

# Fabio Fernando Rizi. 'Coraggio nel presente e fiducia nell'avvenire': Politica e cultura sotto il fascismo nel carteggio tra Benedetto Croce e Giovanni Laterza dal 1925 al 1943

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the door to a far more extensive critique of the limits of the human vis-à-vis the technological, animal, or environmental other (11). The essays in this collection more generally affirm and reaffirm the capacity of human language writ large to bridge the gap—or lay bare the entanglements—between the human and non-human worlds. This is the book's most problematic, but also its boldest and most productive, claim.

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**Fabio Fernando Rizi. *'Coraggio nel presente e fiducia nell'avvenire': Politica e cultura sotto il fascismo nel carteggio tra Benedetto Croce e Giovanni Laterza dal 1925 al 1943*. Firenze: Franco Cesati Editore, 2020. Pp. 123. ISBN 9788876678202.**

The object of inquiry of "*Coraggio nel presente e fiducia nell'avvenire*." *Politica e cultura sotto il fascismo nel carteggio tra Benedetto Croce e Giovanni Laterza dal 1925 al 1943* is the intellectual and business relationship between Benedetto Croce and his publisher, the ambitious maverick Giovanni Laterza. An ideal companion to the previous volumes published by Fabio Fernando Rizi (*Benedetto Croce and Italian Fascism* and *Benedetto Croce and the Birth of the Italian Republic*, both published by University of Toronto Press, respectively in 2003 and 2019), this study adopts a similar methodological approach: to explain Croce with Croce. The book is a thematic exploration of the vast correspondence between Croce and Laterza, which spanned almost four decades. The rich five-volume epistolary—edited by Antonella Pompilio and published by Laterza, 2004–09—constitutes the foundation of Rizi's study. The correspondence is complemented by the six volumes of Croce's *Taccuini di lavoro* (published in 1987) and other scholarly studies and tributes to Croce such as *Croce e la cultura europea* by Daniela Coli (Il Mulino, 1983) and Gennaro Sasso's contributions, most notably the volume *Per invigilare me stesso. I taccuini di lavoro di Benedetto Croce* (Il Mulino, 1989) and the recent *Croce. Storia d'Italia e Storia d'Europa* (Bibliopolis, 2017). Rizi's latest Crocean offering builds on these studies to demonstrate how Croce's opposition to fascism was nothing short of active. It is now a scholarly commonplace to refer to Croce's discovery and republication in 1928, of Torquato Accetto's 1641

treatise *Della dissimulazione onesta* as a blueprint of controlled behaviour under a dictatorship. The title of the book has since become a byword to illustrate the demeanour of Croce's and many other members of the silent opposition to Mussolini's regime. However, this overused, and widely misunderstood label obscured the understanding of a more nuanced and dynamic opposition to the dictatorship, and one that took many shapes.

Rizi's contention is simple. One need look no further than Croce's *carteggi* to find a pugnacious and irreverent intellectual who uses his wit, vast knowledge, and vigorous virtue-signalling to fight back the abuse of power directed at him and at the members of his vast network of liberal and anti-Fascist intellectuals. Rizi organizes the material in succinct chapters along a chronological axis that goes from 1925 to the end of the Second World War, following in essence the development of the correspondence between Croce and his friend and collaborator Giovanni Laterza who will die in August 1943. The discussion centres on the conception and publication of *Storia d'Italia* and *Storia d'Europa* as centrepieces of Croce's intellectual opposition to the regime. It then proceeds to flesh out the invisible work done by Croce and supported by Laterza in helping members of his network who were actively persecuted by the regime. In particular, Rizi highlights the direct financial support for Adolfo Omodeo and Mario Vinciguerra, and how Laterza, following Croce's explicit request, expanded this support by agreeing to give translation and edition contracts to Jewish scholars whose livelihood the regime had threatened. In this sense, Croce's support for Leone Ginzburg and for Ada Gobetti are exemplary gestures. Of relevance are the chapters 8–10, in which Rizi articulates succinctly but effectively Croce's abhorrence of antisemitism and how he tried to defend volumes published or translated by Jewish authors when the regime decided to remove them from circulation.

The book ends with an appendix where two of Rizi's shorter studies (respectively published in 2014 and 2016) are republished. It is a pity that the author did not choose to reshape this material into an introductory chapter to the book. As they stand, they cover the period 1901–10s. It is odd, therefore, to find them at the end of a volume that has been carefully organized following a chronological order.

Rizi's portrait of Croce—as it emerges from this volume and the two preceding it—follows closely the many contributions (public-facing and those of more private circulation such as the numerous and voluminous *carteggi* with many interlocutors) that Croce fashioned for a “critica di [se] stesso.” This latest volume by Rizi, therefore, is also a heartfelt monument to Benedetto Croce and a testament

to the scholar's unending admiration and respect for the philosopher's moral conduct and intellectual action.

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**Roberta Morosini. *Il mare salato: Il Mediterraneo di Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio*. Roma: Viella, 2020. Pp. 348. ISBN 9788833131672.**

In *Il mare salato*, Roberta Morosini considers the sea not as a geographical space but as a literary space that can be “read.” Describing what she does as a “filologia mediterranea” (11) and dedicating a chapter to each of three canonical authors of the Italian fourteenth century—Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio—Morosini explores the role that the sea and navigation of the sea have in their works. Does the sea have a structural function? How does it reveal the poetic and philosophical vision of a given author?

Morosini readily admits that her project began with a focus on Boccaccio, to whom her second, very lengthy chapter is dedicated. Here Morosini advances key intriguing claims: that marine space is fundamental for Boccaccio's poetics; that in the *Decameron*, the sea traversed by merchants, pirates, preachers, women destined for marriage, and women who have been kidnapped replaces the forest into which the knight of medieval romance enters in order to prove his worth; that the sea permits these characters to transform their lives, to find new identities, to become rich or poor; that the liquid and unpossessable space of the sea highlights the demographic and deontological innovation of Boccaccio's work. To her readings of a wide range of *Decameron* novellas that feature maritime activity, Morosini adds compelling readings of visual representations of scenes from the *Decameron*, primarily from illuminated manuscripts. Especially fine examples of Morosini's ability to read novella and image side by side can be found on pages 162–63, where she highlights how an image in a Viennese manuscript assigns mobility to the man of *Decameron* 2.4, Landolfo Rufolo, and staticity to the woman who saves him, and on pages 199–203, where Morosini skillfully draws out key questions about female identity, solidarity among women, and women's integration into a foreign culture that emerge when one compares the little-studied novella of Costanza da Lipari (*Dec.* 5.2) and illustrations of this novella to the oft-studied