

## BOOK REVIEWS / RECENSIONI

**Stefania Lucamante**, (ed.), *Italian Pulp Viction. The New Narrative of the Giovani Cannibali Writers*, Cranbury, Associated University Presses, 2001.

In her introduction to this most welcome collection of essays on the latest literary trends in Italy, the editor, Stefania Lucamante, stresses the fact that since 1996 a dissident alternative has emerged to the literary tradition based on select canonical authors. Indeed, according to Lucamante, the work of a group of young Italian writers, although disparate in style, content, and thematics, presents a radical evolution in the form and the very ethics of modern Italian literature. Dubbed as the *Giovani Cannibali*, a term derived from an anthology of stories, *Gioventú cannibale*, published by Einaudi in the "Stile libero" series of 1996, the first significant showcase for their work, these new fiction writers include Aldo Nove, Simona Vinci, Tiziano Scarpa, Isabella Santacroce, Daniele Luttazzi, Silvia Ballestra, Niccolò Ammaniti, Luisa Brancaccio, Carlo Lucarelli, Francesca Mazzucato and Matteo Gializzo.

Generally influenced by North American pulp fiction writers and cinema - *Pulp Fiction* and *American Psycho* have been cited - the *Giovani Cannibali* rather than emphasising their indebtedness to Pulp, Trash or Splatter, and hence to the laws of consumerism and mass culture, prefer the term *cannibalism* to describe the intrinsic notion of appropriation, with the subsequent mutation of previous literary approaches and tradition that lies at the core of this new narrative trend. It is not surprising that academics - and, it seems, at their peril - have tended to discount and trivialize the importance of their work and have marginalized the movement as a critically insignificant phenomenon of popular culture, attributable to crassly commercial marketing, crude topics as well as the repetition of a slangish jargon of obscenities and striking images of violence. Moreover, says Lucamante, in the case of these young Italian writers the use of the term "pulp" may be too narrow and inaccurate to describe their

narrative which, by defying an overly restrictive categorization, it has grown into a major literary phenomenon of the mid-nineties.

The six essays in this book, written by five critics living in both Italy and North America, offer an in-depth explanation, discussion, and analysis of the different aspects of this narrative trend. They attempt to articulate this narrative movement's place within the Italian literary panorama, discussing the subject of "Pulp" and *Cannibali* writing with respect to the use of language, thematics, and the practical and environmental realities of these writers. What emerges from these views is a wholly original, unmistakably Italian form of Pulp. Says Lucamante in her well-documented "Introduction":

Their writing goes *beyond* literature. In the challenge of traditional disciplinary borders, their writing appears, in fact, to be naturally shaped by *contaminatio* from media, cartoons, film, music, television, video and computer games, and even commercial ads - creating what has come to be a wholly Italian literary phenomenon, inextricably connected with political and ideological realities. The layers of mass culture, references, quotations from television commercials juxtapose the literary element of these narratives, making the essence of such writing one quintessentially linked to Italy in the 1990s (22).

In his essay, "Cannibalizing Avant-Garde", Pierpaolo Antonello investigates the term *cannibalism* in its relation to the concept of avant-garde and its significance to the present. Marco Berisso, in "Linguistic Levels and Stylistic Solutions in the New Italian Narrative (1991-98)", talks exhaustively about the use of language by these writers and of some of the sublinguistic codes in Neo-standard Italian. Filippo La Porta, in "The Horror Picture Show and the Very Real Horrors: About the Italian Pulp", offers a reading in which he discusses the dangers of this type of narrative of rapidly degrading in a superficial fade, a mannerism or a transvestitism. While Gian Paolo Renello, in "The Mediatic Body of the *Cannibale* Literature", argues the relevance of the media in the formation of the new narrative trend, Stafania Lucamante herself, in "Everyday Consumerism and Pornography 'above the Pulp Line'", discusses sexuality, pornography and desire in the female authors who are part of this group of Italian writers.

*Italian Pulp Fiction* concludes with an *Appendix* which, thanks to Lucamante's efficient translations, offers its English-speaking readers a taste of some of the most intriguing pages written by Niccolò Ammaniti and Luisa Brancaccio (*Evening Jaunt/Seratina*), Aldo Nove (*The World of Love/Il mondo dell'amore*) and Daniele Luttazzi (*Little Red Ridinghood/Capuccetto Splatter*).

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