Marisa S. Trubiano. *Ennio Flaiano and His Italy: Postcards from a Changing World*. The Fairleigh Dickinson University Press Series in Italian Studies. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010. Pp. 225. ISBN 978-0-8386-4213-9. US.\$ 74.50.

The book is divided into three chapters. The first deals mainly with Flaiano's early works, the novel *Tempo di uccidere* (1947), various scripts that use the novel as the basis for a film, and other works related to anti-colonialism. The second deals primarily with the works Flaiano produced as a result of his work in cinema. Their "fragmentary" nature is explained and evaluated in a postmodern theoretical framework, in which the sign's 'slipperiness' and perhaps 'slippage' are positive features. The last chapter extends this 'opening,' by viewing Flaiano as an author who was moving beyond/outside the determinants of Italian national culture and, as a precursor of contemporary trends, anticipating forms of what one could call "literary globalization."

Trubiano's volume covers an impressive panorama of both Flaiano's own production and the relevant secondary literature on the subject. I find two points in her analysis most convincing. First: Flaiano's critical relation to fascist colonialism, a topic that was mostly marginal in post-WWII examinations of fascism (and its relations to Italian nationalism and more or less tacit forms of imperial nostalgia), even among professedly more progressive/radical intellectuals and groups. Second: the complicities and compromises incurred by many Italian intellectuals during the "regime" and during the transition from fascism to post-WWII "antifascismo" (a topic recently addressed by Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Giovanni Sedita among others). Flaiano's irony directed at some of the more sanctimonious declarations of "clean breaks" is sobering.

When examining Trubiano's overall theoretical/critical framework however, some questions arise. Italian colonialism was a project embarked upon already in the late 19th century, and in fact there are not a few continuities between areas of Risorgimento culture and the rise of fascism. Carlo Dossi's recently reissued *Note azzurre* (an integral, previously unavailable, edition) include notes on the topic of colonialism. Dossi was an adviser to Francesco Crispi on Italian colonial policy in Africa, and allegedly responsible for the coinage of the name "Eritrea." These continuities extend to such literary and artistic issues as the "fragment." Foscolo translated Sterne, and during the period of the 'Scapigliatura,' he was to enjoy an even greater (and broader) influence, as were many other authors associated with irony, the "fragment," etc. (Jean-Paul was one of Dossi's favourite authors). So many of the characteristics (the 'breakdown' of genres, etc.) that Trubiano associates with Flaiano's production (also a result of his professional work in journalism and cinema?) might be 'recycling' and revisiting trends that have significantly older historical roots. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe (closely associated with Derrida) published *L'absolu littéraire* (1978), a revisitation of Friedrich Schlegel's reflections on the "fragment" and Romantic irony.

Similar issues arise with "post-colonial theory" since ever more brutal forms

of (neo)colonialism are being visited by the 'West' on the periphery (from the most obvious, Iraq and Afghanistan, to the more camouflaged and less followed (Honduras), or currently prominent (Egypt)), especially since the "end of the Cold War." While critical of fascist colonialism, Flaiano's alleged 'opening onto the world' ("literary globalism") does not seem to extend to those economic, social and political foundations on which current forms (institutionally more invasive and subtle) of neo-colonialism are based (class vs. 'identity').

Finally much recent criticism and scholarship discusses Flaiano and his work as if he/it were victims of untoward neglect, partly due to an alleged critical consensus of a more militant era among Italian intellectuals. First, the number of works cited in Trubiano's own bibliography, or those listed in an academic library (dozens in Princeton's Firestone library), would seem to contradict this statement. Second, the new literary/critical (formalist/postmodernist) paradigm of the Berlusconi decades (a regime supported by the neo-fascists) favours authors that share many of Flaiano's characteristics. Third, Flaiano received a Premio Strega for his 1947 novel, and his work (Trubiano quotes Brunetta on the "effetto Flaiano" in Italian cinema) with directors such as Fellini, Antonioni and De Sica who (together with authors like Calvino and Eco) are prime examples of Italian culture's "prodotti d'esportazione" hardly seems to corroborate the "neglect" thesis (which could be contrasted to the actual blacklisting many Western intellectuals were/are subjected to). Last year the documentary *Flaiano: il meglio è alle spalle* was produced. In 2010 Andrea Camilleri (hardly an "outsider") wrote an article for *Il Messaggero*: he blamed the "occhialuti cerberi" of Italian literary institutions for the marginalization Flaiano had been subjected to. Camilleri and Trubiano agree: formal eclecticism and ironic distance from militancy/partisanship in Flaiano's work were one reason.

Overall it seems difficult to make a case for Flaiano as an "outsider." Flaiano may well have been a forerunner who saw the attraction of the informal and the "global" ahead of his contemporaries (Trubiano's subtitle is *Postcards from a Changing World*), as Trubiano cogently argues, but one also wonders whether aspects of Italian "qualunquismo"/"opportunismo" revealed, almost confessionally or intentionally in Flaiano's work, may also inform his worldview.

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Italy and the Bourgeoisie. The Rethinking of a Class. Edited by Stefania Lucamante. Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009. Pp.208. ISBN 978-0-8386-4202-3. n.p.

The editor of this volume has set for herself a formidable task, and has accomplished it to a notable degree of success. What does Bourgeoisie mean in Italy and for Italians? A dynamic term, with numberless denotations, the wise decision of the editor is that the term is better described rather than defined. She proffers, in