Chiara Mazzuchelli. *The Heart and the Island: A Critical Study of Sicilian American Literature.* Albany: SUNY Press, 2015. Pp. 210. ISBN 9781438459233.

In her critical study Chiara Mazzuchelli aims to open a dialogue about a new ethnic literature that she identifies as, "Sicilian-American Literature". Italy's unification in 1871 and the economic, cultural and linguistic differences among the various Italian regions are certainly the beginning of the process for identifying such literature, but the author of *The Heart and the Island* problematizes this obvious origin. Drawing on many Italian scholars and writers such as Gramsci and Sciascia, Mazzuchelli adds the fact that Sicily was and is a region very different from others in Italy. First, she points out to the rich culture Sicily inherited through the different colonization by Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs among others, which undoubtedly left monuments recognised for their beauty all around the world, together with its natural attractions. However, other negative factors such as political corruption, mafia and a weak economy make being Sicilian a crucial state for its people, who consider it either a negative or a positive influence in their life. Secondly, drawing from the field of scholarship of island studies, she points out that Sicilians share characteristics in their personality, which are common to islanders all over the world, without omitting the obvious differences. Indeed, according to Sciascia, as Mazzuchelli notes, Sicily's geographical position and all the colonization suffered, created *sicilitudine*, that way of being which is between the insecurity created by the island's limits and the privileges of the same condition: "Hence a sort of alienation and madness, which, in terms of psychology and customs, induces attitude of presumptuousness, haughtiness, and arrogance." (24)

Mazzuchelli points out that a similar phenomenon is found in writers of Sicilian descent in the United States. She, indeed, found characteristics of attachment to Sicily (also her place of origin), in many Italian-American writers. She named this peculiarity *sicilianamericanità*. The author clearly explains that Sicilian-American literature is the result of the process of identity construction, which was caused by a direct relationship with the island, in some case, but for most of them it was constructed through the parents, grandparents and up to the third or fourth generation. The discourse becomes very interesting when the author understands this ethnic literature as the expression of an identity, which cannot be defined in a specific canon, simply because it is through the very own relationship established with the same island that the different facets of *sicilianamericanità*

are manifested. Indeed, the author proves this multifaceted identity construction by analysing works of four different authors expressing their different link to Sicily through four different literary genres.

The question of identity (which includes ethnicity), and cultural identity is the crucial topic in this book and certainly one of the most complicated to analyse. As Steward Hall wrote, in the introduction to his book *Questions of Cultural Identity*, identity and cultural identity is a matter of being and becoming, since we are all the time constructing them. We come from somewhere, a history and/or a culture, which are in a constant change and redefinition, because influenced by the external world. Although Mazzucchelli does not make any reference to Hall's cultural identity theory she implicitly follows it. Through Ben Morreale's novels she underlines the novelist's *sicilianamericanità* through references to Sicily and its culture both in the island and in the USA. This double vision Mazzucchelli gives is very important, because it shifts the definition of identity not only on how one feels but also, as Hall stated, on how the others perceive a subject or a community. In this particular case Mazzucchelli also analyses how the other ethnic communities in the USA perceived Sicilians. The latter perspective is offered in a much stronger version through Jerre Mangione's memoirs. As the author of the *Heart and the Island* highlights, Mangione has always identified himself as an American of Sicilian descent and through such definition he views himself and many Sicilian American writers as "victims of the collective sense of shame they inherit as a historical and cultural legacy". (77) Mazzucchelli further complements her analysis of *sicilianamericanità* through Rose Romano's poems and Gioia Timpanelli's story telling. With Romano the critic poses two other questions about identity: racial difference and sexual orientation. This problematic lays on Romano's *sicilianamericanità* because Sicilians have been stigmatized for, among many other things, being, necessarily, olive skin coloured and, as it still is today, for not accepting homosexuality as a natural component of the society. Indeed, the Sicilian American community culturally inherited both social attitudes. Timpanelli's Sicilian story telling closes the circle, which the author of this interesting book of criticism has opened with the analysis of Morreale's novels. Timpanelli emphasizes the strength orality has in the Sicilian tradition and its influence on the Sicilian diaspora communities.

The Heart and the Island is a very stimulating book because beyond the four authors examined Mazzucchelli also mentions many others with whom she can engage in this prismatic dialogue. As Sartre posits in his famous book *What is literature?*, the creation of a literary work as the meeting, the conjunction, of the

writer and the reader, we can certainly say that Mazzucchelli is successful in identifying this new ethnic literature. Indeed, she invites us to engage in a reading not only through the lenses of Sicilian American literature, as part of Italian-American literary production, but also as a link between Italian and Italian-American studies. Furthermore, she implicitly suggests this book as a text for comparative study, even though this book is not and does not want to be a comparative work. Finally, Mazzucchelli has certainly been successful in opening this dialogue and in contributing to the expansion of the Italian-American literary field and we strongly believe *The Heart and the Island* can be inspiring for scholars in related disciplines.

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Stefano Magni, sous la direction de. *La réécriture de l'Histoire dans les romans de la postmodernité*. Aix-en-Provence: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2015. Pp. 452. ISBN 9782853999595.

Entrate prepotentemente nel dibattito critico-estetico agli arbori degli anni Ottanta del secolo scorso, le nozioni di postmodernità e postmodernismo non hanno mai cessato, nel corso di questi ultimi trentacinque anni, di suscitare, nell'ampio e variegato panorama culturale italiano, interventi, *querelles*, contributi critici e conferenze di vario genere. Impiegato per delineare la condizione antropologica e culturale conseguente alla crisi e all'asserito tramonto della modernità nelle società del cosiddetto "tardo capitalismo" (Jameson), il termine di postmodernità—posto spesso in contrasto con la *quête* del nuovo e con l'avanguardismo tipici dell'ideologia modernista—ha sovente rinviato, in ambito narrativo, a una disincantata rilettura della Storia, dando origine a una singolare e ironica estetica della citazione e del riuso del repertorio di forme del passato. Ed è proprio in questo contesto critico-letterario che *La réécriture de l'Histoire dans les romans de la postmodernité*, edito da Stefano Magni, va inteso e collocato. Il volume raccoglie infatti i temi principali dell'omonimo convegno svoltosi nel 2013 presso l'Università di Aix-Marseille, in occasione del quale un gruppo di ricercatori internazionali—perlopiù italiani e francesi—hanno dibattuto sui compositi percorsi intrapresi dai "romanzi della postmodernità" nei paesi europei di lingua romanza, sondando temi e autori