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## Book reviews

Roy Palmer Domenico (2002) *Remaking Italy in the Twentieth Century* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield), pp. xiv, 1–181, \$21.95, ISBN 0-8476-9637-5 paperback

A good textbook should contain all necessary information, read well and convey complex arguments simply and straightforwardly without dumbing down. Roy Domenico has for the most part written just such a book. His brief narrative history of Italy in the twentieth century is a model of compression that deserves to find a wide readership among those undergraduate students of modern European history who need an accessible primer on Italy.

Domenico structures the book around five main chapters that deal with the 'Liberal apex and crisis', the 'Fascist reformation', 'Defeat and liberation', 'Christian democracy and prosperity' and 'Toward the twenty-first century'. Inevitably, politics prevails in his narrative, with his discussion of the development of the Fascist regime being particularly impressive for its clarity, but social, economic and cultural history is on the whole not neglected. The brief section entitled 'Arts under Fascism' is just 150 lines long, but Domenico manages to mention – in a remarkably fluid and unhurried way – D'Annunzio's retirement to Lake Garda and subsequent accession to the presidency of the Royal Academy, Croce's 'manifesto of anti-Fascist intellectuals', the architecture of Giuseppe Pagano and Marcello Piacentini, EUR, the 'Generation of '80' group of composers, Arturo Toscanini's travails with the regime and the growth of popular cinema in Fascist Italy. His comments on all these cultural phenomena are pertinent and enlightening. It is an impressive achievement.

Domenico understands also that textbooks need to be enlivened with arresting images and lively anecdotes. Thus he gives us D'Annunzio 'replete with historic costumes and ever-present Russian wolf hounds'; a Fiume crisis that ends when the battleship Andrea Doria 'lobbed some well-placed shells into D'Annunzio's palace'; a father who when discussing the essence of Fascism with his son over dinner tells him to 'eat and shut up'; a De Gasperi depicted in Giannini's cartoons as a 'vulturelike creature in priestly garb' and 'glamorous jet-setters behind sunglasses' who in the boom years of the 1950s and 1960s flocked to Italy and 'set roots from Mediterranean villas to Venetian bar stools'. With one anecdote about Pietro Fiordelli, bishop of Prati, who in 1956 ordered a parish priest to denounce from the pulpit the parents of a couple who had refused a religious marriage as 'gravely remiss in their duties as Christian parents', Domenico vividly illuminates how and why Italy's postwar economic modernization brought with it deep conflicts of social and cultural adjustment. If all textbook writers

had Domenico's gift for a sharp phrase and a telling anecdote, students might be a little more willing to read and learn.

The book's last chapter, which begins with the student unrest of the 1960s, then rushes through the terrorist crisis of the 1970s, addresses the rise of new forces such as the women's movement and the Radicals, discusses the erosion of the DC's power and the collapse of the PCI, analyses the crisis of the political system in the 1990s, looks at the new parties of the right and then, in two brief concluding sections, examines Italy's new status as a 'consumer nation' with substantial demographic problems, is too much of a stretch even for a writer with Domenico's talent for synthesis. It would have been better – publisher permitting – to split the chapter in two and take a dozen or so more pages to round off the book fittingly. As it is, the chapter treats some important political developments far too superficially (the rise of the Lega, for instance, but also the end of Italian communism), makes a number of small, but irritating misjudgements and errors of fact, and leaves out the European context in which Italian domestic political and economic decisions have increasingly been taken. European integration and Italy's attitude towards it, is given about ten lines in the whole text and five lines in the last chapter. It is way too little: here, one must say that the brevity of Domenico's text has distorted the historical record.

With a textbook, the crucial question always is, 'is it worthwhile adopting this book as a classroom text?' The answer, so far as this book is concerned, is an unambiguous 'yes'. The book will be helpful for introductory surveys of twentieth century Europe, as part of the reading requirements for broad lecture courses on modern Italy and could even serve, supplemented by articles and chapters from denser works, as the core text for an undergraduate seminar on contemporary Italian history.

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John F. Pollard (2005) *Money and the Rise of the Modern Papacy. Financing the Vatican, 1850–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. i–xx, 1–265, \$85.00, ISBN 0-521-81204-6 hardcover

The book describes how the management of Vatican finances evolved throughout a century during which we witness the passage from an income principally derived from the offerings of the faithful (Peter's Pence) and income taxes on the residents of the papal state, to income that derives from a complex financial structure administered by financial experts and closely linked to the world of high Italian and international banking.

The author introduces the book's central theme, demonstrating how the structure of Vatican income in the first half of the nineteenth century was the result of the progressive exhaustion of the other sources of income from which the Catholic Church had benefited from the fifteenth century until then. These sources were greatly diminished by the consequences of the Protestant Reformation and the resulting secularization of church properties, as well as from the consolidation of national states and their fiscal needs at the expense of the church itself, which for a long time had collected tithes from peasants. The author illustrates how the structure based on Peter's Pence and local taxation was unable to survive the conquest of the papal state by the Italians and the consequent loss of fiscal and patrimonial income, and how this event

induced the Catholic church to reorganize its finances, seeking to obtain income from the investment of Peter's Pence.

In particular, the church began to invest in Italian and foreign businesses, linking the fate of Vatican finances ever more closely to the Italian economy and, in particular, to the major enterprises in which the Vatican had investments, such as, for example, the Banco di Roma. This evolution involved two types of consequence that profoundly marked the way in which the Vatican addressed financial questions. On the one hand, it made it necessary to safeguard the financial solidity of the enterprises in which the Vatican had invested its own resources. There was, in fact, no lack of moments in which such investments were seriously imperilled by a crisis in the participating enterprises or the depositaries of Vatican funds that risked making them lose important sums of money. In this case the Vatican had to use its own political influence to obtain the necessary support for protecting its investments, as in the case of the Banco di Roma crisis in the early 1920s, when the Mussolini government intervened to save the bank but obtained in exchange political support for the consolidation of an authoritarian regime that was destined to become a dictatorship. On the other hand, the growing complexity of administering the Vatican finances required an ever-increasing degree of competence and therefore financial experts who managed such relations, as in the case of Bernardino Nogara who acted as 'financial officer' of the Vatican for a long period, during which he also had to administer funds paid to the Vatican by the Italian government under the terms of the Lateran Pacts.

The book is doubtless a valid text that confronts a theme that crosses the border between the history of Catholicism and the history of international finance. The contribution that it makes to not only literature about Italy but also more generally concerning nineteenth- and twentieth-century European history is original and stimulating. The book's structure is simple and facilitates reading, even if at times it seems too schematic. The author subdivides the book into chapters, using as a sequence the succession of popes to the throne of Peter. Each chapter usually includes an introductory section on the new pope, then a paragraph about the financial situation at the moment of the new pope's nomination, then a discussion of the principal events of that papacy, especially in the area of Vatican finance. While the decision to dedicate a chapter to every pope is on the whole very effective, it makes the internal structure of the chapter seem overly repetitive and sometimes causes some difficulty in making the connection between aspects whose analysis does not lend itself to the temporal scansion adopted for defining each period.

Beyond the strengths associated with the originality of the approach, the book has some striking strong points in its representation of the interweaving of Vatican finances and the Italian economy. The author eludes the misleading descriptions of the Italian banking situation diffused at the international level by such scholars as Douglas Forsyth, and instead focuses on the consequences of the collapse of Wall Street as the real reason for the banking collapse of the 1930s, thus succeeding in giving a rational explanation for the Vatican's motive in investing in industrial and financial stocks despite the growing crisis. Furthermore the author gives us a rather complete picture of the investments made by the Vatican and of the connections with Italian finance, especially during the period in which Nogara was administrator. Unfortunately, however, he neglects some aspects that would have been important to clarify, because they would have allowed us to understand better the role of intermediary performed by Nogara, especially with the Banca Commerciale Italiana (BCI). This is the case of the Vatican's holdings in Italian banks

affiliated with the BCI in Central and Eastern Europe, which the author does not mention, and whose existence makes Nogara's independence from the BCI doubtful. Such independence, however, seems dubious in the light of Nogara's projects for acquiring shares of Wagons-Lits and Cook's, whose capital had for a long time been backed by the BCI. Another theme that the author seems to overlook is the role of foreign bank branches (first those associated with Banco di Roma, later also those of the BCI in which the Vatican held shares) in supporting the activities and collecting the deposits of the local Catholic communities. This role emerges often in the history of foreign branches of Italian banks, and a study of these aspects would greatly enrich the author's already laudable analysis. A final aspect that perhaps merited Pollard's attention is that of the Vatican's losses owing to World War II. Holdings in eastern European banks were lost, as perhaps were other investments in industrial enterprises; and assuredly during the conflict the traditional source of Peter's Pence must have been greatly reduced. A quantification of such losses would have been very useful to students of that period.

From the point of view of content, the book seems to have been edited with great care. There are only a few spelling errors (Italgaz instead of the correct name, Italgas, Guano instead of Gualino), which is remarkable in a book that contains so many terms in Italian.

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Stefano Luconi and Guido Tintori (2004) *L'ombra lunga del fascio: canali di propaganda fascista per gli 'italiani d'America'* (Milan: M&B Publishing), pp. 1-154, €17.00, ISBN 88-7451-014-4 paperback

In this well-documented study, Luconi and Tintori address various and continuing attempts by the Fascist regime to mobilize Italian-American opinion as part of a broader propaganda effort to build support for the government and its policies. In his introduction, relying largely on published sources, Tintori does an admirable job of placing the study in historical context. He summarizes US immigration policy, Mussolini's reaction to the Quota Act of 1924 as an 'insult' to Italy, the organization of *fasci* in North American cities, the Duce's plan to 'fascistize' Italian Americans and changing responses of American administrations from Wilson to Roosevelt. As American antifascists organized in protest, a dynamic materialized in which the Italian government repeatedly adapted its propaganda policies and apparatus to changing conditions — first the Fascist League of North America, then the Lictor Federation and the more subtle approach of penetrating Italian-American social and cultural organizations. All were designed to capitalize on Mussolini's popularity in the Little Italies of urban America and particularly among the Italian language, philo-Fascist newspapers such as Generoso Pope's *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* and *Il Corriere d'America*.

The authors examine three cases of propaganda: the ambitious and generalized efforts of the Ufficio di informazioni italiano (New York) and the more focused campaigns utilizing movie theatres and radio stations. Tintori explores the first two. Modelled after the British Library of Information, the Italian information office acted as part of a wider effort to disseminate Fascist propaganda worldwide. One of Tintori's numerous contributions is to explain the complexities of this effort caused by conflicting authority and changing personnel. The Ministero per la Stampa e Propaganda dispatched Bernardo Bergamaschi in the fall of 1935 to build American support for Italy's initiative in Ethiopia

through a heavily financed campaign of publicity, lobbying and modern marketing. Bergamaschi turned to Luigi Villari and Ugo Veniero D'Annunzio, son of Gabriele. Villari headed an office of the Italian embassy in Washington that advised 'cultural agents' in the various North American consulates, dispensing Fascist propaganda from Rome. D'Annunzio had founded the Unione Italiana d'America and nurtured numerous connections with prominent Americans, including William J. Donovan, William Randolph Hearst, James Farley and Cordell Hull. In May 1937, Italy's ambassador to Washington, Fulvio Suvich, appointed D'Annunzio president of the Ufficio di informazioni italiano. Funded at an annual rate of US \$50,000 and operating under the direction of the Ministry of Popular Culture, the office opened at 57th Street and Madison Avenue as the Italian Library of Information in August 1938. The ILI found American journalists and academicians most interested in corporativism, but turned its focus more directly to the encouragement of the American isolationist movement and to the campaign to build on Mussolini's positive image among Italian Americans.

The entry of Italy into World War II placed its US propaganda operations in jeopardy and soon the American government ordered the ILI to close. It ceased activity on 15 July 1941. Tintori maintains that, in spite of difficulties, 'there is no doubt that the actions of D'Annunzio appear... to be the most efficacious among all those undertaken by the Minculpop in the United States'. Among the most effective were lecture tours, particularly those of Margherita Sarfatti and Olivia Rossetti Agresti. The problems encountered by the propagandists, Tintori concludes, were primarily products of the limitations on funding that resulted from weaknesses in the Italian economy.

Cinematic propaganda in North America, according to Tintori, was an extension of the Fascists' awareness of the potential of cinema as an instrument for building mass consensus. In 1935, the Italian ambassador to Washington, Augusto Rosso, initiated a programme to distribute a 'double circuit' of Italian films, including both Luce documentaries and full-length movies. However, these efforts were hampered from the start by delays in delivery, bureaucratic problems, and prohibitive distribution costs. One film, *Fiamme di Guerra in Abissinia*, proved particularly popular among Italian Americans in New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Washington, and Ambassador Suvich in 1937 believed that cinematic propaganda had enjoyed 'notable success' in Italian-American communities. However, in that same year the Nuovo Mondo motion picture company of New York, the major American distributor of Italian films, was liquidated, and by 1939, according to Tintori, 'the regime was cinematically mute'.

When Alessandro Pavolini succeeded Dino Alfieri as Minister of Popular Culture in October 1939 he attempted to reinvigorate previous efforts by involving Luce and Pathé News in the distribution of films in the USA, but Italy's June 1940 invasion of France brought his efforts to a standstill. By the end of the year, Luce suspended operations, and the meagre funding for cinematic propaganda was diverted to military expenditures. Tintori's chapter on cinema, like his chapter on the Italian Library of Information, is rich in detail and useful in explaining the relationships among the various agencies, particularly the MAE and Minculpop. Throughout, the author's careful reading of documents provides a welcome authoritativeness.

Examining the third side of the triangle of Fascist propaganda in the US, Luconi argues that, although Mussolini was 'relatively slow' to grasp the potential of radio as a propaganda tool, by 1930 the regime had begun to transmit Italian-language radio signals aimed at Italian communities in the Americas. They hoped to justify and embellish Italian policy while conveying the impression that Italian technology and

equipment were state-of-the-art. With a new transmitter in place in 1934, the Fascists beamed signals justifying the Ethiopian war as a 'civilizing' event. Realizing the entertainment potential of the medium, the government always assured that overt propaganda occupied less than half the air time, the remainder being filled with music, talk and 'buy Italian' programming.

In addition to programmes packaged in Italy, the regime utilized American networks NBC and CBS, as well as their local affiliates such as WQXR in New York, to get out their message. Luconi notes that during the 1930s more than 200 local radio stations broadcast in Italian. Such stations became for the Fascists, as they had for the Nazis, important conduits of propaganda, as they covered such events as Dino Grandi's 1931 visit and Italo Balbo's transatlantic flight, peaking at the time of the declaration of the Empire. To illustrate the effectiveness of such propaganda, the author cites Giuseppe Prezzolini, who credited Fascist radio for its role in limiting sanctions against Italy during the Ethiopian conflict. With a more powerful transmitter in place after 1938, the regime trumpeted its foreign policy, justifying Italy's invasion of Albania to Greek Americans and celebrating Axis successes in 1941. In February of that year, Mussolini created a new agency, Radio Urbe, to which he gave the responsibility of dispensing Italian military news to foreign countries. All the while, Italian propagandists attempted to neutralize American antifascists.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, as with other forms of Fascist propaganda, Italian-language radio broadcasters came under even greater scrutiny. Encouraged by such Italian American antifascists as New York mayor Fiorello La Guardia, labour leader Luigi Antonini, Max Ascoli of the Mazzini Society, physician Charles Fama, and Harvard professor Gaetano Salvemini, numerous arms of the US government began to scrutinize Fascist broadcasts. Among those who launched investigations were the US congress, the FBI, the office of War Information, the FCC, and the Roosevelt administration itself. In July 1942, Mussolini ordered the end of Radio Urbe transmissions and while the Minculpop of the Republic of Salò would attempt to resume broadcasting, they enjoyed little success in the face of Italy's declaration of war against Germany on 8 September 1943.

In his conclusion, Luconi provides a modest – and not unrealistic – assessment of the subject of the volume. Fascist propaganda, he notes, was not necessarily the prevalent factor, but merely one of many, that engendered Italian-American loyalty to the Fascist regime. This is a useful book. Its shortcomings, including some redundancy, are perhaps inherent in the format that provides three monographic studies by two authors. Both endeavour to provide context and interpretation, especially in the introduction and conclusion, but some more thorough editing might have lent greater continuity. Still, readers in search of a more complete understanding of Fascist propaganda efforts in the USA will not be disappointed in the volume Luconi and Tintori have fashioned.

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Gabriele Hammermann (2004) *Gli internati militari italiani in Germania, 1943-1945* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino), pp. 1-573, €28.00, ISBN 88-15-09703-1 hardcover

This is an important addition to the literature on the too-long neglected subject of the treatment of the more than 800,000 Italian soldiers rounded up and disarmed by German

forces after the Italian – Allied armistice of 8 September 1943. Over half of this number was captured in the Balkans and the Greek islands, in a few cases after attempts to resist that notoriously ended in massacre. The remainder were seized in France and Italy itself as the Italian forces, with some honourable but easily defeated exceptions, disbanded in chaos and confusion after the shameful flight of the high command and the monarch himself. This part of the story, summarized effectively in an early chapter of the book, is already well enough known through the work of Elena Aga Rossi and Jens Petersen. The bruising detail of what happened to the 'Italian military internees' as the Germans slightly termed them in order not to give them prisoner-of-war status, with its consequent responsibilities for the detaining power, has not until now been fully retrieved from the German archive sources, collated with the testimonies of returned internees.

'All the orders given out after 8 September were aimed at obtaining the maximum exploitation of the labour resources available, summarized in the formula *Keep the willing, get rid of the unwilling*' (p. 28). What these documents further reveal is that from start to finish the Nazi regime reserved particularly humiliating ways to exploit the extra-labour power that had fallen into their hands, initially to the extent of being counter-productive in terms of its own objectives of maximizing war production, but always with scarcely more regard for the welfare of their captives than they showed to East European slave labourers. The only exception was made for the Italian officers, whose status was respected to the extent that they were not required to do manual work. For the other ranks, no compunction was shown about using them in dangerous situations proscribed by the Geneva Convention, and their meagre rations were pared back to starvation level if they failed to meet often-exaggerated production targets. Free rein was given, deliberately by the authorities, to popular prejudices and stereotypes, now inflamed by the universal perception that the Italians were 'traitors'. Southern Italians in particular were regarded with distaste and assumed to be lazy and dirty: if their personal hygiene failed to satisfy their captors they were forcibly scrubbed.

In July 1944 Hitler finally agreed to requests from Sauckel, his Minister of Armaments, backed by less influential pleas from Mussolini, to convert the status of the Italian Military Internees into 'civilian workers', with the result that they became the responsibility of the firms or enterprises to which they were assigned. In other theatres, prisoners-of-war accorded such status or its near equivalents could often become re-humanized in the eyes of the host population, so much so that Italians working on farms or in factories in Britain were often very reluctant to be repatriated at the end of the war, having formed personal bonds with workmates and their families. This does not seem to have occurred in the case of the Italians in Germany, where the rigid separation of German workers from foreigners (with corresponding severe penalties) was generally enforced by management and supervisory grades, while ordinary workers (increasingly the elderly) were merely indifferent to them. Solidarity and empathy were notable by their absence.

As for Mussolini's Social Republic, its influence was nugatory in all respects. Roughly three-quarters of the Italian Military Internees refused to join the neo-Fascist army, although, in Hammermann's view, this was more attributable to war weariness and apathy than to any strong political attitudes. They rarely caused trouble in the workplace and 'rationing by results' was usually effective in maintaining their productivity until food supplies sank to starvation levels in the last months of the war.

The experience was brutal and brutalizing. It was compounded by the indifference and hostility of their fellow-countrymen when they finally returned to Italy. Something

like fifty thousand Italian officers and men lost their lives during or after their capture by the Germans in 1943, half of them in the roundup period itself, half of them in the period of their captivity and forced labour. With the exception of the Soviet prisoners-of-war they were the worst treated in terms of food and conditions of confinement. They did not have the moral compensations that accompanied their partisan compatriots who died in almost equal numbers, but they too should be counted in the tally of Mussolini's victims.

One curiosity not especially helpful to students: in a book of this scholarly weight, with a scrupulously compiled bibliography and ample footnotes, there is no analytical or even a name index. Despite this, the book must be regarded as an essential contribution to the topic.

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Alfio Mastropaolo (2005) *La mucca pazza della democrazia – nuove destre, populismo, antipolitica* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri), pp. 1–201, €13.00, ISBN 88-339-1587-5 paperback

The parties of the 'new right' this book is concerned with are not the unpleasant and yet perhaps inevitable, offspring of the maturity of democracy; rather and this is the central claim here, and one which is argued very forcefully and clearly by its author, the emergence and success of parties which thrive on 'anti-politics' has laid bare how profoundly ill democracy itself has become today. Democracy has not been nurtured by those who were supposed to take care of it. As a consequence, its illness has remained unchecked and the quality of democratic life is diminishing. By passionately exposing the gravity of its present condition in this study, Mastropaolo is giving yet another valuable contribution to the debate about what can be done to achieve more involvement by citizens, more participation. To argue his case, at the beginning of his book Mastropaolo analyses the main features of the parties that will be the object of his analysis (i.e. newly formed, or recently redefined, often successful, right wing European formations such as the Lega Nord, Forza Italia, the Front National, UKIP the FPÖ, and many others). He then considers what rhetoric they have in common and discusses the composition of their electorate. This part of the book offers an excellent introduction to the phenomenon of the new right and gives the author the opportunity to argue against the adoption of the term 'populist' to define these formations. However, while it is true that the author makes a strong case here against the abuses and misuses of the term by journalists and political scientists alike, it is less clear in the book what it is that commentators adopting the label 'populist' are supposed to get so fundamentally wrong about the parties themselves – apart from the name, that is. For instance, as the classics on 'populism' constantly remind us, what brings these parties together is *not* some sort of agreement on a consistent and coherent ideology that they can all be said to have adopted. There are of course obvious similarities between these formations (i.e. the opposition to migration from the south), however there are also many very important differences (not to mention that these formations often even fall into self-contradiction, too). Mastropaolo does not dispute this. On the contrary, his first two chapters end up exposing many more differences than similarities between these parties. For instance, traditional Christian morality and family life certainly do not play the same role in the propaganda of, say, Pim Fortuyn on the one hand and the Lega Nord on the other;

the welfare state is the object of harsh criticism in some cases but strenuously defended in others; and so on. The question remains, therefore, as to what the parties listed by Mastropaolo have in common. According to the author, they all despise liberal democracy, with its respect of institutions, its attention for the rights of minorities and its checks and balances. The rhetoric of these parties is thus damaging the quality of democracy because it fosters an 'antipolitical' culture that easily turns into lack of interest for democracy itself, as if democracy was some sort of relic of the past. The job of this book is precisely to expose to what extent these parties' attacks against fundamental democratic principles have been facilitated by those who, in the political world and as members of 'civil society', were supposed to be the custodians of democratic ideas and values. Yet, important as this opposition to liberal democracy certainly is, surely this is not all that can be said about these formations. What does this opposition rest on? In addition to this dangerous and illiberal attitude that characterizes much of the 'new right', many of the parties listed by the author, despite their chameleonic, ever changing and often contradictory rhetoric (one very obvious example being the dramatic change of position of the Lega Nord on Europe) share a similar conception of 'the people' that they allege to represent, seen as unitary and homogeneous, a distinctive conception of leadership and an almost religious faith that 'the leader' will always be able to speak on behalf of the faithful. This is precisely why they believe – and often say in so many words – that democratic institutions are not needed to mediate between 'the people' and the executive. If one just listened 'to the people' and used a bit of common sense instead of being pushed around by the various 'elites' that compete for public resources, there would be little need for endless debates in Parliament, for 'tricks', 'games', 'legging', etc. To say it in one word, by following writers such as Taggart or Mèny and Surel, the majority of the parties Mastropaolo covers in his study are 'populist'. Which is of course the very term Mastropaolo is arguing against. That the label itself has been abused is a fact. That words are important is also a fact. It is however still unclear to this reviewer why we should adopt an alternative label ('new right parties') that seems even more vague than the one it replaces (as it wrongly conflates the likes of Forza Italia and the German Republikaner into the same category), thus causing even more confusion. Of course the real question, whatever the name we choose to adopt, is whether an 'anti-political' rhetoric is the main feature of a series of new formations. Even if we accept that this is the case though, the fact remains that the attacks against democracy of many of these parties can only be fully understood if we also keep in mind what has been pointed out above, i.e. their characteristic conception of 'the people' they want to represent and how they propose themselves as those who are able to say openly 'what everyone thinks'.

The second part of the book offers a very welcome and much needed analysis of what went wrong with Western democracies that facilitated the emergence of the various Le Pen and Bossi of Europe. This is the most interesting part of the study. Although not, in any way, simply 'nostalgic' of the past, here Mastropaolo stresses the important role played by the now much despised traditional mass parties in socializing people, in defining identities and in creating social cohesion. This role was especially important with reference to the disadvantaged and the less well off in society, people who might otherwise feel very disenfranchised. Political parties had a pedagogical role to play, they made politics more comprehensible to citizens (albeit, of course, not on their own). Once the network they had created collapsed, or was at least severely weakened, citizens were abandoned to the charms of 'good looking' candidates and to the

sophisticated media strategies of the likes of Berlusconi. Without putting up much of a fight, allegedly 'forced to change' by the new 'needs' of a media age, even historic parties turned themselves into marketing agencies and came to regard citizens merely as 'dispensers of votes'. No wonder that apathy and detachment from politics are such serious issues now, and problems the gravity of which Mastropaolo is not at all willing to downplay. Far from being victims, the parties and movements of the left are also responsible for this situation. First, argues the author, they surrendered to the neo-liberal orthodoxy of recent decades, with its myths of 'the individual' and 'private enterprise', which meant that ideas of 'community' and even the defence of the welfare state were shelved, only to be 'rediscovered' by the 'new right'. Second, in their laudable efforts to expose the corruption of politicians and the inefficiencies of welfare systems in various countries, left-wing parties ended up adding to a crisis of trust in politics and the state that now risks dealing a mortal blow to democratic values themselves (and the fabled European social model). It did not take much in fact for anti-party, anti-bureaucracy rhetoric to turn into anti-democratic propaganda. Institutions started being seen as an impediment, rather than as providers of solutions to actual problems and the democracy that we could have defended, and perhaps are still in time to reconstruct, became ill under the assaults of those who would replace Parliaments with on-line surveys of very dubious accuracy (Forza Italia), or rather appeals to 'direct democracy' (e.g. Dansk Folkeparti, the FN), particularly when the 'enemy' is an easy-to-identify minority. The 'mad cow disease' of our democracies, Mastropaolo argues, should indeed be cured through more participation, through giving voice to the 'demos'; however such participation should be seen as a way for people to understand politics and have a say in it, not as an alternative to the functioning of institutions. When people see a chance of effecting change, they still come out and get involved, as the recent mobilization against the intervention in Iraq across Europe has clearly demonstrated. The strength of this book is precisely in showing us that the antidemocratic tide can be opposed, that spaces of resistance can be opened and that when faced with a real alternative people do come out and take part.

Written by one of the leading political scientists in Italy, this book should become required reading in any advanced university course which addresses the changing nature of political parties, the state of democracy in western Europe and the threat posed by anti-political/populist/radical movements to it, and let the debate continue as to what term we should adopt to define that threat.

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Debora Burton, Susan Vandiver Nicassio and Agostino Ziino (eds) (2004) *Tosca's Prism: Three Moments of Western Cultural History* (Boston: Northeastern University Press), pp. i–xviii, 1–326, \$47.50, ISBN 1-55553-616-6 hardcover

The essays in this collection were presented at the international conference 'Tosca 2000', held in Rome in 2000. They are divided into three asymmetrical sections: 'Circa 1800', the time of the events dramatized in Giacomo Puccini's *Tosca*, 'Circa 1900', the year of the opera's première, and 'Circa 2000', the year of the conference. As may be expected for conference essays, *Tosca* is used as a unifying element for articles from different fields of study, such as history, music history, French theatre and Italian opera.

Thus the book has a multi-disciplinary character, its intended audience extending beyond specialists, possibly including performers and opera lovers. A potential problem is that the individual essays are uneven in character and scope, making the collection a hybrid between a strictly academic book and one aiming at the general public.

Some of the essays provide a historical background for the facts fictionalized by Victorien Sardou in the play *La Tosca* of 1887 (the source of Puccini's opera) and for the anticlerical character of the opera. The opening essay, by Alexander Grab, argues that Napoleon's rule had long-lasting positive effects in Italy. Marina Formica's essay deals with the Roman Republic of 1798–99. Formica suggests that Cesare Angelotti – the republican fugitive aided by Cavaradossi – was a 'purged' version of Liborio Angelucci, a prominent figure in the Roman Republic, one whose memory was tainted by charges of corruption. In his essay, in the middle section of the book, John Anthony Davis argues that anticlericalism was at an all-time high at the time of *Tosca*'s première. The historian supports his argument through an overview of the Italian political situation at the end of the nineteenth century – with the birth of the Socialist Party in 1892 and Pope Leo XIII's reaction to socialist ideas through the encyclical *Rerum novarum* (1891) – and through the testimony of satirical periodicals of the time. Herbert Handt's 'The life and times of Domenico Puccini' (pp. 19–66) describes the prominence of the Puccini family in Lucca's musical life and discusses Domenico Puccini's possible influence on the 'Te Deum' in the first act finale of *Tosca*. Giacomo's grandfather was, in fact, the author of one 'Te Deum' celebrating the French surrender of Genoa to the Austrians in 1800, an event temporally close to the seeming victory by the Austrians at Marengo, which is announced and celebrated in the opera. Handt also reproduces in full a letter that Domenico, a student of Paisiello, wrote to his father from Naples on the occasion of the riots preceding the arrival of the French in that city. This document gives us an insight into the anxiety of non-Neapolitans witnessing the events of 1799, showing that Giacomo's grandfather did not care for politics, while he feared for his own well being.

Two independent comparisons of Sardou's play and Puccini's opera are provided by Eugen Weber and Julian Budden. Weber draws additional comparisons between the historical events in the background of *La Tosca* and *Tosca* and the contemporary situations in France and Italy at the times of their respective premières. Budden argues for the dramatic superiority of Puccini's opera. In addition, a scene-by-scene comparison of the French play and the Italian opera, by Susan Vandiver Nicassio, is included in the Appendix. Inserted between Weber's and Budden's articles, William Laird Kleine-Ahlbrandt's essay argues that, by choosing the battle of Marengo, Sardou was really exploiting the climate of enthusiasm for Napoleon dominating in his day. More strictly musicological essays are those by Dieter Schickling, Deborah Burton, Marcello Conati and Giorgio Sanguinetti. Schickling discusses the changes made by Puccini and the librettists in order to make the opera believable to audiences that were familiar with the places and, partly, the facts mentioned in the opera. However, later on, the musicologist apparently shifts focus and addresses the issue of the musical 'value' of the opera, concluding that *Tosca* 'lies on the boundary between traditional and new compositional dramaturgies' (p. 132). 'Unintentional' answers to Schickling may be read in Conati's and Burton's contributions. Conati suggests substituting 'reminiscence' for 'Leitmotiv' – the term used by Puccini himself – to describe Puccini's use of recurring themes in *Tosca*. Conati convincingly argues that Puccini, 'the theater musician' (p. 178), should not be judged on the basis of how clearly he received Wagner's lesson, rather on the theatrical effectiveness of his work, in line with Verdi's tradition. Burton's



essay shows that Puccini followed a carefully planned tonal structure in the composition of *Tosca*. Sanguinetti's contribution provides an overview of the music theories that were proposed in Puccini's time in Italy. Sanguinetti also discusses the reactions of Puccini's contemporaries to the composer's non-systematic use of 'new' harmonies in operas such as *La fanciulla del West* and *Il tabarro*.

Pier Giuseppe Gillio's essay is of great interest for understanding the creation of *Tosca* – and traditional Italian opera in general – as a collaborative process. Gillio delineates the history of the libretto of *Tosca* analysing previously unavailable material from the archives of Giuseppe Giacosa and documents preserved in the Ricordi archives. Gillio discusses the comments that Illica, Giacosa, Ricordi and Puccini wrote on the working copies of the libretto, allowing one to appreciate how changes were decided upon. The opera, as originally planned, would have featured a nationalistic tirade and *Tosca's* madness scene, both of which were ultimately eliminated. The final text is the result of a negotiation among several people, including Sardou.

The last section, 'Circa 2000', deals with issues arising from modern performances of the opera. Vandiver Nicassio discusses 'updated' stagings of repertoire operas, especially the political transpositions of the situation dramatized in *Tosca*. Alfredo Mandelli's essay laments the loss of nuances arising from incorrect performing of specific passages in the score. The book ends with William Weaver's panel discussion with singers Magda Olivero and Giuseppe Di Stefano, director Luigi Squarzina and 'impresario' Gioacchino Lanza Tomasi.

A criticism to the collection as a whole is that it would have benefited from closer editorial attention in order to avoid repetitions across the essays and to transform them from stand-alone articles or conference presentations into more integrated book articles. Even as it is, though, the book is informative and readable, containing new and relevant contributions to the study of Puccini and Italian opera in general.

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Annie J. Randall and Rosalind Gray Davis (2005) *Puccini and the Girl: History and Reception of 'The Girl of the Golden West'* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), pp. i–xv, 1–241, 1–III, \$35.00, ISBN 0-226-70389-4 hardcover

The volume presents twenty-nine, hitherto unpublished pieces of correspondence (generally consisting of a few paragraphs each, and at times, of clever verse) that Giacomo Puccini, composer of the opera *La fanciulla del West*, wrote to principal librettist Carlo Zangarini (1872–1943) during the three-year period that preceded the piece's first performance (Metropolitan Opera, New York, 1910). In themselves charming and vivid, these letters illuminate three aspects of Puccini's work: his frank approach to collaboration ('il linguaggio per me non è quello che vuoi'), his impatient fondness for the new world setting of *Fanciulla* ('Sempre più la malattia californiana mi prende') and his *coup*-oriented sense of dramatic structure ('Il 3° atto non mi capacita la 1ª entrata di Minnie'). In the light of this newly published material, the authors have undertaken thorough reappraisals of the genesis, content, impact and cultural significance of *Fanciulla*. With sixteen pages of correspondence and almost 200 pages of commentary, the book as a whole offers the sort of textual preparation for the knowing of the work, of the kind that everyone, specialist or not, might hope to consult.

Part I (chs 1 and 2) of the commentary, entitled 'Setting the stage: texts and subtexts', recounts the provenance of the letters, then proceeds to a full review of the plot. The study emphasizes close attention to meanings expressed through notions of nationality, class and sex. Writing with Attic clarity, the authors remind us that the opera's title refers not to some vague 'wild western' setting, but rather, to the *West* of the California mountains during the Gold Rush of 1849–50. The story foregrounds the alienation and loneliness of its characters, mining people from the USA who, having emigrated from the eastern states, now find themselves trapped between a failed dream of easy riches and a longing to return to home and family. With perhaps unintentional topicality, the authors note that this is the troubled California of the years following the Mexican–American War (1846–48), after which the victorious USA took possession of huge tracts of Mexican land. The libretto makes clear the war's 'devastating effect' upon the Spanish-speaking *Californios* and the Native Americans, who suddenly find themselves, in the conflict's aftermath, to be second-class citizens in a 'foreign' land (the *dramatis personae* include representatives from both groups). Part I also considers Puccini's debt to Wagner ('the [orchestral] prelude's brevity and densely packed motivic content signal the exuberance of the Wild West but also its instability'). Indeed, Puccini's mastery of *Leitmotiv* here outshines many passages in Wagner, in so far as it 'instigates' (rather than merely 'accompanies') stage action.

In Part II (chs 3–5), 'Creating the opera', the critical eye pulls back from the finished work itself, in order to gain a wider view of the economic, social and artistic factors that surrounded the opera's composition in the years 1907–10. Here, the authors downplay previous criticism that has centred upon an oft-cited scandal in Puccini's marital life during the same period. Instead, they look for meaning in the relative importance of the piece's grandly hyped New York premiere and its American setting. The western *ambientazione* – in particular, the third act's 'backdrop of the primordial, untamed forests of northern California' – functions not simply as a 'hook' to draw in New York audiences. For the composer, rather, it represents a 'complex signifier' that inspires paradoxically both a heady sense of freedom and a fear of dangerous lawlessness (here, this reviewer notes a kinship with the *site pittoresque et sauvage* that is the setting of Act 3 of *Carmen*). 'Sono fermo', Puccini writes to Zangarini in letter no. 6, 'che [il 3° atto] dovrà essere all'aria aperta in una grande spianata d'una foresta con alberi colossali e con 10 o più cavalli e 60 uomini. Sarà un atto magnifico!' '[P]ensate alla grandezza [sic] del 3° atto', he adds in letter no. 8. The reader comes to understand that Puccini's artistic vision of 'America' would have been equally coherent, had the opera premiered in any other nation in the world.

Some contemporaries recognized immediately that *Fanciulla*, an almost completely through-composed piece in the style of Puccini's contemporaries, was a felicitous child of the new century. Chief among them, the authors report, was Arturo Toscanini, the opera's conductor, who noted that the piece 'is flooded with melody' and yet 'has more vigor, more variety, and more masculinity, than the orchestration of the composer's earlier operas. It is more complex. In one word, it is more modern.' Unlike Toscanini, the study reminds us, there were many who missed the presence of formal, four-square arias (numbers), of the type easily extracted from the whole for use on the concert stage or in the recording studio. (One might remark that in our day, the same charge has been levelled against the theatrical compositions of Stephen Sondheim.)

In Part III (chs 6–8), 'Critical perspectives', the authors make solid contributions to two critical traditions associated with *Fanciulla*. The first centres on the question of

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'Americanism' (with its attendant themes of exoticism and nationalism), and on the supposed failure of *Fanciulla* to achieve 'Americanness'. Beyond its alleged lack of melody, the opera had dismayed its first audiences in this area as well. They had come expecting to hear and see something recognizably and superficially 'American' but were offered instead a complicated construct of the American West, informed, as the study demonstrates, 'by musical and dramatic uses of American social divisions and hierarchies'. This 'Western', which laid out a *verismo*-style 'slice of life' in a country whose 'manifest destiny' was sadly problematic, was as exotic for New Yorkers as it was for the Italians.

Second, the authors consider the traditional critical emphasis on the opera's theme of redemption. True, they explain, Minnie (the heroine) rides in on horseback to save her lover, a reformed *Californio* bandito, during the last possible moments of Act 3. Yet her character – who is in the midst of a sexual awakening and who is not above behaving cynically or dishonestly when it suits her purpose – is deeper, more three-dimensional, than this formidable ending might imply.

In closing, the authors make observations that may bear upon future productions of the reconsidered opera. They tear at the myth that the libretto is weak dramatically, arguing convincingly that this idea likely arose from the reactions of audiences unprepared to accept Minnie as a strong female protagonist (who, unlike Violetta, Mimi, Carmen and Butterfly before her, will not ultimately play the victim). They suggest provocatively that another of the opera's supposed flaws – the alleged improbability of seeing a group of 'rugged' miners humming, singing and moving according to the conventions of the Italian lyric stage – may really reflect a deep cultural problem for audiences who feel that these conventions, in this setting, undermine some 'key aspects of masculinity'.

In appendices, the volume provides exemplary critical apparatus: Italian text of the letters; Italian text of material cited in English; an overview of Zangarini's other libretti; a Metropolitan Opera performance history; discography and videography. Well reproduced illustrations (of Puccini, singers in costume, set designs, etc.) help the reader picture the Metropolitan of the early twentieth century. On the whole, Randall and Davis recapture the contemporary moment of the opera's first appearance, and explore the limits and distortions that an ambivalent audience brought to the piece. Indeed, we might add that New York would not embrace any piece of music theatre as fully 'American' until the opening, some 17 years after *Fanciulla*, of Jerome Kern's *Showboat*.

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Sandra Ponzanesi (2004) *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture* (Albany, NY: University of New York Press), pp. i–xvii, 1–264, \$50, ISBN 0791462013 hardcover

The book aims to address many issues that inquire into the status of postcolonial literatures – postcolonialism itself – as a cultural discourse of shifting hegemonies. Ponzanesi explores the varying degrees of complicity between postcolonial discourses and the central system. She examines the ambiguous process that helps, on the one hand, to consolidate the field of postcolonial studies and, on the other, to make certain postcolonial writings objects of metropolitan consumption. Ponzanesi points out that

some postcolonial literatures, such as Anglo-Indian, have obtained worldwide success, thereby reaching major status and achieving canonical recognition. Their minor status has been filled by other 'struggling minorities... who can now shine in reflected light and claim a literary autonomy' (p. 15).

As we see Ponzanesi complicates the process of minority literature formations and their interactions with both majority literatures and other minorities. Minority literatures do not necessarily engage with and against majority literatures in a vertical relationship. Within the field of minority literature some literatures have minor and some have major status. She points to the case of the Afro-Italian literary tradition that only recently 'has the role of a minority literature within the context of Anglophone postcolonial literatures and it is therefore subversive toward the dominant postcolonial canon' (p. 28).

The book is divided in two parts: the first section examines four works by Indian diaspora authors, the second reviews four works by Afro-Italian migrants. All the writers are women and their texts are largely focused on women characters. In her introduction and first chapter, Ponzanesi makes it clear that these two groups of writers share the 'experience of having undergone the oppression of colonialism' (p. i). While the shape of colonialism has differed from locale to locale, as in the degree to which it has penetrated a culture or dislocated its inhabitants, Ponzanesi's book examines the intersection of the themes, modes, and genres with which these women writers re-imagine culture, re-write history, re-envision the role of women and men, and reconstruct identity. The comparisons mainly consist of the many different strategies of resistance these writers adopt 'to reverse the supremacy of the West over the Third World' (p. 5). The essays collected in the book are united in their focus on the writers' attempts to create alternative value systems that will enable them to heal and cope with their present life as migrants and ex-colonized.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the challenges of negotiating multiple cultural identities and the patterns migrant women follow in trying to reconcile their cultural past and present. In Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* a constant shifting of identity is a point of strength allowing the protagonist a way out of colonial and patriarchal oppression. By changing identities Jasmine succeeds in assimilating into her new host country, the USA. On the other hand, for Meena the main character of *Fault Lines*, a memoir by Meena Alexander, the coexistence of multiple identities is lived as a 'via crucis' (p. 63).

Chapter 4 examines Sara Suleri's novel *Meatless Days* in which the historical events that led to the independence of Pakistan from British rule are told through the eyes of Pakistani women. In her other works Suleri repeatedly calls attention to the fact that in Pakistani society women do not exist 'as full subjects but they are constructed according to social categories' (p. 80). They are wives, sisters, daughters, aunts. By stitching official accounts of history together with anecdotes, gossip, parables, accounts of the everyday life of women in her family, Suleri brings to the surface the voices of those who have been excluded from patriarchal and colonial forms of writing. According to Ponzanesi, Suleri's subversive narrative strategy cutting across different genres and styles is meant to show the complex process of reconstructing history.

In Chapter 5 Ponzanesi explores the strategies Suneptra Gupta uses in her novel *Moonlight into Marzipan* to subvert traditional Western mythologies, such as the story of the creation of Adam and Eve, the Greek myth of Prometheus and many others. One of her strategies is to portray the male character of the novel, Promothesh, as an anti-hero, as an individual deprived of the capacity of exerting power. Ponzanesi explains that by



undermining the agency of the male character, the novel fulfils its new call for a critical rethinking of myths and of their constructed nature.

The second part of the book begins with a comprehensive overview of Italian colonial history as an important corollary to the better understanding of the works of the Afro-Italian women writers examined in this second section. One important point emerges from this chapter: Italian colonialism has been given intense scholarly attention in Italy since the increase in the number of citizens from Africa who have moved to the peninsula. Even as a minority, this multicultural group has affected Italian social life in terms of re-thinking and re-articulating the concept of national identity. The exploration of Italy's colonial past and its relation to national identity has thus become an imperative.

Chapter 7 explores the status of the children born out of the union of Italian colonizers with black women of the colony. In the novel *L'abbandono* by Erminia Dell'Oro one of the characters is a *métisse* who is searching for an identity that is neither Eritrean nor Italian but racially both. She finds ways to use her life as a *métisse* as a privileged space that allows her to see things in perspective. This coming together of two races becomes the facet of the hybridity inscribed in Maria Abbebù Viarengo's poetry. Maria Viarengo is the daughter of an Italian businessman and an Ethiopian woman. Her poems are written in Italian with vernacular Oromo and Piedmontese words inserted in the text. As Ponzanesi explains 'the vernacular in the text undoes and undermines the binary relation between center and periphery' (p. 164).

Chapter 8 deals with the potential dangers of linguistic translations since, according to Ponzanesi, 'an act of linguistic translation is an act of cultural translation' (p. 178). By translating a text one can very easily fail to read the culture embedded in it and can become the perpetrator of a cultural dyslexia, a process in which important cultural differences remain neglected. According to Ponzanesi, Ribka Sibhatu in *Aulò: Canto-Poesia dall'Eritrea* avoids this problem by creating a text *a fronte* in which Tigrinya and Italian versions appear next to each other. The text *a fronte* 'represents the impossibility of a cultural translation that privileges the dominant language by hosting the immigrant in its own democratic linguistic assimilation' (p. 182). Ribka Sibhatu's text creates 'a space where the Western reader is the Other who is not capable of entering the cultural and linguistic system' (p. 182).

Chapter 9 discusses a recurring theme throughout the essays: the danger of universalizing women's role and how such universalization has often taken place in the context of Western dominance. Women's lives in one place, or writings about women's life in that place, may be misunderstood if measured against women's lives somewhere else. All of this points to the difficult role feminism has played in an assessment of non-Western women's lives and literatures. Operating in the spirit of informed and interested critique, Ponzanesi seeks to address here the issue of women's infibulation through the novel *Sette gocce di sangue* by Sirad S. Hassan.

Ponzanesi's study moves between theory and literature with clarity and ease. The author puts some flesh on the bones of some challenging academic jargon thus helping the reader to find his/her way through concepts of postcolonial theory. Read individually, each essay carries its message convincingly; read in conjunction, the two sections of the book may be perceived as almost two separate bodies lacking a unity of dialogue.

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Jennifer Lorch (2005) *Pirandello: Six Characters in Search of an Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 1–257, \$65.00, ISBN 0-521-64618-9 hardcover; \$24.99, paperback

This volume is part of the series 'Plays in Production', which examines the transposition of major dramatic texts to the stage and, where appropriate, to other media. Lorch traces Luigi Pirandello's masterpiece from his original text written in 1921, through a number of important productions that were to influence the playwright's revised version in 1925. It then continues by examining subsequent productions, with a focus on the choices the directors made, including the use of the original 1921 text and/or the 1925 revised version. The volume includes a production chronology, bibliography and photographs of various productions.

The Introduction provides a succinct history of Pirandello's career as an author and specifically as a playwright, and mentions his theories of character portrayal in theatre. Chapter 1 begins with a detailed synopsis of *Six Characters* in the context of the playwright's theories on the human condition and on the dramatic arts, which he expounded in his essays. It then considers the pivotal position of the play as it simultaneously looked back at older theatre while, through its use of fragmentation and treatment of time, looked forward as a work of *avant-garde*, challenging conventional theatrical norms.

Chapter 2 takes up the first production in Rome in 1921, with its legendary opening night that led to scuffles in the theatre and rowdy disturbances that spilled into the streets and continued into the night. Unfortunately there is more extant documentation of the disturbances than of the production of the play. Chapters 3–5 look at some of the earliest important productions in London, New York, Paris and Berlin. The innovations of the individual directors, such as the Russian Georges Pitoëff in Paris and Max Reinhardt in Berlin, the technical possibilities of their theatres, as well as the different traditions in acting and directing are factors considered in the examination and comparison of these early productions. Chapter 6 is pivotal, as it explores how these international productions influenced Pirandello and played an important role in the greatly revised version that he directed in Rome in 1925.

Chapters 7–11 continue with a close look at a number of Italian and international productions from 1936 to 2001, by leading directors such as Giorgio Strehler, Franco Zeffirelli, Robert Brustein and Anatoli Vasiliev. The use of the original 1921 text or the revised 1925 version (some directors combined the two), the deletion or rearrangement of certain sections, and how the directors chose to differentiate the six characters, who appear from the realm of imagination, from the actors portraying actual people are some of the key issues. These chapters also consider how the play was adapted to different cultural and historical contexts. Some directors made a concerted effort to make the play accessible to wide audiences, while others used the play as a vehicle for 'pushing at the frontiers of theatre' (which is the title of Chapter 11). The book ends with a brief look at the play in other media.

This volume provides a detailed examination of the immediate impact *Six Characters* had on international theatre and how it managed to continue in its role as a classic. Pirandellian ideas of subjectivity and relativism, as well as his belief that actors are unable to reproduce exactly what an author envisions challenged the conventional notions of naturalistic theatre. The play took on a life of its own as it served as a canvas for the various directors who explored its possibilities. In his 1922 production in New York, for

example, director Brock Pemberton attenuated the sense of the fourth wall by having an actress enter from the auditorium. He also distinguished the six characters from the other actors with distinct acting styles. The use of make-up and lighting were some of the other devices used in these important pre-1925 productions to distinguish the six characters. And these were some of the innovations that Pirandello then adapted in his revision.

At the same time cultural and linguistic barriers were present. In Great Britain the play was initially censored and thus not granted a license for public performances. Early productions were made by independent companies in 'greenroom conditions'. For the 1922 New York production, Pirandello's descriptive phrase *commedia da fare* was translated as 'comedy in the making' instead of 'play in the making'. Lorch argues convincingly that this mistranslation had an effect on how the critics viewed the play.

The primary purpose of this book is to trace *Six Characters* from the playwright's conception to its instantiation on stage by various directors, exploring the dialectic between text and performance. Lorch executes the task meticulously and with a clear and precise writing style. This book would be excellent for graduate-level classes on Pirandello's theatre. It would also serve well a director who is planning to produce the play.

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Kerstin Pilz (2005) *Mapping Complexity. Literature and Science in the Works of Italo Calvino* (Leicester, UK: Troubador), pp. 1–209, \$19.99, ISBN 1-904744-20 06 paperback

Complexity (from the Latin 'cum-plexus') can be understood as both an ensemble, which embraces, encompasses, or connects several discursive terms (communication has thus been enhanced), and an ensemble (a tangle), which is plaited together, interwoven in such a way as to defy explanation (the Latin term 'explanare' literally means 'to smoothen out, to take out folds'). It is the merit of Kerstin Pilz's book *Mapping Complexity* not to attempt to explain to its readers 'la pensée complexe' – that new paradigm which she notices emerging in the interdisciplinary approach to knowledge both in the so called 'hard sciences' and in literature, notably in Italo Calvino's late works. Any exhaustive explanation would have misunderstood the pluralistic epistemology which characterizes this new paradigm; complex thought attempts to accommodate chaos and disorder through a rethinking of rationality and traditional logic rather than cancelling chaos out by means of rational analysis and processes of simplification. In her study, Pilz opts for 'mapping complexity', a move that is recommended by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, two of the major postmodern philosophers who heralded the new epistemology. In their treatise *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari invite critics to make maps rather than tracings ('calques'). While tracings only reproduce an already given set of logical categories, maps construct their object of study, they 'foster connections between fields', they are 'open and connectable in all their dimensions' (p. 12). In this respect, Pilz's *Mapping Complexity*, like Calvino's own works, is a very successful attempt at creating an epistemological map of the labyrinth that constitutes our contemporary culture. It presents the reader with a wide array of interdisciplinary connections, it brings discourses into dialogue without suppressing their differences and peculiarities, it shows how metaphors inform and are

informed by our conceptual paradigms, how they travel across disciplines in a double process of territorialization and deterritorialization.

In spite of the rhizomatic nature of its thematic content, Kerstin Pilz's book is organized according to the literary – critical tradition of author-centred studies; in six chapters, she traces the evolution of Calvino's dialogue with the emerging interdisciplinary approach to knowledge, moving chronologically from his earlier works to his later hypernovels. In Chapter 2, she presents *Le Cosmicomiche* as a watershed work because its stories are 'an attempt to integrate narrative knowledge with empirical and scientific theory in an effort to reconcile humanity with the Copernican universe' (p. xvii). At the time of *Le Cosmicomiche*, Calvino is haunted by the binary opposition between the discontinuous and the continuous, chaos and order and he struggles to accept the more complex and multiple vision of 'order out of chaos' as proposed by the new sciences. Chapter 3 analyses how in *Palomar*, Calvino's alter ego, Mr. Palomar, oscillates between two opposite models of thought. Borrowing Gianni Vattimo's terms, Pilz sees Mr. Palomar wavering between 'il pensiero forte' (the tendency to adopt models of closure and structure) and 'il pensiero debole' (the postmodern tendency to distrust totalizing visions).

Since Pilz believes that 'metaphors are central to the interdisciplinary exchange which constitutes culture' (p. xviii), in chapters 5 and 6 she discusses three key conceptual metaphors in Calvino's work: the map, the labyrinth and the world as a book. The study excels in showing how the constant reworking of these three metaphors is central to Calvino's shift towards the postmodern episteme. Such a shift informs Calvino's works both at the microlevel of single images and at the macrolevel of the novelistic structure (his late 'hypernovels' adopt permutational systems and information technology as generative devices and, in a way, constitute literary precursors to the subsequent technology of hypertexts, World Wide Web and open encyclopedias).

Finally, in her last chapter (which is also her most successful in terms of rhizomatic writing), the author shows how *Il Castello dei destini incrociati* and *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* can be read as a fascinating dialogue with the new sciences of complexity. The chapter offers a brilliant demonstration of what Calvino meant when he wrote that literature should 'reassert its role of weaving together the various branches of knowledge, the various "codes"' (*Six Memos*, p. 112) and contribute to a general reconceptualization of the way we comprehend the world. In order to show how Calvino manages to accommodate chaos within his narrative models, Pilz discusses key concepts proposed by theories of complexity – such as dynamic systems, dissipative structures, strange attractors, bifurcations, *dinamen* – while analyzing their active appropriation within Calvino's hypernovels. Here, in particular, Pilz discusses key scientists who have concerned themselves with questions of chance, probability and chaos, such as Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, who in *La Nouvelle Alliance* show how chance and determinism can be linked in a meaningful way, or James Gleick who elaborated his 'chaos theory' by asserting that some phenomena in nature are 'order masquerading as randomness', or Henri Atlan, who in his book *Entre le cristal et la fumée* conceives of entropy as a creative force which allows the universe to recreate itself. Pilz underscores how Calvino was intellectually fascinated by such theories yet, while his scientific sources offer a positive epistemology, Calvino's 'relationship with chaos remains fundamentally uneasy' (p. 163). Although 'in *Lezioni americane* he likens literature to an hypercrystal comprising both pockets of order and entropy – in reality his novels convey an enduring anguish' (p. 164).

Pilz's book, *Mapping Complexity*, offers a dramatic refutation of the recent 'Science Wars' debate which pitted the sciences against the humanities by claiming that whenever writers 'extrapolate' metaphors and concepts out of their scientific contexts, they abuse and misrepresent science (see Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont's *Fashionable Nonsense. Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science*). Calvino's ongoing dialogue with the sciences of complexity demonstrates how literature and science constructively inform each other and how both stand to gain from opposing the fragmentation and specialization of their fields.

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Susanna Scarparo and Rita Wilson (eds) (2004) *Across Genres, Generations and Borders: Italian Women Writing Lives* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press), pp. 1–227, \$30.00, ISBN 0-87413-918-X paperback

In this collection of critical and personal essays, women Italianists living and researching on three different continents regardless of origin join together to '...examine the processes involved in writing the lives of women, both as autobiographies and as biographies, and to link the process of narration (*narrazione*) to the act of writing lives and the search for the subject-woman' (p. 1). Taking her cue from the late Carolyn Heilbrun who argued, in *Writing a Woman's Life*, that the return of women writers to autobiography and biography was an essential step in the creation of new traditions for women writing both fiction and history, Paola Bono defines autobiographies/biographies of women as a political project aimed at the reassessment of 'the relationship between women – plural and different, each woman historically placed and identified according to multiple components – and 'woman', trans-historical product of a hegemonic discourse' (p. 14).

The editors group the essays in three main sections; 'Across genres', 'Across generations' and 'Across borders' with the articles of Paola Bono and Ida Dominijanni serving as theoretical bookends, but as should be the case, in a truly interdisciplinary collection such as this one, the essays themselves cross the boundaries in the Table of Contents to address common themes and issues. Women writing stories and reading the stories of other women confront their historically situated selves and that of the other. In 'Women writing letters: epistolary practices in nineteenth-century, newspapers, manuals and fiction', Gabriella Romani expertly illustrates the connection between epistolary practices in women writers such as the Marchesa Colomba, Matilde Serao, Annamaria Mozzoni and Neera (writers who used letters to argue with each other in public as well) and the political program of the *Risorgimento* to promote the identity of the educated Italian women as the 'symbol of an Italian modernity *in fieri*' (p. 27), albeit one still bound by specific gender and class constraints. Hence it is not surprising that several of these women also wrote conduct books since their tales and letters cautioned the new female reader on how to negotiate these new boundaries. Patrizia Guida argues for, as this reviewer has done elsewhere, the prominent place of *Cosima, quasi Grazie* in Deledda's writings because it functions as a 'collective historical memory' (p. 45) of the specific historical situation of the Italian women writer at that time, a memory that challenged the conceptualization of her as a product of 'literary parthenogenesis' (p. 38). Although Dana Renga emphasizes the topics of gender and sexual identity in her

analysis of Elsa Morante's *La Storia*, her elaboration of Morante's critique of historicism serves as an introduction to Maja Mikula's fascinating essay on the autobiography of Carla Capponi (1918–2000) *Con cuore di donna*, published a few weeks before her death. Mikula demonstrates convincingly how Capponi's work, published in the *collana storica* by *Il Saggiatore* challenges the negationism and revisionism involved in the recent debates concerning the role of the resistance, fascism and the demise of the First Republic. This rhetoric aimed at establishing a new identity which all Italians can embrace, is the subject of Ida Dominijanni's concluding essay 'Lost in transition'. Dominijanni reviews three recent films that are linked 'by the same intellectual practice and by the same intention of rewriting the 35 years of Italian political history' (p. 192). Although in these films the most complex characters are female, these figures remain on 'the threshold, which separates intimacy and History, passion and reason...' (p. 206) rather than being given any acknowledgment for having effected political change. This will remain the case until the collective memory recognizes the role of the feminist revolution in the making/unmaking of Italian identity. The role of politics in the life writings of Clara Sereni is examined in Mirna Cicione's well-informed overview of how Sereni uses a mixture of aggressive and self-deprecating irony to deconstruct a mythical family history and represent her self in the political and private spheres.

Although the mother–daughter theme is the primary focus of the two essays in the second section, Bernadette Luciano's, 'Dialoguing with mothers in the twenty-first century: three generations of Italian women writers' and Paula Green's dialogue with Fabrizio Ramondino's final chapter in *Althénopis*. Luciano historicizes the generational mother–daughter conflict. Acknowledgement by women writers of the influence of other women on their writing is a recent phenomenon and Bernadette Luciano expertly examines this conflict in three writers Sibilla Aleramo, Lalla Romano and Gina Lagorio, to show, in these different periods, 'the problematic relationship with writing in and against a dominant patriarchal tradition and within feminist discourse' (p. 113).

History, the mother–daughter conflict and the personal are the focus of Maria Cristina Mauceri's sophisticated analysis of the autobiographies written in Italian by Helga Schneider, daughter of a Nazi mother, and Helena Janeczczek, whose Polish Jewish mothers survived Auschwitz. Both authors have expatriated to Italy and chosen to write in Italian and, both authors use the mother–daughter conflict to mirror their conflicts with their countries of origin. Although the former writer may have left to escape History and the latter to escape the fear and suspicion instilled in her by her mother, both autobiographies demonstrate that 'private life and historical events cannot be separated' (p. 145). Part 3 also includes an article by Rita Wilson and Susanna Scarparo on Anna Maria dell'Oso, a first generation Australian-Italian writer and two autobiographical essays by Australian born writer, Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli, 'Weaving textual tapestries: weaving the "Italian women-writer" into the social fabric' and American born Suzanne Branciforte's 'My other, my self', playful yet serious account of a series of identity repressions that led her from being an American Italianist to becoming an 'Italian American Italian Americanist' (p. 183).

The editors have made sure that all Italian quotes have been translated into English in the notes. The bibliography at the end of the work includes all critical and literary works cited. Some arguments made by the authors are less easily accepted, such as Mauceri's claim that the diasporic writers Schneider and Janeczczek challenge the Italian canon or Dominijanni's efforts to show how feminism has changed Italian politics. Yet these claims do not diminish the insights found in their essays and others concerning how

women from many different backgrounds and periods have learned to negotiate borders, especially the one between life and their art.

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Martha King (2005) *Grazia Deledda: A Legendary Life* (Leicester, UK: Troubadour), pp. i – x + 1 – 235, \$24.99, ISBN 1-90474467-2 paperback

Those familiar with Graza Deledda's work may pause at the subtitle to Martha King's recent biography, *Grazia Deledda: A Legendary Life*. Yes, the magnitude of Deledda's literary production, her international popularity and the distinction of being only the second woman to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature are impressive, but *legendary*? Deledda, neither a feminist nor political during an epoch of ferment and tumult, had the reputation of being reclusive and reserved about her contribution to history. Nonetheless, King's word choice captures the Sardinian novelist's talent for turning the striking personalities and evocative landscapes of her childhood into stories that mythologized the island society, while at the same time negotiating her own authorial persona as a product of this mystical land. King, faithful to Deledda's own claim that her life could be found in her works, uses the novels themselves to chronicle the writer's journey: from a restrictive girlhood in Nuoro, through her discoveries of love, marital life, and motherhood, her response to fame and the culture of Rome, and throughout all phases, her ambition to succeed in the vocation to which she felt destined.

King's book is divided into chapters that demarcate important periods of Deledda's personal and professional life: 'Childhood', 'Early works', 'Lovers by mail', 'Leaving Sardinia', 'Rome', etc. King combines passages from Deledda's novels with excerpts from her epistolary to show how biographical events contributed both to her novels and to her ideas about herself as a novelist. The biography is an engrossing read for anyone with a casual interest in Deledda. In addition, it will enhance the study of her work during a time of revived critical interest, through revealing not merely her life events, but the sensibilities that gave rise to some of her most memorable fiction. King describes the Sardinian landscape in the book's first chapter, 'Nuoro'. Deledda used landscape in her novels as an entity through which protagonists could express their conflicts and passions. King, in turn, discusses the geographical setting behind Deledda's creative development, intimating that the wildness of nature, the contrasts in climate, the indomitable solitude of the mountains all inspired her to consider the pathos of her people in terms of plays between wildness and civilization, self and community, passion and renunciation. King discusses other elements of Deledda's childhood that are equally relevant to her fiction: the architecture of her girlhood house makes us recall the writer's use of interior space to articulate her protagonists' psychological landscapes. King savors the description of the kitchen in particular, a space that was often central to the dramatic action in Deledda's novels.

By the end of the second chapter, 'Childhood', the reader will have a good sense of King's approach: an interspersing of chronological events (the meeting of Deledda's parents, Deledda's birth, etc.) with the ethnographic descriptions of home, community and customs, as well as anecdotes to vivify some of the interesting points of Deledda's early life. In this variegated narrative style, King is true to the work of her subject.

The beauty of Deledda's fiction lies in the texture with which she tells stories, as the protagonist's (often conflicted) actions blend in seamlessly with his impressions and his individual drama is staged abreast of that of society and even of nature.

As King moves into Deledda's adult life, she brings in interesting elements as well, such as Deledda's relationships with the writers Moretti and Tozzi and with Eleonora Duse, who was destined to bring her fiction to the stage. King's descriptions of Deledda's relationships *in famiglia* illuminate Deledda's lifelong devotion to books and education. King's reliance on Deledda's epistolary is critical to her portrait of the writer. These letters indicate Deledda's many contradictions as well as her interest in the dramas of human existence and the need to honour emotions by effusively expressing them, ideas that are fully played out in her novels.

One of the best things King does for Deledda is to portray her many paradoxes. From Deledda's letters, interviews, and essays, King leads us through the contradictions in the life of a woman whose works are remembered for their dramas of conflicting values: emotion versus reason, passion versus self-restraint, and tradition versus modernity. In King's biography, we read of a Deledda with a titanic ambition, who publicly claimed to be modest; we hear her lament the provinciality of her native land – a land which had spurned its budding novelist – while later she defended these same qualities to critics. Deledda embraced independence in women, bemoaning the boredom of those confined to the home and its domestic duties, yet she also extolled her commitment to maternal values and asserted family as important to her life as her muse. Her love/hate relationship with her native Sardinia was transferred to Rome as well. Finally, in the chapter 'Letters to editors', we witness the same woman who claimed to be simple and honest manage a shrewd public relations campaign which at times revealed her real talent at artifice. King does not try to reconcile these contradictions; she simply captures them with the same humour and irony that Deledda used to illustrate the foibles of her dearest protagonists.

There are a couple of phenomena prominent in Deledda's novels, like religion and visual arts, which King mentions in relation to her life but on which she fails to elaborate. Given King's method of intermingling biography and fiction, the reader who has also widely read Deledda may feel disappointed not to hear more about religion. For a reader who is uncomfortable with the intermingling mentioned above, there is a little confusion at times in Chapter 2 ('Childhood'), in which a great deal of King's description comes straight from the pages of Deledda's *Cosima* (justified, perhaps by the fact that this is, indeed, an autobiographical novel). Nonetheless, King deals intelligently with this mix between Deledda's real life and fiction, not reducing either to a replica of the other. Nor does King oversimplify the philosophy of life that Deledda projected through her letters, essays, and fiction. King is perhaps most loyal to Deledda in her portrayal of the writer in her many contradictions. She captures this spirit with Deledda's own words that 'I am a child and an old woman, I am a woman and a man, I am good and bad, foolish and shrewd, intelligent and stupid...' (in King 43–44). King illuminates without demystifying the contrasting impulses and experiences from which Deledda spun her legends.

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Susanna Scarparo (2005) *Elusive Subjects: Biography as Gendered Metafiction* (Leicester, UK: Troubador), pp. i–xv, 1–189, £13.99/\$24.99, ISBN 1-904744-19-2 paperback

Scarparo's valuable text explores not just biography, but the indistinct boundaries and overlap between biography, autobiography, history, fiction and some subgenres, such as life writing. In particular, Scarparo's sensitive literary and theoretical analyses offer an important revision of feminist historiography by revealing the impossibility of an unmediated representation of historical facts and records, and focusing on four writers aware of the difficulties of representing a woman's past, be she an exceptional woman, a historical figure or the author's mother. These four authors are depicted in self-reflexive pursuit of their fictional and historical subjects.

Scarparo's study of literary genres is ambitiously cross-cultural and deals with four novels in different canonical positions. Preceded by an Introduction, each of the first four chapters is devoted to one novel, respectively: *Artemisia* by Anna Banti; *Rinascimento privato* by Maria Bellonci; *L.C.* by the reclusive American, Susan Daitch; and *Poppy* by the successful Australian, Drusilla Modjeska. Chapter subdivisions help to structure Scarparo's complex reading. The fifth chapter functions as the Conclusion and is followed by Notes, a comprehensive Bibliography, and an Index primarily devoted to proper names and a few general topic headings, such as 'feminism' and 'life writing'.

Already in her first chapter on the artist Artemisia Gentileschi, Scarparo begins to show, through the analysis of 'Gentileschi's current fame among feminists' (p. 2), how history as a discipline tells us more about the present than the past. Scarparo offers a synopsis of Gentileschi's position in history and casts Gentileschi's recovery by feminists as an 'exceptional' woman neglected by history as a rather self-serving and problematic attempt to mold Gentileschi into a 'feminist hero' (p. 25). Using Banti's novel to question a feminist idealization of Gentileschi, Scarparo shows how Banti's rendering of *Artemisia* offers a self-conscious interweaving of the real and the imaginary, of fiction and history, and highlights Banti's identification with *Artemisia* and *Artemisia*'s own identification with other female protagonists. Scarparo discovers three parallel storylines, one of which is 'to remember and to narrate... the life of the fictional *Artemisia*, a character in a lost manuscript' (p. 10). The final subdivision of Chapter 1 traces *Artemisia*'s historical fate in the 1980s and 1990s to illuminate the fact that 'one's own inevitable location in the present determines the history of the past one writes' (p. 39). While the 'real' *Artemisia* is a 'mirage', her 'story... in the present... is a reality which one should not afford losing' (p. 40).

Chapter 1 also introduces the concept of self-invention by the protagonist, the narrator and, by autobiographical extension, the author, a concept further developed in chapter two on Bellonci's *Isabella*. Unlike *Artemisia*, turned into an exceptional woman by feminists, *Isabella d'Este* was considered exceptional in her own time and through history. Scarparo notes how in Bellonci's mix of history and fiction *Isabella* shows *Isabella* to be performing, creating herself and her reputation. Bellonci explores *Isabella*'s conditional power as an exceptional woman, at the cost of isolation from other women, for whom she could not 'serve as a model for emancipation' (p. 64). Bellonci, like Banti, rejects the claim of 'unmediated knowledge of the past... by relying on historical records as if they contained unmediated truth' (p. 81).

Scarparo challenges throughout the common assumption that it is only exceptional women who deserve biographies. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on protagonists who were not historical figures, respectively, in Daitch's *L.C.*, a fictional account of a bourgeois

French woman during the French revolution, and in Modjeska's *Poppy*, about her mother. In Daitch's novel, Scarparo discovers translation to be a metaphor for the writing of history (p. 110). The diary of the fictional *L.C.* is translated by a historian and then partially retranslated by the historian's assistant. Daitch's novel makes clear how biographers, translators and historians read themselves into *L.C.*'s life, and how biography becomes autobiography, though the reclusive Daitch is less prominent in Scarparo's analysis than the other authors. Scarparo finds that the assistant's criticism of her employer's translation 'undermines women's history's desire to rewrite history by resorting to unproblematic representation' (p. 118).

Carefully built on the growing and persuasive critical and literary framework of the previous three chapters, Chapter 4 analyses the genre of 'life writing' as it 'complicates... biography' (p. 124). *Poppy*'s author sets out, through her narrator *Lalage*, to write her own mother's story and finds herself at a crossroads in genre, in methodology, in philosophy. Scarparo 'highlight[s]... [Modjeska's] journey from historical orthodoxy based on documented and documentable evidence to her interest in the gaps, the unreliability and the silences of memory and fiction' (p. 127). Scarparo investigates what happens when 'the biographer integrates in the biography the narrative of its writing, and in the process of doing so explores feminist notion of a 'relational' way of life, the narrator *Lalage* tries to disentangle her mother from her conventional roles as mother, daughter, wife, to recreate the 'specificity of one woman's life', a life which cannot but stand for its irrecoverable self (p. 147). At the end of Scarparo's discussion, one cannot help but think of Luisa Passerini's work on historical methodologies.

If the Conclusion is excellent, carefully summarizing the most important points in the book to conclude that 'the biographer, like her elusive subject, is made and not found', then the Introduction is perhaps the weakest element (p. 162). Although it opens on a promising quote on history and fiction by Virginia Woolf in *Orlando*, it does not then adequately chart the theoretical journey Scarparo will undertake. A clearer explanation of gendered metafiction, for example, would have been useful. Also disorienting is the beginning of each of the first four chapters, which strike out like unrelated articles rather than chapters linked together into a book, thus creating a transitional difficulty for the reader.

Nonetheless, the weaknesses are very few, and the literary and theoretical insights too many to enumerate here. Scarparo's book is undoubtedly an exciting and well-conceived contribution to Italian Women's Studies, feminist historiography and genre theory. The complexity and sophistication of its theoretical and literary tapestry offer us exciting new directions in literary analysis.

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