In conclusion, this outstanding volume demonstrates the unquestioned relevance of Pier Paolo Pasolini's writings with respect to the modern cultural and linguistic debate, as well as its own relevance to the rapidly growing body of Pasolini criticism. The only minor flaw which we note is the emphasis on the theoretical writings and their impact on the cinema of Pasolini. To some extent, the poetical writings are not treated with the same depth in a text that brings to bear the most recent critical methodologies to the full complement of Pasolini's works.

CORRADO FEDERICI

Brock University

John Picchione. *Introduzione a A. Porta*. Bari-Roma: Laterza, 1995 (Scrittori 51). Pp. 180.

By the time of his premature death due to heart attack in 1989, Antonio Porta (who had been writing poetry for nearly 30 years) had already left a legacy of more than fifteen books of poetry, half a dozen prose pieces including two novels, several works for the stage, and countless essays. In addition to his prolific poetry, Porta becomes, from the 1960s through the mid-80s, an undeniable force for shaping literary tastes through his contributions to numerous journals and periodicals, and his work as an editor for such houses as Bompiani, Feltrinelli, Sonzogno, among others. Given such prolific production and such omnipresence in the field of contemporary Italian poetry, one wonders about the relative dearth of critical consideration for Porta's *oeuvre*. (To be sure, Porta's works have always received notice but, to date, there exist only two book-length studies of his work).¹ Enter John Picchione's deftly written study of Porta, *Introduzione a A. Porta* to help fill the gaps.

Because Porta is known almost exclusively for poetry, an *introduction* to his work would be wrong-headed (if not completely remiss) if it did not fix steadily on it. Covering a rather long period of great poetic innovation from his debut with the other four poets comprising the *Novissimi* of 1961 (and later of the larger *Gruppo '63*) through the deconstructionist early 80s one could imagine instrumentalizing Porta, making him the *speculum* through which to examine Italy's evolving socio-cultural milieu and those critical paradigms (philosophy, science, the plastic arts and, to a much lesser degree, music) in which Porta himself engaged. To the greater success of this study, Picchione avoids such posturing and focuses (refreshingly, unabashedly) on the evolution of Porta's poetry.

This is not to suggest the author neglects the theoretical considerations or implications of Porta's poetry; on the contrary, Picchione's use of theory is elegant and deployed with discretion. The phenomenological school of philosophy (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, for example, is particularly influential) made up part of the foundation of Porta's poetics and, thus, Picchione studies it in some detail in the opening section of *Introduzione*. Porta's poetic orientation, Picchione asserts, "si muove tra lavorazione linguistica e interrogazione del mondo, tra storia e immaginario, tra la percezione del

linguaggio come materialità, come sistema a sè stante di significazione, e spinte ed impulsi provenienti dalle zone del sentimento e del corpo" (10). Porta's early poetry thus radically insists on quiddity, an attitude that initially recalls Eliot's principle of the objective correlative, only with heavy revision. What "la poesia incentrata sul correlativo oggettivo rivela," Picchione observes quoting Porta, is "una ideologia ante poiesim [...] che non nasce [...] dal fare e dal risultato poetici" (8). For Porta, poetry happens in the making, "nel fare poesia," and not before.

Throughout the first five (of the book's seven total) sections, the author offers smart and subtle readings of Porta's poems. Especially memorable are the readings of poems from the central phase of Porta's career: the 1968 collection *Cara* (which, gendered female, probably refers to poetry itself), *Metropolis* (1971) and *Week-end* (1974). Although in *Cara* "il linguaggio poetico divenuto ossessione" (58) dominates, *Metropolis* assays a restored and orderly poetic language. But, while hoped for, Porta does not regain the unified linguistic sign that *Cara* helped undermine; as Picchione observes, *Metropolis* is predicated on a taut linguistic binary that is clearly represented by the collection's two sections, (appropriately) "Duplice" and "Modelli," as well as by the tensions within the subdivisions of those sections. The political climate of 1968, coeval with the poems of *Metropolis* may have contributed to Porta's interest in greater intelligibility. If Porta's aim was, as Picchione believes, to present "un attacco frontale nei confronti dei modelli e dei comportamenti che regolano il sociale," and to examine "e [mettere] a nudo la situazione storica del vasto serbatoio linguistico-sociale" (62), then privileging self-reflexive yet intelligible language makes sense. Such political leanings which form a mere bud in *Metropolis*, flower more fully in *Weekend* and Picchione's analysis is particularly instructive for the series of poems which stage the dialectical relationship between the empowered and the powerless ("Autocoscienza di un gervo," "Morte come vita," and "Produrre").

One hardly expects such depth or such range in a study that is both introductory and part of a series, and this is where Picchione's work distinguishes itself. The only reason for complaint about this text resides not with the author but with editorial practice. *Introduzione a A. Porta* is one title in the very respectable Laterza series "Gli scrittori." As such, it was required that the book adhere to certain editorial practices, which seem to insist on formulaic (and ultimately less creative) structures and decisions. Although the text's structure seems to adhere to the predictable divisions (nearly a chapter for each major poetical work, for example, chapters devoted to narrative and to theater), Picchione's prose is anything but formulaic. He has stayed firmly within the parameters of the genre of introduction but has embellished it with a thorough bibliography, fine and thoughtful readings, and an eminently readable writing style.

ELLEN NERENBERG

Wesleyan University

1 There are only two other full-length studies of Porta: Luigi Sasso's mid-career evaluation from 1981 (*Antonio Porta*, Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1980) and Mario Moroni's more recent *Essere e fare. L'itinerario poetico di Antonio Porta* (Rimini: Luisè, 1991).