Arrigo Petacco. *A Tragedy Revealed: The Story of the Italian Population from Istria, Dalmatia, and Venezia-Giulia, 1943-1956*. Trans. Konrad Eisenbichler. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005. Pp. xiv, 155. Ill., maps. ISBN 0-8020-3921-9

In one of the largely forgotten chapters of twentieth-century European history, Tito's communist soldiers systematically eradicated Italian populations from the Italian coastal cities of Dalmatia, Istria, and Venezia-Giulia during and after WWII. The strategy was simple: kill and displace as many Italians as possible, regardless of their political affiliation. The geo-political intent of this slaughter was twofold. In the first place, a severely diminished Italian population was less likely to pose physical resistance to Tito's plan to import Slavs from the Balkan interior and repopulate the cities. In the second place, once the Allies arrived, it would appear as if the region were already constituted by Slavic peoples and this would make the Allies more willing to concede the Italian territory to Tito's pan-Slavic national project, Yugoslavia. The plan worked extremely well; not only did Tito obtain the region from confused Allied negotiators (though not his coveted Trieste), but he also succeeded in eventually forcing 350,000 of its Italian residents into exile. As a result, the burden of exilic memory was displaced and carried by the refugee Italians (known as the Giuliano-Dalmati, for their regional Julian and Dalmatian affiliation).

Polarized by Cold War ideological frameworks, European (and, it should be noted, North American) intellectuals largely avoided the subject. Contemporary Italian historians and journalists have begun over the past decade to recover that memory. The recovery has disturbed the Cold War polarities that shaped right and left wing allegiances to respective nationalist and internationalist causes. On its surface, the recovery of that historical memory – through both popular forms such as journalism, eyewitness accounts, and biography or academic disciplines such as ethnography and history – would seem a welcome challenge to the stubborn parameters that for fifty years prevented any honest intellectual discussion of Italy's troubled eastern border with Yugoslavia and the region's violent fragmentation. A host of new challenges, however, have been transformed from the previous amnesia into a more tangible, and perhaps problematic, discourse.

Arrigo Petacco's 1999 book was a landmark event in Italy. It was the first commercially successful work of narrative historiography to contend with the subject of Istro-Venetian and Dalmatian exile. It sparked a series of debates that have inflected Italian popular culture, academia, and political debate to this day. Petacco's book has now been published in 2005 in a welcome English translation by Professor Konrad Eisenbichler with the title *A Tragedy Revealed: The Story of Italians from Istria, Dalmatia, and Venezia-Giulia, 1943-1956*. The book embodies in many ways the challenge presented by this subject to contemporary Italian historiography and political debate; in other, more important ways, it fails to grasp the problem. Despite its failings, the book should forever alter the parameters of how students of Italian history regard their subject.

Petacco's book offers a narrative history in a short, concise volume that is rich

with detail. Its mission is both to introduce the reader to a long-ignored history and also to re-draw its boundaries. It begins, tellingly, with a map of the Italian 1924 border and its later, post-WWII partition in which the Allies rolled the border back to its current station just south of Trieste. The book then cuts to British, American, and Yugoslav surveyors painfully re-drawing the later boundary through private Italian property. They divide farms, homes, and even cemeteries between the two nations as the Italian citizens, suddenly exiled from their farms and homes, are forced to abandon their lands.

The book then proceeds from its dramatic beginning to map the geo-political history of the region. It is here that Petacco first errs, and never recovers. In recounting the geo-political history of the region the author loses sight entirely of its dramatic protagonist: the region's people. While Petacco works efficiently through an immense tangle of names, dates, and events, the result is that he tries to please too many readers. No fact is any more or less important than any other, and dozens of important questions are raised only to be quickly dropped. Tragedy requires, if anything, a consistent and embattled protagonist. For example, Petacco notes in passing at several points that the Anglo-French desire to punish Italy after the First and Second World Wars forced the Allies to concede too much Italian land to Communist Yugoslavia. If this is so, then why was the Anglo-French lobby stronger than the American desire to minimize Communist territorial gains? And did the Anglo-French solution fuel anti-American Yugoslav sentiment, which was partly expressed in the brutal reprisals against the region's Italians? The opening vignette of the three surveyors, with the Americans playing the most sympathetic role, would suggest such a connection. Yet, while the book's first two sections are a competent primer on the region's history, they fail to provide the necessary protagonists and instead sacrifice the narrative to blurry, confused agonists.

It is only with the third section that the tragic protagonists clearly emerge, and even then only briefly. Using the evacuation of the ancient Roman port-city of Pola as a premise, Petacco describes how the Giuliano-Dalmati were caught between and increasingly victimized by a host of conflicting geo-political forces. On one side, Tito and Stalin demanded territory while murdering, torturing, and ultimately driving the region's inhabitants into exile. On another side, the British and Americans debated possible boundaries in light of regretted promises made to Tito during the war. And finally there is the Italian political scene, which was perhaps most despicable of all (yet handled gently by Petacco), in which Italian Communists and Catholics alike turned their backs on the disastrous plight of their fellow citizens.

To say that Petacco's version of that narrative is dynamic and littered with important challenges to students of Italian history would itself be a tragic understatement; in this first English translation of a book on the subject, it stands as a much needed corrective to the worn stories of post-WWII Italian neo-realism or *la dolce vita* that followed. But in breaking new ground, so to speak, Petacco's book also suffers from a tendency to repeat half-baked discourses of memory, trauma, and subjectivity. This rhetoric presents the exile from the Istro-Venetian and Dalmatian territories as simultaneous with and a precursor to other, similar narra-

tives. The Holocaust, the ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, and even the Latin American *desaparecidos* are invoked along the way (not to mention hints of the author's own *pentitismo*). The narrative thus obscures regional specificities while suggesting important supra-regional connections to a protracted war against civilian populations. The connections remain suggestively mentioned rather than thoroughly conceived.

Eisenbichler's thoughtful preface to the translation offers both a necessary contextual account of Petacco's book and an objective evaluation of its worth. As he points out, Petacco's is a "narrative" rather than a "scholarly" work; as such it is perhaps best to regard it as an invitation to further study. Eisenbichler's rendering of Petacco's journalistic Italian style is elegant and concise; he has in fact already won the prestigious "Premio Letterario Internazionale Umberto Saba" (2005) offered by the Associazione Culturale Altamarea (Trieste), the University of Trieste, and the P.E.N. Club (Trieste branch) for his translation.

The slaughter, symbolic destruction, and disintegration of Italians at the hands of Tito's soldiers invoke important and still unaddressed questions of human rights and restitution for the region's exiled Italians. Yet, the precarious and nebulous discourse of trauma that underlies Petacco's book often obscures the prospects of a rigorous historical, or more precisely, genealogical investigation of the matter that does not bury the region's population, yet again, in geo-political detail. Historians of Italian history, Italian immigration, and twentieth-century Europe will nonetheless benefit greatly from Petacco's book. It is a welcome challenge, a worthy polemic, and a reevaluation of how academics and lay readers alike think of modern Italy. Lay readers in particular will be shocked and surprised to learn how Italy, a nation admired for its republican humanism, shamefully left hundreds of thousands of its citizens at the mercy of a brutal ideologue such as Tito, without so much as a passport to protect them. In this respect, Petacco's book fulfills the emotive promise of all tragedy: it makes the reader feel the shame and loss of an exile that has been long ignored, until now.

HENRY VEGGIAN

Montclair State University

La cultura rumena tra l'Occidente e l'Oriente: gli umanesimi greco-bizantino, latino e slavo. Convegno internazionale di studi. Aula Magna dell'Università "A.I. Cuza", Jassi, Romania, 21-22 maggio 2004. Treviso: Fondazione Cassamarca, 2004. Pp. 306 no ISBN, n.p.

Il libro *La cultura rumena tra l'Occidente e l'Oriente: gli umanesimi greco-bizantino, latino e slavo* raccoglie gli Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi organizzato e promosso dall'Università "A.I. Cuza" di Jassi, Romania, 21-22 maggio 2004. È concepito come una miscellanea di 28 interventi in cui i relatori si prefigurano il compito, non poco ambizioso, di caratterizzare ed analizzare l'ambiente umanista rumeno. Questo è, infatti, l'itinerario culturale specifico sul quale gli studiosi presenti al convegno hanno fatto convergere l'interesse e di cui sono testimonianze