

CORRADI, Morena and Silvia VALISA eds. 2021. *La carta veloce. Figure, temi e politiche del giornalismo italiano dell'Ottocento*. Milano: Franco Angeli. ISBN 9788835117469. Pp. 244. Paper. €28.

*La carta veloce* is a collection of nine essays, each one concerning a different theme and written by a different scholar. The volume seeks to enlighten readers about the complex world of nineteenth-century journalism. Newspapers of this period have often been studied from an historical perspective, from which they are seen as mere containers of information; here, however, the curators of *La carta veloce* aim to update the debate and insert it into the context of the newly born “periodical studies”: “si tratta di un campo consacrato ai periodici in quanto tali, come espressione tecnologica, tematica, formale ed ideologica a sé stante, e in quanto degna di un’attenzione individuale e specifica” (15). During this confusing but surely fundamental century, journals had a decisive role: they helped the Unification of the Italian population by creating a common ground for people coming from different regions, uniting them under a similar language, a common taste, and shared news.<sup>1</sup>

Journalists, especially from the second half of nineteenth century,<sup>2</sup> were trendsetters and usually had strong personalities, but not uncommonly they also struggled to find a stable political opinion, or a predominant cultural preference, as they were often captured by last minute fashions that they themselves had partly created. In fact, the two major scandals that followed one another at the end of the century, Oblieght (1882) and Banca Romana (1893),<sup>3</sup> revealed that several political parties were secretly financing many newspapers, showing how important at this time journals were in influencing public opinion.

The whole book relies on an interdisciplinary approach: essays by experts in different fields follow one another in a very organic way thanks to the

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1. However, it is worth mentioning Italy's delay behind other European countries in terms of print runs and high illiteracy rates: in 1871 more than two thirds of the population remained functionally illiterate (GOZZINI 2000, 184); consequently, only the elite could enjoy newspapers.

2. Journalism as a profession begins to take shape with its modern features during this time, as Forno (2012, 14) explains: “Con la nascita delle prime agenzie di stampa, la notizia venne dunque a rafforzare ulteriormente il suo valore di scambio, mutevole e riconoscibile al pari di qualsiasi altra merce. [. . .] Sotto vari aspetti, soprattutto a partire dai primi decenni dell'Ottocento, l'informazione divenne dunque davvero un lavoro per ‘specialisti’”.

3. See MURIALDI 2014 for an in-depth discussion of these two events.

common effort to connect each chapter to the previous one. The authors apply complementary points of view to create an exhaustive picture of nineteenth-century Italian journalism. The overall idea of *La carta veloce* actually refers to the column *Bilancio del Secolo xix*, published on *La Vita internazionale*, which is studied by Sara Boezio in this volume (173–206). This column is the key to the interpretation of this entire volume of essays: *Bilancio del Secolo xix* was a column that appeared for three years (1900–1902) with a strong multidisciplinary character. Through the different perspectives of history, biology, natural sciences etc., it analyzed the last hundred years of world events, vacillating between optimistic hopes and pessimistic fears. The society of the “moaning” century was deeply transformed by new discoveries and technical innovations, wars, an unprecedented perception of geological time scales, the changing of female condition. The editors of the column *Bilancio del Secolo xix* aimed to explore all these aspects and offer to their readers “gli strumenti per affrontare le sfide crescenti della modernità”. The purpose of the column was to pick up the pieces of such traumatic, exciting, and revolutionary events that occurred in a very confusing way during the nineteenth century and give them an order, connect them, explain them, mitigate or emphasize them, and above all make them accessible. In other words, this column aimed to do something really similar to what *La carta veloce* intends to do today.

Too many aspects of this tangled and overpopulated world of nineteenth-century daily newspapers, periodicals, supplements, and of the people who dedicated life to them, still lies in the shadows. In part this is due to the easy deterioration of the fragile and volatile material itself. It has, however, been especially overlooked because of the disparaging judgments of a large section of literary critics toward this medium that was considered ancillary, if not definitely inferior to other forms of literary production. The journalistic productions of notorious fiction writers did not escape this judgment, even though newspapers had often represented a space where authors could elaborate upon their novels and theoretical positions: for example, Matilde Serao, Salvatore Di Giacomo, Gabriele D’Annunzio, Carlo Collodi and Edmondo De Amicis.

The first chapter, written by Loredana Palma, highlights the writer Vincenzo Torelli, a brilliant journalist, dramatist, and theatre critic who operated in Naples before the Italian Unification, in the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>4</sup> This often-neglected period in fact marks an important milestone for the Bourbonic capital: in these years the number of newspapers printed in

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4. His name does not appear in recent histories of Italian journalism such as FORNO 2012 or MURIALDI 2014 and is only cited once in CASTRONOVO 1970.

Naples was higher than those printed in Milan. Torelli's long journalistic activity takes place in this lively Neapolitan cultural scene, opposed to the stereotype of the greyness of the Bourbonic era. Palma states (and proves, in my opinion) that Torelli anticipated a number of journalistic practices that over the years would become very standard, like leaving significant space to advertising aids and serialized stories. Thanks to these innovations, Torelli reached exceptional print runs for the time with his *Omnibus*. He could start furious debates, discussions, and controversies thanks to his sharp articles, in accordance with his idea of what the journalist's mission was: "Il giornalista, io credo, non ha già il diritto ma il dovere di dare il suo giudizio su tutto ciò che viene esposto al pubblico".

In the second chapter, the focus shifts to the city of Milan as a cultural and editorial center during the years that came just before the Unification, and the focus will remain on Milan until the end of the volume. (In fact, the volume could have given more space to intellectuals and initiatives coming from southern Italy, which are often ignored.) In this flourishing context, Patrizia Landi decides to dedicate her attention to five women's magazines (*Il Corriere delle dame*, *La moda*, *Costumi del giorno*, *La ricamatrice* and *Le ore casalinghe*) and three humorous periodicals (the *Farfarello*, *L'Uomo di Pietra* and *Il Pungolo*<sup>5</sup>), all of which emerged in the space of two years. The purpose of the essay is to demonstrate the existence of a strong bond between these magazines and the Milanese context where they were born. Such connections can be seen in the way they reflect readers' needs: on one hand, a female audience coming from different social strata, on the other hand, a specifically male and petty bourgeois one.

Massimo Castellozzi examines the five-year experience of the humorous journal *La Frusta* (1865–1870), edited by Antonio Picozzi, a former Garibaldi supporter, exponent of the first Milanese *Scapigliatura*, and already a contributor of *L'Uomo di Pietra*. *La Frusta* had a peculiar feature: although it declared itself "humorous", a sharp irony abounds, but caricature is totally absent. Arising in the wake of a disappointed risorgimental and increasingly anti-monarchical feeling, which was often encountered in this period, its political orientation is clearly toward the radicals. The artistic view of the magazine is very well expressed in Camillo Cima's reviews, that represent a *scapigliato* taste and a strong aversion toward works perceived as "institutional".

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5. *Il Pungolo* was so successful that for a decade newspaper sellers in Milan were called "pungolisti" (MURIALDI 2014, 60). Things changed around 1875: with the advent of Sonzogno's *Il Secolo*, they became "secolisti" (FORNO 2012, 49).

Morena Corradi chooses to put in correlation two figures both operating in the Milanese post-Unification journalistic scene, but diametrically opposite in terms of ideals, experiences, and character: Leone Fortis and Achille Bizzoni. Their respective journals *Il Pungolo* and *La Gazzettina Rosa*, are direct emanations of their personalities.<sup>6</sup> The first belonged to the pro-government and moderate side, the second one sympathized with the extreme left and was an ardent follower of Garibaldi. Regardless of the differences between them, both Fortis and Bizzoni were great entrepreneurs and founded multiple journals throughout their lives. However, in Fortis's case it is difficult to distinguish which position was coming from a sincere belief, and which from mere opportunism (journalism was his main source of income, while he dedicated his soul to dramaturgy). On the other hand, Bizzoni strongly advocated his ideas throughout the pages of his periodical, firmly condemning monarchy and, because of this, suffered various arrests.

The discourse moves to the Milanese musical scene thanks to the history of *Il Giornale della Società del Quartetto di Milano* (1864–1865), outlined by Bianca Maria Antolini. Despite its short life, the magazine run by Tito Ricordi and his son Giulio, was a strong expression of the vitality of the Società established in Milan, where it was founded, following the birth of the Florentine one. “Il nostro motto è: conservare e progredire”: this is how Alberto Mazzucato summarizes the trademark of the journal, which is characterized by an innovative encouragement of younger artists through competitions and rewards. Its main goal in fact was the renewal of the musical scene in the newly formed Italy.

Edoardo Sonzogno too, several decades later, conveyed his passion for music (and especially for musical theatre) through the publication of the magazine *Il Teatro Illustrato* (1881–1892). Alessandra Palidda analyzes this experience with the intention of highlighting one of the multiple aspects of Sonzogno's editorial activity. Sonzogno's publishing house at that time was first in the field, but it had been forgotten for a long time due to the lack of archival documents, largely destroyed by the bombing in 1943. Sonzogno's publishing activity expressed his democratic political orientation: in order to reach as many readers as possible (even semi-literate ones), half of the space of each issue was dedicated to images, a very common tendency in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century. The periodical published national and international news in the fields of music and theatre as well as many portraits of composers, and reserved spaces for debate. Overall,

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6. This is a typical feature of journals during the immediate post-unification phase: identifying with the political positions of individuals or parties.

Sonzogno promoted all those initiatives that were bonded with the renovation of the Italian repertoire and promulgated by the Casa Musicale, under the guidance of Sonzogno himself.

Maurizio Punzo discusses the only proper political magazine of this volume, *La Critica Sociale*, examining the first decade of its long existence. Punzo cleverly uses this magazine to build a history of ideas of the Socialist Party in this embryonic stage: from the difficulties to acknowledging a possible alliance with Radicals and Democrats to discussions with foreign colleagues. Thanks to the “right to hospitality” professed by Filippo Turati and Anna Kuliscioff, the two founders of the periodical, *Critica Sociale* became the heart of a fruitful international debate and an open space in which to discuss issues of major concern to socialism, especially around political and social-economic topics, but without neglecting literary, and more generally speaking, artistic ones.

The volume closes with a fundamental chapter by Silvia Valisa that draws together all the research presented so far and points out the affinities between nineteenth-century journalism and contemporary digital platforms. The rhetoric is very similar indeed: journals with high circulation at that time aimed to exonerate the reader from the cognitive effort to organize the experience of the world, not unlike what happens with the Internet. Starting from the creation of a digital archive of Edoardo Sonzogno’s *Il Secolo*,<sup>7</sup> a newspaper that aspired to mass fruition as an ideological and commercial choice,<sup>8</sup> Valisa exposes some biases that are elusive but in fact broadly present on the web, which we commonly perceive as a very powerful tool for democracy.

The digital preservation of cultural goods, which allows historical research to benefit from them for much longer, should also imply a questioning of current cultural hierarchies. The journalistic texts studied in this volume, so widespread and popular during their time, ended up being the truly rare texts, as they were the ones perceived as not worthy of study or conservation. Therefore, since the democratization of knowledge is not intrinsic in the digital transition, it should be consciously pursued through appropriate cataloguing tools, well-constructed metadata, and easy

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7. The project was launched in 2013 and should be completed by 2025.

8. Murialdi identifies three choices made by Sonzogno to bring his journal closer to the bourgeois: the democratic policy granted by Ernesto Teodoro Moneta’s direction, the strengthening of a detailed city chronicle, and the ample space devoted to material designed to entertain the general reader and serial novels (2014, 67). Thanks to these actions and to the use of the telegraph, in 1876 *Il Secolo* exceeded 30,000 copies.

accessibility of these productions. I do believe that this final observation helps the reader to understand the necessity of this kind of study, often considered only for specialists, and that instead is crucial for remembering historical realities that are fundamental for how we today conceive of culture, books, and intellectual goods in general, and for how we transpose them onto different media.

Maria Santagata  
*Università di Pisa*

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BAKER, Cathleen A., and Rebecca M. CHUNG, eds. 2020. *Making Impressions: Women in Printing and Publishing*. Ann Arbor: Legacy Press. Pp. 340. ISBN 9781953421005, Paperback \$70.

The past few years have seen an exciting growth in scholarship on women and print history. Recent examples include Claire Battershill's 2022 *Women and Letterpress Printing 1920–2020*, the 2021 *Huntington Library Quarterly* special issue on “Women in Book History, 1660–1830”, the 2020 anthologies *Natural Enemies of Books: A Messy History of Women in Printing and Typography* and *Women's Labor and the History of the Book in Early Modern England*, and digital projects such as *Women in Book History Bibliography* and *Women's Print History Project*. Cathleen A. Baker's and Rebecca M. Chung's *Making Impressions: Women in Printing and Publishing*, which examines women's involvement in publishing and printing from early European printing to contemporary digital projects, is an exciting and valuable addition to this emerging body of work.

Arranged chronologically, the collection begins with essays on recovering women's contributions in early printing and publishing. Christine N. Moog's “Women and Widows: Invisible Printers” and Dianne L. Roman's “Detangling the Medusa in Early American Printing History” document some of the first women who participated in the production