

production but also inspired Pier Vittorio Tondelli's *Altri libertini*. Paziienza and Tondelli's narratives demonstrate how the diffusion of heroin damaged the 1977 Movement leading to a loss of community in the 1980s. *Interpreting Urban Spaces in Italian Cultures* concludes with Ellen Patat's "Exploring Urban Space: Terzani's *In Asia* (1965-1997)" (245-63). Terzani's collection of articles portrays the cities the journalist-traveler visited deconstructing the urban space in order to criticize modernity and to study "history in the making" (245). *In Asia* treats a variety of topics, such as history, culture, geography, small-scale and large-scale events—the complexity resides properly in its miscellaneous nature. Patat interprets the collection as "potential[ly] universal accounts" (249) that help the reader to conceptualize or to map narrative space.

As the title of the Amsterdam University Press series suggests, *Interpreting Urban Spaces in Italian Cultures* offers many insights to "Spatial Imagineries in Historical Perspective" privileging three periods in Italian culture. One could question the periodical division, but the editors do justify the choices made. The quality of contributions varies and some contributions could dialogue more with recent publications, but I did appreciate the variety of approaches and the deliberate use of illustrations. In conclusion, *Interpreting Urban Spaces in Italian Cultures* invites the reader/scholar to further explorations on the topics covered and, of course, other cityscapes.

Inge Lanslots, *KU Leuven*

JEWISH STUDIES

Rachel Bepaloff. *L'eternità nell'istante. Opere. Gli anni francesi (1932-1942)*. Ed. Cristina Guarnieri, and Laura Sanò. Roma: Castelvecchi, 2022. Pp. 668.

Rachel Bepaloff (1895-1949) is a relatively little-known Ukrainian-born French-Jewish philosopher of the 20th century, despite her undeniable speculative stature, the variety of topics she addressed, and her great critical-literary sensibility. The publication of her complete works by Castelvecchi is undoubtedly an editorial event for which we must be grateful to the two editors, Cristina Guarnieri and Laura Sanò. Her four-volume *Collected Works* include: the texts published in France in 1932-1942 (vol. 1, 2022); the texts published in the US in 1943-1949 (vol. 2, in preparation); her correspondence (vol. 3, in preparation); her unpublished works (vol. 4, in preparation).

I am not entirely persuaded that these chronological and editorial criteria are the most useful ones for appreciating the variety and evolution of her thought, her intellectual curiosity, and her various interests. It seems to me that the reader might have benefited from an edition that would collect Bepaloff's prolific

works—regardless of their published or unpublished nature—into three or four categories: philosophy, literature, politics, and so on. In any case, the number of contributions in this single volume is quite impressive but may be a little overwhelming.

The first volume is titled *L'eternità nell'istante*. The volume is quite substantial and provides, first and foremost, a foreword by Monique Jutrin (5-22), a very detailed biography (25-115), various testimonies (116-32), and extensive appendices that include some reviews and prefaces penned by Jean Wahl and Hermann Broch (525-70), an essay by Laura Sanò (571-88), an essay by Cristina Guarnieri (589-650), and a bibliographic note (651-61). Apart from these numerous (perhaps even excessive) apparatuses, we finally find all the texts that Besseloff wrote in France, from her literary debut in 1932 to her voluntary exile in America ten years later: “Su Heidegger. Lettera a Daniel Halevy” (132-66), “Recensione a *La Coscienza Infelice* di Benjamin Fondane” (167-77), “Cammini e Crocevia” (181-374), “Sulla Questione Ebraica. Scambio Epistolare tra Rachel Besseloff e Daniel Halevy” (375-410), “Recensione alle *Approximations* di Charles Du Bos” (411-23), “Appunti sulle *Études Kirkegaardiennes* di Jean Wahl” (423-54), “Sull’Iliade” (455-512), and finally, “Le Due Andromache” (513-25).

As can be understood, this is a meticulously conceived, written, and edited volume, serving as a true guide for the reader into the intricacies of a thinker who has yet to rise to prominence in 20th-century thought but certainly deserves greater recognition. For example, it can be noted that Besseloff was the first in France to study Heidegger and make a series of penetrating observations about his abstruse and innovative yet opaque vocabulary. The speculative force with which Besseloff engages with Heidegger is no less significant, for instance, than that of Henry Corbin, who will be the only other scholar, alongside Besseloff, to study Heidegger in the original and translate some of his works before the Second World War. Although written in epistolary form, this first essay is particularly original because it already projects Heidegger onto an existential and religious background that will be more precisely defined later, especially with the essays “Cammini e Crocevia” and “Sull’Iliade.”

Part of this religious-philosophical theme also characterizes the original pages dedicated, in 1938, to the Jewish question, where Besseloff ponders the meaning and reason of Zionism, especially in the face of an impending Shoah, already anticipated by the violent *Kristallnacht*. According to Besseloff, the “force” emerging from her essay on the *Iliad* but also pervading each of her other texts collected in this volume, cannot be simply equated with power. Instead, it reveals itself as “divine” to the extent that it represents an “overflow of life” that, in strictly Nietzschean terms, emerges in the contempt for death, almost in the form of a blind impulse that drives it to abolish the very values it has generated. Besseloff outlines the *Iliad* with the tremendous theme of the Sacred, its

disturbing force, and the transcendence that violently opens humans up to solitude and yet transcendence toward an absent God. Indeed, it should be noted that, for Bepaloff, the *Iliad* describes human freedom deeply influenced by Jewish thought: humans are responsible and called to ethics even in a universe where God may be absent. Drawing on Kierkegaard, Bepaloff considers “moments” or different “instants” as opportunities for clarity and contemplation, and even as a means through which the possibility of eternity can manifest itself in an instant, hence the title of the first volume. As Cristina Guarnieri aptly remarks in her essay, Bepaloff tries to combine the Green and Jewish “spirit” by appealing to the very awareness that everything is perishable and therefore worth of the greatest tenderness for its fragility.

The volume deserves great gratitude towards the editors, translators, and the publisher Castelvechi, who have undertaken an editorial task with the quite remarkable intent to truly offer a complete work of a philosopher who should have deserved greater recognition but may now finally achieve it.

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Fabrizio Franceschini, *Il chimico libertino. Primo Levi e la Babele del Lager*. Roma: Carocci, 2022. Pp. 202.

L'analisi linguistica delle opere di Primo Levi è un filone che ha attratto l'attenzione degli specialisti del settore da quando lo scrittore torinese ha ammesso di aver nutrito, a partire dai suoi undici anni, un “dilettantesco interesse” (11) verso l'etimologia e la linguistica. Franceschini, con questo suo lavoro, s'inserisce nel filone, basandosi anche sugli studi di Alberto Cavaglioni, Giovanna Massariello Merzagora, Martina Mengoni, Domenico Scarpa e di Cesare Segre, in un testo che appare completo e valido. L'autore sostiene la tesi che in realtà lo scrittore torinese possedesse dalla sua “una preparazione non banale, un interesse reale e anche un certo puntiglio nel difendere le proprie opinioni etimologiche e linguistiche” (12).

Il volume di Franceschini si suddivide in due parti: la prima, “Levi linguista” (19-104), si focalizza sulle serie linguistiche di *Se questo è un uomo* e su *Il sistema periodico*. La seconda parte, “Parole del Lager”, analizza altre testimonianze linguistiche, sia italiane che straniere, sull'universo concentrazionario.

Il primo capitolo “La Babele del Lager e le serie multilingui in *Se questo è un uomo*” (19-44) affronta la genesi del romanzo più famoso di Levi mettendo in risalto “la crucialità del tema linguistico” (19) così come presentato dallo scrittore torinese. Franceschini sottolinea quanti e quali siano i lasciti dal tedesco all'interno delle varie edizioni, questo perché il tedesco era “la lingua in cui le cose erano avvenute ed a cui esse competevano” (*I sommersi e i salvati*, 1986, in *Opere complete*, II, 2017, 1257) e anche perché—e ciò viene dato per scontato nell'analisi di Franceschini—i prigionieri che potevano comprendere gli ordini