

Offprinted from
MODERN LANGUAGE REVIEW

VOLUME 111, PART 4

OCTOBER 2016

The 'mito americano' and Italian Literary Culture under Fascism. By JANE DUNNETT. Ariccia: Aracne. 2015. 564 pp. €24. ISBN 978-88-548-7687-3.

The dichotomist view according to which America and American culture were synonymous with anti-Fascism during the *ventennio* is challenged in this book. In her long and very informative study, the late Jane Dunnett analyses the so-called *mito americano* to show how it was followed both by anti-Fascists and by Fascists. Commenting on the idea that America was viewed with hostility by the regime, Dunnett says that 'nothing could be further from the truth' (p. 104). The volume is not only a critical and historical enquiry into one of the most persistent myths within Italian culture, but is also a deconstructive analysis of this myth. Dunnett takes into account a great variety of sources and does not limit her research to important mainstream literary texts, but includes minor sources as well, such as articles in journals and popular magazines, films, the choices made by publishing houses, and so forth, thus showing a 'big picture' of the Fascist period. In this way, she deconstructs the dichotomous idea that the American myth was associated with anti-Fascism and, on the other hand, that Fascism was politically and ideologically opposed to American culture: as always, when dealing with great issues, nothing is completely black or white. Dunnett undertakes a fascinating journey to discover the 'grey' zones of this myth and brings into focus a quite different reality.

The volume is divided into five chapters, preceded by a foreword by Massimo Bacigalupo (pp. 11–16), a memoir of Dunnett, who passed away in 2013 (pp. 17–23), and an introduction by the author (pp. 27–34) which establishes the ground for the remainder of the work. The first chapter, 'The *mito americano* Revisited: Shifting Perspectives on an Italian *Topos*' (pp. 35–87), deals with the notion of the American myth and how it was perceived through the years by Italian critics. In the author's view the idea is more complex and comprehensive than suggested by its usual association with Pavese and Vittorini and with anti-Fascist connotations. Moreover, the chapter establishes that the *mito americano* was a far broader concept, in which both positive and negative attitudes towards America coexisted.

In the following chapter, 'America, or Eldorado: The View from Italy (1919–1943)' (pp. 89–203), Dunnett explores through different sources the view of the United States that was circulating in Italy during the period between the end of the First World War and the fall of Fascism. As she demonstrates, America was no synonym for democracy or for the defence of democracy in opposition to Fascism; on the contrary, it was much admired, especially for its economic organization: Ford, for instance, was a model for Agnelli and FIAT. As a consequence, the Fascist government cultivated a very good relationship with its American counterpart at least until the formation of the Rome–Berlin axis.

The correspondence on economic matters between the two countries was paralleled in the area of culture, especially regarding the world of cinema, as shown in the third chapter, entitled 'Glamour Elsewhere: Writing about Hollywood during the *Ventennio*' (pp. 205–70). Despite the rhetoric of autarky, the number of American films shown in Italy far exceeded the number of Italian ones. Moreover, Fascist

Italy was by no means immune to the Hollywood star system, and many American celebrities were well received on their visits to the country.

Cinema was a powerful vehicle for American culture, and paved the way for literature as well. Italian publishing houses, ever concerned with profit, extensively exploited the popularity of American narrative. The activity of translating from English into Italian became very productive during the *ventennio* and American books supplanted French ones as leisure reading, whereas Italian literature was always regarded by critics as very highbrow. This phenomenon is discussed by Dunnett in the fourth chapter, 'In Search of a Bestseller: Italian Publishers and the North American Novel (1922–1943)' (pp. 271–368), in which a long section is devoted to the case of Elio Vittorini's anthology *Americana*.

The last chapter, 'Mediating the Myth: The "Discovery" of American Literature by Italian Critics' (pp. 369–481), explores the role of Italian intellectuals in introducing American literature to Italy, taking into consideration authors such as Linati, Praz, Ruggiero, Cecchi, Soldati, Pavese, and Vittorini.

In the conclusion, Dunnett sums up her well-articulated argument and underlines its two main points: the ambiguous borders within which the *mito americano* has been kept and its pervasiveness within both pro-Fascist and anti-Fascist circles during the *ventennio*. One of the great merits of this study is the vast number and variety of different sources with which the author's argument is convincingly constructed.

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[The memorial article in this issue by John Champagne takes further account of Jane Dunnett's scholarship.]

Dino Buzzati and Anglo-American Culture: The Re-use of Visual and Narrative Texts in his Fantastic Fiction. By VALENTINA POLCINI. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars. 2014. x+186 pp. £44.99. ISBN 978-1-4438-5947-9.

Valentina Polcini's book sets out to advance the discussion of Dino Buzzati's relationship with his literary and artistic anglophone sources. The study is divided into three main sections: first, an introduction and examination of some important themes in Buzzati, together with an account of some intertextual debates; second, two chapters dedicated to tracing the influence of the illustrator Arthur Rackham and the writer Joseph Conrad; and third, two chapters which engage with the sea monster, the ghost, and the Christmas tale in Buzzati's work. In clear terms, Polcini lays out where her study fits into a wider critical discourse: as well as advancing the understanding of how Buzzati drew from his literary sources, it seeks to further establish Buzzati's originality and literary credentials. It is also a reassessment of an author long considered minor; and it is the first monograph on Buzzati in English (pp. 3–5).

The opening discussion of the metaphorical and existential dimensions of Buzzati's work is a well-trodden path, and these chapter sections provide both