

Chapter 2 tackles the first phase of the persecution, in 1938–43. The author emphasises the zeal with which the central and local governments pursued the goals of preventing Jews from engaging in any economic activity whatsoever (by dismissing them from their positions, barring them from all professions, withdrawing their licences, etc.) and of expropriating much of their property (land, buildings and businesses), through an agency overseen by the Finance Ministry established in February 1939, the EGELI (Ente di gestione e liquidazione immobiliare: Real Estate Management and Liquidation Agency). This obviously led to the impoverishment of the Jewish population, hindering their attempts to leave the country, or even survive, especially during the Italian Social Republic.

Chapter 3 covers the 20 months of Nazi occupation and the Social Republic, with the German raids and arrests and expropriations by the Italian authorities. One of the most odious aspects of this tragic period mentioned by the author was the public auctioning of confiscated property, even as the Jews were being deported, with many of their former neighbours bidding for or occupying the hastily vacated houses. Chapters 4 and 5 address the ‘difficult postwar period’, when the new democratic governments implemented partial measures for reintegrating the Jews into the country’s social and political life. In the last section, the author describes the limited impact of the *General Report* of the Commission to Reconstruct Events in Italy Related to the Acquisition by Public and Private Concerns of Property Belonging to Jewish Citizens i.e. the Anselmi Commission, in 2001, and the disputes arising from the application of the 1955 ‘Terracini Law’, which granted a life annuity to former victims of racial persecution. Incredibly, it took until December 2020 to remedy several essential shortcomings of this law, and other critical issues still await resolution.

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Matilde Serao: International Profile, Reception and Networks

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This volume examines the critical and popular reception of the writings of Matilde Serao (1856–1927) in chapters devoted to Bulgaria, Russia, Finland, Anglophone contexts, and Spain. The collection sketches an illuminating portrait of a widely recognised Italian journalist and fiction writer, acclaimed by her European contemporaries in both the popular press and in books. An array of diverse methodologies and tools informs the book, which also provides valuable insights about translation practices in the years of Serao’s greatest popularity.

Serao's purported 'loss' of the Nobel Prize opens the book. Ulla Åkerström finds implausible the suggestion that pro-fascist voices blocked Serao's candidacy and attributes such conjectures to 'a possible lack of awareness' regarding the Swedish Academy's workings (p. 18). She outlines the regulations governing its selection process and reviews documents from its archive, concluding that Serao 'was never considered a viable candidate' because she was seen as too regional and lacked a strong backer in the Academy, unlike Grazia Deledda, who won the Nobel in 1926.

Nadezhda Alexandrova and Boyka Ilieva examine Serao's reception in Bulgaria and identify patterns and themes also found in other contexts. Bulgaria's emergence from Ottoman rule (1878) fostered a new, national canon and a rise in literacy. Bulgarian translations from other European literatures proliferated, while the public sphere expanded to include women's editorial activities. As elsewhere, Serao's reception was conditioned by translators' selection of a limited number of texts from her corpus. The image of Serao was consequently partial, though her prominence was undeniable. The authors observe that Bulgarian readers were drawn to Serao as a moralist writer through her depictions of love, poverty, school life, family values, and self-sacrificing virtue. Also typically for the time, translations into Bulgarian were often not signed and were mediated through other, sometimes unidentified languages: it is thus 'impossible to reconstruct the channels of transfer for these works' (p. 38), which are in some cases closer to adaptations than translations.

Russian translations of Serao began to appear in 1885 in journals, newspapers, anthologies, and separate volumes. Maria Belova offers a case study of *All'erta, sentinella*, whose different translations, titles, and venues 'reflect a desire to adapt this story for different readerships' (p. 64). She then examines a major (uninformed but revealing) review comparing Serao to Deledda and juxtaposes it with an interview of Serao conducted in Paris in 1900 that focused on feminism, education, and the city of Naples. A five-volume edition of Serao's works appeared in Russia in 1910–11, but Belova reports that after this, publishers chiefly marketed Serao's works for children.

Serao's Neapolitan-ness and her gender surface repeatedly, including in the Anglophone context. She found an ardent admirer in the influential Edmund Gosse, who wrote glowing prefaces to the English translations of *Fantasia* (1890) and *Addio, amore!* (1894). Gosse, the earlier English commentator Pauline Schletter (1889), and later, Henry James in America, credited Serao as the most prominent and gifted Italian writer of her generation, ranking her among the great realists of the time but, as Ursula Fanning notes, James also considered Serao 'vulgar' (p. 92). All of them adopted a familiar orientalist discourse about the Italian South, describing Serao's Neapolitan characters as passionate, untamed, and violent.

Viola Parente-Čapková surveys Finland's major libraries where, given the country's history, Serao appears in many different languages. Digitised collections of Finnish national newspapers make accessible not only her fiction but also advertisements and reviews, some of which dwell on Serao's personal life; others compare her favourably with the more preachy, more pompous 'Nordic literature of indignation' (p. 148) and tout her as the best-known Italian woman writer of her generation. Serao appeared alongside Verga, De Amicis, and Giacosa in anthologies whose titles evoke Mazzini's Young Italy associations at a moment when Finnish aspirations for independence from Tsarist Russia were at their zenith.

Aided by a massive digitisation of Spanish periodicals, Maria Laura Iasci and Amelia Sanz combine macro- and microanalyses to review Serao's reception in the Spanish press at the turn of the century. The authors retrieved all translations of Serao and over 800 references to her in these sources. They plotted these on a comparative timeline and used Voyant tools for text analysis, creating word clouds and generating graphs to

display word proximities. These document the absence of Serao's identity as a journalist and of her more militant writings. Such quantification confirms patterns appearing throughout the volume, even as it identifies specificities for Spain. The micro-analysis following this survey examines two important female journalists who followed the Italian feminist movement.

Serao as a voice from 'The New Italy' resurfaces in the chapter on Sweden. Igor Tchehoff traces reviews and printings of her work in recently digitised Swedish newspapers, averring that alongside De Amicis and Fogazzaro, Serao was then 'the most translated, most-read Italian author in Sweden' (p. 203). Swedish reviews were long and detailed, sometimes brimming with superlatives. Tchehoff cites, however, a key ambivalence in her Swedish reception: admiration for Italian Renaissance culture and sympathy with the patriotic impulse of the *Risorgimento* vied with familiar prejudices about the Italian South and Catholics. Swedish papers discussed Serao as a public figure (owing to her journalism and her implication in a government corruption investigation) and her personal life.

Two chapters offer more detailed perspectives. Rossana Melis and Maria Luisa Wandruszka briefly discuss Serao's reception in Germany and Austria, but focus mainly on a public address on Serao by the young Leo Spitzer at the University of Vienna in 1912. Spitzer would become one of the most influential Romance linguists and literary critics of his generation: hence it is of great interest that he dedicated his inaugural university lecture to creating a portrait of Serao. The authors provide a discussion in English and an excerpt from the original German text of Spitzer's admiring and discerning lecture, which he sent to Benedetto Croce in a gesture of admiration and collegiality. Spitzer constructively disagreed with Croce's published views on Serao (1903), providing a powerful counterpoint and fresh perspective on her work.

Finally, Gabriella Romani's chapter on Serao's account of her 1893 pilgrimage to the Holy Land (1898) discusses both Serao's book and its English translation. Romani concurs with others in seeing Serao's text as 'a narrative of gender and religious self-definition' and notes that Italians at the time saw it as an effort at expiation for a life spent in 'futile and mundane writings' (p. 160). The book proved appealing to international audiences but it also reinforced essentialising stereotypes of Catholic Southern Europe as superstitious and archaic. Part spiritual journey, part travelogue, and part guidebook, Serao's text presents 'a modernist reading of identity-building and ... female mobility' (p. 163). The English translation by Richard Davey, Romani observes, takes many liberties with the original in order to increase its appeal for English readers.

This volume makes an impressive contribution to Serao studies. Each chapter stands on its own as a vigorous scholarly investigation: the authors search archives, compare dizzying numbers of translations, search for unacknowledged translators, trace political and personal histories, and harness new technologies to examine massive amounts of print publication, presenting clear evidence of the respect and renown Serao enjoyed abroad during her lifetime.

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