anarchist *sui generis*, even today he resists classification in conventional political alignments. In the course of his long life Montanelli nevertheless not only witnessed many of the most dramatic political events of our times, he was able to describe these events to millions of readers. Even if these readers disagreed with him, the writings of this master journalist made it clear that Italians need not be hoodwinked into accepting the interpretation of these events promulgated by what Pasolini called “il palazzo”—that is constituted authority whether during Fascism or afterwards.

CHARLES KLOPP

The Ohio State University

Roberto Esposito. *Terms of the Political: Community, Immunity, Biopolitics*. Translated by Rhiannon Noel Welch, with an Introduction by Vanessa Lemm. New York: Fordham University Press, 2013. Pp. 152. ISBN 9780823242658. \$25.25 CAN.

Roberto Esposito is one the most incisive and thought-provoking political theorist in Italy today. He has produced a compelling body of work that revolves around the fundamental notions upon which the political, social, and ethical Western systems have been built. Esposito's unrelenting objective is to dig into the genesis and developments of essential political beliefs such democracy, freedom, and community. In many respects, he shares with thinkers such as Michel Foucault a method that is both archeological and deconstructive at the same time. Political discourses and social practices are scrutinized in all their micro elements and are subjected to an historical and critical investigation that exposes inconsistencies and antinomies.

The present volume is a collection of eleven essays skillfully translated by Rhiannon Noel Welch and preceded by a valuable introduction by Vanessa Lemm. The first group of essays centres on the notions of community and democracy that Esposito examines through the filter of the immunitary paradigm. Immunization is the recurrent logic that lies beneath the aspiration of a community, inasmuch as the other is perceived as a threat, a virus from which one requires protection. Esposito weaves a series of captivating arguments that combine etymological roots of the terms, philosophical investigations and historical considerations. Sifting through an array of thinkers, from Kant to Hannah Arendt, Esposito theorizes that the definition of community is a paradoxical one: it expresses both necessity and impossibility, a “transcendental condition of our existence” (14) that clashes with individualism and self-preservation. These antinomies have irreparable consequences on the realization of a universal system of ethics and on our conceptions of freedom and democracy. The immunity towards the external is constitutive of all social bodies, he argues, from the juridical systems of nation-states to the organizations that regulate cultural, religious, or territorial manifestations.

One of Esposito's most apparent and extraordinary critical traits is his ability

to transpose into the political discourse categories that traditionally pertain to the realm of medicine, literature, or psychology. Indeed, the aporias that he identifies in most basic terms that form the fabric of the political discourse are interpreted as expressions of a tragic thought or, more remarkably, as manifestation of social melancholy. The melancholic state of individual psychology connected to guilt, traumas and lacerations, acquires the status of a political category that reveals an existential condition that goes beyond *acedia*. Indeed, they embody the demonstration of our human finitude. For Esposito, community is “neither an origin nor a *telos* [...] *but the condition, both singular and plural, of our complete existence*” (36).

Democracy as well, a conception that resides at the core of Western civilization, cannot escape the immunitary logic. Esposito contends that the individual power-drives result in a process of immunization of every citizen that inevitably involves the entire community. And should we consider globalization as a collapse of the outside, he stresses that the condition of the fortress (a defense from the other) is now transformed into that of the desert, a world divested of an inside (46). Perhaps the most abused of all terms, one whose repertoire belongs definitively to the superficiality of common places, is that of freedom. Indeed, Esposito attempts to free freedom from the weight of historical trivialities. Interesting in this respect the analysis related to the identification of freedom with property and the proposal to envisage it “not as something that one has but as something that someone is” (54). The vision of community, seen not as a space of sameness but one of alterity and difference, is linked to Esposito’s own version of freedom as an expression of plurality. However, he avoids a number of questions: how do we build consensus through differences? When do my freedoms stop so that someone else can have his or hers? How do we deal with secular or religious fundamentalisms that advocate as cultural differences expressions of violence and repression? Does the breakdown of consensus create a dystopic community?

The rest of the essays rotate around the issues of immunity and violence, the body and violence, biopolitics and totalitarianism—the latter radically questioned as a political category. Esposito uncovers the death drives (“thantopolitics”) of the Nazi regime (the view of the other as an infectious disease that ends up destroying one’s own life) and in Stalinism. The analysis of violence and community is extended to the monotheistic religions by drawing on the notions of mimetic desire and the figure of the victim in René Girard’s research, integrated with Walter Benjamin’s concept of the law as an expression of violence intended to suppress violence. The pages devoted to liberal democracies, as well as those that deal with the notions of personhood and of the “impersonal” (Weil, Deleuze, Blanchot) are equally stimulating. It is surprising, however, that in his analysis of humanism—both classical and modern—and its relationship to technology, Esposito does not explore the issue of the recent shift from the paradigm of immunology to a neurological one. The latter, triggered by the digital age, does not express the violence towards the other, but towards one’s own neurons. Esposito does not see that the disappearance of the other within a globalized context (excluding the conflicts of terrorism and ethnic cleansing) devalues the immunity factor by directing the violence towards the self—increment of depression,

attention deficit, and other psychic disorders.

All the essays are linked by a recurrent critical operation: Esposito exposes the emptiness of a plurality of beliefs, principles, and representations. This tendency is adopted as a lens through which he looks at the vacuum in which our political language dwells at its most molecular level. That's why Esposito makes a distinction between manifest meaning and underlying meaning of the terms that constitute the foundation of Western political thought. If the first, Esposito argues, is "univocal, monolinear, and self-enclosed", the second is "contradictory" and 'antinomic' (48). Esposito's deconstructive critique does an extraordinary job not only in identifying political complexities, social traumas and fractures, but also in showing possible openings towards new perspectives and hopes for the future. For the English speaker, this translation represents a magnificent introduction to an inspirational political thinker.

JOHN PICCHIONE
York University

Pierpaolo Antonello. *Dimenticare Pasolini. Intellettuali e impegno nell'Italia Contemporanea*. Milano: Mimesis Edizioni, 2012. Pp. 163. ISBN 9788857516943. € 16.

La tesi centrale del saggio di Antonello, veramente affascinante quanto (forse troppo?) fiduciosa, si articola in cinque ben scritte e documentate sezioni: 1) "Introduzione: per una Bauhaus intellettuale"; 2) "Chi sono e a cosa servono gli intellettuali? Italia e Gran Bretagna a confronto"; 3) "Intellettuali e mass-media: incomprensioni, mediazioni, strategie di sopravvivenza"; 4) "Dimenticare Pasolini"; 5) "Impegno postmoderno: l'ossimoro che avanza".

Secondo lo studioso, la nuova era dei media digitali, per loro natura 'liquidi' e rizomatici, consentirebbe di guardare alla questione della presunta mancanza di una vera intellettualità italiana *engagée* in modo smagato e fundamentalmente ottimista. Antonello constata come la partecipazione degli intellettuali alla vita pubblica si stia 'artigianalizzando' (da cui il riferimento alla Bauhaus dell'ottimo primo capitolo) e stia penetrando capillarmente nei nuovi spazi mediatici.

Rintracciando un'embrione di questo parallelo tra 'intellettuali-vati' — la cui azione sociale si sviluppa dall'alto verso il basso — e intellettuali impegnati anche in spaccati sociali democraticamente 'orizzontali' — come ad esempio i *bloggers* — da una parte, e l'antinomia 'arte alta'-*design*, presente già in Gramsci (16), dall'altra, l'Antonello sottolinea come diversa, da un punto di vista sia formativo che degli spazi d'intervento, appaia la natura dell'intellettuale britannico rispetto a quella della sua controparte italiana (secondo capitolo). Questo tipo di *engagement*, per l'autore, potrebbe costituire proprio il proficuo esito della nuova fluida fase di allargamento degli orizzonti comunicativi.

Anzi, secondo l'Antonello, che, a proposito, cita, nel terzo capitolo, il fiore dell'intellettualità contemporanea internazionale (Butler, Chomsky, Stiglitz,