismo del mondo dei pedanti, da cui Giacomo Leopardi volle fuggire" (pp. 33-34).

Questi tre interventi forniscono la forma al libro. Seguono i saggi di otto ricercatori, dei quali, a causa dei limiti della presente recensione, mi devo purtroppo limitare a elencare solamente i nomi e poco più. Ma la loro competenza ha prodotto un lavoro che merita una lettura attenta. Giandomenico Dimanti, Paola Ciarlantini, Paola Magnarelli, Michela Meschini, Sara Lorenzetti, Carla Carotenuto, Marta Guidoliri e Vito Punzi descrivono puntualmente la cultura della regione intorno a Recanati negli otto saggi che completano la prima parte, e nelle "Schede biografiche" degli esponenti di quella cultura discussi nei saggi precedenti, che costituiscono la seconda sezione del libro (pp. 249-410). La terza sezione (pp. 416-811), che occupa l'intero secondo volume, contiene i "Documenti," molti dei quali inediti e importanti, sui quali sono basati gli studi di cui sopra.

Emergono così e assumono lineamenti individuali figure che il lettore già conosce attraverso gli scritti dello stesso poeta, ma anche molti personaggi di rilievo che non compaiono in quelle pagine se non sfuggevolmente o per nulla affatto. E veniamo così a sapere che transitarono attraverso quel famigerato borgo, o ne uscirono, alla conquista di quasi interminati spazi, dotti ecclesiastici, insigni letterati, medici illustri, uomini d'arme, donne colte e di grande intelligenza, musicisti (fra questi perfino un celebre castrato), un esploratore. Le posizioni ideologiche e politiche che segnarono le loro scelte di vita furono varie e spesso tutt'altro che retrive o bigotte. E allora come nasce il mito del borgo selvaggio così ben delineato da Foschi? Leggendo queste biografie di persone dabbene e rispettabili viene spesso in mente un personaggio leopardiano che forse potrebbe aiutare a rispondere a questa domanda: il conte Leccafondi, il topo liberale ma fatalmente mediocre dei *Paralipomeni*. È semplicemente una questione di statura. Leopardi non era uno di loro. Era fatto di una pasta diversa.

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Luca Somigli and Rocco Capozzi, eds. *Dictionary of Literary Biography 264: Italian Prose Writers, 1900-1945*. Detroit: Brucoli Clark Layman, 2002. Pp. 452.

If from the standpoint of human suffering and violence the period beginning with the dawn of the twentieth century and concluding with the Second World War constitutes a particularly horrifying chapter in Italy's history, then the same epoch also brought with it a rich and heterogeneous flowering in literary prose. Leaving aside all the various movements and often confusing "isms" from *vocianesimo* and *futurismo* to *rondismo*, *strapaese* and *stracittà*, it should be sufficient as proof of this to cite just a limited selection of the most famous works that were published in this period from Pirandello's *Il fu Mattia Pascal*, Aleramo's *Una donna*, Palazzeschi's *Il codice di Perelà* and Tozzi's *Con gli occhi chiusi* in the first two decades of the last century to material pertaining to the 1920s, 1930s and early 1940s such as Borgese's *Rubè*, Bontempelli's *La scacchiera davanti allo specchio*, Svevo's *La coscienza di Zeno*, Moravia's *Gli indifferenti*, Silone's *Fontamara*, Bacchelli's *Il mulino del Po* and Brancati's *Don Giovanni in Sicilia*. A highly varied corpus of material, this, which is always destined to foil any attempt to pigeonhole it into anything but the broadest of categories. Still, thanks to the appearance of a weighty new volume in Brucoli Clark Layman's *Dictionary of Literary Biography* series the interested reader approaching these and other prose texts from the first half of the twentieth century now has an extremely useful tool available to assist him in his research, one that is likely to benefit scholarship on modern Italian literature for years to come.

With volume two hundred and sixty-four of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* the Italo-Canadian scholars Rocco Capozzi and Luca Somigli have assembled an impressive array of articles written by persons hailing from all over the western world, including contributions from Italy, the United States, Ireland and Canada. Each entry in the dictionary follows a set format: first a bibliography of the works by the author in question; then the actual literary biography; and, lastly, bibliographical information concerning letters, interviews, bibliographies, biographies and critical works on the author, as well as data on the relevant archives. Just reading through the bibliographies of the works by each of the writers discussed makes for fascinating reading. For example, to contemplate the sheer quantity of works penned by the likes of Marinetti and Papini is to be astounded: indeed, from the publication of their first book to the year of their death both these authors managed to average more than one volume per year. Furthermore, it is also interesting to observe how generically eclectic Italian writers of the first half of the twentieth century were: numerous authors of fiction also devoted themselves to the production of poetry, essays and dramas, not to mention the composition of film-scripts. (Perhaps not all the readers of the present review will be aware that Corrado Alvaro was one of the forces behind De Santis's 1949 classic *Riso amaro*.) Recent Italian writers have also been keen translators, mainly from the culturally hegemonic European languages—i.e. English, French, German and Spanish—and the authorial bibliographies do not neglect to provide data on these translations.

Incidentally, on the precise subject of translations, it ought to be highlighted that the opening bibliographies come complete with information on English-language renderings of texts by the authors under discussion. From this point of view some modern Italian writers have certainly fared better than others. Thus, whilst Papini, Pirandello, Svevo, Tozzi and Vittorini have done very well here, there would currently seem to exist no translation of any of Comisso's major works. The Versilian author Enrico Pea, meanwhile, has also been neglected by the English-speaking world, although the one English translation listed in Somigli's informative entry on this same does originate from a twentieth-century author of no meager repute: Ezra Pound.

As for the actual literary biographies, it must be said that with the exception of just two or three entries these are of an extremely high standard. They are well-researched and almost invariably written in a limpid and highly readable fashion. The entries furnish the inevitable synopses of the various novels and other works but are also ready to situate thoughtfully their authors within the broader literary and cultural context. Overall, the writers of these literary biographies certainly have no qualms about generalising and making some controversial remarks which are bound to set scholars meditating. It is far from easy to single out individual entries for particular praise but amongst the most enjoyable articles in the dictionary are those by Luciano Parisi on Borgese, by Antonio Rossini on Jovine, by Eugenio Ragni on Malaparte and by Maria Luisa Gozzi on Marinetti. Just occasionally, however, one would have been grateful for a little more information. This is, for example, the case with the article on Comisso which runs to little more than four sides and leaves the reader's appetite whetted but not quite assuaged.

The various entries in this *Dictionary of Literary Biography* are full of details that are ready to surprise and delight those who might have a firm basic grounding in twentieth-century Italian fiction but are not experts on the particular author under discussion. Thus, not everyone will be aware that Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, that endlessly energetic and provocative thinker always ready and armed with a manifesto, once penned a "Manifesto della cucina" in which, according to Maria Luisa Gozzi, "he disdained pasta as passé." (187) From the fascinating article on Matilde Serao, meanwhile, written by Elena Urganani, we discover that Serao's marriage with Edoardo Scarfoglio—the man who co-founded what was to be Naples's premier daily newspaper, *Il Mattino*—was anything but a protracted honeymoon. One day a certain Gabrielle Bessard, a cabaret dancer and one of Scarfoglio's lovers, turned up at the couple's flat and, having handed the maid a note for the attention of Scarfoglio, then proceeded to shoot herself. The almost impossibly tragic content of the note was as follows: "Perdonami se vengo a uccidermi sulla tua porta come un cane fedele. Ti amo sempre." Finally, the reader may be amused when he finds out in Beno Weiss's entry on Italo Svevo that the author of *La coscienza di Zeno* was so stage-struck after seeing Ernesto Rossi play the leading role in *Hamlet* that he took the decision to become an actor: Tommaso Salvini gave Svevo a chance to audition but was obliged to reject the eager thespian because he was unable to pronounce the Italian "r" properly.

The entries in this volume are incommensurably enriched by the generous presence of black and white photographic illustrations throughout. There feature here numerous images of the authors and the people they knew which really serve to enliven

the text. Amongst the most memorable snaps are those of Aleramo in 1912, Bacchelli as a young man, Comisso aboard the sailing vessel *Il Gioiello*, de Céspedes together with Palazzeschi and others, Guglielminetti alongside her beloved Gozzano, Jahier with a fresh-faced Calvino, the trio Lussu, Nitti and Rosselli escaping the island of Lipari on a speedboat, Marinetti looking deadly serious to the right of his smiling wife and daughters, an aged Pirandello in the company of Marta Abba, Serao beneath an umbrella seated beside a gloomy-faced Scarfoglio, a wildly gesticulating Soffici and Svevo with his painter friend Umberto Veruda. Together with these photographic portraits the reader will also come across scores of reproductions of title pages and covers. One can, for instance, admire the front cover of Guglielminetti's *La rivincita del maschio*, the frontispiece illustration and title page to Savinio's *Casa "La Vita"* and the paper covers for Bilenchi's *Conservatorio di Santa Teresa*, Bontempelli's *La scacchiera davanti allo specchio*, Marinetti's *Spagna veloce e toro futurista*, Masino's *Monte Ignoto*, Silone's *Fontamara* and Tozzi's *Ricordi di un impiegato*. It is a pity, on the other hand, that the entries in the dictionary are marred by a rather high percentage of spelling mistakes amongst the words in Italian. In addition, it was also found to be frustrating that the quotations from Italian texts were not accompanied by any reference to the edition used and relevant page number(s).

A book such as this enacts a fundamental role in establishing the international canon of major twentieth-century Italian authors. Certainly, this work cannot be accused of ignoring women's writing, seeing that of the thirty-one entries, around a fifth are devoted to members of the female sex: Aleramo, de Céspedes, Deledda, Guglielminetti, Masino and Serao. (Although, whilst warmly welcoming any research on Serao, it is hard to see this Neapolitan author as belonging to the first half of the twentieth century.) As to the inevitable question of lacunae, there are certainly quite a few important prose writers from the period 1900-1945 who are not rewarded with an entry in Capozzi and Somigli's dictionary. At this point it would not be difficult to construct a fairly long catalogue of names that might well have been included. Still, there are two authors in particular whose absence is truly regrettable: Gadda and Moravia. Surely the significance of both these authors is such, both taken independently and in relation to contemporary and later generations of writers, that they should be apportioned a substantial entry in any dictionary of Italian prose writing from the first half of the twentieth century?

To conclude, the two hundred and sixty-fourth volume of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* constitutes a genuinely important contribution to the study of twentieth-century Italian letters, furnishing specialists and non-specialists alike with a helpful and stimulating source of information. The duo Capozzi and Somigli are to be congratulated for having completed so successfully what must have been a taxing editorial project. Unfortunately, many people will find the very high cost of this volume prohibitive and will not be able to acquire a copy of it for their own private library. Still, serious academic institutions will certainly want to make certain that their shelves are stocked with a copy of this fine work of scholarship. They can rest assured that in the years to come it will be well thumbed.

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Carlo Testa. *Masters of Two Arts: Re-creation of European Literatures in Italian Cinema*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002. Pp. 366.

Carlo Testa believes he has some very compelling reasons for writing *Masters of Two Arts: Re-creation of European Literatures in Italian Cinema*, and he takes time in the "Introduction" to clarify some issues that are important to the comprehension and enjoyment of this book. First, he explains that although there is no shortage of books written on Italian cinema, there is one "subset" of films that is consistently neglected by scholars and critics. These films, subsumed into categories such as: *commedia all'italiana*, neorealism, political cinema, spaghetti westerns, film noir and neo-mythological (i.e. "peplums") have frequently gotten "caught in the crossfire" of these groupings. He suggests that their critical neglect is perhaps a result of belonging to such distinct categories. The films in question that form the object of Testa's study in this book, all have one thing in common: they "re-create" works of European literature.

The second justification offered by the author is what he terms the frequently disappointing quality of the few books that have treated the subject of "literature-to-film." He names two: Cristina Bragaglia's *Il piacere del racconto (The Pleasure of Narrating)*, 1993) and Giuliana Nuvoli's *Storie ricreate (Recreated Stories)*, 1998). Both of these books are guilty of xenophobia, Testa tells us, dealing only with films inspired by, or related to, works of Italian literature. How, the author asks himself, can anyone limit their horizons in such an egregious manner in this globalized community? Furthermore, in the scholarship that does exist on Italian cinema, the "intellectual affinities" that Testa discerns between Italian directors and European authors have been treated in an "entirely coincidental, unsystematic manner" (4). It is this surprising void that *Masters of Two Arts* aims to fill, a task that the author considers not only important but urgent.

Another idea that Testa wishes to clarify right at the start of his book, and which is absolutely fundamental to it, is the concept of "adaptation/re-creation." Quoting the noted Russian director Eizhenshtein (Testa's spelling), the author articulates the contrast between adaptation and re-creation, seeing the former as an "uncreative, debased imitation of pre-existing forms," and the latter as "an original appropriation of them that incorporates features inspired by a changed environment and adequate to it." (8)

The issue is at the core of Testa's book, for how can we even begin to consider the process of "literature-into-film" without a thorough scrutiny of the nature of the process, what its aims ought to be and what it ought to eschew? Testa's theoretical leaning away from textual fidelity, what he calls the "f-word," and towards a synchronically and socially relevant re-creation, is fully in line with our postmodernist ethic that sees the creation of meaning as a cultural construction. That is, meaning is not inherent in the text; it is a product of the time, place and interpreter's experiences. Testa therefore thoroughly disapproves of "adaptation" as being not only a redundant, but also an invalid way to turn literature into film.

In *Masters of Two Arts* Testa has chosen texts from French, German and Russian literature that have been re-created as Italian films. The criteria that have led to the specific texts are fully articulated to the reader. The author's goal appears to be to start

his exploration with a scrupulously informed reader who functions almost as a collaborator.

The book is organized into four sections, Part One to Part Four imagined as existing on a continuum describing the relationship between the source text and the film. Part One (“Epigraphic Re-creations”) consists of re-creations which have a strong intellectual link to a prior text but it is no more than alluded to in the plot of the film. In Part Two (“Coextensive Re-creations”) the prior text is “directly evoked” in the diegetic material but only through isolated “icons.” Part Three (“Mediated Re-creations”) discusses two films from a group that Testa sees as being sparse. These are “mediated re-creations” in which the relation between the prior text and the film is mediated by “an epiphany, be it from the theater, the opera, or the cinema itself” (18). Finally, Part Four (“Hypertextual Re-creations”) discusses films in which directors have attempted to incorporate more than one text into the cinematic work. For example, Rossellini’s *Vanina Vanini* draws not only on Stendhal’s same-titled novella, but also upon three or four other texts as well.

It should be fairly obvious from this description of the book’s organization that Testa’s decision to provide detailed information in the “Introduction” is an excellent idea. The premise of *Masters of Two Arts* would not be easy to grasp otherwise. Indeed, this book is challenging reading, throughout. Taking a closer look at some of the essays from each section reveals the density of the material. For example, “Goethe and Archibugi: Italy, the Illegible Land: *Mignon Has Left* (1988)” in Part One, consists of barely six pages in which Testa argues that Archibugi reverses Goethe in a number of crucial ways in the process of “re-creating” him: principally in the Mignon character, in the “readability” of Italy as a topos, and implicitly and by extension, in the “readability” of reality. Keeping in mind that Testa’s belief is that in a true “re-creation” (as opposed to an adaptation) both works shed light on each other, in this essay he illustrates how *Mignon Has Left* accomplishes this goal: by tracing the evolution of the “interpretation of signs to the arbitrariness of signs” (30-31). Testa’s approach, at times semiotic, at others historical, covers a lot of ground as a result of its deft compactness, yet the ambitious nature of it occasionally backfires, resulting not only in density, but also in opaqueness for at least some readers.

Certainly this is an extremely complex book in conception and execution. It is also unlike any other book in the study of literature and film “adaptations.” The amount of research it has evidently required is staggering and Testa has clearly not shirked any part of this work. The style is lively and at times even witty and playful. Finally, for those who might require a little help in making the necessary connections in a book as dense as this one, Testa provides one hundred pages of Notes as well as a twenty-three page list of Works Cited.

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Marilla Battilana. *La corona d'oro e altre pagine*. I Poeti della Regina, Antonio Facchin Editore, 2002. Pp. 117.

Intorno al fulcro primario, “La corona d’oro: quattordici stazioni per un ricordo,” roteano quattro pianeti indipendenti, anche se sottoposti a forze centrifughe/centripete che emanano dalla stella principale. Portano il titolo di “Romanzi” (22 poesie), “Femminismi” (9 poesie), “Umori” (10 poesie), “Filosofemi” (16 poesie) e sono titoli che racchiudono, in forma sintetica, le tematiche messe a fuoco.

Ma è il sole, “la corona d’oro”, che merita la maggiore attenzione. L’autrice dà il sottotitolo di quattordici stazioni” a questa *via crucis* privata che deve essere “ricordata” per non sparire nell’oblio. Sono frammenti memoriali che danno concretezza verbale all’esistenza di un cugino richiamato dall’oltranza. Nell’indifferenza della natura (“Tra i fili d’erba/e i cespugli di nandina, /di agrifoglio”) spunta il ricordo di quel “cugino germano... [che] smembrava le mie bambole/occhi azzurri appaiati/da un filo di rame, gambe/ braccia teste svitate/con vuote occhiaie...” (p. 42). È un ritratto immediato, indimenticabile, simile a un *close-up* cinematografico. La poetessa lo ritrae con sfumature psicologiche che lo riportano in vita: “la caduta sugli sci,” “ci esaltavamo/spauriti,” “pensando alle abilità/ dell’artefice che scoccava/fulmini,” “passato a giochi/ di tanto superiori al mio/ modestamente fatto di parole.” Due vite si intrecciano, maturano, e la memoria dell’autrice inserisce altre persone e vicende condivise, mentre l’immagine centrale del caro cugino assume sfaccettature sempre più numinose. Viene ricordato come un “gran narratore di lepidezze” (p. 45).

Uno scontro fra lui e dei lavoratori arrabbiati dimostra il suo coraggio: “Asserragliato nella Volvo/ solida carrozzeria/finestre a sicura tenuta”, dove la descrizione funge da obbiettivo correlativo per illuminare quel suo forte carattere che “esce/fa un giro intorno al rottame/ ‘Mi rifaranno la macchina nuova’/ borbotta – e telefona a casa”. È un personaggio originale trasformatosi in “mito, leggenda/archetipo familiare nella/prospettiva degli anni, dei decenni” (p. 49); uomo che “amava/la ripetitività testarda e/ansimante del gioco. Temeva/la quiete apparente del pensiero/ che non fosse calcolo matematico/oppure pragmatica riflessione.” (p. 51-2) L’affetto nutrito per questo parente è trasparente ed è “trasumanato” attraverso una poesia schietta, veramente accessibile. Impossibile dimenticare il suo trapasso, “un giorno/ dopo la toilette del mattino/ (mesi di lotta con l’angelo) / ...si involò il tetto/del labirinto ad accogliere luce/più luce nella tenue alba dei/corridoi dalle porte aperte.” (p. 56)

La sezione “Romanzi”, che precede la sequenza principale, sembra la più variegata. La prima poesia, “Il ragno,” del 1960, potrebbe funzionare anche da dichiarazione di poetica: “Un dio sottile mi guardò con occhi/trasparenti e richiamò/la gioia perduta ospite alla mente.” Vari i temi trattati nelle altre: amore puerile, il mistero di una statua osservata, nostalgia per un rapporto concluso, repulsione contro la guerra e la banalità quotidiana, domande esistenziali senza risposta, viaggi intrapresi oltreoceano, dialoghi fra amici e artisti (sia reali che immaginari), riflessioni ed omaggi ad altri poeti e, a concludere questa parte, una riflessione sull’impossibilità di fare poesia: “Qui/dove con altro da te/passa l’estate, acqua-onda/avvolge di sé inutilmente/ l’isola che non

giungo/a intravedere...” (p. 36) Questi sono eventi “romanzati” nel senso che ogni scrittura è una riproduzione fittizia, mimetica della realtà.

La parte più affascinante è, a mio avviso, “Femminismi,” dove il poeta si lascia andare *full steam ahead*, senza remore o preoccupazioni di *political correctness*. La “questione della donna” rimane aperta, ma non c’è nessun dubbio sugli abusi sofferti a mano dei tanti padri/padroni che dominano il nostro pianeta. La realtà vissuta da una famosa nobildonna veneziana del quattordicesimo secolo, Caterina Cornaro, apre il discorso con queste rimembranze:

 Sì, la reggia di Nicosia, ma troppo
 insidiata, lei, donna sola
 - l’arcivescovo e quella terribile
 Carlotta - meglio la compagnia
 dei poeti (nessuno affascinante
 come il giovane Bembo!), meglio
 la novità del Vecellio a portata
 di mano... Meglio esiliata ad Asolo. (p. 61)

Dopo la morte del marito, i governanti della Serenissima la convincono ad abdicare come regina di Cipro. Così, in cambio di una esistenza splendida e sfarzosa in una villa di Asolo, lei viene esclusa dalla prassi politica poiché donna, dato che il potere deve rimanere all’uomo. Non c’è bisogno di agganciarsi al femminismo per sottolineare le ovvie discriminazioni sofferte.

E il binomio sacro/profano purtroppo rispecchia ancora al giorno d’oggi una realtà vissuta da troppe donne, viste o come compagne angeliche (e considerate come proprietà) oppure come donne singole e spudorate. Terribile l’urlo di dolore raffigurato nella poesia “Data medica”: “piaghe/da decubito riscontrate/sul corpo, dermatite / emorragica in zona vulvare/ catetere vescicale con/ampio manicotto di pus/morte da sepsi per/distacco di endoprotesi.” Ecco la tragica vittoria del maschilismo. E sono d’accordo con la poesia “Coppie” che chiude il ciclo: “Diceva allora un saggio/ ‘Non esiste amore, /esiste soltanto una paura/di ore vuote’.” (p. 72)

“Umori”, la sequenza che segue, sembra voler giocare sul doppio significato del vocabolo che in inglese (humor, come per esempio in black humor) ha connotazioni spiccatamente diverse da quelle rispecchiate dal termine italiano. Qui si intravede la vasta cultura letteraria e linguistica dell’autore—già docente di anglistica a Ca’ Foscari e poi di letteratura americana all’Università di Padova. In “Anagrafe” la città di Milano, dov’è nata l’autrice, viene ricreata con ironia come il luogo dove “veleggia l’uomo-sandwich abbigliato/di stracci indiani per le strettoie/intorno alla cattedrale, mentre/ corre l’affarista in tassi verso/un insicuro miliardo.” (p. 77) È un centro industriale dove il destino sofferto dalle lavandaie di Porta Ticinese potrebbe essersi ripetuto nella vita della poetessa stessa. Altre poesie ricordano amici che se ne sono andati (“Almeno sia il passaggio” e “2 marzo, 1998”), memorie di gioventù (“Episodio”), una esperienza Ur-linguistica (“Straniera”), un rapporto non riuscito (“Incompiuta”) e uno che sta procedendo positivamente (“Profilo”)—“forse siamo/una sola creatura/fin qui distrattamente/divisa.” (p. 89)

Il titolo dell'ultima sezione, "Filosofemi," un neologismo che congiunge "filosofia" con "grafemi," ha anche una funzione metapoetica, illustra cioè il processo di fare poesia. Qui abbondano domande, paradossi e preoccupazioni di natura etica, estetica e gnoseologica, come nell'ironico "Telefono rosso" ("E se fosse questione/di vita/di morte/di morte in vita," p. 93) oppure in "Sempreamata filosofia" ("Primolavorocercasi/ al di qua della siepe [leopardiana] / nello splendore del paesaggio." (p. 96) In "Scelte" ("È dunque diverso da ogni altro/il mio libero arbitrio") la vocazione alla poesia è chiarificata, anche se è forse stata una scelta difficile. La terribile responsabilità di procreare è chiosata in "Figli," mentre in "Red Tape" le brutalità stupefacenti quotidiane vengono riepilogate anche da esperienze osservate sull'altra sponda dell'Atlantico: "Indugiando a Cairo, Illinois, in transito/illegale verso una linea di confine, /niggers tiravano pietre grigie al cromo/e ai cristalli di auto più vistose. / Clamorose rivelazioni. Insufficienti le prove/ma restano i sospetti. Nel mentre/che l'inquietante episodio della lettera/ olografa (non) sta a confermare." (p. 99) La giustificata accusa di degrado civile, ecologico e culturale che ci affoga al giorno d'oggi è il tema di "Discorso" e anche di "Notizia":

Avvenne che spiagge
illividite dal crepuscolo
offrissero la stanca battaglia
a vasta macchina oleosa
all'invasione di ratti
scampati al naufragio (p. 101)

In "Cronaca" la robotizzazione umana viene ironizzata, come pure lo sperpero banale del tempo viene criticato in "Ticchettio"—"una fuga nel cosmo, superiore/alla velocità della luce." "Per una definizione" offre una conclusione provvisoria: "Allo stato attuale della nostra/ignoranza, è lo stupore/del Dio che ci vede avanzare/sul filo di rasoio della vita/semprè con questa precaria/ speranza. / Infinita." (p. 105) La poetessa propone un'altra risposta, anche se condizionata da quel "punto geometrico d'amore/ [da cui] per amore esplose il cosmo." E "Poetica" riprende la tematica del fare poesia, seguita poi da due elogi lirici a un altro maker of rhymes—Silvio Ramat. La silloge conclude con "Amuleti," titolo che immediatamente fa ricordare l'Amleto shakesperiano: un ironico elenco di attrezzi, di attività, di keepsakes banali che la cultura odierna e materialistica ci propone come il *Sine qua non*: "superprofitti dei/ petrolieri masnadieri ai governi o in prigione/ galere aperte manicomi apertochiusi provette/ingravidate da ignoti centrali nucleari clonazione/che ci tocca in sorte..." (p.114).

This is not the best of all possible worlds non è la rappresentazione di una utopia bensì di una distopia che l'autore condivide. Tuttavia ci invita a cercare "noi, l'umanità, di ricominciare." E non è poco.

ADEODATO PIAZZA NICOLAI

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Roberto Deidier, ed. *Sandro Penna. Il viaggiatore insonne*. Genoa: San Marco dei Giustiniani, 2002. Pp. 71.

Sandro Penna's first and best-known collection, *Poesie*, came out in 1939, helped along the way by Sergio Solmi and Giansiro Ferrata. There then ensued a long interval without any new collections, a state of affairs that was probably due as much to Penna's peculiar nonchalance as to any possible dearth of enthusiasm on the part of publishing houses. (An epigram by the poet from Perugia reads: "Paresse, paresse / encore mieux que l'ivresse / je t'aimerai sans cesse. / Car mon nom est par... esse.") Finally, over a decade after *Poesie* in 1950, there appeared *Appunti* and, a few years later, in swift succession, *Una strana gioia di vivere* (1956), *Poesie* (1957) (containing *Poesie* 1939, *Appunti*, *Una strana gioia di vivere* and previously unpublished material) and *Croce e delizia* (1958). After which, once again, there followed a lengthy period of silence. Indeed, despite growing interest in his writing, stimulated in part by Pasolini's memorable studies, throughout the Sixties Penna abstained from publishing substantial new collections of poetry, apparently disinterested in allowing further works to see the light of day. Only in the Seventies did the public at large once more have the opportunity to get their hands on new books by Penna, amongst which *Stranezze* (1976) and *Il viaggiatore insonne* (1977).

In an article included in his *Penna Papers* (Milan: Garzanti, 1984), Cesare Garboli, that critic who is today universally recognised as being amongst the leading experts on Penna's verse, supplies vital information on the history of both *Stranezze* and *Il viaggiatore insonne*. Basing ourselves on what Garboli has to say, the story behind the latter volume, the principal object of our interest here, would seem to be more or less as follows. At a certain point, Garboli contacted Mario Spagnol, then in charge of books at Rizzoli, regarding the idea of producing a new volume of Penna's verse. Spagnol manifested interest and put forward the name of Giacomo Manzù as a possible illustrator. Penna himself was quite taken by Spagnol's project; "[n]on faceva che nominare Manzù e io credo che gli piacesse soprattutto il nome Manzù, perché lo pronunciava con una soddisfazione e una sensualità che avevano qualcosa di goloso, indipendentemente dalla speranza della pubblicazione," recalls Garboli in *Penna Papers*. (62) Yet, as so often with the writer from Perugia, this important editorial initiative never really got off the ground. Meanwhile, there arrived a request from Giorgio Devoto for material to form a new book. At this juncture, it was decided that the pieces destined for the "Manzù edition," defined by Penna himself as "bellissime," should instead be consigned almost in their entirety to Devoto. To this selection of poems, Penna adjoined four other texts: "Immobile e perduto, lentamente," "Se l'estate cede, la luna," "Le notti vuote, piene di tamburi" and "Salivano lente le sere." The result of all this was that in February 1977 there appeared *Il viaggiatore insonne*, published by San Marco dei Giustiniani and consisting of fourteen typically concise poems. Sadly, the author of *Il viaggiatore insonne* never had the opportunity to see a finished copy of the book in question: on 21 January 1977 Penna's life came to an end; his corpse was discovered by Elio Pecora during a visit to the poet's flat on Via della Mola de' Fiorentini.

A quarter of a century later, we now possess a critical edition of *Il viaggiatore insonne*. The scholar behind this edition is Roberto Deidier, someone who amongst other things has already published Penna's correspondence with Montale and Saba's letters to the same, not to mention *L'officina di Penna: Le Poesie 1939. Storia e apparato critico* (Milan: Archinto, 1997). Needless to say, this contribution to our knowledge of the textual history of Penna's verse by one of its most intelligent readers is most welcome. It is to be hoped that now, with *Poesie 1939* and *Il viaggiatore insonne* under his belt, that is to say, with Penna's first and, in a sense, last collections properly covered, Deidier will feel the urge to strive on to the end of the long pathway upon which he has embarked. Certainly, the task of producing a critical edition of Penna's poetry in its entirety is an immense one, truly a gargantuan undertaking by any reckoning and one not helped by the dispersion of the relevant manuscripts. Still, there can be no doubt that, as the years pass by, the need for an adequate critical edition of all of Penna's verse production becomes ever more pressing.

Deidier's apparatus supplies us with all sorts of helpful data concerning Penna's 1977 collection. For instance, we learn that not all of the poems sent to Devoto for *Il viaggiatore insonne* were unpublished (as Penna claimed they were in a letter reproduced on page 57): in fact, "Al primo grillo, quando l'aria ancora," "Fra le case andavo allegro," "Quanto più mi sentivo a te legato" and "La festa verso l'imbrunire vado" were all printed in *Tempo presente* during the Fifties. The last of these poems, dedicated "a Eugenio Montale," also appeared in *I poeti a Montale*: interestingly, of the two typescripts of this poem contained in the text for *Il viaggiatore insonne* given to Giorgio Devoto, one is without any inscription to Montale whatsoever, whilst the other contains an inscription to the Genoese poet not in its author's handwriting but, instead, in that of Devoto.

On the subject of variants, through a glance at Deidier's apparatus the reader may readily glean a number of stimulating pieces of information, some of which already known as a result of *Penna Papers*. Take the second and last strophe of "Sbarco ad Ancona," a poem to which Penna was hugely attached, as Garboli recounts in his 1984 volume. (61) The strophe in question, as it appears in *Il viaggiatore insonne*, reads: "Amici miei gli orinatoï... Ma io / non tendo forse al monte dove trovo /—lontano il mare e l'odore perverso—/ l'adolescente odoroso di fichi?" In the version of the same poem conserved in Garboli's private archive, inside an envelope marked "Poesie per Manzù," the same strophe, before corrections, reads: "Amici miei gli orinatoï... Ma io / non tendo forse al monte dove trovo / l'adolescente odoroso di fichi? / Lontano il mare e l'odore perverso / l'adolescente mi fa innamorare / della madre del padre dei fratelli." In the version of "Sbarco ad Ancona" located in *Il viaggiatore insonne* the last two verses of the uncorrected "Manzù version" are nowhere to be found, whilst the third to last line in the latter text is present as a sort of parenthesis between "trovo" and "l'adolescente."

Another especially noteworthy poem from the standpoint of variants is "Grava, sulla città, colma l'estate." In the Sandro Penna archive in Rome one encounters a version of this poem as follows: "Grava sulla città, colma, l'estate. / Guarda un ragazzo trasognato il suo / sesso innalzato. Indi sospira e prende / di nuovo un suo poeta. E

l'ora scende." It would seem that this poem was originally destined for the 1939 edition of *Poesie* but, possibly due to fear of offending the censor, it never came out in Penna's first collection. The published text, as found in *Il viaggiatore insonne*, reads: "Grava, sulla città, colma l'estate. / Nell'orto di una villa c'è un ragazzo / brutto, che guarda trasognato il suo / sesso innalzato. Indi sospira e prende / di nuovo un suo poeta. E l'ora scende." We remain before a poem exclusively in hendecasyllables and, punctuation aside, verses 1, 4 and 5 are identical to, respectively, verses 1, 3 and 4 of the alternative text. However, the version of "Grava, sulla città, colma l'estate" present in *Il viaggiatore insonne* furnishes us with several additional details: the "ragazzo," that being upon whom Penna's amorous gaze falls time and again, finds himself in a garden belonging to a villa and, atypically, is described pejoratively as being "brutto."

Roberto Deidier presents his reader with a well-organized and highly informative critical apparatus. If one were tempted to offer any advice to the editor, it would be helpful to have within the description of each single poem not just the page numbers for prior publications but also a reference to the page number in the present edition. But *Il viaggiatore insonne* (2002) is not just useful for the philological data it provides. The volume also contains the two introductions to Penna's 1977 book which, not unsurprisingly, are nowhere to be found in the successive editions of *Il viaggiatore insonne*, i.e. in *Confuso sogno* (1980) and the second edition of *Poesie* (1989). The first of these introductions is by Natalia Ginzburg, written in that unmistakable style of hers that rarely fails to mesmerise the reader. According to Ginzburg: "[v]ivendo egli [Penna] fuori dalle leggi che il tempo determina e impone, e non conoscendo egli nel suo mondo né classi sociali, né impalcature ideologiche, e mantenendo e avendo mantenuto sempre una piena e limpida indifferenza nei confronti del potere, e intrattenendo con i vivi e con i morti, con i potenti e con gli inermi, un rapporto di assoluta semplicità e parità, egli è uno fra gli esseri umani più liberi che siano mai esistiti." (9-10) The second introduction, of a more technical nature, belongs to Giovanni Raboni, author years previously of one of the finest articles on Penna's verse: "La trasgressione e il mistero nella poesia di Penna," *Paragone*, XXI, 248 (October 1970), 140-47. Finally, *Il viaggiatore insonne* (2002) includes a reproduction of an etching by Renzo Vespignani, originally printed on Fabriano in fifty special copies of the 1977 edition of this collection. It might be noted that the same artist is the dedicatee of the penultimate poem in *Il viaggiatore insonne*, "Salivano lente le sere." Furthermore, taking advantage of the data supplied by Deidier in his apparatus, one might observe that, similarly to the above-mentioned "La festa verso l'imbrunire vado," this inscription does not stem directly from any known text by Penna: in fact, the manuscript of "Salivano lente le sere," conserved by Garboli and presented to Devoto in the form of a photocopy, "è privo della dedica 'A Renzo Vespignani,' che compare solo a stampa ed è quindi da ritenersi d'occasione." (69)

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Sheryl Lynn Postman, J. Jelí Hernández, eds. *Cinema and Multiculturalism, Selected Proceedings*. New York-Toronto: Legas, 2001. Pp. 128.

Among the most recent trends in film studies is the growing interest in multicultural and geo-cultural themes. In a world that has become smaller and more inclusive of 'the others,' scholars are taking a new interdisciplinary direction in the investigation of what has been defined as cinematographic multiculturalism.

Cinema and Multiculturalism is a varied, polyphonic collection of ten selected papers presented at a symposium hosted by the Department of Languages at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell on March 13-14, 1998. The essays reflect the interchange of ideas and theories among scholars in the fields of film studies, literature, language, art history, political science, sociology, psychology and philosophy. The aim of this volume is to lay the foundations for a cross-disciplinary approach to multicultural studies with a view to discussing the function of film as a tool for transmitting artistic, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, social and sexual concepts and values. Cinema is therefore studied in its interdisciplinary and intercultural aspects both as a rich form of art and a revealing documentary of the multifaceted American society. With their own individual investigative approaches, the authors have addressed topics as varied as homosexuality, femme fatale and Western/Gangster films. The emphasis on the association between cinema and multiculturalism has motivated the authors to define what constitutes cinematographic multiculturalism and seek out the most fruitful ways of studying it.

With such ends in mind, Sheryl Lynn Postman and J. Jelí Hernández, co-editors of this volume, have collected ten innovative, ground-breaking articles. The essays span over a period of about a hundred years of film history from 1914 to the present day, treating several genres and themes in a new critical fashion.

Composed in the narrative style of a short story, the first essay, "Screen as Window/Screen as Mirror: Cinema as an Interdisciplinary Field of Studies," by the Italian writer and former film-maker Giose Rimaneli, introduces the discussion on multicultural cinematographic theory and assesses its significance for contemporary scholarly research.

The following nine essays express various aspects of cinematographic inquiry. Michael Aronson's study, "The Days of Maximum Film at Minimum Price: Pittsburgh Exhibition at the Crossroads, 1914-1916," deals with the historical importance of cinema houses in immigrant communities at the beginning of last century. In "The Decameron According to Pasolini," Augustus Matri develops a comparative analysis of a classic piece of literature and its filmic Pasolinian representation and interpretation. The emphasis on the link between film and other arts leads us naturally into the essay "Ut Pictura Kinesis: 'painting as Film, Film as Painting'," by Liana De Gerolami Cheney, where the author "examines the influence of dominant art movements in visual design and thematic perceptions in 20th-century film. [Her essay] focuses on the function of artistic vision as it reveals itself in set and costume design, music, camera technique and other aesthetic elements of film, as well as how such elements function to extend and convey directional vision" (37).

The processes of 'Americanization' and 'Italianization,' as evolutionary phases of moments of encounter and fusion of different cultures, are expressed in Joseph Garreau's "American Twist: 'The Remaking' of a 'Femme Fatale'" which describes how two French films ultimately become part of American mainstream cinema. These processes are also examined in Mario Aste's paper, "Teresa Sant'Angelo, Italian Sauces, Anorexia and Household Saints," where the author scrutinizes three generations of Italian women living in New York through the works of filmmaker Nancy Savoca who presents the old world religious superstitions and mythologies, recreating them in a new cultural milieu: the United States. A second essay by Mario Aste, "From Western to Gangster Films: American Society Observing and Observed," depicts the metamorphosis undergone the classic American Western film showing how, in the 1960s, this typical American genre became an Italian accomplishment with the development of the 'Spaghetti Western' genre.

The remaining three essays: Barbara Langell Miliaras' "Symbolism, Surrealism and Sexuality in John Duigan's Sirens," Timothy Shary's "The Incredibly True Adventure of Teenage Homosexuality in American Cinema." and Jane Freimiller and Jeffrey Gerson's "Film as a Tool, for Teaching Multiculturalism across the Disciplines: Philosophy and Politics-The Case of Independence Day" deal with films produced in the last years of the 20th century. These papers show how cinema has evolved technically and thematically over the past century, but still depicts minorities (women, African Americans, Jews, and homosexuals) in stereotypical roles and, by insisting on prescribed societal rules reinforces preconceived cultural images.

In conclusion, the heterogeneous nature, both in contents and approaches, of the essays contained in this collection reveals the kaleidoscopic, flexible modularity and potentially unlimited boundaries of cinematographic multicultural inquiry. The incorporation of diverse themes and the application of different theoretical frameworks are being fused in one investigative voice. Its coherence and unity derive from the scholars' need to broaden the horizons of film studies by recognizing that multiculturalism is a field of investigation in its own right, and cinema, an interdisciplinary par excellence, is an applied subject which is worth experimenting with to interpret other arts, sciences and fields of studies.

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Millicent Marcus. *After Fellini: National Cinema in the Postmodern Age*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 2002. Pp. 377.

In the expanding field of cinema studies, these essays on the work of fourteen Italian filmmakers stand out in their imaginative force. The author's fascination with neorealism serves as the crucial point of intersection for complex, often brilliant, multi-dimensional readings of films which epitomize a new style of self-expression, and articulate a "national story." Millicent Marcus's *After Fellini* displays an uncommon

combination of theoretical and cultural sophistication, intellectual precision and aesthetic sensitivity.

The book is divided into five sections, which provide a novel account of what the author calls the “afterness” of contemporary Italian cinema. Marcus’s analyses aim at reconciling the hiatus between postwar auteurish trends—that extend to the 1970s and are defined by personal creativity and a stunning visual style—and a new generation of filmmakers who embody a type of cinema engaged in coming to terms with the tarnished identity of the nation it represents. Marcus follows a geographical trajectory that traverses different regions and cultural territories. She is equally at ease with the neorealist masters, the ideological auteurs of the 1960s, and the independent filmmakers who embrace a more flexible means of production in order to adapt to the necessities of the new era. She brings us to re-think questions of aesthetics and authorship, production dynamics, and technical approaches. The revolutionary impulse that characterizes the Italian filmic tradition remains central to defining the identity of the New Italian cinema.

The first section of *After Fellini*, entitled “Looking Back,” comprises of two powerful films released immediately after the war: Roberto Rossellini’s *Paisan* (1946) and Luchino Visconti’s *Bellissima* (1951). In the traditional view, these particular films, and their directors, are singled out for their social emphasis and a realistic visual construction that sets the characters amidst urban or country desolation. For Marcus, they exemplify “filmmaking as a foundation act” (p. 10) as well as a building of national consciousness out of the collapse of Fascism. Rossellini and Visconti pursue unique ethical and artistic visions. From the beginning, the author establishes the common paradigm of her critical investigation as one that draws from linguistic transformation, and political and cultural contexts. The second section (“Italy by Displacement”) includes Bernardo Bertolucci, Gabriele Salvatores, and Roberto Faenza, filmmakers who continue to tell national stories by deflection, or proxy. Their wide-ranging perception of the intellectual life and passion for cognitive journeys guide us through the transformation of Italy during the last twenty years. *The Last Emperor* (1988), *Mediterraneo* (1991), and *Pereira Declares* (1995) are all shot in foreign countries (China, a Greek island, Salazar’s Portugal); they reveal, however, an underlying Gramscian critique, and a preoccupation with death which exposes the burden of an existence devoid of meaning.

The next three sections (“Family as Political Allegory,” “Postmodernism; or, the Death of Cinema?” and “The Return of the Referent”) attest to the slow but constant rise of the New Italian cinema from provincial obscurity to international recognition. Marcus begins by addressing the configuration of the family unit as a vehicle for social allegory. Francesco Rosi’s *Three Brothers*, Ricky Tognazzi’s *La scorta*, and Gianni Amelio’s *Stolen Children* offer a framework of the political complexities and intrinsic social difficulties facing the Italian nation in a period marked by the advent of terrorism, vigorous class mobility, and abiding cultural turmoil. Pursuing this line, she analyses films that confront the specter of cinematic demise: Federico Fellini’s *Ginger and Fred* (1985), Giuseppe Tornatore’s *Cinema Paradiso* (1988), Maurizio Nichetti’s *Icycle Thief* (1989), and Roberta Torre’s *To Die for Tano* (1997) are the most radical examples of the aestheticizing of the post-modern anxieties about the death of the me-

dium. The television age, with deregulation and the digital camera, proved to be an era of transformation. It engendered a popular culture largely molded on American programming and electronic technology. One of the important conclusions of Marcus's work is that the linguistic apparatus, which has been the focus of so much critical inquiry, is simply a flexible device that conveys "a new, hybrid sign through contamination and pastiche." (p. 11) The closing section of the book selects films of powerful historical and personal awareness: Rosi's *The Truce* (1997), Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful* (1998), and Nanni Moretti's *Caro diario* (1993) attest to the artist's lasting commitment to the social and ethical referents of neorealism. Today's filmmakers have produced a body of work that discloses a new beginning for Italian cinema.

Millicent Marcus's book offers new conclusions about continuities and changes in the mapping of the Italian cinematic landscape. It is a major work of scholarship. The author has mastered a theoretical approach whose distinction derives from the balance of scholarly research and intellectual history. *After Fellini* is about a cinema constantly redefining itself, while exposing the dynamics of unsettling social and cultural boundaries.

GAETANA MARRONE

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Angela M. Jeannet. *Under the Radiant Sun and the Crescent Moon, Italo Calvino's Storytelling*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2000. Pp. 197.

Misura, eleganza e chiarezza, sono le lezioni fondamentali della complessa personalità di Italo Calvino, uomo e scrittore.

Le sue storie si caratterizzano per la loro valenza lirico-filosofica in cui la tensione emotiva si eleva fino a diventare pura e limpida poesia, poesia di vita, di una vita guardata dall'alto, con occhi disincantati e velati da una sottile malinconia.

Il saggio di Angela Jeannet si propone di esaminare la matrice o le matrici culturali e letterarie del vasto universo calviniano, ripercorrendo le tappe fondamentali che hanno alimentato la passione dell'artista per il racconto, per la letteratura intesa come quel filo di Arianna che può portare alla fine del labirinto dell'esistenza e dargli una spiegazione.

L'indagine di Angela Jeannet ripercorre le tappe della scrittura partendo dal primo Calvino dove si colgono echi della Resistenza, e di autori quali Montale, Moravia, Vittorini, Pavese in cui lo scrittore affonda le proprie radici per poi allontanarsene in una rielaborazione del tutto personale.

I ritmi, il lessico, le immagini di alcune tra le principali tematiche della poesia di Montale vengono, ad esempio, rielaborate da Calvino fino al punto che l'immobilità montaliana delle piante e degli animali, dell'agave sullo scoglio, acquistano nuova vita e linfa vitale modificando il colore, il sapore, l'odore dell'intera esistenza.

Jeannet ci invita a seguire l'evoluzione della scrittura di Calvino; infatti dalla disamina di racconti neorealistici di fatti reali o probabili che hanno per protagonisti gente del 'popolo'—quegli 'irregolari,' quelle persone curiose, che non si perdono dietro a pensieri e a sentimenti—si passa ad una scrittura che pur guardando il mondo senza nascondere la negatività in esso presente non infonde un sentimento di sconfitta. Negatività del mondo che non cancella il potere della memoria di un racconto epico intriso di vitalità, di storie di avventure e di viaggio che appartengono alla prima tradizione letteraria e che tanto lo avevano entusiasmato da giovane.

I protagonisti delle storie sono visti da Calvino nel mentre ricercano il senso del mondo e della loro stessa esistenza, attraverso ragionamenti che dimostrano la piena ed effettiva percezione del dettaglio di questo mondo ostile ma familiare: Cosimo di Rondò che osserva dall'alto del suo albero, Amerigo l'esploratore che 'osserva' silenziosamente le manifestazioni della condizione umana, il visconte dimezzato che con la sua sofferenza esprime anche la spinta ad uscirne.

Dinanzi all'angoscia dell'incompletezza, al caos del mondo, al dimidiamento, il protagonista conserverà il potere dei sensi, dell'osservazione, dell'organizzazione e dell'interpretazione, della spinta a rimettersi in movimento, del gioco umoristico e di quello geometrico in un supremo ed ostinato sforzo a vivere nonostante tutto .

Il ricorso all'esattezza geometrica, ci ricorda Jeannet, è il tentativo di operare un controllo sul reale, di gettare l'ancora dell'essere; il tracciare linee, triangoli, l'applicarsi a esercizi di esattezza, contando oggetti, ordinandoli in figure geometriche, come fa Agilulfo, può aiutare a capire il principio e la fine .

La rigidità topografica della città viene percorsa da Marcovaldo con i suoi zig-zag, emblema di quella libertà che nasce dalla triste scoperta della duplicità e della resistenza opaca del mondo, dalla delusione di quella Natura, Natura mitizzata e celebrata da autori quali Pavese, ma che per Marcovaldo rappresenta la memoria letteraria che vive in lui, quel segno positivo, quel motivo di esistere nella urbanità della città, con le sue ambiguità di benessere e spreco, volti gemelli del progresso tecnologico.

La Natura si presenta inoltre come luogo di contemplazione, di sogno, che si concretizza sul piano ideologico come antinomia del 'vero' contesto sociale. Tuttavia Calvino è pronto a smascherare la menzognera costruzione dei sogni e a riportarci allo stadio iniziale di alienazione del protagonista, marionetta di un'esistenza immobile in cui la voglia di evadere per il miraggio della visione pastorale è destinata ad essere una mera illusione.

Illusione dell'esistenza o del desiderio di esistere che tanto preoccupano il cavaliere Agilulfo che sa di essere ma non esiste, di Gurdulù che esiste ma non sa di essere, del giovane Rambaldo dominato da sogni giovanili di avventura, dalla smania di battaglie e di amori e innamorato della propria ansia e dei propri sogni, o di Palomar/Calvino alla ricerca della norma nascosta nel fondo di ciò che esiste, in quell'armonia non-omogenea dell'umano e del non umano. E che cosa è l'arte di scrivere storie se non, come dice la monaca 'Bradamante,' la capacità di tirar fuori da quel nulla che si è capito della vita, tutto il resto? Ma finita la pagina si riprende la vita e ci si accorge che quel che si sapeva è proprio un nulla.

Il saggio di Jeannet ci esorta a guardare come davanti a quel nulla la letteratura può definire l'atteggiamento migliore per trovare la via d'uscita anche se questa via d'uscita dovesse essere un passaggio ad un altro labirinto. Ma è proprio la sfida al labirinto che si vuole salvare e ciò che si chiede allo scrittore è di garantire la sopravvivenza di quel che si chiama umano in un mondo dove tutto si presenta inumano [...] la sopravvivenza di un discorso umano, di una letteratura della 'sfida al labirinto,' di resistenza, comunicazione, gioia e non della 'resa al labirinto.'

Il desiderio di parlare al pubblico, la profonda consapevolezza dell'esistenza del pubblico, della ricezione del suo pensiero, sono stati dominanti nell'arte di Calvino per il quale la scrittura diventa, dunque, lo strumento supremo di stimolazione della immaginazione, nutrimento di una moralità rigorosa e spinta alla consapevolezza della propria esistenza. Qui l'elemento razionale e volontario del racconto, l'ordine e la geometria, spingono l'autore verso la fiaba, verso l'intrattenimento del lettore, verso un insieme del raccontabile, perché, come Jeannet sottolinea, egli intende la letteratura nella sua funzione esistenziale, come reazione al peso di vivere, come ricerca di conoscenza, come mestiere ma anche come responsabilità che è anche integrità esistenziale.

L'essere sull'orlo del labirinto è l'inizio del viaggio, la linea di partenza verso il futuro, viaggio che autori come Montale non vollero intraprendere e che l'indagine di Angela Jeannet ci aiuta a ripercorrere alla luce del messaggio di Italo Calvino.

ELDA BUONANNO

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Peter Carravetta. *Dei Parlanti, Studi e Ipotesi su Metodo e Retorica dell'Interpretare*. Torino: Marco Valerio, 2002. Pp. 298.

Dei Parlanti è una raccolta di saggi critici sulla crisi degli approcci formali all'interpretazione del testo. Esaminando i testi di alcuni pensatori in ambito sia europeo che americano che hanno contribuito alla riflessione sul rapporto linguaggio e interpretazione, Carravetta approda ad un nascente pensiero retorico-ermeneutico che rifiuta l'autonomia del significante per rivendicare l'inevitabile eteronomia del significato; arriva ad una retorica ermeneutica che abbandona la generalità del segno e del simbolo per riproporre la specificità euristica ed ideologica del processo di simbolizzazione.

L'"Avvertenza" espone l'intento della raccolta e descrive la struttura del volume. La raccolta mira a riconfigurare il complesso nodo tra metodo critico e teoria dell'interpretazione in base alla loro dimensione retorica (linguistica/figurativa) e alle loro conseguenze etico-politiche. Per quanto riguarda la struttura, i saggi sono incorniciati fra brani riprodotti da un volume antecedente intitolato *Il Fantasma di Hermes. Saggio su metodo, retorica, interpretare* (Lecce, Milella, 1996). L'autore ha ritenuto opportuno riportare la parte introduttiva e la parte conclusiva dello *Hermes* in

questa sede, in quanto *Dei Parlanti* dovrebbe costituirne sia la continuazione che una provvisoria conclusione.

L' "Introduzione" ci presenta la figura di Hermes quale esemplare del tragitto critico: cioè come nume dell'interpretazione intesa come scambio continuo della significazione. Inoltre ci offre un modello investigativo del presente discorso sul rapporto fra linguaggio e interpretazione, ossia il modello del triangolo epistemico all'interno del circolo ermeneutico. I tre punti nodali del triangolo epistemico sono l'Interprete e/o la Società (il critico), l'Interpretare (il discorso critico o il processo dell'atto interpretativo) e l'Opera (il testo, oppure un artefatto, una performance, ecc.). Nel circolo ermeneutico del processo conoscitivo ciascuno dei tre nodi rimanda agli altri due in un continuo "inter-rapportarsi." Inoltre, tutti i tre nodi cambiano nel tempo, nella storia. Secondo Carravetta il 'salto' dal triangolo al circolo corrisponde ad una specie di ponte tra la nozione di *critica come tecnica* e l'idea di *interpretare come intendimento retorico-ermeneutico*.

Il modello del triangolo epistemico-circolo ermeneutico rappresenta la chiave della tesi del volume: cioè invece di ricorrere a discorsi dicotomici a base di una logica duale o binaria, la critica deve tener sempre presenti almeno tre punti di riferimento: "l'Interprete," "l'Opera" e "l'Interpretare." Nel rifiutare l'autonomia o la generalità del segno a favore della specificità del significato, nel ricordare che il significato delle parole è anche costituito *dall'uso particolare* che se ne fa, si apre la porta al fantasma del *relativismo*. Vista così, la critica è un discorso "multiforme, plurivoco, sfuggievole e contemplante più parti."

Nella "Parte Prima, Contesti," si esaminano vari approcci formali al testo nell'ambiente europeo ed americano (capitoli 1 e 2), mentre nella "Parte Seconda, Testi e versioni," si passa ad una considerazione delle opere di alcuni pensatori che hanno contribuito allo studio del rapporto linguaggio-interpretazione, per esempio Paolo Valesio, Geoffrey Hartman, Paul Ricoeur, Lyotard, Luigi Pareyson, Vico e Heidegger (capitoli 3 - 8). Secondo l'autore, questi pensatori rappresentano casi esemplari di un nascente pensiero retorico-ermeneutico.

La "Conclusione" ribadisce la tesi del volume sotto diversi aspetti. Per quanto riguarda il metodo, il viaggio interpretativo è un modo di cogliere il senso del discorso di un altro, e non si fa mai lo stesso viaggio due volte. La retorica viene vista come linguaggio-scambio vivente: cogliere il senso è un processo interattivo, interpretativo. Per l'interpretare, l'autore ci ricorda che bisogna evitare la sclerosi congelante e dogmatica dei sistemi logici che sono di valore dualistico, predicati sull'identità, sull'ineffabile eternità. Invece i referenti, marcati da una componente temporale ed esistenziale, fanno appello alla molteplicità, alla polivalenza: "questa molteplicità bisogna porre come datum di base alla stregua dell'aria, del dolore e delle tasse!"

Come esempio del cammino critico, cioè dell'interpretare come un rispondere, un rischiare, un reagire, Carravetta ci offre "la figura [...] portante di Hermes, nume dell'interpretazione interminabile, dello scambio incessante della significazione, e dell'esistenza come Divenire mutabile, politropo e plurivoco...". Mentre i fratelli di Hermes (fra cui Apollo ed Afrodite) hanno un'identità, una continuità, una prevedibilità, Hermes invece rappresenta la *transizione*, il passaggio, la traversata, il continuo cambiamento. Poiché Hermes è un personaggio-simbolo camaleontico, che indossa

diversi abiti e rappresenta diversissimi ruoli, la sua variabilità lo fa diventare il nume dell'epoca postmoderna.

Il volume viene completato da una bibliografia molto comprensiva (“Opere Citate”) e da un “Indice dei nomi,” sempre molto utile ad un lettore.

Da traduttrice, sono rimasta colpita da varie risonanze fra la critica e la traduzione nelle riflessioni di Carravetta. Per esempio, il concetto dell’altro’: “l’opera come altro” richiama l’autore che è visto come l’altro rispetto al traduttore. Poi c’è la nozione che il testo critico può essere considerato non come “testo secondario,” ma come forma d’arte: “la critica non è seconda a niente e nessuno.” Mi ha fatto pensare al racconto di Jorge Luis Borges, “Pierre Menard, autore del *Chisciotte*” (nel volume *Finzioni*), in cui il protagonista Menard si mette a “scrivere” (a tradurre?) vari brani del *Don Chisciotte* di Cervantes. Come ci spiega Borges: “[Pierre Menard] non volle comporre un altro *Chisciotte*... ma il *Chisciotte*.”

Un altro richiamo alla traduzione è l’aspetto della temporalità: “il discorso e l’esperienza cui rimanda sono istanze inscritte [sic] nel decorso temporale.” Considerata in un contesto figurale (secondo il concetto di “figura” che Erich Auerbach adoperava nei suoi studi sulla *Divina Commedia*), l’opera originale è la “figura anticipatrice” che poi viene “adempiuta” dalla traduzione, e sono tutt’e due “fatti” (testi) concreti e storici: la traduzione non è meno “reale” dell’originale. E lo stesso si può dire per l’opera critica. Nonostante il fatto che l’opera originale “viene prima nel tempo [...] dell’interpretazione” (e della traduzione) e malgrado l’elemento riproduttivo, ripetitivo, che questa “secondarietà” temporale comporta, la critica (e la traduzione) è “un genere a sé,” esiste “come artefatto ‘primario,’ originale, che non ha bisogno di appoggiarsi o fare da supplemento a un altro testo.”

Riguardo alla temporalità, Carravetta parla di palinsesti, di echi, di tracce lasciate indietro da altre esperienze. Lo stesso concetto si trova nel suddetto racconto di Borges: in effetti il compito di Menard fu impossibile dall’inizio perché oltre ad una certa mancanza di naturalezza e di spontaneità, c’era il fatto che trecento anni “carichi di fatti quanto mai complessi” erano passati da quando Cervantes aveva scritto le sue parole. Pure lo scrittore siciliano Leonardo Sciascia nel suo libro *L’affaire Moro* allude a quest’aspetto di ricontestualizzazione, cioè al fatto che le parole vengono ad assumere un diverso significato col passare del tempo e con lo svolgersi degli eventi: “se oggi scrivo questo—le stesse parole e nello stesso ordine —per me e per il lettore tutt’altro ne sarà il senso.”

Echi, tracce, palinsesti... Anche il narratore del racconto di Borges sembra intuire che se il compito di Menard fosse stato realizzato, sarebbe risultato in quel tipo di opera che porta i segni del “ricordo” di un’opera anteriore: “Ho pensato che il *Don Chisciotte* finale potrebbe considerarsi come una specie di palinsesto, in cui andrebbero ricercate le tracce—tenui, ma non indecifrabili—della scrittura ‘anteriore’ del nostro amico.”

Per quanto riguarda il significato delle parole, Carravetta osserva: “esse possono essere interpretate da ciascun lettore diversamente (e ad ogni lettura!).” Parole sante! Aggiungerei: e da ciascun traduttore!

Ernesto G. Caserta. *Trent'anni di critica italiana*. Firenze: Cesati, 2001. Pp. 181.

I *Trent'anni di critica italiana* sono gli anni che corrono dal 1971 al 1995, nei quali Caserta, dal suo osservatorio negli Stati Uniti, ha recensito numerosi studi di critica letteraria italiana. Riunendo in un unico volume le sue recensioni, l'autore ha voluto far conoscere un aspetto poco noto del proprio lavoro, e come esso si sia evoluto, su riviste non sempre facilmente reperibili dagli studiosi. Così le recensioni sono state allineate in ordine cronologico anziché per argomento, e all'interno della struttura diacronica (sottolineata dal titolo stesso) si possono ricostruire gli interessi precipui del recensore: Croce e, appena in subordine, Leopardi. Un'osservazione, in limine, sul titolo: l'opera non fornisce un quadro di trent'anni di critica italiana. Troppi sono gli autori, e le opere, che sfuggono all'attenzione recensoria, anche nei settori più approfonditi (si avverte ad esempio l'assenza di Luigi Baldacci e dei suoi scritti leopardiani dei primi anni Ottanta). *Trent'anni di critica italiana* riguarda essenzialmente la riflessione sul crocianesimo, settore nel quale Caserta è esponente autorevole, ma tocca solo in parte la varietà della produzione critica svoltasi nel trentennio in oggetto.

L' "Avvertenza" al volume chiarisce la linea lungo cui Caserta si è mosso senza deflettere: un metodo crociano 'riveduto,' che differenzia ciò che è poesia da ciò che non è poesia e definisce la critica un 'giudizio valutativo,' laddove il giudizio verte sul valore intrinseco (estetico e storico) che ogni opera, in quanto individuale e cosmica, possiede. La recensione, peraltro, è genere che ben si attaglia allo scontro polemico, e in nome del metodo d'elezione anche gli obiettivi sono chiari: la critica marxistica in primo luogo, ma anche "lo strutturalismo, la decostruzione, la critica psicanalitica, semiotica, e formalistica e le altre più recenti come il globalismo e l'internazionalismo in cui tutto si annega e scompare."

Da questa netta divisione di campo discendono le valutazioni di Caserta. Sono giudicati con acume severo gli studiosi che si allontanano dall'ortodossia crociana, come si vede nella recensione allo studio di Scrivano: Caserta ne sottolinea l' "errore metodologico" (lo stesso che si sarebbe verificato nello storicismo della seconda metà dell'Ottocento), riferendosi a un metodo incentrato sulla esposizione e ricostruzione piuttosto che sulla riflessione critica del pensiero crociano. Un errore, questo, individuato anche nell'opera di Lamanna, pur riconoscendo il valore del dialogo, stimolante e chiarificatore, che egli intrattene con Croce. Nello stesso ambito troviamo una lunga disamina del lavoro di Leone de Castris su *Croce, Lukàcs, Della Volpe* (1978), imputato di non possedere continuità e organicità analitica e di raggiungere soltanto risultati "incerti, approssimativi e deludenti." Nel contestarne lo schema ideologico di partenza, "marxisticamente precostituito," anche la tesi stessa dell'estetica come centro e base egemonica della cultura italiana novecentesca risulta al recensore troppo 'semplicitica,' 'unilaterale e faziosa.' Caserta salva tra gli scritti su Croce quelli che a suo parere sviluppano un metodo storico-critico forte, come il *Crocianesimo in provincia* (1986) di Iermano, la lettura di Sasso (1979) sulla *Storia d'Italia*, lo studio

Croce e Gentile un secolo dopo (1994) a cura di Garin, *I problemi dell'estetica italiana* (1986) di Paolozzi.

Il secondo gruppo tematico preponderante include recensioni agli studi, tra gli altri, di Savarese, Ramat, Binni, Corti, Frattini. L'attenzione rivolta a Leopardi non è separabile da quella rivolta a Croce: lo testimonia proprio la recensione a *La protesta di Leopardi* (1973) di Binni, il quale si muoverebbe in una prospettiva ideologica anziché secondo una visione storico-critica obiettiva. Di Binni viene stigmatizzato l'atteggiamento 'progressivo' per cui Leopardi finirebbe "reclutato tra le file del partito e costretto ad agitarsi al grido della folla." Lo scontro tocca dunque l'intero filone della critica marxista, e il tono di Caserta, come ho osservato altra volta, rischia di scivolare dalla legittima contestazione ideologica allo slogan elettorale d'altri tempi: sbalordisce leggere nell' "Avvertenza" il giudizio grossolano su Leone de Castris e Binni, i quali "cercano di inquadrare i poeti recalcitranti nelle file assegnate al ritmo della bandiera rossa." Del resto, sempre nell' "Avvertenza," Caserta rivendica il proprio ruolo di 'critico-giudicante', e qua e là il polemista ha il sopravvento sul critico.

MASCIA CARDELLI

Giancarlo Lombardi, *Rooms with a View: Feminist Diary Fiction 1952-1999*.
Madison-Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2002. Pp. 189.

In his study, Giancarlo Lombardi investigates feminist diary fiction, with a specific interest for the manner in which the intricacies constructing the relation and struggles between the internal and external world of their fictional creation are defined in writing. The enclosed space of a room, be it the literal physical confinement as in the case of the living room in Simone de Beauvoir's *La femme rompue* or the metaphorical frame of mind bound to limitations set by an order other than the one dictated by the law of the women as in Dacia Maraini's *Woman at War* (or, for this matter, the issue of militant politics as a locus for men whose threshold can never be passed), is eloquently related with what a woman can essentially see and experience of the external world when engaged in the task of writing her private story. Lombardi motivates his choice of analyzing diary fiction in the fact that such forms of writing "seem to lend themselves better than any other works to a critical portrayal of the recent history of women's condition" (27). Also, and very importantly, Lombardi adds the originality of his work to the absence of a "formal study of feminist fiction" which "has [n]ever been produced." Diary fiction appears thus to be the perfect generic frame for an investigation on how women writers have coped with the undergoing transformation of Western society and by default, of their own role as members of the collectivity engaged in the revision of what we do not hesitate to consider still as the world of man.

Lombardi begins his investigation from the years immediately following WWII in Italian literature with Alba de Cespedes' *Quaderno proibito*, whose study is the focus of the first chapter. Through a detailed reconstruction of Valeria's world of subjugation and submission to old values, the suffocating family, the duties of a mindless

and less than inspirational job, Lombardi traces the story of her *quaderno*, the very reason for being, and the very reason for which Valeria will arrive at the burning of the very tool of her temporary freedom from such deluding life.

I believe that choosing de Cespedes' book as a topic for the initial chapter springs from two necessities: the first, more apparent, is to provide chronological bases to Lombardi's analysis, (1952-1999); the second, to show the theoretical vector which takes into account both the evolution of women's movements all across the border and its subsequent conditioning of the genre in which women chose to express such ideological and political change of venues. In such manner form and content seem to go parallel towards renewed forms of fictional expression.

In the second chapter, in fact, "Neurotic Cassandras" Lombardi comparatively studies "the crazy diaries of the sixties," de Beauvoir's feminist texts, Lessing's *Golden Notebook*, and Maraini. Lessing's *Golden Notebook* is an early example of what Lombardi considers to be a 'postmodern' work (1962). It is a form of writing with intersects the diaristic form, the fictional as the two genres construct the book. Simone de Beauvoir's *La femme rompue* closes the analysis of the 'crazy diaries of the sixties' and is symptomatic in its outlook to society and the pragmatic re-insertion of women in society after a life spent being the 'other half' of a man. Monique, unlike de Cespedes' Valeria, was mildly satisfied of her role as homemaker, was comfortable in her role of 'dependent' woman. Her role in the novella is quite antithetical to all other female characters analyzed by Lombardi in his study. She is depressed, but for reasons entirely different from Valeria or Anna Wulf's depression. The element of sexual castration, eloquently described by Kristeva as telling evidence of the physical sense of estrangement when a relationship breaks up takes place in the three of them, but, again, the reasons motivating it are different. Hers is a "fear of the future" for which she does not feel prepared.

In the third chapter Maraini's *Donna in guerra* plays a key role in the analysis of diary form. Five months in the life of a middle-class teacher are recounted in the book. Vannina's space, the apartment in which she spends her cheap vacation in Addis, becomes the most evident form of family prison. Suna, Tottina and Giottina, are characters freed from Vannina's form of submission and in fact, they live in different spaces in which they, contrary to the old Italian saying 'la donna regina della casa' are sovereigns of their personal form of subversion, which ever the case might be. Lesbianism is often seen as a form of transgression but also Vannina's love for a very young boy might extol the same need for a non-suffocating male figure.

In the fourth chapter, "Fall from Grace: Lessing, Atwood, and the Years of the Backlash" Lombardi investigates the period following the militant feminist years: the backlash of which we have a clear and quite appropriate rendition in the eponymous book by Susan Faludi. In speaking of the 80s and the consequence of the ideological struggle of the 70s against a patriarchal society, Lombardi states that "things seem to have changed, but only at the level of appearances" as "under a surface which proclaims full equality between the sexes, demonstrated by the presence of women in high-paid and well-respected jobs, the situation has actually changed very little" (124). Doris Lessing's *The Diaries of Jane Somers* and Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* vigorously construct, even in two different novelistic subgenres (realist and science-

fiction novel), the portrayal of Anglo and American so called 'liberated' women in the 80s. In the epilogue to this study Lombardi does not fail to situate Susanna Tamaro's *Va dove ti porta il cuore* within a certain kind of Italian society. Lombardi claims the book is not as simplistic as it has often been read and Tamaro's own predicament about feminism demonstrates the reactionary bend taken by Italian society in recent years.

This brilliant work is in my view a necessary reading for anybody who is interested in Women's Studies and is quite applicable for many courses of contemporary Italian and Comparative Literature. Lombardi's selection of works and authors demonstrates the attention by which he studied this particular kind of writing, so often frequented by women writers and non-writers who, still like in other times, see the paper and the pen as their own authentic way to the heart. As difficult as it might still be to be a 'man in feminism,' Lombardi has deserved a place for his work on women writers in an epoch, which is slowly detaching the importance of true, and convincing works from trivial and superficial critical ones, still mined by the ghost of sterile essentialisms.

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Pasquale Hamel. *La congiura della libertà*. Venezia: Marsilio, 2002. Pp. 194.

Il lunedì di Pasqua del 1282, in seguito alle celebrazioni sacre nella chiesa di Santo Spirito, fuori delle mura di Palermo, alcuni soldati francesi, guidati dall'ufficiale Droetto, perquisiscono gli uomini per rinvenire in loro armi nascoste. Essendo l'indagine risultata infruttuosa, Droetto ordina ai soldati di frugare le donne ed egli stesso ne dà l'esempio cacciando le mani nel petto di una giovane sposa. Un giovane lì presente toglie la spada all'ufficiale francese e lo trafigge. Lo sdegno covato da tempo contro gli angioini esplode con irruente violenza.

Ha inizio così l'arcinota rivolta, meglio conosciuta come "Vespri Siciliani." L'odio dei siciliani per Carlo d'Angiò si era manifestato sin dal momento in cui questi era approdato al trono nel 1266. La sua arroganza, la sua prepotenza, gli abusi, le prevaricazioni, i tributi e le esose tasse, il mancato rispetto per le persone, per le loro proprietà e tradizioni offendevano il popolo siciliano. Sin dal primo momento, i nobili, le cui proprietà erano state confiscate da Carlo d'Angiò per distribuirle ai francesi, cercavano alleanze tra gli eredi di Federico II per far fuori gli odiati angioini.

A otto secoli di distanza, lo storico e noto scrittore siciliano Pasquale Hamel ricostruisce le vicende storiche in una versione romanzata della sommossa antiangioina. Il romanzo di Hamel, che finisce con la spontanea ribellione popolare del marzo del 1282, prende spunto dall'offensiva di Giovanni da Procida per ripristinare al trono di Sicilia la dinastia normanna degli Hohenstaufen. A questo fine, Giovanni da Procida si spinge alla ricerca di alleanze che possano coadiuvare il suo obiettivo.

Le vicende narrative trasportano, quindi, il lettore dalla Sicilia a Turingia, all'Aragona, al Vaticano, a Bisanzio. Infatti, dopo il diniego di Federico, nipote di

Federico II, la scena si sposta all'Aragona dove "ad accogliere i tre profughi (Giovanni da Procida e i suoi due figli) c'erano molti dignitari della corte di Giacomo d'Aragona e, fra essi il principe Pietro e la sua bella moglie Costanza: l'erede al trono di Sicilia, la figlia di Manfredi, l'unica in grado di riprendere nelle sue candide mani la fiaccola degli Hohenstaufen." (p.36) La visita al Vaticano di due prelati per mettere il Papa al corrente della crudeltà e dell'ingiustizia perpetrate da Carlo d'Angiò non riscontra il favore del Sommo Pontefice, e i due religiosi vengono imprigionati. Il viaggio a Bisanzio ha lo scopo di assicurarsi la solidarietà ed il sostegno economico dell'imperatore Michele Paleologo: "Abbiamo bisogno d'oro, oro per le armate di re Pietro che sono pronte a salpare alla volta della Sicilia e ancora oro per i siciliani." (p.106)

Il desiderio di sottrarsi alla malvagità angioina è grande ma si tratta solo di sostituire una forza straniera con un'altra o è possibile aspirare all'indipendenza assoluta, cioè alla formazione di una repubblica? Questo è il tema, infatti, sul quale l'autore imposta il dialogo tra Giovanni da Procida, che aveva dedicato la sua vita a riportare sul trono di Sicilia gli eredi della dinastia sveva e il conte di Calatafimi. Interviene quest'ultimo: "Noi siamo gli unici che dobbiamo aiutare il nostro popolo, non faremo più ricorso a stranieri, la Sicilia deve fare da sé!" (p.182) Vi sono dei momenti nel romanzo quando il discorso si sdoppia trascendendo la specificità medioevale e invitando il lettore a riflettere sul presente.

Alla fine, la trama del romanzo si snoda con la rivolta spontanea del popolo siciliano che da solo, avendo la meglio contro i francesi, riesce a liberarsi "dall'usurpatore" Carlo d'Angiò. Però, ahimé, il romanzo chiude con l'arrivo degli aragonesi: "Quel giorno era morta, prima di nascere, la repubblica, erano stati sconfitti coloro che ambivano a una Sicilia veramente libera, quel giorno il lungo peregrinare di Giovanni da Procida si concludeva con la sua vittoria. Presto sarebbero arrivate le truppe aragonesi." (p.194)

La congiura della libertà offre al lettore un excursus nella storia. Il lettore ha di fronte a sé una rielaborazione della presenza angioina in Sicilia. Nella presentazione dei personaggi, delle vicende storiche, ma anche nell'elaborazione linguistica e nei frequenti dialoghi, l'autore ci offre una autorevole interpretazione di uno dei momenti più importanti della storia dell'isola.

Pur non allontanandosi dai parametri che gli impone la storia, Hamel inserisce agevolmente le istanze narrative in contesti lirici o drammatici che servono da scenario sul quale si muovono i personaggi.

Questo non è certo l'unico romanzo in cui Hamel si occupa di una tematica storica. Basterebbe leggere *La crociata del santo* oppure *Adelaida del Vasto*, entrambi pubblicati dalla Sellerio, per rendersene conto. Da non dimenticare che Hamel è anche autore di parecchi trattati di storia tra i quali si vuole solo segnalare *Breve storia della società siciliana, 1790-1980*.

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