In conclusione Laura Benedetti in questo suo studio multiculturale ci presenta un'ampia e ben documentata panoramica dello sviluppo del concetto di maternità e della visione della donna nella letteratura e nella società italiana del ventesimo secolo.

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Francesco Loriggio ed.. *The Last Effort of Dreams. Essays on the Poetry of Pier Giorgio di Cicco*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007. Pp. xvii + 207. ISBN 1-55458-019-6. \$65 (hard cover)

This is an important publication since it is the first monograph on Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, a book that, as the editor himself asserts, "in one version or another, by some individual or other, should have appeared years ago" (xiv). The volume comprises ten essays and an introduction by the editor, as well as a bibliography of works by and on Di Cicco. The contributors include fellow poets Mary di Michele, Robert Billings, Dennis Lee, and Albert F. Moritz, comparativists William Anselmi, William Boelhower, and Francesco Loriggio, Italianist Vera Golini, and philosophy professor Yaroslav Senyshyn. This disparate group of accomplished readers and critics brings to Di Cicco's texts a variety of approaches that range from the biographical and the historiographic to the formalist and philosophical, thereby revealing the complexity of the Italian-Canadian poet's work and its place in the context of contemporary Canadian poetry.

Some of the contributions were previously published between 1986 and 2004. There is an interesting blend of biographical elements, informal conversations with Di Cicco, reflections on the writing career of this poet-turned-priest who, after a 15-year hiatus (1986–2001), resumed his poetic production, comments on the nature of poetry (his and that of other poets), and reconstructions of the Canadian literary scene at Harbourfront in Toronto in the 1973–1985 period, where Di Cicco came into contact with such Canadian literary figures as Margaret Atwood, Irving Layton, Gwendolin MacEwen, Al Purdy, and Joe Rosenblatt.

Through multiple perspectives on Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, the person and the poet, readers of *The Last Effort of Dreams* are treated to sophisticated and insightful interpretations of some of the author's major collections, published before and after his "vow of silence." These include *We Are the Light Turning* (1975), *The Tough Romance* (1979), *Flying Deeper into the Century* (1982), and *Virgin Science: Hunting Holistic Paradigms* (1986), as well as his more recent works, *Living in Paradise* (2001), *The Honeymoon Wilderness* (2002), and *Dark Time of Angels* (2003).

Francesco Loriggio, for example, considers the form and function of *Flying Deeper into the Century* as emblematic of "the collection with which Di Cicco's metaphysical poetry (or better, Di Cicco's grappling with metaphysics) officially

begins" (66). Loriggio goes on to identify an important issue, namely, that of the Italian-Canadian author's access to the English language as vehicle for literary expression, a point also noted by Mary di Michele who, in speaking of *The Tough Romance*, credits Di Cicco's poetry with "opening a space in English-language poetry for experiences and feelings born in Italy" (3). She credits him with having changed what she refers to as the "Canadian literature's landscape" (4). In this vein, Loriggio makes the point that, "Non-native speakers are under the injunction of upholding the code in its most pure, ready-made form, the guise that is okay for native speakers" (75). Loriggio also provides an important overview of the historical relationship between literature and religion, between the priest and the poet, finally reading Di Cicco's later works in the light of these observations. He sees the three volumes published between 2001 and 2003 as works that "heal the breach between the priest and the poet" (157).

In this category of chapters devoted to the examination of specific volumes of poetry are William Anselmi's fine reading of *Virgin Science* which, he maintains, "remains an unusual work within the panorama of Canadian Literature, poetry in particular" (97), as well as Vera Golini's reading of the same volume which for her "constituted a radical departure from Canadian Literature's traditional and mainstream modes of creative sensing, perceiving and publishing" (118).

The Last Effort of Dreams also offers synthetic but dense readings of individual poems as, for example, Boelhower's sensitive study of "The Man Called Beppino," and "Remembering Baltimore, Arezzo," alongside Robert Billing's interview with Di Cicco, a dialogue that brings out the poet's familiarity with Cartesian philosophy and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, both informing much of his lyrical discourse. In addition, several of the contributors identify poets who have influenced Di Cicco or who have been influenced by him. Noteworthy is Albert F. Moritz's observation concerning the dual cultural background at work, as he points out Di Cicco's "transformed inheritance from Layton as well as the D'Annunzian strain of Italian modernism" (12).

The critical evaluations are, on the whole, balanced and revealing in that several of the authors refuse to ignore or overlook what they consider to be limitations in Di Cicco's verses. For example, Dennis Lee, a well-established Canadian poet himself, identifies some of the flaws he perceives in *Virgin Science* in these terms: "This is perhaps not the place to square off with him [Di Cicco] over the airless jargon and layman's hubris that often result, nor to pummel his souped-up cranium for its too- clever-by-halfness" (33). Lee, however, is quick to qualify this apparently uncomplimentary remark by adding that "Di Cicco is reaching for modes of thought befitting the 'post-reductionist mind,' seeking a way beyond the dualisms that bedevil the West" (34).

The volume also contains a substantial bibliography compiled by Vera Golini who makes clear that "It is the first, and certainly will not be the last, comprehensive collection of original and critical materials by and on the works of Pier Giorgio Di Cicco" (186). This remark acts as a bookend, matching as it does Loriggio's opening statement to the effect that *The Last Effort of Dreams* is a monographic study that should have been produced long ago. The two assertions, how-

ever, in combination with some characterizations of the place of Di Cicco's poetry within the canon of Canadian literature, and with the information contained in the bibliography, do point to something of an issue, if not a problem. In other words, given the fact that, as Dennis Lee tells us, between 1975 and 1986 Di Cicco "published ten books and three chapbooks [...] had appeared in over 200 magazines internationally, and given more than 300 readings and lectures" (23), given that Vera Golini describes Di Cicco as a "unique voice in our national literature" (108), while Yaroslav Senyshyn calls him a "Canadian giant of poetry" (145), and further given that Dennis Lee contends that "there is nothing in our literature to match the sinewy lyric explosion, with its pyrotechnics, its philosophical edge, and its undertow of heartbreak" (30), it would be reasonable to expect many entries by scholars from departments of Canadian literature and English literature in the bibliography, which is not the case. As indicated in the opening paragraph of this review, the contributors to the volume are either Italianists or comparativists. The relative silence on the part of other Canadianists must say something either about the ultimate quality of the poetry of Di Cicco or about the place of Italian-Canadian writing in the context of Canadian literature. It is hoped that this fine publication will act as a catalyst for a broader scholarly interest in the work of an important voice in Canadian poetry.

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Gino Tellini. *The Invention of Modern Italian Literature: Strategies of Creative Imagination*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. Pp. xi, 169. ISBN 978-0-8020-9186-4. \$27.95

In un articolo apparso su *Il Messaggero.it* del 25 settembre 2005, Filippo La Porta richiamava l'attenzione del lettore sulla "postmodernità" degli scrittori italiani degli ultimi due secoli. L'articolo era infatti intitolato: "Noi italiani, così postmoderni". Lo spunto partiva da un'osservazione di Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "buon conoscitore del nostro paese," il quale sosteneva che "gli italiani sono 'postmoderni' da sempre, senza mai avere attraversato il moderno, proprio perché tendono a restare in superficie e a fare 'spettacolo' dell'esistenza". Di suo La Porta aggiungeva che, salvo alcune importanti eccezioni (Verga, Svevo, Pirandello), "al posto del romanzo abbiamo avuto il melodramma, al posto della realtà la sua messinscena" e che "siamo diventati i 'giapponesi' della letteratura mondiale: fabbrichiamo copie spesso eccellenti di autori stranieri" per poi concludere che "gli scrittori italiani raccontano conflitti e problemi sempre un po' di sbieco, e cioè aggirandoli, imbrigliandoli dentro il linguaggio, rimuovendo i dilemmi morali (o esagerandoli e dunque facendone spettacolo)" (1).

Se mi sono dilungato nel paragrafo precedente è perché credo possibile cogliere dei nessi — sia pure alla lontana e magari di segno opposto, ma sicuramente illuminanti — tra *The Invention of Modern Italian Literature* di Gino Tellini