The following chapter “Survivors, or the Pastoral Denied” has a socio-economic focus as Jeannet looks at the both sets of the Marcovaldo stories to discuss the ironic conflict between the “inside” and the “outside,” or the individual and his/her environment. Especially noteworthy are Jeannet’s discussions of Calvino’s reliance upon comic strips and filmic characters such as Chaplin’s Tramp in creating his humorous protagonist. Calvino’s rewriting and restructuring of the Marcovaldo tales in 1963, Jeannet argues, attests to a growing concern for socio-economic issues on the part of the author. The act of writing is once again proposed as not necessarily an escape, but as a “lesser evil.”

Jeannet addresses Calvino’s younger target audience in “Telling Stories,” a chapter dealing with the instructive and enlightening aspects of reading and writing. This perspective illuminates an extremely “optimistic” Calvino, a writer who creates for the young, combating the pessimism of “most adults and their whole consumerist society” (113). She also reads the “pedagogic motif” of many of his texts — from Le cosmi comici to Palomar — that specifically involves the reader, and calls on him/her to explore a “vision of art and history as the heterogeneous but necessarily connected components of human experience” (131).

Multiple contradictions between urban and natural environments are the topics of “Between Garbage and Cosmos,” a chapter that treats a large span of Calvino’s opus and deals with social issues such as over-crowding, pollution and the loss of natural spaces. Beginning with a discussion of the topos of nature throughout Italian literature, Jeannet continues to address the clear presence of garbage, decay and clutter within Calvino’s writings. She argues that it is precisely because of the “cosmic upheaval” that we do endure, and that “life arises” (144), be it during the war, in the urban sprawl, throughout the cosmos, or within Marco Polo’s “Invisible Cities.”

“Under the Crescent Moon” is the final chapter in the text, and focuses on representations of the female. Her first section on “The Bambina” is the most original in that Jeannet identifies a female presence that has not yet been treated in depth — unlike the “Amazon” or the unattainable/obscure female “other.” The chapter, and the book, closes on a discussion of various forms of the elusive “feminine” as representative of that which consistently escaped the author: language itself. This section raises more questions than it gives answers, but nonetheless clearly prefigures future discussions of the crucial role of women in Calvino’s fiction.

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This collection of essays deals with the creation of Italian nationalism through books, opera, and paintings in the era of the Risorgimento (chronologi-
cally defined as 1821 to 1870) and continuing nationalism after unification through the Fascist era and after World War II. Two essays analyze films dealing with the Risorgimento. Adrian F. Lyttelton opens the volume with the longest study about how Italians created a national patriotic history during the Risorgimento. They made particular use of the Lombard League, the Battle of Legnano (1176), and the revolt of the Sicilian Vespers, a popular rising in Palermo in 1282, to create the notion of civil liberty enjoyed in the Middle Ages, lost in the Renaissance, and to be regained through fighting in the Risorgimento. After 1860, when the papacy was seen as the enemy of the national movement, historians condemned the papacy of the past for repressing free thought. Although Lyttelton does not mention it, this is still today the dominant theme in Italian historiography of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There is much good material in the article, although it is marred by clumsy writing in the beginning and two references with wrong pagination. Andrea Ciccarelli discusses Dante as a cultural icon in the Risorgimento and later. Vittorio Alfieri brought him back into the mainstream of Italian literature and Ugo Foscolo and others appropriated him to the cause, even though Dante was an uncomfortable fit for the Risorgimento. The Futurists, by contrast, attacked Dante for anti-academic and anti-traditionalist reasons. Mary Ann Smart briefly discusses Giuseppe Verdi's Risorgimento operas, La battaglia di Legnano (1849) and Attila (1846). Like other scholars, she finds Verdi's musical nationalism depended partly on his keen sense of the audience and the moment, and that it diminished sharply after these works. Nelson Moe in a monographic study describes how northern Italians, especially the Piedmontese, began to describe the South as Italy's "Africa," i.e., backward, wounded, and needing a forceful "cure." It is an interesting article with many colorful quotes, but marred by some awkward writing. Lucia Re argues that after unification Italian schooling emphasized male learning much more than female learning and, indeed, promoted "a new, culturally and politically specific gender ideology...and...the cult of domesticity" (162). There is interesting detail in the article, including the use of paintings of women writing. But there are also interpretive leaps over gaps in information. Although the author does not mention it, the theme of women writers as "monsters" has a long history. Some fifteenth-century Italians voiced the same complaints about the first female humanist writers.

Claudio Fogu deals with how the Fascist government promoted the cult of Giuseppe and Anita Garibaldi. Roberto Dianotto discusses two of Giovanni Gentile's books which viewed the nation "as a pervasive form of localism" (249), but localism begat unity in Gentile's dialectical thinking. David Forgacs demonstrates how some Italian films of the Fascist era about the Risorgimento were reissued, with and without changes, after World War II; leftist critics then saw them as promoting national unity. In a well-written article, Millicent Marcus analyzes Luchino Visconti's film Senso (1954) which attacked the heroic Risorgimento myth. The film adopted Antonio Gramsci's position that a decadent ruling class imposed the Risorgimento from above and shut the popular classes out. But the film also dealt with many other segments of the Risorgimento myth, and provoked much discussion, as Marcus indicates. In a rambling essay Silvana Patriarca
uses an article by Giulio Bollati of 1972 as a springboard to criticize ideas of national character advanced by commentators in the past twenty-five years. The collection succeeds in its purpose in stimulating interest in this important subject. Anyone even passingly familiar with Italian history of the last two centuries or other eras of Italy's rich past, and cognizant of the debates about the Italian natural character, its perceived glories and faults, will find much good material in the essays. On the other hand, bad practices often irritate the reader. Every article uses "I," "me," and "my," sometimes to an excessive degree. This is jarring and draws attention away from the historical material. By contrast, third-person historical narration produces a seamless and enjoyable narrative. Easily available primary sources are sometimes quoted from secondary sources. While there are many English translations of Italian quotes, the original Italian is sometimes given and sometimes omitted; there is no consistency. All the articles demonstrate a flight from chronology, which is unfortunate in a collection interpreting the past of a nation. Life dates of key figures, publication dates of works analyzed, and other useful chronological information are frequently missing, or can only be found after a tedious search in the bibliographies. Full names of major and minor figures are missing and have to be located in the index. Some individual articles in collective works listed in the bibliographies lack pagination. Theory intrudes unnecessarily in a few essays. The primary responsibility for these faults rests with the authors. But the publisher should have provided better editing.

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It must be said straightaway that Giuseppe Mazzotta's Cosmopoiesis: The Renaissance Experiment is a dazzling read. Original insights, fresh perspective, and inviting prose combine to make this collection of essays a work that is both provocative and engaging.

First delivered as a series of public lectures, the chapters of Cosmopoieses are essays which treat the common theme of "world-making" as it appears in several different Renaissance texts. Often in counterpoint to the so-called Machiavellian or empirical interpretation of the world, Mazzotta conducts his examination by drawing on the humanist understanding of the power of the imagination to recreate the world. A Vichian critical perspective informs the various analyses, stemming from Vico’s conception of making, or poiesis, which identifies making as innately linked with the imaginative act of creating. Mazzotta reads, and argues for reading, literature in a dialectical relationship with other arts, or, as he says, as part of an “encyclopedic conversation” that encompasses, and responds to, all the fields of human knowledge. With this approach, he is able to go beyond traditional Renaissance paradigms which tend to divide the period according to antagonistic models of making, that is the creative (for example, literary and philo-