come cagne o desiderose di fuga come l'allodola, o ancora seducenti come sirene, convivono con donne insidiose e astute come la volpe, la serpe e la tigre. Il capitolo successivo mostra l'uso degli animali come strumenti di vendetta, traendo esempi soprattutto dalle favole filosofiche e dai racconti legati al mondo primitivo e provinciale. Più interessanti sono il sesto e il settimo capitolo, dedicati all'analisi delle immagini di animali usate dallo scrittore per suggerire rispettivamente l'idea della morte e del tempo—entrambi motivi fondamentali della poetica pirandelliana. Tra i diversi animali che fungono da metafore della morte, emerge per la sua complessità la figura della mosca. Immagine ricorrente nella narrativa di Pirandello, l'insetto domestico che impercettibilmente si avvicina "tocca e passa" (98), è per Zangrilli il simbolo del germe di morte che la vita contiene in sé. Per quanto concerne le figurazioni del tempo, accanto agli animali che scandiscono il ritmo ciclico delle stagioni e degli amori, o a quelli che simboleggiano la caducità della vita e l'atemporalità del male, compaiono figure mitico-archetipiche, come l'araba fenice, alla quale vengono assimilati i personaggi che risorgono dalle proprie rovine esistenziali, e la tartaruga che nel suo ostinato tentativo di salire un gradino per poi ricaderne ripropone in chiave zoologica il mito di Sisifo.

Nelle conclusioni, piuttosto che offrire una sintesi critica, Zangrilli ripropone un'ulteriore serie di figure animali, attraverso le quali illustra la varietà dello zoo di Pirandello, senza peraltro approfondirne i significati. Suggella il volume un'essenziale bibliografia di opere critiche e letterarie sugli animali, che insieme all'agevole apparato di note che correda ciascun capitolo, costituisce un utile strumento di ricerca sia per coloro che operano nell'ambito degli studi pirandelliani che per coloro che si dedicano, o intendano dedicarsi, allo studio dei bestiari letterari negli autori occidentali.

Nel suo complesso, il saggio di Zangrilli è un lavoro indubbiamente informativo e analitico, in grado di offrire un'idea chiara delle funzioni e dei significati molteplici che gli animali assumono nel mondo narrativo di Pirandello. Per la sua brevità (l'analisi occupa appena 147 pagine), esso non aspira certamente ad essere esaustivo, tuttavia, sia lo studioso che il semplice lettore rimangono stupiti dalla vasta gamma di esempi proposta dall'autore. Se da un lato ciò non fa che confermare il rigore analitico che contrassegna positivamente questo "bestiario," dall'altro evidenzia il limite di un saggio che in più di un'occasione rischia di esaurire la forza del proprio discorso critico nella mera elencazione descrittiva.

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Renato Barilli. *Dal Boccaccio al Verga. La narrativa italiana in età moderna*. Milano: Bompiani, 2003. Pp. 404. ISBN 99-452-5484-4. Euro 20.

With his usual verve, Renato Barilli, a scholar and literary critic known for his outstanding work in the area of "critica militante," and especially on the historical avantgarde and the neoavantgarde, has written a book in which he shapes a mini-history of prose narrative, which is today the most popular and widespread liter-

ary genre. Beginning with the Italian "father" of prose fiction, Boccaccio, Barilli weaves a fascinating tapestry of prose texts that include works by early modern masters, such as Pulci, Poliziano, Boiardo, Ariosto, Aretino, Tasso, and many others, followed by analyses of Baroque texts by Marino, Della Valle, Tassoni, and Croce, then by Settecento authors Goldoni, Gozzi, and Casanova, and on to Ottocento voices of note, such as Alfieri, Manzoni, selected *Scapigliati*, Deledda, and Verga. Having already published so many essential critical pieces on post-veristic writers of prose fiction, such as D'Annunzio, Svevo, Pirandello, and authors of more recent times, Barilli decided that it was appropriate to end his little history of Italian narrative with the great Sicilian writer, although at least this reader was left thirsting for more from this astute critic on the rich and complex narrative tradition that has been constructed over the last one hundred and more years since the master of *verismo* wrote his masterworks. Postmodern narrative, which can and does include the visual realm of cinema and television serials, as well as the mixed-genre modes of the anti-novel, travel writing, and so on, will perhaps be the subject for Barilli of a subsequent study of Italian narrative *in età post-moderna*. We can only hope so.

This is a highly readable book, more in the style and tone of an essay than in the less personal didactic style that often characterizes literary histories. It is also, in some sense, a daring book, in that it unabashedly includes narrative poetry, theatrical works, and autobiographical writings in its consideration of "prose" narratives, thus escaping a narrow conception of what "la narrativa italiana in età moderna" in fact is. Barilli convincingly justifies his broad definition of narrative by returning to Aristotelian concepts as expounded in the *Poetics*, a text that remains, in Barilli's view, valid in its basic approach to genre issues, if with the obvious adjustments demanded by the great temporal distance that separates *il maestro di color che sanno* from the developments in narrative forms in the modern period. Barilli defines the *età moderna* of his subtitle as comprising the Quattrocento through the end of the Settecento, although he also analyses works of the Ottocento, which was the period when there is "un trionfo definitivo dello spirito constatativo, rappresentativo insito nella Galassia Gutenberg. Ovvero, gran parte dell'Ottocento è da considerarsi ancora pienamente 'moderno,' e anzi, esso risulta largamente dedicato alle varie imprese naturaliste-veriste, tutte ligie a quello spirito" (16). The "che cosa" of this book is thus described, and Barilli continues in his lucid introduction by next explaining the "come." Rather than attempting a full history of narrative in the modern period, Barilli admits to what he calls "un onorevole compromesso" that will concentrate on the great voices, the "maggiori," while nonetheless not ignoring the "comprimari," in a way analogous to "un efficiente sistema ferroviario" that gives precedence to the urban centers while allowing access to all of the other surrounding locales (17). Moreover, Barilli wishes to include analyses not only of the best known masterworks of each author included, but also of some "minor" works, so as not to "immobilizzare il grande autore in un'immagine fissa e risaputa di sé, abbastanza costante nei secoli" (18). Lastly, in his explanation of the shape and goals of this "opera economica," Barilli discusses for whom it is being written. In terms of the commonly used categories,

we could say that he intends the book both for academic and general readerships; given the prevalence of the narrative genre in our era, Barilli argues that students of narrative will gain something in reading a study that is not the usual history of prose narrative, while people who simply read a good deal of narrative texts will also presumably be interested in his approach, which seeks to revivify texts from the tradition, in ways that will speak to our interests and orientations today. With this thorough and enticing introduction Barilli stimulates high expectations, which are met in the subsequent chapters.

Barilli seeks to read the texts in question as if they had just been published, and speak to our current interests, emotions, and anxieties. However, he does not wish to cancel out the very different historical contexts in which they were written, nor to ignore the meanings attributed to these works both within their own times and within the established literary tradition as it has developed over the last many centuries. Among the preoccupations that emerge as dominant in Barilli's analyses there are, not surprisingly, love, death, self-fashioning, and the individual's place and role within the social collectivity. In fact, there is a great emphasis on the feminine sphere, and on female characters who have served as motive and motif in so many of the great narrative works of the last several centuries. From "l'avvocato delle donne," Boccaccio, and the rich feminine tapestry he weaves in his works, to Angelica, symbol *par excellence* of the "unknowable" feminine, and on to diverse Baroque and Enlightenment authors who wrote of the complications of male-female interrelations, then to the unforgettable "La Pisana" and the women of Verga, there is a genuine "filo rosso" that threads throughout this study and one that highlights Woman and women in ways that are refreshingly original. In conjunction with the focus on the feminine, as "other," there is a concurrent concentration on the masculine sphere of action, intellectual prowess, and social-political activism as played out on the complex stage of pre- and post-unification Italy. Both characters and actions are part of the lifeblood of narrative, of course, and the intricacies of the intimately psychological and interpersonal are intertwined with the vaster canvas of national and international events as they shaped the themes and styles of the authors in question. Barilli traces a picture that ultimately seems to move from the great ethical, mythic, and heroic constructs that underpinned culture and society, and also deeply informed the works of early authors, such as Boccaccio, Ariosto, Tasso, and so many others, to the crumbling of those constructs as late modernity became mired in its uncertainties and anxieties of both subjective and collective kind, and eventually resulted in the "postmodernity" of our current world. We have not forgotten the great constructs, however, and it is the continuing relevance of them, as well as the ways in which we have repressed, elided, or simply lost them, that makes reading works of the past both objectively instructional and rife with deep emotional resonance, even pathos.

The historical and philological mastery shown by Barilli in this graceful study is impressive. Written in a style reminiscent of the courtier's "sprezzatura," the book impresses even more, for Barilli wears his learning lightly, and conveys it in a highly engaging manner. His insights are scattered throughout the study, emerging out of his own very obvious engagement with the texts in question, but never

ponderously set forth or forced. I think, for example, of the way in which Barilli shows the emergence in Leopardi's works of the nineteenth-century type *par excellence*: the "inetto" who lives within the subsequent pages of a Musil, a Svevo, a Pirandello, a Kafka. And then, with a reference that is immediately understandable to today's readers, Barilli mentions the "inept" intellectual played by Alain Cluny in Fellini's *La dolce vita*, who kills himself "per tedio della vita"; and with this reference, Barilli reveals not only how relevant Leopardi is to Fellini specifically and current cultural forms generally, but also how our contemporary art sheds retrospective light on the works of a "maggiore" who is far from the "embalmed" classic that generations of scholastic manuals and forced readings of his "A Silvia" have no doubt made of him for young readers.

Barilli includes a brief but very useful bibliography of the best editions of the works he analyzes, along with a judicious selection of critical works. Otherwise there is no standard critical apparatus in the form of footnotes or appendices, so that the volume can be read through as if it were itself a "narrative." And such it is: a narrative about narrative, written with energy and conviction, and with the passion of an esteemed critic who is also and always a devoted reader.

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Eugenio Bolongaro. *Italo Calvino and the Compass of Literature*. Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press, 2003. Pp. 239. ISBN 0-8020-8763-9. \$50 (Cloth).

This study of Italo Calvino's early fiction sets out to correct a bias perceived by the author in the ever-increasing body of Calvino criticism. Bolongaro argues that previous studies tend to focus on works after the mid 1960s to emphasize the post-modern aspects of Calvino's fiction. The author argues that this emphasis gives short shrift to "Calvino's lifelong commitment, as an intellectual, to writing as a way of intervening into a particular social and historical situation" (4). The book is designed to pay close attention to this ethico-political commitment, as played out in five novels, *I giovani del Po*, the three novels of the fantastic trilogy, and *The Watcher*. Bolongaro maintains that these early works, read in conjunction with key essays of *Una pietra sopra*, constitute the foundation upon which Calvino's entire literary project is based.

The first chapter situates Calvino in the socio-political and cultural context of Italy from 1943 to 1963. Bolongaro provides a detailed account of the discussion surrounding the role of the intellectual in the reconstruction of post-war Italy, beginning with the debates between Vittorini and Togliatti published in *Il politecnico* (194–47). The author then traces the evolution of these debates through the pages of *Officina* (1955–59) and *Il menabò* (1959–67). He focuses in particular on key essays in *Il menabò* which elaborate on the role of literature and of the intellectual in the realization of a progressive social project which no longer involves an explicit political affiliation.

Chapter Two, "Italo Calvino: From Neo-realism to the Fantastic," examines