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nesses. True, an engagement with geopoetics (particularly for a world literary discussion of Montale and Calvino) would have opened his insights to realms beyond Ligurian/Italian studies. Pagano's wealth of local detail, however, ranging from eels and agaves, to *chinotto* and *creuza*, sea-life and chestnut plight, farmers and partisans, suffices to portray, *in nuce*, his study's compelling, interdisciplinary character.

## Note

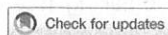
1. Chapter one on Giuseppe [sic] – Giovanni Domenico – Ruffini (1807–81) and the 'discovery of the Italian Riviera'; chapter two on Camillo Sbarbaro (1888–1967) and the 'search for landscape'; chapter three on Eugenio Montale (1896–1981) and 'enigmatic Liguria'; chapter four on Giorgio Caproni (1912–90) and the 'end of landscape'; chapter five on Italo Calvino (1923–85) 'between two continents'; chapter six on Francesco Biamonti (1928–2001) and the 'ruins of landscape'; and chapter seven on the contemporary Annie Hawes and the 'rediscovery of the Ligurian landscape'.

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**Montale, The Modernist**, by Giuseppe Gazzola, Florence, Olschki, 2016  
232 pp, €27,00 (paper back), ISBN: 9788822264824

Many years in the making, Giuseppe Gazzola's book on Eugenio Montale, Nobel prize winner and arguably the most influential twentieth-century Italian poet, traces the author's artistic and intellectual development from his adolescence, spent between the city of Genoa and the village of Monterosso, at that time a remote outpost on the eastern Riviera, and his last postmodern period.

The central metaphor of the study, which is presented in the opening chapter and recurs throughout the book, is the two-headed god Janus, one of the emblems of the city of Genoa, situated on the threshold between the

Mediterranean Sea and Northern Europe, a strategic geographical position upon which the city built its economic fortune, beginning with the first Crusades. For Gazzola, however, Janus is a multifaceted concept, symbolizing, among other things, the unity of space and time that characterizes modernity, which the author analyses in the light of the technological and scientific discoveries of the beginning of the twentieth century.

The most traumatic event for Montale was his experience as a soldier during WWI. Very few critics, to my knowledge, have explored the impact that the Great War had on Montale's literary production, notably because the Genoese poet was very reluctant to write about his life in the trenches. Gazzola has uncovered an impressive number of documents showing the devastating effect that the war had on the young artist. He argues that, although Montale was not in favour of Italy's intervention, his personal participation in the war became an ethical imperative and shows that the horrors he experienced on the front left an indelible mark on his literary production. A poem like 'Non chiederci la parola', for instance, considered by many critics as a manifesto of Montale's early poetics, cannot be comprehended without referring to WWI. The consequences of the traumas experienced by the combatants, such as apathy and lack of emotions, were not fully understood by the military apparatus. Thus, most veterans remained silent, afraid of being perceived as cowards by their friends and family.

Gazzola argues that the sense of loss that one finds in the writings of Montale and other intellectuals of his generation should be related to the theories that Albert Einstein and Henri Bergson were developing at the same time and shows how these two thinkers undermined the traditional concepts of time and space that had existed until then: they could no longer be conceived as absolute categories but governed by a criterion of subjectivity.

The cultural and political changes that took place in Europe at that time had a profound impact on Montale's poetics, as reflected in his first important collection of lyrics, *Ossi di seppia*, a book that Gazzola reads as evidence of a progressive detachment from the poets of Ligurian heritage, like Camillo Sbarbaro and others. In Montale's most accomplished poems one no longer perceives a desire to adhere to the beloved landscape of Liguria, which becomes a limit to be transcended, "breaking free of its materiality" (p. 66). To demonstrate how Montale became a modernist—which is the central objective of his book – Gazzola follows the theories of Romano Luperini, who interpreted the transition from symbol to allegory as the threshold that distinguishes the Ligurian poet from other modernist writers like Gabriele D'Annunzio. The Ligurian landscape, discussed in chapter three, becomes an enigma to be deciphered, or a screen that conceals the emptiness that lies behind it, thus bringing Montale close to authors like Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, analysed in a chapter entitled 'Beyond the Threshold'.

The author argues that the transition from Montale's celebrated first book and *Le occasioni* is marked by a distancing from Liguria, a place from which he needed to escape. After the publication of *Ossi di seppia*, Montale's geographic and cultural horizons began to widen: his first move was to Florence, where he helped create the literary journal *Solaria*, publishing translations of many authors associated with high modernism, from Kafka to Joyce and others. In

published in Eliot's prestigious journal *The Criterion*, is rather misleading, since it intentionally stretches the Italian poet's language to make it almost equivalent to Eliot's. Instead, in Gazzola's opinion, the two modernist poets resemble each other because 'they both keep sight of the precepts of Pound, and because both find a common denominator in the philosophy of Bergson' (p. 148). The importance that Gazzola attributes to Pound in Montale's formation is confirmed by the image (the only one in the book) of a beautiful sculpture portraying the poet, inserted at the beginning of the volume.

'Postmodern Montale' is the object of chapter six. Although works like *Satura*, published in 1971, seem to present its creator as unconcerned with social and political struggles, Gazzola claims that Montale never lost sight of the political conflicts after WWII. Nevertheless, after a short involvement with the Partito d'Azione immediately after the war, 'Montale's engagement turned into a sour disillusionment' (p. 153), which becomes a dominant theme throughout his late literary production. Whereas his books of poetry until *La bufera e altro* were shaped as a *Canzoniere*, Montale's last volumes display 'the rhizomatic structure of the chronicle' (p. 155).

One of the main critics of Montale's disenchanted and rather 'narcissist' stance was Pier Paolo Pasolini, who embodied the typical example of intellectual *engagé*. Gazzola retraces the debate that took place between the two poets in a balanced way, examining Montale's poetic response to Pasolini contained in 'Lettera a Malvolio' published in 1974. While Pasolini described Montale as a typical representative of the reactionary bourgeoisie, one may argue that Montale's disenchanted position originated from a profound dislike of the mass culture produced by late capitalism. Gazzola sees in Montale's late production, characterized by irony, playfulness and sarcasm, an indication that his work had taken a sharp detour, typical of postmodernism. According to Fredric Jameson, pointedly quoted by the author, 'one of the most fateful differences between high modernism and postmodernism is the utter extinction of that pathos or even tragic spirit with which high moderns lived their torn and divided condition, the repression even of anxiety itself' (p. 179). To Pasolini's intriguing question whether Montale was a narcissist, Gazzola's answer is yes and no, because the mirror that Montale uses to reflect on his own self projects a fragmented, dissonant image, almost a carnivalized, distorted reflection of what Montale the modernist aspired to be. As in Bakhtin's grotesque realism, Montale the author does not occupy a privileged position, but is caught like everyone else in the whirlwind of history, as illustrated in his famous poem *La storia*. Gazzola argues that an important philosophical reference for the late Montale was the book by a young Italian philosopher, Cesare Vasoli, entitled *Tra cultura e ideologia*, where Montale may have found an explanation for the collapse of Hegelian historicism that even a Marxist intellectual and poet like Edoardo Sanguineti had denounced (p. 196).

What is left of Montale's subtle but powerful ethical stance that inspired generations of Italian antifascist intellectuals? Has (post)modernization completely erased any hope? The landscape of his youth that Montale celebrated in

*Ossi di seppia* was being destroyed. The villa in Monterosso where he wrote his first masterpieces was finally sold in 1954 and Montale was even reluctant to travel through the area by train. Italo Calvino, who grew up on the opposite side of the Italian Riviera, in the town of Sanremo, also refused to return to the places where he had grown up. And yet, in both authors, the landscape of Liguria continued to be present, often in disguised, allegorized forms. As Montale writes in the above-mentioned poem, progress is not the devastating storm that Walter Benjamin envisioned in one of his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*: it leaves behind tunnels, hiding places, crypts, manholes. These are the places where memory continues to nurture the ghosts that poetry may bring back to life. In the Epilogue of his elegantly written and meticulously researched book, Gazzola, a native of Genoa like his beloved poet, returns to the place where he had begun: Janus' head, the ambivalent emblem of Genoa, god of beginnings and ends, departures and arrivals, gates and thresholds, a place he left behind a long time ago but continues to carry within, as Montale knew too well:

It's curious to think that each one of us has a place like this, however different, that is bound to remain *his* landscape, immutable; it's curious that the order of things is slow to seep into us and so impossible to eradicate later. (1998, p. 309)

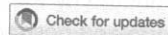
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**Merchants in the city of art: work, identity, and change in a Florentine neighborhood**, by Anne Schiller, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2016, 152 pp., \$24.95 (paper back), ISBN: 9781442634619

A historic market emerges as the protagonist of struggles over identity, heritage, and belonging in an urban Italian neighbourhood. Globalization, migration, and urban politics have transformed identity into something that is at once alluring and fraught. This case study delves into the lives of outdoor vendors of the famous San Lorenzo Market to expose the cultural dilemmas of one European destination. The research draws on ten summer seasons of ethnographic fieldwork with incorporated student research assistants. The book is organized around six chapters and includes several maps, twenty-five images, a bibliography, and index.

The work was published through the University of Toronto Press's