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Authors

Tumolo, Joseph
Bjekovic, Nina

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Introduction and Acknowledgements

Nina Bjekovic and Joseph Tumolo

We are pleased to present the current issue of *Carte Italiane*, “In the Shadows of History: Grappling with the Past in Italian Culture.” In *La storia come pensiero e come azione (History as Thought and as Action*, 1938), Benedetto Croce argued that, “Il bisogno pratico [...] conferisce a ogni storia il carattere di ‘storia contemporanea’, perché [...] essa è, in realtà, storia sempre riferita al bisogno e alla situazione presente” (“Practical need confers on every history the character of ‘contemporary history,’ because in reality history is always directed toward the needs of the present situation”).¹ Indeed, throughout the ages, Italian culture has revived, rewritten, and reinvented the historical past. In the medieval and early modern periods, a classical past—real or imagined—was a key point of reference in the visual arts, literature, music, and philosophy. The first article in this volume, Emily Salamanca’s “‘Singulis Etruriae populis’: The Political Mobilization of the Etruscan Foundation Myth in the Self-Conception of Renaissance Florence,” is a rich testament to this as an exploration of the ways in which Florentine humanists sought to construct an identity for their city in dialogue with the Etruscan and Roman past with an eye to the city’s present politics.

Of course, the historical past is no less prominent in the modern era. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, artists and intellectuals rediscovered or revived past cultural movements including the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the Baroque. The second article in this volume, Chiara Barni’s “Il ‘fratello secentesco’ perduto: Gabriele D’Annunzio e la riscoperta del marinismo,” examines D’Annunzio’s appropriation and reinvention of Giambattista Marino’s baroque aesthetic. As Barni shows, this constitutes a paradoxical move on the part of *il Vate*, who, in an attempt to break from the past, finds himself nevertheless tethered to it. In the same period, the historical past was used and abused in attempts to define the Italian nation. The third piece in this volume, “Trieste ha sempre parlato diverse lingue,” Nina Bjekovic’s interview with Slovene-Italian writer Boris Pahor, explores the author’s perspective on questions of identity in the geopolitical context of Trieste and how these are negotiated in the Triestine literary tradition. The interview also features Pahor’s intimate anecdotes and reflections on his relationship with his native city.

In this volume of *Carte Italiane*, we have included an open theme section. The first piece in this section is Christina Petraglia’s “Art for the Reader’s Sake: An Historical and Textual Study of Emilio De Marchi’s *Il cappello del prete* (1888).” Petraglia’s fascinating analysis of De Marchi’s novel and its socio-cultural context continues something of a dialogue with our themed pieces. As Petraglia shows, De Marchi was active on the literary scene in the years following the Risorgimento when the historical novel in Italy seemed less relevant and lost the appeal it held at a time when writers, artists, intellectuals, and politicians sought to define the new nation.

The final pieces in this volume consider the writers, works, and legacy of Italy’s neo-avant-garde. In Joseph Tumolo’s interview with Carla Vasio, “Con le parole ho sempre amato giocare,” the author and poet reflects on her experiences with the Gruppo 63, on the time she spent in Japan, and on her beloved native city, Venice. Finally, Hiju Kim’s review of Gianluca Rizzo’s *Poetry on*

¹ Benedetto Croce, *La storia come pensiero e come azione* (Bari: Laterza, 1965), 5. This translation is our own.

Stage: The Theatre of the Italian Neo-Avant-Garde is an insightful overview of Rizzo's excellent study of the movement's rich experimentation across the media of poetry and theatre.

In the early stages of planning this volume, history intervened in a dramatic and unwelcome way with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. We remain ever grateful to the members of the Faculty Advisory Board, Professors John Agnew, Massimo Ciavolella, Claudio Fogu, Thomas Harrison, Andrea Moudarres, Lucia Re, Jon R. Snyder, and Peter Stacey. We also extend our sincerest thanks to the members of our Editorial Board—Jan DeLozier, Hiju Kim, Kelly Roso, and Megan Tomlinson—for their unwavering support through the uncertainty and challenges of the last many months. Without their efforts, Volume 13 of *Carte Italiane* would not have been possible.