dominant throughout the twentieth century. Engaging with the Weberian analysis of charismatic leadership and with attempts to define a concept as complex and difficult to pin down as 'populism', here again Pombeni seeks to invoke classical political theory as a means of understanding those phenomena that seem most strikingly specific to our period.

In conclusion, while this book does not offer scholarly contributions that are entirely original and distinct from Pombeni's earlier work, it is nonetheless an interesting collection. Above all, it is one that will be useful to anyone who wishes to engage with both political theory and political history, as it brings together in one place and gives a coherent form to some of the most striking findings from an entire career of academic research, restating some of the key passages in the intellectual trajectory of one of the most influential Italian scholars of recent years in this field of study.

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Andrea Mariuzzo
Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa
Email: a.mariuzzo@sns.it
Translated by Phil Edwards

Ennio Flaiano and his Italy: Postcards from a changing world, by Marisa S. Trubiano, Madison, NJ, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010, 225 pp., US$49.50 (hardcover), ISBN 978-08-38642-13-9

Best known – if known at all in the United States – as Federico Fellini's collaborator and screenwriter on such masterpieces as *La dolce vita* and *Otto e mezzo*, Ennio Flaiano (1910–1972) was a prolific and polyhedric writer, journalist, novelist, critic and dramatist whose work offers fascinating insights into the changing nature of Italy before and after Fascism and the Second World War.

Flaiano was born in Pescara and had a complicated relationship with the city of his birth. At 18, he left Pescara and went to Rome to study architecture. He soon found his way to the café society of writers, novelists, journalists and intellectuals, although, as they all noted, Flaiano was never completely at home or even at ease in this world, always seeming to have something about him of the classical 'provincial' in the cosmopolitan city. It was precisely this outsider status, both geographically and intellectually, that, according

to Marisa Trubiano, gave Flaiano his insightful perspective and most fertile insights into twentieth-century Italian society. Trubiano, associate professor of Italian at Montclair State University, has done an admirable job in converting a doctoral dissertation into an introduction to Flaiano for Anglophone readers. (The book is the latest in a series on Italian Studies published by Fairleigh Dickinson University Press by general editor Anthony Tamburri, Dean of the Calandra Italian American Institute in Manhattan.)

Trubiano's short book (approximately 150 pages of text) is not a biography but three lengthy chapters dealing with specific aspects of Flaiano's work, preceded by a brief biographical essay and an even briefer introduction, which sketches out some previous assessments of Flaiano in Italy. Trubiano divides the remaining body of the book into three organising ideas (used as chapter titles): 'The Recurring Colonialist Nightmare', 'Writing the Contemporary Existence', and 'In Transit from Italian National to Citizen of the World'.

'The Recurring Colonialist Nightmare' is largely devoted to Flaiano's novel, *Tempo di uccidere* (1947), a visceral reaction to the writer's experience in the Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935–1936. *Tempo di uccidere* won the Premio Strega that year and a film based on the novel followed in 1952. Trubiano traces Flaiano's original ambivalence toward Fascism to his more critical stance. 'A close analysis of Flaiano's early art, theater, film criticism and literary and cinematic projects', argues Trubiano, 'reveals the subtle stirrings of what would be his laborious, decades-long shedding of the rhetorical, nationalistic, xenophobic, imperialistic, Eurocentric, and historicist thinking with which he was surrounded' (p. 31). Yet Flaiano never joined the PCI and was often seen as suspect in the eyes of the 'big guns' of postwar Italian left culture. He was, and remained, before and after the war, 'lo scrittore scomodo' for the Italian intelligentsia.

In 'Writing the Contemporary Existence', Trubiano describes the so-called 'Flaiano effect' as a writing of fragments that lays bare the crisis of metanarratives and the suspicion of any insistence on progress and absolutes in history or art. This stance eventually led Fellini and others such as Antonioni, De Sica and Risi to want to work with Flaiano.

'In Transit . . . ' demonstrates how Flaiano's outsider status led him to a fertile critique not only of Italian nationalism but of traditional conceptions of national character and even regional identity.

Combining literary theory, cinema studies, author and genre studies, Trubiano argues that Flaiano was a postmodern intellectual before the term was coined. She has crafted a welcome introduction to an important figure of twentieth-century Italian culture.

Stanislao G. Pugliese
Hofstra University
Email: stanislao.pugliese@hofstra.edu

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