material; rather, it was a tragedy because the death of Madre Cimberna at the end of the second act left the continuation of the fascist revolution open and uncertain. Inspired by fascist ideology, *18 BL* could only have expressed a tragic vision of existence. Fascism conceived life as an endless war where individual energy had to be channelled for the common good, which was equated with the well being of the nation. Thus for fascism individual lives were not marked by a series of immanent tragic as well as joyous events, but by an endless war, a metaphysical tragedy with neither end nor solution. From this nihilist view of existence ensued the fascists’ cult of war and war heroes like Madre Cimberna and their contempt for the comfort of life and peace, as one of the fascist songs goes: “ce ne fregammo un di della galera, / ce ne fregammo della brutta morte, / per preparare questa gente forte / che se ne frega adesso di morir” (A. Virgilio Savona and Michele L. Straniero. *Canti dell’Italia fascista* (1919-1945). Milano: Garzanti, 1979. 108-9).

In closing the book (in which a substantial selection of photographs and drawings reinforces visually the arguments treated), the reader is left with the dubious impression that a theater of masses for the masses failed in Italy because of the flop of *18 BL*. However, this was not the only reason, nor even the main reason for the failure. Rather, from 1926 on, fascism had become increasingly a regime paradoxically enveloped in populist rhetoric, but entrenched in a semi-feudal socio-cultural structure. Radical fascists, who did not conform, were sent to isolated and distant places; such was the fate of Italo Balbo who was dispatched to Libya, as governor of that northern African colony, far away from the centre of power.

The lack of a serious evaluation of these historical facts is unfortunately a shortcoming of this otherwise fine and enlightening study – a study that, centring on the development and failure of *18 BL*, explores synchronically and diachronically the evolution of modernist theater in Italy and beyond, between the two world wars.

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Following his excellent critical presentation of Franco Fortini in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (volume 128. *Twentieth-Century Italian Poets. Second Series*. Detroit: Bruccoli Clark Layman, 1993. 142-49), with the present publication Thomas Peterson establishes himself as an authority on this important modern poet who died in 1994. Peterson’s contribution functions on at least three levels: on one, his study contributes to the growing appreciation of the poetry of a figure better known in his own country for his political, journalistic and literary essays; on another level, it accomplishes the primary objective of the author, which is “to advance the appreciation and understanding of Fortini among the English-speaking public” (1); and finally, the text provides extensive English translations of unrivalled clarity and precision of a difficult and often impenetrable poetic diction. Peterson himself, in his *Introduction*, provides a statement of his methodology which consists of a chronological approach
within which several other techniques are accommodated – from close readings of key compositions to analyses of the influences and the relationships between Fortini and his contemporaries.

In that same Introduction, which is based on the Dictionary of Literary Biography entry cited above, the author also identifies several of the primary stylistic features on which he intends to elaborate in the eight chapters of The Ethical Muse. These are: Fortini’s allegiance to classical Italian verse from a formal standpoint, his rejection of the concept of poetry’s autonomy with respect to the social context, his insistence on a political content expressed in terms of “general” or transhistorical issues as opposed to period-specific issues and his tendency to fuse the spiritual, the political and the aesthetic in his discourse. The challenge which Peterson sets for himself from the outset is that of demonstrating how Fortini’s poetry can be political or realistic without collapsing into or aligning itself with neorealism and how it can be given over to aesthetic considerations without closing itself off in a hermetic solipsism. Furthermore, the author must come to grips with the heterogenous and often contradictory nature of Fortini’s verse which is the product of an eclectic intellect whose interest ranges over the works of thinkers such as Lukács, Kierkegaard, and Barthes as well as Dante, Manzoni, and Leopardi.

In chapter one Peterson analyses Foglio di via (1946), Fortini’s first volume of poems, finding in the work traces of hermetic and vocian influences giving way to Fortini’s own “poetics of advent” about which the author states: “poetry must be a figuration of the ethical and historical world, not in a naively realist sense but as a supposition of a telos, a better future” (15). In formulating such defining poetics, Peterson positions Franco Fortini’s aesthetics, articulated in prose writings as well as in Foglio di via, in relation to Montale’s “hermetic antifascism” (25) on one side and an ideologically charged neorealism on the other. As far as Peterson is concerned, Fortini, though admiring Montale, “sensed in him a retreat [...] into a sanctuary of sorts, an avoidance of the fundamental social and political conflicts of the times” (12). But, rather than extol a realist or historical discourse, engagé in the usual terms, Fortini is seen to isolate Cesare Pavese from the neorealist context in which he is often placed, preferring to privilege his “realism of conscience” (19). What Fortini takes from Pavese, according to Peterson, is the “synthesis of his mythical and ethical concerns” (19). A third figure looms prominently in the formative phase of Fortini’s lyricism and the construction of the thematic axes of Foglio di via, and that is Giacomo Noventa. Writes Peterson: “His [Noventa’s] moral presence is felt in much of Fortini’s writing, particularly in his concepts of ‘errore’ and ‘ospite’ (25). These are two notions which play a determining role in the content of this and subsequent volumes of poems.

The second chapter of The Ethical Muse is devoted to a study of I destini generali (1956) in which the author attempts to expand and apply the notion of a specific historical moment transformed or represented in terms of “archetypal situations” (37) – hence the significance of the title. Rather than elucidate or “capture” the present, or evoke a recent past by means of literary artifice, Fortini strives to achieve a forward-looking or “prophetic” stance and, in doing so, endows his verse with “a third element [the others being lyricism and realism] – of incompleteness and uncertainty” (35), which connects back to the “poetry of advent” mentioned above.
In order to clarify and show the derivation of such ideas, presumably realized in *I destini generali*, Peterson explores the essays which reveal Fortini’s views on the theories of Lukács, Bataille, and Foucault on the correlation between “aesthetic formalism” and “political responsibility” (50). The only problem with this approach is that, perhaps, Peterson loses sight of his original intention of examining Fortini’s poetry which, as he asserts, “needs to be considered on its own terms” (1). After making the point that Fortini’s poetry has been obscured by his prose, the author appears to lapse, for the moment at least, into a similar tendency by conducting a critique of the political and aesthetic essayist. It is arguable whether or not the prose theories are actualized in the poetry: it depends on which theory of textual analysis one adopts.

There is once again a change of methodology in the next chapter (the author had predicted this in his *Introduction*) in that Peterson conducts a comparative study of two “canzoni,” one by Fortini (from *I destini generali*) and one by Ungaretti (from *La terra promessa*). The point of the comparison (or at least a point) is that both compositions take a mythical situation as the basis for the construction of a spiritual autobiography—with the essential difference being that, “Fortini [unlike Ungaretti] addresses a specific history in a city from which he himself was a voluntary exile” (63). As he very convincingly and lucidly demonstrates by means of a close reading of the two “canzoni,” “time, memory, and historical consciousness—move in Fortini from the particular to the general, and imply certain cognitive and ethical statements about society, about the true and the good” (63). In outlining the dissimilarities between the two works, Peterson reiterates observations made in his *Introduction*, where he identifies Fortini’s position with respect to the hermetics and provides additional interpretive depth to the comments made on *I destini generali* in the preceding chapter.

Next, the author translates *La poesia delle rose* (1962), a difficult poem 18 octaves long, and isolates in it the themes of paradox and redemption. In preparation for his dual task, he examines the significance of the noun “rosa” in Fortini’s poetry. His finding is that the term stands for myth and hope—a fusion of Pavesian and Biblical allusion. Peterson’s contention is that in the poem, “the flower occurs amidst an array of means to ‘abolish history’ until it is reconstituted as a symbol of spring and hope, of reason and redemption” (74). The paradox to which Peterson refers appears to be Fortini’s desire to “try to conserve the residual revolutionary capacities of language within a *new alienation*” (73). Such a stance sets him apart from the neo-avantgarde who saw conventional or even classical language as the instrument of capitalist society and, therefore, repudiated it. As well as being political in this sense, the poem has, for Peterson, “a redemptive or heuristic character” (82); this makes it, in many respects, reminiscent of the *Divine Comedy*—which accounts for the redemptive dimension of the poem’s meaning. In arguing along these lines, however, Peterson comes very close to erasing the revolutionary component which Fortini desires and appears to suggest that the poem has the same political applicability as does the work of Dante.

Peterson himself, in his introductory remarks to *The Ethical Muse*, informs the reader of the content and scope of the fifth chapter stating that it “is a formalistic study of the poetry of Fortini and others in the 1960s and 1970s, considered in terms of a ‘metrics’ based on the Goethian concept of phyllotaxis” (2). Such a characterization has a double implication in that phyllotaxis is a metaphor for “a poetry based increas-
ingly on isomorphism, pattern and a specific interest in trees” (93). This means that Peterson intends to examine the poetry of Fortini thematically, commenting on its arboreal imagery, and metrically, illustrating the concept of phyllotaxis defined as the disposition of syntactical elements in such a way as to reveal or even construct an “organization of space and time” (93). The approach causes the author to consider the works of several contemporaries in this light, especially the poetry of Andrea Zanzotto.

The poems of *Poesia e errore* (1959 and 1969), *Una volta per sempre* (1963), and *Questo muro* (1973) are the subject of the next chapter entitled “Dazein or Dazibao” – references to the Heideggerian Being-in-the-world, in the first instance, and to the Chinese public mural, in the second. With this title, Peterson intends to signify the universality of Fortini’s poetics, as well as its revolutionary and anti-hegemonic ideological message. In addition, he ties the content and form of these three volumes of poems to the already established poetics of delineating a “general destiny” of the oppressed of the world through iconic images of specific instances of violence and oppression. Poetry’s political function actualizes itself in the poet’s determination to inscribe on the symbolic wall those very occasions of brutality and irrationality. Rather than trace parallels with the metaphysical walls of Montale, Peterson correctly sees a more appropriate correspondence with intertexts in Sereni. Consequently, the author once more reaffirms his original contention that Fortini is drawn to the more militant poets than to the symbolist hermetics.

Fortini’s insistence on “poetic form as the necessary vehicle for his political and spiritual vocation” (134) is Peterson’s working hypothesis in the section of *The Ethical Muse* devoted to *Paesaggio con serpente* (1984). Here, the critic speaks of Fortini’s “dual citizenship” and “dialectic in two moments,” by which is meant that the poet situates himself simultaneously within and outside of historical events. The serpent of the title appears in the collection’s opening poem and collapses into its emblematic polyvalence, the Garden of Eden and the Valley of Armageddon: the poles between which both Fortini’s poetics and Peterson’s critique oscillate. In this volume, Fortini’s quest for an epistemological poetry and an expressionist language takes him toward the paintings of Morlotti, McGarrell, and Poussin, whose *Landscape with Snake* (1648-1651) Fortini’s title replicates.

The final chapter of the text is entitled, “The Death of Bacchus” and, in effect, addresses the fundamental problem inherent in all of Fortini’s poetry, which is the paradoxical relationship of tradition and revolution. By means of a complex network of intertextual connections that incorporate Nietzsche, Manzoni and Leopardi, Peterson visualizes in the work of Franco Fortini (here is meant once more not only the lyric) the re-enactment of the Bacchic-Dionysian cycle of death and rebirth which fuses mythological and Christian representational modes. This imagery in turn becomes the expressive vehicle for Fortini’s political and ethical vision. Death is seen in literal terms as the destruction of civilization and nature and in moral terms as the absence of justice in history. Rebirth, in both classical and Christian terms, assumes the form of the “hope” and “advent” discussed in earlier sections of the volume.

Peterson ends his fine study with a conclusion that recapitulates some of the lines of inquiry followed throughout the text, while focusing on Fortini’s last publication, *Composita solvantur* (1994). In the final analysis, Peterson demonstrates the uniqueness of a poet whose “moralism is inseparable form his formalism” (174). It appears
that Fortini’s aesthetic rigour separates him from the experimentalist of the twentieth century, while his political views set him apart from the hermetics and post-hermetics. *The Ethical Muse of Franco Fortini* is an indispensable road map through that complicated, sometimes enigmatic, highly allegorical and often obliquely ideological literary world of an underappreciated (to date) modern poet.

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In her article “Alcuni tipi di esercizi sull’uso delle preposizioni,” Karumanchiri reports that “una delle più grandi difficoltà per gli studenti dei corsi di lingua anche avanzati è quello dell’uso delle preposizioni” (*Studies in Italian Applied Linguistics*. Eds. N. Villa and M. Danesi. Ottawa: CSIS, 1984, 75). Instructors of various levels of Italian as a Second Language thus welcomed the first edition of *L’uso delle preposizioni in italiano* since it was the only workbook in existence to focus on preposition usage and practice. ISL instructors will be pleasantly surprised with the second edition’s more comprehensive format which includes not only a series of completely reworked and expanded exercises, but also a grammatical guide and software (a diskette containing almost all of the exercises found in the text). These helpful additions notwithstanding, the aim of the workbook is still “to help students to understand and practice using the most common grammatical structures which require the use of prepositions in modern Italian” (ix). The second edition continues to be best employed with intermediate to advanced students; however, the authors include and even identify some basic exercises which would be suitable for students at the beginner level. Moreover, the authors recommend that “the contents of the entire workbook be spread over three to four semesters” (ix). By observing these temporal guidelines while making concurrent use of another course text (perhaps a comprehensive Italian grammar), the workbook will prove to be a valuable resource to both the student and the instructor.

Since the exercises address and identify one topic at a time, they are easily cross-referenced to the guide. In her review of the first edition, Anne Urbancic noted that “The exercises seem very crowded, and the numerous typefaces, in addition to handwritten examples, are confusing and give the appearance of being cluttered” (*Canadian Modern Language Review* 45: 4, 1989, p. 741). The second edition has since resolved these aesthetic shortcomings and contains some black and white photographs and illustrations which enhance the exercises and overall presentation of the text.

The fact that the guide and the diskette facilitate independent study is a definite merit of this package. The guide presents grammatical explanations in English and makes effective use of various pedagogical graphics such as charts and tables. The authors clearly state that the guide is by no means an exhaustive grammar of preposition usage/meaning, rather it “illustrates only those topics which are dealt with in the