of industrious uniformity and perfect mechanical resolution of difference [a “linea
di pioppi e di schiene al lavoro (74)], Pedriali discerns the ridiculous: “L’uomo
lavabo e bidet. La lubrificazione perfetta” (75). It is this ridicule that marks Gadda as “figlio maschio maliusuito, di primogenito da scherno” (75). Fraternal struggle
also animates the subsequent chapter, “Fame a Longone. Meditazione e rito di
Carlo Emilio Gadda primogenito.” Opening her chapter with reference to Esau
and Jacob, Pedriali connects this biblical tale of fraternal discord and maternal
preference with Gadda’s own delirium “di parte lesa ed offesa” (87). While the
hungry Esau, first born of the twins, sells his birthright to Jacob for a plate of stew,
Gadda’s “temibile fama di giustizia” (86) becomes literal as consumption comes to
constitute a “strumento di retribuzione” (87). We return here, of course, to the
violent ingestion of the sea-creature on the part of Gonzalo who becomes a Lucifer
“privo di pertugio inguinale: sé chiuso in sé, sé attossicato dal sé e dal pasto” or a
Cronus, prisoner of the “neonato umano inghiottito intero” (91).

The sixth chapter, “Fistola in succhio: Chiamate idrauliche per L’Adalgisa,”
opens on an I that participates in a “promiscua fluidità esterna” but is “parados-
salmente garantito, protetto, confermato entro i confini magic del corpo e della
mente” (105). Gadda’s bodies, whether engaged in the violent struggle of germi-
nation or deprived of life, are, Pedriali writes, always “corpi-persona, materia scrit-
ta e individuata” (107). These and similar concerns structure the final
Applicazione, “Il vettore, la cartolina, lo stemma. Magliature riorientative a chiud-
erre, ripartendo dalla Meditazione.” Beginning with the central problematic of
method broached in the Meditazione, Pedriali unpacks a Gaddian suffering that
can be equated with the “cognizione del non poter divenire” (170). Pedriali’s
Gadda is, then, not a Deleuze “avanlettera” (176), but rather a vectorial subject of
contradictions who “dichiara di volere fare sparire gli eroi, e di nuovo si atteg gia
da eroe” (179).

Pedriali’s text, both in its critical rigour and its demanding stylistic elegance,
remains consistently faithful to the full and even contradictory complexity of
Gadda’s thought and style. It is unfortunate that these articles are not available in
English translation, a comment that is, sadly, equally applicable to much of
Gadda’s own writing.

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Albert N. Mancini and Glenn Palen Pierce, eds. Dictionary of Literary

This timely volume of Gale’s Dictionary of Literary Biography series focuses on the
poetic and theatrical achievements of the Seicento or Baroque period in Italian lit-
erature, which prevailed from approximately 1580 to 1680. As Albert Mancini
observes in his informative Introduction to the literary developments of the peri-
The Seicento has since the mid-twentieth century been considered “an essential chapter in the long annals of Italian literature” (xv). The forty-one critical biographies in the volume illustrate the richness and broad scope of the literary and dramatic output of the period. Taken together, they provide a valuable survey of the evolution of the Baroque style, with its emphasis on “theatrical, spectacular, emotional, ... flamboyant and popular” elements that challenged “neo-Aristotelian aesthetics” and the idea of “decorum and morality in art” (xv), as well as counter-Baroque expressions. The biographies have been composed by scholars from the United States and Canada and are constructed around authors’ literary achievements and their contributions to Italian and European literary history. Each entry is preceded by a complete list of the author’s books and letters that were published in the seventeenth century, and early modern and subsequent editions and collections of his or her works. Also included is a list of any published biographies and a bibliography of scholarly references. The entries on dramatists and other figures associated with the theatre include useful lists of play productions. Most of the articles include reproductions of the author’s portrait and the title page of first or subsequent editions, collections, or translations into English of one or more principal works; all contain excerpts from the individual texts analysed, followed by skilful translations into English. The biographies are followed by three Appendices (“The Arcadian Academy,” “Poetry and Music,” and “Theater and Spectacle”), a checklist of further readings, and a cumulative index of the series.

The biographies are without exception solidly researched and lucidly written. In accord with the plan of the series, they are intended to appeal to a general readership as well as to teachers and researchers. Each article includes a critical appraisal of the major themes and stylistic features of the author’s major works, a discussion of the works’ literary, historical, and cultural contexts, and an overview of scholarly assessments and debates. The collection is in keeping with current scholarship on the early modern period in its attentiveness both to widely studied and less well-known figures, and in the balance it sustains between literary traditions and counter-traditions. The influence of the princely courts, the urban academies, and popular traditions and practices is well covered, as are the major literary and dramatic genres that have informed most of the scholarship on the period: lyric and epic poetry; tragicomedies; mock-heroic and burlesque traditions in poetry; opera; the commedia dell’arte; the commedia spagnoleggianti (drama written in the Spanish style); the dialect poetry and plays that became popular in the second half of the century and flourished in major regional centres; and the satirical, conservative poetry of the last decade of the century produced primarily in Tuscany. Careful attention is also paid to the contributions of women writers, the genres of literary comedy, pastoral drama, and tragedy, as well as the importance of often neglected minor classics.

“Baroque poets,” notes Mancini, “broke stylistic and thematic limits in search of new ways to express allegories of the ephemeral quality of reality and the ambivalence of human knowledge” (xv). Since the 1970s, Giambattista Marino has been considered the greatest and most influential poet of the Italian Baroque, not only in Italy but throughout Europe. Depicting “a universe in which every-
thing is relative,” his “clashing styles” introduced “into an area of dogmatic certitude” a new approach to “writing and reading” (xvii). Marino inspired numerous followers, including Claudio Achillini and Giuseppe Artale, who are shown to be not only imitators but also original and complex poets in their own right. The articles on the Marinist school are counterbalanced by the biographies of prominent counter-Baroque poets. They include Giovanni Battista Ciampoli, the long-standing friend and supporter of Galileo Galilei and member of the influential scientific society, the Accademia dei Lincei in Rome, which advocated the revival of classical literature and the restoration of Italian poetry “to its original moral and civilizing function” (94); and a group of Roman poets and theorists of the 1620s, among them Maffeo Barberini (the future Pope Urban VIII) and the versatile and prolific Gabriello Chiabrera. Although Chiabrera has often been paired with Marino in being accorded a central place in the evolution of Baroque poetry, with its emphasis on the search for “a style that would produce in readers a reaction of startled amazement” (84), he came increasingly under the influence of the French Pléiade, and his advocacy of poetry inspired by the classical tradition anticipated the Arcadian school’s emphasis on poetic decorum.

Among the figures representing the rich dramatic and theatrical traditions of the period are Flamino Scala, the acclaimed dramatist, actor, and scenario writer; Battista Guarini, whose pastoral tragicomedy Il pastor fido (1590) was until the nineteenth century “the most widely read and extravagantly praised and condemned text of secular literature in Europe” (158); Giacinto Andrea Cicognini, an exponent of the commedia spagnoleggiante, who was hailed in his time as the greatest dramatist of the age; the prolific Florentine court poet Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger, whose major contributions include his rustic verse comedies La Tancia (1611) and La Fiera (1619), which, like the comedies of his Milanese counterpart Carlo Maria Maggi, were intended to record and celebrate popular speech and regional daily life; and the acclaimed actor Francesco Andreini, who, together with his wife, Isabella Andreini, was instrumental in the evolution of the commedia dell’arte throughout Europe. In Le bravure del Capitano Spavento (1607), a treatise on the character type of the Capitano that he helped to shape, Andreini’s portrayal of the acting profession as requiring solid literary and theoretical grounding and interpretative skills corroborates recent scholarship that has challenged the conventional view of the commedia dell’arte as strictly reliant on stock characters, gestures, and improvisation.

The volume is commendable also for the detailed biographies of women writers. Countering the lingering practice of excluding women authors, and especially women poets, from modern anthologies of Baroque literature, the volume focuses on seven women writers. Lucrezia Marinella’s experimentation with various literary genres ranging from pastoral comedy and prose to epic poetry made her the “most productive and versatile early modern Italian woman writer” (182). Her Le nobilità et eccelenze delle donne et i difetti, e mancamenti degli huomini (1600) is the only extant early modern treatise by an Italian woman in praise of women. The dramatist and poet Isabella Andreini was the most acclaimed actress of her time and was widely revered by popular and courtly audiences for her
superb dramatic performances and literary accomplishments; these include *Mirtilla* (1588), the first pastoral play to be written by a woman, which by 1620 had been reprinted nine times. Margherita Costa is ‘the most “Baroque” of seventeenth-century Italian women writers’ and among a few to include humour in her poetry (113). The early poetry of the self-educated Virginia Bazzani Cavazzoni is in the Baroque style and “compares favorably with that of most seventeenth-century Italian poets” (49); her later work was influenced by the Arcadian school, which abandoned Baroque excess in favour of a simpler style and an interest in nature. The devotional and autobiographical poetry of Isabella Farnese, convent founder, reformer, and spiritualist, was circulated in the salons of devout noblewomen and was “included in the libraries of most monastic orders” (146). Margherita Sarrocchi’s heroic epic *La Scanderbeide: Poema heroico*, which is modelled on Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata* and was published presumably without Sarrocchi’s knowledge in 1606, is the earliest example of the genre by a woman writer. Recounting the exploits of the fifteenth-century Albanian prince Skanderberg against the Ottoman sultanate, the poem is notable for its realistic depictions of military combat and the important social and political roles played by women. Francesca Turini Bufalini was the first Italian poet to produce works informed by extensive and precise autobiographical detail, anticipating “the Romantic tendency of personal confession” in an age that was seeking “marvelous new techniques to be applied to impersonal subjects” (271).

The three Appendices provide valuable surveys of anti-Baroque and other literary and theatrical traditions of the period: 1) the mid-seventeenth century reaction in poetic theory against the perceived aesthetic corruptions of the Baroque style, a reaction that led to the founding in 1609 of the Roman “Arcadian Academy,” which promoted rational principles, “buon gusto” (“good taste”), and clarity of linguistic expression; 2) the wide-ranging influence on the literature and theatre of the age of music and musical theory, including courtly and commercial opera, the narrative-dramatic form of the oratorio, and local traditions and practices; and 3) the vitally important role of theatre and spectacle, which “permeated all aspects” of society (294).

The volume is an essential resource for anyone studying or working in seventeenth-century Italian literature and culture.

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After the recent edited collection of essays on Vincenzo Cerami published in 2004 (*Vincenzo Cerami: le récit et la scène*, Louvain, Presses universitaires de Louvain) Beatrice Barbalato returns to Cerami, with a thorough study on his theatrical production.