

In conclusion, it should be highlighted that the volume falls squarely within international historiographical debates, but also opens up new research scenarios, in particular on the economic policy of the *ancien régime* Italian states and on how the institutions dealt with the structural changes brought about by the late eighteenth-century revolutions.

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doi:10.1017/mit.2019.17

**Pietro Mignosi, *L'eredità dell'Ottocento***, with an afterword by ROSANNA MARSALA, Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2018, 144 pp., € 20.00 (paperback), ISBN 9788893591706

The volume is part of a series published by Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, devoted to the reprinting of every book edited by the renowned liberal antifascist Pietro Gobetti (1901–1926), which are now extremely difficult to find on the book market. The aim of the series is to protect and promote Gobetti's editorial work and to transmit it to new generations.

This volume contains an anastatic printing of Pietro Mignosi's *L'eredità dell'Ottocento* (*The Heritage of the Nineteenth Century*, 1925) with an afterword by Rosanna Marsala and Pierangelo Gentile and a short biography of the author. Piero Mignosi, a Sicilian Catholic thinker, poet and critic, chose to publish most of his essays with Gobetti in an attempt to escape his provincial environment. His initially problematic, then cordial relationship with Gobetti is documented by the letters they exchanged, still unpublished, which are quoted in the afterword.

*L'eredità dell'Ottocento* opens with an introduction (initially conceived as a separate essay) attempting to trace the origins of Italian Romanticism in the eighteenth century, particularly as regards the question of imagination, as theorised by Giambattista Vico and Gian Vincenzo Gravina. While postulating Vico as a forerunner of Romanticism was not a particularly original stance at the time, Gravina was rarely included in the discussion. In the ensuing chapters, Mignosi identifies Giosuè Carducci as the chronological limit of Italian Romanticism and as the founder of a truly spiritual poetry – capable of generating '*una realtà unitaria di sensibilità e di coscienza*' (p. 31) – which counterbalances the indecisive and unoriginal Christianity of Manzoni (in this sense, he interprets Carducci as anti-Manzoni). Obsessed with the spiritual values of literature, Mignosi then argues that all nineteenth-century Italian 'laical' (*areligiosa*) literature has a concealed leaning towards the divine, but is incapable of transforming its sentimental dimension into a fully religious one. Giovanni Pascoli and Gabriele d'Annunzio's works can therefore be read as misunderstandings (*equivoci*) – sterile literary experiments that do not solve the problem of the sentimental and leave their promises unfulfilled. Mignosi identifies a 'mystical' trend in some modern thinkers like Croce and Papini. He seems to find a good example of modern epic writing in the work of Giovanni Verga, praised for 'correcting Manzoni' (p. 56). Towards the end, Mignosi indicates a return to Leopardi as the most promising direction for modern Italian literature.

The essay, though useful as an insight into (shyly) antifascist culture and the canonisation of nineteenth-century authors such as Leopardi and Manzoni – a topic of the utmost interest, given that the Fascist regime appropriated their legacy – is very difficult to read: as Rosanna Marsala

explains, Mignosi's main points on art and literature would become clearer in his later works (p. 125). An annotated edition would have made this essay more accessible.

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doi:10.1017/mit.2019.13

**Catholicism and Cinema: Modernization and Modernity**, by GIANLUCA DELLA MAGGIORE and TOMASO SUBINI, Sesto San Giovanni, Mimesis, 2018, 244pp., €20.00 (paperback), ISBN 9788869770760

Over the years, a segment of the accumulated literature on the relationship between Church and cinema in Italy has sometimes fallen into the temptation to view the Church simply as the great censor and the representative of a policy of control, an institution with the foresight to grasp and exploit the opportunities offered by the seventh art before everyone else. But Gianluca della Maggiore and Tomaso Subini's book designates itself as different right from the subtitle.

That 'and' between 'modernization' and 'modernity' manifests an intention which the analyses and insights that unfold over 200-plus pages do not betray: the intention to spotlight the ambivalence of the Church's position, permanently divided between the desire to benefit from what technical and scientific progress offers for evangelisation, and the fear that the changes brought about by modern advances might harm the Church and undermine its role in society. The authors re-examine and rework the previous readings, describing this dialectic as 'the dynamic processes through which Catholicism has interacted with modernity, creating parallels between the evolution of the Catholic movement and that of contemporary mass movements' (p. 9). Within this tension, a series of events and processes emerge on various levels: the confessional and moral beside the economic, political and aesthetic. The book describes the relationship between Church and cinema in Italy as multifaceted – a relationship that takes different forms over time, finding a balance sometimes when the most conservative impulses are in the ascendant, sometimes when an openness to modernisation, progress, and the winds of social and cultural change predominate.

The volume has two sections: 'Catholic reconquests, totalitarian projects, global perspectives' and 'Sexual and devotional excitement'. Section one covers the first few decades of the twentieth century, taking the analysis up to the threshold of the Second World War; the second section deals with the next 30 years, focusing especially on the key figures and events in the Church's cultural policy on cinema in Italy in the 1950s and 1960s. The two periods reflect different perspectives. In the early twentieth century, the Church's approach to cinema typically involved observing and discussing developments abroad, where cinema had become a more significant proposition, necessitating an urgent risk-benefit appraisal. The analyses in the first part of the book tend, therefore, to look beyond national borders, illuminating the complex web of links that developed between the Vatican and the USA in the 1920s and 1930s. By contrast, in the postwar decades, the Church's teaching with regard to cinema was built almost entirely on what was happening in Italy, sometimes in narrow discussions between conflicting protagonists and movements within the Catholic world. The second part of *Catholicism and Cinema*, then, takes a decidedly local perspective, concentrating on the relationships and interplay between the Church's cultural policy and the national context in Italy.

In both cases, the process by which the documents on the Church's teaching about cinema was developed is pieced together 'from within', based on in-depth knowledge of the Catholic world, its