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

and Adriana Cavarero, English speaking audiences have had the opportunity to observe and address the development of diverse political ideas that, though reminiscent of ongoing debates in Anglo-Saxon political theory, have a peculiarly Italian flavour about them. In part this “Italian turn” in political theory is due to the globalization of academic studies where certain canonical authors and texts migrate freely between national borders. Thinkers like Hannah Arendt, Jacques Derrida, John Rawls, Walter Benjamin, and Jürgen Habermas (to name a few) are cross-cultural banisters of reference that have captured the attention of Occidental political philosophy throughout the world. Another explanation for the “Italian turn” lies in the uniqueness of Italy’s political spectrum today where, amongst the many dramatic paradoxes that inhabit the peninsula, there is the overwhelming transformation of a nation that—having once sent immigrants into the world—has now become, almost overnight, a destination for immigration of great diversity. Such issues as “integrazione”, pluralism, hospitality and the rights of citizenship are hot buttons of political unrest throughout Europe, and especially so in Italy. The facility with which Italy’s old political ideologies try to fit these issues into a now surpassed bi-polar schema of “leftist” or “rightist” politics only underlines the frustrating—and almost paralyzing—inadequacy that such bi-polar thinking produces.

The collection of essays by Massimo Cacciari entitled *The Unpolitical. On the Radical Critique of Political Reason* are a welcome though somewhat dated attempt to move beyond the ossification of a Cold War bi-polarity. With the exception of two of the essays, most of the chapters in this collection were originally published between 1978 and 1982, the period in which—as we are told by Alessandro Carrera’s excellent introduction—Cacciari consolidated his critique of the Marxist dialectical tradition of social inquiry that had been the hallmark of his political and philosophical formation.

For those who have not come across Massimo Cacciari’s writings before, his intellectual biography is at once fascinating and unusual from a North American perspective. In the tumultuous time of late 1960s Italy, Cacciari associated himself with the Potere Operaio Marxist movement. Though the intricacies and development of Italian Marxism in those years are beyond the scope of this review, suffice it to say that by the time that Potere Operaio morphed into the radical Autonomia Operaia of the 1970s (associated with the Marxism of the Padua school of Political Science headed by Antonio Negri), Cacciari had defected to the more mainstream Italian Communist Party. Currently, and after several prestigious academic posts (including his post as Professore Ordinario di Estetica and founder of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Vita-Salute San Raffaele in Milan), he is the elected Mayor of Venice and member of the Partito Democratico.

Cacciari’s public life, in other words, has always been intertwined with his political and philosophical ideas – and *vice versa*. In this regard, it is important to note that the idea of “the unpolitical” explored in these essays is the public expression of Cacciari’s innovative philosophical concept of “negative thought” that forms the basis of his critique of dialectical Marxism. This latter concept finds its origin in, and indebtedness to, the post-Romantic tradition of Schiller, Nietzsche, Weber, and Benjamin—though it is Friedrich Nietzsche who is Cacciari’s greatest

companion in his critique of dialectical thinking. In this regard, Cacciari is not far from the ambitions of Gilles Deleuze whose *Difference and Repetition* is also a strong challenge to the dialectical notion of difference as negation. Yet, and in contrast to Deleuze's philosophy of difference, Cacciari's development of the concept of the unpolitical wants to retain the critical force of negation without falling prey to the processes of overcoming contradiction characteristic of dialectics. We might thus understand the unpolitical as a commitment to an ontology of negation without the urge, ambition, or aloofness of wanting to transcend that ontology. As Cacciari makes clear in the chapter entitled "Nietzsche and the Unpolitical", in processes of politicization, the political presents itself as a totalizing concept whereas "The unpolitical is the work of deconstruction of this totality. Not in the superficial sense of the term 'critique of ideology' — whereby this totality is said to be 'false' — but in the sense that this totality is historically marked and produces the forces of its own crisis, forces whose possibility is definitely accountable." (96)

Such declarations poised throughout this collection express the political force of Cacciari's "negative thought": that is, the unpolitical is not an overcoming of politics but an affirmation of those critical moments that negate the totalizing forces in politics, amongst which are included the totalizing gestures of dialectical thought in general. The possibility of making such claims is what makes Cacciari's position as an intellectual and a public figure so unique. It is, at once, the downside of this collection. As powerful and challenging as Cacciari's concept of the unpolitical is to contemporary political philosophy, it remains mired in a literary hermeneutics whose horizon is limited to the peculiarities of the internal (mis)workings of the intellectual history of Italian Marxism. And what remains disappointing is that there is much to offer in these pages for a serious reflection both on the difficulties and frailties of contemporary Italian politics and on Italy's role in the processes of globalization. The possibility of rethinking a uniquely Italian experience of multiculturalism through the optics of the unpolitical could bring forth innovative and potentially helpful ways of dealing with some of the issues I mention in my introductory remarks. Unfortunately—or perhaps fortunately—the volume leaves it up to the reader to salvage Cacciari's thought from the parochialism to which it has been assigned by an ineffective, and bi-polar, ideological perspective.

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Caro Vitto. Essays in Memory of Vittore Branca. Eds. Jill Kraye & Laura Lepschy in collaboration with Nicola Jones. *The Italianist* 27. Special Supplement 2. London: The Warburg Institute, 2007. Pp. 335. ISBN 978-0-85481-142-7. n.p.

Dopo una lineare prefazione nella quale i curatori ripercorrono le tappe fondamentali dei rapporti fra il grande Maestro, scomparso nel 2004, e il Regno Unito (dalla prima visita al Warburg Institute nel 1948 all'ultimo viaggio a Londra nel-