

tors across periods. Coan claims a current “era of tolerance,” a stand many would contest, particularly concerning immigration.

“It’s been a wonderful life,” reported Faye Lundsky who at five years of age emigrated from Russia with her mother in 1898. At the same age in 1991, Marie Gonzalez came from Costa Rica with her family. “I love this country,” she stated in Congressional testimony. From escaping the pogroms in Russia to enduring the rollercoaster ride of passage of the proposed DREAM Act, these stories chronicle “ordinary people who will go to extraordinary lengths in their quest for freedom . . . for a taste of what many of us take for granted.” (25) Peter Morton Coan wisely lets the immigrants tell their stories in their own words and, despite some organisational and perceptual challenges, provides an outstanding collection of immigrant stories.

John Bieter
Boise State University

Axel Körner, *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy: From Unification to Fascism* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

One might approach *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy* with the logical assumption that it is, as the title suggests, an analysis of the development of a political and cultural identity in Italy from the end of the *Risorgimento* to the first years of Fascism. However, while Körner states that “this book is concerned with the relationship between cities and the nation, and the attitudes of those cities towards modernity, as articulated through municipal cultural policy” (3), much of the work is a close assessment of the formation of cultural and politics in one city, Bologna, which Körner considers paradigmatic of the rest of the nation. Even if he justifies his choice to perform a case study of Bologna as a means with which to understand “*l’Italia delle cento città*” (5) in the introduction, the title is misleading in two ways: besides the geographical issue, there is the cultural one, since the majority of Körner’s analysis of culture focuses on musical performance and, to a lesser extent, architecture, largely neglecting other major spheres of intellectual and artistic output. The result is useful for our understanding of specific aspects of the culture of liberal Italy, but does not provide a complete overview of the characteristics of the period or issues named in the title.

Because of the great number of topics covered, the volume does not lend itself to an exhaustive summary. I therefore limit the following to some chief points. After the introduction, the book is divided into three parts: “Political and Social Conflict,” “Writing the Past,” and “The City, the Nation and

European Culture”. In Part I, Körner provides context for the rest of his study, stating “a study on politics of culture at a municipal level has to examine the social composition of the local political elites and their economic background” (21). After describing the transition from the Bologna of a Papal State to that of a united Italy, he discusses the role of Bologna’s theatres, most notably the Teatro Comunale, in the process of political and cultural change underway in the city. Important throughout is the idea that opera was fundamental in the formation of Italians. The second part looks at “Italy’s nineteenth-century medieval revival and (...) the rediscovery of its pre-Roman civilisations” (87). Körner contends that not only the *notabili*, but also, and more significantly, the professional middle class, made a concerted effort to write a national history. He attempts to show how “different versions of the past were openly contested in Bologna after Unification” (160). Part III examines issues such as urban space and toponymy. Also in this section are chapters on the monarchy (with special focus on Margherita of Savoy) and Bologna’s position as “the Italian capital of modernism” (261). The popularity of Wagner figures prominently as evidence that Bologna was increasingly modernist and cosmopolitan.

Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy is affected by issues that sometimes make it difficult to follow and absorb Körner’s arguments, at least in the first reading. For example, his overly detailed analysis, though interesting, detracts from the book’s readability. The organization is almost overwhelmingly complex. Perhaps most troubling is that some of Körner’s generalizations and hypotheses remain under developed and/or are presented as hard fact. For example, he asserts in the introduction that “in the case of Bologna the city’s politics of culture also became a political target for those fighting against the liberal institutions and democracy, explaining why Bologna was the first city in which the Fascists ended democratic rule, two years before their March on Rome” (5), not adequately accounting for other explanations. Indeed, he only explicitly deals with the rise of fascism in Bologna in any amount of detail in two pages of the introduction and three pages of the epilogue, mentioning factors such as agrarian forces in a manner that is much too cursory considering his stated (and lofty) goal of offering “a new perspective on the origins of Fascism in Italy” (5).

This is not to say that the book is without merit. Indeed, its examination of the political and cultural implications of opera in Bologna is detailed, well-researched, and often fascinating, providing a valuable interpretation of what the development of the music industry says about the political and cultural movers of the time. Nonetheless, Körner has created a text that is full of engrossing facts, references, and digressions, but does not sufficiently answer fundamental questions arising from the title.

Kathleen Gaudet
University of Toronto