

In addition to lacking an organised response, newspapers found themselves significantly erasing the line dividing fact from fiction. The MCP was more successful and effective in dealing with popular cultural forms, such as theatre and music, even though they were potential sites for expression of disagreement.

The last two chapters of the book focus on Fascist propaganda's inability to adapt to the evolving historical situation. They address the regime's failure to mould its message according to the changed circumstances. In particular, as Petrella writes, 'the regime became estranged from its people' (p. 6) and the media avoided dealing with the human aspects of war. This defective approach proved particularly consequential in 1942 and 1943, as the ineptness of the regime's efforts to convince the Italians of the country's might became apparent in the face of military setbacks and increasing air raids by the British. The Italians' morale fell to ever-lower levels. The dire situation of food shortages and escalating bombings, along with lack of reliable news, steered Italians towards resenting the regime's corruption and inefficiency. Internal struggles within the regime's hierarchy made the work of propaganda even less successful, while changes at the top of MCP did little to improve the situation. As a result, the MCP was unable to incite Italian hatred against the enemy. British propaganda hoped to take advantage of the Italians' loss of morale and convince them of the regime's faults and responsibilities. The Italian secret police, OVRA, indeed reported several cases of disaffection among the population. As the British Foreign Ministry monitoring the situation realised, though, Italians were not ready to mount a serious opposition to Mussolini and his government.

The book offers a valuable contribution to the analysis of propaganda in Fascist Italy. It shows in detail MCP's inner workings during the critical years from 1938 to 1943, and also addresses potential forms of opposition among the population. On this latter point, however, the book reveals its limitation. Petrella mostly hints at the issue of consent and does not develop a sustained discussion around it. What did it mean for Italians to dismiss official news or tune in to *Radio Londra* for alternative information, for example? Scholars of Fascism have long been battling with these questions and one should certainly not expect Petrella to resolve them. Nevertheless, a more direct assessment of this central problem would have strengthened the book's principal and successful goal, which is to look at Fascist propaganda not as a monolith but as a changing and often contradictory enterprise. If propaganda indeed collapsed under the impact of war on the home front, we need to assess what, if anything, made Fascist propaganda successful before it crumbled.

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**Italy, Islam and the Islamic World: Representations and Reflections, from 9/11 to the Arab Uprisings**, by Charles Burdett, Oxford, Peter Lang, 2016, x+228 pp., £40.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-3-034-31976-8

Charles Burdett's book, *Italy, Islam and the Islamic World*, investigates the controversies about Islam and Muslims in contemporary Italy within the contexts of 9/11, military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the 2011 Egyptian revolution. It seeks to provide a rhetorical analysis of

the discursive framework within which the emergence of Islam as an internal actor in Italian society has been articulated by a selection of well-known journalists and writers.

The study's most innovative aspect is to analyse Italian representations of Islam as a practice of translation and cultural interchange. In describing his theoretical framework, Burdett refers to critical writing on autobiography, to the sociology of cultures, to cultural criticism, and to the concept of translating cultures.

According to the author, Islam and its representations contribute to the re-definition of what constitutes Italian culture, its historical roots and its present. This approach is productive, as it allows studying Italian culture from a transnational and transcultural perspective.

This study reflects the broader academic movement of examining cultural exchange and cultural mobility, aimed at reformulating hegemonic ideas of 'national' cultures as well as the individual sense of subjectivity. For example, Burdett conceives translation not as a process between cultures but as constitutive of culture, an understanding that reflects the 'translation turn' in Cultural Studies.

The first chapter is a detailed review of Oriana Fallaci's Islam trilogy (*La rabbia e l'orgoglio*, *La forza della ragione*, and *Oriana Fallaci intervista sé stessa*) and argues that the success of the trilogy is due to both rhetorical (her emotional state) and sociological (her cultural authority) reasons. Burdett, however, does not point out another important element of Fallaci's identity central to the success of her racist and Islamophobic writings: she is a feminist icon. As a high-profile woman who pioneered a professional field that, in Italy, was long reserved almost exclusively for men, she asserts her epistemic privilege to claim that Muslim women need to be 'saved' by a culture that, in her view, is inherently misogynistic. Orientalist views of Islam by Italian feminist writers are quite common. Mainstream Italian feminist journalists, with a limited understanding of Islam and the Middle East and with a weak grasp of analytical and critical theories, appear incapable of producing a discourse that goes beyond the binary opposition of universalism to cultural relativism. Caught within this simplistic and orientalist frame, any discourse that challenges this binary is considered misogynist. Building on Burdett's work, one could engage in an analysis on Orientalism, Islamophobia, and racism in Italian feminism.

Burdett focuses on those rhetorical mechanisms of Fallaci's narration that generate racism and correctly underscores Fallaci's adoption of a demotic style and an emotional language. He eloquently explains that she isolates specific incidents and presents them as symptomatic of the Islamic world to construct a homogenised reality of Islam. This extensive and accurate analysis introduces numerous original elements that merit historical contextualisation within Fallaci's work. As such, however, a question lingers: did Fallaci play the role of the public intellectual or, by perpetuating stereotypes, did she anticipate the current wave of racist populism?

Chapter two reviews the works of Tiziano Terzani, Lilly Gruber, Giuliana Sgrena, Sergio Ramazzotti, and Giuseppe Goffredo from the early 2000s. Burdett analyses them as travel writings, emphasizing that they represent encounters with the alterity that take place within a specific power structure. These writers are differently positioned in the media sphere. For example, Terzani began his cosmopolitan career at the German newspaper *Der Spiegel* and developed a humanistic approach to international politics whereas Gruber, a journalist on the RAI news programme TG1, developed a sceptical approach to mainstream representations of Middle East politics following her experiences in Iraq. Several questions remain unanswered and open to future research: how were these works received? How are their narratives developed? What is their relevance today?

Chapter three discusses the representations of Islamic communities in Italy by reviewing media coverage, the discourse of prominent Italian Muslims (Yahia Pallavicini, Younis Tawfiq,

and Suad Sbai), sociological studies of Islam (those by Khaled Fouad Allam, Stefano Allievi, and Renzo Guolo), and the research of historian Franco Cardini. The work of Italian sociologists of religions to fill the gaps in the knowledge of contemporary Islam represents the main contribution to deconstructing deeply rooted stereotypes. As Burdett's analysis clearly shows, however, Islamophobia continues to dominate public discourse in Italy. Orientalism continues to inform this discourse, and even some prominent Italian Muslim women, including the president of the Association of the Moroccan Community of Women in Italy, Souad Sbai, integrate its main themes, opposing alleged 'traditional values', unawareness of women's rights, and 'cultural limits' to the necessity for an 'evolution' to modern Italian values. This is another sign that a more serious engagement with the history and the politics of Arab feminism is needed in Italian scholarship.

Chapter four applies Tzvetan Todorov's theories on cultural interactions cultures to analyse literary works by Amara Lakhous, Younis Tawfiq, Ghanda Ghazi, and Sumaya Abdel Qader. These writers belong to four different generations and they observe the interactions between Italians and Muslims (both Italian Muslims and new migrants) in three cities: Rome, Turin, and Milan. The focus shifts from narrating Islam to narrating Italian society from the perspective of the new Italians: a standpoint that, also through irony, reveals contradictions and deconstructs stereotypes. These writers' contribution to Italian literature's renewal is not only thematic or political, but also aesthetic. In adopting Italian, they participate in a new literary turn and become extremely relevant to Burdett's broader project of translating Italian culture.

Chapter five provides an overview of books published in Italian after the 2010 and 2011 revolutions. The focus is on journalists' writings, specifically those of Domenico Quirico, Michela Mercuri and Stefano Maria Torelli, Azzurra Meringolo, Vittorio Ianari and Andrea Riccardi, Imma Vitelli, Vincenzo Mattei, Stefano Savona, and Giovanna Locatelli. While some of these works introduce what were then unknown voices of the revolutions, others, such as Quirico's book, build on Orientalist stereotypes and add nothing to our understanding of the ongoing cultural and political processes in the Arab world today.

An exhaustive account of the discourse about Islam and the Arab world in Italy is an illusory ambition, and Burdett is clear that this is not his primary aim. Since the focus is on Italian media discourse about Islam, Muslims and the Middle East, the picture can only be dismaying. Burdett is correct to analyse these voices in that his goal is to shed light on the hegemonic narratives. A next step in this research could be to examine the Italian counter-hegemonic narratives about Islam, Muslims and the Middle East: e.g. journalist Paola Caridi's work on the Invisible Arabs (Feltrinelli, 2008); the writings of a new generation of freelance Italian journalists who are fluent in Arabic and have covered the 2011 uprisings from the field; as well as the innovative research of transnational Italian Middle East studies scholars.

This study admirably demonstrates the relevance of discourse about Islam in discussions about Italian culture and Italian mobility, and illustrates the fundamental need to build genuine collaborations between Italian and Middle East Studies experts. Together with texts and ideas, disciplines also travel, and it is perhaps time to cross borders to engage in a fruitful interdisciplinary collaboration.

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