

Within this vast chessboard of players and manoeuvres, Ranci identifies the provocative attitude and actions of the Libyan leader, Gaddafi, towards Western powers such as the USA, France and the UK, and, more importantly, the ambiguous stance taken by Italy, due to its closeness to and vast economic interest in its ex-colony, as the key factors behind *la strage di Ustica* and, more broadly, behind the decades of misdirection on the part of the Italian institutions to prevent the truth emerging.

It is in the third chapter, *Anatomia di un depistaggio*, with the support of the vast amount of documentation available and information which has recently been declassified by Italian institutions, that the author gives the reader a detailed analysis of the systemic conspiracy of silence built around the massacre first and foremost by the Italian Air Force. Radar tracks that suddenly disappear, information that has been systematically omitted, false declarations and forged documents, are just a few of the bricks used to build an impenetrable wall around the DC-9 Itavia crash. Yet, as discussed in the last chapter, this wall of silence began to crumble slowly thanks to the determination shown by the families of the victims. In contrast to the massacre perpetrated by right-wing terrorists at Bologna station a few weeks after the DC-9 crash, the families of Ustica victims had to find those responsible within, rather than outside, state institutions and, therefore, had to fight even harder so that the deaths of their loved ones would not be forgotten.

As Ranci concludes, *la strage di Ustica* demonstrates, beyond the search for the causes and those responsible for the massacre, that it is necessary to reflect on why, to this day, it has been impossible to identify them. Unlike many so-called 'Italian mysteries', the failure to reveal the official truth about the DC-9 Itavia crash should not be considered a mystery but more the result of a desired outcome, of a conscious decision taken to draw a veil over this tragic event in order to protect specific interests.

Giuseppe Serrantino

Middlesex University London

g.serrantino@mdx.ac.uk

© The Author(s), 2021. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the
Association for the Study of Modern Italy
doi:10.1017/mit.2020.74

We want cinema. Sguardi di donne nel cinema italiano, edited by LAURA BUFFONI, Venice, Marsilio Editori, 2018, 295 pp., €25.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-88-317-0846-3

This collection of essays, interviews, and documents reflects on past and current contributions of women to Italian cinema, while denouncing the film industry's gender gap and biases. It is a 'militant book' written by women about women, as Laura Buffoni clearly and bluntly states in her introduction, and a call for action through the voices and gazes of some of Italian cinema's female professionals. Resulting from the eponymous 54th Mostra Internazionale del Nuovo Cinema in Pesaro, Italy, which was dedicated to Italian female filmmakers, it provides a window into cinema made by women, while drawing attention to their multifaceted work in their roles as directors, screenwriters, actresses, producers, film editors, set and costume designers, et cetera.

In her introduction, Buffoni reflects on the need to abandon a binary mode of thinking with its numerous clichés and stereotypes that may result in the passive acceptance by women of a victim-like role in a film industry dominated by white men. While denouncing the normalisation of gender inequality and the asymmetrical distribution of power within and outside the film industry as a

manifestation of the dominant patriarchal social system, Buffoni acknowledges the potential for transformation. The need for change is the leitmotiv that guides the numerous contributions to this volume and allows for multiple voices to unite, like the instruments of an orchestra, into one strong chorus for action.

The volume is organised into three main sections: *Storia* (History), *Incontri* (Encounters), and *Documenti* (Documents). The first section includes essays by Veronica Pravadelli, Piera Detassis, Patrizia Pistagnesi, Giulia Simi, and Lucia Cardone. Pravadelli focuses on the representation of female subjectivity and the contributions of women within cinema, by reflecting on the interpretations provided by feminist and gender studies. The author also brings to the fore the delayed development of these two fields in Italy and other Western countries, compared to Great Britain and the United States. Her essay looks at different periods of the history of cinema, spanning from the silent era to contemporary indie films. Detassis's essay centres on Italian women directors, grouped into three symbolic categories: mothers, rebels, and daughters. This essay also includes a comprehensive list of Italian movies directed by female filmmakers since 2000, to demonstrate the paucity of films made by women in Italy when compared to the overall national movie production and distribution, and to bring visibility to these directors' works. Pistagnesi offers a passionate reflection on the work of female screenwriters and their militant contributions to the war against patriarchy. Recognising the importance of women screenwriters of all generations, she wonders whether there is a specific ethical-aesthetic discourse in female writing which would set it apart from the dominant capitalistic and patriarchal language (disguised as neutral in the literary canon as well as in the audiovisual writing production). Simi traces a female visual memory, a 'koine language', from the innovations before and after the movement of 1968 to today's audiovisual experimental female production in Italy. Cardone underscores the need for a history of cinema that takes into account the many roles women have played in the film industry, thus making visible the complexity and variety of their work, which goes well beyond an authorial perspective and has often been ignored. Her essay centres on film editing and costume design, two categories within cinema that have been more receptive to women, while still denying them the visibility they deserve.

The *Incontri* section is conversational in its conception and structure. It consists of seven chapters that include several interviews with women who play an array of roles in Italian cinema. Female empowerment and agency, but also the day-to-day struggle in a gendered system that lacks inclusivity and resists transformation, are some of the themes these interviews have in common. Elena Stancanelli discusses the female gaze in a world whose representation 'has been colonised by men' (p. 138), both in terms of themes and desires. Daniela Brogi's interviews reflect on the concepts of desire and otherness with regard to the cinematic representation of the female body, and the transformation of women 'from passive objects of desire into active subjects of expression' (p. 153). With her interlocutors, Cristina Piccino investigates the encounter between autobiography and narration, while Cristiana Paternò discusses comedy made by women and its potential to subvert stereotypes. Daniela Persico explores the theme of sexuality and female desire in women's cinema. Ilaria Ravarino's interviews centre on the experience of five women with various roles in the production of Italian TV series, and Cecilia Ermini's conversations delve into the struggles and prejudices women face particularly with directorial debuts and innovative work.

The final section of this volume, *Documenti*, with the contributions of Maura Misiti, Ilaria A. De Pascalis, Pietro Demurtas and Chiara Lalli, is both informative and inspirational, as it comments and reflects on initiatives within the ongoing fight for equal opportunities. The *DEA – Donne e Audiovisivo* report on the under-representation of women in the audiovisual field is the topic of this section's first three pieces, which are followed by the letter/manifesto *Dissenso comune* (2018), signed by women from the film industry as part of a movement following the

#MeToo protests. Chiara Lalli closes this section with a chapter titled 'Sex is about power', where she discusses among other topics feminism as the freedom to choose, and the asymmetrical distribution of power that pervades the patriarchal society in which we live.

This volume is a seminal and compelling work on women in the film industry, whose scope goes beyond the constraints of a single field by including an array of scholarly approaches and a plurality of voices of female professionals in Italian cinema. It is an extensive source of information on the outstanding contribution women have made to the audiovisual sector, an acknowledgment of the discrimination and struggle they face within and outside the film industry, and a call for action and solidarity against the systemic biases and gender inequality to which they are subjected.

Veronica Vegna
University of Chicago
vvegna@uchicago.edu

© The Author(s), 2021. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the
Association for the Study of Modern Italy
doi:10.1017/mit.2021.1

La mafia immaginaria. Settant'anni di Cosa Nostra al cinema (1949-2019), by EMILIANO MORREALE, Rome, Donzelli, 2020, 338 pp., €30 (paperback), ISBN 9788855220507

Among the many thought-provoking insights provided by Emiliano Morreale's outstanding history of the mafia movie, the observation that 'the mafia (especially the Sicilian mafia) is still one of the entertainment industry's most sellable commodities in the world, perhaps even more so than the *Dolce Vita* or Italian cuisine' (p. 8) strikes the reader as an obvious, and yet baffling idea. As nearly every student who has ever taken an Italian cinema course in the Anglophone world knows, the mafia movie has gradually become a staple of what Italian cinema is purported to be, at least according to two generations of critics and scholars. Partly a consequence of the long shadow of *The Godfather* and its epigones over the image of Italy abroad, the popularity of the Italian mafia movie is arguably a misconception. The quantitatively modest production of Italian films and TV shows on *Cosa Nostra* (16 films, almost all very obscure B-movies, out of the 252 produced in the *annus mirabilis* of 1973), let alone their limited international circulation, stands in contrast with its alleged centrality to the industry at large.

While some scholars have taken this discrepancy at face value to call for a reconsideration of Italian film history against (or in spite of) the hegemony of *impegno* to which the mafia movie is perhaps too hastily associated, Morreale instead revisits and expands its history with commendable rigour, demonstrating a salience that goes beyond sheer production outcomes. To do so, *La mafia immaginaria* reframes the mafia movie through the lens of genre – 'a critical gesture that establishes a certain standpoint on a film production and its context, creating new relationships between hitherto unrelated titles, genres, and discourses' (p. 33). The theoretical and methodological boldness of such a move could be appreciated when considering what the vernacular Western *In nome della legge* (1949), the parody film *L'onorata società* (1961), the *poliziottesco* *Il consigliere* (1973), the instant movie *Cento giorni a Palermo* (1982), the porn movie *Concetta Licata* (1994), and the trash-TV-show *L'onore e il rispetto* (2006–17) may have in common besides the self-evident presence of *Cosa Nostra*.

The book is divided into two sections. Chapters One to Four map out the features of the 'autonomous and self-referential universe' (p. 4) that is the mafia movie, demonstrating