

## Augusto Del Noce. The Age of Secularization. Edited and translated by Carlo Lancellotti

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By the time of Livorni's fourth collection, *Onora il padre e la madre*, the speaking voice fractures, breaking into several voices, represented variously through italics, underlining and quotation marks. This is no mere imitation, however, of what one finds in, say, Eliot's *The Wasteland* or *Four Quartets*. Like Eliot, Livorni aligns his poetry with musical forms, but his fragmented voices are part of a harmony that was there all along. His "Oratorio," for example, is a sequence of poems in which the various voices sing in an interrupted, seemingly incoherent way. In the end, however, they form a harmonious whole, as in a musical oratorio, where, behind all the arias, there is a chorus and an orchestra to which each solo performer must eventually return. In the tenth poem of this sequence, a "moltitudine d'apparizioni," says one voice, threatens another voice, who laughs, however, "*perché non possesso già forma / di corpo*." This other voice, this "tu," was once the "sussurro" of love, and its endless echo, as a third, narrative voice says, fills the surrounding void. And it is this assemblage of broken voices which quickens "l'argilla del sangue" (229).

In an insightful afterword to this collection, Mario Moroni says that Livorni's poetry resists being bound by geography or politics. As Livorni himself says, in his revealing "Nota dell'Autore," the exile's only homeland is the ever-fluid sea, which moves back and forth between the two worlds. The result, in Livorni's case, is a poetry that is at once beautiful and moving and inviting.

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**Augusto Del Noce. *The Age of Secularization*. Edited and translated by Carlo Lancellotti. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017. Pp. 270. ISBN 9780773550919.**

Augusto Del Noce (1910–1989) was a leading Italian philosopher during the Cold War era. Chiefly associated with the Catholic world, he taught at the Universities of Trieste and Rome, and served as a Christian Democratic senator during the 9<sup>th</sup> legislature in the 1980s. He collected several of his essays and lectures, produced between 1964 and 1969, and published them in Italy in 1970 as *L'epoca della secolarizzazione*. Almost fifty years later this volume received its English translation as *The Age of Secularization*.

Carlo Lancellotti performed yeoman service for this work as translator and editor. Del Noce wrote in the thick and frequently clumsy style of many Italian academics of that era, sometimes rendering more difficult the translator's task. It may appear, furthermore, to be an odd collection. Why Del Noce chose to include some works, for instance, when they seemed hardly linked to the others. Lancellotti's introduction, thankfully, insists that the original arrangement, if confusing on the surface, makes ultimate sense; and he provides a helpful guide to the pieces that follow.

Del Noce understood modern western history as a series of assaults on the Platonic-Christian tradition from Marxism and from the developing "affluent society," which he described with the term *benessere*, or "well-being." He drew from predecessors like Immanuel Kant, Antonio Rosmini, Simone Weil, and Benedetto Croce. Among the more recent philosophers, Del Noce turned to his contemporary, Sergio Cotta. The first challenge came from Marxism, which Del Noce considered to be a "sacral secularism" along with the other "secular religions," Nazism and Fascism. He conflates these ideologies a bit too much, however, when he labeled Benito Mussolini as "the beginner of European Communism" (110), thinking no doubt of his political activity before the First World War. Del Noce focused mostly on European Marxism, however, which, with or without Mussolini, presented itself as a straw man that he destroyed without too much effort. It died, he wrote, with Stalin in 1953. Still, Del Noce did not rule out a Soviet victory that, writing in the 1960s, he considered a looming possibility. One wonders what he might have thought if he saw the unraveling of Soviet and East European, not to mention Italian, Communism that occurred almost at the time of his death.

To some extent he answered that question of a Marxist victory — that it had become irrelevant. "Even a Communist party in power," wrote Del Noce, "will be forced to deal with a technological world it did not create" (68). This technological world was more a creature of the second, "profane," challenge to the Platonic-Christian tradition — from the affluent society — a far more insidious and, ultimately, triumphant foe. The affluent and technological civilization would force Christians into "moral catacombs" with only "trust and hope in Providence" (68–9). Despite its roots in the Enlightenment, and with its "philanthropic" rhetoric and lofty aspirations toward fraternity and love, Del Noce did not trust the affluent society (227). He identified numerous culprits who led, or perhaps joined, its breathtaking attack on the Western tradition. His list included Henry de Saint-Simon with his "vague religion of humanity," and Auguste

Comte. Del Noce labeled this “scarcely read philosophical interpreter of the École Polytechnique” as, more than Hegel, Marx, or Nietzsche, the real prophet “of the present situation” (57–8).

The second part of *The Age of Secularization* contains only two essays, each of which reflects the time-period in which it was conceived. The first of the two, “The Political Predicament of Catholics,” is based on Del Noce’s presentation in Lucca, at the Christian Democrats’ 1967 conference, which constituted the Party’s most significant discussions on the challenges of modern culture. Del Noce felt the time had come for the DC to address and understand how, coming on the heels of the *dolce vita*, Catholic Italy could deal with its new “affluent society.” The late 1960s saw upheaval everywhere and events on the peninsula alarmed Del Noce who felt that student protesters fell victim to one condition of the affluent society: neophilia. In his view, they felt that they were reinventing the wheel and wrongly connected the new opulence with traditional culture. In doing so, they cut any ties with a natural ally. Del Noce might have taken a page from don Luigi Giussani whose student movement, known eventually as Communion and Liberation, brought together both Catholic resistance to the affluent culture and the students. In sum, Del Noce’s work, its concern with the student revolts aside, does not tread much on the social and cultural aspects of secularization. This can be disappointing. Much more than Saint-Simon *et. al.*, secularization is the story of Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, and Walt Disney. It presents a story more of cars than of Comte.

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**Edith Bruck. *Versi vissuti: Poesie (1975–1990)*. A cura di Michela Meschini. Macerata: eum, 2018. Pp. 243. ISBN 9788860565587.**

Since settling in Rome in the 1950s, Edith Bruck — born in Hungary in 1932 — has adopted Italian as her literary language. She is a prolific writer with a career spanning seven decades to date. Although she has won several awards for her prose works, surprisingly her poetry has fallen out of print. The present volume, *Versi vissuti*, brings together three collections of Bruck’s poems, published over a fifteen-year period: *Il tatuaggio* (Guanda, 1975), *In difesa del padre* (Guanda, 1980) and *Monologo* (Garzanti, 1990).