

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.

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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

terms *donna brava*, *donna italiana*, *donna nuova* and *donna fascista*, with the last largely consolidating the successive determination on sacrifice, on patriotism, and on war-induced participation in modern politics of the first three. In the prologue, her conclusion is that ‘most educated Italians, and certainly almost all those publishing opinions during the conflict, remained ardently pro-war’ (p. 16).

The author’s focus narrows in the following two chapters. In the first, she gives texture to the model of *donna brava*, while asserting that, ‘for all Italian women living in the prewar era, self-sacrifice remained the primary ingredient to being a good woman’ (p. 31). In sustaining this thesis she moves between evidence accrued from her reading of such sociological writers as Paola Lombroso, daughter of Cesare, and material found in the various secondary accounts of peasant communities. She does admit that quite a few peasant and working-class women objected to the war but is chary of venturing far into analysis of such people. Her claim that ‘The socialist feminists allied with the Marxist and Socialist parties, but were unable to make headway in their goal of female emancipation since the struggle to solve workers’ problems took precedence over women’s issues’ (p. 30) suggests that she is not an expert in class analysis or leftist politics.

The second chapter of Part I in Scardino Belzer’s arrangement stands at the heart of her analysis since she now examines how women participated in the war. In this regard she explores a span from volunteer charitable and nursing work to replacement labour for conscripted peasants in the countryside and factory employment; 22% of munitions workers were, by 1918, female. Her main argument is that all war work was novel, in its way, revolutionary, raising the ‘public consciousness’ of women and politicising them, despite the fact that an ungrateful liberal Italian state showed few signs of offering the minimal right of suffrage in return. There is plenty of value here, although the thesis of the war’s impact is probably too extreme. Scardino Belzer ignores the fact that peasant women, belonging to the *Italies* rather than Italy, had for decades before 1914 acquired management and work skills when their men departed in the tens of thousands to the Americas for shorter or longer periods as emigrants.

In Part II, chapters three, four and five describe women’s war experiences, with Scardino Belzer deploying female diary accounts in the freshest research of her work. She commences with the worthy but naive credo: ‘Historians who want to reconstruct the past face an incredible challenge. Generalizing is problematic because historical subjects see events from multiple points of view; one person may hold contradictory thoughts and ideas. Nevertheless, historians cannot abandon the goal of trying to depict how it felt to live in another time and place’ (p. 77). The technique of gradually tightening the focus continues, with chapter three describing life in such places as Gorizia as it changed hands during battle. The chapter ends with the defeat at Caporetto and the impact on those who lived between the Isonzo and Piave rivers.

Scardino Belzer then returns to nursing, with her reiterated stance being ‘even those without a political agenda maintained a loyalty to their country. Patriotism buoyed the women who lived in and visited the war zone and, to some degree, mitigated the violence they witnessed’ (p. 96). In every sense, the war was not to be denied, influencing and amending gender relations between nurses and soldiers, men and women, in complex ways. ‘The battle-hardened soldier with a soft heart recurs in nurses’ writing’, it seems (p. 110), perhaps as the male equivalent of the whore with a motherly soul. Yet, ‘in all the diaries and memoirs examined here, only one account exists of a woman who married a soldier she had met, but she was a civilian not a nurse’ (p. 111).

Class might suggest explanation but, rather than attempting it, Scardino Belzer instead scrutinises the place of prostitution in Italy’s war, although her sources do not allow her to go far.

Rather she turns in more detail to civilian life for those women 'trapped in the war zone'. Here, on occasion, nationalism could be checked by the desire to survive Austrian occupation or the vagaries of Italian 'organised' evacuation. Scardino Belzer, perhaps influenced by her sources, is inclined to think that Austrian rule was harsher than Italian, with rape on occasion seeming to be Germanic public policy.

Women and the Great War concludes with a third section providing a rapid survey of the post-war place in Italy of the *donna nuova*, before the closure of difference into the totalitarian society of the *donna fascista*. Throughout her text, Scardino Belzer tends to wander into comparative commentary on other countries, while her avoidance of much analysis of socialist or Catholic women, with their less than automatically patriotic comprehensions of the war, makes her account of 'new women', Italian-style, somewhat simplistic. As far as she is concerned, women who had sensed their citizenship in the war did tend to accept Fascism, with whatever reluctance and whatever continuing determination not fully to surrender the social and ideal gains they had made in the war. Mussolini, she contends, 'was unable to control Italy's female population' in the way that a patriarch or a pre-1914 Italian male would have wanted. 'The new woman created by the war was there to stay' (p. 188).

In sum, Palgrave Macmillan are to be congratulated for their continued publication of monographs about modern Italy written by recent graduates. Scardino Belzer's book is another example of some of the weaknesses as well as the strengths of the genre.

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La memoria in piazza: Monumenti risorgimentali nelle città lombarde tra identità locale e nazionale, by Marina Tesoro, Milan, Effigie edizioni, 2012, 197 pp., €30.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-88-97648-09-3

In her introductory essay to *La memoria in piazza*, Catherine Brice asks: 'Why (still) study public monumentality?' Brice then proceeds to answer the question, responding to critics who claim that the study of monuments simply confirms the obvious. She argues that the essays contained in this volume, in the tradition of Maurice Agulhon's work on the iconography of Marianne (1972), George L. Mosse's *The Nationalization of the Masses* (1975) and Antoine Prost's *Les anciens combattants et la société française (1914–1939)* (1975), offer important perspectives on the cultural history of politics. These nuanced studies are more than descriptive texts that confirm the connection between politics and monuments as propaganda. Rather, Brice maintains, they are important works that examine the various and interrelated aspects of a monument's life history and which reveal the divisions and 'invisible fractures' in a given society (p. 13).

Brice further proposes that an investigation of the periods that precede and follow the construction of a monument can be very productive for the historian, especially in terms of uncovering the aforementioned points of fracture because decisions about financing, placement, commissions, celebrations, and the monument's various intentional and unintentional uses tend to provoke heated debate.