many others have argued Nanni's main points in plain rhetoric, thinkers with whom he might have engaged in fruitful dialogue: Fish himself, with his classic transpositions of significance from words to interpretive communities; Richard Rorty, whose new pragmatism locates the construction of meaning in complex culture; Heidegger, Gadamer and reception aestheticians, inspired by a hermeneutical understanding of historicity; Stanley Cavell, John Searle, and speech act theorists; Paul De Man, with his emphasis on the rhetoric that sustains semiotics; American new literary historians, who have actually taken the messy next step after Nanni, excavating a variety of sociopolitical conventions contextualizing the production and reception of art.

This interesting book is Nanni's first in English. Ten of its eleven essays were first published in a journal Nanni directs at the University of Bologna called *Parol*. Most of them were read as papers at local Italian conferences between 1985 and 1991, and have retained that form of delivery. Virtually each one advances the same argument with equal power of persuasion, on the basis of the same principles of validation, the same moves, and the same discursive examples. In that respect, the book's title and two subtitles are perhaps too wide ranging.

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Parisi, Luciano. *Borgese*, Torino: Tirrenia Stampatori, 2000. Pp. 96. ISBN 8-8776-3484-7. Euro 7.75.

Giuseppe Antonio Borgese's human and academic weaknesses and strengths are certainly made abundantly clear, albeit in the most polite of ways, in this collection of five previously published studies by Luciano Parisi. The Sicilian writer's assertive nature and boundless confidence in his opinions are among the less attractive aspects of his character. Perhaps his large output of writings in academic and more general spheres engendered a confusion in him between omnipresence and omniscience. Parisi's studies are perceptive, scholarly, and informative, though he tends generally to side with revealed authority rather than to venture original analyses. The chapter headings are: "La critica militante", "Borgese e Manzoni", "I romanzi", "I libri di viaggio" and finally "Gli scritti politici".

Parisi emphasizes the distinction between the two fields in which Borgese's criticism was practised: the academic and the journalistic and argues for Borgese's critical status on the basis of the latter, his "critica militante" in the *Corriere della Sera* and other newspapers. He sees this criticism as marked by "un'estetica seria, articolata, coerente" and by "una capacità caratterizzante di insolita efficacia" (p. 23). Borgese's intuitive judgements in the Press led to conclusions regarding new writers which were accepted by successive generations. One could recall, for example, that he was one of the first to express enthusiasm for Moravia's *Gli indifferenti*. On the other hand, as Parisi underlines, Borgese's academic criticism failed to produce "ampie costruzioni intellettuali". It is not evident to me, nevertheless, that

one could attribute more than ephemeral significance to Borgese's *critica militante* and Parisi simply affirms its value rather than presenting a substantial argument for it.

The second chapter, "Borgese e Manzoni", argues for the importance of Borgese's studies of Manzoni and for the influence of Manzoni on Borgese's own spiritual development. Borgese was concerned as to whether Manzoni represented a break from classicism or a reform of it: an issue of categorization which does not really lead anywhere. As for the spiritual influence, it is not substantiated by any close consideration of the nature of Manzoni's beliefs. The pattern of development Parisi perceives in Borgese, who apparently passes from a non-Christian attitude (see, for example, his scorn of mediocre beings in the 1909 essay on D'Annunzio) to a rediscovery of Christian values (seen in the novel *Rubé*), hardly reveals so specific a type of Christianity as to indicate any close links with Manzoni.

The brief chapter on Borgese's novels includes extensive summaries and treats these works particularly as evidence of the author's personal struggle with concepts of religion and spirituality. There is no substantial distinction made between the novels' protagonists and the author. The treatment does not discuss the works' literary aspects as much as consider them a source of autobiographical evidence, again of a supposed evolution in Borgese's thought. A similar tendency dominates Parisi's comments on *Rubé*. In these days, when the content of real autobiography is interpreted with numerous caveats and certainly not considered as "truth", the procedure seems fraught with risk.

"I libri di viaggio" once more concentrates on biographical aspects in that Parisi argues that an evolution in thought is revealed in Borgese's travel writings. These had been inaugurated in 1909 in the *La nuova Germania*, excruciatingly provincial and racist, notwithstanding the fact that it was written subsequent to Borgese's two-year stay in the country. There is, Parisi indicates, a more benign tolerance to be seen in Borgese's post-1931 writings on the United States. For Parisi "la sua ammirazione per la realtà americana è attenta, calibrata" rather than opportunistic (p. 72). It is open to question whether this really indicates an evolution or maturation in Borgese's thought, rather than a reflection of the fact that life in the United States did not offer many challenges to the comfort and beliefs of a university professor in the 1930s. Consider that not long before, in his 1929 volume *Autunno di Costantinopoli*, he had written "le donne turche? Sono assortite in una 'beatitudine vuota'" (cited p. 68). Indeed, my tendency for all this material would be to suggest that Borgese wrote with his eyes ever fixed on the dominant value systems of his readers.

The final chapter, thirteen and a half pages on Borgese's "scritti politici", reveals at a distance of sixty or so years the full superficiality and pompousness of Borgese. Perhaps one can pat him on the back for his opposition to fascism but the never-abandoned belief in the individuals who influence world history, his belief that ideals, rather than economics were the most important factors in world history indicate that he had not progressed from D'Annunzio and was not unlike Mussolini. Fascism simply seems to have provided Borgese with yet another opportunity to promote himself, this time in an English which he did not have the

modesty to have improved. See for instance the grotesque expression in his *Common Cause*:

"the rules of the epic would have been better observed if Boston had risen for a Holy Sepulchre to liberate or for a Helen to recuperate, while the uninspiring strife over matters of taxation and levies, too frankly avowed, seemed made to order for the most remorseless materialistic interpretation of history." ((cited p. 86)

Parisi quotes Piovene's opinion that "l'esagerata considerazione che lo scrittore ha del proprio ruolo storico sia un dato medio, una qualità neutra capace di degenerare in vizio o degenerare in virtù." (p. 87). This is a little too kind.

Obviously there is a certain convenience for the student of Borgese to have assembled in one volume five well-informed studies on Borgese. Each one, having been published previously, has its own academic *imprimatur*. However the new setting generates distortions of emphasis and redundancies which there has been no attempt to address. Granted, for example, that the political writing of Borgese is truly horrible, is it reasonable to dedicate nearly as much to it in a volume as to his more meritorious novels? Let us by all means gather posthumously into single volumes substantial articles of the various great departed scholars. The living could make a few allowances for their readers, by adjusting and editing. In its citations *Borgese* employs an impenetrable combination of endnotes plus abbreviations in brackets. Each chapter repeats its own separate abbreviations, encrypted at some time and in some place, in one or several endnotes. Was it necessary to print on each of the pages 40, 58 and 75 that henceforth R would stand for *Rubè*? To have an idea of the effort required to read the book, multiply this by the number of all similar bibliographical items similarly treated. Surely a single list of abbreviations, and indeed a single bibliography, would be the least one could have expected. In short this volume should have been assembled with more regard for the reader.

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Paolozzi, Ernesto. *Benedetto Croce. Logica del reale e il dovere della libertà*. Napoli: Libreria Editrice E. Cassitto, 1998. Pp. 91.

Ernesto Paolozzi's *Benedetto Croce* is the best short introduction to the philosophy of the Neapolitan philosopher to date. The work provides a general view of Croce's philosophy and presents an in-depth analysis of some of the key issues Croce tangled with throughout his career: the relation of the aesthetic to the logic; the role and viability of the sciences; the world of *praxis* understood in terms of economy, politics, ethics and vitality; the question of liberalism, and, finally, the notion of history as contemporary history. But the author's most valuable contribution lies in the fact that his reading is not simply a survey or a synthesis of Croce's work but