

highlighting the irreconcilable tensions between bourgeois individualism and Fascism's demand for totalitarian control over the private and public lives of its citizens.

Given the scope of this volume there are necessarily many avenues that are touched on only briefly, such as the very different reception that male and female homosexuality received under Fascism. In a tantalising aside, it is mentioned that the Rocco commission regarded lesbianism as 'the most despicable' sort of same-sex offence given the difficulty of proving a homosexual relationship between women. In later footnotes, however, we are told that men and women suspected of homosexual activity were equally subjected to invasive physical examinations. Ultimately, Benadusi suggests that Fascism's 'almost non-existent interest in female sexuality, except as being there for the pleasure of men or for reproduction', helps explain its attitude towards lesbianism, which it regarded as 'mental illness, a syndrome of hysteria, or at most a sign of the devil' (p. 272).

Benadusi's book is well translated and written in refreshingly readable prose. Although there are moments in the account when the reader feels themselves occupying the discomfiting place of a voyeuristic Fascist bureaucrat monitoring private lives, this element of the author's analysis also sets it apart from any generalised account that might marginalise the issue of homosexuality by maintaining abstract and impersonal constructs. Beyond its importance as a specific study of the Italian case, this work shows that bodies cannot be seen as 'ahistorical, pre-cultural or natural objects' (Grosz 1994, p. x). Here the author's intimate accounts serve to reveal how the human body inevitably features at the heart of any totalitarian project: bodies that must be examined, measured, judged, isolated, punished, and circumscribed so as to be controlled and managed by a pre-determined social order.

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Jennifer Griffiths  
 American University of Rome  
 j.griffiths@aur.edu

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**Italy Today: The Sick Man of Europe**, edited by Andrea Mammone and Giuseppe A. Veltri, London-New York, Routledge, 2010, 257 pp., £28.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-415-56160-0

*Italy Today* opens with an extract from a 2006 edition of the popular TV programme *Le Iene*, showed a number of Italian MPs unable to answer correctly even basic questions on current affairs. Recently, *Le Iene* subjected a newly elected MP of the Movimento 5 Stelle to a similar examination, resulting in an equally embarrassing situation where the latter failed to answer simple questions about the European economy. Leaving aside the changed political context and different background of the *Grillini*, this incident inevitably revives memories of the Berlusconi

era, and as such suggests – even if only in a symbolic way – a continuity of problems that cannot be relegated to the figure of Berlusconi alone. As Paul Corner explains in his foreword to the book, *Italy Today* challenges the centrality of Berlusconi to Italian decline by turning attention to long-term questions of politics and society (p. xv).

The 17 essays gathered here are spread among five sections that cover a variety of relevant issues, ranging from policy-making to the rise of the Northern League, the Church and the mafia. There is, nevertheless, a slight imbalance in the themes addressed, the focus being mostly on politics and political economy. In contrast, there are only two chapters dedicated to problematic memories of past conflicts, which play an important role in Italian society; the South is studied almost exclusively from the perspective of mafia and organised crime; and the issue of gender discrimination is barely addressed, perhaps in line with the overall aim of the book not to indulge in criticisms of Berlusconi, a figure generally associated (outside Italy, at least) with sexism. Yet, the difficult position of women in Italy is a more deeply rooted problem, as the dramatic explosion of *femicidi* in recent years demonstrates.

Part I is an all-embracing section which tries to cover a number of key issues, beginning with Carlo Carboni's chapter on Italy's 'democratic malaise', a result of the 'reciprocal mistrust that exists between the mass of people and the few elites' (p. 19). If some of the findings in the first part of the chapter are rather self-evident, for example regarding the lack of political renewal and the general 'disenchantment towards public life' (p. 23), the second part offers some interesting insights into recent changes in Italian society, such as the move to 'cynical' individualism and indifference towards public life. According to Carboni, Italian society has become a 'minimum democracy' in that it seems to have abandoned 'the idea of a real democracy that provides for a responsible participation of the citizens and of their associations in order to make public decisions and choices' (p. 26), leaving a gap between politics and citizenry. For readers today, Carboni's subsequent hint at Beppe Grillo's gatherings – as an example of 'attentive and competent citizenry' (p. 30) – reads as an uncanny pre-announcement of the success of the Movimento 5 Stelle during the national elections of February 2013, to the detriment of traditional parties on the left and right.

The next two chapters are largely built on quantitative data; this and the occasional use of economic jargon means they are not always easy for the non-social scientist to follow. Catherine Moury demonstrates that Italian electoral programmes lack precision and thus fail to inform voters about future government policies, whereas inter-party conflicts have made coalition decision-making ineffective, with politicians focused on short-term rather than long-term interests, an issue that returns in other chapters as well. Nicolò Conti follows up with an analysis of programmatic supply, arguing that ideological diversity has reduced over time, although he points out how electoral laws and public financing – two heavily debated themes in recent times – have also contributed to Italy's economic problems.

Next, Christophe Roux discusses Italian federalism, placing it in an international context, whereas Stefania Bernini takes us on an excursus into the world of the Catholic Church, with a rich analysis of the Church's political influence in the regulation of medically assisted procreation and family politics more generally. In the final chapter in this section, Chris Hanretty explores the historical roots of the media's lack of autonomy from politics, a 'chronic' problem preceding Berlusconi's entry into politics.

Part II offers an insight into difficult memories of political violence and Fascism, which add another piece to the puzzle of Italy's 'sickness'. In spite of two interesting and thought-provoking contributions on recovery processes, justice and non-reconciliation with regard to violent conflicts in the 1970s (Cento Bull), and on the 'material' presence of Fascism in the built

environment (Arthurs), the section does not really do justice to the role of collective and cultural memory of past conflicts in Italy. Even today, conflicting and counter-memories of the past vie for consensus and are continuously instrumentalised. This section on memory in contemporary Italy would have benefitted, in my opinion, from a reference to the legacies of the Holocaust, the Resistance, and police repression and torture that continue to divide the country.

Part III takes up an important issue in contemporary Italy: immigration and xenophobia. Martina Avanza challenges the Northern League's apparently 'inoffensive racism', unveiling a very precise strategy of exclusion, whereas Nando Sigona's valuable contribution describes the situation of Roma and Sinti communities in Italy, demonstrating that the Northern League does not have the exclusive rights to xenophobia. Finally, Eva Garau examines the role of the Church in public debates about immigration. While a potentially interesting discussion, Garau limits herself to the analysis of two documents that, she argues, give accounts of the Church's new position on immigration, without, however, discussing their actual impact on society.

Part IV is dedicated to the *Mezzogiorno*. The chapters on the 'Ndrangheta (Giap Parini) and Camorra (Allum and Allum) give detailed analyses of the mafia's alliances with mainstream politics, clientelism and the continuation of organized crime after the Tangentopoli affair, although the analysis of the South is not limited to the problem of organized crime alone. Thus this section reconnects with the chapter that opens the next- and final-section of the volume, which explores the lack of industrialization in the South (Iona, Leonida, Sobbrío). Part V itself returns to the economic analyses that dominated in Part I. The chapter on industrialisation is complemented by an important contribution on family firms in Italy (Minetti), and a modest though interesting contribution about the implementation of European funding (Simona Milio), which shows once again how divided northern and southern regions continue to be. Finally, Marco Simoni describes the alliance between the centre-left and trade unions in the 1990s in his discussion of labour and welfare reforms, another theme I felt could have been explored more.

On the whole, *Italy Today* is a valuable contribution to the study of Italian society, politics and economy, with a few interesting – and often interconnected – case studies as well as more general essays that not only discuss the specific problems of Italy but also place it in a wider, European context. However, the dominance of political and economic themes in the book means that several relevant areas of research are ignored or underdeveloped. In addition, recent developments in the political and economic sphere – mostly Mario Monti's labour/pension reforms and, of course, the rise of the Movimento 5 Stelle – call for a follow-up volume that may continue the debate.

Andrea Hajek

*Institute of Advanced Study, University of Warwick*

*andrea Hajek@gmail.com*

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**In the Name of Italy: Nation, Family, and Patriotism in a Fascist Court**, by Maura E. Hametz, New York, Fordham University Press, 2012, 278 pp., \$45.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0-8232-4339-6

Maura Hametz's *In the Name of Italy* is a book with a singular focus: Luigia Barbarovich Paulovich's successful struggle to keep the Fascist regime from 'restoring' her name to its