

**Anthony Cristiano and Carlo Coen, eds. Experimental and Independent Italian Cinema: Legacies and Transformations into the Twenty-First Century**

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letteratura religiosa e della cultura veneziana del Seicento. Si spera di vedere presto un'edizione moderna del *Paradiso monacale* in lingua originale.

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**Anthony Cristiano and Carlo Coen, eds. *Experimental and Independent Italian Cinema: Legacies and Transformations into the Twenty-First Century*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020. Pp. 344. USD 105. ISBN 9781474474030.**

In the introduction to *Experimental and Independent Italian Cinema*, Anthony Cristiano and Carlo Coen put forth two essential claims that contextualize and frame the objectives of their book. The first: independent and experimental works deemed “extravagant, idiosyncratic, or marginal” are undervalued and under-researched (1). Second, even when these works are researched and written on, this knowledge is rarely taught or considered in the English-language world. Their book seeks to rectify this critical gap. It not only offers histories and commentaries on important independent and experimental Italian films, filmmakers, and movements, but also contains wider considerations about the viability and precarious nature of non-mainstream and typically non-commercial film cultures by analyzing trends in the production and distribution of these films. A reader may initially find the scope of the book overly broad, but it is precisely this flexible use of the labels “independent” and “experimental” that enable its incisiveness. Similarly, one will note that the range of contributors — experienced academics, a PhD student, independent researchers, and a documentary filmmaker — invites a diversity of focus and expertise which allows the book to be extensive and precise through myriad perspectives and wide-ranging expertise.

Early chapters focusing on 1980s–90s independent cinema in Milan, as well as notions of liminality and experimentalism in works by Marinella Pirelli and Cesare Zavattini, respectively, establish the key parameters and concerns of independent and Italian cinema. If we consider the most abstract definitions of “experimental” and “independent” as functioning outside or beyond the limits of mainstream aesthetics and industrial trends, then Donatella Maraschin and Paola Nasini’s piece on Milanese cinema convincingly posits that there is something inherently experimental about filmmakers who resist the centralization of the Italian

film industry in Rome. Matilde Nardelli's chapter on Pirelli is particularly useful in interrogating how the *auteur*, a key fixture of global mainstream and independent film cultures, fits into the context of one so largely defined by its opposition to conventional modes of production. Perhaps it may seem incongruous to some readers that this chapter is followed by several others centred on important independent and experimental auteurs, however, these chapters tend to use their respective auteurs as case studies to explore broader topics. For example, Gloria Deagnino's chapter on Mirko Locatelli considers Locatelli's films as evidence of Italian independent cinema's capacity to be explicitly political and, in Locatelli's case, anti-fascist. Many of the auteur filmmakers profiled throughout the book have also contributed to training and educational resources for younger filmmakers in an effort to preserve a movement that is not typically commercially viable. This pattern prevents these profiles from falling trap to the often individualistic depictions of auteur filmmakers.

Later chapters engage more directly with instances of change and fluidity, acknowledging independent and experimental Italian cinema as a precarious tradition, examining how its filmmakers respond to opportunities and threats presented by globalization and the Internet in the latter parts of the twentieth-century and beginning of the next. David H. Fleming and Filippo Gilardi's chapter on Niccolò Bruna's documentaries, primarily produced in Northern Africa, considers the role the 'local' and the 'national' play in an increasingly globalized world. The book concludes with Cristiano's insightful chapter on independent and experimental cinema and the Internet, noting how the web makes distributing and archiving these works easier. Like globalization, one may assume the Internet presents the potential to disrupt or undermine hyper-local traditions, movements, and 'scenes,' yet Cristiano argues that *niche* and *local* "represent a haven" in an increasingly "cluttered" globalized and online world (250).

Given the overwhelming concern with resistance to dominant or hegemonic forces, institutions, and traditions throughout the book, some of the most compelling, at times even delightful, sections are those detailing the innovations inherent to these cinematic cultures. An example of this sort of innovation is found in Edward Bowen's chapter on the use of trade stories in marketing campaigns. Considering how the majority of the films discussed are produced with mid-level to low-budgets, traditional marketing campaigns are rarely feasible. Bowen highlights that many of these films are marketed through stories about the filmmakers overcoming difficult productions, budgetary constraints, and humble origins, communicated via word-of-mouth, the press, and often in DVD bonus materials

and documentaries. The chapter traces how these alternative marketing strategies traverse the independent film industry and provide certain films and filmmakers with quasi-mythological statuses. These trade stories also serve as recruitment tools, in that they often attract younger, aspiring filmmakers. Bowen's chapter expresses many of the crucial ideas and concepts present throughout the book at large, including the necessary innovation found in the face of precarious economic and industrial contexts, as well as the importance placed on recruitment, training, and education as a mode of self-preservation for these cinematic traditions. Also notable is the fact that many of the "against-all-odds" stories surrounding these films, though at times hyperbolic, do appear quite similar to the independent and experimental Italian film movements more broadly, specifically in their ability to survive against hegemonic national and international film cultures in the context of increasing globalization and the Internet.

*Experimental and Independent Italian Cinema* offers much to consider for those interested in or researching trends in Italian arts, media, and film cultures. I believe this book may offer a broader appeal as well, as it will prove useful to readers curious about alternative, political, avant-garde, or otherwise marginalized artistic movements given the success these independent and experimental filmmakers have found in preserving a tradition that is mostly divested from commercial prosperity. The book provides key insights about the circumstances, figures, and events that have defined and contributed to this rich cultural, artistic, and largely political movement, and provides a look at how these traditions' evolution and survival throughout the twentieth century will inform their perseverance in and throughout the twenty-first.

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**Laura Ricci. *Sempre altrove fuggendo. Protagoniste di frontiera in Claudio Magris, Orhan Pamuk, Melania G. Mazzucco*. Trieste: Vita Activa Edizioni, 2019. Pp. 220. Euros 15. ISBN 9788899951153.**

*Sempre altrove fuggendo. Protagoniste di frontiera in Claudio Magris, Orhan Pamuk, Melania G. Mazzucco* è il notevole saggio non convenzionale e appassionante di Laura Ricci che presenta, con un femminismo della differenza, un efficace diario di ri-lettura di alcuni romanzi da lei definiti "di frontiera": dal punto di vista delle