
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, *Gioventù 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 Galianzo.

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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This volume is a collection of Pagnini’s scritti sparsi, arranged in four thematic sections: “Il linguaggio della letteratura” (14 chapters), “L’ermeneutica e I suoi problemi” (2 chapters), “Esercizi di lettura” (3 chapters), and “Teatro” (3 chapters).

Themes discussed in the first section, often with reference to English Romanticism, include definitions of poetic language, silence in literature, symbols and symbolism, the poetic image, myth, the relationship between poetic language and music, the stream of consciousness technique, and the opposition between Modernism and linearity.

The second section is especially interesting in view of the title of the collection. Chapter 15, “Le voci dell’ermeneutica e I silenzi dei testi” contains perspicacious remarks on obscurity in the literary text, points out that Derrida’s discourse was aimed at philosophy, not literature, and adds that deconstruction is merely one of the readerly codes that could be used “a de-gerarchizzare I piani del testo...” (216). In chapter 16, Pagnini makes the valid point that deconstructionist criticism is a form of tautological interpretation, like Marxist or psychoanalytic criticism, in that it obsessively repeats an attempted demonstration of the validity of Derrida’s theories (240). As an alternative to the freewheeling kind of reading proposed by some poststructuralists, Pagnini outlines the “punti d’appoggio” for reading offered by Eco.

The “esercizi di lettura” offers readings of texts by T.S.Eliot, Shelley and Coleridge.

Chapter 20, “Dal copione allo spettacolo” is a brief discussion of the roles of the author, the audience and other collaborators in