della critica della letteratura italiana dal 1902 al 1942, preparato sotto la direzione di Prezzolini pubblicato in tre volumi. Un profilo critico di Prezzolini quale "straordinario organizzatore di cultura, giornalista di prim'ordine e intellettuale dotato di un fiuto quasi miracoloso per i fatti della cultura" (63) viene trattato da Emilio Gentile e Giorgio Luti nei rispettivi saggi. Emma Giammattei, sotto la cui cura era stato pubblicato il carteggio Croce-Prezzolini nel 1990, presso le Edizioni di Storia e di Letteratura, mette qui in risalto lo scambio delle 54 lettere del periodo americano prezzoliniano, fra i due insigni autori. Di particolare interesse risulta il contenuto di queste in quanto servono da epilogo biografico a un carteggio che copre quasi mezzo secolo (dal 1904 al 1946) e che, a detta della Giammattei, "non testimonia una storia, ma propriamente *la costituisce*" (28).

Di natura più personale sono le reminiscenze di Luciano Rebay, Maristella de Panizza Lorch e soprattutto dell'allieva Margherita Marchione, già autrice di diverse pubblicazioni sul venerato maestro che seguì fino alla fine nel tranquillo rifugio svizzero di Lugano.

Molto più significativo per inquadrare Prezzolini come uomo e come studioso negli anni del periodo americano è il saggio di Olga Ragusa. Il titolo "Quando gli archivi parlano . . ." è tolto da una lettera di Prezzolini stesso al professor Peter Riccio della Columbia University, in data 27 febbraio 1956, e nella quale Prezzolini fa accenno alla necessità di consultare gli archivi per il progetto *Directory of Americans of Italian Origin to be called Italian Registrar*. "Quando gli archivi parlano . . ." si avvale di una copiosa documentazione che mette in rilievo "l'attività universitaria . . . non indifferente" (40) di Prezzolini che prestò la sua opera di professore alla Columbia University, oltre a quello di fondatore della Casa Italiana, e di direttore della stessa fin dai suoi primordi. Le difficoltà affrontate, spesso con stoicismo negli anni quaranta, quale rappresentante culturale di un paese nemico, sono dalla Ragusa esaminate con acuta percezione. Passando in rassegna alcune delle diatribe intercorse sui rapporti fra il fascismo e Prezzolini, diatribe che lo costrinsero a scendere in campo per difendersi anche polemicamente, la Ragusa le relega, con la serenità del giudizio "a posteriori", a un "contrastato e sofferto periodo" (46), limitato nella vita centenaria di Prezzolini.

Nella sua totalità, il volume si legge con piacere e contribuisce di gran lunga a farci conoscere "un uomo difficile e contraddittorio che impegnò tutto se stesso in una scommessa che si radicava nella propria insindacabile libertà", come dice Paolo Bagnoli nella prefazione (7).

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Santo L. Aricò, ed. *Contemporary Women Writers in Italy: A Modern Renaissance*. Amherst: The U of Massachusetts P, 1990. Pp. viii, 238.

In the past six years Italian women writers have received attention in North America in the form of translations, anthologies, and special issues in prestigious journals, and the present collection of critical essays marks a significant contribution to the field. In the Introduction the Editor reviews the critical works to date on Italian literature by women. His observations and conclusions come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the dearth of critical studies on the subject. Aricò observes that, while the writings of Deledda,

Ginzburg, and Morante continue to receive critical attention, the works of other prominent women writers have remained unnoticed by otherwise meticulous Italian and international critics. Reactions by some women writers to the national near-indifference they have experienced have been included, thus lending further proof of their critical marginalization.

This collection proposes to redress the problem of critical neglect by offering textual exegeses, biographical sketches, as well as pertinent bibliographies for twelve principal writers. While the essays seem to have no specific arrangement, a close reading reveals points of contact in relation to themes and style. The concerns of the twelve writers, while overlapping, cover four areas: autobiography, which allows writers self-reflection leading to self-disclosure; language as an agent empowering women to speak themselves into "visibility"; the courage of women in the search for the truth which men have lost through their centuries-old struggle for power; literature as a mirror for advocating social change.

The first study, "Elsa Morante: The Trauma of Possessive Love and Disillusionment," focuses on Elsa Morante, the writer and the person. Deliberately bypassing critics who continue to regard the author as an enigmatic figure, the essay proposes a fresh and more productive approach. By directing attention to the significance of "alibi" in Morante's poetry and prose, Rocco Capozzi seeks to reveal and substantiate what Morante had implied all along: the major characters in her works, whether male or female, function in various degrees as the author's dramatis personae, as author-narrator-protagonists, "modifications and complements of the same autobiographical, narrating subjects" (12). Having stated his premise, Capozzi proceeds to examine each major work on the basis of the "alibi" motif, maintaining that a careful, intelligent reading of Morante's texts elucidates not only the writer's vision, but also some fundamental facets of her person. Yet, even to the most attentive reader, Morante remains in part elusive, like a mysterious Sheherezade who preferred to reveal herself not directly but through her stories, myths, and fables. Similarly Morante remains "wrapped in a veil of fiction and narrative lies that intend simultaneously to reveal and hide universal and poetic truths" (22).

From the time of its publication, Anna Banti's *Artemisia* has remained for many readers an enigmatic work, the air of mystery surrounding the protagonist and her life having been deliberately inscribed in the text. Deborah Heller's article alludes to the numerous biographical and historical insights Banti weaves into the novel in relation to her protagonist Artemisia Gentileschi. These very "insights" have been sources of puzzlement for readers precisely because they had been glossed over in or omitted entirely from texts on art history. Heller's analytical study, entitled "History, Art, and Fiction in Anna Banti's *Artemisia*," elucidates Banti's perception of her protagonist both as a real person and as a fictitious creation. A similar fascination pervades the works of Fausta Cialente. Fiction and autobiography, art, history, as well as objectivity, and pseudosubjectivity are elements which develop and coalesce as the primary themes in her literary corpus. Paola Malpezzi Price engages in a close study of Cialente's works which display intense literary and socio-political commitment to the extent that events in her characters' lives mirror happenings in their social and political environments. While committing her characters to a quest for self-expression, Cialente tells her own life story — a technique reminiscent of the narrative mode employed by Banti and Francesca Sanvitale. In her article on Sanvitale, Paola Bilelloch aptly points out that the author creates a new form of autobiography which allows her to move from "self-reflection to self-invention

and, beyond that, to self-revelation" (125). These three writers give us then latent autobiographies effected through the creative act of inserting characters in a socio-political and historical framework with which the writer can identify. On the other hand, Lalla Romano skirts around possibilities of autobiography since her concerns rest principally upon a desire to come to terms with human life in relation to time, past, present and future, as Flavia Brizio indicates in her study. For Romano, the intricacies and workings of memory are of fundamental importance since memory is the only faculty which enables humans to escape the purely momentary, and "the nothingness that lies in wait between moments of existence" (63).

In "A Lexicon for Both Sexes: Natalia Ginzburg and the Family Saga," Corinna del Greco Lobner shows how Ginzburg brings to her work a special commitment which demands absolute honesty from herself and her readers. Throughout her career as a writer, Ginzburg seeks to show that "men and women . . . are neither good nor bad, but comical and pitiable at the same time" (27). This sense of honesty together with her ability to capture the evanescence of life rendered her writings meaningful even to Italo Calvino, her great admirer. Del Greco Lobner's essay reviews the stylistic devices at work in Ginzburg's writings where they serve precisely to realize the writer's goal of transcending traditional patterns of expression, effecting equality through a unique lexicon by which men and women are "qualitatively equal" (29). Like Ginzburg, Armanda Guiducci uses language to empower women to speak themselves into visibility by manipulating the traditional confessional genre. In her study, Fiora Bassanese opens a wide window onto Guiducci's novels whose invisible and "disposable women" (153) are enmeshed in traditional social patriarchy. Guiducci's female characters speak in unpolished, unsequential monologues mirroring women's unfamiliarity with reading/writing; their speaking gives voice to decades of silence. Moreover, Guiducci in her works addresses and deconstructs the male-formulated configurations of the Madonna and the whore in order to reconstruct them in feminist terms and language coming "from the inside" (167) world of her characters. Giovanna Miceli-Jeffries addresses Manzini's two main concerns in her study, "Giovanna Manzini's Poetics of Verbal Visualization," namely, the poetic quality of her prose, and its experimental, innovative character. Manzini tends to involve her life and art in her writing as a result of her belief that writing can foster "an incessant actualization of life" (92) on the material and artistic level. Words act like characters and are "the core of Manzini's poetics" (101) in her ongoing quest for clarity and light, as she attempts to create an individualized language for each of her female as well as male characters.

Mark F. Pietralunga focuses his study, "Gina Lagorio and the Courage of Women," on the author's central theme of woman's moral superiority and courage for truth which men have lost through centuries of struggle for power. Lagorio creates a gallery of indomitable female figures linking her work and thesis to those of Anna Banti whom she much admires, as well as to the writings by Dacia Maraini. For these writers, women's unique courage is an attribute of fundamental importance in the development of social history characterized in large measure by their relentless efforts to put an end to patriarchal stereotyping of women. This consideration is the underlying thesis of all of Dacia Maraini's works to date. Anthony J. Tamburri's study of Maraini's *Donna in guerra* draws attention to the many dimensions of the hardships experienced by women in the male-oriented Italian society of the '60s to the '80s — the time frame for the majority of Maraini's novels. Whenever in the end Maraini's protagonists do succeed in extricating

themselves from an oppressive life situation, the dominant predicament of gender stereotyping remains, however, as a stigma for the woman and a bane for society.

Both Camilla Cederna and Oriana Fallaci are studied in terms of their prolific and widely acclaimed journalistic career. Giovanna Bellesia's essay on "Camilla Cederna: Portrayer of Italian Society" places in clear evidence Cederna's commitment over four decades to providing insight into Italy's cultural, social, and political life up to the highest offices of government. The humorous vein resulting from her often light journalistic style combined with an earnest desire to unmask the truth, have facilitated a unique style approaching subversive propaganda. This earned Cederna faithful readers, but also several trials for public defamation and libel. Italian journalism has gained international attention thanks to the work of Oriana Fallaci, political interviewer and "ardent practitioner of New Journalism." In his analysis of Fallaci's writings, Santo L. Aricò underscores the importance of Fallaci's innovative approach to writing. Her journalistic techniques are reviewed in conjunction with Tom Wolfe's theories which point forward to the journalistic/documentary novels of the future. Eye-witness accounts allow both Fallaci and her readers to experience the account from the vantage point of the observer. The interview style tangibly exposes a person's feelings and consequently produces the same results that the use of the third-person point of view obtains. In fact, Fallaci's works, besides being indelible historical documents, also convey, between the lines, her burning desire to write novels.

This collection closes with an astute summing article by Carol M. Lazzaro-Weis, "From Margin to Mainstream." The critic reviews Italian writings by women from the 1960s underscoring the literary production of the '80s and pointing out numerous factors which have formerly aided but recently disadvantaged women's writing in Italy. While perusal through libraries and bookstores displays a rich record of publications by women since the 1970s, valid cautionary arguments are put forth by feminist critics: such a flood of publications has been facilitated by the establishment of feminist publishing houses but this in turn has caused larger publishers to accept fewer manuscripts by women. At the same time, the visible increase in publications by women may generate a separate literary category for women's writing which, some fear, would further "ghettoize women's literature making it a marginal, powerless, and easily avoided space" (197). This essay offers a penetrating reading of major Italian women writers of the '80s in relation to mainstream European and North American criticism. The vast canvas of critical theoretical notions and pertinent applications presented here further enriches this valuable publication. Thus, the volume, besides introducing the reader to the works of twelve celebrated Italian women writers, also points to the need for more translations, and future publications contextualizing the works of these writers within the landscape of the broad critical discourse of the past three decades.

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