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highlight that it is a 'dialect' they share and not a universal language. And moreover, they each speak many other dialects in which they could not communicate. It is precisely because these other dialects exist, which makes their communication politically pragmatic. That Gobetti can converse with many with whom Gramsci cannot, and vice versa, is what, argues Holub, makes their relationship politically useful for both of them. On one hand, this seems to emphasize different points than Habermas' communicative theory. But on the other, there is still a recourse to 'enlightenment principles' — be they with a small 'e' and within 'dialects.'

Holub's bracketing off of Gramsci's political theory and how it has been interpreted is effective for much of the book. She astutely defers to the existing Gramsci literature in a manner that allows her to elucidate some truly original points about Gramsci's writings and his method. Because these analyses are persistently carried out with an eye towards developing a new political theory and practice, they are crucial not only to the specialists of certain areas, but to anyone who is engaged with relationships between politics and culture. But when it comes to explaining what 'differential pragmatics' is, some of the initial questions about how to interpret Gramsci's political theory resurface.

These problems, however, do not diminish the original and important analysis that Holub provides of specific portions of Gramsci's writings that have not been adequately approached. Nor do these problems

reduce her useful comparisons of Gramsci with many other early twentieth century thinkers. Holub's conclusion, "In Lieu of a Conclusion: Gramsci, feminism, Foucault" also provides some promising suggestions for feminism. While, Holub's project of combining an original analysis of Gramsci's writings with a new theory of "differential pragmatics" perhaps detracts from both, the attempt to combine the two is certainly to be welcomed if Gramsci's writings are to have any import for us living in the second half of the twentieth century.

PETER IVES

1. Antonio Gramsci, *Letters from Prison*, ed. & trans. by Lynne Lawner, (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 79.

2. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart 1971), p. 382.

3. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 384.

4. SPN, p. 416.

Gabriele D'Annunzio: The Dark Flame

By Paolo Valesio.

*English translation by Marilyn Migiel.
New Haven: Yale University
Press, 1992.*

In this book, the transatlantic critic, poet and novelist Paolo Valesio, reexamines the career and seeks to redeem the reputation of Italy's greatest modern writer, Gabriele d'Annunzio (1863-1936). D'Annunzio

dominated Italian letters for over half a century and excelled as a writer in every field he turned to: poetry, novels, theater, criticism, journalism, political polemics, patriotic oratory, and autobiography. He was a great and very public lover of interesting women, a genuine military hero, and passionate patriot. His works bear such "decadentist" titles as, *Pleasure*, *The Innocent One*, *Roman Elegies*, *The Triumph of Death*, *The Virgin of the Rocks*, *The Dead City*, *Glory*, *Fire*, *Maia*, *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*, *Iron*, *Leda without the Swan*, and *Contemplation of Death*. He was a fascinating figure who, according to Valesio, was the last writer to combine erotics and heroics in a "living idea." His life was as interesting as his writing, but both his life and his writing have been ignored both in Italy and abroad since the fall of Fascism, with which he has been routinely associated, and since the end of the Second World War. Recently, there have been signs of a revival of interest in d'Annunzio's life and work, and Valesio's book will contribute to it in a major way.

This is not, however, a survey of the "life and works" variety. Quite the contrary, Valesio uses the figure of d'Annunzio as an occasion to investigate the relation of twentieth-century Italian writing to cultural modernism and therewith the relation of modernist literature to fascism. On the basis of this investigation, Valesio indicts contemporary Italian literary culture for its denial of its own immediate, d'Annunzian past and its betrayal of its longer tradition of cosmopolitan writing which began with Dante, extended through

the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and culminated in d'Annunzio himself.

Valesio argues that the attitude of post-Fascist Italian culture towards d'Annunzio exemplifies a complex process of remembering and forgetting its past which has, on the one hand, cut Italy off from its cosmopolitan traditions and, on the other, blocked its participation in the modernist program of cultural renewal. Thus, d'Annunzio is remembered (and even slyly celebrated) as the dandy and decadent, the florid rhetorician and military adventurer: in a word, the figure of "the artist as Fascist." And as thus enfigured, he stands for everything of Italian culture that must be repudiated if that culture is to become genuinely modern. But in remembering *this* figure, Italian literary culture effectively obscures d'Annunzio's (and consequently its own) affiliations with the inventors of literary modernism (Baudelaire, Flaubert, Rimbaud, Wilde, Whitman, etc.) and, beyond that, the intimate relation between modernism and the great tradition of Italian literary-political cosmopolitanism that extends from Dante to d'Annunzio.

According to Valesio, d'Annunzio was not only one of the greatest of modern *European* writers but specifically the poet who, especially in his execution of the symbolist program, actually "inaugurates literary modernity." Valesio does not try to meet all of the charges, moralistic, aesthetic, and political, brought against d'Annunzio (and, through him, against Italian letters in general) during and after the Fascist era. He aims

primarily at an *aesthetic* reassessment of "a great poet, a major novelist, a brilliant playwright", who distills the essence of "the spirit of the two centuries at whose turn we find him." (4) In a word, Valesio wishes to identify in d'Annunzio's work what an older critical tradition would not have been ashamed to call "poetic genius." To this end, Valesio disposes an impressive, original, complex and, ultimately, very demanding strategy of literary interpretation.

Valesio is a philologist, linguist, and semiotic critic. He has published important books on such subjects as "structures of alliteration" and "rhetorics" conceived as the theory of "the politics of language." He is, finally, the theoretician of what he calls "semiohistory"—which envisages cultural history as a history of sign production, exchange, consumption, and reproduction, but more importantly seeks to distinguish between those writers and intellectuals who are merely "symptomatic" of the forces at work in the period in which they write and those who "signify in those forces, expropriate them, turn them to their own uses, combine them with other forces," and consequently give them direction and purpose they would not otherwise have had.

In this book, Valesio applies the principles of semiohistory to the examination of a single writer, Gabriele d'Annunzio, considered as a "living sign" or point of exchange at which modernist literature and modernist politics intersect, interanimate one another, and, by a complex process of sign alchemy, succeed in endowing each the other with a dis-

tinctively "period" meaning. The period in question is that of modernism, and Valesio argues for D'Annunzio's status as the representative of a unique modernist sensibility. In his account, d'Annunzio was in his earliest work a writer fully the equal of Gide, Proust, Rilke, and Yeats. In addition, he was in his later period the inventor of distinctively modernist, even postmodernist literary genres—such as the anti-narrative novel, the autobiographical "semifiction", the anti-theatrical drama, the poem in prose, and so on. He was also—in the manner of Baudelaire—a cartographer of the modern urban mental landscape and—better than Gramsci—a deconstructor of fascism, "the melancholy of the century." As the foremost visionary poet of this century, d'Annunzio, in his five-volume *Lauds*, not only challenged Dante and Petrarch as a writer of the "total poem", but anticipated and indeed he alone made possible, among many other modernist projects, the *Cantos* of Ezra Pound.

In defense of these claims for d'Annunzio's pre-eminence in our century, Valesio reconstructs the "genealogy" of d'Annunzio, not as a chain of influences, borrowings, and imitations, but rather as a congeries of anticipations and retrospective expropriations, involving poetic rhythms, themes, images, and obsessions shared by such predecessors as Pindar, Dante, Petrarch, Hölderlin, Baudelaire, Nietzsche, and Walt Whitman; and such successors as Pound, Eliot, Ungaretti, Vittorini, Pasolini, Thomas Wolfe, Faulkner, and Allen Ginsberg. Thus Valesio

hopes to dis-figure d'Annunzio, and, on the basis of this dis-figurement, retrieve "the living idea" of the quintessential modernist poet and re-establish his actual "historical relation" to his time and ours.

How does he go about this task? Valesio distinguishes among four different aspects of a writer's corpus. These are: first, the material remains (manuscripts, editions, variants, etc.) which it is the task of philological criticism to sort out, classify, and reassemble as a linguistic unity. Valesio is superb at this operation, and his minings of the fine textures of a poetic line is a model of its kind. Next, there is the writer's status as a "sign", discernible in the trajectory of a career and consisting of his or her role within a period or place within a tradition, which it is the task of the semiohistorian to establish. Here Valesio makes astonishing claims for d'Annunzio's centrality to both his era and the great traditions from which he descends. Whether all of these claims—such as d'Annunzio's status as a "transatlantic" writer—can be sustained is a question for specialists to decide. Third, there is the writer's place in a "genealogy" which consists of his or her affiliations with different representatives of world "literature" and which falls to the literary critic, properly so called, to identify. Here Valesio provides his own version of what poststructuralists have come to call "intertextuality" and does so with compelling authority. Finally, there is the writer's "idea", which is the aesthetic essence contained in the work, and which is discernible only at the level of a specifically "philosophical" inquiry.

Valesio makes claims for the ontological status of the great work of art which appear to indicate not only an interest but a belief in the kind of "aestheticism" which d'Annunzio is supposed to have represented. The book on d'Annunzio is, in short, very much a defense of an "aestheticist" philosophy of art, quite at odds with the kind of ideological defamation of esthetics in general which has emanated from the political Left over the last half-century. In any event, Valesio utilizes these notions of the "levels" at which a writer's work can be invested by the critic to weave a complex account, not so much of d'Annunzio or specific works of his, as much as rather his function as a sign of his times and as a "living idea" whose "time" as a model of poetic creativity has "come around" again.

Valesio's book consists of 287 printed pages divided (depending on how one counts) into fourteen sections. These are: a Preface, a Chronicle of the principal events in d'Annunzio's "Inimitable Life"; an Introduction, subtitled "A Living Idea"; four Parts (entitled "Context: The Literature of Politics", "Text: Poetry and Drama"; "Subtext: Poetry and Criticism"; and "Poetic Genealogies") spanning seven chapters; an Appendix, consisting of d'Annunzio's 1914 essay on Dante, written in French; Notes on the Texts of d'Annunzio's works; Notes on Valesio's own text; and, finally, an analytical Index. I recite this table of contents in order to suggest the (what I take to be planned) *fragmentary* nature of Valesio's presentation of d'Annunzio.

I said earlier on that this was not a "life and works" survey. Valesio steadfastly resists any temptation to narrativize the course of d'Annunzio's life. Anyone wanting information on d'Annunzio's sensational "life", then, must look to the bare chronicle at the beginning of the book. As for the "works", Valesio resists any impulse to summarize the plots of d'Annunzio's novels or paraphrase the contents of his essays, poems, and plays. The problem, therefore, according to Valesio, is not so much to re-read d'Annunzio's works *seriatim* and divide them into periods as it is rather to grasp the "living idea" of his achievement as a poet. This can be done only by applying the most rigorous *philological* methods to crucial passages in the d'Annunzian corpus and then subjecting what has been uncovered in these passage to the most serious *aesthetic* analysis.

What does this mean? It means, first, locating points of poetic fusion in the corpus, points at which different concepts or whole discourses are grasped in an image that illuminates not only the rest of the writing but the "living idea" of the writer and his age as well. For Valesio, such images are almost always products of the effort to fuse opposed entities into unities: life and death, darkness and light, nobility and humility, heroism and cowardice, youth and old age, earliness and belatedness, and so on. In fact, Valesio offers the title of his book, "Gabriele d'Annunzio: The Dark Flame", as an emblem of such images; according to him, this title "concentrates . . . the special quality of d'Annunzio's work and an entire

epoch in European cultural history, taking account of symbolism at the same time as it ushers us toward modernity." The "concentration" consists first in the pleonasm contained in d'Annunzio's name ("The name of the poet . . . names not once, but twice 'the Annunciation' . . . Gabriel being the announcing angel par excellence; . . . [and] his family name translating the etymon of 'Gospel' or 'Godspell' "); and, then, the oxymoron "dark flame" evoking "d'Annunzio's work at a level of intensity and profundity that requires careful reading." The image of the "miles patiens" ("the suffering soldier"), with its suggestion of both heroism and abasement, not to mention its ironic allusion to the traditional religious icon of the "Christus patiens", is another such image; Valesio uses it to focus his discussion of d'Annunzio's response to World War I, his sense of the triumph of fascism as a reaction to Italy's "victimage" in that war, and his prophetic vision of fascism as a kind of sacrificial rite which Italy must live through if it is to redeem its debt to its people.

This "Jungian" notion of the "joining of opposites" informs Valesio's catachrestic readings of everything from the nature of decadentism ("a creative declension"), modernism (product of an effort to join religion and literature or, what amounts to the same thing, the sacred and the profane), and fascism ("a beautiful lie", "a corrupted poetic idea", a "desperate *imitatio* of the Passion") to specific works and their characteristic styles.

The notion of the crucial image as a fusion of opposites is a transla-

tion—or so it seems to me—into modernist terms of Jakobson's definition of the "poetic function" as consisting of the projection of "the principle of equivalence" from the paradigmatic (vertical and metaphorical) onto the syntagmatic (horizontal and metonymic) axis of the utterance. And indeed Valesio distinguishes between the linguistic and the esthetic "moments" of a text in terms of the way it effects a turn between its horizontal and vertical dimensions, a switch within which "temporality" (*kronos*) is suspended and a "'here and now' meaning" (*kairos*) flares up and epiphanically manifests a vision of wholeness, specifically poetic in kind. This distinction authorizes the further distinction between the philological and the aesthetic "moments" of criticism and between their respective aims. While philological criticism is concerned with the reconstruction of the text's material body, aesthetic criticism is concerned with its spirit or soul. The aim of aesthetic criticism is, Valesio says, to identify "the *kairos* in poems." *Kairotic* moments are precisely those in which Jakobson's "principle of equivalence" triumphs over every impulse to disperse meaning across a series or to arrange elements of the whole into a hierarchy. What is effected in such moments is a perfect replication of the whole in the part, a representation of the macrocosm in the microcosm. This replication unites the grandest with the smallest and most humble aspects of a poem, a text, a life, a period, a tradition. And this accounts for what I can only call the phantasmagoric aspect of Valesio's own text, its sudden switches from the microscopic to the

macroscopic levels, its sudden turns from the most painstakingly detailed examinations of a single lexeme, phrase, or line, on the one side, to the most comprehensive claims for a given text's originality, brilliance, influence, prescience, or sophistication, on the other.

Like his notion of the crucial image, Valesio draws his interpretative strategy from the symbolists. This is in accordance with his conviction, formally embraced, that the critic's metalanguage should conform to the language of his object of study, to the point of imitating and, where called for, even parodying it. This may be why Valesio, who is fluent in English, chose to write his book in Italian and, beyond that, cast it in the form of a congeries (a *sorties* or heap) of fragments. It may also account for the fact that Valesio does not, with the exception of his treatment of short lyrics, deal with whole works, but only with fragments or parts of works. In many respects, this strategy accords with the ideology of philology which, from the late 18th century on, presumed that there is no such thing as a whole work, that everything is a fragment, shard, or part of a lost whole; but that this lost whole is perceivable by way of the part and can be reconstructed by a microscopic analysis of the structure of the part.

However, in the case of Valesio, the reconstruction of the whole means distinguishing between the poet's work as a linguistic artifact, on the one hand, and as a sign system, on the other. Signs function differently from words. Whereas words refer (or at least seem to do so) to an extralinguistic reality, signs refer both to

this reality and to other signs—so that, as in the case of d'Annunzio, for example, it can be seen how what he says makes a connection, not only between language and reality, but also among many different discourses, such as those of religion, politics, literature, and personal feeling. Thus, Valesio argues, d'Annunzio's relation to fascism is that of the creator of an original poetic idea, specifically one that envisioned the fusion of "heroics" and "erotics", to a "corrupted" version thereof. So, too, for d'Annunzio's relationship to those Italian writers who came after and were in a variety of ways inspired by him. Ungaretti, in his early war poetry, and Vittorini in his novels, Pasolini in his critical writing—all take up d'Annunzian themes and give them typically modernistic treatments of a d'Annunzian kind. But all of them, in Valesio's estimation, represent a "declension" from—a fading or paling of—the d'Annunzian "idea."

The last chapter of Valesio's book is a *tour de force* of critical imagination. Here he examines what he calls a "number of points of contact between the territory of the d'Annunzian imagination and the territory of the North American imagination" especially as the latter is represented by the "poetic prosings" of Walt Whitman. Although d'Annunzio's allusions to Whitman and to North American writing in general are minimal. Valesio insists upon the possibility of "objective" affinities—both stylistic and thematic—between these two territories as well. The point here seems to be that d'Annunzio's futuristic, prophetic,

metamorphic, and magical—in a word, his hypermodernist—style resembles in more than a superficial way the poetic "effusiveness" of such American writers as Poe and Whitman and, later, Faulkner and Thomas Wolfe. Valesio suggests that this conjunction of poetic territories points to the formation of an "international", even transcontinental style which, once the fad of minimalist writing has passed, will recognize in d'Annunzio its annunciatory angel.

HAYDEN WHITE

The Italians and the Holocaust: Persecution, Rescue, Survival

By Susan Zuccotti.

1996 paperback edition, Lincoln:
University of Nebraska Press,
1996.

New York: Basic Books, 1987.

For a post-Holocaust understanding of the function of moral complicity, we need to examine several post-war myths regarding the relationship between Italian culture and the Jews of Italy. Without explicitly stating such a project, Susan Zuccotti, in her well-researched and intriguing historical study, *The Italians and the Holocaust: Persecution, Rescue, Survival*, quietly examines these myths for veracity as she sets out to document what happened to the Jews in Italy during the war. The first myth, probably the most prevalent one, has to do with a purported lack of anti-Semitism in the Italian tradi-