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BOOK REVIEWS

Power and Magic in Italy, by Thomas Hauschild, translated by Jeremy Gaines, New York-Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2010, xxvi + 230 pp., $90.00/£53.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-84545-482-1

Published in German in 2002, Thomas Hauschild's *Power and Magic in Italy* is now available to English-speaking readers in Jeremy Gaines' translation as volume 13 of the EASA (European Association of Social-Anthropologists) series for Berghahn Books. In this highly readable but very dense book, Hauschild presents the results of a long-term research project in Ripacandida, an agrotown in the Southern Italian region of Basilicata, investigating the peculiar hybridisations between religion, magic, science and social, political and criminal power that exist in the area. Hauschild combines attention to phenomena that belong to the field of the irrational with a lucid analysis of gender and social roles, the political power of the Church, the continuity between past and present and the construction of tradition.

Power and Magic in Italy oscillates between a journal-like chronicle of Hauschild's Italian experiences and a cultivated and complex contextualisation of phenomena within a strongly interdisciplinary theoretical framework. In this way, such phenomena as the survival of the dead, evil eye, witchcraft and the role of saints in Catholic liturgy are assessed through a double gaze that constantly shifts from analysis of the observed community to broad reflection and vice versa. For example, Hauschild locates local superstitions concerning the dead and the worship of saints in a productive dialogue with theology, history of art and literary studies, rethinking the case study of Ripacandida in the light of theological reflections on the hereafter from Dante to the present day.

From the examples provided in the book, magic appears to survive side by side in Ripacandida with a deeply secularised society. This makes the case study important for two reasons. First, this subterranean hybridism sheds new light on the peculiarity of the Southern Italian case, as a border and liminal region between the 'first' and the 'third' worlds, paving the way for new research in the field. Second, the case study challenges the widely held conception of 'modern' and 'primitive' as opposites, stimulating reflection on notions of modernity and secularisation, as well as on the constant need for their redefinition.

Power and Magic in Italy avoids the 'orientalism' common to many studies of the Italian south written by outsiders: the potential cultural clash between the book's northern European and non-Catholic author and his Mediterranean, Catholic and superstitious subject does not result in a patronising or proto-colonialist gaze, but rather engenders a productive tension that turns into reciprocal dialogue. By fully acknowledging the rich complexity of the relationships between Italy and Germany from Goethe to the present day, Hauschild sets his own individuality as a contemporary German scholar as the very pivot of his Italian experience. Cultural shock is thus converted into a lucid analysis of

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cultural differences, within the framework of a common European identity. Even the persistent, traumatic memories of war become, in Hauschild's Italian experience, an instrument of inter-cultural dialogue.

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Mass culture and Italian society from Fascism to the Cold War, by David Forgacs and Stephen Gundle, 2007, xiv + 351 pp., Bloomington, Indiana University Press, US$24.95, ISBN 978-0-253-21948-0

Mass culture and Italian society from Fascism to the Cold War examines what its authors describe as 'a relatively early' but nonetheless 'decisive' phase in the evolution of modern mass culture and cultural consumption in Italy. Forgacs and Gundle attribute both integrative and disintegrative functions to this developing mass culture: integrative in the sense that it helped to 'make Italian society more visible and audible to its own members', on such 'national occasions as sporting events and song festivals' (p. 2); disintegrative, in that it 'put in circulation words, sounds, and images from other societies (which) fueled private aspirations and desires, changed perceptions of what were deemed acceptable sexual behavior and gender roles, and drove a wedge between generations, helping to create new social demarcations' (p. 2).

Since the book deals with mass culture, it must address the issue of reception. It is in this regard, through the use of 117 oral testimonies conducted in 1991–1992 by the authors and by Paola Pallavicini and Marcella Filippa, that *Mass culture and Italian society* makes its most innovative contribution. The result is that the Italian consumer, too often faceless, assumes a flesh-and-blood character here, a real achievement.

The authors make extensive use of the testimonies as well as of polls conducted by Italian firms and agencies between the mid-1930s and mid-1950s. They identify and illustrate areas in which emerged 'new "practices of the self", to use Michel Foucault's expression, and ... changes in collective cultural behaviour' (p. 64). Such areas included the dance hall, the sporting field, the beach and the theatre, often neutral turf where the young could mingle and get away with wearing revealing clothes. Along with these locales, other elements, of class for example, of regional identification and of Americanisation added to the process of cultural change. These factors might be revealed in the preference for the elegant Hollywood look of Grace Kelly or the more earthy, and vulgar, *maggiorate* style of Silvana Pampanini.

With respect to the Fascist era, Forgacs and Gundle reject the claims of Emilio Gentile (and others) that Fascism amounted to a 'lay religion', which 'effectively shaped the mentality of the Italian people, or at the very least bound them into a transient emotional complicity' (p. 2); in fact, the regime could do little to moderate or control the march of liberating consumerism.

Post-war Christian Democracy fared no better than pre-war Fascism in its efforts to constrain consumer society. However, Fascist and Christian Democrat attempts at containment often diverged in that Italians generally and traditionally identified much