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Wood, Sharon, and Erica Moretti, eds. *Annie Chartres Vivanti. Transnational Politics, Identity, and Culture*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2016. Pp. 284. ISBN 978-1-683930069. \$ 95.00 (hardcover). \$ 90.00 (ebook).

Annie Chartres Vivanti (1866-1942), a writer straddled between two centuries, an independent woman whose “nomadism was cultural as much as it was geographical” (Mettifogo 67), is the subject of this collection of essays edited by Sharon Wood and Erica Moretti. Wood and Moretti have gathered an impressive array of voices and perspectives on Chartres Vivanti, and in doing so, they succeed in reclaiming Vivanti’s place as a “prominent figure of the European intellectual panorama” (Chini 146) of her times, and one of Italy’s truly transnational authors.

The daughter of an Italian man of Jewish descent and a German woman, Annie Vivanti was raised in England and “crisscrossed countries and continents” (xv) throughout her life, remarkably free in her ideological and biographical choices. As a writer, she enjoyed great popularity both in Italy and abroad: her first collection of poems, *Lirica* (1890), famously prefaced by Italian poet Giosuè Carducci, was partially or entirely translated in thirteen languages; her autobiographical first novel, *Marion artista di caffè concerto*, came out the following year to great scandal; later novels such as *The Devourers/I divoratori* (1910/1911), and her “reportage” on Maria Tarnowska (*Circe/Marie Tarnowska*, 1912/1915) brought her renewed popularity in Italy and England. She was a sought-after contributor to periodicals such as *Il Corriere della sera* (between 1911 and 1925), but also British and American newspapers (a detailed biography of Vivanti is available, together with a bibliography, on the University of Chicago’s [Italian Women Writers](#) website, authored by Caporossi).

While it is true, as some of the essays included in the collection make clear (for example Urbancic’s analysis of her journalistic style) that Vivanti at times capitalized on her glamorous life and acquaintances to build her literary persona, her posthumous fame almost entirely obliterated her works in favor of biographical gossip. Moretti, for example, reminds us that “Vivanti’s relationship with Carducci would be a constant source of interest for future writers at the *Corriere*, who would come to forget her as a journalist, literary critic, and novelist” (139). *Annie Chartres Vivanti. Transnational Politics, Identity, and Culture* builds on the work of previous scholars and biographers of Vivanti (in particular Caporossi, Parati, Lepschy, and Venturi, together with Urbancic) to restore the literary stature of this writer, while documenting the many important roles she played as a public figure and as a writer in the cultural and political landscape of her time.

The volume is organized in four sections, devoted to “Constructing a Female Self,” “Translation and Cultural Mediation,” “Political Engagement and Journalism,” and “Vivanti Across Literary Genres.” Each section tackles one of the fundamental traits of Vivanti’s oeuvre: her focus on the female experience, her multilingual fluency and ideological commitment to alterity, her extensive production as a journalist (arguably the least known part of her oeuvre), and her eccentric exploration of different genres and styles. Among the many thoughtful essays included in the volume, those that stand out are the ones that engage directly with Vivanti’s transnational dimension, and those that detail and discuss lesser-known material and parts of her life, such as Vivanti’s journalism and her dedication, in 1919–1921, to the cause of Irish independence. Mettifogo analyzes works in which Vivanti stages “Transatlantic” encounters, in particular between Italians and Americans. Her essay illuminates Vivanti’s awareness—and subversion—of the discursive tradition on “Italy” as it had been shaped by foreigners traveling to the peninsula. Gragnani’s chapter on *L’invasore* (1915) and *Vae victis* (1917), Vivanti’s play and novel centered on the sexual violence that German invaders perpetrated on Belgian women during the First World War, untangles Vivanti’s interventions on the thorny debate about abortion in the event of wartime rape. Her independence of mind on the topic is even more apparent when contrasted, as in the essay by Gundle and Storchi that closes the volume, with the filmic version of *Vae Victis* (1955), directed by Raffaello Matarazzo. The adaptation performs an

ideological “Italianization” of the story that turns it into a claustrophobic reflection on traditional motherhood. Ceroni’s analysis of “Tenebroso Amore,” a short story about the fantasy of the African female body as played out in blackface performances, highlights Vivanti’s treatment of Italian colonialism as a representational practice, one that Vivanti also connects with the politics of race in the American context. In the third section (“Political engagement and journalism”) Urbancic’s chapter on Vivanti’s journalism, together with Moretti’s essay on Vivanti’s contributions to Luigi Albertini’s *Il Corriere della sera*, discuss Vivanti’s journalistic work as essential to her creative work overall, while also reconstructing the context in which she operated. Chini’s chapter on Vivanti’s involvement with the cause of Irish Independence brings to light the writer’s transnational networking skills, which she used to lobby, somewhat ironically, for a nationalist cause. Crain Merz’s historical account of Vivanti’s relationship with writer Barbara Allason highlights a fascinating case of female friendship and mentorship, while reflecting on the conflicting stances that these two female intellectuals chose to endorse or reject in their negotiations with the patriarchal system.

Vivanti’s production spread extensively across genres and forms, from novels to plays, poetry, children’s books and journalism (including a stint as a World War I correspondent in Italy for the English *Times*), and it often involved self-translation from one language to another (between Italian and English, but also into French, as detailed in Deganutti’s essay). The fourth section contains contributions that shed additional light on Vivanti’s eclecticism, from her poetry collection *Lirica*, which made her famous at 20, to her later novels. Her works were often imbued with humor, satire and irony, as Cavallucci demonstrates, and Vivanti’s unique brand of humor is yet another example of her transnational identity, as well as of her demystifying posture vis-à-vis authority.

Annie Chartres Vivanti. Transnational Politics, Identity, and Culture tackles the important and multifaceted *oeuvre* of this modern author, an Anglo-Italian woman who possessed, in the suggestive words of one of her contemporaries, “the gift of tongues and pens” (John Hagan quoted in Chini, 147). It also reminds us, over and over again, of the condescending attitude that characterized critical interventions by Italian (male) reviewers of Vivanti, and of women in general, during her life and well beyond. In so doing, this collection adds significantly to the bibliography on Vivanti’s life and work. *Annie Chartres Vivanti. Transnational Politics, Identity, and Culture* is a welcome, key reference in English on Annie Chartres Vivanti and her time; its essays offer a multifaceted approach to most of Vivanti’s works, which will hopefully inspire renewed attention to this important writer. The volume can also be an excellent source for courses on women writers, *fin-de-siècle* poetry and Italian literature, but also on the history of journalism, the representations and legacy of World War I, and transnational authors at large.

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