Nina D. Glassman and Frederick J. Bosco. *Voci: Encounters with Italian*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996. Pp. 249.

In his article "The Role of Culture in Second Language Pedagogy" (*System* 22.2 (1994): 205-19), Thomas Scovel states that "culture is the social cement of all human relationships; it is the medium in which we move and breathe and have our being" (205). *Voci: Encounters with Italian* offers intermediate students of Italian a chance to sample what the authors define as "Italian voices" (*Preface*), which range in topic from cultural attitudes to dialect variation. From an interview with Umberto Eco to a scene from the Monicelli/Germi film *Amici miei*, from excerpts taken from Lampedusa's *Il Gattopardo* and Pirandello's *Uno, nessuno e centomila* to stories out of Ginzburg's *Le piccole virtù*, *Voci* is an *antipasto misto* for Italian students who hunger for cultural tidbits. The book's fourteen units contain a cornucopia of Italian culture that is presented within scenarios, interviews, literary selections, diary entries, film "clips", regional gastronomic information, and illustrations of Italian dialects. What follows these well-chosen cultural selections are, as the authors explain, "various tasks [...] woven into a comprehensive program designed to engage the learner in conversation" (*Preface*).

While discovering selections from Dante, Saint Francis of Assisi, Giovanni Guareschi, and others, as well as an interview with historian Piero Melograni, students are privy to a number of beautiful black and white photos of some of Italy's most notable cities. Because of their representations of impressive Italian works of art and architecture, these photos offer the student a great opportunity to enhance his global understanding. Significantly, many of these photos depict, in a non-stereotypical way, the creators and consumers of Italian culture themselves: *il popolo italiano*. The pictures, in addition to many of the textual selections, are authentic materials which not only provide the impetus for student interaction but also present the target language's culture in a genuine and accurate way. Frank Nueßel, in his article "Guidelines for the Objective Evaluation of Italian Textbooks" (*Il Forneri* 3.2 (1989): 67-85), asserts that "a balanced view of any culture should include a representative mixture of people of both sexes, different ages, and different races" (76). *Voci* manages to integrate cultural realities which are exclusively Italian with issues and situations that would arise in almost every country of the world, from enrolling in a university to reporting a crime. Its balanced view of Italian culture arises not only from its presentation of dialectal variations, as well as the attitudes and opinions of various age and occupational groups, but also from its attention to the reciprocal fascination that Italians and North Americans display for one another. For example, the first *lettura* of the book, "*Punti di vista sull'Italia e sull'America*" (2), interviews both an American and an Italian student who have spent time studying in the other's country. Questions treat such matters as the perceptions each has of the other's culture. One of the activities which follow is a chart in which students rank their *atteggiamenti* towards the two cultures (5). Many students who have spent time in Italy will no doubt find these types of activities psychologically meaningful, resulting in increased motivation and the lowering of the affective filter. Stephen Krashen, as well as other experts in glotto-didactics, have demonstrated that the aforementioned conditions contribute to successful second language acquisition. *Voci* is, without a doubt, representative of the student-centered approach to language teaching which has been widely adopted by L2

instructors. The authors themselves specify that the book "contains a number of paired and small-group activities where the instructor steps aside, guiding the students as they work together to develop their own conversational strategies" (*Preface*).

Each unit of *Voci: Encounters with Italian* contains essentially four parts. As the authors explain, the first part is "an introductory section which establishes the theme of the unit and illustrates one or more styles of expression" (*Preface*). This initial part of the unit is made up of interviews, dialogues, literary selections, historical facts and other interesting readings chosen for their potential to stimulate conversation. The second part of each unit is "a linguistic section which includes key sentences, grammatical notes, vocabulary study, and language exercises" (*Preface*). While the linguistic component of this section is not exhaustive, it would nicely complement any grammar text used in an intermediate or even advanced Italian language course, provided the syllabus allows ample time for conversational practice. The third part of each unit is another reading passage which further "expands the topics introduced in the unit" (*Preface*). The fourth and final section, *Composizione*, is "a writing task linked to the unit's theme" (*Preface*).

All fourteen units contain interesting, as well as relevant, individual and group activities. Using Di Pietro's strategic interaction method, the authors have included "scenarios" as opposed to traditional "role playing" activities, thereby offering students the chance to simulate natural discourse and build communicative competence. The vocabulary items are grouped into "major thematic areas" in order to provide students with "tools for developing discourse competence" (*Preface*). The richness of the lexical content of the book will certainly impress students and instructors alike. The authors also make excellent and abundant use of two-dimensional charts for the organization of vocabulary, grammatical structures and paradigms. *Voci's* English content is minimal, reserved only for lexical items, as "students are encouraged to use Italian throughout, always with the aim of building their language skills" (*Preface*). The appendices include, in addition to an Italian-English vocabulary, a study aid for Pirandello's *Uno, nessuno e centomila*, and paradigm charts for regular and irregular verbs.

In conclusion, *Voci: Encounters with Italian* is one of the most innovative conversational texts to jump into the already crowded pool of resources for instructors of Italian. As a companion to a grammar text with intermediate or even advanced students, or used alone in a conversational Italian course, the rich cultural content and numerous activities and exercises are sure to make a great impression and be a great benefit to those who use the book. *Voci* does contain some typographical errors which, however, do not at all diminish the value of the book. As with any other pedagogical aid, the choice of a text must be a careful and researched one. Instructors should not merely glance at *Voci's* illustrations and literary passages, but they should also examine and experiment with some of its student-centered activities. The last unit of the book, "La creatività linguistica," which is dedicated to "l'Italia dialettale," lists a series of proverbs and *modi di dire* in various dialects. In this section a Piemontese proverb warns: "Bel giuvnòt per ese fort e liber, desmèntia la mort lès nen i liber" ("Bel giovane, per essere forte e libero, non pensare alla morte e non leggere i libri") (207). We are certainly grateful that the authors did not heed this advice.

LYDIA M. RENDE

University of Toronto, Erindale College