poetry, titled *Fiore del verso russo*, and the essay *Teoria dell'arte d'avanguardia*. The two manuscripts were sent to Pavese, following an exchange of letters in which Pavese expressed his personal interest in both projects. We learn from the correspondence that the first manuscript was published in 1949 after some delay, but with an "avvertenza"—a disclaimer, with which the publisher distanced himself from Poggioli's critical comments on the Russian poems. With respect to the essay on the avant-garde, delays and silence veiled reluctance on the part of Einaudi to proceed with the publication. In a letter dated February 2, 1950, Pavese responds as follows to Poggioli's questions as to the status of his work: "[I nostri colleghi] Hanno già cominciata l'offensiva: è chiaro che si tratta di *odium nominis* ... Tristi tempi" (126). The manuscript was rejected and eventually published in 1962, by Il Mulino in Bologna.

The book is largely an academic biography of Renato Poggioli, one that pays homage to this scholar's substantial contributions to the diffusion of American literature (Herman Melville, John Steinbeck, John Dos Passos) and literary criticism (Harry Levin, I.A. Richards, René Wellek) by reporting to Pavese recent publications in America, during the period of time in question. In support of the contention that the volume is a snapshot of Poggioli's academic life is the inclusion of Savioli's 12-page concluding essay titled, "La curiosa fortuna del *Fiore*," ovvero note sulle ricezione critica."

"*A meeting of minds*" *Carteggio 1947-1950* complements existing compilations of correspondence by Cesare Pavese, for example, the 2-volume *Lettere*, edited by Lorenzo Mondo and Italo Calvino. One could argue that Ludovico tends to over-read Pavese's psychological state, writing: "[...] l'intera vicenda è frutto e documento da un lato delle indiscutibili, e per altro note, ingerenze della politica e dell'ideologia di partito sulla cultura italiana degli anni del dopoguerra, dall'altro è l'ennesima testimonianza bruciante e palese della fragilità umana di Pavese, della sua debolezza e delle sue contraddizioni, che sono però anche l'*humus* della sua arte di scrittore tragicamente moderno" (28). While Pavese's frustrations with the editorial policy of his employer are well documented here, to read such expressions as a prefiguration of suicide is somewhat problematic, as is Ludovico's tendency to conflate the empirical author and the implied author. The volume, nonetheless, is a valuable resource, the product of careful research on the part of Savioli and, as such, it shines new light on the political, intellectual, and literary dynamics of post-war Italy.

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Lina N. Insana. *Arduous Tasks: Primo Levi, Translation, and the Transmission of Holocaust Testimony*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009. Pp. 319. ISBN 978-0-8020-9863-4. \$ 75.

The work of Primo Levi exceeds literary assessments, embracing every branch of knowledge. Lina Insana's *Arduous Tasks: Primo Levi, Translation, and the Transmission of Holocaust Testimony* is a fascinating contribution to the exploration

of Levi's oeuvre from an original angle—that of translation.

In his life, Levi translated from French, German, English and Dutch, from scientific texts to volumes by Kafka, Levi-Strauss, the anthropologist Mary Douglas and the Holocaust historian Jacob Presser. Despite the fact that many critics (Marco Belpoliti, Zaia Alexander) have already outlined the crucial role of translation in Levi's career, *Arduous Tasks* surpasses the established critical recognition of Levi's linguistic prowess. Insana conceives of translation as a dynamic process, a framework for an interpretation of the many directions Levi takes, from testimony to the problematic development of his landmark concepts. Levi's column "Tradurre ed essere tradotti" is then "not only the sketch of a translation theory but a testimonial theory as well" (ix). Placing translation-related concerns at the center of Levi's cultural endeavor sheds new light on seminal aspects of his work. Insana considers in the first two chapters of the book the images taken from other authors, grafted in Levi's own texts. Two case-studies analyze the long-standing relationship and obsessive recurrence in his writing of subtexts as Dante's *Commedia* or Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

For Levi, translation is a craft, yet one that changes its agent in unexpected ways. His translation of Kafka's *Der Prozess*, was admittedly "una palinodia del mio ottimismo illuminista" ("Tradurre Kafka"). In the third and fourth chapter, Insana explores Levi's more confrontational encounters with Kafka and Presser in volume translations. These experiences not only illuminate the set of issues related to the transmission of the "memoria dell'offesa," but are also treated as triggers for Levi's investigation.

Many commentators claimed Levi's departures from the originals are at times conspicuous. Insana interprets these departures—or deliberate "mistranslations," as she calls them—following Derrida's suggestion: they are an attempt for definitive interpretation of a text ("Des Tours de Babel"). The result is a convincing reconsideration of Levi's "so-called" major works, under the light of the profound links made apparent by Levi's "mistranslations." As in the case of Jacob Presser's *De nacht der Girondijnen*, a book Levi translated in 1975: the novel addresses issues that the Italian writer will further elaborate on in his grey zone theory. Insana showcases how much Levi's "mistranslations" foreshadow his own later positions, fully developed only in his 1986 essay, *I sommersi e i salvati*. In his adaptation, Levi interprets Presser's book with anxieties about the transmission of the Holocaust that are not present in the original text.

Translation unveils interferences and the intertwining of texts in the workshop of Levi's writing. It also enlightens the subterranean continuities and breaks in his thought. In the chapter dedicated to Levi's translation of Kafka's *Der Prozess*, Insana frames Levi's outspoken difficulties in translating the Czech author in the general reappraisal that will lead Levi to his 1986 masterpiece. While Insana's effective close-ups of Levi's texts and accurate contextualization are convincing, still more effective is her recasting of Levi's attitude towards translation. When Levi professes a theory of translation as self-identification with the author who is being translated, he ends up, in the adaptation of Kafka's novel, identifying himself with the protagonist Joseph K. When Levi designs a poetics of "scrivere

chiaro,” he then shields himself and his shame of survival under literary quotations in such poems as “Il superstite.”

What is less convincing of *Arduous Tasks*, however, is the other theoretical stake of the book: the trauma theory employed as a model for Levi’s testimony. Insana argues: “When Levi addresses this target audience in a literary context, implicitly characterizing them as uninitiated to the horrors of Auschwitz by transmitting its complex and corrupt sign system, he does not merely declare the presence of willing witnesses but rather creates them *through his very words*” (5). If translation affects the translator, there is an ontological distance between witness and the addressee(s) of his speech—of which Levi was painfully aware. In fact, what the scholar calls “an interactive testimonial model, whereby each member of Levi’s target audience in turn becomes an active witness in its own right” (9) might work if the witness and its audience are part of a homogeneous community, sharing the same linguistic, moral and religious values if not familiar ties and memories. Levi, instead, always willingly addressed heterogeneous, multilingual and allegedly secular audiences, his history as a survivor being radically different from the “model witness” trauma theory is referring to. His family was not shattered by the Holocaust, his former community seriously wounded, not destroyed. After the Holocaust, he was not *Heimatlos*, as most Holocaust survivors from Central or Eastern Europe were. Clichés such as Italians being “brava gente” notwithstanding, Levi’s indictment to the Germans in his books explicitly addresses them as his “true” audience, proving the theoretical assessment at stake unsatisfactory—at least in approaching Levi’s complexity. Insana herself seems to recognize that when she writes: “one of the central components of Levi’s creation of an audience is his Italianness; indeed, it is also fundamental to the establishment of his own authorial position” (44). Subjectivity matters, after all. The “chain of witnesses” and the ensuing community envisaged in the book are not apt for understanding Levi’s testimony—not even Levi’s translations. Despite the thorough research, the chapter on his translation of Kafka undervalues the specificity of the Italian cultural establishment. When Levi translated *Der Prozess* in 1983, for Einaudi and the Italian public he was not merely a Holocaust survivor, but also the successful and celebrated author of *Se non ora, quando?*, a novel which, for the Italian audience, spoke of the Holocaust as much as of Mitteleuropa. In the early 80s, the attention to central European literature was at its peak, as historian Tony Judt has argued about a cultural “rediscovery” of Central Europe. From the viewpoint of ‘the West,’ Kafka was Mitteleuropa. Levi’s palinode after translating *Der Prozess* was real, and painful. Yet his translation testifies a further difficulty, a communicative breakdown with his audience, a lack of reciprocity.

Levi’s legacy defies any normativity. With *Arduous Tasks*, Lina Insana found a compelling and thought-provoking point of entrance in his oeuvre, one that will stimulate other scholars to investigate the less apparent features of this difficult author—first of all his scientific translations.

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