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stable place where authentic ‘persuasion’ can be achieved. The difference between Petrarch and Michelstaedter (according to Ilvano Caliaro) is that, for the former, stability can be projected only in the dimension of religious transcendence, whereas for the latter it is only in the complete possession of the present that absolute value can be found.

The fifth and final chapter of the work is devoted to a thematic comparison between Michelstaedter and the Triestine writer Scipio Slataper (1888–1915). It is not known whether the two knew each other, although both attended, in partially coinciding years, the Istituto di Studi Superiori in Florence, and the latter reviewed the first volume of Michelstaedter’s writings when it was published in 1912. One point of contact between the two is, once more, the interpretation of Christianity and, in particular, of the figure of Jesus and his teaching, seen as attributing value to a life deemed good precisely because it embraces the present, transcending itself not towards a distant future, but in the absolute immanence of giving to the other. Both reject the enslavement of a person to society; but, if Michelstaedter comes to a complete rejection of society, Slataper instead maintains his commitment to practical activity and engagement for the common good. In Slataper’s words: ‘Quello che è stato disastro per Papini, Michelstaedter — felicità per noi. [. . .] Ci siamo accorti che nel lavoro, nell’esprimerci nel sodo, c’era una felicità.’

Michelstaedter had killed himself on 17 October 1910. He was barely twenty-three years old.

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GIUSEPPE STELLARDI

Montale, the Modernist. By GIUSEPPE GAZZOLA. Florence: Olschki. 2016. 232 pp. €27. ISBN 978–88–222–6482–4.

‘Sometimes you can see a celestial object better by looking at something else, with it, in the sky.’ This is what Anne Carson writes in *Economy of the Unlost: Reading Simonides of Keos with Paul Celan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. viii, where she sets the sixth-/fifth-century BC Greek poet Simonides of Keos in dialogue with the twentieth-century German poet Paul Celan. Although this is not a comparative enterprise, in *Montale, the Modernist*, Giuseppe Gazzola proposes to bring Montale into productive conversation with some of the central literary voices of Anglo-American modernism, with the aim of suggesting a new understanding and coherence of our major twentieth-century poet, as well as offering a better understanding of modernism itself.

The author reads Montale alongside Eliot, Pound, Svevo, Larbaud, and Joyce. Gazzola’s principal objective is to highlight the specific historical, scientific, and philosophical contingencies of that time that Montale and these other modernist literary figures shared. The modernist issue, as well as its protagonists, work, however, more as a background to a study of Montale’s oeuvre. Although considerable attention is given to the historical and socio-political context of Montale’s time as well as his biography (especially his experience of the war and his relationship with

the Ligurian landscape), Gazzola does not forget to give the necessary attention that the poetic text requires, and in doing so he offers new readings of key poems such as 'Non chiederci la parola', 'Meriggiare pallido e assorto', 'Arsenio', and 'Dialogo'. Furthermore, he does not fail to highlight the differences and points of departure between Montale and the other modernists, showing how the Italian poet develops his own unique poetic voice. An instance of this is Montale's re-elaboration of the 'objective correlative'. Hence, this monograph represents a significant contribution to Montalean scholarship and Italian Studies more broadly, but it is also a contribution to Modernist Studies for scholars working on Anglo-American modernism.

While in the first part of the book Montale is positioned as fundamentally a modernist author, the concluding part focuses on Montale's later production, especially on how his fourth poetic collection, *Satura* (1971), stands as a significant turn in his poetic development. In Chapter 6, 'Postmodern Montale', Gazzola posits some fundamental questions regarding Montale's later poetic production, against the accusation of 'qualunquismo' (political indifference) raised by Pier Paolo Pasolini and embraced by many others. Gazzola challenges this widespread view of Montale as unconcerned by the political and social issues of his time and proposes a new perspective marking a postmodern turn that is rooted in the developments of his philosophical views in the post-war period. According to Gazzola, *Satura* actually marks the 'emergence of a strong postmodernist voice in Italian poetry' for the way it explores typical postmodern preoccupations such as the end of history, of ideology, and authorial presence (pp. 153–54).

Gazzola also considers the question of whether there is a sense of continuity or a brutal rupture that characterizes Montale's oeuvre. His view that adopting a postmodern perspective allows us to see both a continuity and a discontinuity appears convincing and gives us a productive resolution to the long-lasting discussion among Montale scholars. Instances of this are the postmodern ideas of the irreality of the real and of the world as representation, which are shown not to be limited to Montale's later poetry, but can already be found in *Ossi di seppia*. At the same time, we cannot deny a significant development of Montale's philosophical and epistemological ideas, especially the new understanding of space and time that he develops, which culminate in breaking down any barriers between the 'aldilà' (afterworld) and 'quaggiù' (down here) (*Xenia* I. 4 and *Xenia* I. 7), between living and dead, as, after all, we might all be dead without even knowing it: 'siamo già morti senza saperlo' (*Xenia* I. 4).

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ADELE BARDAZZI

Postcolonial Borges: Argument and Artistry. By ROBIN FIDDIAN. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2017. 240 pp. £30. ISBN 978-0-19-879471-4.

This study takes up the challenge of assessing Borges's complex and to some extent problematic relationship with the category of the postcolonial. In doing so, it addresses the vexed question of whether a discourse articulated in relation to the