ignores the seemingly idiosyncratic substitution of Pasithea (Pasithee) for Hélène in the *Premier Livre des sonets pour Hélène* (13,1 identified as 14,1 on p.126). Pasithea is the pseudonym bestowed by Pontus de Tyard upon his first lover — in a relationship unlikely to have been consummated — who is generally considered to have been an active participant in the social circles of Lyon. Tyard's love for her is central to all his lyric and philosophical writings published between 1549 and 1555. Consequently, a more detailed synchronic study of Ronsard's contemporaries could seriously qualify Sturm-Maddox's view of both Ronsard's originality and his direct dependence upon Petrarch.

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Natalia Ginzburg: A Voice of the Twentieth Century. Eds. Angela M. Jeannet, Giuliana Sanguinetti Katz. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000. Pp. xv, 250.

Natalia Ginzburg's rich literary corpus has for long enjoyed wide interest from appreciative reading audiences ranging from literary critics to translators, educators and readers for pleasure. Yet ironically, the marked popularity of the fiction and of the author have served not to dispel but rather to reinforce the aura of questioning and puzzled disbelief that have persisted in relation to Ginzburg's intellectual accessibility and the seeming contradictions often displayed in her works. This monograph consisting of an introduction by Rebecca West, ten essays, an interview with Ginzburg as well as translations of some brief fiction, seeks to provide fresh and widely encompassing interpretations of the writer, her novels, theatre, and critical writings. Each study moves away from early perspectives challenging as it does, the pre- or misconceptions that have often resulted from readers glossing over cultural considerations or too quickly formulating sexist stereotyping.

The essays range over diverse thematic fields and critical approaches. Through her extended interview, which opens the monograph, and her later analysis of the epistolary novels ("Writing the Self: The Epistolary Novels of Natalia Ginzburg"), Peg Boyers seeks to penetrate into the authenticity of the persona and the writer herself for whom writing was the most truthful creative act of existence. As well, Luigi Fontanella's essay pays a friendly homage to a writer whom he respected and admired especially for her *Voci della sera* and *Lessico familiare*, which Fontanella places among the "classics of the late twentieth century." (34) Fontanella is fascinated by the security of Ginzburg's style deliberately employing a diversity of syntactic systems coalescing to create an aura of mnemonic allure in the stories resting upon evergreen threads of memory and imagination. Boyers's contributions and Judith Lawrence Pastore's reading of Caro Michele bring to light a number of paradoxes in Ginzburg's life and work: her public commitments as an elected Representative in the Camera dei Deputati, yet her admission of not being a "political person" (20); her support of free

choice and divorce, yet her view of abortion as a negation of the sacredness of life and of the family as the most important social unit; her ability to live with her faith while doubting the existence of God. In addition, Pastore points out that Ginzburg's work often displays her longing "for the lost order of traditional beliefs, an order founded on patriarchal values," yet she has "no illusions about such beliefs." (92) These and other contradictions pertinent to women and society receive focal and penetrating attention in the last essay ("Feminism and the Absurd in *Two Plays* by Natalia Ginzburg") by Serena Anderlini-D'Onofrio. Its four sections discuss the writer and these plays in relation to gender and feminism: The Figure of Two-in-One in the Family; Marriage: Who Has Fun with It?; The Mistress, the Wife, and the 'Hero'; Ginzburg Responds to Feminism. Anderlini-D'Onofrio makes use of the views of some of the best critical scholars in the fields of political, social thought, and psychology with a view to shedding some very interesting light on Ginzburg's ambivalence vis-à-vis the questions addressed in these sections. One of the most fascinating questions Anderlini-D'Onofrio seeks to unravel concerns identity and self-perspective. She points out that, regarding herself a "hybrid" by nature and culture, as both Jewish and gentile, growing up at a time of profound political change and unrest in Italy, Ginzburg the person and the writer, positioned herself both inside and outside the Jewish and gentile communities. Being neither one completely, Ginzburg could say she was "nothing": she claimed "'nothing' as her own space on two counts." (214-15) From this neutral vantage point of outsider/insider Ginzburg was and was not a feminist, she was and was not part of Italian feminism—two conflicting perspectives cohabiting in the person and the persona of Natalia. Ginzburg's female characters do not identify as feminists. Yet, Anderlini-D'Onofrio explains, friendships and complicities illustrated in her works often give evidence of the homoerotic secret that "inhabited the female homosocial space the feminist movement had created." (216) This method of representation, one might add, allowed Ginzburg the person and the writer the possibility to overtly appear to be of her generation while subliminally artistically working in sympathy with the plights and fights of young feminists.

Ginzburg's literary style and corpus, then, also need to be regarded as blueprints for her often unarticulated (and nevertheless very much extant) views. To this end, Ginzburg nurtured a consuming passion for and devotion to the act of writing, a "craft" in need of constant refining, as discussed in the essays by Eugenia Paulicelli ("Natalia Ginzburg and the Craft of Writing"), Jen Wienstein ("The Eloquence of Understatement: Natalia Ginzburg's Public Image and Literary Style"), and by Giuliana Sanguinetti Katz ("Sagittarius: A Psychoanalytic Reading"). In addition to the diverse concerns elucidated by each of these revealing studies, their unifying theme serves to underscore the fact that Ginzburg's manner of writing conceals and at the same time conveys much more than is evident in mere surface readings. Paulicelli's essay demonstrates that far from being the indicators of a superficial feminine style, "Simplicity and familiarity are specifically for Ginzburg the realms in which both truth and mystery hide." (154) The concept of her own writing as a mestiere relating to the act of forging or "mak-

ing" in which the whole person is involved, conveys Ginzburg's commitment through creativity to help rebuild a new literature and society "after the 'dark years' of Fascism." (158) Thus, her personal wish for her writing to be accessible to all through familiar, everyday, experiences is achieved by means of a process of tireless stylistic refinements leading to clarity (*chiarezza*). This notion is further reinforced by Wienstein who quotes an image employed by Calvino to define Ginzburg's style as it succeeds in containing the breath and breadth of worlds in grains of day-to-day realities, such as a "sea passing through a funnel." (192) Further, Ginzburg affixes to names special significances so that human relations and actions can conceal subtexts lending themselves to symbolic readings; the detailed study by Sanguineti Katz based on *Sagittarius* illustrates how stylistic and thematic elements of a Ginzburg novel—from animal symbolism, to colours, food, and body parts—can be architecturally structured to convey special symbols which in turn open windows onto fascinating and intriguing psychoanalytic readings.

Placing Ginzburg's works within a broad national historic frame, the studies by Ward and Jeannet penetrate into the intimate vision of the writer influenced as she constantly was by political factors and personal experiences. For Ward, a number of Ginzburg's early texts published in the national newspaper *L'Italia libera* seek to reconcile two basic and conflicting goals. These can in fact be traced all along her literary corpus: "First, to stare reality in the face and tell its story in narrative form; and second, to maintain an attitude of humility before that reality." (57) Part of Ginzburg's engagement as person and author, as well as a female writer, was to make a "story out of history," as Jeannet's essay eloquently points out. This at a critical time and period in the twentieth century when "the literary text in particular was entrusted with the task of recording what was unspoken or hidden; the almost imperceptible movements of human consciousness." (64) For Jeannet, Ginzburg, in her own unique and inimitable fashion is among the most accomplished Italian writers of a new literary season born of unprecedented socioeconomic conflicts. Her clear, yet deceptively "simple" style and tone work well together to sustain her intellectual posture which always reflected upon and unhesitatingly questioned the character of the society and of the politics of her times.

This volume successfully underscores the fundamental and often-overlooked fact that Ginzburg's works seek to give a voice to a class of Italians whom history has silenced, to record events and human relations to which history generally remains oblivious. Not only for students of Italian, and feminist studies, but also for those who read Ginzburg for the pure pleasure of reading her, this monograph is a very welcome addition thanks to the articulate studies incorporate recent critical theories, the attentive considerations given to style and its implications, the reframing of the significance of Ginzburg's literary corpus in light of Italy's politics and culture in the second half of the twentieth century.