

When the regime fell in 1943, Claretta was imprisoned in Novara where, usefully for the historian, she continued to keep a diary. Even then, after his fall from power, her diary's pages were full of outpourings of love for Mussolini. Once both were freed from their respective prisons, Claretta was installed in a villa not far from his new residence on Lake Garda. They were unable, however, to meet often and much of their relationship was conducted by post. Claretta's letters from the period had increasingly political as well as personal themes and included plenty of simplistic and extremist political advice. Her obsession with Mussolini's other lovers (and his legitimate family) and her attempts to promote her own relatives' interests did not, however, abate. During the final winter of their lives their correspondence took on an increasingly tempestuous tone as Claretta railed against his family and his failure to give her the attention she felt she deserved.

Bosworth concludes the story with an attempt to separate fact from fiction about her and her lover's death, about which many contradictory accounts exist.

Written in his usual witty, well-crafted and very readable style, Bosworth's latest book is an engrossing read. It is very thoroughly researched and based on a lifetime of reading on the Fascist period. It is also, at times, very funny. Dense with interesting details and embellished by some excellent photographs, it draws extensively on Claretta's own copious diaries and the correspondence between the two lovers, as well as from members of her family. Claretta's diaries enable us to enter into 'Ben' and 'Clara's' bedroom. There is not a great deal of graphic detail, beyond fairly coy mentions of whether they had sex, but numerous conversations are meticulously recorded. Many of them shed light on the Duce's changing thinking and feelings over time.

In many ways this book tells us more about Mussolini than about Claretta herself. She is there on most of the pages, and we certainly read a vast number of her words, but she never really emerges as a fully rounded character. We learn that she was a practising Catholic who attended mass, who liked to lie in bed eating chocolates, who sometimes sketched cartoons and who was loyal to her family and its interests. But we learn virtually nothing of her childhood (and what might have led to her political views) and her adult life beyond the Sala dello Zodiaco in Palazzo Venezia (where most of their trysts took place) remains obscure. In this respect the last sections of the book are the best. Based on correspondence rather than diaries, in this section Claretta emerges as a more defined, if far from appealing, character, one with unpleasantly radical (albeit simplistic and naïve) fascist political convictions and an intense hatred of her enemies. Most of her vitriol is aimed not at the communist partisans – who would shortly execute her – or the invading Allies but at 'Ben's' other lovers and his family.

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1977. Quando il femminismo entrò in TV, by Loredana Cornero, Rome, HARPO, 2017, 219 pp., €15 (paperback), ISBN 978-88-99857-16-5

Scholarly research on the visual representation of women in Italian media has grown considerably in recent years, in particular during the last years of Silvio Berlusconi's government. Writing from a feminist perspective, Alessandra Gribaldo and Giovanna Zapperi have observed – in *Lo schermo*

del potere. Femminismo e regime della visibilità (ombre corte, Verona 2012) – that the female image has become an inevitable topic of analysis following the former prime minister's sex scandals. In fact, the study of the relation between gender, power and visual culture represents a common trend not only in feminist academic circles but also outside academia, as demonstrated by Lorella Zanardo's successful video documentary *Il corpo delle donne*, distributed on the internet in 2009 and which attracted over four million viewers. Another example is *1977. Quando il femminismo entrò in TV*, Loredana Cornero's account of the only feminist TV programme ever to have been aired on Italian television, first published in 2012 but now made available in a new edition, on the occasion of the programme's fortieth anniversary.

Si dice donna made its first appearance on 1 September 1977, on the newly created Rete Due (now RAI2). Following the expiry of its monopoly of radio and television broadcasting in 1975, the RAI underwent a major reorganisation. Law 103 of 14 April 1975 provoked a radical change in power relations, as control of the RAI was moved from the government to parliament, meaning that the governing Christian Democrats lost their monopoly and television broadcasting was 'parcelled out' between the major political parties, with Rete Due falling into the hands of the Socialists (the Communists had to wait until 1979, when the future RAI3 was launched).

Although this *lottizzazione* did not produce a pluralistic platform for television broadcasting, which continued to be organised 'in a centralized and hierarchical manner, as an instrument needing to be regulated in order to control public opinion' (Elena Dagrada in *Italian Cultural Studies. An Introduction*, edited by D. Forgacs and R. Lumley, OUP 1996), Cornero – who serves as the general secretary of Comunità Radiotelevisiva Italofoina – points out the positive effects of this reform. With two state channels now vying for attention, competition became the main drive behind the new direction given to Rete Due by its director, Socialist Massimo Fichera. Renewal, change and originality marked the 'trasgressività controllata' of Rete Due under Fichera's direction, which became an authentic attempt at giving space and visibility to a variety of new political, cultural and social actors. A door was thus opened for the women's movement, which had gained much visibility in the second half of the 1970s, as women increasingly took to the streets to denounce sexual violence and claim women's rights (for example to abortion, with Law 194 of 22 May 1978 being passed after many years of feminist campaigning). The idea for a programme on the 'condizione femminile' was presented to Marina Tartara, at the time the only female department head within the RAI, who put together a team of feminist journalists linked mostly to the women's organisation UDI (Unione Donne Italiane).

Drawing on press releases and interviews with the various actors involved, Cornero reconstructs the history of this highly successful yet short-lived experience, which was terminated after only four years of broadcasting as a (political) change of guard within the direction of Rete Due put a damper on the innovative palimpsest introduced by Fichera. A slightly generic opening chapter – on the problematic representation of women and persistent gender stereotypes on Italian television – is followed by a concise historical and social portrait of the 1970s, with emphasis being placed on the many legal reforms that changed women's conditions. In the rest of the book, Cornero reconstructs the four seasons of *Si dice donna*, describing the different format and themes of discussion chosen for each edition, the motivations behind these decisions, and the way the programme evolved in general, with its abrupt end in 1981 following a number of highly criticised, even censored, episodes on the themes of prostitution and abortion. In the early 1980s, Law 194 was still strongly debated and controversial, and the two referenda to repeal the law in 1981 caused tensions between the feminist team of *Si dice donna* and Rete Due's new direction. The reality was that the 1970s were over, and the newly elected, pro-Craxian director of Rete Due was not nearly as sympathetic to the feminist cause as his predecessor.

An interesting history therefore unfolds, thanks also to the ample use of interviews which offer a close insight into the power dynamics and personal relations that animated the group of journalists behind the programme, and the other actors involved. This doesn't hide the fact that the book is written in a rather descriptive way, contains limited references to secondary literature, and lacks a conclusion. Clearly the book is not intended for an academic audience, but for a wider public (on a minor note, more photographic material would have been interesting, given the subject matter). Nonetheless, *1977. Quando il femminismo entrò in TV* restores an important piece of women's history that would otherwise have remained locked in the archives of the Teche Rai, and offers a unique insight into the dynamics of gender, power and broadcasting politics in contemporary Italy. More importantly, it shows that an authentic, less stereotyped and sexist image of women in television *is* possible, even if this does not seem to be a primary concern of present-day television broadcasting in Italy, especially not on private TV channels. To give one example, in April 2017, an episode of Maria De Filippi's popular show *Amici* featured a recorded prank where singer Emma Marrone – during the rehearsal for a musical performance – was repeatedly groped by a male dancer. When the prank was broadcast, all studio guests (including Marrone herself) laughed at the singer's annoyed reactions to the 'simulated' sexual harassment. The time couldn't be more right for a feminist comeback.

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Late Nineteenth-Century Italy in Africa: The Livraghi Affair and the Waning of Civilizing Aspirations, by Stephen Bruner, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, 197 pp., £45.99 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-4438-4376-8

Only six years after internationally celebrated jurist and foreign minister Pasquale Mancini announced to a bemused Italian parliament that because the 'keys to the Mediterranean' were to be found in the Red Sea, Italy needed to assert itself there, Massawa – capital of the soon-to-be-named Italian colony of Eritrea – became the centre of a scandal that gripped Italy and, according to Stephen Bruner in his intriguing, original and excellently illustrated book, forced the nation to rethink the rationale behind its 'mission' in Africa. Mancini had bolstered his awkwardly greeted *raison d'état* justifying Italian expansion with the customary grandiloquence of Europe's global mission to proselytise the virtues of civilisation. Having spent his entire career developing a legal framework for injecting liberal virtue into international relations, Mancini was naturally sensitive to charges that newly created and liberated Italy risked tarnishing its moral integrity by participating in the undignified spectacle of the 'scramble' for Africa. But, as for so many of his contemporaries, positioning the European nation as a force for good in the world proved irresistible.

However, by 1891, in place of the good works and order liberal Italy was supposedly bringing to its grateful inhabitants, Massawa had become the scene of unbridled violence, cupidity, licentiousness and corruption presided over by those very so-called bestowers of civilisation. A series of murders and extortions carried out by or at the instigation of colonial police lieutenant Dario Livraghi at the expense of a number of indigenous notables was revealed by Napoleone