connect with others" (146). Indeed, in fiction and non-fiction, the epistle continues to inspire readers and writers. Beautifully written, and accessible, this book can be appreciated by specialists and non-specialists interested in literary and epistolary studies, women's fiction, and Italian studies.

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Maria Rosa Cutrufelli. *Reasonable Doubt (Complice il dubbio)*. Translated by Giuliana Sanguinetti-Katz and Anna Urbancic. Willard, ON: Soleil, 2007. Pp. 181. ISBN 978-1-894935-29-6. n.p.

Complice il dubbio is the second novel of Maria Rosa Cutrufelli, a well-known Italian feminist journalist, editor, critic and author of 5 widely translated novels. Cutrufelli's first novel, *La Briganta*, a fictional memoir of a female brigand cast in the historical novel genre, appeared in 1990. In this long-overdue English translation of *Complice il dubbio*, originally published in 1992 and adapted for the Italian screen in 1998, Cutrufelli plays with another genre dear to postmodern and feminist writers, the detective/crime novel. Introducing the translation are two excellent critical essays, "Explorations in Female Sexuality" (Sanguinetti-Katz) and "Reading Reasonable Doubt: The Spaces of the Imagination" (Anne Urbancic), which outline well several critical issues for debate.

Complice il dubbio begins with a mysterious death. Anna, a thirty-five year old female medical doctor who has separated from her husband to avoid becoming a "prisoner of her marriage," (80), is running through the empty streets of Rome in August to get back to her apartment the morning after an arranged evening sexual encounter with an architect about the same age. The man, recently separated from his wife, was already quite drunk and obviously depressed on her arrival but she decided to spend the night. In the morning, after pinning her down on the bed, the deranged man committed suicide and Anna flees home in order to ponder when and how she could go to the police.

As the reader learns more about Anna's carefully controlled and respectable life, this calculated tryst begins to appear less a deviation from her normal behaviour than an extension of her mania to control spaces, both physical and imaginary. As Anne Urbancic notes in her critical essay, Cutrufelli's representations of space and utilization of the literary trope of chiasmus show that Anna, orphaned at age four and raised by her grandmother in a ground floor apartment where she could and still does hide from others, consistently reproduces spaces in which she can "cocoon" safely or present an emotionless exterior. Feeling exceptionally alone in a deserted Rome, she had decided to create another impermeable space for a casual sexual life, one she assumed she could keep secret and, of course, control as she examined her emotional side.

Yet, spaces in this narrative are not impermeable, thanks to the most prominent character in the novel, Doubt. That same morning, Anna offers assistance to

a young girl, Marta, running behind her, the girl visibly shaken by some experience. She brings the young woman into her downstairs office and then invites her to stay in her upstairs apartment/sanctuary after finding the architect's address in her purse. This begins a game of "sadistic hide and seek." (Sanguinetti-Katz 14) Although Anna retains her typical exterior self-control and justifies Marta's presence as an attempt to help the young girl who could get accused wrongly if she turns herself in, tension mounts as both characters become accomplices in covering up the crime not only from the police but from each other and themselves.

Sanguinetti-Katz, who sees the work as "a subtle exploration of the feminine psyche" in her article grounded in a psychoanalytical analysis of Anna's conflicted sexuality, writes that Marta, among other possibilities, is the dominant maternal figure who must be overcome Urbancic sees the young Marta, fearless and sexually uninhibited, as Anna's alter ego. Either way, this figure turns Anna's black and white world into a mysterious gray. Anna seeks to control Marta in order to prove her innocence to herself as well as to Marta who may suspect her. Her inability to accomplish either comes out when Marta abruptly leaves after a confrontation with Anna who then seeks her desperately all over Rome. In the process she has to confront another version of what happened, namely one where she accidentally pulled the trigger on a gun thrust into her hands by her lover, thus becoming the killer. Marta returns and calls Anna a coward, showing that she always suspected both Anna's innocence and her intentions to go to the police.

Both Sanguinetti-Katz and Urbancic speak of allusions at the end that allow the reader to conclude that there has been some development since Anna falls into a sound sleep next to Marta, realizing that the child would no longer play this game "to conceal and remove reality." (180) Nonetheless, there are other clues that the game will not stop and that Marta's unexplained return has resolved nothing. Although Anna claims she will go to the authorities the next day, uncertainty and doubt seem to hold the upper hand: "Tomorrow. She, Anna, didn't know what the next day would bring her. Would she be in control of herself, of her wishes, of the sudden turns of her imagination? Or would she lose herself once more in ambiguous dilemmas and cruel shadows?" (181)

Hence, the novel's ending, as is the case for many postmodern *gialli*, is indeed open-ended. The problem has been determined: whether or not Anna will manage to deal with doubt and its grey area or continue to try to move between closed, controlled spaces is not something that can be resolved on the page. Neither can the nature of doubt which, by the end of this novel, can be described in terms almost identical to the famous line in the 2008 American movie *Doubt* concerning the attempt of a nun (Meryl Streep) to prove sexual abuse and remove the parish priest who, in his farewell speech, tells his parish: "Even certainty is an emotion, not a fact."

The importance and the essential ambivalence of the role of doubt are underlined in by different translations of the Italian title. The translation in German, *Die Verdächtige Komplizen* (The Guilty Accomplice) imposes a more clear-cut interpretation of the novel whereas Urbancic and Katz's choice of "Reasonable Doubt" picks up the soliloquy of a distraught Anna searching for the needed

Marta: "How can a jury acquit or condemn me?" shouted Anna to herself ... She started brooding: how is it possible to decide and establish without any possible ambiguity, without uncertainty, once and for all, that things had gone in one particular way and in no other way, if not even those who had the experience can be sure of them? Time—even the brief passing of an hour, of a minute—accumulates contradictory proofs, makes fun of the objectivity of facts, manipulates the very perception of reality, presses down emotions one on top of another like a vacuum...." (156). Here Cutrufelli thematizes one of the main tenets of the postmodern *giallo* which mocks "la fatta prova" demanded by most courts, inserting at the same time a theme she exploits in her historical novels, the variation that gendered memories produce and the differences they reflect.

Although the benefits of doubt remain in abeyance, there is no doubt that this translation captures well the rhythm and playfulness of Cutrufelli's prose. There are indeed some figurative images describing the interior psyche that most likely caused some difficulty for the translators, but for the most part, Cutrufelli's prose imitates the black and white spaces which Anna is constructing like her grocery list (which becomes problematic). A preposition, at most two, are questionable (i.e. Martha got off the car to let her in (meaning out) but the text is surprisingly error free. The introductory essays could have inserted the page numbers of the text and perhaps a note discussing briefly the process of translating this work.

This highly readable translation, as well as the questions the text solicits, make it a wonderful read for undergraduates. Sanguinetti-Katz and Urbancic have provided us with a valuable resource for teaching Italian literature in English.

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***Il cibo e le donne nella cultura e nella storia. Prospettive interdisciplinari*, a cura di Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli e Lucia Re. Bologna: Clueb, 2005. Pp. 239 + ill. ISBN 88-491-2521-6. Euro 22 (paper)**

Since time immemorial, women have been central to the preparation of food, yet very little research has been carried out in the humanities on the fundamental connection between them and food. This is surprising, for the nexus women-food is of the utmost importance to society not only because of the service women have provided for millennia by virtue of their skills in preparing food for the family table, but also for the equally important cultural assumptions that have underpinned women's role as providers of nourishment. Starting with Eve and her "offering" of the fateful apple to Adam, western society (in its Judeo-Christian expression) has had an ambivalent understanding of the fundamental nexus between women and food. While, from one perspective, the preparation of food for the table can be seen as a menial service for the family unit, from another perspective it is a fundamental marker of culture that distinguishes (and separates) one social group from another. Similarly, while women have traditionally been