

Catholic theology remains amongst the Romans of today: secular, cosmopolitan, twenty-first century Rome is a far cry from the medieval hamlet ‘liberated’ by Piedmontese troops in 1870.

Evicted from eternity is perhaps most compelling as a straightforward ethnography. Herzfeld has an intimate understanding of – and a profound love for – the people of Monti, their ways and their city. The writing is consistently evocative: Rome is described as a ‘city of saucy impertinence and robust scandal’ (p. 9), its urban landscape ‘a lunatic archaeology’s scrambled detritus’ (p. 2), its inhabitants filled with ‘salty humor... warm gregariousness... and the towering strength and self-confidence with which they meet [life’s] disappointments as well as its excitements’ (p. xi). Herzfeld has a keen ear for the cadences and intimacies of Romanesco dialect, and revels in the local cuisine, ‘a living tribute to manual dexterity and quick wits rather than to monumental recipes moldering in leather-bound tomes’ (p. 13). Anyone familiar with the Eternal City will instantly recognise this riotous energy, which courses through the book itself.

References

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Piero Gobetti and the politics of liberal revolution, by James Martin, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 222 pp., £52.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-230-60274-8

Until recently, Piero Gobetti has been a little known figure in the English-speaking world. References to this firebrand young liberal and anti-Fascist intellectual are usually confined to footnotes in the better-known tale of Gramsci’s early activism among the Fiat workers in Turin, or the wider story of the rapidly tightening censorship of the public sphere in the early days of Fascism. However, this is beginning to change with a spate of recent publications. James Martin’s book is an excellent English-language introduction to Gobetti and places the ideas of this ‘revolutionary liberal’ – who has, controversially, been both claimed and rejected by the liberal, socialist, communist and republican traditions in Italy in the 95 years since his death – within the context of the broader liberal tradition for the first time. In doing so, Martin shows how Gobetti’s ideas have implications that go beyond the Italian context, and that of the turbulent post-war climate in which they were developed.

Born in 1901, Gobetti's public career lasted only seven years, ending with his untimely death in 1926. In that time, he made a name for himself as an editor, journalist and political commentator of singularly original thought, and as one of Mussolini's most outspoken opponents. A self-styled 'revolutionary liberal', he witnessed the factory workers' movement in early 1920s Turin at close range and, inspired by his contact with Gramsci and the Fiat workers, he sought to reinvigorate traditional liberalism to take account of these modern struggles for autonomy. By 1922, his 'instinctive' opposition to the growing threat of Fascism increasingly absorbed his attentions. Through his famous political journal *La rivoluzione liberale*, Gobetti publicised his own intransigent views, and brought together the voices of some of Italy's best-known intellectuals.

Describing Fascism bitterly as the 'autobiography of a nation', he opposed the parliamentary system of liberal Italy as much as he did Mussolini, seeing them as two sides of the same coin. Equally, he castigated the Italian people for their support of the would-be dictator as much as he criticised Fascism itself. Before his death at the age of just 24, he had directed much of his intellectual energy towards theorising a new kind of politics that would give Italy the mature, robust democracy the country needed, and inoculate it against the rise of a movement like Fascism in the future.

James Martin's book gives an excellent explanation of exactly what this 'revolutionary liberalism' meant, its intellectual origins, what it might have meant in practice and what it has to offer the broader European liberal tradition. His is the first book to place Gobetti's political thinking properly in the broader British and continental liberal traditions and as such offers a new framework for understanding Gobetti's liberalism as well as an introduction to his thinking. Martin also sets Gobetti firmly within the Italian context and is adept at explaining Gobetti's Italian influences, from the economist Luigi Einaudi and conservative Gaetano Mosca to the democrat Salvemini and, of course, Gramsci. Although Gobetti borrowed something from all of these very different thinkers, he ultimately used all these ideas to formulate his own, unique, ideas of liberalism.

For Martin, the defining characteristic of Gobetti's liberalism is its agonistic dimension, his continuing emphasis on the necessity for constant struggle and conflict in order for a robust democratic system to work. It was the tendency of the Giolittian liberal system, as much as Mussolini's Fascism, to suppress conflict that caused Gobetti to oppose both so virulently. Gobetti associated liberalism with the drive for liberation and autonomy; when his ideas are read in this key, it is much easier to understand how he read 'liberal' tendencies both into the Russian revolution and into the revolutionary socialist factory workers' movement.

Gobetti's theorising was not, however, without its limits and inconsistencies and Martin acknowledges the limitations of a study that tries to explain a political system that Gobetti himself did not set out systematically but worked out over time, mainly through his journalistic writings. He is also not afraid to explore the limits of 'revolutionary liberalism'. Martin shows how the encounter with Fascism, rather than helping to define Gobetti's liberalism, ultimately revealed the inadequacies inherent in a system that lauded the Turin working classes' struggle for autonomy, while ultimately relying on a small group of like-minded intellectuals to lead Italy's liberal revolution. When it came to a concrete political struggle, particularly in the months following the disappearance of Matteotti when it seemed as if public outrage actually had the potential to bring down Mussolini, Gobetti was out of his depth.

Martin's book is at its most original in the final chapter, where he discusses the possible relevance of Gobetti's revolutionary or agonistic liberalism to twenty-first century democratic politics. Gobetti was formulating his theories in a very different world from ours. His admiration of communism was based on the liberating potential of the Russian revolution as he saw it from Italy in the early 1920s. Equally, his anti-Fascism was based on a very early apprehension of the movement and was formed primarily by his aversion to the illiberal way in which Italy was governed up to then. It failed to take account of the fact that Fascism represented a completely new threat, and one with a European dimension. What, then, might his theories have to say to contemporary readers and democratic citizens? It is Martin's contention that since Gobetti's liberalism has continued conflict at its core, it is a more inclusive system than traditional liberalism, where debate is constrained by an acceptance of rational core values derived from the Western Enlightenment tradition. Equally, Gobetti's idea of liberty is public and collective rather than individual; it is the freedom of social groups to engage in the struggle for autonomy rather than the 'negative freedoms' from government interference of rights-based liberal thought.

Despite its inevitable limitations and inconsistencies, Martin convincingly argues that Gobetti's revolutionary liberalism, with its emphasis on continued, robust political conflict rather than a consensus which will almost inevitably exclude some groups, along with its focus on the public and collective dimensions of freedom, has a lot to offer Western democratic thought as we struggle to engage minority groups in the political process and continually reconsider the concepts of citizenship and civil society. This book makes a worthy contribution to the fields of modern Italian studies and political theory, both introducing Gobetti to an English-speaking audience – ably explaining the Italian context to those who might not be familiar with it – and demonstrating Gobetti's relevance to twenty-first century debates about liberalism, democracy and citizenship.

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Fardelli d'Italia? Conseguenze nazionali e transnazionali delle politiche di cittadinanza italiane, by Guido Tintori, Rome, Carocci, 2009, 128 pp., €23.50 (paperback), ISBN 978-88-43-04977-6

Popular debate in Italy concerning the naturalisation of *oriundi* has rarely moved beyond the realm of sport where the moot point is about increasing the chances of a medal at the Olympics or getting around quotas on foreign players in a football team. However, since the 1990s and often out of the public eye, there has been a huge rise in the numbers of descendants of Italian emigrants acquiring Italian citizenship, particularly in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. This short, important book by Guido Tintori provides a detailed analysis of the dimensions of the phenomenon as well as the unintended consequences at national and transnational level of a citizenship law that continues to privilege 'ethnic' roots over residence. It is accompanied by a 60-minute DVD film by Argentine director