

An interesting history therefore unfolds, thanks also to the ample use of interviews which offer a close insight into the power dynamics and personal relations that animated the group of journalists behind the programme, and the other actors involved. This doesn't hide the fact that the book is written in a rather descriptive way, contains limited references to secondary literature, and lacks a conclusion. Clearly the book is not intended for an academic audience, but for a wider public (on a minor note, more photographic material would have been interesting, given the subject matter). Nonetheless, *1977. Quando il femminismo entrò in TV* restores an important piece of women's history that would otherwise have remained locked in the archives of the Teche Rai, and offers a unique insight into the dynamics of gender, power and broadcasting politics in contemporary Italy. More importantly, it shows that an authentic, less stereotyped and sexist image of women in television *is* possible, even if this does not seem to be a primary concern of present-day television broadcasting in Italy, especially not on private TV channels. To give one example, in April 2017, an episode of Maria De Filippi's popular show *Amici* featured a recorded prank where singer Emma Marrone – during the rehearsal for a musical performance – was repeatedly groped by a male dancer. When the prank was broadcast, all studio guests (including Marrone herself) laughed at the singer's annoyed reactions to the 'simulated' sexual harassment. The time couldn't be more right for a feminist comeback.

Andrea Hajek

Independent researcher
andrea Hajek@gmail.com

© 2017 Association for the Study of Modern Italy
doi:10.1017/mit.2017.63

Late Nineteenth-Century Italy in Africa: The Livraghi Affair and the Waning of Civilizing Aspirations, by Stephen Bruner, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, 197 pp., £45.99 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-4438-4376-8

Only six years after internationally celebrated jurist and foreign minister Pasquale Mancini announced to a bemused Italian parliament that because the 'keys to the Mediterranean' were to be found in the Red Sea, Italy needed to assert itself there, Massawa – capital of the soon-to-be-named Italian colony of Eritrea – became the centre of a scandal that gripped Italy and, according to Stephen Bruner in his intriguing, original and excellently illustrated book, forced the nation to rethink the rationale behind its 'mission' in Africa. Mancini had bolstered his awkwardly greeted *raison d'état* justifying Italian expansion with the customary grandiloquence of Europe's global mission to proselytise the virtues of civilisation. Having spent his entire career developing a legal framework for injecting liberal virtue into international relations, Mancini was naturally sensitive to charges that newly created and liberated Italy risked tarnishing its moral integrity by participating in the undignified spectacle of the 'scramble' for Africa. But, as for so many of his contemporaries, positioning the European nation as a force for good in the world proved irresistible.

However, by 1891, in place of the good works and order liberal Italy was supposedly bringing to its grateful inhabitants, Massawa had become the scene of unbridled violence, cupidity, licentiousness and corruption presided over by those very so-called bestowers of civilisation. A series of murders and extortions carried out by or at the instigation of colonial police lieutenant Dario Livraghi at the expense of a number of indigenous notables was revealed by Napoleone

Corrazzini, a correspondent stationed in Africa and working for the Roman newspaper *La Tribuna*. His denunciation, on further probing, proved to be only the classic tip of the iceberg. While robbery was the motive behind the brutal tortures and murders Corrazzini described, bands of irregular soldiers formerly on the colonial payroll, and now burdensome to the military authorities, had been simply disarmed and gunned down or, as euphemistically described in the Italian colony's parlance, 'repressed'. Italian newspapers were soon reporting the 'repression' of something in the region of 800 to 1,000 indigenous Eritreans, though they had committed no crime and had never been tried.

Questions were asked about the role of the governor of Eritrea, Antonio Baldissera, in the mass killings, thereby also indirectly implicating the government in Rome. With a catastrophic famine concurrently blighting the colony – any traveller to Massawa simply wandering across the causeway connecting the city to the mainland could witness the horrors of a camp teeming with thousands of starving wretches abandoned to their ghastly fate by the indifferent Italian authorities – the murders and the murderers came across as even more sinister. Sobriety, good government, progress and the enlightened paternalism Italians had been told would result from the unfurling of the tricolour in Africa could not have been a more inaccurate depiction of what was unravelling before everybody's eyes.

Bruner takes us carefully through the vicissitudes of the scandal as it was reported in Italy via a scrutiny of the press, which he rightly characterises as, by the later 1880s, of the 'New Journalism' variety: memoirs, articles and pamphlets as well as the various publications of the Royal Commission of Enquiry on the situation in Eritrea provoked by the scandal. The reporting of the affair though, and here Bruner's major original claim comes to the fore, was not confined to a simple paradigm of denunciation, as might have been expected, with the accused and their backers (including the government) seeking to deflect guilt by using the familiar tactic of scapegoating or suggesting that one or two rotten apples did not spoil the basically sound colonial barrel. Rather, commentators began to probe the issue further and to question how far 'civilising' the indigenous should be part of the process of colonisation at all.

The debate did lead many to consider that colonialism per se was morally tainting liberal Italy and there were calls to leave Africa altogether: but, Bruner notes, the scandal also allowed the airing of opposing views that denounced the restraint implied in the idea of an Italian 'civilising mission'. According to these views, what was wanted was land for Italians and, as an obvious impediment, the indigenous should at best be left to their fate, at worst hurried along the way to inevitable extinction. Bruner calls in liberal and gentlemanly *litterato* Ferdinando Martini, who was to govern Eritrea from 1897 to 1907, to make his case. In 1891, as a member of the Royal Commission of Enquiry, Martini toured the little Italian colony and then penned his *Nell'Africa italiana*, a superbly entertaining musing on Italy's idiosyncrasies and the nation's colonial future. Yet in and among the *bon mots* and the brilliant vignettes that so effortlessly fill his pages, Martini chillingly put forward the idea that the 'civilising mission' was nothing but a scam and that Italy's remit should be to fundamentally 'replace race with race'. For Bruner such musings came to stand for a conscious and sinister overall change in Italian outlook. The African indigenous were no longer to be regarded as subjects for civilising but as dangerous rivals fit for elimination. Rather than Livraghi's actions and the 'handful' of indigenous dead indicating that Italy should clean up its act, the bloodshed was condoned as the only viable way forward. The perpetrators were acquitted and full-scale war with Ethiopia inevitably followed. Quietly, land in Eritrea was taken from the natives and put aside for future Italian colonists.

Bruner's thesis is plausible if a little simplistic. From the anti-slavery campaigns in Somalia in the early 1900s, to the pervasive notion of the people of Libya waiting with bated breath for

liberation from the hated Turks in 1911, and indeed to *Faccetta Nera*, when even Fascists sung about liberating a ‘little black face’ from African slavery, the ‘civilising mission’ surely remained at the heart of propaganda and empire, for Italy and, I suspect, everybody else. Yet Bruner has also shown that at least for some it became viable to openly cast aside conventional morality in the quest for Italian expansion. The concept being hesitantly reached for even by so urbane and likeable a liberal as Martini was ‘genocide’. Replacing ‘race with race’ became sayable; it rose to the surface and came clearly into view, a life raft for Italian colonialism when all around the flotsam from Mancini’s shipwrecked but more humane vision bumped uselessly and aimlessly about. The tens if not hundreds of thousands of African dead Italy was to leave behind over the half century following the Livraghi scandal are hardly explained by Bruner’s short book but it has certainly pointed enquiry in the right direction.

Giuseppe Finaldi

University of Western Australia

giuseppe.finaldi@uwa.edu.au

© 2018 Association for the Study of Modern Italy

doi:10.1017/mit.2017.69

Italy’s Other Women: Gender and Prostitution in Italian Cinema, 1940–1965, by Danielle Hipkins, Oxford, Peter Lang, viii + 448 pp., £45.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-3-0343-1934-8

Every now and then at my fairly liberal university in the US, one of my students will ask why so many prostitute figures feature in the Italian films that we watch in class. These films normally include *La dolce vita*, *Mamma Roma* and *Paisan*, but many others could be added to the list. So far, my answer has been a flippant one: why not? Danielle Hipkins’ latest book, *Italy’s Other Women*, finally provides the comprehensive answer that I have struggled to give to my students.

Scholarship has so far dismissed the female prostitute as nothing more than a passing cliché within the Italian auteurist canon. Hipkins convincingly demonstrates that she is a much more pervasive and complex figure, one that sheds light on a number of ideological contradictions and anxieties within post-war Italian cinema and society. Between 1940 and 1965, the figure of the prostitute featured in at least ten per cent of all Italian-made films. But, as Hipkins suggests, ‘she cast her shadow on many more’. During this period, several ‘other’ female figures such as the female collaborator or the actress were shaped by the dominant discourses of the time about prostitution. Hipkins’ central argument is that the female prostitute functions in Italian cinema as a ‘borderline identity’, used to police feminine virtue and respectability. But Hipkins notes that, partly escaping the original intent for her to act as a marker of opposite territories of feminine virtue and sin, this figure ends up blurring ‘those very boundaries she was supposed to support’ by means of her proximity with other non-normative identities (pimps, sexually active women etc.) and sexual behaviours (such as adultery). In the chapter on the *filone bordellistico* (‘brothel series’) of the 1950s, for example, Hipkins shows that these films also reveal surprising narratives of female resistance and mutual solidarity between women.

Italy’s Other Women is an impressive book for many reasons. It is a rigorous, carefully researched book. It is also an extremely accessible, deftly argued one that productively draws on a compelling body of feminist and queer theory. It offers a rich historical contextualisation of the reasons why the figure of the prostitute drew so much interest between the 1940s and the 1960s.