such a journey: connections between the ontological and the historical path must be explored, and awareness that we all belong to the same 'universal homeland' must provide an ethical point of reference for a constructive approach to the particulars of history" (192). This lesson is learnt through Maraini's experience of exile and wandering, where exile has nothing to do with nostalgia and alienation but rather has much to do with a notion of travel that completely discards the tourist visit: "It does not evoke melancholic nostalgia for lost origins, authenticity, and meaning; instead, it points to a place beyond «the frontiers of common knowledge» [...], where it is still possible to wander in search of «the common coordinates of humanity»" (194). Categorizing Maraini's view is not a simple task, and this is precisely Blum's point, since it is this characteristic that makes the writer so apt to reconfigure Western tradition and its relationship with the non-Western other.

In chapter six Blum turns to migration literature written in Italy and continues her discussion on female mobility by examining "its role in mediating the encounter between different values and cultures" (204). One of the main points of Blum's investigation in this chapter is related to the difference between integration and interaction. The clash between cultures in Italy is reflected in Blum's examination of some of the literature that has been produced by female native Italians, such as Maria Pace Ottieri, and immigrant writers, such as Khadj Beye. In relation to the rope of the journey, Blum believes that the age of migration in Italy offers a new way of viewing the postmodern impasse. With Ottieri she explores the possibility of mythical thinking in an attempt to grasp the whole and living it in daily life. From here she leads her reader to the concept of "writing as an act of intercultural mediation" (222) and the work of Edouard Glissant, who discusses errancy in terms of "a way of finding oneself «by taking up the problems of the other»" (223). Glissant's idea of "rhizomatic or nomadic thought" (223), provides Blum with a constructive way of viewing exile. Rather than discovery or conquest, we can consider the relationship with the other from a new perspective: "«Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what [he] call[s] the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other»" (223). In view of this, the task that Blum has taken upon herself is that of investigating how the plot of the conventional journey (male-centred) is being rewritten in the migration literature in Italy today. The fundamental role of women writers and women characters in migration literature goes from viewing feminine mobility as threatening a static notion of identity to "a central figure for constructive transformation" (233).

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Angela Bianchini. *Spiriti costretti. Racconti biografici*. Torino: Aragno, 2008. Pp. 288. ISBN 978-88-8419-322-3. €19.

Some twenty years ago, I happened across a book written in English that cleverly enticed me to travel through space and through time, pursuing the trails of some of my admired English authors. It was not quite a biography, not at all fiction, but

the personal journey of a twentieth-century writer following the adventures and misadventures of Shelley, Coleridge, R.L. Stevenson and Mary Wollstonecraft. Nor was I the only one captivated by this volume, written by Richard Holmes and entitled *Footsteps: Adventures of a Romantic Biographer* (Penguin, 1985). I know an academic couple who often gave this little tome as a gift to various friends and acquaintances. Between the covers of this book, I found spirits compelled by their talent, their curiosity, their sense of almost unbearable need to go beyond themselves. And I found an empathic scribe who captured their restlessness and translated it into inviting prose.

The brief volume under review here once again fills me with the same sense of expectation, the same desire to travel the miles and experience the vicissitudes of a new group of authors. Angela Bianchini has gathered other compelled, and compelling, spirits and has offered them to us in superb literary portraits.

Bianchini, who lives in Rome, is well known for her award winning works of fiction, for the articles published in contemporary Italian periodicals, as well as for her work with RAI. But beyond this, she is also an academic, having taught both in Italy and in the United States. Consequently, she possesses a fine eye for critical analysis and an innate sense of how her own contributions might enhance the efforts of the researcher who follows her.

Spiriti costretti constitutes a felicitous encounter of the academic and the personal. Bianchini's title attests to this; suggested to her by her sister who had remembered it from the eighth canto of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, Bianchini applies it to embrace those writers who had "il desiderio di ritrovare...quegli incanti, che, in definitiva, si portavano già dentro, in modi e paesi vari, a volte viaggiando, a volte consumandosi in viaggi immaginari attorno alla propria stanza oppure assistendo agli arrivi e partenze delle persone che più amavano" (8). She refers to the result of these peregrinations as perspectives in culture and biography. In this sense the book is an exercise in academic criticism. But Bianchini's personal empathy for her subjects reveals itself in her admission that she has undertaken her own fascinating forays into various, and at times, almost unknown archives. She has reopened the covers of long forgotten books. There, in the spirit of *critique génétique*, she has discovered the energy and the essence that makes of her subjects the compelled spirits that they are. And thus she becomes for them an interpreter.

The book is divided into four sections. The spirits who people the pages of each identify readily as Italophiles. In their lives they may have spoken English, French, Spanish or German but in their hearts there beats a sympathy with the many facets of Italy. In the first section, Bianchini offers glimpses into the comings and goings of Mrs. Trollope, Edith Wharton, Constance Fenimore Woolson, Isabel Stewart Gardner, the incomparable B.B. (Bernard Berenson), F. Marion Crawford and Vernon Lee. These are the Anglos who lived around or in Florence, Rome and Venice. In the second section, Bianchini focuses on the French: the artist Watelet, Belle de Tuyl (known as Zélide), George Sand and Colette. The section following includes the Spaniards: Zenobia Camprubí, Pedro Salinas, Jaime Salinas, Enrique de Rivas and María Teresa León. The fourth section introduces people whom Bianchini met: Natalia Murray Danesi (beloved Darlinghissima of

Janet Flanner), Iris Origo, Clotilde Marghieri and the linguist Leo Spitzer, whom Bianchini knew already when they were both at Johns Hopkins University, and also later in Rome.

What impresses most in this volume are the intimate details of the people portrayed. Bianchini's inimitable talent for making them live again allows us to watch them at their most human level, and prompts us to read their works to learn even more. They are both vulnerable and strong. They fail and try again. For example, we look forward to discovering for ourselves how the melancholia of the tragedy that defined the marriage of Edith to Teddy Wharton opened up new possibilities for her as a writer. In another chapter, we learn the life of Juan Ramón Jiménez through his love for and of his wife Zenobia. With the touching vignettes that paint their devotion to one another, we gain important insight into his poetry. He believed in "*amor y poesía/cada día*" (174). She made that possible for him as Bianchini's gifted reading of her diary shows. In one of the most painful chapters, Bianchini makes us feel the smarting of Fenimore Woolson's soul as she reads herself in the character of the unmarried and unattractive Tita Bordereau in Henry James' *The Aspern Papers*. James and she had shared a close friendship; his betrayal of her was uncalled for. When she died after a fall from a balcony, (it remains unknown whether by accident or suicide), Bianchini's description of the event delivers, in fewer than 40 words, a succinct summary not only of Fenimore Woolson herself, but also of her perfidious friend, Henry James. More importantly, Bianchini's words provide an echo of the psychological subtlety of James' style as well. Bianchini writes: "La trovarono, piccolo fardello umano, in una calle, due gondoloieri di passaggio. Suicidio o disgrazia, la sua morte fu il gesto più jamesiano di una vita che aveva tentato, invano, di conformarsi ai gusti del suo difficile amico" (59).

In her book, Bianchini delicately plays with the elements that in her subjects made up the practices of their everyday life, as Michel de Certeau would say; elements that eventually interwove themselves into the fabric of (mostly literary) cultural achievements. Bianchini is an expert and captivating storyteller. And while this brief work does not purport to be an academic study of the various eminent figures of the past which it depicts, it deserves to become a *livre de chevet*: delightful to read, well researched, engaging and insightful.

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Parati, Graziella. *Migration Italy: The Art of Talking Back in a Destination Culture*. Toronto-Buffalo-London: University of Toronto Press, 2005. Pp. 272, ISBN 0-8020-3924-3, \$55, €35.

Il libro della Parati si offre come un prezioso e utile saggio, ma direi anche un esempio di scrittura applicata a una vera, alta forma di divulgazione che non prescinde affatto un profondo rigore scientifico e critico. Prezioso perché il libro ritor-