Patrizia Sambuco. *Corporeal Bonds. The Daughter-Mother Relationship in Twentieth-Century Italian Women's Writing*. Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2012. Pp. 216. ISBN 978-1-4426-4425-0. \$ 55.

The sequencing in the title and the designated time frame are essential to the reader's grasp of the scope of this analytical text. Sambuco, an Italian scholar with academic credentials that range from the University of Bologna to Monash University in Melbourne, carefully frames her subject from the outset. The "corporeal" ("tangible," "relating to the body," "nature of matter") is less clear but will become apparent in the theoretical explanation which she applies to her narrative selections.

Unlike another recent study on motherhood (Benedetti – 2007) *Corporeal Bonds* tightens the focus from the general theme of motherhood in Italian culture and literature to the trope of daughter-mother relations in five novels. As clearly stated in the title, the order is not arbitrary. The author applies close psychoanalytical analysis to the daughter in Morante's *Menzogna e sortilegio*, to Sanvitale's *Madre e figlia*, in Di Lascia's *Passaggio in ombra*, Ferrante's *Amore molesto*, and Stancanelli's *Benzina*. The fifth text includes the surreal dead mother's point of view; hence, her voice is also factored into the analysis.

The introduction and first chapter is an historical overview comparing Anglo-American, French, and Italian women's studies themes beginning in the 1970s; it gives an updated list of primary and critical sources for the mother-daughter relationship. Sambuco mentions Cavarero in relation to her overall analytical framework but relies heavily on Irigaray's work "as a means to create new possibilities for the expression of the female subject [...]" and her search for new forms of knowledge and language that "speak corporeal" (7).

"Corporeal" from the title is thus defined. It is the text of the daughter-narrator which "defines the female self that is outside the patriarchal society" (7) and creates an alternative or rather new dimension outside and separate from the patriarchal dominant symbolic order.

In the case of Morante's *Elisa* (a text which pre-dates considerably the other four but which fits securely into the analytical frame), her search for her mother's love seems to predict one of the Italian feminist dilemmas in the 1970s. Furthermore, her creation of a fantasized narrative shows the need to create a specifically woman's narrative. In Sanvitale's *Madre e figlia* (1980) Sonia renegotiates her relationship with her mother through consideration of the changing female body; but it is also the author's narrative strategies of dreams and imagination which make it possible to redefine corporeality. 'Desire' appears in the subtitle of the chapter on Di Lascia's *Passaggio*. According to Sambuco, the female discourse is not so much stated as implied.

The discussion of Ferrante introduces the fact that it is unknown whether that author is indeed a woman. However, our author deals mainly with content and not with the authors. Sambuco considers *Delia* from a psychoanalytic perspective but also deals with the very tangible metaphor of dresses and how they relate both to the storyline and to the corporeality analysis in general. Finally, Sambuco underscores the comic tones in Stancanelli's *Benzina* (1998), the most

recent historically and also dramatically different from the preceding novels. In common with the previous texts is the 'otherness' of the dead mother. It creates the same directional tension between daughter-narrator (despite portions devoted to the dead mother's self-critique) in order to develop an understanding of the bond between them and how the societal role of each is defined (distorted) by patriarchal expectations.

This volume is a methodical application of psychoanalytical feminist theory from the end of the twentieth century to a body of women's narrative from the same period (excepting, of course, Morante, although clearly her inclusion has an obvious matrilineal connection to the Italian women's discourse of the 70s and 80s). The author carefully denies a direct causal relationship between theory and practice but, like Adalgisa Giorgio in *Writing Mothers and Daughters*, she posits the connection. Her selection of daughter-narratives fit skillfully into her chosen theoretical framework: how can women step outside of the patriarchal conceptual system (the symbolic order) in order to express a new symbolic order. The key is first recognition of sexual difference and of the mother. Sambuco has carefully articulated her method and attributed its many facets and origins to the relevant feminist philosophers. She applies this measurement to each single text and evaluates how each daughter-protagonist makes steps in the direction of denying the patriarchal as she attempts tracing her path toward subjectivity. Sambuco's selections and analyses lend new and productive ideas to the consideration of women's texts from that period but likely to more recent ones as well. Female-to-female intersubjective communication and the mother-daughter trope continue to enlighten our analyses of literature in the new millennium.

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***Popular Italian Cinema. Culture and Politics in a Postwar Society.* Edited by Flavia Brizio-Skov. London; New York: I.B. Taurus, 2011. Pp. 283. ISBN 978-1-84885-572-4. Np. (Hardback).**

Part of a trend in Italian cinema studies to examine non-canonical works, the collection of essays in editor Flavia Brizio-Skov's *Popular Italian Cinema—Culture and Politics in a Postwar Society* analyzes films that have received less than their due attention. The book's aim is to understand how genres such as the peplum, the western, horror films and the *commedia all'italiana* were not merely escapist but instead meaningful reflections of significant changes to Italian society and politics in the postwar era. Many of these films enjoyed great commercial success either in Italy or abroad, which may be partly to blame for their relative absence in traditional film scholarship. What a reader of this book will welcome is the inclusion of a number of works that might have slipped under the critical radar. Another laudable aspect of the collection is its examination of the popular reception of these films and its connection of their success to the surrounding cultural and political climates of their release. This proves useful for some (though not all) of