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La carta veloce. Figure, temi e politiche del giornalismo italiano dell'Ottocento edited by Morena Corradi and Silvia Valisa, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2021, 244 pp., €28.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-88-351-1746-9

The volume opens with a reference to Dante's image of the castaway, who grasps the shore and turns to gaze at the fury of the waves. This metaphor is employed in the article 'Alla fine del secolo' (published on 20 December 1900 in the pages of Ernesto Teodoro Moneta's *La vita internazionale*) to capture the sense of bewilderment of the early 'survivors' who looked back at the century which had just passed. Indeed, from the shore of the new century, 'l'Ottocento' appeared as 'mare in tempesta e abisso vertiginoso per la moltitudine di eventi, catastrofi e successi che ha portato con sé a livello nazionale, europeo, e mondiale' (p.7). The great achievement of this volume is to reconstruct with vividness and precision the feelings and tensions that characterised the *fin de siècle*, and the decades that preceded it, from the standpoint of the new protagonists of the cultural field: the journalists, who were the new professional figures emerging from the modernization of information and the transformation of the print industry which in Italy had had a boost after the Unification. Journalists and periodicals of this period are not only dealing with modernity but embody the process of modernization. The volume makes the case for studying 19th-century periodical culture as a crucial moment in Italian cultural history. Hence this study is invaluable reading not only for scholars interested in the history of publishing in Italy (although it offers brilliant insights into this field) but for everyone interested in 19th-century Italian culture and the emerging of modernity.

The volume has an introduction and nine chapters which are articulated chronologically and are linked by common threads including the attention to the evolution of the periodical as a genre, the rise of new types of audiences, and the dynamic between the local and cosmopolitan dimensions. The city of Milan, the post unification period and the publishing house Sonzogno are, for obvious reasons, at the centre of these explorations. However, the great merit of the volume is to bring the attention to

unexplored areas, within and outside of Milan, focusing on aspects, figures and journals less well known to a larger public and which really help to recreate the multifaceted picture of the period.

The first two chapters investigate the pre-unification period: in the first Loredana Palma brings up the case of Vincenzo Torelli, who with his successful magazine *Omnibus*, in the Naples of the 1830s, anticipates the direction in which Italian journalism will develop: Torelli understood the importance of expanding his readership and was the first to publish *feuilleton* in instalments. Patrizia Landi, in the next chapter, focuses on the Milan of the 1850s; first she dwells on the reasons that made Milan's socio-economic cultural fabric unique in Italy already before the Unification and then she introduces the element of novelty for the Milanese audience: women's magazines and humour magazines, around which worked the best of Milan's Italian literati, most of them belonging to the Scapigliatura. The Scapigliatura is also the focus of the next contribution by Massimo Castellozzi but the attention here is on a specific case study: the magazine *La Frusta* (1865-70), whose 'progressivo dissenso antigovernativo e anti monarchico' (p.77) was characteristic of the Scapigliato attitude. The next chapter, which ends the first part of the book, is an enlightening piece by Morena Corradi which compares the professional profiles of two newspaper editors Achille Buzzoni and Leone Fortis: 'due "nemici" di penna' (p.7) (because their periodicals reflected one the extreme left, and the other the moderate and pro-government side) whose stories are equally emblematic of the challenges faced by journalists, but also of their priorities among which the question of nation-building and the role of literature in this process.

In the second part of the volume different editorial expressions are considered. The chapters by Bianca Maria Antolini and Alessandra Palidda dwell on musical journalism in Milan: the *Giornale della Società del Quartetto di Milano* testifies to the critical debate on music and melodrama in the Scapigliatura years and the need for a broader theoretical and philosophical musical culture; Palidda instead focuses on *Il Teatro illustrato* which shows the importance but also the inventiveness of Sonzogno as a cultural impresario able to reach 'un pubblico non solo più vasto, ma anche incapace di leggere o di farlo in italiano' (p.136). With Maurizio Ponzo, in the following chapter, we move to

a different form of periodical altogether, the journal *Critica sociale* funded by Filippo Turati in 1891: Ponzio's informative and engaging account of this publication shows its importance not only for Italian journalism but for Italian political culture as a whole: Turati's aim was not only to 'fornire un contributo, peraltro fondamentale, alla costituzione del Partito socialista, ma anche dotare il socialismo italiano di una rivista rigorosa' (p.159). *La vita internazionale* funded in 1898 by Ernesto Teodoro Moneta (Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1907) is the focus of Sara Boezio's chapter. Boezio examines several issues of the column entitled 'Il bilancio del secolo XIX', launched in 1900 with the idea of reviewing the technological, political and cultural achievements of the past century. This survey is fascinating: not only we have a sample of the intellectual rigour and multidisciplinary breadth of these contributions (the fields covered include: geology, biology, economics, sociology, philosophy, politics), but also, since these words were written, as it were, in the middle of the storm (Dante's metaphor of the castaway is used here),

we hear the urgency with which the people of the time tackle the challenges of modernity, and their concerns are so relatable that we recognise ourselves in these *fin de siècle* voices. In the last contribution Silvia Valisa discusses the ongoing initiative to digitise one of the great 19th century newspapers, *Il Secolo*. After dwelling on the potentialities offered by digital humanities for the study of 19th-century periodicals, Valisa foregrounds the importance of *Il Secolo* because 'con le sue centinaia di migliaia di esemplari è emblematico delle nuove modalità di produzione e diffusione a grande scala che caratterizzano l'Ottocento *insieme* all'epoca digitale' (p.219). What follows is an invitation – which could not be a better conclusion to this volume – to create a dialogue between two eras and two technologies of knowledge, which are in many ways profoundly similar.

Olivia Santovetti (University of Leeds)