waste none of the reader—especially in the readings of the greatest of all the sick females in this book: *Senilità*'s Amalia. As reams of Svevo critique press in on Bond, Amalia is lifted into a whirlwind of interpretations (45-63), making us admit, yes, ultimately these breakdowns and dysfunctions are probably undecidable. They transcend both our ken and its words. And if sometimes those words seem to encompass too much, it is because of another paradox akin to that of Zeno: the feminine and the body, death and the “space-off” from language are produced only within the inexhaustible resources of language itself, by theory after theory.

Bond's master theory is Kristevan, positing a division between the physical, poetic and unconscious fluidity of the “semiotic” and the “symbolic” law of the father. Her chronic disruptions of narrative activate the former. Heuristically the opposition bears excellent fruit, delivering insights that “dominant” interpretations of these Triestine writers might otherwise miss (allowing Bond to develop the psychological hermeneutics explored in their own ways by Elio Gioanola, Mario Lavagetto, Eduardo Saccone, Leo Bersani, and Giuliana Minghelli). Even so, the opposition between the semiotic and the symbolic seems finally not so absolute. Just as the subversive discourse of Ada is reported by Zeno (and the stories of Pressburger by the unreliable “Professor Sch.,” which are undercut even further by bogus medical references—rhetorical complications that could be further factored into this study) so it appears that it is only *within the terms of the symbolic* that the semiotic is posited outside it. The imbrication of the two is solid in Svevo and Pressburger, and there Kristeva does not predominate. Her theories—tackled in Bond's very articulate, methodological first chapter of the book—become pressing precisely where the semiotic itself becomes (symbolically) dominant: in the reading of Morandini. Along the way the insightful Bond invokes quite a variety of methodological tools to give speech to the illnesses, gender tensions and aphasic intrusions in these novels and stories.

Bond's sophisticated study is a welcome addition to the catalogue of *Legenda*, the British book series that has done so much to promote Italian intellectual perspectives over recent years, especially in the work of young scholars. One only wishes there were more such initiatives.

THOMAS HARRISON
UCLA

Gabriella Remigi. *Cesare Pavese e la letteratura americana: una «splendida monotonia»*. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2012. Pp. xviii, 226. ISBN 978-88-222-61021. € 24.

It would be impossible to understand Cesare Pavese's view of the world without knowing how he read American literature. He was under its spell all his life, from the time of his early experience of *Leaves of Grass* in the *liceo* until his latter days, when he was reviewing F.O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance*. And Pavese was also, of course, an assiduous translator, not only of Melville but of Sinclair Lewis and Gertrude Stein, of Dos Passos and Faulkner. All translators must try to retrace

the original writer's creative journey, and for this reason the task is a kind of training. In this penetrating new study, which follows the entire arc of Pavese's career, Gabriella Remigi shows how his reading of American literature shaped his own art. Given that she is dealing with a writer who so often had to face the exasperating compromises of translation, it is appropriate that her analysis of Pavese's work — not only of his translations but also of his essays, his fiction, his poetry, his memoirs — should be grounded in concrete philological evidence.

Remigi begins with an examination of Pavese's reading of Whitman, Melville and Jack London. Pavese, whose *tesi di laurea* (1930) was a study of Whitman's poetry, was drawn to the American champion of free verse because the two writers shared a common sensibility. Whitman's celebration of the raw and primitive, of human beauty stripped of its centuries of civilizing varnish, offered Pavese an alternative to what he considered stifling European convention. Accompanying this attraction to the primitive was Pavese's fascination for the unconscious human urge to return to one's origins. For Whitman, the forces of nature were at work everywhere, in the country as well as in the city. His poetry allowed Pavese to see a certain atavism even in his industrialized Turin. This atavism was perhaps the quality that Pavese appreciated most in *Moby Dick*, which must have been his most ambitious translation. Remigi shows, however, that throughout Pavese's work, phrases suggestive of repetition—such as “ogni volta,” “ogni notte,” “già una volta,” “la seconda volta,” and so on—serve as markers that identify this atavistic dimension of his vision, this fascination with a cyclical, or mythical, and therefore timeless, return.

The American Dream, as expressed in American literature, meant to Pavese the unhindered, unabashed pursuit of such a return. However, in the modern Americans—in Fitzgerald and Steinbeck, in Sherwood Anderson and Lee Masters, in Willa Cather, Sinclair Lewis, Dos Passos and Dreiser—Pavese also found, says Remigi, “l'altra faccia del sogno,” that is, “il disincanto” (80). In these writers the country was in stark contrast with the city but, in the end, no purer; and the mythical return was thwarted, replaced all too often by a grim surrogate, the refuge of alcohol. It was Lee Masters, perhaps more so than anyone else, who gave Pavese a way of going beyond realism, a way of seeing destiny as an undeniable force working, always and inexorably, under the surface of things. Remigi's reading is particularly sensitive here. Poems in Pavese's *Lavorare stanca* bear telling echoes from *Spoon River Anthology*. “Do the boys and girls still go to Siever's / For cider after school, in late September?”, for example, resonates in Pavese's “Una generazione”: “Vanno ancora i ragazzi a giocare nei prati / dove giungono i corsi. E la notte è la stessa” (92). Here, again, are the markers of Pavese's atavistic vision. Repetition, then, which so characterizes a writer such as Gertrude Stein, was to Pavese much more than mere phonetic wordplay. It was “una figura,” says Remigi, “dell'essere e dell'esistere, di una monotonia in cui ontologia individuale e ineluttabile destino coincidono” (144). Deliberate repetition also characterizes much of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. When Pavese translated this novel—Remigi dedicates a revealing, richly detailed analysis to this translation—he showed an acute awareness of the significance of this feature; he even added a few repetitions of his own. In this novel, says Remigi, and especially in the dialogue, repetitions are expressive of the “mi-

raggio-utopia della fattoria coi conigli in cui l'idiozia che deforma la percezione della realtà del personaggio si bea" (184).

Remigi's frequent use of the word "monotonia," which also appears in her subtitle, is a deliberate echo of an observation made by Pavese in *Letteratura americana*. Every genuine writer, he said, is "splendidamente monotono," in that every page will bear the writer's stamp, lending a certain sameness to the most diverse material. This stamp—a recurring image or situation, a recurring turn of phrase—is an expression of the underlying meaning of the surfaces of the writer's world, in which all concrete objects have a natural symbolic value, capable of revealing the force and shape of human destiny. Towards the end of his life, Pavese would find this notion illuminated and confirmed in F.O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance*. Guided by Matthiessen's sharp gaze, says Remigi, Pavese descended into the "tenebrosi abissi dell'anima puritana," a literary journey that awakened the darkest corners of his being: "la sensibilità vulnerabile e spigolosa, la costrizione volontaristica, il senso dello scacco dinanzi a un destino implacabile, l'anelito religioso – di una religiosità laica, s'intende, gravida d'assoluto e di trascendenza" (165-66).

CARMINE G. DI BIASE
Jacksonville State University

Italo Calvino. *Italo Calvino: Letters, 1941-1985*. Ed. Michael Wood, trans. Martin McLaughlin. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013. Pp. 640. ISBN 9780691139456. \$39.50.

Michael Wood's *Italo Calvino Letters, 1941-1985* is a selection of six hundred and fifty letters from Calvino's life that document and demonstrate how Calvino was perhaps the most important Italian voice of the twentieth-century. The letters trace Calvino's life from his college days in Turin to his final years in Rome and Paris. The selected letters were derived from Luca Baranelli's influential text *Italo Calvino, Lettere 1940-1985* (Milan: Mondadori, 2000). Martin McLaughlin translated the letters to an English that retains the clarity and tone of the original Calvino letters to give the reader an accurate representation of literary culture of the second half of the twentieth-century. My review will contend that Wood intended to preserve a Calvino who was less Italian and more international in scope.

A youthful Italo Calvino wrote to his close friend Eugenio Scalfari on 7 March 1942. In his letter, Calvino expressed how he enjoyed writing letters: "A fine thing it is to have a distant friend who writes long letters full of drivel and to be able to reply to him with equally lengthy letters full of drivel; fine not because I like to plunge into captious polemics nor because I enjoy getting certain ideas into the head of some idiot from the Urbe, but because writing long letters to friends means having a moral excuse for not studying" (3).

Although Calvino's tone of voice seemed sarcastic by using words like "drivel" and explaining his drive to write letters as "a moral excuse for not studying", I argue that he truly enjoyed composing letters to close friends. Calvino used tone to am-