(«vezzeggiativi»), si costruisce un bell'insieme di colloquiale e ricercato che ben riproduce lo stile di Benzioni.

Un equivoco si presenta invece nella ripresa di Sereni nel titolo *Basta con le botte, basta All'aperto*, dove «All'aperto» è interpretato dai traduttori come un invito, mentre nell'incipit della lirica di Sereni si tratta di un avverbio di luogo (seguito da «per tutto un pomeriggio/ ci siamo malmenati»).

La scelta del testo a fronte è un elemento che rende questo volume particolarmente prezioso, consentendo al lettore di muoversi avanti e indietro fra le liriche originali e la loro resa in inglese, che permette di esplorarne i contenuti nelle loro implicazioni.

ELENA FUMI

Independent Scholar

Serenella Iovino. *Ecocriticism and Italy. Ecology, Resistance, and Liberation*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016. Pp. 183. ISBN 9781472471656.

Serenella Iovino's lively and often dazzling new book, *Ecocriticism and Italy*, moves in two complementary directions: by one path it introduces specific examples of the "Italian case" to the wider world of English-language Ecocriticism (and more generally to Environmental Humanities), while in the opposite direction it applies global ecocritical theory to four Italian eco-disasters. At the same time, the book ambitiously employs the tools of critical hermeneutics in a visionary campaign of sociopolitical activism. Iovino's declared goal is nothing less than liberation. As she puts it, through "a strategy of resistance and liberation" (11), her ecocriticism aspires "to intervene, to interfere, to be part of something that changes" (5). Key aspects of this strategy are the principle that a landscape, including not only geography and geology but also its layers of history, is as much a text as any other cultural production, and is subject to interpretation as such; and the practice of narrative research, in which the writer and her own experience become active agents within the text itself. For Iovino, "ecocriticism becomes a device to delve into the world's own eloquence" (48–90). Thus her concise but stunningly broad-ranging treatise moves back and forth, without prejudice, between literary, art, and cultural criticism, journalism, historiography, diary, memoir, and manifesto.

The study consists of four 30–40 page chapters, each devoted to an urgent eco-social issue with deep historical roots:

- 1) the cognitively and ecologically polluted city of Naples;
- 2) the perpetually decaying island city of Venice, and Porto Marghera, the petrochemical manufacturing zone on the bordering mainland, whose toxic fumes bestowed prosperity even as they poisoned generations of industrial workers;
- 3) three Italian earthquakes, in Irpinia (1980, Campania), Belice (1968, Sicily), and L'Aquila (2009, Abruzzo), in each of which a natural disaster transmogrified into an ongoing human catastrophe, largely due to political corruption so inveterate as to seem part of the natural air;
- 4) the Piedmont region, where peasant traditions, good and bad, have struggled to survive the industrial booms and busts of mining and asbestos, and now risk cultural oblivion; with a thin reed of promise offered, in the author's hopeful view, by the slow food revolution.

The chapter on the bodies of Naples is organized around the concept of porosity, a quality rhapsodized by Walter Benjamin during visits there in the 1920s. Iovino expands the concept to embrace Naples from virtually every imaginable perspective: the porosity of Naples is described as spatiotemporal, telluric, material, semiotic, transcorporeal, metabolic, geochoreographic, cognitive, and discursive. Her analysis joins the city's unstable geology to literary tradition, ranging from Lucretius to Deleuze and Saviano, with an extended treatment of Curzio Malaparte's *La pelle*, which "testifies to the entanglements of politics, violence, illness, moral discourses, and survival struggles in a city whose rich and glorious past seems to be turned into damnation." (30). Embodying the multidirectional model of porosity, the theoretical web of the chapter references ancient and eighteenth-century sculpture, Goethe, Joseph Wright of Darby, Leibniz (through Deleuze), Vesuvius, Pompeii, pyroclastic flow, food consumption, German philosophy, French art, the ecomafia, illegal dumping, recent photography that blends art with journalism, and the author's own memories of her childhood in Torre Annunziata.

Chapter Two applies a similarly inclusive perspective to Venice, threading together descriptions of the city's past and ongoing environmental crises with references to Calvino, Zanzotto, Borges, Goethe, the Futurists, and Marco Paolini's theatre and video work on Venice and Vajont, with a substantive exploration of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, read through an ecocritical lens. Attention focuses briefly on the scandals of the MOSE project, and then in more detail on

the cumulative tragedy of Porto Marghera, “a material *mise en abyme* of the whole pollution system, almost a metaphysical self-representation of toxicity” (59).

Chapter Three examines three Italian earthquakes and the misguided recovery efforts that transformed natural disasters into festering social wounds, oozing hopelessness and corruption. After each of these quakes, emergency regimes largely neglected local realities and handed over management to public and private agencies tainted by arrogant, utopian grandiosity or craven opportunism, often permeated by organized crime. Instead of solving problems, planners seized on the state of emergency to advance private interests: “Coupled with infiltrating networks of corruption and organized crime systems, the emergency regime legally permitted a chronic mutilation of territories and lands, inexorably smothered by an avalanche of concrete” (92). Iovino dedicates significant attention here to attempts by artists in various media to formulate aesthetic epiphanies that might exorcise the demons rising from the ruptured earth. The maximum expression of this is Alberto Burri’s massive, “apocalyptic” (119) *Cretto* in Gibellina, an immense, nearly 8000 square meter cement sculpture which covers the surface of the destroyed town of Belice, Sicily, flattened by an earthquake in 1968. For Iovino, the *Cretto* functions as a “restitution of semiotic capacity” to a silenced landscape.

The final chapter, “Slow”, is the most reflective and personal, centering on the motif of the austere wines of the Piedmont region, where the author lives. Here Iovino recovers an unjustly neglected writer, Nuto Revelli (1919–2004) whose books evoke the lost ways of life of the peasants of Cuneo. In the final pages, Iovino expresses hope that the Slow Food movement, headquartered in Piedmont, may represent the leading edge of a slow revolution that “tries to reconcile people and the land based on a more gentle scale of values and rhythms” (149).

Throughout, Iovino’s thought and critical methods are sophisticated and stimulating. It must be said, however, that beyond the first chapter, which was previously published in a shorter form, the rest of *Ecocriticism and Italy* would have benefited from the assistance of an editor willing to give this powerful author the editorial attention her work deserves. There are small and large errors and awkward usages, too many to list, which a proper editorial process could easily have corrected, allowing the author’s voice to come across in all its convincing eloquence. If a “slow revolution” (153) is on the way, let us hope it is one in which editors have time to properly edit the books they are responsible for.

THOMAS SIMPSON
Northwestern University