GIOVANNI CECCHETTI. *Giovanni Verga*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978. Pp. 172.

Giovanni Cecchetti's book, *Giovanni Verga*, is an interesting and informative survey of all the works of the best author of the Italian *verismo* movement. Cecchetti states in the Preface that there are only a small number of books about Verga written in English and none really give an exhaustive picture of Verga's literary contributions. Cecchetti feels that his book fills this gap. *Giovanni Verga* is divided into six chapters each one being dedicated to the presentation and analysis of a work or series of works (novels, short stories or plays). These are grouped together according to a chronological criterion which sets as major focal points the publications of *I Malavoglia* (1881) and of *Mastro don Gesualdo* (1889).

The first chapter takes into account the novels and short stories published between 1877 and 1880, usually considered as the work of a young and artistically immature Verga. In general novels such as *Storia di una capinera*, *Eva*, *Eros* and *Tigre reale* are judged as failures and cannot be considered of great artistic value. The structure of the novels is weak and the storyliners are conventional. Cecchetti does, however, spare some individual characters as, for example, *Eva* and *Nedda*. He seems to follow the traditional view point which considers *Nedda* as a transition piece between Verga's romantic and *verista* period, warning however that such a dichotomous analysis must not be exaggerated. He does underline that there is one constant factor in all of Verga's early prose: that is, the desire to portray reality and man's passions as they really are, without hypocrisy or artifice.

The second and third chapters take into account the works which are usually considered to represent the height of Verga's talent. Cecchetti discusses briefly *il verismo*, concluding that this school was a byproduct of the mingling of two French movements, *realism* and *naturalism*. The critic then studies Verga's new language as best exemplified in *I Malavoglia*. A natural result of this language is that the characters seem to narrate themselves without the help of an author, and this is a major achievement towards the representation of reality as it truly is. According to Cecchetti, "L'amante di Gramigna" is evidence of the birth of this original language which paves the way for the "interior monologue" of modern literature.

Cecchetti then focuses his attention on the stories of *Vita dei campi* and on *I Malavoglia*. After a summary of the "novelle"'s plot, he critically appraises each one. He considers *I Malavoglia* as Verga's successful attempt at "creating the perfect novel" (p. 96). The style, the language, Verga's ability to disappear from the narration, to let the story evolve from the dialogue, to let the characters themselves relate their own interior motivations, are all reasons which prompt the critic to call *I Malavoglia* an artistic masterpiece and the precursor of a new literary tradition.

The fourth chapter discusses all the works published between *I Malavoglia* and *Mastro don Gesualdo*. Most of these unfold in a bourgeois milieu and seem to lack the vitality, preciseness and originality of Verga's best efforts. Only

Novelle rusticane positively reflect Verga's artistic capabilities. The characters accept with stoicism and resignation their destiny and exemplify Verga's pessimism, his dark and bitter humour.

The fifth chapter is dedicated to *Mastro don Gesualdo*. This novel vividly and effectively depicts the economic greed which spurs man on to continue his quest for riches and the power which these riches bestow. Verga examines with extraordinary coherence the isolation produced by greed, ambition and the inability to communicate and understand one another. Cecchetti states, however, that the weakness and length of the second half of the second part of the novel does not permit him to consider it as artistically equal to *I Malavoglia*.

The final chapter rapidly analyses the works which belong to the last years of Verga's literary activity, and is aptly titled "Twilight." In general, Cecchetti gives a negative appraisal of these efforts, although he does consider that some "novelle" of *Don Candeloro & Cie* possess a high degree of artistic quality, and all the tales of this series develop a single theme: life is a comedy of errors in which all men are actors.

In conclusion, *Giovanni Verga* is a very precise and complete survey of the author's works. Cecchetti's style is clear and concise. This results in a straightforward and easily understood analysis of Verga's novels, his ideas and his artistic concepts. The exhaustiveness of Cecchetti's review does not permit him to linger or penetrate analitically each of Verga's publications. He does, however, capture the essence and presents the major critical elements of each work. Cecchetti readily and successfully fulfills his goal of acquainting the English-speaking readers with one of Italy's major novelists.

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ENZO LAURETTA. *Luigi Pirandello, Storia di un personaggio "fuori di chiave."* Milano: Mursia, 1980. Pp. 322.

A un primo sguardo d'insieme, questo libro del Lauretta potrebbe dare l'erronea impressione del centone. A chi, poi, tenga alla severità e sobrietà della forma, quei tanti capitoletti in cui è suddiviso il libro, taluni dal titolo debile (*C'era una volta . . . salute precaria*), potrebbero anche fare arricciare il naso. Bastano poche pagine per ricredersi subito.

Non ci si imbatte nella ennesima raccolta o ricupero o riciclaggio di dati e interpretazioni arcinote, ma in una meditata ristrutturazione dell'apparato umano-artistico del Pirandello, il che porta a giustificare il titolo, originale ed illuminante, del libro.

Il Lauretta a cui spetta il merito, qualora ancora non si sapesse, di essere l'ideatore dell'annuale congresso internazionale pirandelliano che da sette anni si tiene puntualmente e con grande successo ad Agrigento, ha tracciato in questo suo nuovo libro, un disegno preciso, chiaro e serrato della formazione artistica del Pirandello indicandone le linee di sviluppo. È un testo critico che parte dall'analisi storico-umana, non storia romanzata.