

The Cambridge Companion to
Modern Italian Culture

edited by

ZYGMUNT G. BARAŃSKI *and* REBECCA J. WEST



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Contents

List of illustrations ix
Contributors xii
Acknowledgments xv
Note on translation xvi
Chronology xvii

Introducing modern Italian culture 1
ZYGMUNT G. BARAŃSKI

- 1 The notion of Italy 17
JOHN DICKIE
- 2 Social and political cultures in Italy from 1860 to the present day 35
ANNA CENTO BULL
- 3 Questions of language 63
BRIAN RICHARDSON
- 4 Intellectuals, culture and power in modern Italy 81
DAVID WARD
- 5 Catholicism 97
PERCY ALLUM
- 6 Socialism, Communism and other ‘isms’ 113
ROBERT S. DOMBROSKI
- 7 Other voices: contesting the status quo 131
SHARON WOOD *and* JOSEPH FARRELL
- 8 Narratives of self and society 151
GIAN-PAOLO BIASIN

- 9 Searching for new languages: modern Italian poetry 173
SHIRLEY W. VINALL *and* TOM O'NEILL
 - 10 Drama: realism, identity and reality on stage 197
ANN LAURA LEPSCHY
 - 11 Italian cinema 215
PETER BONDANELLA
 - 12 Art in modern Italy: from the Macchiaioli to the
Transavanguardia 243
EUGENIA PAULICELLI
 - 13 A modern identity for a new nation: design in Italy since 1860 265
PENNY SPARKE
 - 14 Fashion: narration and nation 282
EUGENIA PAULICELLI
 - 15 The media 293
CHRISTOPHER WAGSTAFF
 - 16 Since Verdi: Italian serious music 1860–1995 311
JOHN C. G. WATERHOUSE
 - 17 Folk music and popular song from the nineteenth century to
the 1990s 325
ALESSANDRO CARRERA
 - 18 Epilogue: Italian culture or multiculture in the new
millennium? 337
REBECCA J. WEST
- Index* 347

Illustrations

Map 1. The unification of Italy. xx

Map 2. Italy since 1919. xxi

1. Giovanni Pastrone's *Cabiria* (1914): Maciste (Bartolomeo Pagano) rescues Cabiria from sacrifice to the Carthaginian god Moloch. The Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive. 216
2. On the outskirts of Rome, Mussolini begins construction of the largest film studio in Europe, Cinecittà ('Cinema City'). Cinecittà Archives. 218
3. Luchino Visconti's *Ossessione* (1942), an unauthorized Italian version of James Cain's novel *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, is one of the films made during the Fascist period that would lead to Italian Neorealist style. The Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive. 220
4. Roberto Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* (1945): partisan leader Manfredo (Marcello Pagliero), photographed as a crucified Christ, is tortured by the Gestapo. Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia Photo Archives. 220
5. Roberto Rossellini's *Paisà* (1946): a black GI named Joe (Dots M. Johnson) meets a Neapolitan street urchin named Pasquale (Alfonsino Pasca). Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia Photo Archives. 221
6. Vittorio De Sica's *Ladri di biciclette* (1948): Bruno (Enzo Staiola) delivers one of the greatest of all non-professional performances as a child who helps his father locate a stolen bicycle. The Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive. 222
7. Luchino Visconti's *La terra trema* (1948): deep-focus photography adds to the spatial realism of a Neorealist masterpiece. Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia Photo Archives. 223
8. Roberto Rossellini's *Viaggio in Italia* (1953): the marriage of Katherine (Ingrid Bergman) and Alexander (George Sanders) falls apart amidst the ruins of ancient Pompeii. Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia Photo Archives. 225

9. Pietro Germi's *Divorzio all'italiana* (1961): in the absence of a divorce law, Fefé (Marcello Mastroianni) must trick his wife Rosalia (Daniela Rocca) into committing adultery with Carmelo (Leopoldo Trieste) so that he can kill her and escape punishment. The Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive. 227
10. Sergio Leone's *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1966): the site of the climactic gunfight that concludes all of Leone's 'spaghetti' Westerns. The Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive. 229
11. Michelangelo Antonioni's *Il deserto rosso* (1964): the director's careful compositions within the frame underlie his abstract use of colour and form. The Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive. 230
12. Federico Fellini's *Otto e mezzo* (1963): the exhausted director on the set of an alternative ending for the film that was eventually rejected. The Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive. 231
13. Francesco Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano* (1962): an overhead shot of the dead Sicilian bandit opens Rosi's semi-documentary account of his life. The Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive. 233
14. Federico Fellini's *Amarcord* (1974): sexual immaturity, for Fellini, represents one of the many ways provincial life under Fascism was shrouded in ignorance. The Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive. 235
15. *La notte di San Lorenzo* by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani (1982): in recounting a story about the meeting of American soldiers and young Italians in war-torn Tuscany, these post-war directors pay homage to Rossellini's *Paisà* and their own Neorealist origins. The Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive. 236
16. Lina Wertmüller's *Pasqualino Settebellezze* (1975): in order to survive in the concentration camp, Pasqualino must seduce its hefty female commandant (Shirley Stroler). The Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive. 238
17. Bernardo Bertolucci's *L'ultimo imperatore* (1987): Pu Yi (John Lone) is driven out of the Forbidden City in an epic portrait of China's last emperor that earned Oscars in nine categories. Bernardo Bertolucci and Studio Lucherini, Rome. 239
18. Giovanni Fattori, *Garibaldi a Palermo* ('Garibaldi in Palermo'), 1860–2. Private collection, Montecatini Terme. 244
19. Odoardo Borrani, *Le cucitrici delle camicie rosse* ('The Seamstresses of the Red Shirts'), 1863. Private collection, Montecatini. 245
20. Odoardo Borrani, *Il 26 Aprile 1859* ('26 April 1859'), 1861. Private collection, Florence. 246
21. Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo, *Il quarto Stato* ('The Fourth Estate'), 1901. Reproduced by permission of Fratelli Alinari. 248
22. Giacomo Balla, *Dinamismo di un cane al guinzaglio* ('Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash'), 1912. Reproduced from the collection of George F.

- Goodyear and by permission of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY. 250
23. Giorgio De Chirico, *Enigma di un giorno* ('The Enigma of a Day'), 1914. Reproduced by permission of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. 252
24. Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Venere degli stracci* ('Venus of the Rags'), 1967. Installed at the Diego Aragona Pignatelli Museum, Naples. Reproduced by permission of the Galerie Tanit, Munich. 260
25. Coupé 1900. Photograph by Pinin Farina, 1953. 274
26. Gio Ponti, Espresso coffee machine for La Pavoni, 1948. 274
27. Soda water syphon, designed by Sergio Asti, 1956. 276
28. Ettore Sottsass, *Yantra Ceramici*, 1970. 278
29. Superstudio, 'The Continuous Movement', 1969. 279
30. Achille Castiglioni, 'Boalum Lamp', 1970. 280

Introducing modern Italian culture

A companion to modern Italian culture

Putting together a collective volume that intends to provide an overview on a complex issue such as the culture of a modern nation state is fraught with problems. Any overarching assessment cannot but be partial, since it is based on a process of selection and synthesis which offers the means to arrive at a series of generalizing descriptions and evaluations which can form the key moments of a broad analytical 'narrative'. This is true not just as regards the editorial choices determining the basic make-up of the book, but also as regards the critical efforts of individual contributors to whom the responsibility for granting substance to the editorial schema is delegated. In addition, the collaborative nature of the project does not always make it easy for the volume to present a unified front. However, this is no bad thing. I am persuaded that, beyond all that may unite its different parts, the success of a synthesis like the present 'companion' is also to a large degree dependent on the fragmentation of its vision. In order to prepare their 'narratives' of their respective corners of modern Italy, the contributors have had to undertake a job of drastic pruning. Yet the impetus behind this operation is different in each case, conditioned as it is by divergent methodological sympathies, as well as by contrasting perceptions both of what 'Italy' can signify and of the nature of its achievements. Hence, just as much as in the chapters' points of contact, it is in the robust tensions that arise from the competing claims of a panoply of different expert voices that a revelatory glimpse of the multifaceted complexity that is 'modern Italian culture' can be espied.

Our book thus attempts to strike a balance between congruence – the

hope that, through collaboration, it is possible to suggest a broad, largely unified, impression of Italy – and difference – the recognition that such an impression is constantly put into crisis, first by the variety of events and experiences that have marked the recent history of the peninsula, and secondly by the differing reactions which these same events and experiences have elicited and continue to elicit. In order to avoid compartmentalizing Italy into a series of self-contained units, we would encourage readers to approach our volume in an open and flexible manner. In particular, they should consider the ways in which the chapters can usefully interact; and, in this regard, so as to ensure that rapprochements can be effected as freely as possible, we have not organized groups of chapters into separate sections. Bringing different chapters together cannot but expand understanding and break down barriers of perception. Such a way of reading, especially with the help of the index, also provides fuller information on matters which are not specifically discussed in a single chapter but which are examined in various areas of the book, such as the reverberations of the divisions between the North and South of the country.¹ Equally, it helps to foreground many of the key events, movements, institutions and figures of modern Italy: from the Risorgimento to Fascism and from the Resistance to Tangentopoli ('Kickback City'); from *verismo* to Futurism and from Neorealism to the Neo-avant-garde; from the Catholic Church to the Italian Communist Party; and from Alessandro Manzoni to Benedetto Croce and from Antonio Gramsci to Pier Paolo Pasolini. Finally, it offers a sense of how the relative weight of any set of circumstances, even of a crucial phase of Italian history such as Fascism which aimed to affect every sphere of life, changes depending on whether one considers this in terms of the development of architectural style, social policy or the film industry. Our survey has its limits; however, there are ways in which these can be not just countered, but also turned to the book's and the reader's advantage.

A fundamental consequence of recognizing the restrictions which constrain the present book is the need to justify as precisely as possible the criteria governing its make-up. To put it in a slightly different way, it is important to acknowledge not just what may be found in its pages, but also what is missing. The problem of what is omitted is a crucial one; and certainly our choices have in part been driven by what we deem to be vital about post-unification Italy, and, hence, are evaluative in nature. Although it is important for judgments of discrimination to be made, and all the contributors to this book reveal their studied preferences, I

am aware of the relative character of our selections and appraisals. I am also cognizant that it is easier to make evaluative assessments within a single area of human enterprise than to do this between different types of activity; just as I appreciate that distorted judgments can result from applying the measures belonging to one sphere to define the significance and traits of another. Thus, on the one hand, it would not be difficult to make a case for the intellectual, ethical and artistic superiority of Rossellini's cinematic *œuvre* in relation to the productions of Berlusconi's three television channels, not least because Rossellini's ambitions are intellectual, ethical and artistic, while these attributes do not seem to be a priority as far as the television stations are concerned. On the other hand, there is no doubt that Berlusconi's brash programming strategies and even brasher programmes have had a much more profound impact on post-war Italian society than Rossellini's films with their restrained humanism. In a book which attempts to provide an introduction to 'modern Italian culture', both Rossellini the film-maker and Berlusconi the media entrepreneur have to be found a niche. The issue is not whether Berlusconi is 'better' than Rossellini, or whether the opposite is true, but of ensuring that their respective, and different, importance is adequately highlighted. There is thus no grand, all-seeing juncture from which modern Italy can be conveniently assessed; just as it is impossible for a 'companion' such as ours to provide more than the faintest of sketches of the country, its history and culture. At most, we can offer a kind of rudimentary map that will allow interested readers to set out on a journey of discovery – a journey during the course of which they can formulate their own preferences and increasingly recognize the limits of the image of Italy that we are presenting.

How were these limits fixed? What conditioned the choices that determined this drawing of boundaries?

Our ambitions for this book have always been primarily practical. To begin with, *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Italian Culture* fills a not insignificant gap in the literature on post-unification Italy. As far as we are aware, there is no single-volume study in English – and we suspect that the same is true as regards the Italian book market – that attempts to provide a general introduction to the cultural life of the peninsula since 1860. Precisely because of this, we feel that the main stress of the 'companion' has to be on providing information; and that for this information to be meaningful, it has to be both historically rooted and critically assessed. In addition, given the book's introductory character, we

hope that it will appeal to a wide audience, ranging from students at every stage of their studies of Italy to the many people with an interest in the country. However, we would like to think that Italian specialists, too, will find the book useful, especially as a first point of reference, when seeking information on subjects outside their main areas of expertise. In the light of these aspirations, we decided that, in part, the book had to have a traditional remit (hence the strong emphasis on history, literature, history of art, and what John Waterhouse, somewhat provocatively, terms 'serious music'), so that readers would find what many of them would conventionally expect from a 'companion' to a national culture. At the same time, we also believed that it was important that we call into question some of these conventional assumptions, thereby encouraging readers to begin to reassess their ideas both of Italy and of culture. John Dickie's deconstruction of 'The Notion of Italy' plays a vital role in this respect, as should be clear from the prominent position we accord his chapter at the book's opening. Equally, Anna Bull's historical survey, which follows Dickie's presentation, with its emphasis on 'Social and Political Cultures', intends to underline how historical events and changes in society are closely intertwined with people's attitudes and values; and 'attitudes and values' can usefully serve as one broad definition of culture (others will be examined in due course). The discussions of the mass media, film, design, fashion, popular music, political, worker and religious mass organizations, and 'Other Voices' (this chapter focuses on groups and movements, such as the Catholic Church, organized crime, terrorism, the separatist regional Leagues, and Feminism, that, at one time or another, have questioned the legitimacy of the unified state) also intend to cast light on matters which are often ignored when a restricted view of culture is embraced.

'Cultural studies' and Italy

As with so much of our book, its basic structure was influenced by our desire to find a balance which would permit readers to grasp something of the complexity of the issues that cohere around the concept of Italy and to become aware of the variety of ways in which these issues can be approached. At the same time, however, our conviction that 'culture' cannot be reduced to what traditionally has been described as 'high culture' constitutes a clear expression of our own intellectual sympathies. This sense comes to us, as does our book's strong emphasis on rela-

tivism and on the need for interdisciplinarity, from the important work which for several decades has been done under the ever-broadening umbrella of 'cultural studies'.² Despite the wealth of academic work that is now included under this designation, what unites it is the belief that different forms of communication and of social practice should not be evaluated on the basis of critically untested value judgments. Instead, 'cultural studies' advocates that attempts be made to recognize the significance of as wide an array of these forms as possible, while placing special emphasis on those subordinate discourses and groups which, traditionally, have been marginalized in socio-political terms and in the academies. As a result of the eclecticism of 'cultural studies' and its intent to undertake a process of cultural revaluation, the relationship between it and longer-established academic disciplines has often been quite difficult. Our book tries to avoid such polemicizing. Admittedly, at their best, these academic disputes have succeeded in usefully redefining scholarly concerns; and the impact of 'cultural studies' on educational curricula in Britain and in North America has been profound.³ At the same time, however, the reductionism of many other exchanges has usually been clear to all but the entrenched combatants. Thus, while acknowledging its debts to 'cultural studies',⁴ *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Italian Culture* also vigorously asserts the worth of traditional humanistic disciplines, as well as the value of the achievements of artists who quite deliberately create their works for a narrow and intellectually sophisticated audience, and who see themselves as contributing to an élite tradition. Our book, therefore, is not concerned to conform to specific preferences of method. The emphasis is on breadth and 'openness', as regards both the information provided and the ways in which these facts can be interpreted. Where a particular approach can be of benefit to achieving these ends, I would hope that its influence is discernible. In this respect, it is reassuring to note that our position is strikingly similar to the principles adopted by Dombroski and Cervigni, the editors of the most recent collection on 'Italian Cultural Studies'.

Yet, for all our attempts at inclusiveness, there are significant areas of modern Italy for which we have failed to find room in the pages of our book. This is true as regards both topics which conventionally belong under the rubric of 'high culture', such as architecture and education, and subjects which might be comprised under the marker of 'low culture', such as sport and food. Equally, other important matters have only been included by being combined in a single generic category. This

is the case as regards the press, radio and television, which have been subsumed under the catch-all heading 'the media'. Finally, a further group of topics is not treated systematically, though some understanding of them can be achieved by bringing together the relevant sections of different chapters. A noteworthy instance of this kind of 'fragmentary' presentation is the large amount of information about the development of Italian thought that can be gathered by amalgamating the chapters on left-wing ideology, Church doctrine, intellectuals and 'other voices'.

The decision regarding what to include and what to exclude was largely conditioned by what we think are the salient aspects of post-unification Italy. At the same time, we were helped in making our selections by the knowledge that three other collaborative books were due to appear (all three have now been published) which intended to cover some of the same ground and appeal to a not dissimilar audience as our 'companion'. While providing a balanced assessment of Italian culture, therefore, we felt it would be an advantage if our book, whether methodologically or as regards coverage, could, whenever possible, refrain from intruding too much on to the spaces marked out for themselves by these volumes. Ideally, we consider *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Italian Culture* to exist in a complementary relationship to these three works, and we would encourage readers to compare our treatment of particular issues with theirs.⁵ Equally, we would hope that readers of these volumes would turn to our book to find information on areas, such as literature, music, art and political thought, where our coverage is generally fuller than theirs, and to get a broad sense of post-unification Italy – something which none of the three aims to offer, since their sights are overwhelmingly fixed on the twentieth century and on quite particular ways of looking at Italy. Similarly, Dombroski and Cervigni's collection, though it ranges from the Renaissance to the present, also has a relatively narrow, as well as an unsystematic, focus: it concentrates on analysing a disparate array of specific texts, figures and issues rather than on offering a series of broad interrelated overviews.

The three books are: *Italian Cultural Studies. An Introduction*, edited by David Forgacs and Robert Lumley (Oxford University Press, 1996); *La cultura italiana del Novecento*, edited by Corrado Stajano (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1996) and *Revisioning Italy. National Identity and Global Culture*, edited by Beverly Allen and Mary Russo (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). The basic differences between these volumes and our 'companion' should be evident from their titles.

Revisioning Italy is an overtly committed collection which ‘cross[es] disciplinary boundaries and explodes the category “Italy” from within its traditional regional, peninsular, and European contexts and, from the outside, through its multitudinous occurrences and transmissions in Africa, Asia, and the Americas’. Drawing on ‘contemporary trends in transnational cultural studies’,⁶ it explores issues – such as Italy’s position in Europe and in the world, immigration, ethnicity and colonization – that our book addresses in a much less emphatic manner. *La cultura italiana del Novecento*, too, is a committed collection: ‘the book wants to be a contribution to knowledge, a memory, a profile that can help [readers] face up to the year 2000’; and, like the Allen–Russo volume, it sets out to do this by assessing Italy against a global backcloth. However, unlike both *Revisioning Italy* and the present ‘companion’, the focus of Stajano’s book is crucially restricted by an élite sense of what is important about a national culture:

What is [...] the condition of Italian culture within the framework of a world undergoing a great transformation? What is the condition of the arts, of the sciences, of the legal and economic disciplines [...] culture as history and as national life? [...] [The] 26 essays recount the past and the present of the fundamental disciplines which constitute the framework of twentieth-century culture [...]. Each essay [...] aims to offer a kaleidoscope of the ideas, opinions and figures that have characterized the century in its various moments.⁷

And the twenty-six essays fulfil these aims rather well, offering excellent syntheses of academic disciplines as diverse as medicine, archaeology, demography and psychology. Thus, *La cultura italiana del Novecento* proffers a fuller view of Italian intellectual life than our book intends to provide. On the other hand, where our two volumes overlap, given Stajano’s stress on ‘ideas’ and on intellectuals, his book is often less able to give an impression of the complexity of a problem than our less constrained surveys. Similarly, its sense of the variety of Italian culture is considerably narrower than ours.

The remit of *Italian Cultural Studies*, even though it concentrates exclusively on post-war Italy, is broad:

Cultural studies is not so much a discipline as a cluster of disciplines. In Britain, where the term originated [...], these disciplines have come to include literature, social history, media studies, human geography, cultural anthropology, and the sociology of deviance [...].

Work in these diverse areas has been loosely unified by a common set of concerns: to deal with culture as a set of signifying practices and symbolic social forms; to look at a wide variety of cultural materials and avoid prior evaluative rankings of high and low; to bring new theoretical considerations to bear on the study of culture.

The aim of 'cultural studies' is to 'interrogate and deconstruct' the distinctions between 'high' or 'élite' culture and 'mass' or 'popular' culture, as well as their different forms.⁸ Forgacs and Lumley's book is especially strong in dealing both with the sociological and anthropological dimension of culture and with 'low' forms: it ranges widely between youth cultures and corruption, and between gender relations and film stars. It is less concerned, however, to deal with 'high' culture and its implications. Of the three books under discussion, *Italian Cultural Studies* is the one which we see as having the closest complementary relationship with our 'companion'. Our broad historical perspective is countered by its more tightly focused chronological purview; our restricted treatment of popular and mass culture is balanced by its wide-ranging exposition of this topic; and our concern with 'high' culture corrects its limited and somewhat idiosyncratic treatment of this area.

'Culture', 'Italian', 'modern'

The title of our book, *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Italian Culture*, and especially the designation 'companion', indicate that its coverage intends to be wide. On account of the catholicity of our vision, each of the three key locutions constituting our title – 'modern', 'Italian' and 'culture', terms whose meaning is problematic whatever the context – raises special problems, and hence needs to be explained and defined with a modicum of care.

The most amorphous and fluid of the terms is 'culture'. This fact should already have been evident from the different values which so far have been attached to it in this Introduction. For instance, the quotation from *La cultura italiana del Novecento* reveals that, as is typical of Italian usage, Stajano uses *cultura* to refer specifically to 'high' culture, namely, to the intellectual and artistic achievements of a sophisticated élite. In addition, his view of this *cultura* is essentially optimistic: *cultura* is intrinsically valuable; it can help improve life; it can offer a safe haven during times of trouble. Stajano's faith in the benefits of 'high' culture is not unusual; it is deeply embedded in Italian society, even among non-

intellectuals. Indeed, the idea has often been canvassed that many of Italy's problems could be alleviated if more of its citizens could be made to share in this *cultura*. Given the fairly restricted remit of what is deemed worthy to be described as culture, this means that, in general, Italian *cultura* is not as volatile a term as English 'culture'. Equally, this same élitist perception of culture can in part explain why 'cultural studies' as a distinct discipline has not managed to find acceptance in the Italian academic world – though this does not mean that popular culture and the mass media are not studied. They are, but independently of each other, and, of course, independently of 'high' culture.⁹ Yet it is also clear on reading Stajano that there are meanings of *cultura* which are broader and less precise than 'high culture'. It is enough to think of his allusion to 'culture as history and as national life'. Furthermore, in Italian usage, *cultura* is coupled to the epithets *popolare* and *di massa* to refer, respectively, to activities developed by the people for their own use, and to mass-produced forms and their consumption.¹⁰

It is the more extended notion of 'culture' that, in recent years, has played an active role in British and North American thinking about culture. The concept is associated with 'experience', 'consciousness', 'ideological configuration', 'values and attitudes' (what the French have termed *mentalités*) and with the symbolic forms through which these states are expressed. It is also utilized to allude to 'ways of life', 'forms of organization' – the symbolic means and rituals to which different groups have recourse in order to establish their own identity, often through opposition to one another. This sense of culture, which potentially succeeds in embracing any type of intellectual, aesthetic or semi-otic behaviour, is not just extremely wide, but also challenges the distinctions between 'high' and 'low', 'élite' and 'subordinate', 'mass' and 'popular', since it highlights the shifting nature of the particular area of cultural activity covered by each of the terms. It also foregrounds the relationship between cultural practices and power; and, by extension, the relationship between academic discourse, cultural value and power.¹¹

The Cambridge Companion to Modern Italian Culture subscribes to this flexible view of culture. Indeed, at different points in the book, all the above-mentioned aspects of culture are given prominence. At the same time, however, by affording a notable amount of space to matters which commonly have been defined as belonging to 'high culture', it attempts to redress what has become something of an imbalance in many of the

analyses that have been done in the field of 'cultural studies'. If the boundaries between different symbolic forms and practices are to be tested effectively, and the specificities of each of these are to be recognized, then key areas cannot be downgraded. To do this simply mimics the exclusive attitudes of the most haughty traditions of élite learning. Furthermore, as I clarify in the following paragraph, 'cultural studies', which not infrequently has relied rather too heavily on grand yet transient theorizing, can learn useful lessons from the procedures of established disciplines. Although such methodological problems obviously lie beyond the remit of our 'companion', it can nonetheless be useful to remind readers of their existence.

In contrasting Italian with British and American approaches to the study of culture, I should not like to create the impression that Italian scholarship is incapable of appreciating the implications of looking at culture from a mobile and interdisciplinary perspective. If anything, my impression is that the Italian emphasis on context, history and respect for the literal meaning of texts offers the best means to understanding the complexity of any cultural expression. In particular, given Italy's millennial regional, political and linguistic fragmentation, questions relating to culture, albeit with 'high culture' very much to the fore, have long been posed by Italian scholars in a manner receptive to geographical, historical, social and textual difference.¹² Indeed, such work has helped to establish that it is extremely difficult to make claims for a strong and overarching Italian national culture. This is true even as regards 'high' literature, given that Italy is alone in the Western world in having two major, yet distinct, élite literary traditions – one in Italian, the other in dialect. Although, since the Second World War, education and the mass media have diminished social, linguistic and regional differences, the continuing lack of a clearly identifiable national culture cannot but pose grave questions about the nature of national identity in Italy whether today or in the past. Equally, this absence can offer a first reason why, for centuries, Italy has found it far from difficult to assimilate foreign influences.

Naturally, this lack of an easily recognizable national cultural core raises doubts about the value of the epithet 'Italian' in the title of our book. At a very crude level, anything that occurs or is produced within the confines of the unitary Italian state can be termed 'Italian'. However, such a premise creates confusion regarding the status of cultural manifestations which appeared within those same confines before 1860, the

year in which the country was largely unified. This is particularly so as regards pre-unification cultural forms which in some way make claims to being Italian. It is misleading, and not just when thinking about Italy, to imagine that well-defined geographical and political boundaries will determine and guarantee national identity and belonging, and so eliminate difference. It is vital, therefore, to remember both the fragility and deceptiveness of tags which are supposed to circumscribe a national area, and the shifting wealth of experiences which such tags are supposed to embrace – experiences that frequently are not even significantly shaped within the frontiers of the country. However, as long as its limitations are kept in mind, the epithet ‘Italian’ can, of course, serve a useful purpose. Bonds of geography, politics, history, religion and language do tie communities and cultures together (and all these elements do indeed underlie our book’s use of ‘Italian’). The problem is the strength of these ties and their significance, as well as their relationship to all those other forces, from regionalism to the artistic avant-gardes, whose thrust is towards separation rather than unity.

Italy may very well be marked by fragmentation; however, that is a general condition which it shares with every nation-state. This is an important fact. For too long, Italy’s perceived lack of strong and tangible centralizing features has led people, including many Italians, to consider the country as ‘anomalous’, even backward, in respect to other advanced Western capitalist countries. The effect of this viewpoint has been to downplay Italy’s achievements, which, especially in the post-war period, both economically and socially have been noteworthy. At the same time, it is undoubtedly the case that there are elements – such as the lack of linguistic unity, the inability of the state to gain legitimacy among its citizens, and the reluctance of those same citizens to think and feel in national terms except when celebrating the achievements of some great figure of the pre-unification past or when shouting support for an athlete or team donning the country’s blue international shirt – which create the impression that Italy is little more than a name, and even that it is permanently on the verge of collapse. Ever since 1860, efforts have been made – without too much success – to counter such impressions by creating unifying national heroic myths such as that of the Risorgimento (the glorification of the unification process) or that of the anti-Fascist Resistance. More recently, as the idea of the country disintegrating under the combined pressure of the separatist movements, organized crime, corruption and the collapse of the First Republic has

begun to seem to many a real possibility, various intellectuals have argued that, despite the country's recent unification and the failure of the state to bring its citizens together, a specific and definable *identità italiana* not only exists but has existed for centuries. Arguments in favour of this position have largely been based on highlighting the existence of a 'tendentious cleavage between national identity and Italian identity, namely the split separating the way in which the national state was born and its mode of being from the historical past of the country, which has become its nature'.¹³ Unfortunately, the arguments put forward to support such views are largely unpersuasive: they are heavily laced with subjectivism and vagueness (what precisely does 'nature' mean in the passage cited in the preceding sentence?). As this Introduction has attempted to argue, matters of (national) identity are extremely difficult to define. Indeed, a genius of the stature of Dante Alighieri, when trying to establish certain common Italian characteristics in the *De vulgari eloquentia* ('On Vernacular Eloquence'), lapsed into unexpected banality: 'in so far as we act as Italians [*homines latini*], we have certain basic traits [*simplicissima signa*], of custom, clothing and speech, which allow the actions of Italians to be weighed and measured' (I, xvi, 3).

As a consequence of the claims relating to Italy's 'backwardness' and 'anomalousness', it is not unusual to hear the argument that the country's contacts with and contribution to modernity have been essentially negative. Some commentators have actually gone so far as to damn Italy's relationship to modernity, ascribing the country's faults to the 'difficulty Italian modernity has in creatively combining historical materials and deposits of our identity, of adapting that which is peculiarly Italian to its needs and vice versa'. 'As a result Italian modernity becomes with the greatest of ease corporativism, familism, tax evasion, mass illegality, and whatever else.'¹⁴ Such assertions are plainly overwrought. It is certainly true that Italy's rapid transition from a primarily rural economy at the time of unification to a successful neo-capitalist economy since the 1950s has been anything but straightforward: both the successes and failures have been striking. It is equally true that Italy has found it difficult to develop bureaucratic and state structures to complement the social, political and economic changes through which the country has passed since 1860. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that, as our chapters on art, literature, music, the cinema, design and fashion illustrate, a far from negligible amount of what is perceived

by people all over the world as characteristically 'modern' in these areas is Italian in origin. As regards the use of the term in the title of our book, it is not meant to suggest that thanks to unification Italy somehow became part of the modern world. The transition to modernity – the passage from a traditional oligarchic, agrarian and mercantile society to one dominated by capitalist economic, political, social and cultural forms – was irregular. In parts of Northern Italy, it had begun before 1860, while for the bulk of the peninsula the change did not occur until after the Second World War. On the one hand, the epithet is useful as a way of suggesting that, in general terms, the book covers the period when the shift to modernity painfully, unevenly and gradually took place. On the other hand, 'modern' is purely conventional: it is a cliché of much writing on Italy to consider the modern era as commencing with the country's unification.

Despite its position as one of the leading industrialized nations, modern Italy plays a secondary role in the world. Its greatness lies squarely in its past: during the centuries-long spread of Roman civilization; during the later Middle Ages, when, in comparison to the rest of Europe, it not only hosted the greatest thinkers (St Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas), the greatest artists (Cimabue and Giotto) and the greatest writers (Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio), but was also the seat of the most important banking and trading interests; and, finally, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when it spearheaded that revolution in Western culture which we now remember as the Renaissance. Modern Italy suffers under the yoke of this history. Indeed, many of those who bemoan the country's present condition do so by comparing it unfavourably to idealized versions of this illustrious past. Our book is not affected by such critical nostalgia. Its inspiration, as I suggest above, is not polemical but practical; and no one is more aware than Rebecca and I of our book's provisionality. As I write, late in 1998, things are changing. A new centre-left government, led 'scandalously' by an ex-Communist, the leader of the *Democratici di Sinistra* ('Democrats of the Left', formerly the *Partito Democratico della Sinistra*, 'Democratic Party of the Left'), Massimo D'Alema, has just come to power; major constitutional reform is being seriously discussed. For obvious reasons, such matters must perforce lie beyond the remit of our book. In any case, it is not our intention to give an up-to-the-minute account of modern Italy, but to offer a spyhole onto nearly 150 years of Italian culture. And if, by doing this, we can encourage some readers to recognize that, despite the

burden of its past, modern Italy, to use Gian-Paolo Biasin's suggestive words, 'is a tiny but all-important place in the world',¹⁵ then we will consider that our efforts have been more than worthwhile.

NOTES

1. See Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris (eds.), *The New History of the Italian South* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997).
2. See Simon During (ed.), *The Cultural Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 1993); Lawrence Grossberg *et al.* (eds.), *Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1992); Fred Inglis, *Cultural Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).
3. See Robert S. Dombroski, 'Forward', in Robert S. Dombroski and Dino S. Cervigni (eds.), *Italian Cultural Studies*. Special issue of *Annali di Italianistica* 16 (1998), pp. 11–14 (pp. 12–13); Ian Taylor *et al.* (eds.), *Relocating Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1993); Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1990).
4. For a succinct yet sympathetically incisive critique of the methods of 'cultural studies', see Paolo Barlera, 'Toward a Genealogy and Methodology of Italian Cultural Studies', in Dombroski and Cervigni (eds.), *Italian Cultural Studies*, pp. 15–29 (pp. 28–9).
5. For other studies dealing in general terms with modern Italy, see Further Reading.
6. Beverly Allen and Mary Russo, 'Preface', in Allen and Russo (eds.), *Revisioning Italy*, pp. ix–xi (pp. ix–x).
7. Corrado Stajano, 'Introduzione', in Stajano (ed.), *La cultura italiana del Novecento*, pp. vii–xviii (pp. xviii, xi–xii).
8. David Forgacs and Robert Lumley, 'Introduction: Approaches to Culture in Italy', in Forgacs and Lumley (eds.), *Italian Cultural Studies*, pp. 1–11 (pp. 1–2).
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 3–8.
10. Zygmunt G. Barański and Robert Lumley, 'Turbulent Transitions: An Introduction', in Barański and Lumley (eds.), *Culture and Conflict in Postwar Italy* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 1–17 (pp. 10–12).
11. John Frow, *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
12. Barański and Lumley, 'Turbulent Transitions', pp. 11–15.
13. Ernesto Galli della Loggia, *L'identità italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998), p. 65.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 154, 148. 'Familism' is the accentuation of exclusive family values and actions.
15. See below p. 168.

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