

Piera Carroli, ed. Mezcla. World Noir in Italy. Marilù Oliva. The Female Poetic in Millennium Crime Fiction

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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Piera Carroli, ed. *Mezcla. World Noir in Italy. Marilù Oliva. The Female Poetic in Millennium Crime Fiction*. Leicester: Troubadour Publishing, 2019. Pp. xvi + 249. ISBN 9781838591311.

This interesting volume of collected essays edited by Piera Carroli and published under the meaningful title *Mezcla* introduces the works of Marilù Oliva, author of numerous *noir* fiction books. The body of Marilù Oliva's works, in specific her trilogy of *La Guerrera*, represent endless socio-political and cultural issues that Italy is facing. With this volume, Piera Carroli brings to light the academic analysis of the Italian *noir* fiction, the transcultural and gender issues, and the style of writing that Marilù Oliva employs in her works, which allow her to carve a unique and new place for *noir* fiction in the academic literary canon. *Mezcla* holds contributions from numerous academics from different backgrounds, and it opens with an informative preface by Romano de Marco (ix), followed with an introduction by Piera Carroli (1). The volume is then divided into two clear parts, titled respectively "Part One: Writing the World into Italian *Noir*," (15), and "Part Two: *Guerrera* and Beyond" (121). The book concludes with a conversation between Piera Carroli and Marilù Oliva (206) that is found after the references, bibliography (190), and notes (203).

Mezcla stays true to Marilù Oliva's polyglot *noir* fiction by putting together a collection of multilingual chapters. A starting example would be the "Prefazione" written by Romano de Marco that reads both in its original Italian and in the English translation that follows. In his short essay, Romano de Marco familiarizes the readers with Bologna's multiculturalism and in specific its Latin American community that serves as the source of Marilù Oliva's inspiration for the creation of her main character, *La Guerrera*. Romano de Marco notes the linguistic reality of the Latin American immigrants living in Bologna, mostly known by the "itañol," the mix of Spanish and Italian, that they speak (xiv). In the preface, the reader is also familiarized with Oliva's unique style of writing that results from using the linguistic reality in Bologna serving both as a metaphor and symbolism, along with the various other problems written in the Italian literary landscape, such as politics, the economy, and the constructed traditional gender roles (xv). The introduction, written by Piera Carroli, is key in understanding the academic purpose of *Mezcla*. Piera Carroli is clear and concise, and she opens by explaining the focus of the *noir* fiction, and its origins. She then proceeds in offering an academic definition of the genre (5), followed by Marilù Oliva's bibliography (7), and the

many reasons why the author should be placed in the Italian literary canon, from which are her polyglot novels and her “multifaceted transcultural narrative world” (9). She then continues by explaining further Marilù Oliva’s style of writing and explains the origins of the word *Mezcla* (9–13).

The first part of the book contains five contributions and focuses on the numerous cultural traits that the South American culture brings to Bologna through the character of La Guerrera. The first two contributions are from Piera Carroli, titled respectively, “*In the Selva Oscura*. Exegesis of the Trilogy” (17), and “La Guerrera as Cross-Cultural *Flâneuse*. A Journey into World Cultural Memory” (33). In her first contribution, Carroli analyzes the origins of *capoeira* through Oliva’s main character, followed by the introduction of the origins and importance of salsa both culturally and academically in her second contribution. As Carroli explains, “[s]alsa is often ridiculed as a non-academic subject in some circles, [...] [f]ortuitously, they are also the subject of multidisciplinary studies conducted into the anthropological and social nature of syncretism in Italy, and among young people in Emilia-Romagna [...]” (48). The third contribution is by Laura Lori, titled “Daily Struggles. A Journey into Material Disintegration” (62), which focuses on the violence against women that is exercised in Marilù Oliva’s trilogy. The next chapter is Maricetta Barbaro’s “*Fuego*. Sulla via del fuoco. Bologna magica e mitologia del fuoco,” that appears both in Italian (77) and in English (89). This chapter focuses on La Guerrera’s discovery of a mythical Bologna that is intertwined with the esoteric traditions of Cuba. This part concludes with a contribution by Piera Carroli titled “From *Inferno* to *Paradise*? Towards Reconciliation” (104), which serves as a transition essay to part two of the book, analyzing La Guerrera’s reality and connection with other cultures and languages.

Part two explores a conjunction of memory, cultures, and the everyday fight that women put up in Bologna with its opening chapter by Camilla Ghedini titled “Marilù Oliva: Il *noir* che racconta l’emancipazione femminile. La Guerrera aka Marilù Oliva evoluzione diegetica e esistenziale,” that reads both in Italian (123) and in English (129). The second chapter, also bilingual (135 and 148) is a contribution by Daniele Maria Pegorari, titled “Il *noir* di Marilù Oliva: dal poliziesco seriale all’apologo morale,” which explores how Oliva masks the *giallo* with *noir*, and brings forth socio-political and cultural issues that Italy is facing. The last two chapters are by Piera Carroli, titled respectively “*Lo zoo*—Surfing the Web for Good and Evil. Exploitation and Rebellion” (162), and “A New *Noir* Ethics. *Spose sepolte*. Closing Observations” (180). The former chapter analyzes

the sociological problems that result with warfare, such as human trafficking and violence, by analyzing the characters of *Lo Zoo*, and highlighting how they persist. The latter provides a concluding analysis of the trilogy, reminding the readers of the cross-cultural sensitivity, and giving a psychological analysis of childhood traumas and cultural shocks.

Mezcla is a first of a kind volume that brings to the readers an analysis of the Latin American immigrants in Bologna, along with the various cultural differences and problems they face through Marilù Oliva's trilogy. Moreover, this volume also places Marilù Oliva in the Italian literary canon, transforming her *noire* fiction into works that can be analyzed from an academic point of view. Marilù Oliva also rightfully earns her place in the Italian literary landscape with her rich references to literary giants, and her wholesome presentation of the Latin American communities in Italy throughout her brilliant narration.

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