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

seen as the “incubators” of man’s seed—to the point that a child takes the father’s family name, not the mother’s—, it is women who twice, first through gestation and then through breast-feeding, nourish that child with their own body. While men can be removed from the nourishing of a child, the same cannot be said of women.

Taking into consideration the fundamental nexus that exists between women and food at so many levels, this collection of essays seeks not so much to fill a gap (the task would simply be immense), but to inspire interest and further research in the topic. To do so, the two editors raise some interesting questions for our consideration, such as: can we identify, analyze, and explain a specifically “female” way of relating to food? If so, does this have any bearing on society, culture, politics? The eleven essays that follow do not answer these questions, but they do suggest a variety of ways in which such questions might be approached. They do so by looking, in very diverse and at times even interdisciplinary ways, at cultural expressions ranging from the *Canticle of Canticles* to video performances, from medieval recipe books to twentieth-century eating disorders. The editors’ introduction opens the discussions by raising some of the questions one ought to keep in mind and also reminding us of some of the biases we have quietly inherited about women and food—for example, the ancient Roman idea that voraciousness is good in men, but not in women, or that it is acceptable for men to drink to inebriation but not women.

The collection opens with Alessandra Ferlini’s psychoanalytical interpretation of the *Canticle of Canticles* that points out not only how a woman’s body is food to be consumed and enjoyed by her male admirer, but also nourishment for her child. It continues with Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli’s analysis of book VII of Hildegard of Bingen’s *Physica* where she discusses which animals are and are not edible—somewhat of a tour de force for a saintly noble woman who probably never fried an egg her entire life. Cristina Mazzoni continues the discussion of female mystics’ relationship with food with a survey that reaches from the Middle Ages to modern times and points out that it was not only abstention from food, but also the preparation itself of food that could help some women attain a closer relationship with the divinity. Her survey is followed by Elisabetto Sambo’s analysis of selected visual representations of women and food from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment. At this point Elisabetta Graziosi invites us to linger in the eighteenth century to examine Giacomo Casanova’s voracious appetite for women as companions both in the bedroom and in the dining room. Which leads us directly into Bruno Capaci’s article on various irrepressible libertines, from Don Giovanni and his insatiable hunger for women (though he generally ate alone) to De Roberto’s don Blasco and his complete disregard for monastic abstinence from women or continence in food. Moving from literary to historical sources, Fiorenza Tarozzi brings to our attention the leading role played by women in the “bread riots” that erupted in Italy in eighteenth-twentieth centuries, pointing out women’s determination to demonstrate in the streets against misguided governmental policies and taxes on food. Lucia Re’s article on Paola Masino’s *Nascita e morte della massaia* (1938-39) provides a literary counterpart to women’s demon-

strations against the state, this time in the figure of the otherwise unnamed *massaia* who rebels against the Fascist ideology of the “housewife in the kitchen.” Martina Corgnati’s contribution directs our glance to how women painters in the late nineteenth century provided radical re-interpretations of the women-food nexus, in particular when it touches upon motherhood and breast-feeding. Cristina Bragaglia follows suit with a look at eating disorders as represented on Italian and American screens in the second half of the twentieth century. And Patrizia Calefato brings the collection to a close with an examination of current discourse on food that focuses on two different, but related media, advertisements and cinema, and in particular on a commercial for Evian water and on the films *Babette’s Feast* and *Chocolat*.

This stimulating collection of articles points to innovative ways in which to re-examine cultural products, historical events, and social assumptions, while at the same time it invites us to think more subtly about the nourishment we receive from women’s natural and social role as providers.

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Mollica, Anthony. *Ludolinguistica e glottodidattica*. Perugia: Edizioni Guerra / Welland: Soleil Publishing, 2010. 424 pp. ISBN 978-88-557-0327-7. Euro 25.

In this new volume, Mollica unites years of research in over 400 pages dedicated to ludodidactics and Italian as a Second Language. The book opens with a preface by leading Italian linguist and scholar, Tullio De Mauro, who writes, that Mollica’s work is a “strumento prezioso per gli educatori, i docenti e gli stessi alunni che apprendono. A essi porge una larghissima offerta di esempi concreti di gioco linguistico, li illustra e guida a risolverli, mettendone in luce le potenzialità per l’apprendimento” (ix-x). In the postface, Stefano Bartezzaghi, an Italian puzzle writer and word games expert, writes about how a book on “ludolinguistica e glottodidattica diventa prezioso, perché contiene giochi divertenti e collaudati” (392). Essentially, the activities, as presented by Mollica, can be used in the classroom to enhance grammar lessons. In fact, in Mollica’s volume we find thirty chapters all dealing with a variety of different games and activities used to motivate second language learners of Italian.

In the opening chapter the author traces the history of ludodidactics and explains that, among others, two major reasons for writing *Ludolinguistica e glottodidattica* were to “contestualizzare, storicamente e teoricamente, gli elementi di ludolinguistica oggetto di trattazione” (xvi) and to “fornire agli insegnanti una varietà di attività integrative, da utilizzare come materiale aggiuntivo, a completamento delle attività di base presenti nei libri adottati e che talvolta, per varie ragioni, non rispondono ai reali bisogno del gruppo classe” (xvi). Each subsequent chapter opens with a detailed description and history of the technique or activity