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Book Reviews

ANTONIO VITTI, *Il primo Pasolini e la sua narrativa*, New York, Peter Lang Publishing, 1987, pp. 152.

Il primo Pasolini e la sua narrativa by Antonio Vitti is a study of Pasolini's early works, *Ragazzi di vita*, *Una vita violenta* and *Il sogno di una cosa*, in the context of the complex social and political reality of the times. Prof. Vitti shows the continuity of Pasolini's ideas and how they were born out of specific linguistic, social and political problems of Modern Italy. He gives background information on the political and linguistic environment of the period in which the novels studied were written: the development of neorealism and the reaction to it, the history of the "questione della lingua," the growth of urban slums outside of Rome and even a brief history of the Roman dialect. However his actual literary analysis of Pasolini's language and specifically the use of dialect often lacks weight. For example, when Vitti states, regarding a line of dialogue from *Ragazzi di vita*, "[La frase] esce quasi dalla pagina, anche perché abbiamo una transizione di tempi, dal passato remoto, usato dal narratore, al presente nel bercio del ragazzo. Questo cambiamento di tempo avviene tutte le volte che Pasolini passa dal discorso narrativo al discorso diretto dei gridi dei ragazzi," he is observing something true of all traditional novels with narration in the past tense. It leaves one truly perplexed as to whether he thinks this is a unique attribute of Pasolini's writing.

Vitti does not assume any knowledge of Italian literature or history,

leading one to believe that he envisions an audience of relatively less experienced students. Unfortunately, it is precisely those students who will have difficulty deciphering Vitti's book. This is due to the non-use or misuse of normal punctuation marks, relative pronouns and other grammatical niceties; for instance, "Vengono, quindi, esclusi gli anni tra le due guerre e i così detti 'Anni Trenta,' perché la 'quarta generazione' o la generazione di mezzo, come spesso vengono chiamati gli artisti che si formarono culturalmente prima della guerra, dovettero saggiare la propria lezione culturale con una drammatica serie di eventi: la guerra e la Resistenza che influenzarono e trasformarono la proprio esistenza [sic]" (p. 1); and "Egli si fa continuatore dei valori acquisiti nel dopoguerra sviluppandoli con molte contraddizioni e spunti originali, senza di essi si arriva ad una nuova preistoria" (p. 22). This book would have been greatly helped by an editor, who might have been able to correct the ambiguities. It also would have been greatly improved by a proofreader, who would have been able to make a coherent sentence out of "Lo stato fascista che organizzò la cultura e l'intellettuali non aveva più un rapporto diretto con la massa, ma con gli istituti di cultura" (p. 3). A proofreader would have decided once and for all if *Ragazzi di vita* has eight or nine chapters, whether the character's name is spelled Riccetto or Ricetto, and would have saved time for all those readers who will search their dictionaries in vain for "scampare," "traditione," "pagini" and "coicidere," and who will comb the library for *Alì*.

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DONNA MANCUSI-UNGARO *Dante and the Empire*, Peter Lang Publishing, 1987, pp. 201.

Dante and the Empire by Donna Mancusi-Ungaro is a well-researched attempt to reconcile the tension that Italian scholars have long felt between Dante's formal treatise on political theory, the *Monarchy*, and his other better-known works, particularly the *Divine Comedy*.