

BOOK REVIEWS

## ***Literary Voices of the Italian Diaspora in Britain: Time, Transnational Identities and Hybridity***

**by Manuela D'Amore, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2023, xiii + 314 pp., £99.99 (hardback), ISBN 9783031354373; £79.50 (eBook), ISBN 9783031354380**

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*Literary Voices of the Italian Diaspora in Britain* aims to shed light on the 'textual terrain' created by authors from the Italian community in the UK. Drawing on the work of Italian American scholars Anthony Tamburri and Fred Gardaphé, D'Amore proposes the term 'Italian British' to describe the authors whose families left Italy for the UK between unification in 1861 and the outbreak of the Second World War. *Literary Voices* addresses a wide span of writers living in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and one of the ambitions of the text is to broaden the focus from the more limited samples of authors whose work has been addressed in previous critical studies. Much of this Italian British literary production takes the forms of autobiography, memoirs, historical fiction and family sagas.

D'Amore argues that Italian British writing offers a significant component of Italian writing in English, and the text draws links between Italian American and Italian Australian writing as part of the analysis. The text's structure reflects the ambition to make Italian British writing more widely known, comprising five analytical chapters and an extended appendix entitled 'Authors, Texts and Contexts'. Divided into three sections 'England', 'Wales' and 'Scotland', this appendix provides further biographical and critical details about the writers discussed in the volume, including samples of their work. The introduction to the work notes that Italian Northern Irish writing is often linked to London and the bigger English cities, or to the Welsh valleys, and tends to be narrated second or third hand through oral history projects, which may explain why there is not a Northern Ireland section in the appendix. This section provides writing spanning a wide chronological period, from the first account of the Italian British experience, Eugenio D'Agostino's 1938 *Wandering Minstrel*, to works published in recent years. It also signals works published in genres beyond the more traditional autobiographical to include forms such as plays and detective fiction.

The analytical chapters discuss Italian British writing thematically, weaving in texts from all four nations into a single narrative rather than considering them separately. There is a bibliography at the end of each individual chapter noting the texts discussed. 'History and Histories: Transnational Lives Through Time' offers a chronological outline of how major historical events influenced the construction of core Italian British identities, paying particular attention to the rise of fascism, the impact of the Second World War and

the sinking of the SS *Arandora Star*. 'Departures, Arrivals and Settlements: Pictures from Rural Italy and Urban Britain' traces the representation of the various points of departure for migrants, such as Picinisco or Bardi, of stopping points along the migratory journey, such as Dover, and of the destinations chosen by migrants, including London's Little Italy, the South Wales Valleys, and Edinburgh and Glasgow. The chapter also includes a section on the camps where Italian British citizens were interned during the Second World War. D'Amore argues that the texts create 'literary atlases' that enable the reader to follow the migratory paths of the characters, often clarifying the connections between hamlets in northern and central Italy and British cities.


'From Street Musicians to Educators and Actors: The Long Road to Social Integration' maps the employment trajectories of Italian migrants to Britain and the ways in which they gained social recognition. It charts how the texts represent employment as itinerant musicians, ice cream sellers, fish and chip shop owners, and owners of cafés, restaurants and hotels. The chapter also reflects on depictions of education as providing fulfilment but also, in one case, as a distancing from the Italian community. 'Italian Cultures, Traditions and Foods in Transition' looks at the significance of cultural transfer and the hybrid products that emerged from contact between Italian and British traditions. It examines how changes to dress and cuisine map shifting patterns of integration and hybrid identities, and how religious, cultural and culinary traditions evolved with each generation. 'Languages in Contact: Italian, English, German and French' analyses the numerous linguistic forms present in the texts, including the use of standard and dialect Italian, as well as non-standard forms of English, to show the relationship between plurilingualism and the construction of multilayered identities. It reflects on the use of Cockney, Welsh-accented English and Scottish dialect in the texts. This analysis raises interesting points about plurilingualism and could perhaps be developed still further to think about the intersection between geography and class in the way in which the Italian British writers were viewed by individuals from outside their own communities.

Reading the literary production of the four nations in tandem enables an important cross-cutting analysis of Italian British literature. *Literary Voices* covers an enormous number of primary texts and is rigorous in its consideration of existing critical literature in the field.

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## **La prima guerra italiana. Forze e pratiche di sicurezza contro il brigantaggio nel Mezzogiorno**

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The inner civil war in the Italian Mezzogiorno and the explosion of brigandage in the 1860s are among the most vibrant and polarising fields of the new Risorgimento