

(p. 23), and even offers a brief detour in which he muses about *Swann's Way* (p. 57), all in an attempt to give us a sense of relevant trends in cultural guardianship in the centuries leading up to Italian unification. The chapters on Fascism and the post-war Republic (the last 59 pages of the book) are similarly outside the book's main focus, and what is more are too short to provide convincing insight into what the author admits are complex historical moments. The inevitable result is a work that seems to cram too much into too little space; a book that tries to do too much.

Overall, however, the book has a clear appeal to any scholar of Liberal Italy given the centrality of the question of artistic heritage (at least in the minds of the politicians enacting the laws) to the development of a modern Italian state. The book may also have an appeal to the general reader in that it provides important insight into the current state of affairs, the *stato contemporaneo* that Ragusa's title playfully evokes. Ragusa rightly states in his conclusion that there exists a 'prolungata inerzia delle leggi precedenti' (p. 257) that has largely shaped the way in which the Italian government continues to view the question of its cultural and environmental heritage. Thus, the book offers valuable lessons to those who seek to understand better the Italian government's current approach in this area. Given the considerable press the Italian government has recently garnered for one of its policies in particular, the pressure the government has put on foreign museums to return works of dubious provenance, a deeper understanding of the origins of Italian artistic protection policy is very welcome indeed.

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Visiting modern war in Risorgimento Italy, by Jonathan Marwil, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, ix + 262 pp., £54.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-230-10813-4

In 1859, long-running European diplomatic efforts to resolve the 'Italian Question' gave way to war in northern Italy. During the spring and early summer, Piedmont in alliance with France fought Austria for possession of Lombardy and Venetia. In the first major battle, at Magenta (4 June), an estimated 10,000 men were killed in a single day (the blood-soaked soil inspired the name given to a new red alkaline dye created shortly afterwards). Magenta, however, was only the overture to the main act: the battle of Solferino (24 June), where casualties surpassed 40,000. The violence of the two battles captured the imagination of contemporary audiences across the world.

In his new book, Jonathan Marwil sets out to examine how individuals reacted to that violence and what its representation might tell us about the changing nature of the historical understanding of death on the battlefields. Unlike the existing focus upon the political history of the war and its role in the process of Italian unification, Marwil contends that the real significance of the 1859 war lies in what it tells us about changes in attitudes to violence.

To make his case, Marwil has created a chronological account of the war based around a host of individual figures who travelled to the battlefields. This broad sweep allows his

narrative to switch between well-known historical actors and lesser-known characters. Thus, Marwil's 'visitors' to the battlefields include Napoleon III, Victor Emanuel II, Franz Joseph, Giuseppe Garibaldi, Louis Kossuth, Ferdinand Eber, a Hungarian exile who ended up covering the war for *The Times* newspaper, Henry Jarvis Raymond, the co-founder of the *New York Times*, and a young English photographer known only by his initials, 'J.L'.

It is Marwil's uncovering of marginal historical figures such as 'J.L' that will most please historians familiar with the events of 1859. 'J.L' travelled to Italy with the ambition of taking photographs of a battle. Instead, he ended up taking a picture of the corpses of dead soldiers. Marwil points out that this marked the arrival of a now sadly all too familiar photographic subject: photographers had previously refused or been unable to take photographs of war dead.

Within his narrative of how visitors represented the war, Marwil returns repeatedly to the issue of how they described the casualties in their writings. For example, when confronted with the casualties at Solferino, Marwil writes how Henry Raymond asked readers of the *New York Times* to:

... 'imagine' the area in front of the city hall of New York filled with carts, each containing five or ten blood-soaked soldiers 'groaning and writhing in pain,' and then to 'conceive Broadway, as far as the eye can see, filled with an unbroken procession of just such carts laden in the same sad style'. (p.115)

This concern with human suffering was the war's most durable legacy. Indeed, if the war may be said to have produced a single hero, it was a non-combatant: Henry Dunant, a devoutly Christian Swiss businessman. Dunant spent several days aiding the dying and injured when their arrival transformed the small town where he was staying into a 'vast improvised hospital' (p. 111). The book Dunant wrote about this experience, *Un souvenir de Solferino*, was an international bestseller and it empowered its author to play the leading role in the founding of the International Red Cross.

The discussion of *Un souvenir de Solferino*, first published in 1862, marks the point when Marwil switches his focus from visitors to the battlefield in 1859 to the longer-term history of the memory of the wars. Continuing his main theme, however, Marwil shows how visitors to the battlefields during the 1860s and 1870s continued to represent the battles through writing, painting and displays of photographs. The book's final chapter includes a fascinating account of how the dead continued to be used as political symbols. In 1869, so many bones were visible at Solferino that the graves were exhumed and placed in two specially built ossuaries. A crowd estimated at between 30 and 40 thousand attended the inauguration of the ossuaries. There, deputations from Austria, France and the Italian parliament joined to honour the dead together.

Visiting modern war in Risorgimento Italy offers a rich history of a war that differs considerably from the approach of those historians still schooled in thinking in terms of battlefield strategies and tactics. However, it is regrettable that the book pays so little attention to the work of other scholars. In the preface, Marwil suggests:

The themes and arguments the book offers are embedded in the experiences and thoughts of the characters, much as in a work of fiction. Except that the people in this book and the things they say and do were as real as the battlefields they visited, either during or after the war. Although the form of this book will sometimes appear to be novelistic, there is nothing make believe in it. (p. 4)

The case for historians' return to narrative – a process now in its fourth decade – is of course not without its merits. But choosing that particular form of history writing should not preclude the historian from adding another layer to the story: the layer which deals with the place of events and their meanings in the work of other historians and historical debates. Here, Marwil's book is too often silent.

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Garlic & oil: food and politics in Italy, by Carol Helstosky, Oxford–New York, Berg, 2006, 248 pp., £18.99 (paperback), ISBN 1-85973-895-8

The association between Italy and food has become universally indissoluble. Helstosky's book aims to investigate why and how Italians have shaped their food habits and cuisine. The subject is potentially very wide and the author limits the period of her research to between unification and the 1960s, as if previously Italian food was something completely different and did not constitute instead a tradition upon which to draw. One can acknowledge that only with unification have we seen common food policies and regulations in Italy. However, the implication that politics alone is able to influence so heavily such a sphere of human life seems rather reductive.

Chapter 1 deals with the years 1861–1914 and the food legislation of liberal governments after unification. According to the author, if Liberal Italy had huge differences and customs within its territory, 'The one activity shared by the majority of citizens was the seemingly endless quest to fill one's stomach' (p. 14). Although Italians did not face starvation or malnutrition, their diet was poor and scanty, encompassing less meat and fats than in previous centuries. The reasons for this lay in the disorganisation of the distribution, storage and retail sectors that contributed to rising prices, and in the growing demands of an expanding population. The poor diets of many Italians also contributed to the crisis of production: as Helstosky points out, inadequate nutrition had a negative impact on labour productivity.

Chapter 2 focuses on the years 1915–1922. Helstosky states that, surprisingly, the First World War improved the standards of eating in Italy: with the majority of men at the front, the economy experienced for the first time full employment and high wages that allowed the purchase of quality food. Fixed prices for basic foods, state intervention and the purchase of wheat from the Allies at subsidised prices also contributed to the improvement of the Italian diet in this period (still, though, the average consumption of meat amongst civilians and military was below European levels). After the war, when extraordinary wartime measures were no longer in place, 'consumers found it difficult to return to pre war consumption habits...opting instead to pay higher prices and more taxes to secure the goods they desired' (p. 51). This desire, however, clashed with the economic situation, with inflation and the onerous debts the government had to pay: prices increased but not wages and this, and the example of the 1917 Russian Revolution, led to many popular demonstrations, riots and protests.