

Reviews

Elsa Filosa. *Tre studi sul "De mulieribus claris"*. Milano: Edizioni Universitarie di Lettere Economia Diritto (LED), 2012.

Tre studi sul "De mulieribus claris" by Elsa Filosa is the first book dedicated solely to Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* (1374), a chronological series of female biographies, in which mythical women mingle with those of Ancient Rome. Filosa's contribution to the study of Boccaccio and female life-writing is as deep and varied as is her approach to the subject. Written in Italian, it is replete with informative tables, colorful images, and elaborate attention to details and dates. Following a Table of Contents, Premise, and Introduction, her work is divided into three sections: "I modelli letterari," "I rapporti con il *Decameron*," and "La donna umanistica." Each of these studies is then divided into headings and sub-headings that make the work easy to consult, despite the absence of an index.

The introduction alone is full of insightful elucidations, such as the analysis of the "de-mitologizzazione" process in the *De mulieribus*, by which many female deities are humanized through Boccaccio's historical re-telling of their lives. Filosa also positions the text within its political setting, calling attention to the plots of Florence and Boccaccio's subsequent move to Naples, observing that during the initial stages of composition his friends were the supporters of many Florentine conspiracies. As a result, she asserts that many of the biographies can be considered "esempi di fervore per uno Stato giusto," an observation heretofore passed over by other critics of the *De mulieribus* (30).

In the first study, "I modelli letterari," Filosa explores the classical and medieval influences upon the work's structure and content, such as Pliny, St. Jerome, Ovid, and Virgil, but she maintains that Petrarch remains Boccaccio's primary model, specifically the *De viris illustribus* and the 8th letter of the *Familiars XXI*. This letter is of particular importance to the study, and makes frequent appearances in Filosa's work, because in it Petrarch includes and comments upon more than 30 biographical sketches of women. Subsequently explored in this section is Boccaccio's narrative amplification of Valerio Massimo's female biographies in *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri*. Filosa focuses particular attention on the biographies of Tertia Aemilia, wife of the elder Africanus; Curia, wife of Quintus Lucretius; and Sulpicia,

wife of Fulvius Flaccus. She concludes that Boccaccio's narrative talents give life to the psychology of the characters, and highlights how Boccaccio investigates historical possibilities by narrating what *could have happened*; in so doing, he intrudes into the text with rhetorical questions, adds extraneous details, gives generalizations of the female sex, and attributes thoughts and motivations to his protagonists.

Filosa's second study, "I rapporti con il *Decameron*," focuses on the ties between the two works, and is divided into three main sections. In section 2.1 and 2.2, she asserts that while intertextuality between the *Decameron* and the *De mulieribus* is difficult to establish, a recurrence of themes is present, such as the injustice of forced cloisterhood, the propensity of parents to harshly judge their children caught in amorous affairs (Thisbe and Salvestra), the theme of grief for a lost loved one (Dido and Lisabetta da Messina), and the Senecan idea that virtue can be born out of the most odious of persons or conditions. Her most sweeping conclusion from this chapter is that the *De mulieribus* instructs and edifies just as the *Decameron* serves as both didactic exempla and moral edification.

Throughout the entire work Filosa explores the narrative complexities of a work that has been dismissed by many scholars as primarily misogynist in scope, or as belonging to only one genre of literature, be it pedagogic history or moralizing storytelling. Filosa proposes, instead, that Boccaccio's genius lies in his variety of tones and purposes ("sia storiche, sia pedagogico-moraleggianti, sia letterario-narrative") and that the presence of misogyny in the text is counteracted by moments of "proto-femminismo" (37; 40). This is not new terminology; Pamela Benson, in her book *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman*, terms Boccaccio's *De mulieribus* "pro-feminist rather than feminist," but she uses the term to signify the paradoxical *subversion* of female praise, praise that is necessarily "short-circuited" by the social and cultural limitations of the times (Pennsylvania State UP, 1992, p. 2). Filosa, however, uses the term to describe the potential of Boccaccio's *De mulieribus* to *further* female equality, noting that "il *De mulieribus claris* si distacca in modo significativo, in più occasioni, dagli stereotipi misogini medievali" (40). This is the age-old conundrum for a scholar of Medieval and Renaissance female literature: to either call attention to the progress, or observe how the progress is incessantly circumvented. Filosa chooses the former, and attributes the inherent dichotomy to the cultural times, reminding the reader that though Boccaccio was tied to the patristic traditions of the Middle Ages, he was entering a future in which "le donne avrebbero conquistato maggiore spazio nella società" (41). Boccaccio

is, in fact, still held to be the first humanist and, as such, deserves more credit than perhaps past scholars, save Stephen Kolsky, have given him.

Filosa's third Study, *La donna umanistica*, explores the idea that in both art and literature women were represented in a binary way; they were flat characters who represented one particular vice or virtue. She focuses on paintings by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Andrea da Firenze, and Simone Martini, in which the female figure is symbolic of virtuous traits or fields of knowledge, and how these figures possess very few defining physical characteristics; the objects they carry speak to the viewer of what they represent. She contrasts these typologies to Boccaccio's heroines who are much more complex, cannot be categorized as "assolutamente buoni o cattivi," and are imbued with new ideas on freedom, glory, and chastity. His heroines are poets, scholars, painters, sculptors, and inventors who embody a work that represented, in Filosa's view, a "punto di rottura con la tradizione della catalogazione femminile," in essence, a stride towards Renaissance humanism (172). Filosa, thus refreshingly, sets aside the usual anachronistic approach when treating feminist works, instead crediting Boccaccio for his modern and, if not humanistic, at least pre-humanistic approach to the subject of female biography.

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Meredith K. Ray. *Daughters of Alchemy. Women and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*. Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard UP, 2015.

Meredith K. Ray's *Daughters of Alchemy* is an engaging and original study of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian women as practitioners, authors, readers, and patrons of early modern science. It is the first monograph to trace women's participation in scientific and natural inquiry in the various spaces they occupied: the private domestic sphere; apothecary shop; literary, humanist, and scientific circles; politics; and the public sphere. Through a series of six case studies Ray shows how women's participation in alchemy, medicine, and debates on natural philosophy influenced not only the development of scientific culture but also literary discourse concerning the intellectual capacity of women in the ongoing *querelle des femmes* (debate over women). The first part of the book concentrates on female practitioners of alchemy and medicine and the rising popularity of female-authored *libri di segreti* (books of secrets), while the second

part focuses on female literary engagements in natural philosophy and traditionally male-dominated genres and fields of inquiry.

Chapter 1 begins with Caterina Sforza and her understudied *Experimenti* (*Experiments*) – a manuscript studied by Ray in a private library. A compilation of recipes ranging from medical treatments for common and rare ailments to poisons and their antidotes, cosmetics, elixirs, and counterfeit gold, the *Experimenti* was later handed down to generations of Sforza's Medici progeny. As Ray notes, Sforza is thus not only the progenitrix of the Medici dukes, but also their long engagement with medicine and alchemy. In this chapter Ray elucidates the intertwining of the personal and the political in Sforza's *Experimenti*, something we see not only in the presentation of the recipes – Latin signals authority while a code is used for more delicate ailments like impotency – but also in the social networks Sforza established in the exchange of recipes and procurement of ingredients. A wealth of Sforza's correspondence stresses that she was a practitioner of the recipes – not merely a copyist – who exchanged and sought out recipes, using them as a form of social and political currency. Politics is also at play with her cosmetic recipes. Not only did they provide beauty treatments and solutions for achieving idealized standards of female beauty but they also played an active role in Sforza's own public self-fashioning.

Chapter Two turns to the 1561 *I secreti della signora Isabella Cortese* (*The Secrets of Signora Isabella Cortese*). The only book of secrets attributed to a woman in this period, *I secreti* went through seven editions by 1599, attesting to its popularity. In it, Cortese addresses a specifically female audience as she provides advice on a range of female duties and concerns – household management, medical treatments, cosmetics, and how to turn metal into gold – all stemming from the author's experience. As Ray notes, *I secreti* and other similar books of secrets “were situated within the context of a gendered form of knowledge that derived from direct experience, rather than study” (52). However, the lack of historical evidence about Isabella Cortese has raised doubts about the authorship of this text and gender of its author. So popular were these representations of female experience that male authors often capitalized on the trend, publishing work that essentially filtered women's knowledge through a male authorial voice. Readers familiar with Ray's excellent first monograph *Writing Gender: Women's Letter Collections of the Italian Renaissance* (Toronto UP, 2009) will especially appreciate her discussion of authorial attribution here, since it aligns perfectly with her earlier work on male literary ventriloquism of the female voice.

In the second part of the book, Chapter Three transitions to the literary engagements with natural philosophy by Moderata Fonte and Lucrezia Marinella. Scholars have tended to focus on the more explicit iterations of proto-feminist discourse in Fonte's *Il merito delle donne* (*The Worth of Women*) and Marinella's *Della nobiltà e eccellenza delle donne* (*The Nobility and Excellence of Women*), but Ray instead examines the use of scientific discourse as a rhetorical tool for defending women and their intellectual capabilities. Most appreciated is Ray's treatment of each author's lesser-studied works alongside the treatises. Her close analysis of the female characters in Fonte's epic *Floridoro* and Marinella's epic *L'Enrico* and pastoral *Arcadia felice* shows how the female mastery of alchemy and natural philosophy levels the playing field with men. Combined, these two case studies illustrate how women writers introduced the category of science into the *querelle des femmes* in an innovative literary way.

In the final chapter Ray shows how by the seventeenth century women began to participate more directly in scientific communities through the examples of the social networks fostered by Camilla Erculiani and Margherita Sarrocchi. Erculiani's connections to Polish humanist circles in Padua enabled her to build a relationship with female patron Anna Jagiellon of Poland – daughter of Bona Sforza of Milan – to whom she dedicated her epistolary *Lettere di philosophia naturale* (*Letters on Natural Philosophy*). By including pro-women *topoi* popularized by the *querelle des femmes* tradition in both her dedicatory letter to Anna Jagiellon and a second dedicatory letter to her readers, Erculiani calls for educational reform and more access to scientific learning for women. Ray's close study of the epistolary form shows how Erculiani carefully crafted her authorial voice to highlight her natural intellect – developed from experience, rather than study – while showcasing her knowledge of canonical texts in the (fictitious) voice of Georges Garnier, her interlocutor. In the case of Sarrocchi, we encounter two intersecting communities: the scientific community and her literary *ridotto*. This is perhaps best seen in the compelling discussion of the epistolary relationship between Sarrocchi and Galileo, an exchange which Ray has recently translated into English for the first time (*Margherita Sarrocchi's Letters to Galileo: Astronomy, Astrology, and Poetics in Seventeenth-Century Italy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). While Sarrocchi consulted with Galileo on his discovery of Jupiter's satellites, he in turn read drafts of her epic poem, the *Scanderbeide*, wherein the character of Calidora, the enchantress, is learned in natural philosophy. In the end we see how Sarrocchi and Galileo treated each other as colleagues and peers, exchanging and

commenting upon each other's works while cognizant of what each one had to offer the other.

Daughters of Alchemy successfully maps out the myriad ways in which early modern Italian women engaged with and contributed to scientific knowledge. Its transhistorical and multi-genre approach provides a much broader picture of women's place in scientific communities than has been previously offered by scholarship. One overarching and unifying theme is the male-female collaborations that proved fruitful for both parties involved (most evident, perhaps, in the Sarrocchi-Galileo exchange). This puts *Daughters of Alchemy* in dialogue with Diana Robin's work on male-female collaborations in the early modern printing industry (*Publishing Women: Salons, the Presses, and the Counter-Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Italy*. Chicago: UChicago P, 2007), and adds a new facet to our evolving understanding of the various networks involved in early modern women's entrée into traditionally masculine disciplines and the public sphere. Although more historically descriptive and less analytical than Ray's previous work, *Daughters of Alchemy* is a major contribution to the study of early modern women and science, gender studies, and history, and will quickly prove to be required reading of scholars and students, alike, of this period.

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Federica Santini. *Io era una bella figura una volta: viaggio nella poesia di ricerca del secondo Novecento*. Piacenza: Scritture, 2013.

From our present hell of narcissism, populated by selfies and reality TV, it is difficult to imagine a time and place when poetry mattered to such a degree that it could make the front pages of newspapers and magazines. It is even harder to fathom that such well-known poets would advocate, in their theoretical prose (not to mention practice in their verse), a conscious and deliberate reduction of the lyrical "I," in an attempt to remove their subjectivity from their works so that Language could express itself (more about this in a moment). And yet, such an unbelievably far-fetched reality existed: in Italy, roughly from around the end of the 1950s, all the way to the end of the 1970s. Granted, most of these poets continued to write and publish well beyond this time frame, but the conditions had changed, the audiences weren't as responsive and, in short, a whole era had come to an end.

Federica Santini, with her lucid, well-argued, and illuminating monograph, takes us back to that time. At the center of her research is a crucial distinction, one that became a central concern for poets and poetry toward the end of the 1800s and that has remained productive ever since: the divide between “I” and “subject.” The first is the individuality of the single poets, their historically and biographically determined personalities. The latter is a function of language, as it emerges from the poem itself, independent of the author’s will, inscribed in the words themselves.

The introductory chapter traces the history and the genealogy of the fracture between subject and I, discussing some of the most influential modern poets: Leopardi, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, all the way to Breton and the surrealists. The picture is further enlarged to include the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Lacan, and the writings of Paul Valéry. Santini argues that the distinction between subject and I can prove to be a very useful tool in cataloguing the various poetic experiments of the second half of the Twentieth Century, for it cuts transversally through the categories devised so far within the literary canon, and thus it can bring together authors we normally think as distant, and help differentiate between those we usually lump together.

Chapter 1 attempts to create a more rational map of the poetry of recent decades, beginning with the dissolution of the neo-avant-garde in the mid-1970s. Prof. Santini identifies three major currents: 1) the *poesia innamorata* (from the title of an anthology edited by Pontiggia and Di Mauro in 1978), that harkens back to the orphic mode of authors such as Dino Campana (however, Santini argues, the poets here included are too heterogeneous to be considered a school or even just a useful critical label); 2) a revival of the lyrical-hermeticist tradition, that focuses on the voice of writers and depicts their struggle with a fragmented reality; 3) a group of heirs to the recent neo-avant-garde, expressly hostile to any form of lyricism and confessionality, and in favor of a more experimental style. To these three categories, Santini prefers a fourth, brought forward by Francesco Muzzioli: that of *poesia di ricerca*, that has the advantage of including a number of remarkable poets who had not taken part in the groups that animated the Italian poetic landscape, but instead decided to carry on their experimentations independently.

Chapter 2 explores another possible category: the *linea lombarda*. Prof. Santini retraces its origins to the famous anthology edited by Luciano Anceschi and published in 1952. That group of six Lombard poets shared a few common traits: an attention to concrete objects

and everyday life, a fascination with nature, and a strong moral calling that charged their verse with a remarkable ethical tension. Santini goes on to introduce Alfredo Giuliani's reflections on this issue, and agrees with his suggestion that we should enlarge the category to include more poets, both contemporary and subsequent to the original set of six. The resulting critical grouping should be named *area lombarda*. Using a poem by Vittorio Sereni, Santini exemplifies one aspect of the sensibility common to all the poets in this category: the way they contrast the natural environment with penetrating observations of the urban landscape. Then Santini moves to illustrate how Elio Pagliarani is connected to this group: he shares a common Milanese environment, a sharp attention to objects, and a remarkable expressive power that conveys his strong moral stance. The older Lombard generation is crucial to this reconstruction of the history of the poetry of the second half of the Novecento because it employed a way of writing that shifted the attention away from the lyrical I and onto the environment that surrounded it, thus creating the space for a more experimental approach to poetry.

The last part of the chapter is devoted to a comparison between Pagliarani's *Girl Carla* and Majorino's *Capitale del nord*. Prof. Santini points out the similarities and the differences between these two crucial *poemetti*, attributing the former to the two poets' common origin within the *area lombarda*, while the latter reflect the two poets' diverging approaches to the reduction of the I: while Pagliarani achieves this by editing together different voices, ranging from the instructional handbook to late-medieval poetry, Majorino juxtaposes hendecasyllabic and blank verses, dividing his lyrical I into two distinct characters, belonging to two opposed social classes.

The remaining five chapters are an in-depth analysis of the poetry of five different authors: Maurizio Cucchi, Elio Pagliarani, Amelia Rosselli, Andrea Zanzotto, and Emilio Villa. In each analysis Santini uses the distinction between subject and I as a way to illuminate the verses and tie them to the cultural and literary debates that surrounded their writers as they were composing them.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to Maurizio Cucchi whose poetry, since his first prominent collection of verse titled *Il disperso* (1976), was praised by a large cross-section of the Italian poetic scene. His *romanzo in versi* is similar in some respects to Majorino's and Pagliarani's, although it lacks a well-defined set of characters and a coherent plot. It displays a strong tension between a world of concrete, detailed objects and an oblique, eccentric narrative technique. Santini's analysis focuses on a wide selection of passages, showing how Cucchi builds a subject

by cobbling together sentences and voices that are not clearly identified; the subject so created remains a mystery for the “I” who is orchestrating the general narrative. Clues are half-hidden in every verse, but far from helping the reader put order in the tangle of characters, they only intensify the sense of confusion and conspire to create an alienated form of individuality. If on the one hand Cucchi is an heir to that *area lombarda* described before, his poetry is a striking original contribution to that tradition and serves to move it forward, toward a new season of experimentations.

Chapter 4 returns to Pagliarani and concentrates on his second *romanzo in versi: La ballata di Rudi*, which was composed over a long period of time and finally published only in 1995. The *Ballata* displays a rather unstable narrative (eternally in danger of unraveling and coming apart) as it weaves together the stories of three main characters: Rudi, Armando, and Nandi. Santini masterfully retraces the cultural references Pagliarani had worked into his verses, showing the complex and varied tapestry of inter-textual references that underpin his text. This is an evolution from the more concrete brand of realism that he had displayed in his previous *Ragazza Carla*. Instead of focusing on the reality it describes, the *Ballata* dissects and objectifies the different threads of which it is made, staging a realistic representation of the very act of writing and declaiming its own verses.

In chapter 5, Santini introduces the multilingual works of Amelia Rosselli. Her diverse biographical background allowed her to cultivate a certain detachment from the Italian poetic and cultural scene, to which she often looked as if from the outside in. This fact, together with her intimate knowledge of English and French (and their relative literary traditions), allowed her to write verses displaying a complex and unique dynamic between the subject and the I. Her language, Santini observes, is always *vibrante*, both in a musical sense and in the sense that it continuously oscillates on the page, remaining ever elusive. Santini illustrates the functioning of this *vibrazione* by analyzing a few poems by Rosselli, and by reconstructing the complex web of their inter-textual references. Additionally, we are shown how deliberate and self-conscious Rosselli’s writing is: her poems often reflect on their own making, and this creates a fascinating interplay between subject and I. This point is further clarified by comparisons with other influential poets such as Montale, Celan, and Plath.

Chapter 6 investigates the poetry of Andrea Zanzotto and its complex relationship with the writings and theories of Jacques Lacan. In particular, Santini looks at some specific moments in the poet’s

oeuvre to show how it is consistently negotiating three different poles of attraction: the landscape, the language, and the subject. None of these elements, she argues, has preeminence over the remaining two, but they all influence and transform each other. After reconstructing Zanzotto's relation with the neo-avant-garde, Santini observes how he is deeply affected, almost terrified, on a personal and emotional level, by the constant threat of an aphasia that stems from the realization that our subjectivity, which we usually think of as the stable core that gives continuity to our experience, is actually inconsistent, mutable and, for the most part, an illusion. The analysis of a number of poems gives concrete proof to Santini's argument, illustrating the role that the triad language, landscape, and subject plays in Zanzotto's poetry. Particularly striking and enriching is the comparison with Leopardi and the way in which the two authors utilize the moon in their writings.

The last chapter is devoted to one of the most elusive figures of Twentieth-Century Italian poetry: Emilio Villa. Santini builds an interesting parallel between him and Zanzotto, arguing that both operate within the dichotomy of aphasia v. linguistic overload: on the one hand there is the impossibility of writing, for the subject (in which the words should be rooted) is but a linguistic illusion; on the other hand, there is a voracious appetite for all forms of written and spoken language, all equally susceptible of being included in the poems, for they are all as "real" as the ones produced by the subject. Dr. Santini analyzes *Oramai* (1947), a collection that links Villa to the *area lombarda*, but also shows some fundamental differences that set him apart from that group. Then she proceeds to discuss the poet's aversion to standard Italian, and his many experimentations with other languages (both living and dead). By looking at the series of *Sybillae* and *Vanità verbali*, written by Villa in the later part of his career, Santini clarifies the poet's stance on the possibility of communicating through words. His poetry, she argues, is not meant to provide access to a higher plane of meaning (in an orphic sense), but, rather, it is an exemplification of the powerful and endless mysteries enveloping human language.

Santini's exploration of the Italian poetry of the Novecento does not let its systematic nature get in the way of its effectiveness, nor uses it as an excuse to pass over difficult texts and authors. The main objective, consistently pursued and brilliantly achieved throughout the volume, is that of painting a picture of the poetic landscape by analyzing the texts themselves. As literary critics, it is from the texts that we should always begin. Sometimes we forget this simple truth,

and we find ourselves swept up in highly sophisticated (if often hopelessly useless) theoretical discussions. Poetry is not, Dr. Santini reminds us, a place for generalities. It is, instead, the place where the concrete and the punctual point to the universal. The analysis proceeds from the texts to their authors, to the cultural context, and then returns once again to the texts in order to verify her general hypothesis that connects subject, I, the act of writing, and the phenomenic world.

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Annie Rachele Lanzillotto. *L is for Lion: An Italian Bronx Butch Freedom Memoir*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2013.

As the title suggests, *L is for Lion: An Italian Bronx Butch Freedom Memoir*, reminds us that a life is made of many identities and many histories. Following the traditional memoir format, Lanzillotto describes her upbringing as a young girl in an Italian-American family in the Bronx in the late 1960s. Her childhood is characterized by her father's violent outbursts, her older brothers' struggles with drug addiction and the draft, and big family dinners marked by her mother's lasagnas. Annie realizes she is different from the other neighborhood girls early on; rejecting games with dolls, she chooses instead to chase her ball and wait until she is big enough to join the boys in the daily game of street stickball. She grows up watching her mother cook and clean all day, listening to her father's stories of World War II, and learning to call the neighbors by banging on the heating pipes each time her father raises a fist to her mother.

When her mother finally leaves her father, Annie is yanked away from the familiar street corners of the Bronx, and thrust into the quiet, empty world of suburban Yonkers; the close-knit community of relatives and neighbors from the Bronx is replaced by her mother's smaller, quieter family, presided over by her maternal grandmother, GrammaRose. GrammaRose teaches Annie her philosophy of *sistemazione*: rules for living a good Italian life and learning what to eat and when. Annie's connection to her grandmother and her interest in her Italian heritage will lead her, a decade later, on a pilgrimage back to Italy and to her ancestral hometown. Before that trip, however, Annie discovers softball, kissing girls, and, with the help of a teacher, her own intellectual curiosity and knack for public speaking. These last two developments lead to her admission to Brown University, a

huge event for the working-class community she comes from, but which Annie seems to accept as a matter of course, asking, "What's the big deal?" (102). This casual dismissal of a dramatic event is characteristic of Lanzillotto's narrative, recalling GrammaRose's stoic demeanor; when Annie learns of her grandmother's dramatic journey from Italy to the United States, as a young woman, and asks about her hometown, "she tapped the heel of her black strap shoe. And that's all [Annie] knew of *Acquavita*. The heel of the boot" (82). Although Annie bonds with her family through their shared Italian culture, there are some distinctly American behaviors that set Annie apart. This is particularly true of Annie's refusal to be silent about her battle with cancer or her sexual identity.

Annie's first year in college is interrupted by her cancer diagnosis and subsequent treatment at the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City. Lanzillotto offers vivid descriptions of the heavy toll chemotherapy took on cancer patients in the 1980s, as well as providing a touching remembrance of the staff and fellow patients she met during her time at Sloan-Kettering. The dramatic ups and downs that dot the timeline of Lanzillotto's memoir define her experience of cancer as well; her tumors are persistent and prevalent, but she is also introduced to Dr. Kempin, a thoughtful physician who encourages her to return to college when she is able, and to learn about her illness and treatment so she can be her own health advocate. This will become a defining relationship and will serve as impetus for Annie's eventual return to college and study of the sciences. The tenacity and fearlessness that Annie develops as a cancer survivor inform her other experiences, helping her develop friendships with people of all races, ages and backgrounds, and giving her the courage to pursue relationships with women in college and after.

Although Lanzillotto does not recount a specific "coming out" moment, she does describe the difficult reconciliation of her identity as an Italian-American Catholic and her desire for women: "Being in the closet is the worst feeling in the world. I felt like Judas every step of the way" (181). She also describes the freedom she feels when, preparing to go study abroad in a conservative and patriarchal Egypt, Annie dresses in drag for the first time, wearing a moustache made for her by a Bronx barber: "Without knowing it, he gave me freedom [...] Now I could be an asshole Italian American man just like the rest of them" (194). The trip to Egypt and the time in drag help direct Annie toward the expression of (non)gender identity she will eventually be most comfortable with; it also leads, however, to some scary encounters, including the heartbreaking rejection by her older

brother, who whispers, leaning on the wall of their mother's hospital room, "You *skeeve* me" (237). But by this point Annie is too wise and too strong to be broken by her brother's words; instead, she begins to explore the growing lesbian and gay scene of New York in the late '80s and early '90s. It isn't until the mid-'90s that Annie's gaze turns back to Arthur Avenue, the main artery of the Italian community in the Bronx, drawing on its rich history and cultural life to feed her theatrical productions.

Although the East Coast Italian-American community has been made familiar to audiences around the world (Coppola and Scorsese being just two prominent entries in a long list of recognizable names), Lanzillotto's account is different; narrated in a somewhat clumsy, decidedly personal tone, *L is for Lion* keeps the inconsistencies of mistranslation, and conflates family tradition with Italian custom. Despite the rambling narrative and the rather awkward prose, *L is for Lion* stands out, in this era of coming out narrative, as a story in which gender and sexual identity are questioned, but are not the only defining features of an individual's identity. Lanzillotto's testament as a witness to the ravages of cancer, AIDS and heroin in the '70s and '80s reminds readers that the social struggles of the last few decades did not occur in isolation, but are all connected and have intersecting consequences for broad swaths of people.

SOLE ANATRONE

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Gian Maria Annovi and Flora Ghezzeo (eds.). *Anna Maria Ortese. Celestial Geographies*. Toronto / Buffalo / London: University of Toronto Press, 2015.

Annovi and Ghezzeo's collection of essays for an English-language audience is an excellent resource for scholars who would like to deepen their knowledge of Anna Maria Ortese's full body of works. Written by well-known and new critical voices coming from different geographical backgrounds – from Italy to the United States, from Belgium to Switzerland – this book attempts a coherent interpretation of Ortese's entire literary, essayist, and epistolary corpus. The collection is generally characterized by a delineation of her themes, the structure and style at work in particular texts, all analyzed together with brief or long digressions on the biography and career struggles of the author. This later aspect makes the work more suggestive and persuasive – and necessary to the reader for a better understanding of Ortese's texts.

The first section of this volume – *From Naples to Paris (via Jerusalem): Modern Alienation and Utopian Reality* – is a coherent group of essays that analyzes Ortese's shorter texts and helps trace the distinctive formation of the writer together with the cultural and political events that surround her writing. Critic Lucia Re first delves into some of the controversies on the publication of *Il mare non bagna Napoli* (1953) and into the intersexual references present in the book, an aspect that corroborates the grandeur of a writer who lacked formal education but was talented since her youth. Then Re focuses on the story *Un paio di occhiali*. Drawing on Berger and Mulvey on the male gaze, Irigaray and Cixous on Western ocular-centrism, she investigates how Ortese's nearsightedness is a "deliberate act" of refusing to see, hence to accept reality as it is, defined by dominating power. From the city of Naples still unaffected by modernity we move to an industrialized and capitalistic Milan, where Ortese moved in 1948, with Andrea Baldi's critical piece on *Silenzio a Milano* (1958) in his "Ortese's journey through Urban Modernity." Baldi points out the ambivalent relationship Ortese had with Milan that represented on one side a "promised land" for career opportunities, and, on the other, an urban space where individuals are rejected and dehumanized by the brutality of the culture of commodification brought by America to post-war Italy. In the third essay Cristina della Coletta analyzes Ortese's *Il mormorio di Parigi* (1986). After comparing Ortese's socio-economic experience of displacement and Hanna Arendt's political one, she investigates the notions of belonging and independence, political movement and intellectual freedom by comparing Ortese's figures of the "non consenzienti" to Arendt's notion of "conscious pariahs."

The second section – *Life of a Celestial Body: Making and Unmaking the Self* – includes four essays that illustrate the multidimensional nature of Ortese's "I" and her strategies of autobiographical representation, which oscillates between sincerity and falsehood. Amelia Moser's analysis of Ortese's epistolary exchanges with some of the major literary figures of her time, provides the reader with significant insights on Ortese's life story, in particular the struggles with her initial stage of writing and the promotion of her work on the one hand, and the influence Massimo Bontempelli had on the author's writing on the other. Three of the collections of letters have been published and translated here for the first time. Luigi Fontanella's interpretation of *Angelici dolori* (1937) brings into relation Ortese's narrative techniques, rhetorical devices, and main themes, from which her ability to transfigure reality emerges through the deployment of magical elements, with the indissoluble relationship

between her life and her writing. Following Fontanella, Beatrice Manetti sheds light on the difficult path of writing and publishing her two Milanese novels: *Poveri e semplici* (1968) and *Il cappello piumato* (1979), often overlooked by critics, in which the theme of “making and unmaking” Ortese’s autobiographical “I” is explored. Lastly, Flora Ghezzi’s compelling argument on *Il porto di Toledo* (1975) through the lens of temporality, sheds light on Ortese’s experimental writing and her obsession with the fleetingness of time. Ghezzi highlights the paradox in Ortese’s desire to stop time through autobiographical writing (which crystallized the self and the past) and her fear of doing so, the consequence being the very death of the self.

Section III – *On Becoming Beast: Iguanas, Linnets, Lions, and the Geography of Otherness* – focuses on the monstrous creatures present in the thematically cohesive group of novels, such as *L’iguana* (1965), *Il cardillo addolorato* (1993), and *Alonso e i visionari* (1996). One can notice here a slight shift in Ortese’s poetics, in which realism becomes intertwined with fantastic elements, hybridism, and allegories. Inge Lanslot opens the section with an inter-textual examination of the trilogy mentioned above. She argues that Ortese aims at transcending the Cartesian binary opposites of reality, typical of a patriarchal and western cultural tradition, in order to dismantle our taken-for-granted values and upset our conformist perspectives. Well enhanced by analytical tables at the end, this essay illustrates the ambiguous and ever-changing identities of Ortese’s literary aim at constructing an “opaque” and polymorphous reality. In the following essay Gian Maria Annovi offers a postcolonial interpretation of *L’iguana*: through an in-depth examination of textual and extra-textual references, he shows how the island of Ocaña, a hybrid space overlapping with the Iguana’s body, contributes to a representation of the early stages of the colonization of America. Ortese gives thus voice to the oppressed, criticizing colonialism and capitalism. (Annovi’s comparison of witch-hunts to the native’s persecution is brilliant.) Gala Rebane offers instead a detailed close reading of *Il cardillo addolorato* (1993), drawing a parallelism between political changes in the France of the Revolution and of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the events in the novel that take place in Naples. By doing so she sheds a new light on Ortese’s critique of the false ideals of the Enlightenment, which gave “rise to a new dehumanized culture based on economic rationality.” A different interpretation of *Il cardillo addolorato* is provided by Margherita Pieracci Harwell through her meticulous textual and thematic analysis of the enigmatic character of Elmina. By way of comparing and contrasting with other novels’ characters, the critic illustrates Ortese’s “truth of existence” and her compassion

for the “very last of the world.” Drawing on Derrida’s observations on Heidegger’s *Fundamental Concept of Metaphysics*, Tatiana Crivelli Speciale’s last essay pinpoints how the uncanny presence of the puma and the concept of “suffering” in *Alonso e i visionari* aim at unmasking the dominant western ideology of power rooted in the Enlightenment “rational philosophical system of thought” and challenge the theoretical accepted categories of man vs animal, human vs non-human.

In the final section – *An Uncommon Reader* – Monica Farnetti takes into consideration some of Ortese’s critical writings on other literary authors, which provides new insights on the figure of Ortese as reader. In the appendix that concludes the collection the reader will find the first English translation of Dacia Maraini’s interview with Ortese in 1973. It is an illuminating dialogue between two eminent figures in the panorama of Italian literature.

MIRIAM ALOISIO

University of Chicago

Federico Fellini. *Making a Film*. Translated and with an introduction by Christopher Burton White. New York: Contra Mundum Press, 2015.

Federico Fellini did not like talking about his films. Interviews were something that he would happily renounce. His timid personality, along with an anti-intellectualism (an example: “I’m not familiar with the film classics: Murnau, Dryer, Eisenstein. Shamefully I’ve never seen them”) and an inclination for self-doubting, did not conform with the oppressive need of the cultural industry to produce standardized “goods,” be they in the form of magazine articles, TV programs, or anything else. On the other hand, Fellini was a natural storyteller, someone whose pleasure in telling anecdotes and jokes was as strong as his ability to captivate, provoke, and entertain his audience. Fellini’s skill in turning every question into a narrative reverie makes this volume an interesting introduction to his inner world and work method. This collection of conversations, interviews, and brief dialogues exchanged sporadically over the course of ten years or so (from 1965 to 1976) was originally published in Italy in 1980. An English translation appeared in the United States in 1976 with the title *Fellini on Fellini*, but it was missing half of the chapters that the director would eventually add to his final Italian version, making this new edition an important step toward filling the lacuna in the English library of resources in Italian cinema.

Despite its fragmentary character, *Making a Film* gives the reader a general impression of narrative coherence. The intensity of Fellini's stream of consciousness turns the book into a sort of personal diary filled with his visions, fears, and idiosyncrasies. The vast majority of the anecdotes narrated by the author relate to his childhood spent in Rimini during the Fascist regime. The provincial town situated on the East coast of the Italian peninsula is transfigured in an oneiric vision: "Rimini: a word made up of spears, little soldiers in a line. I can't imagine it objectively. Rimini is a hodgepodge: confused, frightful, affectionate, with a great breath, an open void of ocean." How can one not think of the dreamlike evocation of the same coastal town later conveyed by Fellini in *Amarcord* (1973)? And what about the kaleidoscopic chaos of characters inhabiting the director's memory? Among them a pig castrator who sleeps with all the women in town; his longtime friend Nasi, "whose legs were broken because he sawed down a tree while sitting on a branch on the wrong side;" gypsies making love potions; people claiming they can eat eight meters of sausage, three chickens, and a candle; women with glasses who look like Harold Lloyd, teachers who beat students on a daily basis, but suddenly become friendly around the holidays when parents bring them gifts; church painters who leave for Brazil leaving their frescoes half-done; one-eyed beggars masturbating in the church... and then all sorts of impostors, liars, drunks, pirates, and adventurers. An inevitable sense of skepticism assaults the reader. Are these real stories? Or is Fellini taking advantage of his interlocutor for his own entertainment? Here's another example: "The headmaster, nicknamed Zeus, was like a fire-eater; he had a foot the size of a Fiat 600 and he tried to kill children with it." The world depicted by the filmmaker blends the painting of Hieronymus Bosch with a provincial interpretation of Catholicism, the theater and the circus, the physical and the psychological: "In fact, when I happen to be in Rimini I'm always haunted by ghosts." Ghosts and presences constantly haunt the director, who loves to linger in his childhood fantasy, as when he admits his fascination with the ocean, defined as "the place where monsters and ghosts come from." In fact, not only people, but places too have a crucial importance in Fellini's narrative – churches, cafés, cemeteries, and train stations are perfect sites for Fellini's epiphanies and apparitions, these latter being the true personal signature of Fellini's style: "once we saw a train that was completely blue. It was the sleeping car. A curtain was raised and a man in pajamas *appeared*" (emphasis mine). Epiphanies and apparitions like the one of the King of Italy Vittorio Emanuele III seen by Fellini in Forlì: "the train arrived and a little old man *appeared* with a tuft of white whiskers under his nose. It was the king" (emphasis mine).

Things become clearer for the reader when Fellini talks about his almost casual discovery of the theater: "I didn't understand whether it was a game or not." Isn't the trespassing between a playful and a dramatic mode exactly what Fellini does in these pages and in his most celebrated films such as *La strada* (1954) and *La dolce vita* (1960)? Not surprisingly, one of the recurrent concepts in the director's language is *perspective*, a term very much connected with the world of theater. Referring to his participation in a school play, Fellini recounts: "Each one of us played the part of a character in Homer's epic. I was Ulysses; *I kept my distance and observed things from afar*" (emphasis mine). The theater taught him to sharpen his sight, to look at things with fixed attention. Not by chance, the passages where Fellini really excels are those where he can deploy his observational skills, as in the physical descriptions of his childhood friends: "Stacchiotti's face looked boiled, red, and greasy, covered in a rash, and he had dull, pale eyes, slimy like snail residue, or an egg white." The reader will find so many other lenses through which we can deepen our understanding of the Italian director's *weltanschauung*: his ideas on the role of the artist in our society, on TV and journalism, Jung and psychoanalysis, the purity and intensity of Rossellini's gaze, his love-hate relationships with the producers of his films, on cinema's expressive use of light and color, his experience with LSD, and, last but not least, his love for the circus. The inclusion of Italo Calvino's inspired essay "A Spectator's Autobiography" and Liliana Betti's lucid afterword "A Revealing Book" make this collection an invaluable resource for anyone interested in Fellini's colorful and oneiric world. Strongly recommended.

FRANCESCO RABISSI

University of Arizona

Francesco Ciabattoni. *La citazione è sintomo d'amore. Cantautori italiani e memoria letteraria*. Roma: Carrocci, 2016.

"Nei tre canti di Cacciaguida / si descrive una Firenze 'sobria e / pudica', quando non era 'ancor giunto / Sardanapalo a mostrar ciò che in camera si puote' e da Firenze il discorso / si espande a tutto il mondo: diventa / universale, in un crescendo di malinconia / e passione che definirei come, che definirei / quasi... che definirei come...". Impossibile esimersi dal prendere l'abbrivio con la citazione di una citazione – dall'"Alighieri" (*Ipertensione*, Phillips, 1975) del professor Roberto Vecchioni – per entrare nel merito di questo volume di Francesco Ciabattoni che, senza cadere mai nell'ovvietà di cui spesso tracimano le pubblicazioni dedicate alla musica d'autore italiana, ma, anzi, regalandoci un prodotto "filologicamente" impeccabile, entra

con perizia nei testi di sei cantautori italiani per rivelare il “debito” da loro contratto con il mondo delle lettere. Il rischio di cadere nella trappola della “*vexata quaestio* se la canzone possa essere poesia” (18) o in quella di voler stabilire le differenze tra il genere canzone e il genere poesia, viene immediatamente spazzato via da Ciabattoni, non perché queste domande non abbiano necessariamente una risposta, ma perché chiunque lo volesse fare si troverebbe davanti, come indicato a chiare lettere nell’introduzione, a “scogli metodologici insormontabili” (18). Meglio, piuttosto, concentrarsi sulla canzone in sé, e aprire nuove possibilità d’ascolto alla canzone d’autore anche per chi, ed è senza vergogna che mi includo in questa categoria, è cresciuto tra un concerto di Francesco Guccini e un disco di Claudio Lolli e ancora rimastica quotidianamente le canzoni di quando aveva diciotto anni.

Uno studio che va al di là delle collaborazioni dirette tra poeti/scrittori e cantautori (su tutte si ricordi la collaborazione Roversi/Dalla che marca tre LP del cantautore bolognese: *Il giorno aveva cinque teste* [1973], *Anidride solforosa* [1975] e *Automobili* [1977] tutti per l’etichetta RCA), che non si ferma certo a quelle tracce che sono una diretta riproduzione in musica di testi poetici (che si tratti dell’Angiolieri di De André o del Michelangelo di Capossela), e che accenna, senza farne però il fulcro d’indagine, a incisioni dichiaratamente ammiccanti a testi letterari (tra i quali spiccano i vangeli apocrifi e lo *Spoon River* ancora di De André). Più interessanti sono gli innesti letterari all’interno di un traccia, di una strofa che possono apparire del tutto svincolati dal testo ma che diventano amplificatori di significato per la canzone stessa. Dice Ciabattoni: “[...] dopo aver riconosciuto la citazione e averla situata nel suo contesto letterario, il lettore-ascoltatore si rende conto che il testo della canzone non è più lo stesso: esso ne esce arricchito e trasformato” (14).

Piuttosto che di citazioni Ciabattoni preferisce parlare di allusioni letterarie; un termine, “allusione”, usato dall’autore con un significato ampio, “intendendo con ess[o] il ricorso a qualunque strategia di citazione o di imitazione” (12). Vengono, comunque, distinti diversi tipi di citazione: “ve ne sono di più evidenti e di nascoste [...] Quando le citazioni o i prelievi testuali consistono nell’importare un frammento non famoso, l’arte allusiva si fa ancora più sottile e complessa perché prevede un riconoscimento basato su una conoscenza approfondita del testo d’origine, senza la quale non si coglie pienamente il significato della canzone” (12).

All’introduzione – che include, oltre a un preciso quadro esplicativo della metodologia seguita, una ricchissima bibliografia di studi sulla canzone d’autore in linea con la serietà di questo lavoro – seguono

sei capitoli, ciascuno dedicato a un cantautore e una brevissima coda, in cui si tirano le fila per sottolineare le peculiarità rilevate per ogni cantautore nell'uso dell'allusione e per invitare ad un ascolto differente, più attento, ai testi della nostra musica d'autore.

Cinque dei cantautori sono da annoverare tra "the usual suspects" del panorama canoro italiano, quelli che, insomma, chi tra noi i cantautori li ha frequentati, si aspetterebbe: nell'ordine, infatti, troviamo Roberto Vecchioni, Francesco Guccini, Angelo Branduardi, Fabrizio De André e Francesco De Gregori di cui, comunque, vengono rilevati e approfonditi alcuni scambi fruttiferi con la letteratura, in alcuni casi evidenti (penso al De André-Saba de *La città vecchia* o al Guccini-Gozzano de *L'isola non trovata*), in altri meno, soprattutto quando le allusioni riportano a testi altrui al "canone" italiano (De Gregori e Hans Magnus Enzensberger per *I muscoli del capitano*, o *La pulce d'acqua* di Branduardi ispirata da un racconto indiano).

Una sorpresa, invece, è l'ultimo dei cantautori presentato da Ciabattoni. Dai nomi presentati precedentemente uno si aspetterebbe di trovare un Dalla, un Battiato, o magari un Capossela: invece l'autore spiazza un po' tutti chiudendo il volume con quello che da molti è stato visto e bollato come il cantante dell'amore con la A maiuscola, delle ragazzine, fatuo, spesso pretenzioso: Claudio Baglioni. Del cantautore romano, che al di là della critica ha sempre dimostrato, voglio sottolineare, una capacità stilistica e retorica che molti poeti oggi nemmeno si sognano (i suoi testi sono una fonte inesauribile di figure retoriche della tradizione – allitterazioni, chiasmi, sinestesie etc.), Ciabattoni rivela una vastissima rete di relazioni col mondo della letteratura, da Pessoa a Fortini, da Gozzano alla Morante per arrivare a Pasolini, con il quale Baglioni sembra aver instaurato un lungo e duraturo rapporto.

Un libro importante per chi ama la canzone italiana, accattivante quasi quanto un giallo, in quel suo offrire tessera dopo tessera un quadro più chiaro per ciascuno dei cantautori selezionati. Un libro importante per chi non conosce la nostra musica d'autore e vorrebbe cominciare a farsene un'idea. Un libro importante per i cosiddetti Cultural Studies, spesso bistrattati (e non con tutti i torti): l'indagine fatta da Ciabattoni sui testi di questi autori dimostra che è possibile parlare di musica italiana in maniera accademica, sempreché ci si attrezzi con strumenti d'indagine appropriati e con una metodologia che non lasci nulla all'improvvisazione. Non mi dispiacerebbe, in fondo, vedere una delle nostre università con una cattedra dedicata alla canzone d'autore: il libro di Ciabattoni dimostra che ci sarebbero tutte le basi per farlo.

BEPPE CAVATORTA

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Donna H. DiCello and Lorraine Mangione. *Daughters, Dads, and the Path Through Grief: Tales from Italian America*. Atascadero: Impact Publishers, 2014.

Part memoir and part consideration of the complex relationship between father and daughter, *Daughters, Dads and the Path Through Grief: Tales from Italian America* by Donna H. DiCello and Lorraine Mangione is a welcome addition to the ever-growing mosaic of Italian American studies. The volume also encompasses the fields of psychology, women's studies, and bereavement studies. In interviews with more than 50 women, the authors, who come from diverse theoretical traditions in psychology, examine the intricacies of the father-daughter relationship and its many stages through the lens of Italian American memories, experiences, and environments. The Italian American women whose interviews compose this volume represent a wide range of ages, education, professions, family backgrounds, religious beliefs, and sexual orientations. The book is divided into six sections, with introductory remarks to each section by both DiCello and Mangione. Sections are framed in the context of psychological ideas and commentary (written for a generalist audience) on approaches including attachment theory, object relations theory, grief, and reaction to death. Each section is concluded by a Pause and Reflect segment in which readers are given the tools to allow them think about their own fathers, where they came from, and how they helped shape their daughters' lives. Poignant and personal, *Daughters and Dads* could be incorporated as a complementary text in many an Italian American classroom. The volume shows how culture and relationships form who we become, and how, even after death, our fathers and their *italianità* continue to help shape us as Italian Americans.

In Part I, "Defying Stereotypes," DiCello and Mangione introduce their own fathers, and then go on to present the other fathers who play a role in the book. In essence, Part I "fleshes out a picture of the Italian American man," his very being, the difficulties he faced, and his contradictions (40). The women interviewed give vivid descriptions of their dads in a context often framed by Italian Americana. Author Helen Barolini, one of the interviewees, provides a glimpse into her youth in the form of a poem she wrote to her father as a teenager. The remainder of Part I explores central themes that stood out for the fathers as they lived their lives: family, the importance of community, work ethic, the value of education, and their relationship to World War II.

In Part II, “Learning, Doing, Being: Early Ties with our Dads,” the authors examine the childhood matrix of father and daughter and consider how “the experiences the women had with their dads triggered the construction of a template for relating throughout their lives” (70). Attachment theory (which surmises that the connections we feel early in life help us feel secure later in life) and object relations theory (which focuses on how we as humans connect with others) play center roles as the theoretical backbones of this section.

In Part III, “Stepping into Adulthood with our Fathers: Connection and Disconnection,” the authors contemplate the ups and downs of the teenage years, daughters’ first forays into young adulthood, and the moment when fathers saw their daughters as adults for the first time. The interviews show that connections forged early in life remained strong throughout adulthood, and often allowed daughters to think critically and mindfully about how to plan their own lives.

Part IV, “Holding On, Letting Go: Our Fathers through Illness and Death” grapples with the process of letting go of Dad. The interviews in this section touch on the daughters’ devotion to their fathers throughout illness and death, regret or guilt for decisions made and, for some, the presence of the mystical in death. DiCello and Mangione summarize what has been written about grief and mourning, and stress how the Italian American culture (or any culture for that matter) can influence people’s “need to grieve, how they grieve, and how their deceased loved one becomes integrated into their life after death” (114). The authors contend that four aspects of Italian American culture – family as central to life and to survival, a comfort with religion and spirituality, resilience tempered with fate as a framework for living, and the power of transformability of ritual and symbol – underlie our thinking about Italians and their relationships to each other and death (132).

In Part V, “Aftershocks: Missing Our Fathers through Time and Space,” DiCello and Mangione consider the ongoing ramifications of dealing with a father’s death. A number of interviewees relate dreams that occurred following their fathers’ deaths; the authors also consider the role of dreams as an integral part of dealing with the many emotions that follow the death of a father. Part of this section is dedicated to belief systems (often Catholicism), and also to a daughter’s new perspective on life following the death of her father.

In Part VI, “Living with our Fathers in our Hearts,” the authors examine Italian American women’s deep connection to their culture, a culture that serves as a blueprint for continued bonds and remembrance after a father’s death, for in remembrance

there is immortality. They also explore what women have done to honor, remember, and memorialize their fathers. The volume's final chapter confronts the discrimination and prejudice that some of the interviewees felt as Italian American women growing up predominantly in the mid-20th century. This brings me to one small critique of this volume: it is generally a one-sided view of the father-daughter relationship, and (until the final chapter), of the Italian American experience. The authors clearly state that all women interviewed had reported stable relationships with their fathers. A reader looking for a more comprehensive study encompassing both positive and negative interactions will have to look elsewhere, for the stories in this volume are told are from the vantage point of women who look back and recall, for the most part, only positive memories. The authors conclude the volume on the notion of conviviality, "the great Italian emphasis on being *with life* in its presence and absence," as one of the many emotional and psychological juxtapositions experienced in a life led to the fullest (233).

LISA FERRANTE PERRONE

Bucknell University

Suzette R. Grillo and Zach P. Messitte (eds.). *Buon Giorno, Arezzo: A Postcard from Tuscany*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016.

The publishing industry spends a good deal of ink on travel books. And many bookstores devote yards of shelf space to guides to Italy. As well as general guidebooks, there are often works that focus on individual regions (Tuscany, Sicily) or cities (Florence, Naples, Venice, Rome). Less plentiful are books on smaller towns, and that is what makes *Buon Giorno, Arezzo* unique. Edited by Suzette R. Grillo and Zach P. Messitte, with stunning photographs by Jacque Sexton Braun, the book contains essays by eighteen contributors, who, on the whole, graduated from, or taught at, or are in some way affiliated with the University of Oklahoma. Norman, seat of the university, and Arezzo are sister cities.

Arezzo is often omitted from the modern traveler's itinerary, and that is a shame. Its extraordinarily rich history covering two millennia, its stunning artwork, its notable gold industry, and its outstanding culinary traditions make it worth more than the two hours the nineteenth-century British traveler John Ruskin gave it. Arezzo is the gateway to the Casentino Valley, home to Saint Francis, Michelangelo and Dante at various points in their lives; to many

and varied Romanesque churches; to Etruscan and Roman sites and artifacts; and to modern towns noteworthy for their beauty, traditions, and modernity. If you saw the movies *La vita è bella* or *The English Patient*, you have seen parts of Arezzo and the Casentino.

Subtitled *A Postcard from Tuscany*, this volume is not a guide that will give you information about specific hotels or restaurants. It will, however, give you an overview of the history, culture, and daily life of this beautiful and wealthy Italian provincial capital. Arezzo's most famous citizens – Maecenas, Petrarch, Guido Monaco, Pietro Aretino, Leonardo Bruni, Vasari – receive mention, as do notables (specifically Piero della Francesca) who spent time in the city and left behind some of Italy's most famous artworks. In Arezzo, besides architectural monuments, there are noteworthy works of art by Donatello, Cimabue, Piero della Francesca, Giorgio Vasari, and Pietro Annigoni, among others; there is a gold museum that speaks to the city's long involvement in the jewelry-making industry.

To get an idea of the historical and cultural richness of Arezzo, I recommend reading Kirk Duclaux's chapter, "The History of Premodern Arezzo," and also Federico Siniscalco's "Getting to Know the Aretines." The remainder of the book expands on themes both of these contributors introduce.

In his portion of the introduction, David Boren, President of the University of Oklahoma, writes: "Today's global community requires collective action. [...] We must, therefore, study and experience the histories, cultures, politics, economies, languages, and societies of others. Our future depends on it" (vii). *Buon Giorno, Arezzo*, allows the reader to study and experience Arezzo both pleasantly and thoroughly. In a sense, though, this book is about more than Arezzo. It speaks of quotidian Aretine elements of life as well as to "collective action." It offers the reader – veteran traveler, student, artist, historian, for example – a possibility: the chance to know one part of modern Italy and to understand the path that has led to the present. Etruscans, Greeks, Romans, Renaissance princes, and two world wars all have left individual marks on Arezzo; but nowhere is it more evident that the sum is greater than the parts than in this relatively small, traditional, and innovative city.

BETH BARTOLINI-SALIMBENI

Independent Scholar

Elisa Dossena and Silvia Dupont. *Sequenze: Italian Through Contemporary Film*. New York: Edizioni Farinelli, 2016.

This book is not the only one available for those who want to teach Italian cinema and Italian language. But it is the first one to weave carefully together the two fields so as to apply, as stated by one of its cover reviewers, “its multiple approach to the teaching of Italian through cinema and of Italian cinema through language” (Clarissa Cio’, San Diego State University). The authors of *Sequenze*, Elisa Dossena (Princeton University) and Silvia Dupont (Newton High School, Ma), demonstrate this specific pedagogical framework through the appropriate selection of the cinematographic corpus to be used and through the array of the various activities and exercises linked to each of the ten contemporary movies they have chosen. The titles of the films themselves bear witness to the wide-ranging set of issues presented: “Buongiorno, notte”, “Giorni e nuvole”, “Habemus papam”, “Il capitale umano”, “Io sono Li”, “La grande bellezza”, “La ragazza del lago”, “Le chiavi di casa”, “Mine vaganti” and “Ricordati di me”.

The strategy to use a movie to teach a language and vice versa is well known to Elisa Dossena, who has already produced a guide to the study of Paolo Virzì’s *La prima cosa bella* (*The First Beautiful Thing*, in “Quaderni di cinema italiano per stranieri”, Guerra Editore, 2014). But the project of *Sequenze*, finalized with Silvia Dupont, also stems from Dossena’s academic interest in the use of visual media in language teaching as a whole (see her own account in the web interview “Teaching Italian through films”, <http://www.iitaly.org/38272/teaching-italian-through-films-first-beautiful-thing>). Thus the theoretical reference of the book seems to a modern pedagogy in FLT which advocates the use of the so-called “visual organizers” (Herron et al. 1991, 1992 1995; Canning Wilson and Wallace, 2000 for example). The movie is therefore considered as a cultural artefact, an aesthetic means to express the director’s message to the spectator; but when treated as a meaningful “text” to be used in a language class, the movie can also be useful to document social, cultural and anthropological issues related to that same language. It is not the precise contextualization of the movie that counts (expanding the historical aspects of a movie for example); rather the movie “realistically” puts together its various linguistic and cultural levels, finally conveying the story and the director’s artful editing of the plot. For the language teacher, the movie becomes a powerful carrier of meanings, where language and culture continuously interact and impact on each other. The movie as meaningful text, then, is offered to the language student for the pedagogical activities that can be applied to the given samples, or clips, selected by the authors, while at the same time reinforcing the linguistic practice that has been conducted in class thus far.

And, in fact, *Sequenze* means just that: “sequences” of lifelike, realistic and natural extracts taken from the chosen titles of the manual, but always extracts that work “sequentially” to construct the final message of the complete movie. The student may complete the study of the film presented in the specific chapter with a final viewing of the same, or the whole process may stop with the comprehension of the clips, since a certain amount of linguistic and cultural competency has been achieved. Chapters are organized around the three short clips for each movie (of not more than three or four minutes) that the authors of the manual have selected (web links to the movies are given and no DVD accompanies the book). Comprehension activities and expansion exercises are attached to each clip, also dealing with the range of colloquial/dialect/slang variants of the Italian language. Moreover, each movie is introduced by a text, a newspaper article, which the authors have chosen to debate the various opinions on a controversial aspect of modern Italian society. The same text is also exploited for exercises of scanning and skimming linked to the viewing of the movie clips that will follow. If the teacher wants to present a complete viewing of the movie, after presenting and using the three segments as described previously, other expansion exercises might follow (written and/or oral). Finally each chapter ends with a brief section explaining curiosities, famous phrases pronounced in the movie, and also offering to the students other sources for further study.

This book can help tutors, instructors and lecturers of Italian, both at the intermediate and at the advanced level, to attain a double objective: the study of the language in all its modern, colloquial and slang variations; but also to help learners achieve what is called “cultural competence”, since the various films presented refer to important topics of today’s Italy, such as, immigration, politics, gender relations, disability, and media. Regional varieties, dialects and contemporary Italian are also treated when the particular movie presents these cases. In this way the project of Dossena and Dupont also avoids all those cultural stereotypes which are often to be found in the “didactic” selection of movies that are supposed to fully represent Italian language and culture abroad. The final effect is that of a mosaic of clips offering a wide range of aspects of the Italian language of today, including even some controversial and untypical elements. Highly recommended.

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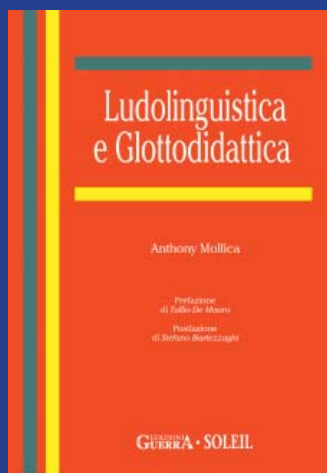
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