

first essay of the volume by Ada Neiger addresses the lingering anti-Semitism which underlies Sergio Romano's pernicious *Lettera a un amico ebreo*. Using the rhetorical trope of *concessio*, according to Neiger, Romano is able to claim at once that some of his best friends are Jewish, despite the fact that Judaism constitutes, according to him, "una delle più antiche, introverse e retrograde confessioni religiose mai praticate in Occidente."

It is fitting, then, that among the final essays of the volume, those that treat monuments and museums, Cristina Villa's ends on an admonitory note. Describing her visit to the Monumento al Deportato di Carpi, she lingers over a citation from Bertold Brecht's epilogue to *Aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui*, an allegory of Hitler's rise to power. "Questo mostro stava, una volta, per governare il mondo! I popoli lo spensero, ma ora non cantiamo vittoria troppo presto. Il grembo da cui nacque è ancor fecondo." By citing Brecht's own use of literary means to raise public consciousness of historical danger, Villa's essay stands as a microcosm of the *politica sociale* that this entire volume serves to promote. Laura Pacelli ("Scrittura femminile tra Resistenza, deportazione e memoria") strikes a similar note when she cites the *cri du coeur*—"un grido disperato alla conoscenza, unica arma contro l'indifferenza e la violenza"—that issues from the pages of the women writers within her study. In the case of *Memoria collettiva e memoria privata*, this call for activism takes the form of scholarly inquiry, of the sort necessary to maintain public vigilance against Holocaust recurrence, "lest we sing victory too soon," in the words of Bertold Brecht.

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Roberto Ludovico. *"Una farfalla chiamata Solaria" tra l'Europa e il romanzo.* Pesaro: Metauro Edizioni, 2010. Pp. 328. ISBN 978-88-6156-060-4. €25.

As the author informs us in his Introduction, there is no shortage of scholarship on the Florentine literary journal *Solaria* (1926-36), founded and directed by Alberto Carocci, co-directed by Giansiro Ferrata and Alessandro Bonsanti. He acknowledges the fact that critical interest peaked in the 1960s-80s, concentrating on the relationships between the contributing writers and journal directors, on the one hand, and the historical and political circumstances of Fascist Italy, on the other. Ludovico's methodology consists of illustrating the ways in which the literature published in the journal impacted on Italian culture. Specifically, the author proposes to underscore the role played by *Solaria* in continuing the work begun by the journal *La Ronda*, "nella direzione del romanzo moderno dei contenuti psicologici e sociali e d'importazione europea, che avrebbe fatto da preludio al pieno sviluppo della narrativa del dopoguerra in Italia" (11).

Ludovico argues that, by publishing international authors, the journal offered Italian writers an alternative to the suffocating nationalism preached by the Fascists. The butterfly metaphor in the title captures the activity of the journal as it fluttered among modernist European authors, such as Proust, Joyce, Eliot, and

Woolf, inspiring Italian poets and novelists to extend their aesthetic horizons beyond their national borders. The phrase is attributed to Giansiro Ferrata, a contributor to *Solaria* as well as co-director in 1929-30. While this theme of “europeismo” in the 1920s and 1930s has been treated by other scholars, Ludovico contends that the approach has been neither systematic nor exhaustive. In response, he offers a re-examination of the work of the journal in the expectation that new perspectives on the importance of the journal may emerge.

He begins by giving an account of the circumstances of the birth of the Florentine journal as an initiative of Carocci and a small group of like-minded intellectuals including Raffaello Franchi and Bonaventura Tecchi, who gathered regularly at the renowned Giubbe Rosse café in Florence, where they exchanged ideas on the concept of a journal that respected the Italian tradition while being receptive to the new forms of literature circulating in Europe and abroad. The title of this opening chapter is telling: “Per programma nessun programma.” It suggests the group’s intention of avoiding both the “stilismi e purismi esagerati” (15) of *La Ronda* (Roma, 1919-23) and the revolutionary spirit of Piero Gobetti’s *Il Baretti* (Torino, 1924-28). *Solaria* sought to be pioneering and at the same time to avoid both the pursuit of aesthetic perfection and overt political engagement. This ambivalence would eventually make manifest the identity crisis within the journal itself, in the form of the competing visions of Carocci and of his co-directors. For Ludovico, the crisis was the inevitable result of a “ricerca di un equilibrio ormai divenuto impossibile tra la cultura e l’impegno sociale” (23). As Ludovico demonstrates with consummate skill, the journal was, nonetheless, an invaluable vehicle for those writing in the 1926-36 decade and remains an indispensable resource for those wishing to understand the interaction between intellectuals and the Fascist regime, with its censorship policy. The journal took a position “sempre in bilico tra la legalità e l’illegalità, cercando di essere voce quanto più possibile indipendente in uno Stato che bandiva ogni forma di pensiero autonomo” (35).

Examining the issues printed year by year in *Solaria*, Ludovico is masterful in shedding light on the growing exposure of Italian writers and readers to such figures as Eliot, Proust, Gide, and Joyce, the emerging poetry of Eugenio Montale, Salvatore Quasimodo, and Giuseppe Ungaretti, as well as the narrative of Italo Svevo, Giovanni Comisso, and Alberto Consigli, among others. The author also comments on the position of *Solaria* with respect to Croce’s *Poesia e non poesia*, the prose writings of Paul Valéry, and the important role played by the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, thereby documenting the journal’s evolving format, from review articles to a definitive “linea teorica” (46).

In the richly annotated volume, Ludovico examines carefully and critically the content in the issues published each year and identifies two central directions: the presentation of contemporary Italian poets and novelists and the presentation of contemporary European writers, primarily French and English. In the process, Ludovico discusses the poetry, translations, short stories, reviews, and critical essays published in *Solaria* during a fascinating and formative moment in Italian cultural history. He also correlates the many viewpoints expressed by the dozens of figures who contributed to the journal – some only occasionally, and others in an

ongoing manner. In a word, Roberto Ludovico's "*Una farfalla chiamata Solaria*" tra *l'Europa e il romanzo*, represents an impressive work of scholarship and an invaluable addition to the critical tools with which to study Italian literary history in a decisive decade.

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Italian Women's Theatre, 1930-1960. An Anthology of Plays. Translations and Critical Introductions by Daniela Cavallaro. Bristol, UK/Chicago, US: Intellect, 2011. Pp. 392. ISBN 978-1-84150-555-8. \$ 30.

This important volume illustrates the depth of women's contributions to Italian theater, a contribution rarely explored either in texts examining female authors or those discussing theater in general. As such, Cavallaro has done a valuable service to Italian literary studies, giving voice to those playwrights whose works have been little known and seldom researched. In her critical introduction, Cavallaro offers a cogent overview of women's theatrical production from the 1930s to the 1960s, making explicit how these authors paved the way for the more familiar names of feminist theater, such as Dacia Maraini and Franca Rame. She points out as well that the treatment of female characters in the works of these earlier playwrights often challenged traditional expectations of female behavior and female roles. Cavallaro provides a brief biography of the four authors under study, followed by an English translation of a representative work by each. The volume concludes with a helpful appendix listing both published and unpublished works by these authors.

Cavallaro begins with Paola Riccora, pen-name of Emilia Vaglio Capriolo (1884-1976), who began by translating and adapting French farces for the Neapolitan stage before turning to writing her own dramas. Riccora's plays focused on middle-class protagonists, caught up in domestic troubles that were often resolved by a poignant ending. She is best known for her drama *Sarà stato Giovannini* which was performed by the famous de Filippo siblings (Eduardo, Peppino and Titina) and their theater company in 1933. This successful collaboration was followed by others, including *Angelina mia!*, *La bottega dei santi*, *Lontananza*, and *Io e te*, all staged in the 1930s. Riccora's best work was written in the 1930s, although she continued to create plays into the late 1960s. *Sarà stato Giovannini*, a comedy revolving around family betrayals, seductions, and social class, is reproduced here, demonstrating Riccora's skill in portraying multi-layered characters against the background of trenchant social commentary.

Anna Bonacci (1892-1981) is recognized primarily for her drama *L'ora della fantasia*, staged in the early 1950s throughout Europe, and resulting in both an Italian and an American-film adaptation. The play, translated and reproduced in this volume, highlights the dominant theme of Bonacci's works: that of living out, albeit briefly, a particular fantasy or desire. *L'ora della fantasia* treats this theme through the use of an age-old plot device: a married couple each deceiving the