Il volume chiude con le note biografiche sugli autori (423-431), Ringraziamenti (433-436), la lista di fonti delle Illustrazioni fotografiche (437) e con Index nominum (439-446).

Frutto di una collaborazione internazionale, la pubblicazione ha goduto di appoggi finanziari, tecnici e altri da parte non solo degli individui attivi nelle istituzioni accademiche tedesche, svizzere, statunitensi, ma anche da parte di individui che rappresentano istituzioni quali Unione Siciliana Emigrati e Famiglie, la casa editrice Sellerio, l'Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Amburgo. Questo è un bellissimo esempio di come, sotto una guida paziente, sagace e lungimirante della curatrice (docente all'Università di Brema, vincitrice del XXXIV Premio Internazionale Flaiano l'8 luglio del 2007, autrice di numerosissimi libri e articoli), in collaborazione con individui ed enti volenterosi possa nascere una pubblicazione accademicamente valida.

Mai come in questo caso è vera la triste constatazione che la recensione non può che dare un resoconto superficiale del libro recensito. Certo, i contributi sono di livello eterogeneo dal punto di vista dei riferimenti bibliografici critici (ci sono saggi con due o tre pagine di riferimenti bibliografici, e altri completamente privi di questi). Inoltre, alcuni temi-base della storia siciliana guardata dal punto di vista delle scienze sociali non hanno trovato spazio nella pubblicazione, quali la mafia, il retroscena politico-economico-sociale di alcuni avvenimenti chiave, la poesia dialettale, ecc. Viene espresso qui il desiderio che Reichardt possa trovare il modo di aggiungere questi temi in una futura pubblicazione che oltrepassi il mondo letterario, importantissimo, ma non unico.

Per la sua ampiezza, per il suo rigore scientifico, per gli accostamenti pieni di spunti originali, per il contenuto focalizzato sulla Sicilia ma mai miope, questo libro costituisce una vera miniera di materiale che dovrà essere consultato da chiunque si accinga a capire la Sicilia.

JANA VIZMULLER-ZOCCO
York University

Makolkin, Anna. *A History of Odessa, the Last Italian Black Sea Colony*. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellon Press, 2004. Pp. Viii, 270, 20 ill. ISBN 0-7734-6272-4. US. \$119.95.

Much has been written about the Italian contribution to Russian culture during the late medieval and early modern periods. Anna Makolkin, however, argues in her *A History of Odessa* that in nineteenth-century Odessa, Italian culture continued to exert a significant influence and played a foundational role in making the Black Sea port a unique, European outpost in a decidedly backward Russia. She further contends that this contribution has been intentionally ignored, covered up and distorted by nationalist historians intent on underlining the fundamentally native, Russian and Ukrainian character of the city's history.

The book is based on extensive archival research; indeed, this is one of its primary strengths. The author has accessed many unknown records drawn from

archives in both Ukraine and Italy, and has excavated fascinating details of a story which has been all but forgotten. The text is organized into ten chapters: the first is a historiographical survey meant to show what the author believes is the ample evidence of wilful "historical amnesia" by both Russian and Anglo-American scholars of the existence and significance of the Italian community in Odessa. She contends that scholars have at best ignored, at worst consciously purged, this tale in the service of nationalist myth-making.

Subsequent chapters discuss the role of a Neapolitan family of Spanish extraction, the de Ribas, in the establishment of the city in 1794 under the direction of Catherine the Great; the creation of the free port of Odessa and the key role of Italian merchants in its earliest decades; the importance of Italian as the port's *lingua franca* and its enduring presence in the local dialect; and a profile of the types of individuals and groups who emigrated from Italy to Odessa. Makolkin concludes her survey with a discussion of several cases of Italian immigrants clashing with local society and officialdom; growing discrimination against Italians and other immigrant groups by Russian authorities; and the mysterious murder of the Italian vice-consul of Odessa, Silvio Cozzio, in 1927.

The bulk of the book, and its most solid chapters, examine the Italian contribution to the cityscape and cultural life of Odessa. Italian architects and artists played an important role in the construction of the old centre of Odessa, and borrowed liberally from classic Italian models in creating what the author describes as the "Italian Face" of Odessa. The affection of Odessa's Italian community for theatre and opera resulted in a vibrant musical and theatre scene. Popular works of Italian opera were regularly staged in Odessa, and Italian opera singers made frequent visits to the city throughout the nineteenth century. Similarly, Odessa attracted numerous Italian musicians and actors, including Eleonora Duse. Makolkin argues that this strong Italian presence is responsible for Odessa's unique and vibrant character within a much more staid, modern Ukraine.

This work is clearly one of passion: the author spent her formative years in Odessa and is fascinated with the diverse culture of the city. She is also a devoted Italophile who enthusiastically catalogues the many Italian contributions to Odessan culture. In the end, however, while *A History of Odessa* provides a long list that clearly demonstrates the influences of all things Italian on the city, it is a frustrating work that is located somewhere at the intersection between history, philosophy and polemic.

The author is not a trained historian, and while this certainly does not disqualify her from writing history, there is throughout an overall ahistoric quality to the book. Rather than dealing in historical specificity supported by documentary evidence, Makolkin tends to write in broad generalizations about ethnicity and national identity, culture, human nature and history. Her generalizations are often presented as incontrovertible and commonsensical, but are rarely supported by compelling evidence.

This is evident in one of the most problematic aspects of this book, the simplistic understanding of culture and cultural interaction that is at its core. For the author, cultures are reified objects which exist in isolation and preserve their pri-

mordial qualities. When cultures engage, there is not a process of dialogue, of adaptation and accommodation, rather one culture conquers, colonizes, and ultimately civilizes or destroys another. Russia is barbaric and backward, in Makolkin's estimation, and Italians bring it culture and civilization, just as they had previously done throughout Europe. Their civilizing influence makes Odessa (which the author genders as a woman) a beacon of light and hope in the benighted and backward steppes of Asia. Despite the destructive and nationalistic forces let loose under Russia and the Soviet Union, Odessa was able to survive unaltered and preserve "her" separateness and unique identity.

Makolkin also ignores the important contributions of the Spanish, French and other groups in the evolution of nineteenth-century Odessa. And she overestimates the degree to which the Italian role in Odessa has been transgressed. While I am unfamiliar with Russian and Ukrainian literature, the most complete history of Odessa in English, Patricia Herlihy's *Odessa: A History*, does devote space to the Italian presence and influence in the nineteenth-century, and covers many of the same topics as Makolkin does, though admittedly in much less detail.

Finally, the book also suffers from an unfinished quality, which is often an unfortunate characteristic of books published by The Edwin Mellen Press. There is an inconsistent and confusing use of punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and bolding and italics throughout that adheres to no identifiable stylistic rule. The prose lacks clarity and specificity, and is often stilted and difficult to penetrate. Also curious is the author's choice of parenthetical references over the endnotes or footnotes more common to historical writing. There are very few notes, and those that do exist are cursory and vague. Given the interesting and unexplored character of the documents upon which the book is based, footnotes would have helped convey a clearer sense of the rich archival sources. In the end, I expect that students of Italian and Russian history, as well as scholars of emigration, may find bits and pieces of interest to them in this book, and the admirable archival work will suggest new avenues of research. I expect, however, that most readers will come away from this book, as I did, frustrated by its oversimplifications and its idiosyncrasies.

ERIC DURSTELER

Brigham Young University

Borra, Antonello and Cristina Pausini. *Italian Through Film: The Classics*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007. Pp xi, 213. ISBN 0-300-10952-0. US\$ 25.

This volume comes as the second in a series of pedagogical tools for students of Italian language and culture after the success of the first on contemporary film published by the same press. The book is a well laid out and practical tool for use in the second language classroom and in culture-based courses. A brief Introduction explains the scope: Italian cinema from 1945 to 1981; the book is "conceived with a chronological, non-thematic approach" (ix). It presents fifteen