

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The book reviews by Albertazzi, Fantoni, Ghirardini, Griffiths, Hajek, Massaccesi and O'Connor were inadvertently omitted from Modern Italy 18.3. Taylor & Francis would like to apologise to all those concerned for this production error.*

**Lega & Padania. Storie e luoghi delle camicie verdi**, by Gianluca Passarelli and Dario Tuorto, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2012, 229 pp., €16.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-88-15-23777-4

Like other similar parties that have achieved considerable success in recent decades, the Lega Nord (LN) continues to attract much interest from scholars, however they may decide to define it (i.e. 'extreme right', 'populist', 'radical right', and more). Since 2000, there have been several monographs dedicated to this party, with recent examples including Zaslove (2011) and De Matteo (2011). Among the many questions puzzling observers of the LN, two are particularly interesting: to what extent has the party 'normalised', thus becoming 'part of the system' (after serving in government for a good eight of the last 13 years); and is the LN the last 'mass party' left in Italy? Passarelli and Tuorto's volume advances our understanding of the second of these questions.

The book is split into three parts, with most of the original research and unpublished data found in Part 3. Part 1 offers a summary of the history of the LN, from its origin to the present day, a useful introduction for those who are not familiar with the existing literature. Part 2 provides extensive data on the LN's electoral geography and the political and socio-economic characteristics of both areas where it has traditionally been strong and in which it has only recently arrived. Therefore, Part 2 offers a comprehensive picture of the LN's *luoghi* – the places where it operates and fields candidates for election. Part 3 focuses on party representatives, members and voters. It provides a rich amount of information on and some analysis of the demographic, social and political background of LN representatives, members and voters, thus helping the reader to understand who staffs and supports the party. It also examines the views of representatives and supporters on not only what the party stands for but also how it works. What we gain from this part of the book is a clear sense that the LN comes close to a traditional 'mass party' model, as it manages to foster a very close relationship between its elites and members, values full members (i.e. *soci ordinari*) and relies upon them. In this sense, the LN has bucked the trend of many other European parties; the authors convincingly show that the party is still unwilling to relinquish its rootedness at the local level and places importance on the variety of ways (i.e. meetings, social events, demonstrations, etc.) through which members are *socialised* and political developments explained to them. This is also part of the party's strategy for the recruitment of its political personnel, which relies heavily on the indoctrination and rigorous selection of faithful members, rather than the co-option of candidates from outside the party (according to their perceived chances of winning elections).

Although there has been renewed interest in party memberships, recent work has often focused on membership figures and party organisation, while not enough attention has been paid to the study of members at the micro level. Overall, we still know little about 'the reasons for

remaining a member or for leaving a party' (van Haute 2011, 22), the members' values and ideas, and the extent to which these coincide with those of their parties. Therefore, research that gives voice to the party members themselves is to be welcomed, especially in the case of the LN, due to the important role they play within it. However, despite the book's claim to cover the 'stories' of party members and representatives, and notwithstanding the authors' use of a large number of computer-enabled interviews and a smaller sample of in-depth, face-to-face interviews with key informants, one learns surprisingly little about the interviewees' *lived* experiences of taking part in a variety of political activities within the LN, or about their views on the themes the party has insisted upon since its foundation, such as federalism and immigration. Although some quantitative information concerning these topics is provided towards the end of the book, the discussion always remains at a rather superficial level, based as it is on some of the quantitative data collected through computer-enabled interviews, the in-depth interviews seemingly contributing little. The authors can also be criticised for their claim that 'populists' can only be defined as such when of the 'extreme right' (pp. 113–114). On the contrary, there is widespread agreement among scholars on the 'chameleon-like' nature of populism (Taggart 2000) and its ability to 'attach itself' to a variety of other ideologies, from radical/extreme/moderate right, to left-wing, etc. Despite these shortcomings, this book provides a useful contribution to the available literature on the LN and a precious and updated teaching tool to those covering the nature of the LN as part of advanced modules on Italian politics/European populism.

## References

- Dematteo, L. 2011. *L'idiota in politica. Antropologia della Lega Nord*. Milan: Feltrinelli.
- Van Haute, E. 2011. "Party Membership: An Under-Studied Mode of Political Participation." In *Party Membership in Europe: Exploration into the Anthills of Party Politics*, edited by E. van Haute, 7–22. Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles.
- Taggart, P. 2000. *Populism*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Zaslove, A. 2011. *The Re-invention of the European Radical Right: Populism, Regionalism, and the Italian Lega Nord*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Daniele Albertazzi  
University of Birmingham  
d.albertazzi@bham.ac.uk

© 2013, Daniele Albertazzi

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13532944.2013.813669>

**Women and the Great War: Feminity under Fire in Italy**, by Allison Scardino Belzer, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, x and 271 pp., £57.00, ISBN 978-0-230-10040-4

Published in 2010, Allison Scardino Belzer's study has its uses as an introduction to the effect on women of Italy's participation in the First World War. Scardino Belzer arranges her material in sections that move from the general to the particular. She starts with an introduction and a prologue, the one generalising about women and modern warfare, the other about how Italy entered into the Great War and what sort of conflict it fought. From the introduction we learn that, from 1900 to the post-war era, Italian women moved through four phases, summed up in the