

Neapolitan dialect with parallel translation in English by Charles Sant'Elia, a New York lawyer and international delegate of the Neo-Bourbon movement.

The book's main title recalls, even if it does not directly cite, Rem Koolhaas' *Delirious New York* (1978) in which the Dutch architect similarly sets out to articulate his fascination with Manhattan. The subtitle, however, is misleading: rather than 'a cultural history of the city in the sun', the book works better as an exploration of Neapolitans' and Italian Americans' divergent encounters with Naples and their subsequent attempts to write about the city.

The editors' decision to embrace a range of registers and perspectives is indeed admirable and I agree that there is a need to engage more critically and broadly with cultural experiences of Naples. Besides a handful of essays, the book unfortunately does not provide many clear signposts to how such an endeavour might be approached or contextualised in relation to local history and society. Moreover, there is no general bibliography or index, which is especially frustrating for a tome of this size. While the decision to juxtapose scholarly interventions with the musings of enthusiastic visitors may make for a 'delirious Naples', the absence of any serious reflection about how such multivocality might contribute to a more measured and probing understanding of the city is perhaps the book's main weakness. In sum, there is much to enjoy and learn from this text, but there is also sometimes a nagging sense that, when it comes to Naples, almost anything is permissible as long as it chimes with 'porosity' or is suitably 'delirious'.

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Il Movimento Liberazione della Donna nel femminismo italiano. La politica, i vissuti, le esperienze (1970–1983), by BEATRICE PISA, Rome, Aracne, 2017, 469 pp., €24.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-88-255-0148-3

In recent years, there has been consistent historiographical interest in the crucial political period of neo-feminisms in Italy, which has assiduously filled the gaps in the reconstruction and interpretation of their complex articulation of practices. Archives and collections, including private ones, have been enhanced or have collected important series of oral sources.

This dense and timely history of the Movimento Liberazione della Donna (MLD, Women's Liberation Movement) by Beatrice Pisa provides another important piece of the mosaic. MLD was born in the context of the Radical Party, which at the beginning of the 1960s was experimenting with anti-patriarchal, anti-bourgeois, anti-system and libertarian positions. This book has a noteworthy documentary richness, which is also systematised in a useful appendix, comprising photographs, documents, considerable 'grey literature', oral sources, bulletins, leaflets, diaries, autobiographical writings and letters, the result of patient excavations in public archives and in some private ones. One of these is Liliana Ingargiola's private archive. With Alma Sabatini, Ingargiola was one of the founders of MLD, a pre-eminent figure in its history and in women's political history in republican Italy. While the existing historiography has paid insufficient attention to these women, this book dedicates in particular the second and last chapters to them, taking a kind of circular approach.

The issue of 'positioning' and 'subjectivity' with respect to narrated and analysed events is also interesting. Beatrice Pisa addresses, as a historian, the birth and evolution of a movement in and of which she was both an activist and a witness. She does not deny this fact, and instead uses this observation point to deconstruct personal and political dynamics and to reveal peculiarities and some specific personalities without ever losing sight of the collective experience. In 1978 MLD included almost 50 groups across the peninsula; Pisa's research tells just *one* of many possible stories (p. 11). In fact, it focuses on the original Roman experience, starting in April 1970, first in the form of a political working group, out of the meeting of the former 'Radical Collective for the fight against sexual repression and against psychiatric institutions' and influenced by the practices of the American Women's Liberation Movement. Following this, the MLD, whose aims were to fight against the economic, psychological and sexual exploitation of women, was federated to the Radical Party, from the turbulent founding Congress of 1971 (pp. 29–31) until 1978, when the relationship of crisis with the party came to an end (Chapter 7). MLD espoused a 'secular-libertarian' feminism, with a clear radical matrix. Questions of sexuality (including lesbianism); the decriminalisation of abortion; the establishment of counselling and self-help practices; violence against women; and equal opportunities in the workplaces were all crucial. As we read in Chapter 3, dedicated to the MLD's forms of 'doing politics', unlike other feminist experiences, MLD rejected the practice of self-consciousness and, in particular, that of separatism, which MLD women identified as a potential closing-off to other women, and a concrete risk. Other fundamental characteristics of the movement were the will to mediate between liberation and emancipation, and a constant dialogue with institutions. The latter is perhaps one of the points that most differentiates the MLD from other Italian feminist experiences during this historical phase.

The MLD constantly sought a difficult and often contradictory balance between the Radical Party's positions and identification with the feminist movement. This characteristic is something of a gift for a historian in that it allows us to follow the MLD's interactions with many different actors: the long-standing interactions with feminist collectives, those of 'difference' to Marxist ones, particularly during the decisive occupation of an ancient Roman palace in Via del Governo Vecchio (Chapter 4); with parties and with other social movements. It gives us a precious magnifying glass with which to examine the multiple forms of women's participation in the political life of republican Italy. What emerges clearly is how the feminism of the MLD helped to determine the irruption of the female sexual body and generated a renewed look at reproductive bodies on the political scene. Pisa locates one of the moments of the greatest distance and liveliest dialectic between the Radical Party and the MLD in the highly significant battle for abortion (Chapters 5 and 8). Many in the MLD accused the party of remaining trapped in male mental frameworks, and of not having commissioned a woman to conduct the analysis, on the basis of the key Italian feminist practice of 'partire da sé' ('starting from oneself'). The battles for the decriminalisation of abortion and against widespread violence against women (through the creation of a dedicated collective and a centre providing legal, psychological and political assistance) especially illuminate the MLD's direct, active and critical attempts to 'engender' normative processes (Chapters 9 and 10).

The epilogue focuses on the years 1983 and 1984, the former being the year in which the Justice Commission of the Chamber of Deputies presented in parliament a unified bill on violence, which took the popular initiative law promoted by the MLD as its starting point. Yet these were the sunset years of political feminism in its mass dimension. Pisa notes the triumph of the 'feminism of difference', which concentrates on cultural, philosophical and psychoanalytic dimensions. By setting 1983 as the temporal limit of this book, the author is able to identify and illuminate the closing

of a political parabola in the early 1980s. From a historiographical point of view, this period remains as yet unresolved.

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The Poetics of Decadence in Fin-de-Siècle Italy: Degeneration and Regeneration in Literature and the Arts, edited by STEFANO EVANGELISTA, VALERIA GIANNANTONIO and ELISABETTA SELMI, Oxford, Peter Lang, 2018, 312 pp., £45.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-3-0343-2260-7

The critical perception of the fin de siècle – in the Western world, and particularly in Italy – has long been influenced by a set of notions that were actually coined, as historical and spiritual definitions, in the fin de siècle itself: ‘degeneration’ (popularised, as is well known, by Max Nordau in 1892); ‘neurosis’ (a clinical definition, coming to encompass the attitude of a whole century in Paolo Mantegazza’s *Il secolo nevrosico* of 1887); and, first and foremost, ‘decadence’, initially imposed as a label in a sonnet of 1883 by Paul Verlaine, and later taking on a particular significance in Italian literary criticism, principally thanks to Walter Binni’s highly influential *La poetica del decadentismo* (1936). Definitions as such are always highly problematic, tending to retrospectively superimpose upon a certain age the interpretation that cultural élites have elaborated for the contexts of their own work, thereby silencing cultural experiences that are marginal in relation to dominant models. A book such as *The Poetics of Decadence in Fin-de-siècle Italy* is welcome for various reasons: but principally because, in coupling ‘degeneration’ with ‘regeneration’ in its subtitle, it indicates its intention to reread fin-de-siècle Italian culture beyond the lenses of *decadentismo*, and to show how the age of ‘degeneration’ was actually saturated with regenerative drives.

The introduction, by Evangelista only, takes stock of the critical debate on the Italian fin de siècle, providing a careful reconstruction of the origin and developments of critical notions – such as those of degeneration, neurosis, and decadence – that have become commonplaces in critical assessment of the age. The essays comprising the volume, nine in total, each focus on protagonists of the Italian fin de siècle.

The first essay, by Sara Boezio, focuses on ‘Regenerating at the turn of the century’. By reading texts of 1899 by Pascoli and Fogazzaro in parallel with works published in the same year – such as Henrik Ibsen’s last play, *When We Dead Awaken*, Leo Tolstoy’s *Resurrection*, and Émile Zola’s *Fécondité* – the author provides us with a vivid portrait of a turn of the century that is pervaded, alongside rising concerns about degeneration, by a distinct desire for rebirth. Fogazzaro is the protagonist of the two following essays. In ‘Fogazzaro e la “mistica ebbrezza” dell’arte’, by Giulia Brian, the author identifies Fogazzaro as the initiator of an anti-aestheticising approach to art, focused on silence and non-verbal communication rather than action and boasting proclamations. The essay is enriched by two appendices, providing readers with some important documents for assessing Fogazzaro’s oeuvre, and particularly the novel *Il Santo*: an interview of 1908, originally published in *La Stampa*, and two letters sent to the author by Maud MacCarthy on the topic of theosophy and the portrayal of Madame Blavatsky in his works. In ‘Appunti di lettura