

BOOK REVIEW

Italian Studies across Disciplines: Interdisciplinarity, New Approaches, and Future Directions

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This edited volume provides a wide-ranging overview of new approaches and future developments in Italian Studies and testifies to the liveliness of the field. The interest of the editors in connecting Italian cultural practices with methodologies from other disciplines is apparent throughout the collection. Contributors pursue their analyses through a variety of theories and approaches, including Posthuman and Non-human Studies, New Materialism, Media Studies, Feminist Studies, Trauma Studies and Children's Studies. Such a richness, although a strength of the collection, may – to some extent and perhaps inevitably – affect the cohesion of the volume, which presents the nine essays in an unspecified order.

The first contribution, *Intermedialità e transmedialità nell'italianistica (letteraria): alcune questioni aperte* by Paolo Giovannetti, gives an overview of inter- and trans-mediality in Italian Studies. The author highlights the strengths and flaws of traditional Italian critical approaches towards hybrid texts and media, and particularly sheds light on innovative scholarly works by Gabriele Frasca and Tommaso Ottonieri. The essay is divided into sections and is therefore easy to navigate, although too rich in examples that may distract and confuse the reader.

Marilina Ciaco is the author of the second chapter, *Scritture installative in Italia fra oggettualità e new materialism*, which shares with the first one its focus on hybrid textual forms, here termed 'scritture installative'. The author proposes three case studies of inter-medial hybridisation between poetry and installations: *Prati* by Andrea Inglese, *Tecniche di liberazione* by Mariangela Guatteri and *Enciclopedia asemica* by Marco Giovenale. The study effectively analyses the peculiarities of a new form of poetry where the subject is a vague third person, verbs are impersonal, descriptions regard non-human beings, and the visual layout is dominant over words.

Clodagh Brook and Monica Jansen are co-authors of the following chapter, *Transnational Perspective on Postsecular Italy: Arts, Media, and Religion*. The authors highlight the lack of scholarly investigation in Italian Studies about religious observance, values, plurality, and tensions that nonetheless exist in Italian culture. Brook and Jansen advocate the need for critical studies that counter-argue narratives of Italy as a mono-religious state and claim that intra-religious tensions as well as religious and secular ones are particularly evident in 'postsecular art'. Following the analysis of Paolo Sorrentino's television series *The Young*

Pope and The New Pope as case studies, Brook and Jansen effectively suggest new research directions.

The fourth chapter, *Discussing Politics on Twitter: Some Evidence from Linguistics* by Claudia Roberta Combei, analyses discursive strategies used by Italian political actors on Twitter and focuses on populist language. Combei advocates that the study of conceptual metaphors and language simplifications allow scholars ‘to contribute to the understanding of political discourse and to investigate its framing effects on voters’ (p. 139). She takes as case studies the posts of eight Italian politicians among the most active and popular on Twitter. These are examined to test Combei’s research hypothesis that populists are forerunners in using conceptual metaphors and language simplification on Twitter, showing the value of such an innovative study.

Alberica Bazzoni is the author of the fifth chapter: *Trauma, Sadomasochism, and the Female Body in Elena Ferrante’s ‘I giorni dell’abbandono’*. Drawing on psychoanalysis, trauma theory and feminist approaches, the author focuses on sadomasochistic violence in *I giorni dell’abbandono* (2002) to examine Ferrante’s problematic representation of gendered violence. Bazzoni’s analysis of the body as represented in the novel highlights the persisting presence of patriarchal modes and normative social roles, thus declaring the difficulties of a feminist reading of the work yet proposing an innovative feminist critique of the violence represented.

The sixth chapter by Anna Finozzi, *Conquistare lo spazio: le mappe alternative nella letteratura postcoloniale italiana per l’infanzia*, sheds light on the lack of academic studies on Italian children’s literature and particularly from a postcolonial viewpoint. The author successfully examines how trespassing boundaries and the concept of transgression in youth literature are employed by authors to represent flexible and hybrid identities, by analysing three case studies: the illustrated album *L’altracittà* (2010), the illustrated book *Heva. Peshmerga kurda* (2020), and the teen novel *Sotto lo stesso sole* (2021).

Chapter seven, *‘Il mondo fatto dalla carne di lei’: una lettura ecofemminista del ‘Misterioso atto’ di Federico Tozzi* by Marco Ceravolo, proposes an unprecedented ecofeminist perspective within the Italian critical landscape. Ceravolo analyses connections between female characters, nature and beasts and divides the essay in two parts. In the first section, the author sheds light on non-human traits shared by women and beasts in Federico Tozzi’s novellas *La matta*, *Il crocifisso*, and *Un pezzo di lettera*. In the second part of the essay, Ceravolo examines the profound bond between women, nature and the divine in Tozzi’s fragmented novel *Paolo* (1907).

The relationship between human beings and nonhumanity is also at the core of chapter eight, *‘A Bundle of Countless Relations and Situations’: Carlo Emilio Gadda and the Question of Human (and) Nature* by Santi Luca Famà. The author proposes a non-anthropocentric perspective to the work of Carlo Emilio Gadda to unveil the potentiality and fruitfulness of such an investigation. After a thorough account of the theoretical frameworks employed, Famà examines a selection of Gadda’s novels and essays to cast light on his idea of reality as entanglement, comparing it to the notion of ‘thing’ drawn by Tim Ingold, and shows the communalities between the concepts of hyperobjects by Timothy Morton and Gadda’s acceptance of natural history.

The last chapter, *Oltre la fine: fantastico italiano e postumano, tra spettri e folk horror* by Daniela Bombara and Francesco Corigliano, illustrates how non-realistic writings can be employed to describe and understand postmodernity. This aim is pursued on one hand, by examining the figure of the ghost in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as an example of hybrid subjectivity that shares commonalities with the concept of the posthuman, and, on the other hand, by analysing the interplay of contemporary weird fiction and folklore. The authors exemplify their argument taking Luigi Musolino’s ‘weird folk’ writing as a case study.

The collection results in an original and composite study of new and re-emerging tendencies in Italian Studies. The main ideas are presented in a convincing way and readers can effectively enjoy an overview of the many research strains that the field offers.