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La Penna, D. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4197-0041>
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Aretusa: Continuity, Rupture, and Space for Intervention (1944-1946)

Daniela La Penna, University of Reading

d.lapenna@reading.ac.uk

Department of Modern Languages and European Studies

Arts and Humanities Building

University of Reading

Whiteknights Campus

RG6 6AA

Reading, UK

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Abstract: This article focuses on the cultural activity of *Aretusa* (1944-1946), a journal that was deeply connected to the inner circle of philosopher and politician **Benedetto Croce** (1866-1952). The article analyses the role played by periodical editors **Francesco Flora** (1891-1962) and **Carlo Muscetta** (1912-2004) in shaping the mission and direction of this journal. By drawing on **Pierre Bourdieu**'s theory of *habitus*, and the notion of *hysteresis* in particular, this study details the factors influencing the aesthetic dispositions, political

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positioning, and the wider impact of historical circumstances on the cultural practice of each **editor** while at the helm of the review.

***Aretusa* tra continuità e rottura (1944-1946)**

L'articolo ha come oggetto l'attività culturale di *Aretusa* (1944-1946), una rivista profondamente legata alla rete intellettuale che aveva al suo centro Benedetto Croce (1866-1952). Il saggio analizza il ruolo che i direttori Francesco Flora (1891-1962) e Carlo Muscetta (1912-2004) ebbero nel modellare la missione e direzione della rivista. Utilizzando alcuni concetti cardine della sociologia della cultura di Pierre Bourdieu (*habitus* e *isteresi*), questo studio esamina i fattori che hanno influito sulle disposizioni estetiche e posizioni politiche dei due direttori e analizza l'impatto delle circostanze storiche sulla loro pratica culturale.

Keywords: Benedetto Croce; Francesco Flora; Carlo Muscetta; Pierre Bourdieu; *Habitus*; *Hysteresis*; *Aretusa*.

Introduction

The resonance of the myth of *Aretusa* in Naples,¹ a city that between 1940 and 1943 had been so heavily bombed as to have forgotten its own mythological origin, may have appeared as a faint and yet necessary call for action to the local intelligentsia who in 1944 gathered around the Liberal beacon of resistance to Fascism, the elderly senator and philosopher Benedetto Croce. *Aretusa* was the name that literary critic Francesco Flora and Croce, his illustrious mentor, had chosen for a literary journal that, like the myth, would incite resistance and rebirth by immersing the young Liberal readers it aimed to address in the reinvigorating

waters of high culture. The editorial board of the review included, alongside Ada Croce, illustrious intellectuals such as Guido Dorso, Gino Doria, Tommaso Fiore, Sergio Ortolani, Enrico Terracini, as well as featuring Adolfo Omodeo, provost of the Faculty of Law of the University of Naples, and Fausto Nicolini, Croce's trusted collaborator. The journal was conceived in Sorrento, where Croce had withdrawn in March 1942, and where he had managed to create a small intellectual salon also frequented, from October 1943 until the end of the war, by a number of English and American officers with literary inclinations who would be invited to contribute to the new-born review: William Weaver, Albert Spalding, and Raleigh Trevelyan amongst the many. *Aretusa* was, initially at least, the emanation of this small circle, animated by engaged Liberal intellectuals who had shown, during the Fascist regime, a demonstrable allegiance to Benedetto Croce, as well as young foreign writers who were lured to Croce's charismatic presence by his international fame. In keeping with the idea of transformation and rebirth embodied in the myth, *Aretusa* started its publication in March 1944 when *La critica*, Croce's journal, had ceased its course (started in 1903) and had converted to a more manageable yearly iteration as *I quaderni de La critica* (which in turn terminated in 1949). This circumstance is in no small measure symbolic of the continuity between the major and influential *La critica* and the smaller publishing venture *Aretusa*, which would endure many configurations during its short life-span. The journal ran for 18 issues, from March-April 1944 to March 1946. During its publication, the review was directed by Francesco Flora and Carlo Muscetta, with Fausto Nicolini acting as interim between the two.

Critical literature on *Aretusa* is scant. Existing work has looked at the published face of the journal (Cavalluzzi 1995; Cavalluzzi 2004; Mondello 1985, 82-83) to contextualise *Aretusa*'s cultural mission with cognate and contemporary enterprises such as Alba de Cespedes's *Mercurio* (Della Terza 1995). This article intends to contribute to an ongoing

reconsideration of the Liberal bloc's dynamics of cultural intervention by providing a re-evaluation of the cultural forces that shaped *Aretusa*, as well as an assessment of its standing and reach within the publishing field of liberated Italy – in particular the Neapolitan milieu from which it sprang and the Roman context to which it eventually migrated and in which it ultimately dissolved. Furthermore, by exploiting hitherto unpublished archival sources, this article illuminates for the first time the debate that developed between the Croce family, which provided the journal with both the financial and social capital necessary for its launch and consolidation, and the two main editors who succeeded to the helm of the operation, Flora and Muscetta.² Archival scrutiny will help answer the following questions: how did Flora and Muscetta negotiate their leadership with Croce, the source of financial capital and legitimation? How did they conceptualise the heteronomous pressures brought about by the extraordinary historical circumstances that characterise the period under scrutiny (1944-46)? To what extent did the editors' past organizational experience, and their political and aesthetic dispositions, influence the radical transformations in the journal's aesthetic stance? This article suggests that Flora drew on Croce's symbolic capital (misreading the cues signalling the erosion of his standing in the 1920s generation), while proposing a stylized and abstract modernist aesthetic practice in a historical moment that demanded the reconstruction of the ruin with impetus and energy. This conditioned the reception of *Aretusa* which was perceived as an emanation of what Bourdieu calls the hysteresis effect: when the field undergoes powerful transformations due to historical externalities, players may experience a mismatch or disjuncture between their personal and institutional habitus and the field (Bourdieu 2000, 262; Hardy 2008). Within Bourdieu's theory of cultural practice (Bourdieu 1990), the notion of hysteresis highlights the dissonance between personal and collective cultural practices (see also Lahire 2003). In order to redress the effect of Flora's hysteresis, to salvage *Aretusa* from the 'instant of hesitation' (Bourdieu 2000, 235), Muscetta acted instead

as a charismatic catalyst for the young intellectuals who, like him, had participated in the Resistance, and mobilised additional cultural and symbolic capital through his connections with both established institutions and emerging networks in the field. The story of *Aretusa* provides an opportunity to cast a sharper focus on how and why misalignment between personal and institutional habitus and the changing field condition occurred, and to analyse the role played by periodical editors' dispositions in the creation, and resolution, of hysteresis.

While desirable, a *thick description* of this particular journal's *milieu* is beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, this study intends to pave the way for an articulated understanding of the cultural field *Aretusa* inhabited, by focussing on how the editors negotiated his disinterested vision with the many challenges brought about by rapid-paced historical change as it developed at a local and national level. The aim is to track how these challenges provoked fluctuations in the symbolic currency that the editors adopted in order to attract and retain talent, in a context which put extraordinary pressures on the shape and extent of local and national intellectual networks, and on the material infrastructure (such as capital availability, paper rationing, printing facilities, and distribution) surrounding *Aretusa*'s publication process.

The First Generation of *Aretusa*: Francesco Flora

The documentation in support of the request to print and sell *Aretusa*, approved on 9 March 1944 by the Allied Control Commission of the Allied Military Government, displays the name of Ada Croce, the philosopher's daughter, as administrative director of the review. The approval was, in fact, a mere formality as the first issue of the review was published only a few weeks later by Casella, a trusted Croce collaborator who would be responsible for the

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printing and distribution of the journal until the double 1945 issue n. 5-6. The programme of the pocket-size review was published in the first issue, on the second page of its elegant ivory cover. The review would publish, alongside original fiction and poetry by ‘foreign writers and [...] the best writers resident in liberated Italy’, critical examinations of both contemporary foreign literatures engaged with ‘the world’s present condition’ and the Italian traditions, including the regional ones aimed at, in true Crocean spirit, ‘recovering their humanistic and universal character’. Most importantly, however, *Aretusa* intended to broadcast ‘contributions from the various democratic nations for the solution of the present intellectual and moral crisis of civilized people’. The inherent cosmopolitan spirit of the programme would be reignited in Francesco Flora’s editorial entitled “Agli scrittori e ai lettori”, in which the journal was presented as an ‘ideal Court of public opinion’, a ‘Party of Form, an Orphic association’ assigning to ‘artists and writers’ the responsibility to exert control over the mass media and over ‘the relationship between the State and political parties, as a guarantee of everybody’s freedom of thought’ (Flora 1944, 9). Crucially, Flora presented *Aretusa* as a conduit for an ‘international association’ so that ‘the forces interested in culture and art [may] contribute to the union of European civilization that is necessary to world peace and safety’ (ibid). Even though Benedetto Croce was not explicitly mentioned, Flora’s editorial was laced with Crocean references. Flora’s definition of the dictatorship as a ‘blind Fascist parenthesis’, based on a ‘bastard mix of barbaric doctrines’, and an illness that from Italy spread to the whole world (Flora 1944a, 4-5), resonated with images and tropes punctuating Croce’s engrossing speech at the Congress of the National Liberation Committees held in Bari in January 1944 (Croce 1963).³ But the references were not limited to the Bari address. Also, and most importantly, Flora made reference to Croce’s view of culture as the manifestation of freedom, as something separate from and superior to politics, notions that Croce had vigorously articulated in his 1925 Manifesto of anti-fascist

intellectuals. In his editorial, two phases of Croce's anti-fascism were therefore synthesised: first, his poignant and yet unsuccessful call to mobilise intellectual forces against Fascism's totalitarian turn, and second, his engagement with the forces of the interim government after the fall of the regime. Furthermore, Flora's reference to and eulogy for those intellectuals who, despite their stance of non-collaboration, confinement, jail sentence, and exile, continued to 'cooperate with the workings of thought' (Flora 1944a, 8), was aimed at drawing attention to the main tenets of the tradition of dissent that found its source in Benedetto Croce (see Ward 1996, 43-85; Rizi 2003, 196-212). This was done to intensify this tradition's adversarial role in the historical crisis provoked by Fascism and to make visible its contribution to anti-fascism since the inception of the Fascist state. Finally, it was intended to act as a call to arms and cooperation. Flora's operation was therefore complex, aimed at supporting the Crocean intelligentsia's robust claim to cultural hegemony over an intellectual field that was swiftly being infiltrated by aggressive and organized Communist intellectuals. Flora and Croce were acutely aware of this: by 1944 Naples had quickly transformed into a testing ground for the polarised politics of the reconstruction. On 27 March 1944, the US-occupied city had welcomed Palmiro Togliatti, the general secretary of the Communist Party since 1926, who had come back to Italy after his 18 year-long exile. Togliatti's presence in Naples had awakened the sparse left-wing intellectual circles, and a plethora of official and non-US authorised Socialist and Communist leaflets and publications were flooding the market. Togliatti, however, also established a dialogue with the broadly democratic intelligentsia and exploited the legacy of non-compromise that PCI intellectuals had held during the Fascist regime (See Croce 1948, 90-103). The aim was to prepare the ground for the Soviet-approved 'Salerno turn' that led the PCI to cooperate with a government of national unity (Agosti 2008, 151-157) and in this way to consolidate a pool of collaborators

from various southern cities for *La Rinascita*, which started its monthly publication in June 1944 and displayed from the start a strong interest in the Southern Question.

From its inception, by acting as a catalyst for Croce's bid to maintain cultural hegemony, *Aretusa* was drafted in a highly polarised and quickly changing intellectual field. It contributed to the containment of Communist cultural propaganda by extolling the virtues of high culture and by reminding the Liberal elites of their past institutional role in the nation-building process in order to propel them towards the responsibilities of reconstruction. The prongs of this tactic were sharpened by a symbolic exploitation of Croce's legacy and a mediated consecration of Croce's literary and historical inquiry. The result of this orchestration was a cautious contamination of the literary agenda with political intervention, as a careful look at the structure of *Aretusa*'s first issue will reveal.

Aretusa purportedly aimed to provide an inclusive and 'disinterested' space in which different generations of writers, political organizers, and commentators were able to enter into productive dialogue with one another. From an aesthetic and literary point of view, under Flora's directorship, *Aretusa* conceived of itself as playing a vital mediating role between modernity and tradition. In this light, one must read the coexistence, in the first issue, of academic studies such as Flora's "Surrealismo e Ermetismo", and Antonio Russi's "Discorso sopra la poesia contemporanea" (an essay presented by Flora as displaying a heretical position against his own stance on hermeticism), as evidence of *Aretusa*'s plurality of views. However, Russi's piece also provided an astute survey of the literary periodical press during the *ventennio*, and established links of continuity between the aesthetic positions diffused by Croce's *La critica* and some of the most experimental reviews of the day (*Frontespizio*, *Corrente*). The Crocean theme was intensified in Vincent Shean's "Per via Dante" which discussed the legacy of Croce's *La critica* and the role played by the publishing house Laterza in setting the standard of excellence in scholarship and in animating anti-fascist

cultural life before the fall of Mussolini's regime. Roberto Pane's "Il restauro dei monumenti" (on the reconstruction of Naples's heavily bombed historic centre), together with Guido Dorso's recollections of Italy's descent into war in 1940 ("Equilibrio e egemonia") and Raimondo Craveri's "I due dopoguerra", a piece advocating the need for a Full Employment Plan to counteract the causes of the (re)emergence of Fascism as in 1918, formed a cohesive block of texts that looked at the past to draw lessons for building a new, secure future. *Aretusa*'s cosmopolitanism and cultural elitism are displayed in pieces where foreign language quotations are not translated (cases in point are Ada Croce's piece on Garcilaso de Vega and the excerpts of Andre Breton's Yale 1942 speech). The review section "Lettere inglesi e americane" welcomed discussions of *The Development of Modern Italy* by former affiliate Cecil Sprigge, and *US Foreign Policy: The Shield of the Republic* by personal correspondent Walter Lippmann. Small rubrics provided updates on the pillars of transnational modernist literary aesthetics (Virginia Woolf, Paul Valéry, and James Joyce as well as Aragon and Eluard) favoured by Flora, Elena Croce, and assistant editor Gabriele Baldini. The items reviewed in the section 'Rassegne' further reinforced the impression that *Aretusa* was an emanation of the tightly-knit Croce salon: a list of books and speeches by Croce (including the Bari address, the appeal to Badoglio, and the plea for the King's resignation) were reviewed by Flora himself, while the editor's *Ritratto di un ventennio* was positively discussed by Elena Croce.

However, despite this display of a compact cultural offer, it would be a mistake to consider *Aretusa* solely as a self-referential and endogamous conduit of Croce's values and positioning. Flora's personal literary taste and past organizational experience became evident in the design of the issues launched under his responsibility. The strident juxtaposition of original seventeenth-century poems in French and Spanish (which constitute the backbone of the foreign literary presence under the Flora administration), an obvious example of *La*

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critica's (hence Croce's) penchant for baroque poetry re-emerging in *Aretusa*, and critical studies aimed at promoting the aesthetics of surrealism and experimental poetry (reflecting Flora's own modernist preferences), speak of an uneasy accommodation of the two men's aesthetic dispositions. Flora had acquired the directorship of *Aretusa* after an intense research period, done without the comfort of a secure academic position. His unyielding opposition to the regime led him never to become a member of the Fascist Party nor to accept an appointment to the Accademia d'Italia. Flora's resolute allegiance to Croce had been cemented as far back as 1925, when he agreed to become the acting director of *La critica* when the regime passed a bill prohibiting all members of parliament from owning or directing journals. Flora's relationship to Mondadori led him to move to Milan, where he completed the monumental *Storia della letteratura italiana* (1940-42), the work in which Croce's influence on Flora's conception of historiography and literature can best be measured. In Milan, Flora put the bureaucratic editorial habitus developed while collaborating with *La critica* to the test, and sought to capitalise on his symbolic currency by founding the short-lived *Il saggiaiore: rivista di varia umanità*, published and distributed by Libreria La Lampada in 1943. The journal combined militant academic articles (such as the editorial "Preludio alle poetiche d'oggi," of which "Surrealismo e ermetismo" is an ideal continuation) with scholarly studies by up-and-coming academics. The journal also published features on literature in translation such as Cesare Pavese's presentation of *I morti di Spoon River* (1, 1943), thereby showing Flora's interest in American literary culture. The review displayed a "Vivaio" section where different academics and commentators, alongside the editor-in-chief, would provide critical insight into topical cultural issues (a feature that – with a different name – would also appear in *Aretusa*). Furthermore, the journal ended with a section entitled "Occhiale," which published (mildly) polemical position pieces penned by key intellectuals under a pseudonym. This section too moved to *Aretusa*. Flora's return to

Naples at the end of 1943 propelled him into an intense political situation that forced him to embrace explicit political argument for the first time. This intense activity cemented Flora's reputation as a belligerent and engaged conservative intellectual, who was ready to repurpose his filo-Crocean anti-Fascist dissident's habitus in order to halt the advance of the Communist recruitment campaign in the intellectual field. From late 1943, he worked for Radio Napoli and his regular broadcasts under the pseudonym of Terenzio were collected in his 1944 *Ritratto di un ventennio*.⁴ Flora also actively collaborated with *Risorgimento*, the main Neapolitan newspaper that arose from the forced merger of *Il Mattino*, *Il corriere di Napoli*, and *Roma*, a US-backed mouthpiece whose deep internal divisions found a common cause in their anti-communist stance.⁵ It is no surprise, therefore, and in line with a strategy aimed at saturating the intellectual field, that the launch of *Aretusa* was covered in *Libertà*, the Liberal Party newspaper (where articles on Croce and by Croce featured regularly), and that excerpts from Flora's editorials were reprinted in the same publication (see Flora 1944b and 1944c). Flora's divarication between engaged politics and editorial responsibility was also made possible thanks to the support provided to him, especially by Elena Croce, who maintained contact with a vast network of scholars and writers, thus sourcing fresh copy for the journal and pre-selecting original creative writing for Croce and Flora's approval (a case in point is Elena's rejection of Malaparte's *Kaputt*, see E. Croce 1985, 33-34). The political strategy in which *Aretusa* was enmeshed put strain on the cohesiveness of the editorial line. Pieces such as "Giugno 1940: cose viste" (published in the second issue) by Count Carlo Sforza, the anti-fascist diplomat who, like Croce, had served in the last Giolitti government and would be part, with Croce, of the Bonomi government, looked back at the days when Italy had descended into war, while aiming at consecrating Sforza and Croce as politicians whom the elites could entrust with the responsibility of the institutional transition to democracy. The reality of war and of the Resistance was instead related through literary

form: poetry (Bassani's "Non piangere compagno" in the second issue), literary reportages such as Alberto Moravia's "Diario politico" (ibid.), and prose (Vitaliano Brancanti's "Il vecchio con gli stivali" in the third issue). Divergence from the diktat to publish work in the original language was minimal, but also wrapped in symbolic meaning: a case in point is the publication of translations from Hofmannsthal by Resistance martyr Giaime Pintor in the third issue. Several letters between the publisher Casella and Elena Croce testify both to Casella's desire to widen the *Aretusa* brand so as to also start a series of independent publications, but also to the Croces' concern with a lack of take-up in Rome, and his hope that the review would reach a wider circulation as the north-bound American troops managed to gain ground (EC, Ar, Casella folder). It is fair to hypothesise that circulation was limited, a situation made more acute by the objective difficulties fettering efficient promotion and distribution. Yet, *Aretusa*'s visibility in the ideological warfare was noted.

In the third issue of Togliatti's *La Rinascita*, E. A. Grossi published "Responsabilità dello scrittore", an article that was part of an orchestrated strategy aimed at thwarting Croce's prestige and at undermining the standing of his associates, a strategy that had started with the first issue of the Communist review in June 1944. The piece started with the following:

It is not without surprise that in the first issue of *Aretusa* – journal of literature created and directed by Francesco Flora and published by Casella in Naples – one reads articles concerning, still, surrealist poetics and hermeneutics, and generally, contemporary poetry. They do so with such a serious tone and with such attentive and indulgent critical analysis as to leave the reader wondering whether the review has been published in March-April 1944 by delay, and wondering whether it belongs to a long gone era since, amongst the few licit things, it was considered licit, in literature as in politics, to

give credit to stupidity and to repress at all costs any manifestation of human intelligence.

The article continued by exploring the intellectual and aesthetic connections between *l'avventura futurista* and the Fascist regime, hinting at the moral compromise that enveloped those who separated the aesthetic value of the futurist experience from its political actualisation. The disjunction between the attack on *Aretusa* and the disquisition on the links between Fascism and Futurism was only apparent. Grossi had in fact penned a damning attack against Flora, who in 1921 had published *Dal romanticismo al futurismo*, a study that identified in Futurism the most modern and innovative incarnation of Decadentism. The irony of this encrypted assault would not have escaped Croce, who had criticised Flora's 1921 volume and expressed in various outlets his suspicion of Marinetti's aesthetic and political antics (see at least Croce 1955 [1924], 268-70). *Aretusa* expressed and addressed the specificities of cultural practice of a particular set of contributors and, in turn, of readership: born between 1880 and 1910, predominantly of middle class extraction, university educated, conservative in political outlook, and cultivating a sense of elitist distinction. Grossi was right in noting the anachronism of *Aretusa*'s cultural offer. But this was due to Flora's failure to adapt his habitus to the changed historical circumstances and social dynamics of the literary field. Flora's historical layering of social and cultural capital influenced his agency and his ability to decipher the changed circumstances of the field, brought about by the acute period of crisis and transition induced by the war. The ethos of pure artistic experimentation, supporting the idea of the 'Party of Form', had ceased to constitute the values of anti-fascist intellectual and literary practice, or at least this ethos did not conquer the hearts and minds of the younger generation of the 1920s, who were either quickly being lured by the political experimentation of the Action Party, or with an equally rapid pace were converging towards

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the PCI's reformed stance of energetic collaboration in the reconstruction. Flora's perceived hysteresis, however, cannot be interpreted solely as an example of individual cultural dissonance, a long-lasting impasse in the individual's personal dispositions. Flora's cultural stance seemed viable because it was directed to and drew support from a whole intellectual community, with its legitimised core and prestigious catalyst whose resilience to isolation and open attacks had already been tested during the Fascist regime. This community's political stance was being scrutinised by *Aretusa's* own core intended readership, those younger intellectuals who, while they had harboured sympathies for the Liberal bloc during the regime, became quickly attracted by the contamination of Liberal high-minded politics with Socialist propositions being pursued by the Action Party, a contamination famously defined by Croce as a monstrous hybrid, and a betrayal of Liberal politics (see Fantoni 2003). Flora had organized an entire review to the tune of this dissonance, the hysteresis effect inhabiting the space created by counter-adaptive lag in the habitus that retards adaptation to the changed context. The first generation of *Aretusa* had promoted durable practices that functioned to the tune of a different time. Grossi's review of Flora's journal had unceremoniously exposed the discordance between aesthetic practice and historical context, and exploited such *contre-temps* to great effect. Even though the war had not yet ended, the political forces of the new Italy were already engaging in battle to influence the shape and direction of the role played by culture in the reconstruction.

The Second Generation of *Aretusa*: Carlo Muscetta

In a letter dated 28 August 1944, Flora gave Croce his resignation, for serious family reasons (Mezzetta 2008, 152). In a series of letters to follow, Flora agreed to pass the responsibility of issue production to Nicolini, who in turn resigned in October 1944 due to increasing

commitments with Laterza. The organizational role that Elena Croce had played in the shadow of Flora and Croce increased in visibility, responsibility, and relevance as she took on the negotiations, together with her husband Raimondo Craveri, with Carlo Muscetta, the editor-in-chief, who substantially changed the journal's aesthetic and political direction. From his native Irpinia, Muscetta had started one of the most exciting, upwardly mobile intellectual trajectories in Fascist Italy, one that had cut across the filo-Crocean dissident circles in Naples and Florence and the Rome-based Fascist cultural groups and outlets, where a tangible and growing dissatisfaction with the regime was fuelling a return to the ethical stances of Realism (Garin 1962, 263-270).

A recipient of the 1939 Littoriale of political education together with Giaime Pintor, as well as a former contributor to Bottai's *Primato*, Muscetta had cemented his reputation as an able and astute cultural broker when in 1940 he started his collaboration with Meschini's *La Ruota* where he established transformational friendships with Leone Ginzburg and Mario Alicata and connections with Cesare Pavese in the Roman office of Einaudi. With the fall of the regime, the anti-fascist sentiments that he had harboured for some time and that he had disguised in observance of the paradigm of 'honest dissimulation' (Muscetta [2009], 76; Serri [2005], 56-64) coalesced into political intervention. With Ginzburg, he embraced the call of the Action Party, and co-directed the Roman branch of *L'Italia libera*. This visibility led to a dramatic capture and detention in a Nazi prison until March 1944 (Ginzburg later died of torture-related injuries in Regina Coeli), when he joined the clandestine resistance and resumed his duties at the helm of *L'Italia libera*. Raimondo Craveri had joined the Actionist underground network and acted as a conduit between Elena Croce and Muscetta, who was keen to make a mark on *Aretusa* and to shape the formulation of its new editorial mission. The earliest attestation of the negotiations between Elena Croce and Muscetta go back to July-August 1944 and relate to the change of publisher and distributor, testifying to

Muscetta's strategic modernising vision for the journal. When an early agreement with Einaudi did not come to fruition, the responsibility for printing and distribution was eventually absorbed by the Rome-based publisher Donatello De Luigi. As the typewritten minutes of a meeting between Muscetta, Elena Croce, and Craveri dated September 1944 reveal, Muscetta intended to change the name of the review, while being ready to harness its legitimisation:

The mythological title could provisionally be kept, by printing 'Aretusa' as a watermark and by superimposing the new title. It would not be an inelegant solution. Surely we should keep the old title for practical reasons [...] also because the PWB [Psychological Warfare Branch] and the Ministry for Press would not allow it to disappear. (EC, *Ar*, Muscetta folder, 4)

The new title would be underpinned by an equally bold and rejuvenated vision for the journal:

I prefer *The City* because it declares immediately, with clarity and realism, the civic ideal to which a literature that is not dilettante, solitary, and indifferent to the hardships we will endure, must aim. A literature so conceived can easily be joined to a culture that is not academic and not obtusely technical, that is, the culture we are moving towards and which society requires of us today. [...] Down with the experiments, the somersaults, the academic trappings! (ibid.)

The Croce family would not agree to the change, but conceded to move the registration of the journal from Naples to Rome (approved by the Ufficio provinciale della censura militare in

April 1945), also in light of Muscetta's increasingly intensive collaboration with Einaudi, which culminated with his appointment as director of the Roman office in March 1945. The spirit of the 1944 minutes, however, resonated in Muscetta's editorial to the first issue under his responsibility, which began by confronting head-on the legacy of the 'old' *Aretusa* ('as will appear evident from this first issue, and from the direction that we want to give to the review, it would have been opportune to change its name', Muscetta 1945, 4). Muscetta was eager to position and to align *Aretusa* within the debate on the responsibility of the intellectual class towards Fascism, which was developing on the pages of the journals that were flooding the publishing scene in the same year (*Mercurio*, *Costume*, *Società*, *Risorgimento*, *Rinascita*, *Il Politecnico* and others). The intent was to wipe away *Aretusa*'s perceived 'unctuosity [...] of [its] allusive and academic style' (ibid.) and to accept the challenges of a new type of cultural intervention, whose roots had to find nourishment in a 'critical re-examination of the *ventennio*' ((Muscetta 1945, 7):

But I don't think one can participate in this harsh analytical work with a better clarity of will to rebuild our country, if not by abandoning the surviving mentality of the cleric, isolated within a society that he refuses to acknowledge as his and he refuses to educate together with himself. (Muscetta 1945, 8)

Muscetta's distance from the ethos of Flora's administration could not have been starker, nor pitched in less uncertain terms. If Flora's manifesto was turgid with the aim to demonstrate the role that Italian cultural legacy could play in the reconstruction of a world order still shaped by the tenets of neo-idealist philosophy, Muscetta's editorial found its resolve in the contemplation of the devastation inflicted by war, and was embittered by the concern that Fascism could re-emerge in the new centres of power. If Flora's editorial was imbued with

the values of high culture and an elitist outlook, Muscetta exposed the inadequacy and the historical fallacy of intellectual clericalism by implicitly rejecting Julien Benda's theorization as defined in the 1927 *La trahison des clercs*, a text whose influence loomed large on Flora's editorial. Under Muscetta's administration, the desire to locate Italian culture within a cosmopolitan and transnational context diminished dramatically: while still interested in publishing surveys of foreign literatures, the new leadership was firmly focussed on the development of a national culture and in locating the new cultural practice within the forms of democratic political participation and intervention.⁶ In this sense, the obsequious parting from Croce's magisterium that is voiced in the editorial is telling. Defined by Muscetta as a 'consolatory philosophy', Croce's example and legacy was to be reassessed through a new paradigm: the intellectual forces of democratic Italy would have to populate 'the dreadful solitude', 'the recurrent desert' Croce was forced to inhabit during Fascism, with their plurality of voices. Muscetta's leadership made its most visible mark by effecting a radical rejuvenation of the talent recruited for *Aretusa*, with the enrolment of intellectuals of his own generation. These intellectuals had been schooled in Fascistised institutions and educated in purged universities, they had developed cultural ambitions within the GUF and state-sanctioned outlets, endured similarly long-drawn and gradual conversions under Croce's shadow. Crucially, they had re-functionalised the Fascist vision of literary practice as a form of discourse that was susceptible to political interpretation and positioning, adapting it to the forms of the adversarial yet democratic political intervention developed in the immediate post-war period. Muscetta's intellectual habitus, matured in the cultural hothouse that Einaudi had come to represent since the last years of the dictatorship, would inform the direction of the new *Aretusa*, with an impulse and vision that was intended to be charismatic and revitalizing, but that was shared only in part – in its inspiration and manner of actualisation – by the financial backers and the distributor of the review. Croce no longer featured as author,

as he was absorbed by the high politics of national unity. Elena Croce publicly distanced herself from the journal, but her experience there proved foundational for her subsequent launch of *Lo spettatore italiano* (1948-1956) together with Raimondo Craveri.⁷ In the space of a few months, Muscetta managed to inject refreshing polemics into the section “L’Occhiale” (where his argumentative editorials were published under the Stendhalian pseudonym of Abate Blanès), and to secure the publication of a host of exciting writing aimed at engaging the reader with the historical and intellectual reality of a nation whose political institutions were rapidly and radically changing. The new *Aretusa* alternated high-minded pieces by Action Party members such as Giuseppe Martini’s “Stato e Cultura” (13), with articles by young, left-leaning intellectuals who would eventually gravitate towards the Communist Party, such as Delio Cantimori’s “Metapolitica” (14). Creative texts such as Corrado Alvaro’s “Lettera al figlio”, Natalia Ginzburg’s “Inverno in Abruzzo” (both in issue 7), Pavese’s “Storia segreta” (13), Calvino’s “Angoscia” (16) were published alongside lucid analyses such as Roberto Battaglia’s “Giustizia partigiana” (10) and dialogical essays such as “Dopo la dittatura: nota a Quinet” (8) and Aldo Garosci’s “Il sole di Roma” (an open letter to Franco Venturi) (9). The vocation to dialogue, made more urgent by the need to locate *Aretusa* in the dynamic intellectual and publishing field of Rome, also became a feature of the literature published in the journal. However, despite the recruitment of the best Einaudi talent (Calvino, Ginzburg, Pavese), and the issuing of a literary competition with the aim to mobilise new talent in the hope of being seen as a catalyst for literary novelty, the publisher’s verdict was damning:

Nobody disputes [...] the excellence of *Aretusa*’s content, which does have a noble dignity, but it is a commonly shared view that the journal suffers from a certain stagnation and detachment from today’s spiritual exigencies. [...] In other words, [...]

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Aretusa does not penetrate the public (and I don't mean the people in the street) because it is too remote from today's problems, because it is deficient from the informative point of view, and because it is devoid of a directive line defining its position. (EC, *Ar*, Muscetta folder, De Donato to E. Croce, November 1945).

Causes of Failure

In the last issue of the journal, the section "L'Occhiale" welcomed a number of short pieces. From an editorial note on the 1945 Nobel laureate Gabriela Mistral, to Leone Ginzburg's piece on the meeting between Paul Valéry and Benedetto Croce, published posthumously across a number of different journals, to reprints from the up-and-coming *Il Politecnico* ("Il fascismo che fu dei giovani" by Elio Vittorini) and *Costume* (Sebastiano Timpanaro's "Lettera sulla trascendenza"), it seemed obvious that *Aretusa*, while giving visibility to the competition, was coming to terms with the saturation of a highly polarised market segment. The anthology was introduced by Aldo Garosci's cogent piece entitled "Società" which identified the eponymous journal as the only one of the many Communist inspired journals that exhibited a real 'critical discussion' in its attempt to bring the political forces of the PCI and the Action Party into dialogue. Garosci's eulogy of *Società* (1945-1961) highlighted the typological factors that could sustain the long-term viability of a journal: a cohesive editorial line, focussed on the discussion of political reality and not compromised by the desire to give voice to too wide a spectrum of cultural activity; a sustained and unequivocal relationship with the source of political legitimacy (the Communist Party). *Aretusa* had suffered from abrupt changes in vision and direction, and these had been the result of the periodical editors' newfound vocation for intervention in and engagement with the politics of reconstruction. But both Flora and Muscetta, once the high tide of politics had retreated, would look at the

experience of *Aretusa* as transformational for the opportunity it afforded for leadership, the many lessons imparted, and the few learned. For these busy and alert cultural brokers, however, periodical editorship continued to be just one aspect of their multifaceted cultural practice. Flora continued to endorse an idea of high culture imbued with Croce's aesthetics. He embarked on the project of *La Rassegna d'Italia* (1946-1948), a journal precariously divaricated between high-quality academic output and the militant promotion of a literary modernity that soon became outmoded by the consecration of neo-realist experimentation. Carlo Muscetta was instead attracted by the call of active politics and politically engaged cultural practice. After *Aretusa*'s demise in March 1946, he adhered to the Movimento Democratico Repubblicano, a formation born out of a schism of the Action Party led by Ferruccio Parri and Ugo La Malfa that aimed at offering, in Parri's view, an 'integral democratic position' (Savino 2010, 82). Muscetta agreed to run (unsuccessfully) for the 2 June elections, which marked a watershed in Italian politics. While the Republican Party managed to maintain a significant but not prominent profile in the conservative bloc, the Liberal Party, despite a campaign revolving around the anti-fascist credentials of one of its most illustrious members, Benedetto Croce, saw its base considerably diminished, especially in the North. The elections had inflicted a serious blow on the two parties that had forged the pre-fascist Liberal state while testifying to the quickly gained ground by the Democrazia Cristiana and the Communist Party. With only seven Actionist members in Parliament, the militants' diaspora relocated to other political formations, including the PCI. Tellingly, Muscetta's first contribution to *Società* in 1947 (a review of Gramsci's *Prison Letters*), sealed the long-resisted attraction of this intellectual to the PCI's sphere of influence (Muscetta became a PCI member in March 1947), which ultimately led him to *Società*'s editorial board in 1948, and then to its joint directorship, with Gastone Manacorda, in 1953.

Conclusions

In situating *Aretusa*'s editors' responses to the restructuring of the intellectual field in the wider historical and aesthetic context of the period under consideration, this article has highlighted the various factors that influenced the strategies deployed by Flora and Muscetta when confronting a shift in the aggregative values and organizational behaviours determined by the influence of a dramatically contested field of power over the intellectual field. These strategies reflected differences not only in the capital possessed, but also in the ability to transform that capital into symbolic currency. These in turn affected the evaluation of what it was possible to achieve with a new journal under changing cultural and political conditions. Muscetta's aim was to steer the institutional habitus of *Aretusa* away from the out-of-phase step determined by Flora's direction, and to realign it with the pace of the changing field conditions. This meant dissolving the ties with the intellectual energies emanating from the Liberal bloc and mainly linked to the Neapolitan milieu, and turn *Aretusa* into a catalyst for the Actionist intelligentsia. Once this move was sanctioned, the ground left behind in Naples was quickly occupied by austere publications such as Adolfo Omodeo's *Acropoli* which, unlike *Aretusa*, embraced academic specialisation (historiography) and political debate, and up-and-coming literary journals such as Pasquale Prunas' *Sud*, which acted as a conduit for local and national creative talent. Muscetta's wager turned out to be more risky than expected. *Aretusa*'s move to Rome, to the centre of political power, propelled it into a more dynamic intellectual pool which serviced (sometimes simultaneously) a market segment densely populated by aggressive and more perspicuous entrants. The reliance of different journals on a shared network of intellectual resources, the dependency on precarious and often under-resourced systems of reward, production, and distribution, and the competition for exclusivity of access to the source of political legitimation (often a shared proximity thus

allowing for pervasive propagation of political ideas) were the defining features of the publishing field of the time, already destabilized by unsettled historical and institutional conditions. This complex set of circumstances, while hastening *Aretusa*'s demise, also favoured a redistribution of the human resources supporting the enterprise across the field, thus ensuring, paradoxically, the symbolic afterlife of the experience of cultural intervention and organization embodied in this short-lived and yet significant platform. In this changing context, *Aretusa*'s various metamorphoses acquire a typological quality through which similarly fated cultural endeavours can be read.

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¹ The story of the nymph Aretusa who transformed herself into a stream to elude rape by Alpheus, has been recast in various narratives from antiquity (Pausanias, Hesiod, Homer, Ovid) to modernity (Dante, d'Annunzio).

² Reference to correspondence related to *Aretusa*, held in the 'Elena Croce' archive at the Biblioteca Benedetto Croce in Naples will be signalled with the abbreviation EC, Ar, followed by the folder name and document number.

³ See Leavitt's contribution in this issue for an exploration of the discursive context in which these references developed.

⁴ It also led to a number of publications such as the anti-communist pamphlet *La città di Caino* (1945) and the collection of Fascist directives to the press in *Stampa dell'era Fascista* (1945).

⁵ *Risorgimento* was founded and co-directed in 1943 by the monarchic Paolo Scarfoglio and the Republican Emilio Scaglione. While financially sustained by the Achille Lauro group and the Banco di Napoli, *Risorgimento* was effectively under the strict control of the PWB. On 19 March 1944, and thanks to Benedetto Croce's pressuring, Floriano del Secolo assumed the directorship. Scaglione joined Guido Dorso at the *Azione*, the Neapolitan branch of the Action Party-backed *L'Italia libera*, while Scarfoglio directed *Il Giorno* (see Greco-Oddati [1975], 10-12).

⁶ Amongst the foreign-facing contributions: Bob Ottoway's micro-anthology "Poeti inglesi contemporanei" (8); Dionisotti's essay on Constant (11-12); Desideria Pasolini's article on Vernon Lee (14); Augusto Caraceni's reading of Faulkner (15); and the reviews of critical work on Kafka (8); Mann (10); Joyce (11-12); Virginia Woolf (16).

⁷ 'When *Aretusa*, now directed with greater engagement and competence as far as it concerned the signalling of Italian literary novelties, became filled with new collaborators to me unknown, it became totally foreign to me' (E. Croce [1985], 34).