

the reader: as promised at the beginning of the book, everything moves from the poems, and the richness and appropriateness of the citations not only manage to give weight to and validate Sermini's ideas but offer easy access to Amelia Rosselli's poetry, even to those who are approaching it for the first time.

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**Modern Rome: From Napoleon to the Twenty-First Century**, by ITALO INSOLERA, translated and edited by LUCIA BOZZOLA, ROBERTO EINAUDI and MARCO ZUMAGLINI, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (UK), Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018, xxvii + 479 pp., £40.99 (paperback), £80.99 (hardback), ISBN: 978-1-5275-1664-9

The first edition of Italo Insolera's *Roma Moderna* was published in 1962. Since then, the book has been revised and republished many times, with the most recent Italian edition published in 2011 by Einaudi with the title *Roma Moderna. Da Napoleone I al XXI secolo* (including contributions by Insolera's collaborator Paolo Berdini). The extraordinary longevity of the book is evidence of its essential contribution not only to the urban history of the 'eternal city', but more broadly to modern and contemporary Italian history. This new edition is the first in English and, together with the translation of the 2011 Italian text, it includes a preface by the editors, a useful 'Presentation to the Anglo-Saxon Reader', and an epilogue including two new chapters. The first of these chapters, entitled 'Modern Rome?' and authored by Vezio De Lucia, is substantially drawn from earlier publications by De Lucia and Francesco Erbani, and adds some interesting suggestions about potential urban developments in the capital city. The final chapter, entitled 'Latest developments in the history of Rome', authored by Paolo Berdini, is more consistent with the structure and the nature of the overall volume, and provides an important update on the urban history of Rome since 2011. The volume is further enriched by various appendices, including a useful glossary, a list of all the mayors of Rome since 1870, and further images and maps.

The book, while constituting an essential contribution to the urban history of Rome, is also a crucial reading for scholars interested in a broader understanding of Italian national history, and in particular its complex, ambiguous and contradictory relationship with modernity. At the core of the book are two constant tensions that have characterised the development of Italy as a modern nation, and of Rome as its capital city. The first is the tension between tradition and innovation. A constant struggle emerges in the book, between the need to preserve the history, beauty and cultural richness of the eternal city, and the challenges and opportunities brought about by modernity, including industrialisation, urbanisation, migration and globalisation. The second, more specific tension at the core of the book, is between policy and practice. The book details the constant failure to inform, implement and control urban development through public policy, urban planning and democratic and progressive interventions, vis-à-vis the exponential, chaotic and often unregulated urban growth of Rome, which has been dominated by speculation, corruption, and grandiose ideas detached from the actual needs of the city.

From its first edition, the book has continued to evolve and grow in parallel with the urban development of Rome. Written by 'an architect and urban planner turned historian and prolific

writer' (p. xix) the book was born from a genuine impulse to influence urban policies and public discussions about the future of Rome through progressive and innovative scholarship. The immediate success and impact of the book was certainly a sign of hope. Yet, over the following decades and through its many editions, the book has gradually come to critically address in detail the substantial failure of most attempts to regulate the growth of Rome (and one might say of Italy itself) through rational, organic, democratic and progressive means. Interestingly, this criticism becomes particularly apparent when Insolera and Berdini consider the plans, achievements and failures of the *giunte rosse* in the 1970s and 1980s, the centre-left *giunte* in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and even the very recent 'attack on the *soprintendenze*' (p. 407) by the centre-left national governments. The evolution of the book itself provides powerful evidence of the involution of Italy, and illuminates some of the core reasons for Italy's persisting crisis, including the responsibilities of those centre-left parties and local and national governments that, despite many promises, largely failed to promote the modernisation of Rome, and of the whole country.

One of the editors of this edition (Roberto Einaudi, p. xxi) suggests that Insolera himself, before dying, thought the book could be retitled with the addition of a question mark. And 'Modern Rome?' is in fact the title of De Lucia's second last chapter in this volume. The reader will be left wondering what Rome could have been, had its promise of modernity not been so remarkably neglected. Yet what makes Rome unique and beautiful is also its palimpsestic, chaotic, fragmented, cynical, contradictory and iconic character. The book provides an idealistic, detailed and critical analysis of a capital city that failed to embrace not just modern, rational and progressive urban planning, but perhaps modernity itself.

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**The Pathologisation of Homosexuality in Fascist Italy: The Case of 'G'** by GABRIELLA ROMANO, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, €51.99 (hardback), ISBN 978-3-030-00993-9

The aim of this book is to fill a research 'gap', by providing a 'systematic study' of Italian Fascism's use of 'internment in an asylum as a tool of repression for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual (LGBT) people, as an alternative to confinement on an island, prison or home arrests' (p. 1). Moving from a 'micro-history' – the internment in 1928 of G., a 45-year-old homosexual man born in a small village in Piedmont – the volume highlights, through different kinds of sources but especially medical files, the practice of expulsion from the allegedly 'sane' national 'body' through sanitary detention, of individuals attributed with a homosexual orientation or behaviour.

According to the author, the research gap to which she refers is part of a larger one in the general literature 'on the history of homosexuality in [Fascist] Italy'. Romano identifies 'one of the main reasons' (p. 5) as the fact that 'the Italian legislation' 'reinforces an outdated mentality, rooted in prejudice, that imposes serious limitations to historical research in this and related fields'. She mentions in particular the 'directives contained in two Italian decrees, no. 281 of 1999 ... and no. 196 of 2003' (p. 4). The 'research gap' seems to depend mostly on a lack of interest about the topic by Italian academic institutions and mainstream researchers. In fact, in my opinion these legislative restrictions are likely to be a minor factor that did not prevent access to sources including personal