

step-by-step narrative of how they are *made to change*. That is, how the calls for visibility and accountability, the necessary institutional interventions and data-based research and analyses *can* have an impact on the way gender violence is seen (or not), and how it is (mis)represented and condemned (or not) in our society. Writing, as I am, as the *Legge Zan* still awaits to be voted on in the Senate, I am (we are) painfully aware of the importance that every gesture and intervention can have in the necessary fight against the systems of gender oppression.

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The Archipelago: Italy Since 1945

by John Foot, London, Bloomsbury, 2018, 480 pp., £25.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-4088-2724-6

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Over a number of years, John Foot has established himself as a leading historian of many facets of modern Italy. Political history is his primary sphere of competence, but he has ranged widely beyond that, authoring studies of Italian football, cycling, divided memories and psychiatric reform. The present book brings together politics, society, sport, the mass media and much else besides. Many others have written histories of postwar Italy, though in English the only one to have stood the test of time is Paul Ginsborg's *A History of Contemporary Italy*, which was first published in 1990 and to which the author added a further volume, *Italy and Its Discontents*, in 2003. For many years, Ginsborg has been indispensable reading for students of contemporary history in Italy (where the books were published by Einaudi) as well as the English-speaking world. The reasons for this enduring success lie in a combination of meticulous reconstruction and analysis of political events and parties, attention to moments of social conflict and consensus as well as matters of economic development, an unusual eye for telling detail, and a clear prose style. As a historian of nineteenth-century Italy, Ginsborg brought to his works a certain long-range view of Italian development and a keen sense of regional diversity, as well as a special focus on the family and gender relations. As a student of Ginsborg, Foot has absorbed many of his lessons, in particular in thinking of political history as inseparable from social history and in the attention he pays to stories of common people and their struggles: as he writes, 'ordinary Italians changed their own country' with their decisions and above all their refusals to conform.

The Archipelago is neither a replacement for *A History of Contemporary Italy* nor a challenge to it (in the way, perhaps, that Silvio Lanaro's *Storia dell'Italia repubblicana* was seen to be). Rather it should be understood as a work of a different sort, that seeks to engage readers in a different way by drawing them into the history of the postwar decades by taking them into real-life experiences and giving a feel of them. Thus the author takes time to explore the education system, legacies of the past, reform, sport and music. All the

key events, forces and personalities are present, but there is no real attempt at diachronic history even though the chapters are organised in chronological order. Instead, the stories the book tells (and the Italian edition, published by Laterza, is in fact entitled *L'Italia e le sue storie*) are interwoven with references to songs, films, sporting events and emotions – which themselves sometimes form the actual stories. For example, the opening chapter on the postwar years gives us Primo Levi, Rossellini's film *Paisà*, the Giro d'Italia and Toscanini as well as the broad lines of the political and economic reconstruction. The second chapter discards what might be called the 'year zero' approach to the postwar period by devoting considerable space to the legacies and after-effects of Fascism. Constantly, in the book, there is a deliberate tension between looking back and looking forward, as in the focus on nostalgia for a declining rural world and the enthusiastic embrace of cars and consumption. Certain topics emerge more strongly here than in other books; some of these, not surprisingly, reflect the author's longstanding interests, but others are perhaps less expected. Considerable space is devoted for example to urban planning and to the education system, which Foot writes about with considerable insight. Satire is also given its due, with a section on the Communist Party newspaper *L'Unità's* irreverent supplement *Cuore*.

All this might suggest that *The Archipelago* is an idiosyncratic book, a personal – even quirky – history of postwar Italy. To a conventional historian or a political scientist, it might well look like that, but to those who have sought to engage with the cultural history of recent decades it will read like a welcome rounded treatment of a rich period that is not afraid to tackle television programmes as well as political crises, or to discuss the celebrated-interviewer-turned-Islamophobe Oriana Fallaci as well as Bettino Craxi. Of course, Foot cannot in this book provide a fully-fledged cultural history of the postwar period – his account is too wedded to politics and to major events for that. But what he does brilliantly is to offer a history that is at once political and cultural, simultaneously concerned with passing figures and moments and with deeper trends and problems. His book in some respects is structured like an archipelago – as a group of separate but related short treatments – and no doubt it was this that prompted the decision to use this slightly off-putting term for the title. As Foot writes in the introduction, the book renounces any sort of master theme in favour of fragments, flashes and snapshots that together form a picture of contemporary Italy.

The Archipelago is aimed at the general reader. It is not a scholarly monograph or a textbook, but a bold and challenging, accessibly written, portrayal of a country that is as informed by the author's impressive overall grasp of the main currents of Italian history as by his research on selected topics. Even the expert reader will find much of interest in it.

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