in apparenza ‘fatte in casa’” (127).

Nel presente e nel futuro, poiché il mondo è oramai “quello dell’Ikea e non quello delle vecchie, belle falegnamerie” (127), dei mobili in serie e non dei mobili artigianali, il romanzo ha davanti una precisa scommessa, quella di “raccontare il mondo che diventa unico” (129), tra la perdita delle culture nazionali e la conquista di palcoscenici planetari. Una scommessa ancora tutta da giocare, pur sapendo che il prezzo da pagare è elevato.

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Silvia Ross. *Tuscan Spaces. Literary Constructions of Place*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010. Pp. xii, 224. ISBN 978-1-4426-3998-0. \$ 45.

Geopolitically, Tuscany exists within a rather tightly defined space. Connotatively, however, it embraces collective and personal spaces marking it across time and across space, always a *locus amoenus* with intriguing semiotic considerations to complement its historical, economic and literary importance since the late Middle Ages. Silvia Ross’s study offers six essays focusing on the literary connotations of Tuscany. Her introduction describes how Tuscany has attracted the attention of waves of travellers who, over the centuries, have imagined and reproduced in verbal and written accounts, their image of the Tuscan landscape, embellishing it as they fashioned it, with the end result of producing the “myth of Tuscany”. The myth involves the geography, the history, the people of Tuscany, and turns the geopolitical reality into a highly subjective mental space. Taking her cue from David Harvey’s *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Blackwell: 1996), Ross investigates how various writers create their “Tuscan space”, how they see their Self in relation to a (Tuscan) Other, how they envisage and understand Tuscany for themselves, and also, by extension, how they imagine Tuscany views them.

Opting for the early 20th century as her point of departure, Ross explores the work of Federigo Tozzi for its attitude of psychasthenia towards his native Siena; the fears and phobias that the Tuscan environment imposes on the characters who people Tozzi’s works all point to their, and ultimately, his problematic connection to Tuscany, and eventually also to modernity. His rural scapes often offer frightening, stressful scenarios; his cities are dehumanized, dependent on the “personification of the inanimate” (28). In this Tozzi follows his Tuscan compatriot Mario Pratesi who wrote half a century earlier, although he does not figure in this study. Psychasthenic vertigo, in metaphorical and physical sense, arises from Tozzi’s unstable relationship with the environment, undermining his identity formation and assigning uneasy otherness to his relationship to Tuscany. Aldo Palazzeschi reveals similar attitudes that, according to Ross, are based on his sublimated malaise vis-à-vis sexuality and difference. Palazzeschi is the soul of his *Sorelle Materassi*; they are the “buffe”, the misfits who act out their (and his) differences

on their bodies (47), differences performed at the window of a home which is both prison and freedom; they are also reflected metaphorically in the spatial ambiguities that surround them in their quasi rural Coverciano, not Florence but close enough to see the spires and red roofs of the city.

Florence is also the place that Vasco Pratolini depicts a spatial non-area in his works. The city represents “not so much the author’s own sense of alienation as his interest in accentuating the Other” (67). Ross’s detailed examination of Pratolini’s novels offers rich, thought provoking considerations on the disorienting effects of a city whose spaces and people point to exclusionary marginalization including political, sexual and social. Whether he describes the areas around the Piazza della Signoria, where he grew up, or the more peripheral and industrial area of Rifredi, or even the “in-between zones, areas not wholly associated with the country or the city” (78), Pratolini remains highly aware of the places of Others, the heterotopias that most reveal him as writer of male characters who “while espousing progress, [display] antiquated prejudices towards the Other” (89). Nor is this a surprising discovery in an author whose characters generally remain solidly entrenched in their own, traditional places in the city.

The remaining three essays are dedicated to Tuscan outsiders. Feminist writer Elena Gianini Belotti, although Italian, moved from Rome to a country estate outside Siena. Her autobiographical *Voli* (2001) reflects her life there, and confirms her interest in a Tuscany seen through the eyes of eco-feminism and through the tragedy of environmental degradation. Her work attests to the hardships of the rural past evident in every corner of her new house. Though restored, the house holds onto its traditional place in nature and among indigenous flora and fauna. Ross sees in this author a repudiation of the romanticized Tuscany; Gianini Belotti’s work demonstrates the predilection for the everyday complementarity of nature and human inhabitants, where animals are not seen as Other, but rather as sharing in the living experience. Gianini Belotti’s space, according to Ross, is one where ecological issues (and concomitant guilt about transgressions) open up the space that is Tuscany by providing a “sensitive interpretation of life among the locals, be they human or animal.” (163). Different is the situation of outsiders like Frances Mayes, and David Leavitt and Mark Mitchell; three American “Tuscans” who “go native”, as Ross writes, in Tuscan spaces of their fantasy (128). They are not the only non-Tuscan writers to appropriate and re-interpret the region, which they do first and foremost through massive repairs to their new homes in attempts to reappropriate the past. Their spaces are masked by nostalgia of a “Tuscany” of the past (129). While the anxiety of never really belonging looms large in shaping their acquired Tuscan identity, it is mitigated by their promotion of the stereotype of the local other, and their restorations inevitably divide the non-Tuscans and locals into us/Other binary where the locals become the “different” ones.

Similarly, the 19th century and early 20th century Tuscany visitors, such as writer E.M. Forster, who felt attracted by and yet also recoiled from the overwhelming artistic beauty of Florence, a reaction known as the Stendhal Syndrome. Ross also reviews the role of the Baedeker travel guide in informing the parameters of their Tuscany and stops to consider the dangers visitors perceive in travel-

ling to Tuscany, dangers such as those depicted by Dario Argento's thriller film *La sindrome di Stendhal* (1996).

Ross has had to choose only a limited number of authors from rich panoply of possibilities. Her elucidation of Tuscan spaces as sites of "othering" is well supported by the authors she does choose. The book offers a clearly and elegantly written study offering Tuscanophiles ample opportunity for thoughtful considerations of the spaces that determine their own Tuscany.

ANNE URBANCIC

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Cesare Pavese and Renato Poggioli. *"A meeting of minds." Carteggio 1947-1950.* A cura di Silvia Savioli. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2010. Pp. 161. ISBN 978-88-6274-219-1. € 18.

As Roberto Ludovico explains in his ample 31-page Introduction, the English phrase in the title of the present volume is borrowed from a letter sent in 1950 by Renato Poggioli (1907-63) to Cesare Pavese (1908-50) and is used to describe a convergence of intellectual and cultural interests. Poggioli writes: "Vedo con grande piacere che fra noi si realizza a questo riguardo quello che in inglese si chiama 'a meeting of minds'" (15). The recourse to English is explained by the fact that Poggioli is writing from his position as Professor of comparative literature at Harvard University to Pavese, who is working for the Einaudi publishing house in Turin during the years preceding his suicide, in August 1950. Their interests intersect on several levels, including their work as translators: Pavese's translations of American writers and Poggioli's translations of Russian poets. As well, the transatlantic collaboration attested in the 86 letters, which are meticulously annotated by Silvia Savioli, served to enhance the exposure of Italian post-war culture to innovative forms of writing originating abroad. Both Pavese and Poggioli introduced American novelists to the Italian reading public through the publication initiatives of Einaudi. In one letter, we find that both were aware of "l'esigenza di ampliare gli orizzonti della cultura letteraria dell'Italia fascista ricercando, studiando e diffondendo — come critici e come traduttori — i nuovi grandi modelli della letteratura internazionale contemporanea" (17).

Ludovico's Introduction also provides an important framework within which to interpret the exchange of letters, offering insights into Pavese's activities and state of mind in those crucial years between 1947 and 1950, and providing historical information on the relationships between the Einaudi publishing company, Poggioli, and the Italian Communist Party. Both the letters and Ludovico's comments demonstrate dramatically the fact that Pavese felt caught between the Einaudi policies and the need for freedom of expression. In other words, while Einaudi was committed to distributing foreign novelists and poets, the editorial board did not tolerate negative references to Communism, both in Italy and in Russia. At the centre of this controversy were Poggioli's anthology of translated