

Form eines Kriminalromans – über das Versagen des italienischen Bürgertums und über das Wesen des post-risorgimentalen Italiens geht. Die Beschreibung des Leichnams der Liliana Balducci ist von mehreren Interpreten als Allegorie des ermordeten Bürgertums interpretiert worden, was aus Lists Betrachtungen nicht hervorgeht. Die in der Beschreibung der noch blutenden Wunde unwiderlegbar vorhandenen Anspielungen auf den Ersten Weltkrieg und auf die faschistische Machtübernahme lassen erkennen, dass man es weder mit einem klassischen *giallo* noch mit einer reinen Politisatire zu tun hat. Anders gesagt beschränkt sich Gaddas literarische Ambition nicht auf die politische Satire, sondern ist vielmehr mit jener des großen Moralisten Alessandro Manzoni vergleichbar, der zwar in seinem historischen Roman die Lombardei des *Seicento* beschrieb, gleichzeitig aber auch die italienische Gesellschaft seiner eigenen Epoche vor Augen hatte. Das bisher Gesagte hat Folgen für die Interpretation des Protagonisten, Kommissar Ciccio Ingravallo, den Frau List zunächst als intellektuell etwas träge und sogar als ein wenig beschränkt darstellt, schließlich aber doch als findigen Kopf würdigt. Tatsächlich teilt Ingravallo mit Gadda das komplexe Realitätsverständnis, und wenn er dem überall die Hände im Spiel habenden Eros schon immer eine besondere Bedeutung zumaß, erweist sich sein Leitgedanke auch für den hier zu lösenden und vielleicht nie ganz lösaren Kriminalfall als durchaus zutreffend. Die Schlusszene – das letzte Verhör der Assunta Crocchiapani, deren pralle Vitalität neben ihrem sterbenden Vater („una vitalità splendida, in lei, a lato il moribondo autore de' suoi giorni“) ein kontrastreiches Bild von Eros und Thanatos ergibt, bestätigt Ingravallós Weltansicht voll und ganz. Frau List ist der Auffassung, dass sich am Beispiel des Kommissars und seiner schwierigen Fahndung die begrenzte Reichweite der Vernunft zeige. Das trifft zu, doch ist gerade Ingravallo jemand, der zur Meditation neigt, seine ersten Eindrücke langsam verdaut und sich zeitweise von seinen Intuitionen leiten lässt, ohne gleich die Schlussfolgerungen ziehen zu wollen. In einer Welt, in der alle plappern, übertreiben oder lügen, macht ihn sein meditatives Schweigen zum wahrhaft gad-dianischen Helden.

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Ilvano Caliaro: *Per una vita che sia vita. Studi su Carlo Michelstaedter*. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2017. VIII + 112 pp., pb., € 20.–

Carlo Michelstaedter (Gorizia, 1887–1910) is one of those lesser-known Italian writers whose work is studied comparatively little outside the Peninsula. He has nevertheless been the object of some considerable research since Sergio Campailla rediscovered him in the early 1970s, and there has been a renewed interest in his work following the centennial of his death in 2010. Generally, Michelstaedterian studies seems to rely on a certain fascination with the author's biography. In most accounts, Michelstaedter appears as a young, brilliant yet desperate student, who spent his formative years both in Austro-Hungarian and Florentine educational contexts; he was immersed in Italian as well as German cultural debates – until his suicide put an end to his studies at university: he shot himself soon after he completed his dissertation.

Michelstaedter grappled with nihilistic thought and with the paradox of trying to teach with words the uselessness – or rather noxiousness – of words themselves. For him, speech is only meaningful when it is capable of mercilessly ridding the speaker of the illusions and pleas that prevent human beings from understanding the pain of their existence and from living an authentic and ethically good life.

Michelstaedter's pursuit of what he called the 'true life' is the focus of Ilvano Caliaro's book, which compiles four essays previously published and slightly reworked for republication. One entirely new chapter complements these essays. The book is organized around the questions of absolute value and authentic life in Michelstaedter (pp. VI–VII). Chapter 1,

Voci, analyzes the so-called ‘preface’ to Michelstaedter’s thesis *La persuasione e la rettorica*, a kind of annotated catalogue of inspiring teachers and precursors to his own thinking. Caliaro outlines especially the searching character of Michelstaedter’s philosophical reflection, his emphasis on honesty, radicalness and solitude.

In Chapter 2, *Il “filosofo”*, Caliaro presents Michelstaedter’s own philosophical thinking (as well as the latter’s criticism of established schools of thought) and delineates the profile of the author’s “persuasore” (pp. 23ff.) – the ideal man who “owns himself” and lives a life of true values – pinpointing Socrates as a key role model. As the only chapter not previously published, it also has an introductory character, in that it contextualizes Michelstaedter’s thinking against the background of Nietzschean and Schopenhauerian thought and in that it sets the stage for the three subsequent chapters that compare Michelstaedter’s work with a variety of novelists and poets who either influenced him or were his contemporaries.

Caliaro’s longest chapter, *Con Tolstoj verso Gesù*, describes the influence of Tolstoy’s Christianity on Michelstaedter’s reception of the Gospels, including some precious remarks on the annotations in Michelstaedter’s own copies of them. Caliaro compellingly shows how the Russian novelist and the Gospel of John, despite not being mentioned in the “lista dei persuasi”, play a fundamental role in Michelstaedter’s understanding of Christ as an example of perfect morality, as an instantiation of justice in every single instance, even at the cost of one’s life.

Chapter 4, *Petrarca “filosofo”*, explores Michelstaedter’s leaning on Petrarch’s meditation on the world’s vanities and his borrowing of the expression “fondare in loco stabile sua speme” (*Triumphus Temporis*, v. 45). In this reconstruction, Petrarch finds the “loco stabile” in the metaphysical horizon of the Christian God, who preserves intrinsically good worldly values from annihilation. Michelstaedter, by contrast, requires every individual to be his own source of value through ethical action in every single moment, putting the making of absolute value before survival (p. 80). This chapter is a welcome contribution indeed, since previous research on Petrarch’s influence on Michelstaedter amounts to little more than a couple of articles. It is all the more perplexing though that the little research there is has not been referenced correctly (Raffaele Fiantanese’s study is referred to as “Raffaele Fiantese’s”, p. 69n. and p. 108).

The last chapter, *“Persuasione” a confronto*, compares Michelstaedter with the writer Scipio Slataper (Trieste, 1888–1915), who also was a student at the Istituto di Studi Superiori in Florence. The chapter presents details of both authors’ biographies and of their engagement with the Florentine cultural scene. Beginning with a brief resume of Michelstaedter’s thought which further condenses summaries Caliaro offers in previous sections, this chapter contrasts the young writer’s thinking with Slataper’s ethics, focusing on the key terms “work/action” and “justice”. Caliaro posits that the two authors share what Slataper called “metterci nella vita, contro l’intellettualismo [...] la fede si raggiunge con l’attività e non con il pensiero [...] la volontà cioè atto e umanità: cioè individuo in relazione con gli altri” (p. 103). Furthermore, he argues persuasively that Michelstaedter eventually refuses the social reality in which the actualization of the “good” should take place (p. 104).

Caliaro’s extensive use of original quotes in his analysis of literary influences on the author’s work is without a doubt an asset of the book, especially since some of the material is unpublished and thus accessible only in the archives of the Fondo Michelstaedter in Gorizia. While focusing on Michelstaedter’s quotes rather than engaging with the existing research on the young author, Caliaro paints a consistent and seamless picture of his thought. The result is a conceptual architecture so coherent that one would almost be tempted to overlook the dead ends and paradoxical elements highlighted by many other scholars as well as their – far from consensual – positions. In this regard, the book differs significantly from works that treat Michelstaedter from a philosophical point of view and

examine the consistency of his argumentation (e.g. La Rocca's *Nichilismo e retorica*, 1983, Brianese's *L'arco e il destino*, 1985/2010 or Bortoluzzi's *Carlo Michelstaedter e la testimonianza della verità dell'essere*, 2016). Unlike most of the existing studies, Caliaro attempts a positive reconstruction of the "persuasion", instead of discussing what it is not, or rather, defining it *ex negativo*. In so doing, he adopts a philological rather than a philosophical approach. Caliaro persuasively discusses the genesis of Michelstaedter's texts: He examines intertextual references and influences that possibly inspired the author, and thus opens a view on the discursive world Michelstaedter moved in and implicitly referred to while addressing specific concepts or resorting to peculiar words or images.

On the downside, apart from the rather scant discussion of previous research, Caliaro's approach to Michelstaedter's works occasionally seems to rely on Slataper's thought and terminology more than both the sources and the common reconstruction of Michelstaedter's philosophy in its critical reception would suggest. This becomes evident, for example, in the emphasis on the concept of "justice", more frequent in the Tergestine than in the Goritian writer, as well as the concept's identification with absolute value (pp. 25ff., pp. 71–72, pp. 86–p. 87, p. 97). In other words, one cannot help getting the impression that the thorough reconstruction of Michelstaedter's philosophy and its critical reception is corroborated through a Slataperian perspective. In this sense, a comparison with other attempts to define a positive Michelstaedterian ethics (including Storace's *L'essere come azione*, 2007) would have been helpful to substantiate the author's own position. Furthermore, it has to be mentioned that elemental mistakes, such as for Michelstaedter's date of death (p. VI, p. 70, p. 88), together with other minor errors, further dampen the book's persuasiveness.

In brief, new readers might fare better with Perego/Storace/Visone 2005 as an introduction to Michelstaedter (who offers a less rich use of original quotes but provides a far more generous bibliography), whereas advanced Michelstaedter scholars might appreciate this chance of accessing Caliaro's earlier contributions in a single work.

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Sabine du Crest: *L'art de vivre ensemble. Objets frontière de la Renaissance au XXI^e siècle* (Collection Objets frontière dirigée par Sabine du Crest). Rom: Gangemi editore spa international, 2017. 160 S., kart., zahlreiche farbige Abb., € 20.–

Sabine du Crests *L'art de vivre ensemble* gehört zu den in ihrem methodischen Ausgangspunkt innovativsten und anregungsreichsten Büchern der letzten Jahre. Die Autorin weist ihrer Methode einen Platz auf der Schnittfläche der Forschungsfelder *Materielle Kultur* und *Transkulturalität* (S. 5) zu. Unter Grenzbjekten (objets frontière, border objects) versteht sie in Europa produzierte Gegenstände, die aus außereuropäischen Gegenständen hergestellt wurden (S. 9). Die Natur der nichteuropäischen Objekte kann variieren, es kann sich um künstlerische, kunsthandwerkliche oder religiöse Gegenstände handeln, insofern eine solche Unterteilung den den entsprechenden Kulturen eigenen Konzepten überhaupt angemessen ist. Neben *artificialia* werden auch *naturalia* betrachtet. Der auf benachbarten Gebieten arbeitende Forscher und insbesondere der Philologe wird hier sogleich bemerken, dass das Konzept der Grenzbjekte ein enormes kognitives Potential besitzt und auf andere Forschungsgegenstände übertragen und erweitert oder begrenzt werden kann.

Der zweite methodische Trumpf, den du Crest elegant und versiert ausspielt, besteht in der Konzeptualisierung der Objekte als Subjekte. In ihrer bravourösen *Introduction* regt sie dazu an, die Grenzbjekte nicht als bestimmten Kulturräumen entstammende Gegenstände anzusehen, die von Menschen mit anderen Kulturen entstammenden Objekten verbunden wurden, sondern als Verbindungen, die Objekte miteinander eingehen, um in