

# Michael Antonio DiMarco. Mundunur. A Mountain Village under the Spell of South Italy

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It is this binarity, this vividness, this extremity that makes Bruck's poetry so moving and so informative. She grants us unflinching access to her thoughts and feelings, no matter how controversial, how distressing, or how intimate. The difficulty of marketing poetry, and its lack of commercial viability mean that Bruck's poetry has often been overlooked in favour of her prose. For scholars and interested readers who really want to learn more about this fascinating writer, her poetry offers a unique insight into her childhood, her experience during the Holocaust, the legacies of survivorship, and her return to life after Auschwitz. Bruck uses her poetry, like her prose, to testify: her verses convey the horrors of the Lager, but they also testify to a *moving beyond*, to love and a rediscovery of happiness. Bruck's poetry takes her reader on a tumultuous journey which is moving, illuminating, devastating and, ultimately, unforgettable.

Bruck's poetry has not, to date, received the degree of critical attention it deserves. It is to be hoped that the present volume, by bringing together poems written over several decades into an accessible single edition, will reignite scholarly and public interest into the rich and important poetry of this fascinating writer.

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**Michael Antonio DiMarco. *Mundunur. A Mountain Village under the Spell of South Italy*. Santa Fe: Via Media Publishing, 2020. Pp. 337. ISBN 9781893765603.**

Michael Antonio DiMarco's 2020 text *Mundunur. A Mountain Village under the Spell of South Italy* is a refreshing new work that explores the history and alterity of Southern Italy through the prism of the author's familial and cultural heritage. Although there are many texts written by ethnic Italians living outside of Italy recounting their actual or metaphorical endeavor to understand their ancestry and cultural identity, DiMarco's text stands out as unique. *Mundunur* successfully and comprehensively guides readers through the history, culture, and economy of Italy's Mezzogiorno since the Paleolithic period while strategically and effectively using the history of his ancestral village of Montenero Val Cocchiara, known also as "Montenero," or "*Mundunur*" in the local dialect, to illuminate these changes. Furthermore, DiMarco's background in editing and publishing becomes obvious through his easy to read narrative style, exhaustive research, and attractively

designed book. The distinctness of the work can be found especially in its concluding chapter, which orients the reader away from the past and towards the future with a lengthy three-day tourist itinerary of Montenero. This final chapter, together with DiMarco's evident care for Southern Italy and its people throughout the text, invites the public to visit Molise and see the region's fascinating past and promising future in the same way as the author.

In the first two chapters of *Mundunur*, DiMarco presents readers with an engaging narrative and pictorial history of his "Monti" ancestors and relations who emigrated from Montenero to Erie, Pennsylvania at the turn of the twentieth century as well as his influential first visit to the Southern Italian village from which they came in 1976. It is here, however, where the typical Italian American historical and cultural narrative ends. In Chapter three DiMarco writes in depth about the geography, flora, and fauna in which his family's village and province is found and in Chapter Four he discusses the region's Oscan, Samnite, and Roman history with detail rarely found in Italian ethnographic studies. It is in Chapter five, however, where DiMarco's talent for summarizing and explaining Italian history as experienced in Montenero becomes evident and renders this work unique. Chapters five through nine masterfully and succinctly trace the lengthy history of Southern Italy from the fall of the Roman Empire to Italian unification through anecdotal, factual, and archival research completed by the writer regarding Italy and Montenero. This allows *Mundunur* to serve as a helpful text for students interested in Southern Italy as well as casual readers of history or cultural studies.

Chapters ten through fourteen carry the reader from the period beginning with Italian nationhood to the present day, all of which is presented in a manner that is easily relatable to readers. DiMarco's ability to reference seemingly every major social, political, and cultural happening during those years is laudable and rarely seen outside of historical academic texts. Despite the extensive narrative on the development and challenges of Italian nationhood since unification, DiMarco remains impressively faithful to using the Apennine village of Montenero to show how these many happenings affected Monti villagers as well as other Southern Italians. In Chapter fifteen, DiMarco again departs from typical Italian American literature and speculates on how his family's village and region may employ their rich history, culture, and natural surroundings to build a better future that will end the ongoing depopulation of Southern Italian villages and towns while generating sustainable development. Finally, DiMarco acts as an agent of this change in Chapter sixteen, *Mundunur's* last and longest chapter. Here readers find a heavily

illustrated “three-day fictional tour of Montenero” enticing readers to visit the village and actively participate in the future transformation of Southern Italy.

DiMarco’s work is a beautifully created text that depicts the author’s personal wayfaring as a third generation Italian American who seeks to understand himself through his heritage and culture as well as inspire others to seek out the majesty of Southern Italy regardless of their background. The author’s careful yet easily understood historical examination of Southern Italy through the prism of Montenero and its environs especially encourages one to view the Mezzogiorno’s pulchritude as preserved due to, and not in spite of, its alterity. In this way DiMarco’s distinct text forms part of a growing chorus of writings that explore the wealth of diversity found in Italy’s south. *Mundunur* is therefore an engaging new work that studies the perceived “backwardness” of Southern Italy only to find that the south’s dissimilarity to the north handsomely rewards anyone intrepid enough to embrace its multifaceted past and challenging present, and employ its resources to work towards a more fulfilling future for oneself and others.

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**Mario Masini. *I miei film con Carmelo Bene*. Venezia: Damocle, 2020. Pp. 130. ISBN 9788832163261.**

Mario Masini è stato lo storico direttore della fotografia dei film di Carmelo Bene, e con questo volume ci fornisce un resoconto intimo e tecnico della sua esperienza artistica con l’autore di Campi Salentina. Il libro è frutto delle conversazioni intercorse tra Masini e Carlo Alberto Petrucci, il quale ha curato il testo finale avvalendosi della prosa asciutta e aneddotica tipica del registro orale. Il racconto di Masini (riportato in italiano, inglese e francese) è ricco di episodi e considerazioni che fanno luce sul percorso produttivo dei film di Bene, e che lo rendono una pubblicazione di sicuro interesse per gli studiosi della sua opera.

Dalle pagine del libro emergono aspetti che chiariscono la complessità tecnica e concettuale del cinema di Bene. Molte pagine sono spese su *Nostra Signora dei Turchi* (1968), film che, alla luce dell’esperienza di Masini, si configura come un’opera di scavo interiore. A suo avviso, infatti, la pellicola costituisce il tentativo da parte di Bene di fare i conti col suo passato. Masini sottolinea come la sfera intima dell’artista fosse segnata tanto dalla cultura cattolica tipica di un certo