

from memory. Nonetheless, Coluccello's cogent study constructs important critical perspectives that enable readers to better understand both the intimate historical links between the Mafia in Sicily and the political powers aligned with them, as well as discourses that legitimised or denounced them.

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Stillness in Motion: Italy, Photography, and the Meanings of Modernity, edited by Sarah Patricia Hill and Giuliana Minghelli, Toronto, Buffalo and London, University of Toronto Press, 2014, 372 pp, \$80.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-4426-4933-0

In Dino Risi's *Il sorpasso* (1962) there is a throwaway moment involving a snapshot taken on a beach. Bruno (Vittoria Gassman) is seen showing off by performing a handstand in front of a group of enthusiastic admirers. The film offers a close-up of Bruno's face, upside down, as it would appear to an observer on the scene. This shot is followed by a point of view shot from Bruno's perspective – thus, also upside down – of a dark-haired young woman snapping his photograph. Intrigued, Bruno quits his monkeying around and chases after her, only to discover that the photographer in question is his semi-estranged daughter Lily (Catherine Spaak) in a wig. Unfazed – or at least pretending to be so – Bruno offers to take Lily's photograph, but when he takes hold of the camera his gaze is distracted by a woman passing in a bikini. Lily can only respond in half-contemptuous bemusement.

In this cinematic sequence, photography – as a material practice and as a narrative object – operates via a concatenation and proliferation of gazes – at the bodies of Italians and at the landscape of Italy. It uncovers uncomfortable erotic attachments and offers itself as a means of throwing into relief and placing under critique Bruno's (and perhaps more widely, the Italian male's) insistent, stridently comic masculinity. But, on a less allegorical level, photography's appearance also matter-of-factly indexes the commodity culture of a nation that had only recently acquired the habits and luxuries of American-style capitalism. The appearance of the photographic act in this scene speaks to the most general concerns and claims of photography (and cinema), but also occasions a reflection on a peculiar photographic *italianità*.

Stillness in Motion: Italy, Photography, and the Meanings of Modernity, a wonderful new collection of essays edited by Sarah Patricia Hill and Giuliana Minghelli, offers abundant resources for taking a moment like the one described above and unfolding it in all of its complexity. One of *Il sorpasso*'s chief thematic preoccupations is Italy's awkward relation to modernity, and this relation, broadly speaking, preoccupies *Stillness in Motion*. As the editors' generous and illuminating introduction frames it, 'To raise the question of photography in Italy... is to raise the...problematic and unsettled question of how Italy relates to modernity' (p. 3). Hill and Minghelli go on to ask: '[H]ow does the encounter between a country belatedly entering into the modern industrial age yet endowed with a sophisticated visual culture foreshadow issues that

are central to the current global culture of the image?' (p. 4). In other words, while photography is the manifest subject of this book's investigations, it also becomes – to give into the most obvious pun—a lens through which to consider not only Italy's peculiar experience of modernity in relation to an aesthetic and technological form that helped to articulate that modernity, but also through which to engage more broadly the intersection of politics, mediation, history on a transnational scale.

The question of Italy's somewhat vexed relationship to modernity is accounted for in a number of overlapping contexts. On the one hand, Italy was late in achieving unified nationhood and fully developed industrial capitalism; on the other, Italian artists were responsible for some of the most seismically radical aesthetic movements in the twentieth century. Italy's cultural modernity and its cultures of aesthetic modernism have often been termed ambivalent or ambiguous, even anachronistic – both too late and too early. As a technologically modern medium committed to an almost primitive obsession with likeness, and as a realist medium that established its global significance during the period that saw the rise of modernism, photography shares these traits of ambiguity. If modern Italy is, so to speak, ontologically ambiguous, then *Stillness in Motion* explores this ambiguity in relation to photography's consonant 'infinite reproducibility, complex temporality, and ambiguous ontology' (p. 3).

The book takes up these concerns across a wide range of essays that focus on a diverse set of topics that are, nonetheless, carefully situated in relationship to one another. Roberta Valtorta's luxuriously thorough essay on photography and the construction of national identity begins the volume by encountering what she calls photography's 'double task' in Italy: 'to be a tool to catalogue and celebrate the national patrimony *and* an agent of modernization and ... national unification' (pp. 33–34). Minghelli's essay on Futurism's contentious disavowals of and oblique engagements with photography offers a rich vein of scholarship and theoretical reflection. Barbara Grespi's essay on neorealism's debt to American inter-war photography goes far beyond the well known links between Paul Strand and Cesare Zavattini and provides a novel way of encountering a subject about which many of us may think we already know too much. Hill explores the world of *Il sorpasso* in her essay on photography's role in documenting but also producing the tenor of life during the economic miracle. (For this reader, Hill's essay's greatest contribution is its fascinating final section on Pasolini and photography.) Christian Uva authoritatively analyses the violence of 1970s domestic terrorism in Italy (the years of lead or '*anni di piombo*') through photography's complex identity as historical document and aesthetic artefact. Photographs of terrorist violence, Uva writes, 'capture not only the spirit of these times but the complex mechanism by which we experience photographically history and change' (p. 268).

As that last quoted passage indicates, the essays in *Stillness in Motion*, whatever the specificity of their individual subjects, repeatedly and inventively open onto broader historical, political, artistic and epistemological questions. All of the above-mentioned essays read almost like miniature books, so intricate, engaged and exhaustive is their scholarship. One wishes, in fact, that each of these essays could become a book. Although my interest was especially piqued by the essays I have named, I learned from and enjoyed every single essay in the collection – something I find myself rarely able to say about most edited collections.

The last section of the book cleverly includes two archival treasures: first, a reprint of Umberto Eco's essay 'A photograph' alongside the original photograph (of a terrorist shooting – one discussed in Uva's essay) that inspired it; second, two essays by the artist and theorist Franco Vaccari, an important conceptual photographer whose work deserves greater notice outside Italy. The last section also offers an entertaining and informative interview between Vaccari and Minghelli.

The book is handsomely produced and includes numerous illustrations, including eight colour plates. Given the range of references – to photographers, historical actors, places, events, other scholars – I found myself lamenting the lack of an index that would further assist readers in making the most of the book. (The lack of biographical entries for contributors is also a shame.) However, essays carefully cross-reference one another, a nice editorial feature that makes the reader confident about the scholarly coherence that has shaped the volume.

Stillness in Motion is immensely satisfying both as a book about Italy and photography, and as a book about cultural modernity, technology, politics and aesthetics.

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