and the interrelated ideological and psychological implications of discursive practices – as I aimed to show in my analysis of the evolving Futurist ‘fiction of power’ (*The Other Modernism*, 1996), a critical contribution that is dismissively acknowledged and incorrectly characterized. Arguably, had I alongo explored possible links between his own findings and contributions based on different approaches, he would have taken a greater step towards the ‘holistic’ interpretation that he advocates as a goal of future scholarship in his conclusions (p. 309).

Notwithstanding the above reservations, I would highly recommend *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti: The Artist and His Politics* to all those who are interested in the intertwined history of Futurism and Fascism. I alongo’s fruitful research casts new light on an important episode in our cultural past, the ideological and political implications of which remain relevant for understanding conflicts and contradictions in present-day cultural realities.

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Corsica fatal, Malta baluardo di romanita'. L'irredentismo fascista nel mare nostrum (1922–1942), by Deborah Paci, Milan, Le Monnier, 2015, 274 pp., €21.00 (soft cover), ISBN: 978-88-00-74581-9

Well researched for the most part, but not only from Italian language sources, this book looks at ‘Fascist irredentism’ in the so-called ‘Mare Nostrum’ between the wars, concentrating on two islands which, by historical and geographical assumption, were meant to be within Italy’s regional orbit: Corsica and Malta. The former had been under French occupation by conquest since 1769, the latter under British occupation by ‘cession’ since 1800. In both, but in varying ways and to different degrees, an Italian influence or presence had been experienced since the thirteenth century. These pasts and geographical proximity were grist to Fascism’s mill using history to legitimate affinity and indeed belonging, real or imagined.

Linguistically, Corsica had a greater claim to be Italian than Malta, whose vernacular, albeit largely an import from Norman Sicily, retained Semitic roots. But, as in Corsica, Italian had become the language or culture of public life, and indeed of commerce, a dominance it retained throughout rule by the Order of St John when the adversary was Ottoman, not Genovese. Unlike the Corsican independence movement from 1729 and sovereignty under Pasquale Paoli until the French invasion of 1769, the first stirrings of Maltese nationalism dated to the nineteenth century, provoked mainly by British attempts to anglicize for purposes of geo-strategic control, and there was no sovereignty until 1964 when Britain finally granted independence.

In the context of Mare Nostrum, therefore, Italian claims were largely predicated on cultural links and historical memories, albeit *stricti juris* Malta had been given to the Knights by Spain in 1530 as a fief, so that it remained effectively ‘Neapolitan’ until the British usurped the title when they blockaded Bonaparte’s garrison into surrender during the anti-French insurrection (1798–1800). Maltese insurgent leaders had

invited Nelson to intervene temporarily with prior approval from the king of Naples; it was not until the treaties of Paris that the anomaly was rectified and ratified at Vienna in 1815. The Corsican Republic had been crushed by a French army at Ponte Novu and Corsica subsequently incorporated into the French state in 1789, a decade later. Britain too had a brush with Corsica but in the end it deferred to the Restoration.

Fascism would have liked to rewrite or relive a history which had passed and changed, hence much of the 'irredentist' discourse was, as Paci shows, driven and coordinated from the centre at Rome rather than from the periphery at Bastia or Valletta. This dual case study broadens the contextualized spectrum of irredentist ideology and motif by picking on localized anti-colonial discontent and suppressed yearning, often twisting or exaggerating it to suit ideological and possibly expansionist purposes.

Still, some irredentist flames on the islands still flickered, however subdued or dangerous these were due to French and especially British antagonism, particularly in the 1930s when Italy flexed its muscles as an empire in East Africa and the Red Sea. A reawakening of tinder from the ashes saw wafts of air arriving from the mainland, often making use of the same protagonists – cultural imperialists or redeemers in the service of a greater Italy, heir to the Risorgimento which had seen a marked empathy and influence through the likes of Niccolò Tommaseo or Leonetto Cipriani on the Corsican side, or Nicola Fabrizi and Francesco Crispi on the Maltese side. Mazzini's appeal to duty and the patria reverberated still, notwithstanding more mundane or utilitarian interests which took their toll over time. Old time affinities and sympathies, as in music and song promoted by a Rome-subsidized local institute, even in football, or on radio, let alone in religion, could be misread or misinterpreted as 'irredentist'. Of course, such rooted heritage could be watered down, not just protected. But one royal commissioner, mentioned fleetingly by Paci, feared an irredentist streak because all Maltese judges knew Italian not English, when Italia Irredenta was about the north not the south. Raising the vernacular into an official language (when in Britain Welsh and Gaelic were being suppressed) was seen, in the words of the Nationalist Party's founding father in the 1880s, as a means of 'further isolating the islanders' in the region: *inclusio unius* (Maltese) *est exclusio alterius* (Italian) – on the Macaulay anglicizing principle, as applied in India.

Tacking on to such situations, some of the Italian propagandists in both islands were actually the same, so one has to be circumspect about relying on certain sources, such as Agostino Savelli's history of Malta. The likes of Francesco Ercole, Gioachino Volpe and Umberto Biscottini, among others, were active in trying to whip up irredentist sentiment on both islands and in much the same ways at the same time – the *Archivio Storico*, the *Giornale di Politica e Letteratura*, concerts, lectures, exhibitions, even archaeological research findings (however inaccurate). Sentiment no less than paranoia was alive and well.

Both Ercole and Volpe were historians, understandably so because cultural penetration, in so far as it may be called that, was much concerned with historical memory, archival literature and language usage. But both were also Rome-based politicians, the former a Minister of Education. So too was Biscottini linked to both the foreign and the education ministries. In the case of Corsica, irredentists had to beware of France; in the case of Malta, Britain (except that in the former case,

in 1942, Italy had occupied it). When I was in Ajaccio to address a conference on Bonaparte – ‘Les îles méditerranéennes et l’appel de l’Orient (Mediterranean Islands and the Appeal of the Orient)’ – I was impressed by the rather dilapidated state of the house where Napoleon was born, a much vaunted tourist attraction, and by the graffiti and banners of the autonomist-independentist movement in the capital, all in Italian-sounding Corsican. Admittedly it was 1998, the year when Prefect Claude Erignac was assassinated.

Paci makes a meal of the idea that culture was being used for political purposes with a view to eventual occupation or annexation. To what extent there was such a real end in mind, at least in the case of Malta, remains unclear. Equally, to what extent was there a popular desire, economic or political, for it? When Malta was largely undefended and Britain concerned with its own defence at the time of Italy’s declaration of war on 10 June 1940, no Italian attempt was made to send the navy and land a would-be occupying force. On the following morning Mussolini simply sent bombers instead. Contrary to what a few Maltese dreamers may have expected at the time, these planes did not drop flowers. They simply facilitated the deportations without charge or trial of scores of suspected, already incarcerated, possibly ‘disloyal’ inhabitants, read essentially as anti-colonial nationalists, putting an end to any minority whiff of irredentism once and for all.

Paci visited Malta and is familiar with several Maltese publications, including four of my own, but her concluding chapter is based exclusively on Corsican sources. An insightful comparative analysis of similarities and differences by way of a conclusion might well have been in order here.

Paci’s book is valuable for widening the spectrum of mainly Rome-driven interwar Fascist irredentist activity in the Mediterranean, and offering separate perspectives on two islands which *prima facie* are fairly easily comparable although, as in the case of Malta and Cyprus, they may not be quite so similar on the ground.

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~~Italia a colori. Storia delle passioni politiche dalla caduta del fascismo ad oggi~~, by Maurizio Ridolfi, Florence, Le Monnier, 2015, 336 pp., €16.00 (soft cover), ISBN: 9788800745536

~~Approaching Maurizio Ridolfi’s Italia a colori. Storia delle passioni politiche dalla caduta del fascismo ad oggi as an art historian rather than as a historian brings this reviewer into contact with a unique volume. In line with his earlier La politica dei colori. Emozioni e passioni nella storia dell’Italia dal Risorgimento al ventennio fascista, published in Le Monnier’s ‘Quaderni di Storia’ series in 2014, Ridolfi focuses on what he defines in his introductory notes as ‘the terrain of a history of the political use of colours, that is to say the policies promised through them’ (p. viii). If this is the central point that Ridolfi’s multi-dimensional book investigates, and before going~~