

have been important to clarify if and why the ‘Italian way’ of pathologising homosexuality followed certain common patterns.

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Sicily on Screen: Essays on the Representation of the Island and its Culture, edited by GIOVANNA SUMMERFIELD, Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland, 2020, vii + 290 pp., \$65.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-4766-7648-7

Conceived and edited by Giovanna Summerfield, *Sicily on Screen* offers a range of diverse critical perspectives from international scholars whose contributions provide a timely and multifaceted reflection on how the island of Sicily and its culture have been represented in cinema and television. The volume aims to introduce less well-known material alongside works that have received international acclaim, providing insight into the different ways native and foreign directors have engaged with Sicily as more than a scenic backdrop but rather as an interlocutor of the complex human realities contained within its many narratives.

The essays are divided into two main thematic sections, the first of which explores a range of issues often stereotypically associated with the island through the genres of fiction, satire and documentary. In particular, this section invites us to consider Sicily as an allegorical space of embedded social and cultural conditions that are philosophically and politically transferable to contexts beyond the region. Works analysed and discussed here include Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Teorema* in relation to Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Godfather*, Andrea Camilleri’s *Commissario Montalbano* series, Salvatore Ficarra and Valentino Picone’s comedy *L’Ora legale*, Daniele Ciprì and Franco Maresco’s *Cinico TV*, and De Seta’s canonical documentary studies of peasant life on the island during the 1950s. The second section presents an internationally relevant take on the theme of ‘othering’, juxtaposing the traditional north-versus-south cinematic paradigm with more recent explorations of immigrant, feminist and queer identities. The section opens with a further exploration of *The Godfather*, this time across the entire trilogy, interrogating Coppola’s inclusion of Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana* in the musical score and its encoded essentialism. This is followed by a case study on Sicilian peripherality through the films *Stromboli*, *L’Avventura*, *Il commissario Lo Gatto*, *Panarea* and *A Bigger Splash*, all of which were shot on the Sicilian islands and archipelagos. The intertwining narratives of two women’s experiences of migration and belonging are then discussed through Emanuele Crialesi’s *Terraferma*, which sets the tone for two further essays that explore marginalised female identity and feminine subjectivity through Roberta Torre’s *I baci mai dati*, and the literary and political contributions of Maria Occhipinti and Giuliana Saladino in respectively: *Con quella faccia da straniera. Il viaggio di Maria Occhipinti*, and *Giuliana Saladino. Come scrivere una Donna*, before closing with a final essay on love and desire between women in Donatella Maiorca’s *Viola di mare*.

The essays in the two sections vary not only in theme and linguistic quality but also in the level of critical engagement and analysis. Most notably in the second section, the content seems overly descriptive, leaving less space for critical discussion or analysis, while in other instances the

analysis itself would have benefitted from more solid and sustained theoretical underpinning. That said, together with a foreword by the director and screenwriter Roberta Torre, an editorial introduction and closing essay (featuring the 1960s films *L'Avventura* and *Il bell'Antonio*) by Giovanna Summerfield, a link between the two main sections provided by the director and writer Giovanna Taviani, and an afterword by the film director Costanza Quatriglio, the volume as a whole is successful in providing a comprehensive and thought-provoking overview of the scope and diversity of perspectives that exist amongst Sicily's narrators as well as its scholars. It is both a reflection and confirmation of how rich the potential is for the study of the region's cultural production (and reproduction) and should therefore be viewed as a welcome addition to the literature.

The publication of this volume evidences the growth of scholarly interest in Sicily as a culturally distinct region with its own literary canon and cinematic tradition which, together with more recent written and visual texts, represent a body of work that provides salient critical perspective on historical and contemporary issues pertinent not only to the island, but arguably the entire Mezzogiorno and Mediterranean region. Indeed, in her afterword Quatriglio states precisely this, that Sicily is more correctly narrated as a meeting point between geographies, histories, and cultures rather than removed or extraneous to these – a conceptual shift, she argues, that should also be applied to both Italy and the European continent. However, as an established feature of scholarly discourse on Sicily for at least the past 25 years, it is tempting to wonder if it is also this conceptualisation that is now in need of critique and revision. Similarly, it is also worth pondering whether an acceptance of other well-trodden notions presented within this volume – of Sicily as an allegory, metaphor or 'bottomless treasure trove' (p. 5), where somehow we may access the 'key to everything' (p. 257) – not only risks reaffirming rather than challenging existing stereotypes and intellectual tropes, but also forecloses the possibility to view certain social contexts and human experiences as acutely local and politically urgent despite their geographical and historical complexities. One case in point is the representation of Lampedusa through the lens of Gianfranco Rosi's acclaimed *Fuocoammare*, a film that has been subject to extensive critique elsewhere precisely on this very point. Furthermore, if as Roberta Torre claims in her foreword, the only real imperative for an artist is 'to turn chaos into beauty' (p. 1) – and, as Summerfield and others mention, Sicily offers both in equal proportion – what are the ethics of doing so? And how do such conceptions square with the surreal vulgarity and desolate aesthetics of Cipri and Maresco? Indeed, it might be argued that some of the most innovative and experimental cinematic visions of Sicily, particularly amongst Sicilian directors and screenwriters, overtly disavow and subvert such cloying renderings.

Like the island of Sicily, as much a discursive space as it is physical, this book may therefore be best contextualised as a meeting point for the opposing theoretical paradigms of those seeking universalisms and of those for whom they are an anathema; fitting for the 'rare anti-Hegelian dialectic' (p. 1), as Roberta Torre articulates, with which Sicily presents us, denying a synthesis but offering fertile ground for broader insight and fruitful discussion.

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