

17.

«IL GIARDINO DEI FINZI-CONTINI»

Giorgio Bassani's Enchanted Ghetto

James T. Chiampi

During the succeeding Passovers, the Lord will not spare these Jews: in *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, Giorgio Bassani's narrator mourns the fate which his relatives and *commensali* could not know awaited them at the hands of the Nazis:

[...] guardavo ad uno ad uno, in giro, zii e cugini, gran parte dei quali, di lì a qualche anno, sarebbero stati inghiottiti dai forni crematori tedeschi, e non lo immaginavano [...] ma ciò nondimeno già allora, quella sera, anche se li vedevo tanto insignificanti nei poveri visi sormontati dai cappellucci borghesi o incorniciati dalle borghesi permanenti, anche se li sapevo tanto ottusi di mente, tanto disadatti a valutare la reale portata dell'oggi e a leggere nel domani, già allora mi apparivano avvolti della stessa aura di misteriosa fatalità statuaria che li avvolge adesso, nella memoria [...].¹

Transported back in time, yet like some latter day Theoklymenos, gifted with prophetic vision of the atrocious fate that awaited the suitors (*Odyssey* XX.350ff.), Giorgio foretells the doom that awaits these – to him – pathetic middle-class Italian Jews². Their modest and correct middle-class dress in these comfortable surroundings suggests that theirs is a tragedy of assimilation, that is, of complacency. Deeply ambivalent Giorgio mourns them in their unknowing, preserving them even as he banishes them. Of course, Giorgio survives by fleeing such complacen-

¹ Bassani 1962, 186-187. In keeping with current critical practice, I shall refer to the narrator, who is never named, as 'Giorgio'. See Barbara Spackman, 1989 and 1990.

² *The Odyssey of Homer*, trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1967: «I have eyes and I have ears, and I have both my feet, / and a mind inside my breast which is not without understanding. / These will take me outside the house, since I see the evil / coming upon you, and not one of the suitors avoiding / this will escape[...]» (307). See Bausi 2003, 219-248.

cy; why they neither resist nor flee, I would argue, is a question less of Freudian depth psychology than it is of Freudian depth psychology engrafted upon the *topoi* of a faculty psychology formed from epic, both classical and Renaissance. His guests – but especially the guests of the Finzi-Contini – recall the Lotus Eaters of *Odyssey* IX, and the paladins beneficently imprisoned in Atlante's palace in Canto XII of the *Orlando furioso*, like them entranced to *athymia* and ataraxia by assimilation, wealth, culture and opulence in its enchanted precincts³. As with the gardens of epic, the garden and *magna domus* of the Finzi-Contini are consecrated to the banishing of political cares.

To return to our opening quotation, it is as if spiritless, without outrage and helpless, these bourgeois guests are already dead, as Theoklymenos sees the suitors. In the imagined present, Giorgio mourns their future, which is as scattered ashes. This has august precedent: in Atlante's palace, each paladin searched for the object of his desire in a state of beneficent enchantment, believing he heard her, or him, elsewhere; thus did he remain occupied and removed from deadly warrior collisions with others. In a similar way, Giorgio may find himself in the billiard room, the library, or Alberto's study of the *magna domus* while, unbeknownst to him, Mìcòl, object of his desire, lies upstairs in her bed, perhaps with Giampiero Malnate. Like Atlante's palace, the house is something of a labyrinth intended for the harmless dissipation – or satisfaction in art – of desire that would otherwise lead the warriors to fatal battles and duels. Thus, while family and friends beguile their time among antiquities, scholarly trivialities, arcana and decoration, the Holocaust approaches and, in autumn 1943, engulfs them. Giorgio's reminiscence is thus a proleptic mourning. With subtle distinction, Bassani situates both the garden with its tennis court and farming activities and the garish *magna domus* beneath the rubric *giardino* of the title. The work announces its project as the commemoration of this lost world; indeed, it is a masterpiece of the literature of mourning⁴. The apoliti-

³ Primo Levi revealed the unforeseeably perilous side of such assimilation in his description of the famously incompetent Italians of Auschwitz in his chapter Ka-Be from *Se questo è un uomo* (1989, 43): «tutti avvocati, tutti dottori, erano più di cento e già non sono che quaranta, quelli che non sanno lavorare e si lasciano rubare il pane e prendono schiaffi dal mattino alla sera; i tedeschi li chiamano 'zwei linke Hände' (due mani sinistre), e perfino gli ebrei polacchi li disprezzano perché non sanno parlare yiddisch». See JoAnn Cannon 2003, on memory in Levi and Bassani.

⁴ Indeed, it is tempting to characterize the novel as a tragic, Italian *Brideshead Revisited*.

cal and politically irrelevant was a brief refuge, deadly in its distraction. Using the resources of his vast *cultura*, Bassani suggests that select members of the Jewish community of Ferrara contented themselves in a *paradiso terrestre* as they awaited their atrocious murder.

In her seminal 1993 essay *De Sica's Garden of the Finzi-Continis: An Escapist Paradise Lost*, Millicent Marcus studied the garden of the Finzi-Contini as «[...] a psychological metaphor for the Finzi-Continis' passivity and withdrawal in the face of Fascist anti-Semitism – a response that invites fruitful comparison with Freud's category of neurotic denial»⁵. Employing the insights of A. Bartlett Giamatti's study, *The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic*, Marcus understood Bassani's work – as it appears in De Sica's film – as heir to the gardens of the Renaissance wherein art became associated with the private and personal, hence antithetical to history, the civic and the political⁶. But history will intrude on their Marvellian green world. I intend my study as a companion piece to that of Marcus; however, I shall treat the garden of the Finzi-Contini less as the locus of neurotic denial than, more traditionally, as the inheritor of the psychological thematics of Renaissance chivalric epic and romance, that is, as a place consecrated to an insidious *athymia* – or spiritlessness – which was the greatest psychological and moral danger to properly epic endeavor. Indeed, the mourning of the Finzi-Contini provides an instance of their *athymia*.

Plato's proscribed spiritlessness represented the danger that the private concerns of the self (pleasure, rest, art) could pose the civic concerns of the polis. Ferrarese Bassani goes further and melds the Ariostean enchanted palace, and its magical inclusiveness, with the garden of chivalric epic: that is, he melds enchanted imprisonment with sensual indulgence. It is as if – in the spirit of Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* – he joined Atlante's palace to Alcina's garden: both occasions of the lingering that chivalric ethic proscribed. To allusions to the Renaissance epic and *The Divine Comedy*, I shall add allusions to *The Romance of the Rose*. Such dense allusivity, I would argue, is not something beneath or beyond the text – not something intended simply to provide matter for *Quellenforschung*; on the contrary, I believe it is both stylistic and thematic. Although Marcus makes numerous typically sensitive observations about the novel, her object of study is the film. I, on the other hand, shall direct my attention solely to the

⁵ Marcus 2000, 260.

⁶ Giamatti 1966.

novel to read therein a more traditional psychology, politics and ethics in Bassani's classical moment, and then relate them to a thematics of enervation familiar from the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Italian novel. Finally, in the novel, the conservancy of art suggests an attempt at the achievement of perfect memory and presence, even as the play of context subverts such recapture with irony, ambiguity and other poetic forms of unknowing. Realism, in short, is always ironic in the description of an imagined past.

If the aporia of mourning is that one loses the singularity of the absent one by incorporating him/her, but remains more faithful to his/her singularity if one lets him/her go, then art, which fashions the mourned object into an object of aesthetic fascination by both incorporation and release, and never without structural, contextual irony, is particularly suited to mourning. Moreover, the relationship between mourning and art is a significant thematics of epic. Some examples: taking refuge at the court of King Alkinoös of Phaiakia, Odysseus, listening to the blind bard Demodokos sing tales of the Trojan War (*Odyssey* VIII.523ff), is described as crying like a woman who covers her dying husband's body as she is prodded by his conquerors with spear butts to get moving toward slavery. That is, godlike Odysseus, sacker of cities, is momentarily unmanned. «Lo, Priam! Here, too, virtue has its due rewards; here, too, there are tears for misfortune and mortal sorrows touch the heart» (*Aeneid* I.461-462), cries Aeneas, surrendering to grief as he stares rapt and intent at the reliefs depicting the battles around Troy that decorate the entry to Queen Dido's court⁷. *Defixus in uno*, Aeneas sighs as he feeds upon these empty pictures of an irrecuperable past and is slowed in fulfilling the mission destiny has assigned him of laying the foundations of the Roman Empire. His is an inappropriate, because unsanctioned and obstructionist lingering, but, then, in modern aesthetics, art is understood to stifle the will, and, with it, movement and action beyond the precincts of art⁸.

Art intransitively absorbs the will that bears Dante's Pilgrim, with the aid of grace, toward God: the Pilgrim faints with pity after damned Francesca tells her sublime and self-aggrandizing tale of love and death (*Inferno* V.142). Art prematurely satisfies the Pilgrim's will, which is the dynamism of his movement (his love of God aided by sanctifying grace conforms him to transcendent vision). In the *Gerusalemme li-*

⁷ Virgil 1965, vol. I, 271-272.

⁸ Vivas 1966, 406-411.

berata, Rinaldo is lulled to sleep by a theatrical being – or machine – that debunks honor in language suggestive of classical Roman poetry (XIV.60ff.). In each instance, the hero is emasculated, since his steadfast commitment to the mission he has undertaken defines a proper manliness. In the garden of the Finzi-Contini, a place consecrated to art and culture, emasculated Giorgio strives to obey his beloved Micòl much as De Lorris's Dreamer/Amant obeyed the God of Love or Tasso's Rinaldo obeyed Armida: «Sebbene, specie da principio, lo sforzo fosse durissimo, mi feci una sorta di punto d'onore di sottostare scrupolosamente ai divieti di Micòl»⁹. Giorgio finds honor in servility.

As we see in the case of each of these heroes, art, with its capacity for evoking intransitive absorption, is the enemy of responsibility, outrage and action. In the *Republic*, as in the earlier *Phaedrus*, Plato discuss *thymos*, the spirited part of the soul, as the agency of intellect in its rule over appetite. *Thymos* is the origin of praiseworthy passion, the mechanism of righteous indignation, making intellect more than a fastidious, hands-off spectator and judge of the squalor of appetite. Crucial to Platonic *paideia* in the development of the soul is the education of *thymos* to refuse the ugly, then, with maturity, to refuse the morally reprehensible. Later, as the neo-Aristotelian irascible appetite, which, with the concupiscible, form the two parts of sense appetite, the irascible helps the soul resist those harmful forces which either withhold the necessary or threaten it with harm. Such active resistance to evil is suppressed in the garden of the Finzi-Contini much as it is suppressed in Rinaldo caught in the garden of Armida in Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*. The closest we come in the novel to a show of spirited moral outrage is the impulsively sarcastic yet impeccable fascist salute that Micòl snaps at her racist Nazi examiner¹⁰. Spiritlessness can be overcome: even as Giorgio mourns his spiritless relatives and the Finzi-Contini – whom he barely understands – he looks into himself and realizes that he must leave. His insight: «Io non ero morto, mi dicevo, io ero ancora ben vivo! Ma allora, se ancora vivevo, a che scopo, come potevo restare lì, insieme con gli altri. Perché non mi sottraevo subito a quel disperato e grottesco convegno di spettri [...]»¹¹. Spiritless and whining, utterly incapable of outrage, they are already dead to him. Not even Alberto's fatal lymphogranuloma will shake the spiritless, imperturbable compla-

⁹ Bassani 1962, 241.

¹⁰ *Ivi*, 193.

¹¹ *Ivi*, 187.

gency of the Finzi-Contini themselves: «E non gli sembrava perlomeno strano che nessuno di casa sua, né suo zio né suo padre, avesse preso finora la benché minima iniziativa per curarlo? [...] Calmi, sorridenti, serafici: nessuno muoveva un dito»¹². Spiritlessness is lethal, frustrating the action necessary for survival.

In epic, both classical and chivalric, the hero must be restored to his responsibility. Mercury finds Aeneas, who has wasted a long winter in ease and self-indulgence with Dido, lounging about with a jasper-studded sword and cloak of Tyrian purple. Mercury spares him no sarcasm in calling him a model husband. Ariosto's Ruggiero will be awakened by the fairy Melissa, disguised as the old wizard Atlante, while Tasso's Carlo and Ubaldo will awaken Rinaldo by displaying to him his image reflected in a brightly polished shield. Rinaldo had become, in the words of Carlo's rebuke, «egregio campion d'una fanciulla» (*Gerusalemme liberata* XVI.32), that is, a eunuchoid mirror bearer, who has forgotten his duty to Goffredo and the Christian army. In the case of the Finzi-Contini, aesthetic lingering is not simply delay and distraction from a mission, as encouraged or frustrated by the divine, but a tragic indifference to growing, eventually mortal, danger. Like these epic heroes, Giorgio too must have his *thymos* stirred, be reawakened to his duty by his father (a *sansepolcrista* before his expulsion from the party, who is figured throughout the novel as the adequate judge of the Finzi-Contini). Entranced by Micòl – here as Dame Idleness – he is not unlike de Lorris's Amant in the Garden of Delight from the *The Romance of the Rose*: «Volle essere Micòl a mostrarmi il giardino. Ci teneva. 'Direi che ho un certo diritto'»¹³. Micòl is the Dido, Dame Idleness, Venus, Alcina, and/or Armida of garden and *magna domus*, making them a tragic Holocaustal version of the *locus amoenus* or pleasance¹⁴. Giorgio's state recalls the lovesickness of Poliziano's Giulio from the *Stanze per la giostra*: «né poi viril pensiero in voi germoglia, / sì del proprio valor costui vi spoglia» (I.16. 7-8).

If the role of Alcina in *Orlando furioso* and Armida in *Gerusalemme liberata* was to reign over the enchanted space of the garden and maintain the enchantment of the hero, the role of Micòl is not just to manage house and grounds, but more importantly to manage, that is, stimulate,

¹² *Ivi*, 261.

¹³ Bassani 1962, 107.

¹⁴ See Curtius 1953, Giamatti 1966, as well as Chiampi 1990, 487-502.

tease¹⁵ – and when necessary frustrate – Giorgio's obsessive desire for her: stealing away with him into the carriage house, but not permitting him to consummate his sexual desire for her; accepting or refusing his telephone calls; greeting him in the shadowy doorway; permitting him into her boudoir – that is, reining in his desire or spurring it just enough to keep him returning to the *magna domus*, to the garden, to her company and to that of dying Alberto. Fairies like Alcina only hold power within the enchanted garden, Micòl likewise, thus Giorgio: «[...] con me fuori di casa e del giardino non ci sarebbe venuta mai»¹⁶. Micòl uses rejection to perpetuate the love of the fascinated, desperate, eagerly servile narrator – whom she can control easily with the implicit threat of forbidding him the house – even as she enjoys transgressive sex with Malnate.

Like Virgil's Mercury or Tasso's Carlo and Ubaldo, Giorgio's father recalls him to his manliness with advice to: «'[n]on andarci piú. [...] È piú da uomo, tra l'altro'. [...] Aveva ragione. Tra l'altro era piú da uomo»¹⁷. The consequence: «Fu cosí che rinunciai a Micòl»¹⁸. This reassertion of manliness awakens Giorgio to the impracticality of his situation: that he is twenty-three, a student of literature, with job and prospects denied him by the race laws, passing his time in conversation, tennis, music and love with Micòl. In retrospect, we realize that his flight from the spell cast by art and Micòl is essential to his surviving the Holocaust. However, as if to underscore the thematics of enervation, Giorgio tells us virtually nothing whatever of his survival. Only in retrospect will he, like a latter-day Ruggiero, express his amazement and regret at his enchantment by the place and by Micòl: «Come avevo potuto essere talmente cieco?»¹⁹. In Christian tradition, paradises are dangerous to postlapsarian mankind because of the wound to the will mankind suffered in the Fall. Mankind does not know what to want, nor how much. After all, Dante the Pilgrim can only enter the *paradiso terrestre* atop the mountain of Purgatory once he has figurally cleansed himself of the seven deadly sins. Giorgio's heeding the counsel of his father is a classic instance of humility for both Dante and Giorgio: one form of humility consists in accepting the counsel of one whose will is directed aright.

¹⁵ Bassani 1962, 192.

¹⁶ *Ivi*, 140.

¹⁷ *Ivi*, 278.

¹⁸ *Ivi*, 279.

¹⁹ *Ivi*, 286.

The thematics of warrior *thymos* has yet another counterpart in the novel, mourning entrepreneurial vigor: in *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, the art, artifacts and cultivation which the Finzi-Contini enjoy, embody, of course, their impeccable taste, but they also bear tacit witness to the success of the founder of their fortune, the iron-willed entrepreneur Moisè Finzi-Contini, a man, according to family consensus, «dal gusto artistico [...] non troppo coltivato»²⁰. Indeed, Giorgio's father will call the tomb which Moisè erects *sibi et suis* a sin against taste²¹. In brief, like warrior spiritedness, the entrepreneurial *élan vital* that acquired the garden and *magna domus* and built the tomb has, by the time of Professor Ermanno – «un uomo di studi»²² – dissipated into *rentier*, or quasi-aristocratic, enervation. The Finzi-Contini are utterly different – and utterly detached-from the founder of their fortune, having evolved aesthetically into spiritlessness by shedding Moisè's practical *élan*. Thus, Giorgio's father criticizes their «assurdo isolamento nel quale vivevano, o, addirittura, [il] loro sotterraneo, persistente antisemitismo da aristocratici»²³. To him, the Finzi-Contini do not coincide with their nominal ethnic/cultural identities, that is, with themselves; he makes wealth a contaminating difference within the purity of such identity. It is as if a curse of aristocratic enervation hangs over the place, a historical pessimism in the form of a haunting by the pauperized Marchesi Avogli from whom Moisè acquired the land for his gauche, tasteless house. By the end of the novel, even the tennis court will have deteriorated.

This quasi-oedipal theme of the squandering (*dilapidamento/sperperamento*) of vigorous entrepreneurs' fortunes by their enervated *rentier*/descendants is familiar throughout the Italian novel from the turn of the last century onward. The fruits of the founders' vigor are spent in the heirs' quests for health, social prominence, or other versions of ataraxia: leisure and freedom from worry. For example, in Giovanni Verga's *verismo* masterpiece *Mastro Don Gesualdo* (1889), the neglected Gesualdo Motta lays dying in the palace his dowry has procured for his daughter, a duchess, while the now Duchess and her husband consume the money Motta schemed and worked hard to earn. In Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Trionfo della morte* (1894) the sterile life of Giorgio Aurispa, *rentier*/heir to his uncle, the suicide Demetrio's, fortune, is

²⁰ *Ivi*, 19.

²¹ *Ivi*, 27.

²² *Ivi*, 25.

²³ *Ivi*, 42.

a long indulgence in 'illness', connoisseurship and self-absorption. In Luigi Pirandello's *Il fu Mattia Pascal* (1904), feckless, spiritless Mattia Pascal and his brother Berto look on impotently as Batta Malagna, their administrator, robs them of the lands, houses and vineyards their father acquired in his adventures of quasi-piratical capitalism. Zeno Cosini, heir to his father's business – though never permitted to control it – is obsessed with his 'health' in Italo Svevo's *La coscienza di Zeno* (1923). With the exception of *Trionfo della morte*, in each of these novels, the capitalist forebear is robust and vigorous, often coarse; his heirs refined, self-absorbed and enervated. The spiritless decadence of refinement, culture and connoisseurship of the Finzi-Contini could be termed a 'soft *decadenza*', unlike the hard sexual *decadenza* of a Baudelaire or the homicidal absolutist *decadenza* of a D'Annunzio. Their garden is the renunciation of all but scholarly labor. For these reasons, the debilitating refinement and erudition of the Finzi-Contini together with their spiritlessness tacitly invite a Futurist critique. In *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, even Professor Ermanno's handshake is limp and reluctant of contact ²⁴.

The particular *decadenza* of the Finzi-Contini arises in part from their socio-political renunciation of the wheeler-dealer capitalistic opportunism of Moisè Finzi-Contini, founder of the family fortune whose euphemistic and condescending epitaph describes his «tempra austera di lavoratore indefesso» ²⁵. And herein lies a conflict: the tomb of the Finzi-Contini has about it the naive vulgarity of the *arriviste* – eliciting Giorgio's condescension («faceva spicco, saltava subito agli occhi» ²⁶); it is moreover useless: «da oltre mezzo secolo non si interrava più» ²⁷. Moreover, it is a minor scandal to the Jewish community: naturally, Giorgio's father despised it: «Che idea da nuovi ricchi, che idea bislacca» ²⁸. Now, however, taste flourishes inside Moisè Finzi-Contini's great English rock pile, which is at once sanatorium, mausoleum, and library, all housed in a museum. We might say that the vulgar *magna domus*, a memorial to entrepreneurship, now houses the refined tastes of Moisè's descendants/dependants, making both tomb and *magna domus* metaphorically one as expressions of mourning ²⁹. Thus does young Alberto

²⁴ *Ivi*, 148.

²⁵ *Ivi*, 20.

²⁶ *Ivi*, 19.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ *Ivi*, 24.

²⁹ On mourning, see Derrida 1994; Staten 1995; Miller 1996 and 2009; Krell 2001.

first obsess himself with the design of furniture for his room, then with the most satisfying placement of the speakers of his gramophone. During heated political discussions, he fussily empties ashtrays³⁰. This, while the cancer which will kill him, goes undiagnosed. This obliviousness of the political, as recalled in Professor Ermanno's response to Giorgio's recounting his expulsion from the Biblioteca Comunale in obedience to the race laws, is accordingly unsurprising: «E allegro, decisamente allegro e soddisfatto, era piú tardi il tono di voce con cui il professor Ermanno, presomi sottobraccio, mi propose di approfittare d'allora in poi liberamente [...] dei ventimila libri di casa [...]»³¹. Apolitical, bookish quietism and satisfaction are two of the latter day – and fatal – enchantments of the place. The tennis court, which is intended for the diversion of the energy of the young, accordingly, lies outside the *magna domus* for thematic as well as practical reasons. Thus, Micòl will humiliatingly and condescendingly rebuff Giorgio's advances in the house («Sei tutto rosso, rosso *impizà*. Lavati la faccia»³²), and then indulge herself with Giampiero Malnate in the *Hütte*. How did Giorgio survive the Holocaust? We learn only that he was in prison in 1944³³. Had he participated in the Resistance like Giorgio Bassani?³⁴ It is telling that his wartime communication with prisoners in other cells reminds him of his communication with Professor Ermanno in the library³⁵, suggesting that they describe a common captivity.

Origins: Giorgio, accompanied by a group of friends, is on a day trip one weekend outside Rome to visit the Etruscan tombs of Cerveteri. A vivacious little girl named Giannina asks her father a question: «Papà [...] perché le tombe antiche fanno meno malinconia di quelle piú

I owe a special debt to Mark Dooley and Liam Kavanagh 2007. A remark of Dooley's was influential in the composition of my recent work on mourning and the Holocaust: «[...] for Derrida, 'writing' equates to the marks and inscriptions of those who have been victimized in the quest for purity and full self-presence, even when such marks have been, either intentionally or unintentionally, turned to ash or cinders» (139). See also Chiampi, «Un dolore pacato e eguale»: Eternally Mourning Ippolita in *Trionfo della morte*, forthcoming in *Italica*.

³⁰ Bassani 1962, 168.

³¹ *Ivi*, 174.

³² *Ivi*, 218.

³³ *Ivi*, 184.

³⁴ There is no small historical irony: the *Giardino dei Finzi-Contini* passes through various stages of composition during the period leading from the capture of Adolf Eichmann in Argentina to his trial in Israel, and is published a few months before his hanging in May 1962.

³⁵ Bassani 1962, 184.

nuove?»³⁶, inspiring in Giorgio a desire to write of the Finzi-Contini. The next year he does. Little Giannina's *joie de vivre* will establish a contrast with the *athymia* of the massacred Finzi-Contini and the visitors to the garden and in particular with Signora Olga's perpetual mourning her son Guido who died of infantile paralysis. We could say that the death of little Guido is the origin of their spiritlessness in their attempt to preclude further mourning. After the prologue, which describes the tombs of the Etruscans, the first two chapters of the Parte Prima begin with the words «La tomba»³⁷, while the third chapter begins: «Nel 1914, quando il piccolo Guido morì [...]»³⁸. We learn, that «la signora Olga [...] d'allora in poi non aveva più smesso il lutto»³⁹. Mourning takes the form of spiritlessness; its most obvious consequence is the tutorial education of the children and the family's social exclusivity. Giorgio identifies the origin of his memoir of the Finzi-Contini with cemeteries: first the Etruscan ruins⁴⁰, creating a parallel among lost worlds, then the neglected Jewish cemetery of Ferrara, which contains the body of Guido Finzi-Contini, dead at the age of six, announcing the theme of pastoral mourning: «Et in Arcadia ego». It is telling that Professor Ermanno Finzi-Contini is betrothed to Olga Herrera in the ancient and picturesque Jewish cemetery of Venice, and that his own prized opus is a collection and translation into Italian of the inscriptions on the Jewish gravestones of the Lido cemetery⁴¹. One could even say that the novel follows a line of male extinction from the death of little Guido Finzi-Contini through that of Alberto Finzi-Contini from cancer, and closes with the murder of the entire family: «chissà se hanno trovato una sepoltura qualsiasi»⁴².

Tomb and cemetery: in both house and garden, epic emasculation is expressed as cultural conservancy and disregard of the ethical and political. Professor Ermanno's learning is erudite and arcane – he recommends that Giorgio consider a thesis on the works of «Sara Enriquez (o Enriques) Avigdòr» correspondent of no less than Ansaldo Cebà!⁴³ – rivaling in *précieusité* and erudite triviality the learning of the tutor Pinzone from *Il fu Mattia Pascal*. Learning throughout the novel

³⁶ *Ivi*, 14.

³⁷ *Ivi*, 19, 24.

³⁸ *Ivi*, 30.

³⁹ *Ivi*, 26.

⁴⁰ *Ivi*, 12.

⁴¹ *Ivi*, 182. See Woolf 2007, 52-57.

⁴² *Ivi*, 16.

⁴³ *Ivi*, 182.

is entombment in wishful resurrection, from which Giorgio only barely escapes. Professor Ermanno's dedication to such arcana in the midst of atrocity makes the *magna domus* a tomb of *thymos*. This is familiar from august Ferrarese literary tradition: in Ariosto, gardens are places for the illusory promises of sexuality; palaces are prisons whose lure is protective, beneficent captivity. Nevertheless, eventually, the political must breach the walls of the garden and of the *magna domus*, but then Ariosto's Ruggiero must be converted to Christianity, join Charlemagne and die an early death betrayed. Giorgio also recalls Aeneas, who had to return to his travels, his destiny and his early death. And like them he will escape the garden, regain his manly spirit, but unlike them, survive. Giorgio is not without his own conservancy, which lies in his writing this repository for their anonymous ashes.

The refugee social life of the Finzi-Continis' familiars appears at first to conjure away the specter of Italian fascism's attempt to ingratiate itself to Germany by means of the anti-Semitic *Leggi razziali* of 1938, which echoed, but exceeded in perfidy, Hitler's Nuremberg Laws of 1935. Still, who is more Italian and italophile than Jewish Professor Ermanno? Professor Ermanno is a conservator of Carducci's letters to his mother – he keeps them entombed and unavailable in his downstairs safe even as he venerates the bed upstairs on which Carducci slept. Nevertheless, Professor Ermanno (Italian translation of 'Hermann') and his fellow Jews would be labeled, by *Il manifesto della razza*, a member of «l'unica popolazione che non si è mai assimilata in Italia perché essa è costituita da elementi razziali non europei, diversi in modo assoluto dagli elementi che hanno dato origine agli Italiani»⁴⁴. Finally, the Republic of Salò's *Carta di Verona* of November 14, 1943 would declare Italy's Jews «stranier[i] e parte di una nazione nemica»⁴⁵. These gov-

⁴⁴ *La difesa della razza*, 5 agosto 1938, 9. In his chapter *Zinco*, from *Il sistema periodico*, Primo Levi wrote: «Potrebbe addirittura diventare una discussione essenziale e fondamentale, perché ebreo sono anch'io, e lei [Rita] no: sono io l'impurezza che fa reagire lo zinco, sono io il granello di sale e di senape. L'impurezza, certo: poiché proprio in quei mesi iniziava la pubblicazione di 'La Difesa della Razza', e di purezza si faceva un gran parlare, ed io cominciavo ad essere fiero di essere impuro. Per vero, fino appunto a quei mesi non mi era importato molto di essere ebreo: dentro di me, e nei contatti coi miei amici cristiani, avevo sempre considerato la mia origine come un fatto pressoché trascurabile ma curioso, una piccola anomalia allegra, come chi abbia il naso storto o le lentiggini; un ebreo è uno che a Natale non fa l'albero, che non dovrebbe mangiare il salame ma lo mangia lo stesso, che ha imparato un po' di ebraico a tredici anni e poi lo ha dimenticato» (1987, 460).

⁴⁵ Avagliano 2002.

ernmental decrees, together with the Jews' identification as such in the census, would become administrative tools the SS, by September 1943 part of an army of occupation, would use to locate the Jews for deportation to the death camps. Bear in mind that Italy's Jewish population had already been enumerated on «List B» of the Jews of Europe presented at the Wannsee Conference of January 1942, despite Italy's putative autonomy as ally. Actually, the assimilation of the Finzi-Contini to Italian life, as with most of the Jews, was so complete as to preclude a potentially saving distrust of the government; it was lethal.

The spiritless Finzi-Contini actively reject political commitment: when the lawyer Geremia Tabet shows up at Professor Ermanno Finzi-Contini's door, not only does Finzi-Contini not accept the filled out party card Tabet proffers, but he gently shuts the door in his face (that is, after handing him a discreet bribe ⁴⁶). Politics – Fascist politics in particular – has been banished from garden/enchanted palace much as it had been for Aeneas, Ruggiero and Rinaldo: Professor Ermanno «in vita sua non si [era] mai occupato di politica [...]» ⁴⁷. In a similar way, the life of the Finzi-Contini is an implicit repudiation of the futurist, D'Annunzian and Fascist cult of vigor as encapsulated in the slogan *Vivere pericolosamente*. However, although they themselves are besieged by the government's anti-Semitic laws and pronouncements, the Finzi-Contini nevertheless discriminate – and are perceived as discriminating – against fellow Jews: Josette Artom despises Ferrarese Jewry ⁴⁸; la Signora Regina, on the other hand, will describe the non-Jewish Malnate as a «*musafir*» ⁴⁹, which is her word, Micòl explains to Giorgio, for «*goi*» guests. Giorgio's father will say of the Finzi-Contini: «È gente diversa... non sembrano neanche dei *judim*» ⁵⁰. Not Jewish to Jews, they are not Italian to Fascist politicians, dwelling in ethnico-political undecidability.

In rationalist thought – and most cogently in Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* – happiness is defined as self-sufficiency, a state in which nothing is lacking. Such happiness can ultimately be found only in God, the perfectly self-sufficient absolute; God, Who is perfect self-sufficiency. Material self-sufficiency is the mundane and potentially prideful –

⁴⁶ Bassani 1962, 28.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁸ *Ivi*, 25.

⁴⁹ *Ivi*, 99.

⁵⁰ *Ivi*, 277.

hence potentially sinful – image of such transcendent happiness, and mourning is one turmoil attendant on the failure of creation to provide happiness. Where there is no lack – no absence – there is no mourning; there can, accordingly, be no mourning in God, Who creates all things and maintains them in their being. Thus, according to tradition, it is proud and futile to make material wealth one's absolute, for it cannot satisfy spiritual will, and, as mutable, must disappoint. An index of their pride is this judgment of the Finzi-Continis' loss of Jewish identity offered by Giorgio's father: «Perché a loro, *halti* come erano sempre stati (contrari al fascismo, va bene, ma soprattutto *halti*), *le leggi razziali facevano in fondo piacere!*»⁵¹. With its pretensions to comprehensive plenitude and inclusivity, the garden/*magna domus* of the Finzi-Contini presents an image of self-sufficiency that is quite overtly prideful as tradition understands it. It alludes to the Edenic garden of tradition: much as in the tradition of the *The Romance of the Rose*, whose Garden of Delight boasted «[...] three times as many birds / as there can be in all the rest of France» (II.243-244)⁵². It also alludes *in malo* to Dante's *paradiso terrestre*, where the seeds of all the plants and trees that exist on earth are to be found: «E saper dei che la campagna santa / dove tu se', d'ogne semenza è piena, / e frutto ha in sé che di là non si schianta». Thus, recalling Dante's *paradiso terrestre*, we find in the garden of the Finzi-Contini «alberi di grosso fusto, tigli, olmi, faggi, pioppi, platani, ippocastani, pini, abeti, larici, cedri del Libano, cipressi, querce, lecci, e perfino palme ed eucaliptus»⁵³ – a catalogue of trees also reminiscent of verses 1285ff. of the *The Romance of the Rose* – planted in their hundreds by grandmother Josette Artom. Pride cast down: they would be chopped up for fire wood toward the end of the war.

Finzi-continico conservancy expresses faith in and hope for permanence – perfect presence – and it extends from things to people: «In realtà, a furia di fare collezioni: di cose, di piante, di tutto: si finisce a poco a poco col voler farle anche con le persone»⁵⁴. Micòl too is a collector and conservator, hunting through antique shops for Venetian *lattimi* («Sono vetri: bicchieri, calici, ampolle, ampolline, scatolucce: cosette, in genere scarti di antiquariato»⁵⁵), a hunt which has yielded her over

⁵¹ *Ivi*, 74.

⁵² De Lorris and De Meun 1962.

⁵³ Bassani 1962, 22.

⁵⁴ *Ivi*, 75.

⁵⁵ *Ivi*, 129-130.

two hundred such *objets*. Antiquarian Juno or Atlante: Giorgio sagely refuses to tell her that her collecting goes against her declared aversion «di sottrarre almeno per poco le cose, gli oggetti, alla morte inevitabile che attendeva anche loro»⁵⁶. In her case, her conservancy becomes a charitable concern for objects. Alberto's no less: his vast cosmopolitan record collection contains music from Monteverdi to Louis Armstrong and Charlie Kunz⁵⁷. Professor Ermanno similarly: his library contained works on «matematica, fisica, economia, agricoltura, medicina, astronomia»⁵⁸ to mention only a very few of its subjects. This image of the library as a sufficiency of learning and its conservation suggests an eternity in which to enjoy it – that is, permanence; self-sufficiency pridefully attempts to banish difference, loss and absence, as well as any bond of need with the outside. (Indeed, the very name «Mura degli Angeli» that surrounds the property suggests the cherubim God set around Eden to keep mankind out.) Professor Ermanno's vast library of Italian art and literature is a memorial to Italian culture – the very Italian culture that will betray him. This suggestively Hegelian mausoleum of presence is intended to thwart history and preclude further mourning. A Boethius, on the other hand, would argue that such an intent is prideful and futile, a vain attempt to thwart Fortune. The image of the *magna domus* in ruins, invaded and taken over by squatters, testifies to such futility. The pride of the Finzi-Contini is clear even in the exclusivity of their religious practice: Professor Ermanno restores the old Spanish synagogue for worship exclusively by family and friends⁵⁹.

Bassani encapsulates the pride of the Finzi-Contini in the figure of Micòl, which he derives from Dante. In the tenth canto of Dante's *Purgatorio*, on the terrace of the punishment for pride, biblical Micòl, daughter of Saul from 2 Samuel 6.20, is depicted among the speaking reliefs: «Di contra, effigiata ad una vista / d'un gran palazzo, Micòl ammirava / sì come donna dispettosa e trista», watching «l'umile salmista» dance with his robes upraised (V.65). Micòl is portrayed as contemptuous of her husband David, king and priest, and for her pride was stricken with sterility. In the novel, Giorgio's father, filled with class resentment, accuses all the Finzi-Contini of an «ereditaria superbia»⁶⁰,

⁵⁶ *Ivi*, 130.

⁵⁷ *Ivi*, 152.

⁵⁸ *Ivi*, 181.

⁵⁹ *Ivi*, 29.

⁶⁰ Bassani 1962, 42.

and despises the «*baltùd*» of their social exclusiveness⁶¹. When our protagonist meets Micòl just outside the garden, she stands above him on the wall within the garden staring down at him, rather as Dante's Micòl looks down at David, similarly contemptuous: «[...] mi prendeva in giro, evidentemente, e un poco anche mi disprezzava»⁶². The figuration of Micòl is layered and manifold: once again, as keeper of the entry⁶³ she recalls Dame Idleness/Oiseuse in Guillaume de Lorris's *The Romance of the Rose*, who invited the Dreamer/Amant into the Garden of Delight. However, the Garden of Delight, far from a paradise, is actually a wood in which Amant is hunted, wounded and enslaved by the God of Love. Giorgio likewise: in the false paradise of the Finzi-Contini, Giorgio, pridefully searching for his absolute, the love of Micòl, is wounded and enslaved by manipulative her: «Cacciato dal Paradiso, non m'ero ribellato, dunque, attendendo in silenzio di esservi riaccolto»⁶⁴. Lucifer, Adam and Eve were chased out of their respective paradises as punishment for their pride.

Pride understands the self as absolute, and is often rendered in literature as almost solipsistic self-absorption. Thus, another paradox of the Finzi-Contini is that they both belong to and are foreign to the Jewish community of Ferrara by making their garden a closed world of familial self-absorption, and inaccessibility. Micòl and Alberto speak their own language, «il finzi-continico»⁶⁵; their elders speak an Italian mixed with Hebrew, Venetian, Spanish and various German; Ferrarese Professor Ermanno speaks Hebrew with a Tuscan accent⁶⁶. Their vast and diverse cultural conservancy also informs their social exclusivity: Micòl loves to drink her *Skiwasser* (or *Himbeerwasser*, as she and Alberto call it) – a memory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire⁶⁷. Alberto and Micòl were educated at home by private tutors (one wonders if perhaps Professor Ermanno and signora Olga understood little Guido to have been infected by a bacterium from the outside, or perhaps that the outside itself *was* the bacterium). It is as if, to the mourners of Guido, the garden has a prophylactic function. This suggests a quasi-Hegelian *reductio ad absurdum*: if they could transport everything within, they would be

⁶¹ *Ibidem*.

⁶² *Ivi*, 52.

⁶³ *Ivi*, 50.

⁶⁴ *Ivi*, 242.

⁶⁵ *Ivi*, 51.

⁶⁶ See Caliaro 1981 and Della Coletta 1998.

⁶⁷ Bassani 1962, 93.

safe. A further *reductio ad absurdum* of their exclusivity: Giorgio hints at possible incest between Alberto and Micòl, as if to transform them into a sexual monad. True to the isolation/exclusivity of the place, their conversation and humor are erudite: one evening, Professor Ermanno greets Giorgio with mild irony, citing the first verse of canto VIII of Dante's *Purgatorio*: «Era già l'ora che volge il disio»⁶⁸. Micòl speaks of leaving her «famigliola sbigottita»⁶⁹ as she departs to pursue her university degree in Venice, citing, of course, a verse of Petrarca's Sonnet XVI («Movesi il vecchierel canuto e bianco») from the *Canzoniere*. The garden wall she calls the «*vert paradis des amours enfantines*»⁷⁰, citing Baudelaire's *Moesta et errabunda* from *Les Fleurs du mal*. She misquotes a verse from Ungaretti's *Auguri per il proprio compleanno a Berto Ricci*, saying, «Non mi lasciare ancora, sofferenza»⁷¹. Citing verses from Umberto Saba's «Tu sei come una giovane / una bianca pollastra»⁷², Micòl describes scheming Adriana Trentini with condescending – implicitly self-denigrating – teasing antiphrasis as one of «tutte – le femmine di tutti – i sereni animali – che avvicinano a Dio»⁷³. (The charm of her wit suggests *The Romance of the Rose*: Love's courtiers «chanted sonnets courteously and well» [III.125]). Her particular assimilation is to the cosmopolitan, hence the casual remarks in English: «*dear friend*»⁷⁴, «*I prefer not to*»⁷⁵, «*You are fishing for compliments*»⁷⁶. From the French: the quotations from Baudelaire; from the German: «*privat*» and the ubiquitous German «*verboten*»⁷⁷. From the American as well: the literal quotations and translations from Dickinson's *I Died for Beauty*⁷⁸, and their long discussions «sul povero Bartleby e su Spencer Tracy»⁷⁹. Ironic and denigrating hyperbole, literary quotation and witty asides suggest the wit of Castiglione's courtier even as they assert her not belonging to provincial Ferrarese Jewry. Bassani's stylistic cosmopolitanism: this layering of poetic context on poetic context, meaning upon meaning,

⁶⁸ *Ivi*, 100.

⁶⁹ *Ivi*, 143.

⁷⁰ *Ivi*, 113.

⁷¹ *Ivi*, 134. Ungaretti's line is «Non mi lasciare, resta, sofferenza!»

⁷² *Ibidem*.

⁷³ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁴ *Ivi*, 140.

⁷⁵ *Ivi*, 215.

⁷⁶ *Ivi*, 224.

⁷⁷ *Ivi*, 131.

⁷⁸ *Ivi*, 157.

⁷⁹ *Ivi*, 216.

and irony upon irony suggests the elusiveness of the Finzi-Contini – that they are never truly present to Giorgio in a transparent, univocal and spontaneous way. Cosmopolitanism describes a structure of traces from the past that make a full grasp of the Finzi-Contini impossible. They are inhabited by other opaque contexts and traditions. Their – and in particular Micòl's – refined cosmopolitanism suggests the traditional image of unbelonging – the Wandering Jew⁸⁰.

But enchanted gardens and palaces offer only brief respite, and destiny requires that they fail. In the fourth canto of the *Orlando furioso*, the magician Atlante, forced by Bradamante to release her beloved Ruggiero from his enchanted preserve, removes the stone covered with magic characters and breaks the smoking vases beneath which it conceals:

L'incantator le spezza; e a un tratto il colle
riman deserto, inospite ed inculto;
né muro appar né torre in alcun lato,
come se mai castel non vi sia stato. (IV.38)

Bombed out in 1944, the *magna domus*, now infested by the mosquitoes and frogs down by the Panfilio Canal, like Atlante's palace, has lost its magic, and now strange, rough people inhabit the ruin, people who throw stones at the visiting health inspector. And the *Guida del Touring* has dropped it⁸¹. This thematics of the failure of beneficent containment also has classical precedent: in the *Aeneid*, the nymph Juturna implores the gods for respite, however brief, from war and death for her brother Turnus. Jupiter grants her request, which is supported by Juno, but warns her that Turnus's salvation will be brief, for fate has decreed that he must die. Juno proceeds to conjure up a wraith in the form of Aeneas, whom Turnus chases onto a ship that slips anchor, postponing his fate. In Bassani, however, Bruno Lattes, Adriana Trentini, Désirée Baggioni, Claudio Montemezzo, Carletto Sanni, and Tonino Collevatti, are permitted entry for the sake of Alberto and Micòl's sport and diversion (*The Romance of the Rose*: «The fairest folk that you'll find anywhere / Are Mirth's companions, whom he keeps with him» [VV. 583-584]; *Orlando furioso*: the garden of Alcina «avea la piú piacevol gente / che fosse al mondo e di piú gentilezza» [VII.10].) Giorgio provides high-brow company for both Alberto and Micòl; Giampiero Malnate's use is

⁸⁰ «Cosmopolitanism», of course, is the term Stalin used to denigrate the Jews as «rootless» at the time of the Doctors' Plot.

⁸¹ Bassani 1962, 22.

as company for Alberto, but more importantly to see to Micòl's satisfaction⁸². The garden has become a ghetto of enchantment. Virgilian and Ariostean pathoi of futility are recalled in the pathos of Bassani. Bassani himself displays a *finzi-continico* cosmopolitanism in the breadth of his choice of allusions, a breadth worthy of Professor Ermanno himself; this cosmopolitanism is an economy of influences. Reading Micòl's words, one is distracted by allusion to biblical Micòl, Oiseuse, Dido, Alcina and Armida. One sees Micòl and misses her; that is, one sees her singularity as distracted among allusions. She is elusive and secretive, never present to herself or to Giorgio. As distracted within this economy, the reader shares a community of culture with Giorgio and Bassani, but only as distracted, not fully present to herself. Thus, although Micòl is understood to be a flesh and blood singularity, she is singular on account of her assimilation to a broad cosmopolitan culture that makes her share in all these characters from epic and romance. Spoken language is understood to possess immediacy, transparency and intimacy; she, on the other hand, is present to us as not present on account of her quotations from the poetry of Ungaretti, Saba, Dickinson et al., with all their seven types of ambiguity. Thus, Micòl's poeticizing expression effectively separates Giorgio from Micòl. One could further argue that all this is detrimental to community, for it defeats comprehension in the same: the reader cannot understand her as she understands herself. Even when face to face with her, her complex irony maintains her impenetrable secrecy. The literariness of her speech becomes a metaphor for the layering of history that keeps her opaque. Giorgio's love for her is a mourning for the absent object which is she.

This creates a subplot based upon erudite Giorgio's own ethnic identity and his own belonging. The culmination of his development starts with his renunciation of the garden and Micòl and continues to his acceptance of his father's practical point of view. Part of that acceptance is his realization of the pride and failure of *finzi-continico* conservation. Bassani's borrowings from classical, medieval and Renaissance authors only underscore the futility of pretensions to presence, as if to make a point against apocalyptic Hegelian optimism: by failing, the yearning of the Finzi-Contini to bring all things together and maintain them in their unaltered presence becomes a grim parody of the final recollection of all things by Hegelian Universal Spirit, wherein all would be preserved/

⁸² Bassani 1962, 286.

recalled without loss. Regarding their ambitions, Giorgio's father – authoritative, like a latter-day Mercury, Melissa, Carlo or Ubaldo – does not spare his son his sarcasm that makes Professor Ermanno a latter-day Atlante as Zionist: «Eh, ma se loro, i Finzi-Contini, rimpiangevano il ghetto (era nel ghetto, evidentemente, che sognavano di veder rinchiusi tutti quanti: disposti, magari, in vista di questo bell'ideale, a lottizzare il Barchetto del Duca per farne una specie di *kibbúz* sottoposto al loro alto patronato): liberissimi, facessero pure»⁸³. Thus do the race laws simply serve their ends. The realism of Bassani's descriptions of the events that take place in the *magna domus* is his version of romance enchantment. That is, Bassani has forged an ironic tour de force in constructing an apparently realistic reminiscence of this period of virulent *nazifascista* anti-Semitism, concluding in the unspeakable atrocity of the Holocaust, out of materials taken primarily from Renaissance chivalric romance with its fairies and enchantments. Bassani's concomitant historical realism makes of Fascism the lure into this deceptively invincible world of wealth and refinement: the evils of the surrounding fascism suggest the reliefs of human misery that face outward on the walls of the Garden of Delight.

«Stranier[i] e parte di una nazione nemica»: in a nation as culturally/'racially'/historically diverse as Italy, made up of Sicilians, Neapolitans, Tuscans, Venetians, and Tyrolese, duchies, kingdoms and republics, made up of citizens whose primary identity is often that of their region, the notion of Italian racial purity can only seem confusingly risible today, even if tragically so. Indeed, the race laws themselves were largely imported from Germany. Thus, the Finzi-Contini with their appreciation and loving preservation of Ferrarese and Venetian Jewish culture are, like their fellow citizens, Italian by virtue of their difference. Such a play of the trace is underscored by Bassani in such a figure from the past as Josette Artom, «ammiratrice fanatica della Germania dall'elmo chiodato di Bismarck, non si era mai curata [...] di dissimulare la propria avversione all'ambiente ebraico ferrarese, per lei troppo ristretto – come diceva –: nonché, in sostanza, quantunque la cosa fosse parecchio grottesca, *il proprio fondamentale antisemitismo*»⁸⁴. It could be said that alienation forms the assimilation of the Finzi-Contini; that is, the particular way the Finzi-Contini choose to be Jewish has them belonging neither to the Jewish community nor to the 'Aryan' one. And

⁸³ *Ivi*, 75.

⁸⁴ *Ivi*, 25.

it establishes an ironic subplot: that their lesson in preservation has formed the artistic judgments and style of the narrator. A retrospective illumination: glancing backward, one is led to conclude that the opening of the novel, set among the Etruscan tombs, announces an impenetrability the ancient Etruscans share with the Finzi-Contini.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alighieri, Dante (1970-1975). *The Divine Comedy*, Charles S. Singleton (ed. and trans.), 3 vols., Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Ariosto, Ludovico (1967). *Orlando furioso*, in Id., *Opere*, Giuliano Innamorati (a cura di), Bologna, Zanichelli.
- Avagliano, Mario (2002). Ebrei e fascismo, storia della dersecurazione, *Patria indipendente*, 6-7, giugno-luglio.
- De Lorris, Guillaume and Jean de Meun (1962). *The Romance of the Rose*, Harry W. Robbins (trans.), New York, Dutton.
- Bassani, Giorgio (1962). *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, Torino, Einaudi.
- Bausi, Francesco (2003). *Il giardino incantato: Giorgio Bassani lettore di Thomas Mann*, *Lettere italiane* 55, 219-248.
- Caliaro, Ilvano (1981). Dal *Giardino* di Giorgio Bassani: il 'finzicontinico' di Micòl: tra dignità e stile, *Forum Italicum* 15, 52-57.
- Cannon, JoAnn (2003). Memory and Testimony in Primo Levi and Giorgio Bassani, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Novel*, Peter Bondanella and Andrea Ciccarelli (eds.), Cambridge, England, Cambridge University Press, 125-135.
- Chiampi, James T. (1990) Tasso's Rinaldo in the Body of the Text, *Romanic Review* 82, 487-502.
- (i.c.s.) «Un dolore pacato e eguale»: Eternally Mourning Ippolita in *Trionfo della morte, Italica*.
- Curtius, Ernst Robert (1953). *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, Willard R. Trask (trans.), New York and Evanston, Harper and Row.
- Della Coletta, Cristina (1998). La cultura del giardino: Miti e appropriazioni letterarie nel *Giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, *MLN* 113, 138-163.
- Derrida, Jacques (1994). *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the "New International"*, Peggy Kamuf (trans.), New York, Routledge.
- Dooley, Mark, and Liam Kavanagh (2007). *The Philosophy of Derrida*, Montreal and Kingston, Ithaca, McGill-Queen's University Press.

- Giamatti, A. Bartlett (1966). *The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Homer (1967). *The Odyssey*, Richmond Lattimore (trans.), New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco and London, Harper.
- Krell, David Farrell (2007). *The Purest of Bastards: Works of Mourning, Art and Affirmation in the Thought of Jacques Derrida*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Levi, Primo (1989). *Se questo è un uomo; La tregua*, Torino, Einaudi.
(1987). *Il sistema periodico* in Id., *Opere*, vol. I, Cesare Cases (a cura di), Torino, Einaudi.
- Marcus, Millicent (2000). *Vittorio De Sica: Contemporary Perspectives*. Howard Curle and Stephen Snyder (eds.), Toronto, Buffalo and London, University of Toronto Press, 258-279 [ed. orig. De Sica's *Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, in Id., *Filmmaking by the Book: Italian Cinema and Literary Adaptation*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press 1993].
- Miller, J. Hillis (1996). Derrida's Others, in *Applying: To Derrida*, John Brannigan, Ruth Robbins and Julian Wolfreys (eds.), Houndmills, Basingstoke and Hampshire, Macmillan, 153-170.
(2009). *For Derrida*, New York, Fordham University Press.
- Poliziano, Angelo (1979). *The «Stanze» of Angelo Poliziano*, David Quint (trans.), Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press [ed. orig. *Stanze per la Giostra*, Vincenzo Pernicone (a cura di), Torino, Loescher 1954].
- Spackman, Barbara (1989). *Decadent Genealogies: The Rhetoric of Sickness from Baudelaire to D'Annunzio*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press.
(1990). The Fascist Rhetoric of Virility, *Stanford Italian Review* 8, 81-101.
- Staten, Henry (1995). *Eros in Mourning: Homer to Lacan*, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Tasso, Torquato (1961). *Gerusalemme liberata*, Anna Marina Carini (a cura di), Milano, Feltrinelli.
- Virgil (1965). *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I-VI*, H. Rushton Fairclough (trans.), 2 vols., Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, Harvard University Press and Heinemann.
- Vivas, Eliseo (1966). A Definition of the Esthetic Experience, in *The Problems of Aesthetics: A Book of Readings*, Eliseo Vivas and Murray Krieger (eds.), New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Toronto, Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 406-411.
- Wolf, Judith (2007). Echoes of Venice in Giorgio Bassani's *Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, *PN Review* 33, 52-57.