own reflections on the topics under discussion. His prose, while scholarly, has personal touches, and one intuitively finds in it his admiration for the critics he has chosen, as his chapters on Anna Banti and Bernard Chandler, in particular, demonstrate. On the latter's work, he comments that for Chandler "intelligenza e scrupolo filologico in lui coesistono sempre, e la sua ricerca può ispirare letture contrastanti proprio per la fedeltà assoluta che ha nei confronti di un autore complesso." (74). The same may be said also of Parisi's fine and fundamental work in this study.

Both volumes under review will undoubtedly prove important supports to scholars who, through their own studies, hope to invite new readers to Manzoni's faithful group of twenty-five.

ANNE URBANCIC

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Cristina Della Coletta. *World's Fairs Italian Style: The Great Exposition in Turin and Their Narratives, 1860-1915.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006. Pp. 351. ISBN 0-8020-9115-6. \$70.

Cristina Della Coletta is on a mission: to diversify, in her own words, "the West's monolithic and univocal 'discourse of Empire.'" (4) *World's Fairs Italian Style: The Great Exposition in Turin and Their Narratives, 1860-1915* responds precisely to this perceived gap in historical research, namely the persistent omission of Italy when discussing international and universal exhibitions. Della Coletta focuses on Italy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; however, sections of her investigation do extend geographically to major European, American, and colonial cities. The author investigates how Italy's World's Fairs took note from and competed against, albeit on a smaller scale, the World's Fairs of its more industrialized counterparts, in other words, the more economically and politically developed countries of Britain, France, and the United States.

In 1861 Massimo D'Azeglio expressed Italy's desire to "make Italians." Della Coletta contends that these World's Fairs had a significant role in forging the Italian national identity through the promotion of a defined set of bourgeois values all within the discourse of Italy's burgeoning imperialistic aims. The fairs propagated a very precise image of Italy through a historical display of a highly idealized past, convenient comparisons with other cultures in which Italy prevailed as superior, and its portrayals of a bright future characterized by innovations in science and technology.

Within this giant consensus-building machine, however, were great inconsistencies. Della Coletta examines both the nationalistic and imperialistic ethos of the Italian World's Fairs and the manner in which the very scripts that were supposed to promote this master narrative of progress and imperial superiority already contained within themselves evidence of opposition, resistance, and destabilization.

The capital of the newly unified Italy was initially Turin in 1861-65, followed by a brief six-year stint in Florence, before being permanently transferred to Rome in 1871. Della Coletta focuses on the 1911 World's Fair that was held in each of

the cities that had at one point in time held the title of ‘capital of Italy.’ This tripartite division, designed to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the country’s unification, ended up instead highlighting its relentless regionalism (instead of the rosier picture of a cohesive nation) and further drew attention to Italy’s dependence on Britain and France for guidance in its imperial aims. It exposes Turin as a city that used its industrial and political might to vie with Rome as the major force in Italy’s national formation.

In the second half of the volume, Della Coletta considers the works of two Torinese contemporaries, the best-selling author of adventure novels Emilio Salgari and the internationally renowned poet Guido Gozzano, providing in so doing a revisionist look at their work in the context of modernity and the World’s Fairs that helped to shape it.

In her first case study, she looks at how Salgari’s novels—popular, formulaic, exotic, and perfectly fitted to the exposition mentality of the time—gave narrative form to the ideologies, dissonances, and ambiguities that were present but would otherwise not have been voiced. Della Coletta argues that Salgari’s tales helped to give shape to the still fluid sense of Italy’s nationhood by giving it a cultural artefact (a popular novel) that was devoured by such a large readership.

In the second case study, Della Coletta dissects ‘L’Olocausto di Cawnepore’ and ‘Goa: “La Dourada,”’ two of Gozzano’s Indian narratives, to show the unresolved and contradictory nature of not only Gozzano’s, but ultimately Italy’s, ideologies regarding imperialism. She argues that the themes and principles present in the former text – which is an idealization of the West’s colonial aspirations – are ultimately destroyed by the arguments in the latter. A hermeneutical reading of the World’s Fairs reveals the binary foundation on which the displays were organized in order further to enhance the dichotomy of the West versus the Other. Gozzano’s ‘L’Olocausto’ corroborates and enhances the West’s view of India (negative) and Britain (positive). Through Gozzano we see that the modern sense of wonder comes not from the encounter with otherness, but rather from the recognition of conventional and known views; the modern ‘new’ is but recognition of the familiar. ‘L’Olocausto’ reveals, furthermore, the Italian middle classes’ admiration for the British imperial model and Italy’s own colonial aspirations. ‘Goa,’ on the other hand, is a parody which brings into focus Italy’s fear of the erasure of all social distinctions between ‘them’ and ‘us,’ which had the potential to challenge the West’s sacrosanct identity and sense of superiority.

The World’s Fairs, we can conclude, were temporary expositions which had permanent side effects on the mentality of all Italians. An exquisitely written study, *World’s Fairs Italian Style* reveals a strong research base that is impressive by its effective use of primary sources across a wide range of genres and by the visuals illustrated throughout the book. One certainly gets the idea that Della Coletta has accomplished the double achievement of successfully proving her thesis while doing so with true verve and passion.

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