

Gadda: Interpreti a confronto. Ed. Federica G. Pedriali

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***Gadda: Interpreti a confronto*. Ed. Federica G. Pedriali. Florence: Franco Cesati Editore, 2020. Pp. 258. ISBN 9788876678684.**

This collection of essays showcases the latest research in Gadda studies by established practitioners of the field. The eleven contributions are not grouped by thematic subdivisions or other internal organizing principles but are freestanding, a reflection of the unwieldy character of Carlo Emilio Gadda's oeuvre that has defied easy categorizations and imposed boundaries since its entry on the literary scene. Indeed, the exploration of the unwieldy character of Gadda's narrative emerges, in all its complexity and theoretical significance, as the main *trait d'union* of the essays comprising the volume.

Underscoring this unwieldiness, and unpacking it ever so slightly with suggestive broad strokes to orient and entice the reader, is the opening essay "Gadda in Theory, with a Summation Coda" where Federica G. Pedriali provides an unconventional state-of-the-field overview of the lines of inquiry that animate Gadda studies and are pursued in the volume. The gesture of "re-reading myself reading Gadda" (10) signals a programmatic call for greater awareness of the role of the reader in the exegetical enterprise of Gadda's work even though the self-reflexive bent of the essay seems to restrict the potential audience.

While the effect on the reader of this volume is not one of following a tightly preordained path some overlapping nuclei can be discerned. Several essays deal with Gadda's subtexts, intertexts, influences, and borrowings, offering a rich, wide-angle view not merely of Gadda's hyperliterariness, or the often-noted magmatic quality of his writing, but of his ability to engage, with various degrees of subtleness or directedness, with great writers of the past.

Federico Bertoni's essay "Il romanzo moltiplicato: Gadda nel Novecento" highlights the resonance, in Gadda's novelistic production, of the preoccupations about the limitations of literary narrative constructs, and narration in general, seen in the great writers of the twentieth century (Musil, Woolf, Calvino, Nabokov, Gide, Perec, DeLillo, Roth). The anxiety about the logic "of finite elements" (47) that confronts the novelist who must choose what to omit and what to include, is closely mapped by Bertoni in its many echoes among these authors—a strategy that allows him to problematize recurrent discussions of Gadda's novels as "unfinished" as well as attempts to classify his work too narrowly within the confines of the Italian literary tradition.

Further probing the question of "unfinished business" by tracing the influence of literary antecedents (albeit of the nineteenth century) is Manuela Bertone's

“In margine al *Pasticciaccio*.” Her exquisitely argued essay juxtaposes the “abrupt” ending of Hawthorne’s *Fauno di marmo* and, perhaps more importantly, his public defense of the artistic choice, to Gadda’s ending of the *Pasticciaccio* and strikingly similar posture in defense of his *giallo*.

Alberto Godioli’s “‘Un romantico preso a calci dal destino’: Gadda and the Nineteenth Century Novel” maps the intertextual presence of Dickens, Balzac, Stendhal, Dostoevsky, and Flaubert that subtends the various inflections and shifts of Gadda’s satire of bourgeois society. Godioli highlights the waning influence of the romantic-realist models after the *Cognizione* in favor of a more Quixotic bent that places even further distance between the seriousness of everyday life and its farcical underbelly.

An additional exploration of Gadda’s work through the lenses of European literature is provided by Gabriele Frasca’s essay “La lingua del sì e quelle del no,” a tour de force that weaves in and out of major texts by Joyce, Nabokov, and Beckett. Frasca plucks with dexterity the linguistic snippets and motifs that Gadda incorporated into his prose, leaving the reader with a renewed appreciation of the linguistic filiations and appropriations that in Gadda’s case are not simple “borrowing” but grafting that coalesced to produce his own unique style.

Giuseppe Stellardi’s “‘In nome di quale poetica?’ L’antipoetica di Gadda,” offers a beautifully written and finely argued assessment of Gadda’s pronouncements on the aesthetics and stylistic dimension of his work. He maps chronologically the instances of self-reflection that allow us to glean Gadda’s stance, and changes over time, on the question of poetics. What emerges is a Gadda deeply skeptical (and painfully so) about embracing or even sanctioning precise theoretical confines for his artistic expression, casting further doubts about the validity of such constructs in general, yet longing for the sense of completeness that such a system would provide.

Stellardi’s essay dovetails with Giuseppe Bonifacino’s exploration of Gadda’s complex relation with the realist code in his “Dalla polarità alla deformazione: il realismo ‘noumenico’ di Gadda.” The unfinished, open, and incomplete status of the object of representation is seen by Bonifacino as one of the tenets of Gadda’s approach to mimesis and knowledge production. He traces the spatial and temporal coordinates of this “spectral” operation by describing how for Gadda meaning is revealed not only through the discourse of surface and depth—of what is concealed by appearances, and hence what a narrative that deforms reality brings to light—but also through the “temporalization” that characterizes deformation

that dislodges the object from an “original” shape and puts it in play, thus delaying indefinitely the coalescing of words around a final image or meaning.

Departing from Gadda’s poetics to explore the impact of Gadda’s publishing strategies on the critics’ assessment of his oeuvre is Cristina Savettieri’s essay “Il senso di Gadda per il romanzo.” In tracing the editorial vicissitudes of Gadda’s short stories that were adapted from unfinished novels she provides an effective, counter-intuitive mode of analysis that highlights his novelistic vocation. Savettieri approaches Gadda’s texts against the grain of a critical tradition that had de-emphasized or rejected his placement in the pantheon of novelists while favoring a classification of “prose writer” who operated outside the contours of established literary genres. What emerges is a solidly reasoned case for rethinking Gadda’s position in the literary canon.

This volume offers a remarkably multifaceted critical view of Gadda’s oeuvre, one that attests to the complexity of his work and to the fertility and continued relevance of Gadda studies. The uniformly high caliber of the essays makes the collection an invaluable addition to Gadda scholarship and a rewarding reading experience.

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