

**Sammelrez: F. Dufay: Die Herbstreise und M. Serri: Il breve viaggio**

Serri, Mirella: *Il Breve viaggio. Giaine Pintor e i fascisti a Weimar nazista*. Venedig: Marsilio 2002. ISBN: 88-317-7999-0; 250 S.

Dufay, Francois: *Die Herbstreise. Französische Schriftsteller im Oktober 1941 in Deutschland. Ein Bericht*. Berlin: Siedler Verlag 2001. ISBN: 3-88680-735-5; 192 S.

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At the height of the Second World War, a stream of somewhat improbable foreign visitors traveled to Nazi Germany. In addition to the forced laborers and prisoners of war, a steady stream of high profile European intellectuals made their way to various German cities in 1941 and 1942. Two recent books tell the stories of some of these curious journeys. In Francois Dufay's *Voyage d'automne* (published in German, with additional photographs and a helpful map, as *Die Herbstreise*), we learn of the multi-week study-trip to which several prominent French writers and journalists were treated by the Nazi Propaganda Ministry in the Fall of 1941. Mirella Serri's *Breve Viaggio* („The Short Journey“) describes and contextualizes the travels to Nazi Germany of one Italian writer, Giaine Pintor. While both books focus closely on their own national contexts, a look at the two works together raises issues of interest for historians of Germany, of wartime Europe, and of European intellectual life. Both reveal the promise of international approaches to the history of Europe's intellectuals in this period, raising questions that go beyond the immediate scope or intentions of these books themselves.

Dufay's book uses memoirs, letters, and substantial archival documentation to chronicle the activities in Germany of his tale's protagonists: a group of French writers and journalists that included well-known figures of the French radical right, like Drieu la Rochelle and Robert Brasillach, as well as several ostensibly „apolitical“ literary stylists like Marcel Jouhandeau and Jacques Chardonne. Du-

fay follows the literary pilgrimage of this group, which came to include the poet and French Academician Abel Bonnard, the novelist André Fraigneau, and the fascist publicist Ramon Fernandez, from its first travels (including visits to the birthplaces of Beethoven, Stefan George, and Goethe) until their arrival, several cities later, at Weimar. The group arrived in the famed city of Goethe and Schiller in late October 1941 as the official French delegation to the annual „Grossdeutscher Dichtertreffen,“ to which Goebbels had for the first time invited foreign writers.

Dufay, a journalist who writes for the French weekly *Le Point*, offers a detailed reconstruction of this journey that is an engaging read, rich in well-researched detail and colored with evocative if somewhat liberally applied atmospherics. Dufay focuses more on narrative reconstruction than on argument. But the book's later chapters, on the „exploitation“ of the writers' presence at Weimar by the Germans, on the ways this event was used against these writers in France's post-liberation trials of collaborators, and on some of these writers' efforts to bury evidence of their participation, offer a fascinating look at this journey's political and personal consequences.

Moreover, Dufay does, in the course of his narrative, offer an explanation of the willingness of some of these writers to participate in the Germans' travel plans. In the case of Marcel Jouhandeau, for example, Dufay seeks to illuminate the novelist's decision to accept the Germans' invitation by sketching his character—he was, we learn, a „lover of imprudence“—and by suggesting a homosexual romantic attraction to the German officer at the Paris Propaganda-Staffel responsible for the oversight of French Literature, Gerhard Heller. Heller himself, Dufay asserts, was the only „temptation“ powerful enough to draw Jouhandeau from his comfortable life in Paris (10). On the other hand, Dufay treats with sarcasm Jouhandeau's own declaration, as recorded in his journal, that he saw travel to Germany as an important form of bi-national reconciliation and „bridge-building“ between France and Germany, a land the writer had long revered as the home of Goethe and Nietzsche.

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Dufay's analysis of Jouhandeau's motives is emblematic of the book's understanding of French collaboration more generally. The participation of French intellectuals in Nazi-led cultural initiatives is the result of a „seduction“—in Jouhandeau's case quite literally. Dufay's discussion of Jouhandeau's emotional experience of this journey is well documented and makes for remarkable reading. But for this to become the model case for our understanding of wartime collaboration seems problematic. While wartime collaboration was no doubt often motivated by careerism or various forms of ideological, personal, or erotic „weakness,“ one wonders how deeply our understanding of this period can be improved by references to „temptation“ and allusions to Faust.

It would be interesting, instead, to know more about the ideas that led these (presumably) thinking people to make the choices they did. When fascist intellectuals participate in a fascist intellectual enterprise, do we need psychology to understand their eagerness to participate? To what degree did any of France's representatives at Goebbels's meeting of the writers of the New Europe believe in the goals of Hitler's European „New Order“? While Dufay offers the reader a valuable reconstruction of these events and their aftermath, his efforts to explain or interpret them remain rooted in a kind of sarcastic contempt for his subjects. This is of course understandable, but not particularly illuminating.

One year after the first invitation of foreign writers to Weimar, a similar meeting again took place there under the auspices of the newly founded, German-controlled „European Writers' Union“ (Europäischer Schriftstellerverband). Among the members of Italy's delegation to this meeting was a young writer, critic, and translator of German poetry named Giaime Pintor. For Italian leftists of a certain age, this fact itself is fairly shocking. Pintor was killed at age 24 by a German landmine near Rome while operating as an anti-fascist partisan in December 1943. He was celebrated in early post-war Italy as a hero of the Communist resistance, and as the very model of the committed intellectual. He was, in the words of Italo Calvino, the „posthumous leader of his generation.“ What was he

doing in Weimar in October 1942?

Mirella Serri, a professor of Italian literature at the University of Rome, argues that the answer to that question necessitates a reevaluation of the life and legacy of this symbolic figure of the Italian resistance. Indeed, the majority of the book is occupied not with the trip to Weimar itself but with Serri's revisionist reconstruction of Pintor's political biography, for which this journey is, she argues, vital evidence. She suggests that Pintor's travel to Weimar, which, while not altogether unknown to scholars, had been generally forgotten in post-war Italy, reveals that the construction of Pintor as an anti-fascist hero involved a cover-up by the Italian Communist Party of important aspects of his past—namely, that he was actively involved with the Fascist regime and its ties to Nazi Germany even in October 1942.

The „short journey“ of the book's title turns out not to refer to Pintor's voyage to Weimar, nor to his brief life, but rather to the remarkably brief span of time it took for Pintor, and others like him, to switch their political allegiances. Serri's title is a polemical reworking of that of Ruggero Zangrandi's „Il lungo viaggio attraverso il fascismo“ (The Long Journey through Fascism) of 1947. Serri thus takes issue with that book's influential claim that a generation of young Italians slowly matured into anti-Fascism over the course of the late 1930s and early 1940s. Rather, Serri argues, Pintor's case is typical of a far shorter journey away from Fascism—one charted in months rather than years—that began only after the fall of Mussolini in July 1943. That Pintor was in Weimar as late as October 1942—by which time the extent of Hitler's ambitions and the scale of the Germans' atrocities were no mystery to someone in Pintor's position—must be seen as dramatically reducing the scale of time in which his political „voyage“ can have taken place.

Serri's argument thus contributes to a growing body of research that has used various indicators to show that when Germans and Italians turned away from Fascism and Nazism it was not because of the war, or, as has been suggested in Italy, because of the alliance with Nazi Germany or the anti-Jewish „racial laws.“ It was, rather, only the prospect

of losing the war that sent people looking for alternatives. If this was true even of the legendary Giaime Pintor, that would seem to be a powerful contribution to this argument.

But Serri's effort to present Pintor's presence in Weimar as the conclusive piece of evidence on this issue raises as many questions as it answers. Did Pintor's acceptance of the invitation necessarily show fascist conviction, or just opportunism, or even curiosity? In many ways Pintor's diary—published and edited by Serri herself in 1978—remains more revealing (and more damning) than the record of his actions, which can bear multiple interpretations. Serri's use of material from this diary strengthens her important and ultimately convincing argument, but somewhat undermines what she presents as the main novelty of this book.

If this „short journey“ thesis is correct, what are its implications? Ultimately, Serri remains frustratingly agnostic about many of the fascinating questions this argument raises. To what extent did Pintor's deep engagement with German high culture affect his interest in the Weimar conference? Were Pintor's commitments in October 1942 fascist, or nationalist, or was he interested in the prospect of a „New Europe“ promised by the Germans at Weimar? Finally, does her documentation of Pintor's wartime travels diminish the power of Pintor's final act—that of dying in the effort to deliver Italy from German occupation? What, in light of Serri's revelations, are we to take this life to mean? Serri's deep knowledge about Pintor makes her decision not to provide her book with a richer conclusion particularly regrettable.

Just as scholarly work on travelers' narratives and tourism has lately been seen to offer rich materials for transnational historiography (or „Transfergeschichte“), these two studies show how a reconstruction of the „cultural tourism“ of WWII can help illuminate this dark but important moment of European international exchange. At the same time, both works suggest that older interpretations of these interactions—as collaboration, as „seduction,“ or as a long but unequivocal voyage towards anti-Fascism—may not offer the best tools for understanding this period or integrating it into larger narratives of the Eu-

ropean twentieth century. In the meantime, both of these stimulating books offer essential materials for further research on these questions.

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