quelli che rimandano agli scritti teorici di Bontempelli per amplificare il dialogo testuale interno in questi romanzi.

Il quarto capitolo, “Il tema del gioco nella *Scacchiera davanti allo specchio*” (89-112), è dedicato a quella che si potrebbe considerare la prima opera metafisica di Bontempelli. L’aspetto ludico della forma artistica è fondamentale all’interpretazione di questo testo letterario altamente autocosciente. Come nota la studiosa, “Il legame che intercorre tra la creatività e l’idea di gioco è suggerita nella *Scacchiera* tramite l’immagine su cui il narratore concentra la sua attenzione e quella dei lettori, e che dà il titolo al racconto” (108).

I capitoli conclusivi mantengono la loro attenzione su quelle tematiche maggiormente riguardanti sia la metanarrativa che la poetica di Bontempelli. In “Realismo magico e artificiosità dichiarata in *Eva ultima*” (113-144), Giordano esamina un testo che ha ricevuto scarsa attenzione critica, ma che è evocativo per la comprensione delle basi teoriche di Bontempelli riguardo al realismo magico e all’artificio letterario. In “Il rapporto realtà-finzione nei *Miracoli*” (145-176), la studiosa analizza il rapporto tra creazione artistica e realtà per concludere che: “nel momento in cui la realtà viene rappresentata, essa non è più una rappresentazione della realtà ma una creazione artistica, con leggi e caratteristiche proprie. L’arte è la creazione di una realtà speciale, non l’illusione della realtà” (172).

Nonostante la revisione trascurata — numerosi errori tipografici che vanno dall’indice (ad es., “autobiografia”, viii) alla bibliografia (“avventu^a”, 182) sciupano la presentazione di questo volume — e l’impostazione un po’ pedante del materiale, il testo è un’allettante introduzione che riesce a raggiungere lo scopo esplicito dell’autore: “Questo studio è stato impostato con uno scopo ben preciso: rivelare e approfondire alcuni dei maggiori aspetti metanarrativi in atto nell’opera” (xxv) di Bontempelli. Il merito di questo studio risiede nell’aver delineato un tracciato degli aspetti metanarrativi all’interno della produzione letteraria bontempelliana ancorandolo ad un contesto critico di ampio respiro. In tale prospettiva, l’opera dialoga con i maggior teorici della *metafiction* sia per approfondire particolari aspetti dell’immaginario che per mettere in risalto l’originalità di Bontempelli scrittore. Talvolta questo dialogo assume toni quasi nostalgici poiché torna ad un discorso teorico inestricabilmente legato alla fine del Novecento; ciononostante, *Dalle Avventure ai Miracoli* colma una lacuna negli studi su Bontempelli e fornisce un terreno fertile per ulteriori ricerche.

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Acculturation & Its Discontents: The Italian Jewish Experience Between Exclusion and Inclusion, ed. David N. Myers, Massimo Ciavolella, Peter H. Reill and Geoffrey Symcox. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008, Pp. 228. ISBN 978-0-8020-9851-1. \$65.

“Italy’s significance as a laboratory of Jewish cultural transformation far exceeds the size of its Jewish community (or more accurately, communities)” writes David

N. Myers in the Introduction to this volume. "There is a growing body of scholarship in Italy, Europe more generally, and Israel that stands in acknowledgment of this significance. Slowly, the point is beginning to be understood in the field of Jewish studies in North America" (13). As both a testament to that understanding and a precious contribution to it, *Acculturation & Its Discontents* gathers, in written form, nine papers presented at a UCLA conference held in Spring 2003. In the wealth of its archival discoveries, the sophistication of its analyses, the variety of its scholarly approaches, and the strength of its stimulus to further research, the project marks a striking advance in the field of Italian Judaica, and stands as a model of that interdisciplinarity to which so much contemporary scholarship aspires.

Though the book's title alerts us immediately to its overall organizing strategy, I find the subtitle to be the more powerful key to its scholarly intentions. In the editors' preference for the term *acculturation* over *assimilation*, they acknowledge their debt to the American sociologist Milton Gordon (p. 7), who discriminated between two forms of minority absorption into the cultural mainstream: the first involving the retention of the group's distinctive features; the second involving the relinquishment of them. The editors' insistence on acculturation and the struggle it entails within the context of a society often hostile to the internal "other" is given spatial expression in the subtitle "between exclusion and inclusion." It is in this "betweenness" that the volume locates its scholarly focus, for the strict dichotomy between inside and outside does not hold in these case studies, where the ghetto walls prove to be porous and the prohibition against Jewish-Christian contact turns out to be anything but absolute. By challenging the binary opposition *exclusion-inclusion*, this book establishes a space of multiple gradations, elasticity and nuance within which Italian Jewish culture developed its own particular forms of richness and complexity.

Appropriately, the volume begins with two essays on life in the ghetto, for this term functions as both the symbol and the literal means for the enactment of Jewish segregation. In Benjain Ravid's superb study of the *condotte* (charters) of the Venetian ghetto, what emerges with great clarity is the balance between civilian measures to strictly regulate Jewish behaviors on the one hand, and the desire to attract and keep Jewish mercantile activity on the other. In asking "How 'Other' Really Was the Jewish Other?" Ravid provides answers in the abundance of economic and cultural ties which his research uncovers, from Sara Coppio Sullam's exchanges with the Genoese monk Cebà, and Leone da Modena's dialogues with Christian theological thought, to close relations between Jews and Venetian nobility, and even Christian tourism among the synagogues of the ghetto. Far from embodying the extreme polarity of the exclusion-inclusion spectrum, the ghetto marks a considerable degree of acceptance. For "when any pre-modern Christian society came to consider the Jews as being so other that it did not wish to tolerate their presence, it would expel them" (43). The very non-expulsion of Italian Jews is therefore highly significant, for it defines the outer extreme of the inclusion-exclusion spectrum beyond which Italy (at least the non-Spanish occupied regions) did not go.

And this last parenthetical point is important, for it raises one of the questions

posed by Myers in his Introduction: can we speak of a unified Italian Jewish history or does regional diversity of experience override that option? Certainly the dissolution and disappearance of Southern Italian Jewish populations would argue against the temptation to generalize on a national scale. Significantly, none of the essays in this volume addresses these by-gone communities. The focus, instead, is on the evidence of Jewish life in what are considered to be the most populous and culturally active communities: those of Venice, Rome, Trieste, Livorno, Mantova, Ferrara, Florence and Turin.

If I were to name a rhetorical figure that hovers over this collection, that figure would be synecdoche. Not only does the ghetto function figuratively as the part-for-the-whole, but so too does the method of micro-history itself—the use of concrete archival examples to infer the larger historical forces at work—which characterizes a number of the essays in this volume. Thus we have Kenneth Stow's penetrating analysis, in "Emotion and Acculturation: Masquerading Emotion in the Roman Ghetto," of the notarial acts produced between 1538 and 1605 by Rabbi Judah Piattelli and his son Isaac, whose use of *ars dictaminis* formed a code which allowed passions to be masked in a way that enabled the Jewish community to represent itself in terms acceptable to the surrounding Christian society. Two other essays invoke personal case histories to indicate larger trends in the Jewish acculturation experience. In "Can Fundamentalism Be Modern?" Alessandro Guetta examines a pair of texts by Mantuan physician Avraham Portaleone to demonstrate the oscillation of Italian Jewish thought between scientific enlightenment and religious faith. With great erudition, Guetta

considers the way in which Portaleone stages the debate between antiquity and modernity in *De auro dialogi tres* (1584), coming down on the side of empirical knowledge. Twenty-five years later, after a life-threatening illness, Portaleone abandons Latin with its assimilationist charge, to write the Hebrew text *Shilte ha-Giborim* in which piety triumphs over empiricism. "In the works of Avraham Portaleone," Guetta concludes, "one recognizes the intellectual tensions of his time . . . an oscillation between openness and closure to the non-Jewish world . . . [T]his work, with its reversals and difficulties, is part of what one would call the movement of Italian Jewish culture toward modernity" (111).

The first half of the book, labeled "Renaissance Reverberations," concludes with Guetta's essay, ushering us into its final segment, "Into Modernity." As the title of the next piece—"Jewish Women, Marriage Law, and Emancipation: The Civil Divorce of Rachele Morschene in Late Eighteenth-Century Trieste"—suggests, a micro-historical strategy is at work here too. The only female voice in this volume, Lois Dubin brings a welcome and expertly crafted feminist perspective to bear on the topic, as she interweaves engaging analysis of the interplay between civil law and *halakhah* on the threshold of the state's entry into marriage and divorce regulation under the Habsburgs' rule. By presenting the texts of trial documents full of prurient domestic details (making for riveting reading), Dubin's article echoes the specificity and liveliness of Stow's research on notarial acts in the Roman ghetto, which themselves often played out marital dramas in the legal domain. In the late eighteenth-century Triestine context, as in the Renaissance Roman one, *halakhah* still

has the upper hand but, in the Settecento case, state involvement “created significant new opportunities for [Jewish women.] Most importantly, it provided a venue in which a Jewish woman was not solely dependent on her husband’s unilateral action. In and of itself this measure was empowering” (134).

The richness of this volume is attributable in large part to the new archival material that has been so carefully researched and interpreted. But the book’s wealth also inheres in its interdisciplinarity. Bringing together history (and specifically feminist history in Dubin’s case) with musicology, linguistics, literary criticism and religious studies, *Acculturation & Its Discontents* reveals how specific disciplinary strategies can bring to bear knowledge of unexpected relevance on the large cultural issue at play. In this regard, the volume’s two musicological contributions especially come to mind. Dan Harrán’s paper on “Jews as Portrayed in Italian Music from the Late Fifteenth to the Early Seventeenth Centuries” reveals the existence of an entire musical genre, the *ebraica*, in which Christian composers took satiric aim at their Jewish compatriots. To do so, they “translated” their grotesque perceptions of Hebraic language sounds into non-sense lyrics, and their chaotic perception of liturgical chant into melodic *desaccord* or “heterophony.” I am particularly struck by Harrán’s approach to the negativity of Jewish stereotyping in the *ebraiche*—a negativity which he considers innocuous in the light of the *musica leggera* category to which this genre subscribed.

A second musicological essay, Edwin Seroussi’s “Singing Modernity: Synagogue Music in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Italy,” uses the changes in liturgical music during this time period to gauge Italian Jews’ openness to modernizing influences. For example, Seroussi identifies such innovations as the commissioning of original musical compositions and the increase in choral music as evidence, in general, of the Italian Jewish will to up-date liturgical practices. It is here that the specificity of the Italian case is of particular relevance for, unlike its counterparts throughout Northern and Central Europe, the Jewish community of Italy was always open to outside musical influences, with opera heading the list. Thanks to Harrán’s analysis, music, as “an ambiguous medium of communication itself” (178), emerges as an ideal venue for the study of Italian Jews’ conflicted relationship with modernity—its desire both to preserve and to progress; in other words, to acculturate.

One of the historical periods that brought this ambivalence to a head was the three-year interval 1796-99, the theme of Geoffrey Symcox’s essay, “The Jews of Italy in the *Triennio Giacobino*.” During the dizzying series of emancipations and re-ghettoizations of these years, Symcox asks us to imagine the “sense of disorientation and shock” (159) that Roman Jews experienced when freed and re-ghettoized two times within the fifteen-month period between February 1798 and Spring 1799. In this tumultuous time of back and forth, Italy’s Jews faced in acute form the larger and long-term challenges posed by emancipation—to balance the joys of a longed-for freedom with the anxiety of loosened community bonds, of threats to religious integrity, and so on.

With the volume’s final pair of essays, linguistics and literature enter the disciplinary mix. In “Their *True* Tongue: History, Memory, Language, and the Jews

of Italy,” Simon Levis Sullam traces a double itinerary, sketching a history of Jewish Italian linguists from Graziadio Isaia Ascoli (mid-Ottocento) to Rabbi Umberto Cassuto (early Novecento) and Benvenuto Terraccini (1920-1960’s), and applying their precepts to the “questione della lingua” as manifested in the work of twentieth-century Italian Jewish authors. In this regard, Svevo displays a zero-degree of Jewish linguistic identification, while Saba devotes lively pages to local Italian Jewish speech in the section “Gli ebrei” of *Ricordi-Racconti*, as do Ginzburg in *Lessico familiare*, Bassani in *Giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, and Levi in the “Argon” chapter of *Il sistema periodico*. Sullam concludes on a poignant note—that by now, these linguistic residues have lost their direct referential function and instead serve as signs of nostalgia, that the language of the Jews has become “a structure of memory more than a structure of life: a true *lieu de mémoire*” (194).

It is in the final chapter that this volume reveals the historical extremes to which the polarities of its subtitle, “between inclusion and exclusion,” can lead. Despite its benign tone, Guido Fink’s essay, “Growing up Jewish in Ferrara: The Fiction of Giorgio Bassani,” points to the tragic “signified” of twentieth-century Italian Jewish history. For the racial legislation of 1938 meant more than a repeat ghettoization—it meant a set of measures, by a government allied with Nazi Germany, that made possible the genocidal operations of 1943-1945. As a result of the racial laws, the dream of inclusion as full-fledged Italian citizens was shattered, while exclusion through mere separation was an option as flawed as it was obsolete. Fink’s essay does not dwell on this point, focusing instead on the way in which Bassani’s opus chronicles the Ferrarese Jewish community of the pre- and immediate post-WWII period, with special emphasis on the author’s increasingly personal protagonism, through the transfigured narrative “I” of *Gli occhiali d’oro* and *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, and the alter ego Bruno Lattes, of both the latter novel and the short stories scattered over the pages of *Storie ferraresi* and *L’odore del fieno*. But Bassani’s “I” is not the only first person pronoun to surface in this essay. Fink himself becomes an “I” whose Ferrarese childhood intersects with Bassani’s literary production in a moving and unexpected way, showing that Italian Jewish history is no mere abstraction, but a concrete reality with ramifications in the scholarly sphere.

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Massimo Cacciari. *The Unpolitical. On the Radical Critique of Political Reason*. Ed. with an intro. by Alessandro Carrera, trans. Massimo Verdicchio. New York: Fordham University Press, 2009. Pp. 295. US\$26 ISBN 978-0-8232-3004-4 (paper); ISBN 978-0-8232-3003-7 (hardbound) US\$80.

Not since the time of Machiavelli’s *Il Principe* has Italian political theory received so much international attention and critical engagement. From the writings of Antonio Negri to those of Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, Gianni Vattimo