Antimafia Media:
Value, Imaginary, and Community in Western Sicily

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Abstract

Antimafia Media: Value, Imaginary, and Community in Western Sicily

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Antimafia Media examines the multifarious ways through which the antimafia movement and the local culture industry have fed each other in the last two decades, while also benefiting from and capitalizing on the global popularity of the Sicilian mafia. Grounded on an ethnographic approach, the dissertation demonstrates how the crime syndicate, currently undergoing what is probably the worst crisis in its century-long history, has morphed into a symbolic resource widely mobilized by the local culture industry to attain credibility, legitimacy, and economic gains. By attending to the work of a variety of cultural actors in and out former capital of the mafia Palermo, it maintains that the local culture industry's re-elaborations of mafia history and mythology enabled the circulation of a politically deleterious imaginary of the syndicate grounded on its cinematic mediations rather than on its actual manifestations. The emergence of this easily accessible and commodified movie-made mafia imaginary underpins the current surge of mafia-themed cultural production, which I chart out in relation to the workings of the film and television, tourism, and cultural heritage industries. Through a wide range of cases ethnographically documented spanning from mafia museums and tourist tours to the making of a TV series belonging to the popular genre of mafia television, *Antimafia Media* illuminates largely unknown forms of cultural production that nonetheless have a massive impact over Sicily's social and economic life. Moreover, it explores the ambivalent complicity of the hegemonic faction of the antimafia movement toward mafia-themed cultural production, arguing for a reassessment of the entanglements of activism, social imaginary, media making, and cultural politics in light of the ongoing economic recession and social distress affecting the region.

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Introduction
Extracting Value from the Mafia

In November 1987, on the last day of the Maxi-trial, a TV-broadcasted event held in a bunker-courthouse inside the prison of Palermo that indicted almost half-a-thousand mafiosi, a respectable-looking, dressed-up, older gentleman asked to speak. Known as "the Pope," Michele Greco took the floor to denounce the entire trial as a hoax set up by struggling criminals who duped the State into executing their own private *vendetta*. Greco, whose methods, businesses, and networks were exposed by a series of anonymous letters later attributed to Salvatore Contorno, a high-profile *pentito* (former mafioso turned state informant), was charged with having ordered the murder of seventy-eight people, along with possession of war weapons and explosives. In addition, Greco was at the time of his apprehension head of the "Cupola" (or Commission), the Sicilian mafia's highest decision-making body made up of all the most prominent mafiosi of the Palermo province, and that title earned him his glamourous nickname. Addressing the court, the man stated in his typical articulate, measured manner, "Films are the ruin of humanity. Violent films, pornographic films—these are the ruin of humanity. Had Contorno watched, say…" A magistrate malignly prompted him, "*Crema, cioccolata e… paprika* [Michele Massimo Tarantini, 1981]?" a sex comedy written by the Pope's only son who rejected the family business to pursue a disastrous filmmaking career. The boss, visibly annoyed, got back on track. "Had he watched *Moses* [probably, *The Ten Commandments*, Cecil B. DeMille, 1956] instead of *The Godfather* [Francis Ford Coppola, 1972], he would not have defamed Chiaracane. Absolutely not". The audience greeted the statement with a laugh.

Scholars and observers read the Pope's tirade in line with the idea of the mafia as "a cinematic invention" used innumerable times by mafiosi claiming to be nothing but poor farmers, shepherds, or produce exporters.[1] The laughter confirmed that already at that point it was an exhausted trope. In the most exhaustive study published on Cosa Nostra and cinema, Emiliano Morreale countered Greco's argument by remarking that "*The Godfather* and similar films had affected more mafiosi in the exercise of their duties than *pentiti*," for the New Hollywood classic

[1] Morreale, Emiliano. *La mafia immaginaria. Settant'anni di Cosa Nostra al cinema (1949-2019)*. Rome: Donzelli, 2020, 3; Id., "Ideologia mafiosa e devozione cattolica nel cinema degli anni Novanta." In *L'immaginario devoto tra mafia e antimafia. Narrazioni e rappresentazioni* edited by Luca Mazzei and Donatella Orecchia, 73-82. Rome: Viella, 2018, 73.

shaped bosses' style, behavior, and self-perception.[2] Indeed, one can easily picture the Pope at the meeting of all the heads of the US mafia families meant to seal the peace between the Corleone and the Tartaglia families. However, the issue extends beyond matters of individual and group behavior. The impact of the film, its two sequels [*Part II*, 1974 and *Part III*, 1990, both by Francis Ford Coppola], and the 1969 novel by Mario Puzo among Sicilian mafiosi has been documented. Murders and intimidations inspired by the film, including a severed head of a horse found in a business owner's car, occurred in Sicily throughout the 1980s and early 1990s,[3] corroborating the assumption that "fictional portrayals of criminals feed back on the practices of criminals themselves."[4]

Since the Pope is one of the many bosses who have denied the existence of "the thing-called-mafia," interpreting his words as another manifestation of false consciousness is certainly accurate. Yet, I would like to yield to the temptation of advancing a bolder hypothesis: that, in fact, the Pope might be right on the matter of *The Godfather*'s influence on Contorno. Interpreting his claim just as a condemnation of the "cinematic invention" would have been undisputable had the boss been referring to himself. Salvatore Chiaracane, instead, was the lawyer of several mafiosi. As such, he was accused of having met his clients while they were on the run, suggested dishonest defensive strategies, and acted as a go-between for mafiosi.[5] Taken at face value was the *pentiti*'s claim, impossible to verify, that the lawyer was himself a mafioso, a criminal offense contemplated by the penal code only since 1982. Disputing these ambiguities, Greco meant to imply that Contorno, influenced by *The Godfather*, may have mistaken the lawyer for a *consigliere* (sometimes spelled as *consigliori*), a figure within the family, ranking below the boss and the underboss, in charge of advising them on the most sensitive matters. Except that that figure, if it had existed in Sicily at all,[6] seemed reminiscent more of Don Vito Corleone's *consigliere* Tom Hagen (who, had he been

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[2] Morreale, Emiliano. *La mafia immaginaria*, cit., 14. All translations from Italian are mine.

[3] Varese, Federico. *Mafia Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, 149.

[4] Gambetta, Diego. *Codes of the Underworld: How Criminals Communicate*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, 251.

[5] Lodato, Saverio. "Smentito l'imputato eccellente." *L'Unità*, March 15, 1986; Bolzoni, Attilio. "Chiamo Falcone a testimone." *La Repubblica*, March 15, 1986. For a detailed reconstruction, see Tribunale di Palermo. "Chiaracane Salvatore." In *Ordinanza-Sentenza emessa nel procedimento contro Abbate Giovanni + 706*, 4806-4829. Vol. 23, 1985. https://www.csm.it/documents/21768/1957009/Ord+maxiprocesso+volume+23+pagine+4607_4835.pdf/af684a68-e344-e50f-3c26-199c187d7e37, last accessed May 20, 2022.

[6] In illustrating the hierarchy of the Sicilian mafia to judge Giovanni Falcone, *superpentito* Tommaso Buscetta was the first to describe the *consigliere* as a well-defined figure. Whereas in the context of US Cosa Nostra multiple attestations of the figure exist, all the judicial, scholarly, and journalistic references to Sicilian *consiglieri* I came across quote Buscetta (or sources entirely based on Buscetta). As for Chiaracane, the verdict motivations quoted above play on the term's semantic ambiguity between an advisor of sorts (such as a lawyer) and the third in command of a family (a *consigliere* proper). See Paoli, Letizia. *Mafia Brotherhoods: Organized Crime, Italian Style*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, 40-46.

Sicilian, could have legitimately aspired to replace the old boss) than of the devious and cynical lawyer omitting to turn his clients in to the authorities or delivering messages to inmates. I find it meaningful that Greco's point has gone unnoticed by the myriads of commentators who reflected on this extraordinary indictment of harmful cinema only to denounce the disingenuousness of the boss.

The apprehension undergirding the Pope's complaint, regardless of its honesty, deserves serious consideration, especially given that Coppola himself had trusted that "after seeing [*The Godfather* saga], one should come out 'knowing' lots of things about the mafia: terms, procedures, rationales, secrets."[7] The fear is that the boundaries between what Roberto Dainotto called "the *real* mafia—with its brutal, often abusive connotation—and the *imaginary* mafia surrounding it—a mythical potpourri of codes of honor, family values, and chivalric machoism—,"[8] may become blurred even for those who are supposed to sanction what the mafia is and take action to convict its members. I take this incongruity as my starting point in order to foreground a contradiction worth thinking through. On the one hand, the episode hints at the significance of cinema in the definition, shaping, and dissemination of a distinct set of representations informing what we think of as the mafia. On the other hand, it suggests a certain reluctance to engage with the material and social consequences of this process of mediation, which motivates the disavowal of the process itself, here expressed through laughter and mockery. *Antimafia Media: Value, Imaginary, and Community in Western Sicily* dwells in the interstitial space opened up by this contradiction, the space between an essentially cinematic imaginary and its contemporary actualizations in value-generating practices and products. But before moving to the present time, I need to provide a brief historical overview.

The Maxi-trial brought a bloody era of mafia rule to a close and marked the inception of a new one, still ongoing, in which the organized crime group bears only a limited impact on the public life of Western Sicily, the area historically most affected by the workings of Cosa Nostra. At that time, Palermo, the capital of Sicily and the fifth largest city of Italy, registered the apparently unconceivable discrepancy between one of the highest consumption rates of Europe and the lowest income rate of Italy, which could only be explained by the centrality of illegal activities to the economy of the city. According to a political scientist, "an estimate attributed 20% of the city's gross product to be under the direct control of the criminal economy, which raise to a staggering

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[7] Quoted in Jones, Jenny. *The Annotated Godfather*. New York: Black Dog and Leventhal, 2007, 91.
[8] Dainotto, Roberto. *The Mafia: A Cultural History*. London: Reaktion, 2015, 10. Author's emphases.

80% if accounting for the grey area of connivances and collusions."[9] All this wealth went hand in hand with violent crime. The dismantling of the heroin-smuggling ring connecting Indochina, Turkey, France, and North America known as the French Connection in the early 1970s found Italian-American and Sicilian mafiosi eager to reroute the ring through Sicily. Huge profits and brutal clashes ensued. Though an important social and political actor for over a century, from the early 1970s onward Cosa Nostra further tightened its grip on the island by diversifying investments, developing networks of influence, and running entire sectors of the economy, while benefiting from close relations with local and national elites. At the same time, the wave of bloodshed provoked by two mafia wars and a series of smaller conflicts that eventually permitted the Corleone *cosca* to take the reins of the whole organization forced the Italian state to step in. Mafia bosses reacted with even greater violence. "Nothing has marked as negatively the image of the South, let alone its actual history," historian Salvatore Lupo observes, "as the deeds of the Sicilian mafia between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1990s: its fantastic deals, its entrance into the world of international finance [...], the thousands of deaths in the internecine war of the early 1980s, and above all the series of 'excellent' killings."[10]

In the late 1980s, with the outcomes of the Maxi-trial still uncertain, the team that set it up ("Antimafia pool") dismantled and its members at the center of smear campaigns, the collective feeling that the hope of a reversed destiny may have been an intoxication kicked in. Signs of change, even within the corrupt and mafia-friendly ruling party Democrazia Cristiana, were overshadowed by discouraging silence, backstabbing, and indolence. The antimafia movement, a constellation of very diverse civic associations held together by the belief that Sicily's collective good depended first and foremost on the defeat of the mafia, struggled to coordinate its action and expand its constituency. Then, almost abruptly, the course of history changed. With the end of the Cold War and the gradual embrace of social-democratic positions by the Communist party, Cosa Nostra and its political sponsors lost their geopolitical raison d'être, which historically was connected also to the repression of organized labor. National media put the Sicilian situation under the spotlight in a reversal of decades of neglect and complicit reticence. The killings of some of the protagonists of

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[9] Azzolina, Laura. *Governare Palermo. Storia e sociologia di un cambiamento*. Rome: Donzelli, 2009, 19. The estimate comes from Centorrino, Mario. *I conti della mafia*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1993. As the author admits, this, like any other estimate concerning illicit or informal economies, should be taken with a grain of salt.

[10] Lupo, Salvatore. "Il conio del capitale sociale. La questione meridionale dopo il meridionalismo." *Meridiana* 61, 2008, 21-41, 26

the fight against the mafia, instead of causing more despair, provoked an awakening of civil society, whose fervent appeals for a mafia-free Sicily were now amplified by the media. According to Palermo-born writer Roberto Alajmo, much had to do with the media:

> Since television and press correspondents from all over the world were still in town waiting for a new massacre to happen, the antimafia demonstrations […] ended up becoming the main news for the sheer lack of anything else. Over and done with a demonstration, Palermitans went back home and found themselves parading on television. They recognized themselves and acknowledged that, at least from the television's perspective, they were the apparent majority, and so they took to the streets the day after, and the day after that, looking at themselves infinitely in the media-mirror reflecting their own indignation. For the first time, the city read positively about itself in the newspapers. It liked that.[11]

Here this history splits into two axes. One is the history of mafia repression, a success that no one would contest. In the early 1990s, the state struck decisive blows against the syndicate by promoting special legislation, apprehending almost all the top-level bosses, and trying to leave this horrendous chapter of history behind. In 1993, Cosa Nostra carried out a series of terrorist attacks at Milan's Modern Art Gallery, Rome's Lateran Basilica and church of St. George in Velabro, and Florence's Uffizi Gallery. From then on, only arrests have made news headlines. The mafia did change under the rule of a more moderate boss of the bosses, who shunned violence and cared about business above anything else. His arrest, on the same day of 2006 as the new center-left government sworn in following the allegedly mafia-tolerant Berlusconi government, put in jail the last boss deemed able to exercise power beyond the boundaries of his family's territorial jurisdiction. Two years later, with the media tycoon back at the helm of the government and a Sicilian lawyer as Minister for Justice, harsher antimafia legislation, contested by the European Court of Human Rights, exacerbated the crisis of Cosa Nostra.[12] After four decades of using the rhetoric of emergency, contagion, and crisis to raise concerns about policy issues, even the Antimafia

[11] Alajmo, Roberto. *Palermo è una cipolla*. Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2005, 14.
[12] See Paoli, Letizia. "The Decline of the Italian Mafia." In *Organized Crime: Culture, Markets, and Policies*, edited by Don Siegel and Hans Nelen, 15-28. New York: Springer, 2008; Lupo, Salvatore, and Giovanni Fiandaca. *La mafia non ha vinto*. Rome: Laterza, 2014; Tondo, Lorenzo. "Sicilians Dare to Believe: The Mafia's Cruel Reign Is Over." *The Guardian*, September 22, 2019. See also Dino, Alessandra. "Waiting for the New Leader: Eras and Transitions in Cosa Nostra." In *Italian Mafias Today: Territory, Business, and Politics*, edited by Felia Allum, Isabella Clough Marinaro, and Rocco Sciarrone, 12-29. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2019; Pignatone, Giuseppe, and Michele Prestipino. *Modelli criminali. Mafie di ieri e di oggi*. Rome: Laterza, 2019.

Parliamentary Commission conceded in its 2018 report that Cosa Nostra is today "an organization in search of its identity, barely able to survive through the work of low-rank affiliates with low-profile ambitions."[13]

The second axis of this story concerns mafia perception. Having managed to mobilize a whole country, the Sicilian antimafia movement went from elated to depressed in the space of a few years as collective enthusiasms over the successes against the syndicate gave way to apathy in the wake of the perception of a lowered, if not nonexistent, threat. Some members of the movement turned their attention to more urgent issues, from the right to the city to migrant struggles. Others promoted a pervasive antimafia action, especially catered to schoolchildren, starting from the assumption that the alleged crisis of Cosa Nostra corresponded to a conscious strategy of submersion on the side of the crime syndicate. The disappearance of the mafia from the public life of the island, the explanation goes, is a sign of the unfettered power of an organization that does not need to fight any longer for the simple reason that it has won. Prone to conspiracies and animated by a vehement anti-institutional populism, the movement began to conceive of itself as the sole pure expression of civil society in a context deemed to be contaminated by the cultural and economic influence of the mafia. Within this ideal of healthy polity, sectors of the judiciary aligned with the movement—a few even managing to attain the status of antimafia icon reserved to the martyrs of the fight against Cosa Nostra—in a paradoxical confluence of the state within civil society.

If television and press gave the movement a strong impetus in a phase of heightened tensions by raising awareness as well as contributing to institutional change, cinema came to play a leading role in the aftermath when Cosa Nostra was no longer visible. Starting from the mid-1990s, a series of state-funded movies and made-for-television movies began to promote antimafia ethos and history through the life stories of its protagonists. Millicent Marcus calls this body of biopics "the antimafia martyr genre,"[14] putting emphasis on the quasi-religious dimension (or, more appropriately, the civil religion) that makes the genre stand out from the variety of mafia-themed film genres around the globe.[15] There is something truly extraordinary in the nonexistence of recent

[13] Commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sul fenomeno delle mafie e sulle altre associazioni criminali, anche straniere. *Relazione conclusiva*. XXIII, no. 38, February 2018, http://www.avvisopubblico.it/home/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/XXIII-n.-38.pdf, last accessed May 29, 2022.

[14] Marcus, Millicent. "The Anti-Mafia Martyr Genre in Italian Film." *MacMillan Report*, October 28, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=649yW3Au240, last accessed May 29, 2022.

[15] See Xu, Jian. "The Gangster Film as World Cinema." In *Global Cinema Networks*, edited by Elena Gorfinkel and Tami Williams, 228-243. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018. See also Larke-Walsh, George S., ed. *A Companion to the Gangster Film*. Hoboken: Wiley, 2018.

gangster films focusing on the world's oldest and most widely known organized crime group, all the more so considering that contemporary European cinema, as I argued elsewhere, has articulated a critical discourse through the genre on how neoliberal governmentality shapes the sphere of the social.[16] Likewise, it is no less surprising to note that of the hundred or so of films and TV shows on Cosa Nostra that have appeared since the mid-1990s almost none are set after the season of the massacres that ended in the summer of 1993. This has contributed to a growing gap in the present between, paraphrasing Dainotto, the *real* antimafia—arguably the only victorious social movement in post-Cold War Italy—and the *imaginary* antimafia—a mythical potpourri of pedagogical initiatives, civic virtues, and middle-class values held together by the supposed dangers that Cosa Nostra poses to Sicilian society at large.

Even though the imbrications of cinema and the Sicilian mafia date back to the 1940s, I focus mostly on a corpus of films and TV shows made since the mid-1990s in order to foreground the political, cultural, and aesthetic implications of the invisibility of Cosa Nostra on the territory and its hypervisibility on screen. The three decades that *Antimafia Media* surveys are characterized by a stunningly homogeneous production of mafia-themed cinema, justifying readings based on notions such as genres and formulas for nearly all the body of texts produced during this period. Antimafia cinema and television consist, in fact, of stylized, formulaic biopics meant to disseminate antimafia ideology through the emotional grammar of the melodrama and the ethical posture of the so-called *cinema d'impegno* (committed cinema). The figure of the martyr, as mentioned above, dominated the first decade of the genre.[17] The following decade, roughly from mid-2000s to the early-2010s, saw an interesting reversal shortly after the arrest of the last Corleonese boss of the bosses: mafia bosses became the subject of biopics, albeit within the same ideological, ethical, and aesthetic framework.[18] Around 2012, the genre changed in order to adapt to new market demands,

[16] Fidotta, Giuseppe. "Gangster Film Reloaded: European Values and the Criminal Specter of Late Modernity." In *The Routledge Companion to European Cinema*, edited by Gábor Gergely and Susan Hayward, 316-325. New York: Routledge, 2021.

[17] Among the most well-known titles, it is worth mentioning at least *Giovanni Falcone* (Giuseppe Ferrara, 1993), *Il giudice ragazzino* (Alessandro Di Robilant, 1994, on Rosario Livatino), *I giudici* (*Excellent Cadavers*, Ricky Tognazzi, 1999, on Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino), *Placido Rizzotto* (Pasquale Scimeca, 2000), *L'attentatuni* (Claudio Bonivento, 2001, on Giovanni Falcone), *Brancaccio* (Gianfranco Albano, 2001, on don Pino Puglisi), *Gli angeli di Borsellino* (Rocco Cesareo, 2003), *Paolo Borsellino* (Gianluca Maria Tavarelli, 2004), *Alla luce del sole* (*Come into Light*, Roberto Faenza, 2005, on don Pino Puglisi as well), and *Giovanni Falcone – L'uomo che sfidò Cosa Nostra* (Andrea and Antonio Frazzi, 2006).

[18] Among the most famous ones, *Il capo dei capi* (*The Boss of the Bosses*/*Corleone*, Enzo Monteleone and Alexis Sweet, 2007, on Totò Riina), *L'ultimo dei Corleonesi* (Alberto Negrin, 2007, on Bernardo Provenzano), and *L'ultimo padrino* (Marco Risi, 2008, on Bernardo Provenzano as well).

diversifying into a festival-oriented format[19] and a commercial-oriented one.[20] From the same period on, television shows started focusing on little-known martyrs, such as police, journalists, and entrepreneurs in a conscious attempt to expand the antimafia Pantheon and thus a catalog of stories, characters, and settings already exhausted. Antimafia cinema's predecessors used to fluctuate between political cinema (usually sponsored by or at least close to the Communist Party) and exploitation (parody, sexy comedy, *poliziottesco* or spaghetti crime film). Antimafia cinema firmly refused the two forms and embraced instead a post-political, educational stance, which favored its massive circulation in schools and wide adoption by NGOs and antimafia activist groups. Antimafia media is mostly state-funded and benefits from the still dominant position of the public sector within the national media industry. Non-state productions, which oftentimes find their rationale in commercial competition against state media, do not present noticeable differences at the level of patterns or models, except for a less overstated didacticism. Because of its popularity and social legitimacy, the genre attracts first-rate actors in lead roles, whereas secondary roles are distributed across Southern Italian character actors. It is common for media professionals (mostly actors) who have found national recognition through these productions to take part in initiatives organized by the antimafia movement and consider themselves as activists, even when admittedly ignorant of anything mafia.

An additional contradiction heightens the cognitive dissonance between mafia reality and mafia perception and, with it, the gap between real and imaginary antimafia: the entry of the local culture industry into what one may cynically call the business of mafia manufacture, fabrication, and supply. Recounting their fieldwork in 1980s Palermo, Jane and Peter Schneider recalled that at the time "no bookstore in Sicily exhibited books or other materials on mafia; the scholar interested in the subject had to make circumspect and embarrassed inquiries. Today, a contrary situation exists: mafiology is a media and publications industry."[21] Written at the time when the television and press correspondents evoked by Alajmo had just demobilized, the article, though already raising the alarm about a disconcerting trend, accurately photographs the inception of an industry. In the two decades between the Schneiders' warning and the present day, mafia fever has ended up infecting literally

[19] For instance, *Salvo* (Fabio Grassadonia and Antonio Piazza, 2013, awarded the Gran Prix of the Semaine de la critique at Cannes), *Lo scambio* (*Hidden Identity*, Salvo Cuccia, 2015, presented at Torino), and *Sicilian Ghost Story* (Fabio Grassadonia and Antonio Piazza, 2017, presented at Sundance)
[20] For instance, *La mafia uccide solo d'estate* (*Mafia Kills Only in Summer*, Pif, 2013), *La trattativa* (*The State-Mafia Plot*, Sabina Guzzanti, 2014), *In Guerra per amore* (*At War with Love*, Pif, 2016)
[21] Schneider, Jane, and Peter Schneider. "Mafia, Antimafia, and the Question of Sicilian Culture." *Politics & Society* 22, no. 2 (1994): 237-258, 255

any sector of the culture industry. In a time when Cosa Nostra seems (almost) nowhere to be found, its imaginary is everywhere to be consumed. Hardly conceivable half a century ago, when both national and local ruling classes used to deny the very existence of the syndicate, today's hypervisibility of mafia-themed commodities bespeaks of the supremacy of a specific imaginary. It is my contention that this imaginary is antimafia in spirit and cinematic in nature. The goal of this dissertation is to explain how that is the case.

Palermo is the background against which most of my research unfolded. The city has survived, though in no way unscathed, several decades of deadly mafia violence, only to find at last a renewed yet contested identity as a modern Mediterranean urban center, open to international events (such as the hotly debated Manifesta art biennial in 2018), mass tourism, and intercultural exchange.[22] Palermo is a city replete with contradictions, evident even to the casual observer. The unemployment, poverty, and emigration rates are among the highest in the European Union, with a significant section of the population making a living from informal labor and grassroots networks of care.[23] The old city center with its magnificent architecture has begun to change in the wake of a heavy touristification process, while parasitic private initiatives and the endemically indebted public sectors struggle to establish synergies concerned with tackling the structural problems of the city. Despite the lack of planning, infrastructures, and resources, the city in the last two decades had nonetheless managed to transform itself from "mafia battleground to cultural capital," to borrow the expression of five-term mayor Leoluca Orlando.[24] In this context, the local culture industry, though characterized by a certain vivacity, lives off a mass of precarious and underpaid workers, whose labor is often obscured by nationally acclaimed personalities able to centralize whole segments of the industry and promote logics of personalization and gatekeeping hindering the emergence of new talent. At the same time, the growth of the tourism industry and its effects upon the city began to orient the cultural offer in several ways. Among the most remarkable ones, the mafia resurfaced not as an organized crime group but as a shared imaginary underpinning forms of production and

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[22] Coen, Emanuele. "Palermo città aperta: la rinascita del capoluogo siciliano tra film, arte e cultura." *L'Espresso*, June 27, 2018.
[23] Istituto Nazionale di Statistica. *La Sicilia. Profili demografici e contesto sociale*. Rome: ISTAT, 2016 mentions the staggering youth unemployment at 57%, the average annual income of 16,000 euros, the 33% of the working force employed by the public administration against the 7% in the industry and 4% in agriculture, and the highest emigration rate in the country with one in seven Sicilians now living abroad.
[24] Tondo, Lorenzo. "The Resurrection of Palermo: From Mafia Battlefield to Cultural Capital." *The Guardian*, March 27, 2017.

consumptions apt to the regime of precariousness, uncertainty, and vulnerability that defines the culture industry in Sicily as much as in the rest of the world.[25]

Antimafia Media focuses on the production and circulation of a social imaginary, shaped and mediated by cinema, within a system wherein the singular forms merge into each other and contribute to form an informed citizen-consumer. To do so, it examines the workings of the Sicilian culture industry in relation to the cinematic mafia imaginary. I devote a larger share of attention to specific segments of the local industry (i.e., film and television, cultural heritage, and tourism), address some only tangentially (i.e., publishing and music), and neglect others entirely despite their contribution to the issues at stake here (i.e., performance and fine arts). Yet, the systemic nature of the culture industry as well as my specific interest in the social imaginary produced and circulated by the latter rendered a mapping of the individual sectors less relevant than an examination of the articulations of said imaginary.

Following Dilip Gaonkar, I conceive of social imaginary as "a way of understanding the social that becomes social entity itself, *mediating* collective life."[26] My point of departure is that cinema and television have played a key role in the production and dissemination of such a mafia imaginary and that attending to the processes of mediation casts light on aspects of Sicilian collective life worthy of attention. This dissertation explores the actualization of the mafia imaginary across a fragmented network of practices, performances, products, and markets. Investigating these articulations means attributing a twofold dimension to mafia imaginary: material, as embodied in commodities and experiences, and cinematic, as generated by and continually modulated through cinema. The latter dimension allows us to acknowledge the ever-changing character of this imaginary, its adaptability to different contexts and uses often at odds with each other. The former dimension, instead, draws attention to the ways in which this imaginary, once actualized, becomes a terrain of struggle wherein different social groups negotiate the meaning of the mafia and, consequently, of their own work (often, but not always, conceived as antimafia). This is to contrast the received idea that the ubiquity of mafia-themed commodities corresponds to pure and simple speculation. On the contrary, the mafia imaginary's appropriation and reworking by the local culture industry engenders a structural ambiguity between cultural promotion, pursuit of social legitimacy,

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[25] Gill, Rosalind, Andy Pratt. "In the Social Factory? Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work." *Theory, Culture & Society* 25, nos. 7-8 (2008): 1-30; McRobbie, Angela. *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016.

[26] Gaonkar, Dilip P. "Toward New Imaginaries: An Introduction." *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 1-19, 4. Emphasis mine.

countervailing strategies, and, of course, exploitation that should discourage any apodictic condemnation. What in the following pages takes center stage, then, is a complex set of interactions between creative labor, forms of militancy, industrial dynamics, and cultural infrastructures, all centered around the mafia and yet gesturing toward something deeper and broader than the crime syndicate.

In order to do justice to the complexity of these interactions, my research combined a two-year participant observation (among film and television productions, antimafia associations, and tour operators) with semi-structured interviews with the actors involved in the production and dissemination of mafia imaginary and textual, sociological, and political-economic analyses. John T. Caldwell calls this approach "integrated cultural-industrial method of analysis"[27] and traces it back to the lesson of Clifford Geertz and his rendering of cultural forms as texts, veritable works of imagination based on social materials.[28] More in general, this approach is at the core of production culture studies, a research field located at the intersection of cultural studies, media industry studies, media anthropology, and critical theory.[29] By moving beyond the dichotomy between political economy and cultural studies that has characterized the study of cultural industries, production culture studies has developed an useful framework to account for forces, subjectivities, and dynamics internal to production processes, while also extending the semantic range and hermeneutic capacity of the very notion of cultural production. This methodological approach allows me to interrogate the forms of cultural production associated with mafia imaginary in an original manner as well as to throw light on social actors and issues usually overlooked by existing scholarship on Cosa Nostra, cinema, and culture.

Nonetheless, my research object presents some specificities making a straightforward application of production culture studies' assumptions questionable, let alone inadequate. In the first place, the "industrial" dimension of the Sicilian case is hardly comparable with the ones privileged

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[27] Caldwell, John T. *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008, 4.
[28] See Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
[29] See Mayer, Vicki, Miranda Banks, John T. Caldwell, eds. *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*. New York: Routledge, New York 2009; Banks, Miranda, Bridget Conor, Vicki Mayer, eds. *Production Studies, the Sequel: Cultural Studies of Global Media Industries*. New York: Routledge, 2015. In the European context, see Szczepanik, Petr, Patrick Vonderau, eds. *Behind the Screen: Inside European Production Cultures*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013. In the Italian context, see Barra, Luca, Tiziano Bonini, Sergio Splendore, eds. *Backstage: Studi sulla produzione dei media in Italia*. Milan: Unicopli, 2016; Cucco, Marco, Francesco Di Chiara, eds. "I media industry studies in Italia: nuove prospettive sul passato e sul presente dell'industria cine-televisiva italiana." *Schermi* 3, no. 5 (2019), and especially Barra, Luca. "La virtù sta nel mezzo (e nel confronto). Questione di metodo per i production studies televisivi e mediali," 65-80.

by scholars of the field. Hollywood and its various Northern and Southern epigones, along with a series of more or less decentered nodes of an inexorably global industry, bear little resemblance with the constellation of institutions, enterprises, and initiatives grouped together on account of the content and discourses they promote rather than of their economic, or even organizational, structure. In the second place, the "production" dimension does not feature a level of stability and autonomy such that it could be studied in isolation from circulation as well as from the workings of social actors operating outside the circuits of production (e.g., the network of antimafia activism). For these reasons, this work engages substantially with the tradition of media ethnography, which is far from being foreign to culture production studies either,[30] in order to expand notions such as culture industry, imaginary, cultural infrastructures, and creative practices,[31] as well as to reconstruct interactions from the perspective of the actors involved in them.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters opened, in the spirit of the subject matter, by a massacre.

In the first chapter, I set the stage by introducing the antimafia movement that emerged in the 1980s and its project of cultural re-education intended to eradicate mafia culture through cultural production and promotion. In it, I outline the features of the civil religion developed by the movement in the heydays of popular resistance against Cosa Nostra in order to explore what remains of that framework once the crime syndicate stopped to be the catalyst of political concern or action and the movement itself entered a crisis of legitimacy fueled by scandals. This is a chapter about the

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[30] Essential in this respect is Mayer, Vicki. *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011.

[31] See Ginsburg, Faye, Lila Abu-Lughod, Brian Larkin, eds. *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*. Berkeley-Los Angeles: California University Press, 2002; Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2005; Hirschkind, Charles. *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006; Himpele, Jeffrey. *Circuits of Culture: Media, Politics, and Indigenous Identity in the Andes*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007; Larkin, Brian. *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008; Meyer, Birgit, ed. *Aesthetic Formations: Media, Religion, and the Senses*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009; Pine, Jason. *The Art of Making Do in Naples*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012; Mazzarella, William. *Censorium: Cinema and the Open Edge of Mass Publicity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013; Ortner, Sherry. *Not Hollywood: Independent Film at the Twilight of the American Dream*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013; Pandian, Anand. *Reel World: An Anthropology of Creation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015; Meyer, Birgit. *Sensational Movies: Video, Vision, and Christianity in Ghana*. Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2015; Ginsberg, Faye. "Anthropology/Media." In *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the Front Lines*, edited by Jeremy MacClancy, 323-336. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019; Lee, Toby. *The Public Life of Cinema: Conflict and Collectivity in Austerity Greece*. Los Angeles-Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020; Chung, Hye Jean. *Media Heterotopias: Digital Effects and Material Labor in Global Film Production*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018; Rossoukh, Ramyar D., Stevan C. Caton, eds. *Anthropology, Film Industries, Modularity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021.

shifting grounds of antimafia hegemony in Sicilian culture in a time when the movement seemed to have exhausted its historical function only to survive as a relic or a fetish of sorts. As such, it is an exploration of the cultural memory of the struggle through its material and symbolic expressions and their attempts to reactivate, convert, or challenge the civil religion framework. I turn to three "objects" that exemplify these aspirations. *La mafia uccide solo d'estate* (*Mafia Kills Only in Summer*, 2013) by Pierfrancesco "Pif" Diliberto, the last remaining sponsor of the movement within the national media industry, provides an excellent entry point into the politics of everyday resistance and remembrance, which I argue are the dominant registers of antimafia culture in the present time. The Mafia Museum in Salemi constitutes one of the most blatant attempts to capitalize on the global appeal of the mafia for economic gain. Conceived and designed by figures outside the movement, and as such unfamiliar with its ethical principles and values, the museum offers an original take on mafia knowledge and its sensory transmission, later in part reversed through an act of re-appropriation by and for the local community. Finally, Franco Maresco's *La mafia non è più quella di una volta* (*The Mafia Is No Longer What It Used to Be*, 2019) gives a critical perspective on the civil religion framework complemented by a genuinely antimafia stance and a nostalgic gaze on the lost authenticity of both current-day movement and popular culture.

The second chapter deals with what is commonly perceived as the only resource left in Sicily after a decades-long economic crisis exacerbating the island's inequalities: beauty. There I explore the embeddedness of a culturally specific discourse on beauty in the recent history of the region, with an emphasis on tourism and lifestyle as elective spaces of beauty consumption. The chapter reconstructs the history of tourism in Sicily in relation to the mafia, signaling the shift from shielding tourists from potential encounters with organized crime to integrating firmly the traces of the mafia into the tourist experience. Being the only profitable sector of the regional economy, tourism is a source of collective anxiety and the local public opinion is particularly alert to the exploitation of what may bring discredit to the local community, which more than often happens to coincide with anything related to the mafia. In this sense, it is also an ideal standpoint from which to observe the transformation of Cosa Nostra into a symbolic and economic resource, for it is where different imaginaries are actualized into products and experiences meant to establish what the mafia is and, more interestingly, explain it to cultural outsiders. In this process, cinema comes in to offer the visual grammar and emotional repertory through which these exchanges occur. In this chapter I also attend to the work of antimafia tour operator Addiopizzo Travel, the main for-profit antimafia organization in Sicily, and its intense relation with cinema either as a spreader of stereotypes and mendacities or

as an agent of antimafia activism. In the last section, I turn to antimafia cinema masterwork *I cento passi* (*One-Hundred Steps*, Marco Tullio Giordana, 2000) and the Addiopizzo Travel tour inspired to it in order to understand the reconfiguration of militancy prompted by the adoption of antimafia cinema's post-political stances by the antimafia movement and its transmissibility through tourism.

The third chapter reconstructs the vicissitudes of mafia television, focusing in particular on two acclaimed antimafia products, the most watched television event in the history of the medium in Italy *La Piovra* (*The Octopus: The Power of the Mafia*, RAI, 1984-2001) and the groundbreaking quality-TV series *Il Cacciatore* (*The Hunter*, RAI/Amazon Prime, 2018-2021). This chapter explores the frictions between local and national culture, labor, and community by paying attention to the social life of mafia television in the local context. Taking the issue of authenticity as the main point of contention between national media and local actors, I examine ethnographically the ways in which local workers negotiate the meaning of their labor and the relevance of mafia television in the present time. By heeding to how the local production culture interacts with the national one, mockingly referred to as the "Romans," I demonstrate the impact of the project of cultural re-education on cultural workers for whom the stakes of making mafia television are such that a distinct moral economy holding the promise of reconciling industrial and ethical imperatives is established.

Taken as a whole, this work aims to investigate the generation of value, meant as "a mutable social relation and not an inherent characteristic of things themselves,"[32] in the context of mafia-themed cultural production. Playing on the polysemy of the word value, it investigates the conjunction of ethical principles and economic concerns, moral obligations and unscrupulous exploitation. The mafia emerges at several points in this dissertation as a resource to be tapped rather than as a threat to be contained. My goal is to show how the conflicts over the forms and modalities of this extractive process are crucial for understanding the material consequences of cinematic imaginaries and their life in the present time.

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[32] Reno, Joshua O. "Foreword." In Thompson, Michael. *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value*, vi-xiii. London: Pluto Press, 2017, vii.

Chapter 1

Struggle on Display:
Memories, Museums, and Media for a Civil Religion

> Throughout the history of the human race no land and no people have suffered so terribly from slavery, from foreign conquests and oppressions, and none have struggled so irrepressibly for emancipation as Sicily and the Sicilians.
>
> Karl Marx[33]

On May 23, 1992, a heinous bombing took the lives of judge Giovanni Falcone, his wife judge Francesca Morvillo, and police officers Antonio Montinaro, Vito Schifani, and Rocco Dicillo. This attack marked a point of no return in the history of Cosa Nostra, despite how both high-profile executions and bursts of spectacular violence had characterized the syndicate's strategy since the late 1970s. Throughout the 1980s, Falcone acquired an unprecedented recognition as the investigative judge who revolutionized the methods of the Palermo Prosecution Office by shifting focus from drugs and murders to routes of illicit money, strengthening international law-enforcement cooperation, and relying systematically on the contributions of hitherto neglected figures populating the buffer area between the underworld and the upperworld. Among the latter, *pentiti* gained a critical role by expounding Cosa Nostra's structure, internal dynamics, and strategy to the puzzlement of the investigators who struggled to distinguish the reality exposed before them from mafia mythology and calculated self-interest.[34] Some of the procedural and operational novelties introduced by Falcone were controversial but they did bear fruit, and the Maxi-trial I discussed in the introduction was just one among the many testimonies of the seismic effects of his modus operandi.

In a matter of years, the judge became "the most representative figure of the 1980s antimafia;"[35] his frequent television appearances, interviews, and speaking engagements further contributed to establish a widespread awareness of the mafia phenomenon beyond Sicily in a

[33] Marx, Karl. "Sicily and the Sicilians," *MECW*, vol. 17. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1981, 370.
[34] See Falcone, Giovanni, and Marcelle Padovani. *Men of Honour: Truth about the Mafia*. London: Fourth Estate, 1993.
[35] Lupo, Salvatore. *La mafia*, cit., 326.

historical conjecture when the movement, by then only a regional reality, was experiencing one of its most severe backlashes.[36] For the national public, Falcone and his less well-known colleagues at the Antimafia Pool were leading a successful fight temporarily halted by the dismantling of the pool and the removal of the judge from Palermo, a circumstance that alerted public opinion on the danger that their work might have been undone by the much-maligned deep state. For the local activist community, instead, the last years of Falcone's career were somehow more divisive. On the one hand, no one could dispute the antimafia credentials of the architect of the Maxi-trial and the single prosecutor with the highest record of mafiosi convictions. On the other hand, however, controversies arose when Falcone, in accepting a position at the Ministry of Justice, tainted his otherwise impeccable reputation by siding with Bettino Craxi's Socialist Party, a party that not only espoused a dubious line towards the fight against the mafia, but also hinged upon a network of corruption and embezzlement that once unearthed triggered the largest political crisis in the history of postwar Western Europe.[37] In addition, Falcone was harshly criticized from the left, most notably from Palermo Mayor Leoluca Orlando, for "keeping in the drawer" evidence that could lead to the prosecution of influential politicians such as seven-time Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti and his Sicilian right-hand man and member of the European Parliament Salvo Lima. Such was the climate of mistrust that local newspapers speculated that the 1989 failed bomb attack against Falcone was not a mafia threat, but rather a ruse of the judge himself to increase his standing among magistrates and secure a steadier career advancement.

On May 23, 1992, following the bomb's detonation in Capaci, the so-called "season of poisons" undercutting the work of frontline antimafia judges through gossip, smears, and acts of sabotage ended. From that moment on, Falcone's figure acquired a whole different meaning, both symbolically and politically. To this date, nearly every Sicilian over forty could easily recall the images from the crater left by the 500-kilogram explosive broadcasted live by all major television networks and most could recount what they were doing when they learned of the judge's death and switched on the TV.[38] "Our 9/11," called it an antimafia activist from Capaci who shared with me

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[36] See Schneider, Jane, and Peter Schneider. *Reversible Destiny: Mafia, Antimafia, and the Struggle for Palermo*. Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003, 192-203.

[37] See Gundle, Stephen, and Simon Parkers, eds. *The New Italian Republic: From the Fall of the Berlin Wall to Silvio Berlusconi*. New York: Routledge, 1996, esp. Gundle, Stephen. "The Rise and Fall of Craxi's Socialist Party." 85-98, and Nelken, David. "A Legal Revolution? The Judges and Tangentopoli." 191-205. See also, Burnett, Stanton H., and Luca Mantovani. *The Italian Guillotine: Operation Clean Hands and the Overthrow of Italy's First Republic*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998.

[38] See Stille, Alexander. *Excellent Cadavers: The Mafia and the Death of the First Republic*. New York: Vintage, 1996.

his memories of the bomb blast and the subsequent hovering cloud. The comparison, however inaccurate it may be, shed light on some public feelings that circulated among the community in the days following the killing of Falcone—an acute sense of injustice, hopelessness, and loss contrasted by a series of spontaneous grassroots initiatives meant to reclaim citizens' rights to take part in the struggle against the mafia on an unforeseeably large scale.[39] The killing of Judge Paolo Borsellino on July 19 of the same year boosted both those public feelings and the urgency to prompt a vigorous response. The state reacted forcefully by approving tougher antimafia legislation (including the infamous 41-bis hard prison regime condemned by actors such as Amnesty International and the European Court of Human Rights), streamlining investigation and prosecution processes, and launching the largest homeland security operation since World War II with about 150,000 soldiers sent to patrol the streets of Sicily over six years.[40] Nonetheless, the mobilization of civil society outstripped, and in many respects rejected, politicians' response in order to reclaim Palermo's then-faded antimafia identity and suppress the toxic anti-antimafia sentiments spread throughout the 1980s and partially ascribable to sectors of the state itself. Many initiatives seized the streets of Palermo, from the solidarity strike promoted by the three major labor unions that drove 250,000 workers to the Sicilian capital to the white bedsheets dotting the balconies of the city with messages of protest ("Enough!", "Palermo Asks for Justice!", "Mafiosi, Kneel Down!" etc.). Through visible gestures of resistance, denunciation, and disruption, the 1992 grassroots initiatives expressed the need to commemorate the sacrifice of those who lost their lives in the antimafia fight. Rather than occupying the then habitual space of institutional mourning, at best turned into a space of contestation when local or national authorities were involved, citizens decided to voice their grievances through informal, uncoordinated, and at times even purely symbolic actions. At the site of the Falcone killing, teenagers from Capaci painted a graffito simply reading "NO MAFIA" on the building from where the mafiosi triggered the bomb.[41] Few kilometers away, Palermitans of all ages gathered in front of Falcone's house in via Notarbartolo leaving at the foot of its magnolia tree a wealth of offerings, most notably pictures, drawings, and letters. The tree, immediately

[39] See Moge, Charlotte. "Le Mobilisations antimafia de 1992." *Rivista di studi e ricerche sulla criminalità organizzata* 2, no. 1 (2016): 32-60.

[40] On the political and law-enforcement responses to Falcone's and Borsellino's killings, see Jamesion, Alison. *The Antimafia: Italy's Fights against Organized Crime*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999, 40-62, 80-125. The official figures, slightly downplayed by Jamieson's otherwise exhaustive account, are reported in http://www.esercito.difesa.it/operazioni/operazioni_nazionali/Pagine/vespri-siciliani.aspx, last accessed November 30, 2020.

[41] Ayala, Gianna, and Matthew Fitzjohn. "The Archaeology of the Mafia: A Material Investigation of Extortion, Justice, and Reprisal in Palermo, Sicily (1982-2012)." *World Archaeology* 45, no. 5 (2013): 816-831.

rechristened the "Falcone tree," became what anthropologist Deborah Puccio-Den called "a civil shrine," an "anarchist monument where everyone comes to express their thoughts and sign them with their hands."[42] As mafia victims turned into martyrs[43] and regular pilgrimages established a distinctive antimafia temporality, a full-blown "civil religion" started taking shape also through similar spontaneous and yet very loaded acts of spatial appropriation.[44]

This chapter seeks to explore what remains of the civil religion narrative in a time of intensified social conflict in which the crime syndicate, no longer the catalyst of political concerns or action, has lost its power to mobilize civil society across generations under the banner of the antimafia movement. Cosa Nostra crisis notwithstanding, the antimafia activist universe is still a player, though a minor one, within the political life of Palermo and to a lesser extent of Western Sicily. Its values, watchwords, and agendas have been interiorized by sections of both the ruling classes and the Left to such an extent that critical views are regularly kept at bay, let alone publicly discussed.[45] From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, the movement gained a foothold in the administration of the city, finding in the person of Mayor Orlando an interlocutor and loyal ally (and for a brief period of time even a leader), and, in his project of social renewal, a platform.[46] The *Primavera di Palermo* (Palermo Spring), as the project was known, was a commendable experiment of associative democracy whereby civil-rights, feminist, environmental, and antimafia organizations, confederated by the mayor, cooperated to change the face of the city. "However precious their contribution had been," Nino Alongi noticed, "the movements could not grapple with the complexities of the administration [...] and proved unable to articulate long-term goals irrespective of temporary interests and tensions."[47] On the debris of the Primavera, Orlando's break-away from the Christian Democracy, the moribund party that ruled both the country and the island for over forty years in collusion with organized crime groups, led to the creation of La Rete (The

[42] Puccio-Den, Deborah. "Difficult Remembrance: Memorializing Mafia Victims in Palermo." In *Grassroots Memorials: The Politics of Memorializing Traumatic Death*, edited by P.J. Margry and C. Sanchez Carretero, 51-70. New York: Berghahn, 2011, 51, 61.

[43] "The Mob Claims a Martyr," titled *The New York Times* reporting on the death of Falcone. Tellingly, the article is illustrated by a drawing of an octopus whose head is replaced by a human skull. See Freeh, Louis J. "The Mob Claims a Martyr." *The New York Times*. June 5, 1992.

[44] Puccio-Den, Deborah. "The Anti-Mafia Movement as Religion? The Pilgrimage to Falcone Tree." In *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World*, edited by P.J. Margry, 49-70. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008. See also, Gambini, Diego. "Funerals of Mafia Victims: The Construction of a New Civil Religion." *Modern Italy* 23, no. 3 (2018): 253-268; Ravveduto, Marcello. "La religione dell'antimafia. Vittime, eroi, martiri e patrioti della resistenza civile." In *Strozzateci tutti*, edited by Marcello Ravveduto. Rome: Aliberti, 2010.

[45] See Lupo, Salvatore, and Giovanni Fiandaca, *La mafia non ha vinto*, cit.

[46] Orlando, Leoluca. *Fighting the Mafia and Renewing Sicilian Culture*. Los Angeles: Encounter Books, 2001.

[47] Alongi, Giuseppe. *Palermo. Gli anni dell'utopia*, Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1997, 298.

Network), a progressive Catholic party running on an antimafia platform that included a membership standing out for its pluralism (Communists and Jesuit sponsors, judges and activists, former mayors and relatives of mafia victims) and yet fully eclipsed by the figure of the leader. Emerging from a geopolitical conjuncture of great uncertainty, as all the major political parties (the Christian-Democrat, the Communist, and the Socialist) broke down due to the combined pressure of judicial scandals, public outrage, and a sweeping wave of anti-politics, while a new equilibrium brought about by the end of the Cold War was yet to be seen, the Rete cashed in on a deep-seated discontent by turning the antimafia into "a political resource."[48] Although the party sent one senator and twelve members of Parliament to Rome, the fact that Palermo was its only true electoral base and Orlando its only beneficiary led to the gradual dissolution of that group as well. Twenty-five years later, commenting on his fifth reelection as mayor, the former party leader now running on the principle that "Palermo is [his] party" stated that "after 1992, we did not need antimafia spokespersons. What we needed and still need is from everybody to be committed to legality, to live a life against the mafia without resorting to antimafia professionals."[49] Though consistent with today's disintermediation of politics and the subsequent dismissal of parties, unions, and other intermediate bodies, this abjuration of the movement, coming from a personality that most Palermitans would have identified as an antimafia professional before the term assumed a derogatory connotation,[50] epitomizes well the series of transformations within antimafia culture that this chapter sets out to investigate. My interest in exploring these processes lies in the messy articulations of activism, memory rituals, and mediatization that the civil religion paradigm, as I will show, could account for only incidentally. Instead of positing some would-be mystical power in the antimafia crusading and crediting it as a (or perhaps the) true expression of Sicilian culture in contrast to the false mythology of the mafia, I argue that thinking of the relationships between the two in dialectical terms implies overcoming the set of binary oppositions (good and evil, moral and immoral, pure and impure)

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[48] Blando, Antonino. "L'antimafia come risorsa politica." *Laboratoire Italien* 22 (2019): https://doi.org/10.4000/laboratoireitalien.2893, last accessed November 30, 2020.

[49] Quoted in Idem.

[50] The querelle on the "antimafia professionals" (*professionisti dell'antimafia*), initiated by antimafia writer and intellectual Leonardo Sciascia in 1987, is a contested page in the history of the movement pitting activists, intellectuals, and civil servants against each other on ethical grounds. Ironically, one of the two targets of Sciascia's invective is "a Mayor" who devotes himself to antimafia initiatives and finds no time to govern his city, reassured as he is that anyone who dares contest him would be accused of being in collusion with the mafia, if not a mafioso. Sciascia, Leonardo. "I professionisti dell'antimafia." *Il Corriere della Sera*, January 10, 1987. See Lupo, Salvatore. "L'affaire Sciascia." In *Che cos'è la mafia. Sciascia e Andreotti, l'antimafia e la politica*, 3-36. Rome: Donzelli, 2007; Schneider, Jane, and Peter Schneider. "Il Caso Sciascia: Dilemmas of the Antimafia Movement in Sicily." In *Italy's "Southern Question": Orientalism in One Country*, edited by Jane Schneider, 245-260. New York: Routledge, 2020 [1998].

through which the antimafia continues to define its own political horizon. If one could rightly claim that the mafia determines the antimafia and vice versa, focusing on these messy articulations allows me to underscore the extent to which the antimafia, unlike the mafia, operates within and against civil society. Within: as an alliance of citizens acting for the promotion and defense of a definite ideal of society. Against: as an enemy of what does not fall within the ethical compass of that ideal of society and nonetheless structures and regulates its functioning, not in absolute terms, but in the specific characters making up Sicilian public life today that scholar-activist Umberto Santino calls *mafiogeni* (or "mafia-generating").[51] Hence, the frequent warnings to not let the guard down and keep up the pressure—a caution to be taken seriously not because of the innate risks of a new and more powerful mafia emerging from nowhere, but because these admonitions find their substance in a distinctively antimafia politics of representation and memorialization. This is a story about hegemony that so far has been grasped through its discursive articulations: a history of civic virtues and moral standards, mass education, ideals of citizenship and democracy, social justice, and so on.[52] By shifting attention to the material expressions of that history in the present, this chapter looks at the relevance of the antimafia struggle as incorporated into Western Sicily's cultural heritage. To do so is to navigate a range of uneven temporalities—a residual past and an always deferred future constantly (re)articulated in the present in order to drive political action; a historical past to be preserved as part of a shared culture; the linear-progressive time of the struggle, the timeless time of memory, and the fractured time of trauma. The Falcone Tree embodies these uneven temporalities in a nutshell, being at the same time a resurgence and a relic of the Primavera rhetoric as well as a symbol of its institutionalization and a promise of perpetuation.[53] The key question this chapter aims to answer concerns the lasting significance of the civil religion paradigm and its adjustments to the shifting historical circumstances that have led an authoritative commentator to proclaim "the end of the antimafia and the crisis of its myths."[54] While I certainly do not share the dubious enthusiasms of conservative polemicists over "the fall of the [antimafia] icons" and the "twilight of the exhilarating heroic season," or more broadly the mirage of "an antimafia without the mafia,"[55] this chapter registers some crucial shifts in antimafia-related cultural production and promotion that

[51] Santino, Umberto. *Dalla mafia alle mafie*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2006, 287-290; Id., *Mafia and Antimafia: A Brief History*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015, 34-37.
[52] Dalla Chiesa, Nando. *Manifesto dell'antimafia*. Turin: Einaudi, 2014.
[53] Puccio-Den, Deborah. "The Anti-Mafia Movement as Religion?" cit., 53-55.
[54] Forgione, Francesco. *I tragediatori. La fine dell'antimafia e la crisi dei suoi miti*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2016.
[55] Sottile, Giuseppe. "Antimafia senza mafia." *Il foglio*, September 14, 2019.

taken in abstract may support such interpretations. In their own way, the three objects analyzed in the following pages—two films and a museum—could lend themselves to reinforce the biased view that today's antimafia, meant as both the movement proper and the sentiment of the struggle, has exhausted its historical function and persists as an obsolete residue of a not so bygone past. If one is to take this position seriously, then it would help turn to Raymond Williams' understanding of the "residual" in cultural and social processes as a set of elements from the past partly incorporated in the effective dominant culture and nevertheless lived and practiced *also* as alternative and oppositional.[56] Since public debate seems polarized between those who dismiss antimafia's civil religion altogether and those who hold it to be vital to the propagation of a society-wide antimafia consciousness yet to come, the shapes that its material and symbolic expressions have taken in recent times have received less attention than they deserve.

In the first section of this chapter, I will provide a reconstruction of the intertwining of the civil religion paradigm, activism, and antimafia-related cultural production by focusing specifically on *La mafia uccide solo d'estate* (*Mafia Kills Only in Summer*, Pierfrancesco "Pif" Diliberto, 2013). Through the analysis of the film and its production context, I illustrate how remembrance and individual life stories have become privileged instruments for reaching out to audiences that have experienced neither the Second Mafia War nor the subsequent popular mobilizations and immersing them into the emotional and ethical makeup of the struggle. Keeping the focus on the issue of how to transmit the memories of these events, I turn to Salemi's mafia museum, a contentious institution established to attract tourists and as such considered perhaps too ungenerously as exploitative and ineffective. The vicissitudes of the museum, initially established outside of any antimafia orthodoxy and then re-appropriated by and for the local community, are representative of the clashes over the institutionalization of this conflict-ridden legacy and as such point to different and yet complementary understandings of the function of cultural institutions within the civil religion paradigm. Finally, I turn to Franco Maresco's *La mafia non è più quella di una volta* (*The Mafia Is No Longer What It Used to Be*, 2019) to illustrate the new range of tensions brought about by the dissociation between an allegedly faltering antimafia movement and its strongly ritualized and formalized civil religion. Unfolding throughout the chapter as a running thread is the question of which of the once available forms of political action are still circulating in the public sphere and to what extent they are salient in the discourse mediated by and promoted through the local culture

[56] Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, 121-127.

industry.

Everyday Antimafia and the Politics of Remembrance

"Every morning in Palermo, Mayor Orlando wakes up and knows he must ran twice as fast as the proverbial gazelle or he won't make it to attend all the antimafia commemorations of the day," joked an activist and academic from Palermo who incidentally, being a relative of a mafia victim, is quite familiar with those commemorations. The gag, ungenerous and mischievous as it may be, sheds light on two widespread ideas around institutional antimafia activism: the osmotic exchange of antimafia and government and the ubiquity of remembrance as the bedrock of political action. In introducing this chapter, I have briefly sketched the rough route that led to the former and the key role played by Orlando in building an antimafia front, which he cleverly mobilized in ways that also exceeded the sphere of the fight against the crime syndicate. The latter aspect, instead, is more puzzling and casts some shadows on the perspectives of antimafia politics, caught between a now unrecognizable enemy, a faltering popular support, and an uncertain future. Many of the antimafia's struggles are common to turn-of-the-century social movements at large, and leftist political formations in particular. A wealth of scholarship bears witness to the painful disbanding of political platforms and projects aiming at disrupting what has been characterized as the outcomes of the implementation of the neoliberal project: "social regression, growing inequality and impoverishment […], increasing insecurity and the anxiety that follows, loss of credibility of democratic practices […], and ultimately instability and political chaos."[57] In the Italian context, the 2001 G8 summit protests in Genoa repressed by the police through an unprecedented use of violence (according to Amnesty International, "the most serious suspension of democratic rights in a Western country since the Second World War"[58]) marked a no return point[59] and still after twenty years is often evoked as such by activists, including antimafia ones.[60] In the following two decades, while

[57] Amin, Samir. *The World We Wish to See: Revolutionary Objectives of the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2008, 32-33.
[58] Quoted in Cilento, Fabrizio. *An Investigative Cinema: Politics and Modernization in Italian, French, and American Film*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2018, 207, who also reports that the statement had been used as tagline of the film *Diaz. Don't Clean Up This Blood* (Daniele Vicari, 2012).
[59] Fabbri, Maria, and Mario Diani. "Social Movement Campaigns from Global Justice Activism to Movimento Cinque Stelle." In *The Routledge Handbook to Contemporary Italy: History, Politics, Society*, edited by Andrea Mammone, Ercole Giap Parini, and Giuseppe A. Veltri, 225-236. London-New York: Routledge, 2018.
[60] Interestingly, two antimafia activists from different associations I interviewed identified the repression of the G8 protests, which as progressive university students already implicated in the antimafia universe they both attended, as a terrible shock that had an impact on how they came to perceive their own antimafia activism. One of them expressed this with particular force as a bewilderment in front of the fact that "the Falcone boys [i.e., the police, a reference to the majority of the victims of the Capaci bombing of 1992] were beating *us* up and history has taught us *we* were not on the wrong side."

far-left political parties evaporated and mass movements underwent a dramatic process of pulverization, the antimafia movement in Sicily seemed steadily headed in the opposite direction—perhaps the only Italian social movement that, far from having been defeated, has brought its watchwords to the heart of the institutions, made its teachings a mandatory part of the curriculum design in most Sicilian schools, and spread its wings across generations, cultures, and the political spectrum. Yet, antimafia activists do not hold such a rosy view of their achievements. On the one hand, internecine conflicts are the norm and many would question the very existence of *an* antimafia movement, preferring instead vague expressions such as world, galaxy, or universe as well as tracing a firm line between their institutional, social, and political components. Evidence of such a fraught terrain is the fact that no serious attempt has been made after the early 1990s to build a unitary front, or *coordinamento*; further illustrated by the numerous controversies raised around and within Libera, the antimafia NGO most invested in confederating the different souls of the universe (not secondarily through the promotion of the civil-religion framework).[61] On the other hand, growing fears that the antimafia message and ethos could be coopted by the political and economic elites colluded with the syndicate have been confirmed by a variety of scandals, some of which led to the arrests of politicians campaigning on antimafia platforms, entrepreneurs using their influence within the movement to blackmail their competitors, and high-rank bureaucrats who established a formidable network of corruption and cronyism through the management of assets seized from the mafia.[62]

Rifondazione Comunista party cadre and mafia scholar Francesco Forgione voiced similar concerns in an adamant denunciation of the identity crisis undermining the antimafia movement as a whole. He contends that fragmentation and contamination represent only two of the many epiphenomena that occurred as a consequence of the antimafia's desertion of the political realm, whose battles are increasingly fought on symbolic and ethical grounds. Echoing Nando dalla Chiesa and Pino Arlacchi's far-sighted intuition, expressed as early as 1987, that the nature of the movement is "considerably more ethical and civil than political,"[63] Forgione observes:

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[61] Merlo, Salvatore. "Oltre Libera: Che cosa c'è dietro la grande disfatta dell'iconografia antimafia." *Il Foglio*, December 3, 2015; Di Girolamo, Giacomo. *Contro l'antimafia*. Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2016.

[62] Day, Michael. "Italy's 'Anti-Mafia Industry' Comes Under Suspicion after Shock Claims over Senior Figures in Fight against Organised Crime." *Independent*, March 8, 2015; "Why Italy's Antimafia Movement Is in Trouble." *The Economist*, August 9, 2016.

[63] Arlacchi, Pino, and Nando dalla Chiesa. *La palude e la città. Si può sconfiggere la mafia*. Milan: Mondadori, 1987, 127.

> The antimafia movement has lost its "social" soul, its critical orientation toward power and the economy, its autonomy from politics and most critically the judicial, its ethical and moral credibility. It has been crashed between a media circuit geared toward the attention-seeking behavior of some magistrates, a self-appointed vanguard of the fight for the moral revival of the State and society, and some careerists who have used the antimafia brand to climb political and institutional ladders, accumulate power and do business. In between, there is the bewilderment of youths, volunteering associations, and citizens who hold the belief that the struggle against the mafia and its system of collusions and relations must go back to being a struggle for freedom and radical change.[64]

The author, who during his tenure as president of the Antimafia Parliamentary Commission from 2006 to 2008 was vehemently attacked by prominent figures within the movement for the perceived treachery of investigating antimafia misconducts, raises a crucial point: it is not just tactics or strategies, but the very nature of the struggle that has changed. The osmotic exchange of antimafia and government, he maintains, threatens the overall identity of the movement as an expression of civil society, as such necessarily separated from the state.[65]

From Hegel to Partha Chatterjee, a long line of political theorists have elaborated on the distinction between political and civil society as a constitutive element of social organization foregrounding "the active engagement with social forces (through either mediation or production) to order social identities within the context of institutions."[66] Gramsci, in particular, has been credited for capturing the democratic potential of civil society and framing it within a broader political horizon ultimately tending towards a radical transformation of society altogether. Reversing Hegel's belief in the necessary subsumption of civil society by the state, the Gramscian strategy of social progress envisaged "expanding and reinforcing the scope and powers of the various segments and institutions of civil society"[67] in order to input into the rule of political society. In this process, he warned against the seamless alignment between "political society" (the state, or the "government by functionaries") and "civil society" (its "organic complement," or "self-government") and its byproduct, that is, "statolatry," an attitude of a social group toward its own state which hinders the expansion of internal forces simultaneously independent from and complementary to the state. On

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[64] Forgione, Francesco. *I tragediatori*, cit., 5-6.
[65] Lupo, Salvatore. "Introduzione." In *Che cos'è la mafia. Sciascia e Andreotti, l'antimafia e la politica*. Rome: Donzelli, 2007, vii-xiv.
[66] Hardt, Michael. "The Withering of Civil Society." *Social Text* 45 (1995): 27-44, 40.
[67] Ivi, 30.

the one hand, Gramsci recognized that for groups that "have not had a long independent period of cultural and moral development on their own [...] a period of statolatry is necessary and indeed opportune" in order to be initiated to "autonomous state life." On the other hand, abandoning statolatry to itself would turn it into "a theoretical fanaticism" unable to "develop and produce new forms of state life, in which the initiative of individuals and groups would have a 'state' character, even if it is not due to the 'government of the functionaries'."[68] Gramsci's theory of civil society must not be disentangled from the actual struggle for political power, which is closely related to the acquisition of hegemony in civil society and thus the creation of new spaces "beyond the reach of the governmental, administrative, and juridical apparatuses of the state."[69] However, it is necessary to keep in mind that when conceiving the antimafia as a social group, its alignment with and dependence from the state as well as its withdrawal from political society (what Forgione called the antimafia's lost "social soul") complicate the picture. More than just a deficient critical orientation toward power, today's antimafia is in fact characterized by its inability to imagine forms of political action that could bypass, or constitute alternatives to, the apparatuses of the state, being them the educational system, the judiciary, state-owned media, parliamentary politics, etc. The import of legality as the movement's constitutive value appears, in this respect, symptomatic inasmuch as the very boundaries of the concept are sanctioned by the state. From this impasse results the retreat to the struggle's symbolic and ethical dimensions, so self-evident that mayor Orlando comfortably defined the antimafia movement as "a permanent education process aimed at spreading a culture of legality fundamentally inspired by ethical values."[70]

The pedagogical project of the antimafia has received much scholarly attention, especially since Jane and Peter Schneider identified it as one of the cornerstones, alongside the recuperation of Palermo's built environment, through which the movement "has energetically propagated a set of values loosely associated with building 'civil society.'"[71] As the Schneiders document, a myriad of associations, educators, social workers, and clergymen spearheaded multifarious approaches to educating for "legality," citizenship, and democracy that led only to stalemates and shortcomings, most notably in the city's "at risk neighborhoods." Nevertheless, their ethnographic evidence testified a sense of urgency and civil passion, prevalent across the movement around the time they

[68] Gramsci, Antonio. "Statolatry." In *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 268-269. New York: International Publishers, 1971.
[69] Buttigieg, Joseph A. "Gramsci on Civil Society." *boundary 2* 22, no. 3 (1995): 1-32, 15.
[70] Orlando, Leoluca. *Fighting the Mafia*, cit., 5.
[71] Schneider, Jane, and Peter Schneider. *Reversible Destiny*, cit., 3.

conducted their fieldwork (late 1980s to late 1990s). The sense was that all the conditions were in place to win the fight, provided that younger generations repudiated the value and belief systems to which they may have been socialized. Accordingly, antimafia teachings spanned from abstract ideals of democratic participation to the most quotidian rules of conduct, from what it means to be a good citizen to how to settle a dispute among peers— a broad ethical spectrum, indeed, unified by the aim of educating in the present so as to guarantee the polity with a better future.[72] Then, something began changing. The sense of urgency, motivated in part by the crime syndicate's imminent threat, waned and Cosa Nostra vanished from the political agenda during the Berlusconi era. Although the movement maintained its hold over the school system and schoolchildren remained (to this day) the designated target of most antimafia initiatives,[73] the actual teachings underwent a process of abstraction. Upon observing pictures of the previous May 23rd commemorations, one cannot but help notice how, almost from year to year, the marchers' signs transition from social and political demands towards ethical claims.

It is at this conjuncture that remembrance became the mainstay of the antimafia movement and the prism through which, in the epoch of a barely perceptible Cosa Nostra, the topicality of the entire educational project could be perceived. Through the gradual transformation from political demands to memory imperatives, the media reconfigured their main function in the struggle against the mafia as well, moving from being the platform whereby those demands were articulated—e.g., talk shows and broadcasted state funerals—to being mere sites of commemoration. "This is the beginning of the age of *Mafiaworld* [in English in the original]," observes film scholar Emiliano Morreale, "a Cosa Nostra reduced to a theme park, a world of signs that each time mobilizes the registers of commemoration, commitment, and conspiracy to strengthen its position within the [national] mediascape."[74] These registers, I would argue, are not equivalent: commemoration, in fact, is the growth medium of mafia-themed films and TV shows, as Morreale himself admits when pointing to the virtual absence of films and TV shows " about Cosa Nostra set in the present time."[75] Two points need to be emphasized before moving on to explore the shifting grounds of remembrance in antimafia-related cultural production.

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[72] Santino, Umberto. *Oltre la legalità. Appunti per un programma di lavoro in terre di mafia*. Palermo: Centro di documentazione Peppino Impastato, 1998.
[73] Dalla Chiesa, Nando. "Gli studenti contro la mafia: note (di merito) per un movimento." *Quaderni piacentini* 11 (1983): 39-60; Cavadi, Augusto, ed. *A scuola di antimafia. Materiali di studio, esperienze didattiche, criteri educativi*. Palermo: Centro di documentazione Peppino Impastato, 1994.
[74] Morreale, Emiliano. *La mafia immaginaria*, cit., 266.
[75] Ivi, 19.

First, the interactions between the film and television industry and the movement, never devoid of conflict and mutual mistrust, are infrequent and the very existence of antimafia-centered films should not be mistaken for a sign of any structural connection between the two. Notwithstanding, from the 2000s onwards films and TV shows have become integral to the antimafia's educational project, constituent elements of a shared heritage formed and transmitted mostly through the school system. If getting access to the "antimafia circuit" represents a much longed-for opportunity for low-budget film producers whose work cannot rely on traditional distribution channels, mainstream mediamakers do not seek as actively the movement's approval, even though the didactic and one-dimensional approaches of most products bespeak their fitness to be absorbed into the circuit. Rank-and-file educators and activists tend to "use" films (and to a lesser extent TV shows) often uncritically, as plausible, if not authentic, illustrations of the struggle, mirroring in their canon-making practices mainstream media's propensity for biopics of mafia martyrs, referred to with a hint of familiarity as, for instance, "the film on Peppino" or "the film on don Pino." As Alice Mattoni put it, mediated life stories of mafia victims are fundamental to the movement "because these individual and subjective memories feed the imaginary of those who, collectively, get organized to fight the mafia. However, they convey only the fragments of a more complex and articulated history that unfolded mostly through numerous collective actions."[76] Accordingly, the antimafia cultural elite tends to display a certain contempt for a form of cultural production deemed cheap and politically deleterious, a criticism associated with a broader concern for the "personalization" of the struggle and the consolidation of the figure of the martyr as its ultimate embodiment. Exemplary in this sense is the position of Umberto Santino, a doyen of the leftist antimafia. "To be accepted into the [antimafia's cinematic] pantheon, one must become a prayer card [*santino*]: a flat, clean-cut, nearly holy figure devoid of contradictions and, possibly, of the unsettling implications that the struggle cannot but raise," he said to me. Then, our conversation shifted to his involvement with the industry, and in particular his troubled collaboration to the making of "the film on Peppino," *I cento passi* (*One Hundred Steps*, Marco Tullio Giordana, 2000). As the director of the documentation center dedicated to the Marxist militant and mafia victim, he spoke of the "disastrous impact" the film had on the activities of the Centro. "After its release, we lost our Peppino for good; the young Proletarian Democracy party militant who spent his short life

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[76] Mattoni, Alice. "I movimenti antimafie in Italia." In *Atlante delle mafie: storia, economia, società, cultura*, edited by Enzo Ciconte, Francesco Forgione, and Isaia Sales, 335-350. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2014, 336.

at the service of antimafia, environmentalist, and feminist causes had been turned into an immature hothead with daddy issues all thanks to a film that has become today's *Potemkin Battleship*, the mandatory screening for any [antimafia] cine-club." Finally, he added, "Most invitations I have received in the past twenty years were at screenings of the film for the schools: I do not see any point in going and telling students that Peppino was not like that, that the struggle has never been like that. Giovanni [Peppino's brother, a pizzeria owner and antimafia spokesperson] is always eager to go, he tours the country like a Pilgrim Madonna as many others do." This last observation is crucial to grasp cinema's (and to a lesser extent television's) functions within the dynamics of circulation conflating education, cultural promotion, and antimafia activism, and the fact that it is expressed through a series of religious metaphors (the prayer card, the Pilgrim Madonna, the martyr) is no less revelatory. It is hard not to see in Santino's discomfort a reflection of the uneasiness of the "social antimafia," or what has remained of it, in the face of the abstraction of the antimafia message, a process that cinema and television helped propagate. This has not always been the case, though. The student movement of the late 1960s and 1970s in Palermo, for instance, resorted habitually to cinema as an instrument for raising political consciousness (also with regards to mafia-related issues). Besides the oral accounts I collected about the circulation of the so-called *cinema civile* among leftist groups, a good example is Opera Universitaria collective's *Sottosviluppo, potere culturale, mafia*.[77] The leaflet collects the proceedings of a debate prompted by the screening of *Confessione di un commissario di polizia al procuratore della Repubblica* (*Confessions of a Police Captain*, Damiano Damiani, 1971) in which the film and its political shortcomings constituted the starting point for developing an antagonistic institutional critique of the nexus between underdevelopment, the state, and Cosa Nostra. Reporting on the event, Jesuit and future architect of the *Primavera* Ennio Pintacuda noted that the film (and cinema more generally) incited the students to speak with the intention "to remove the bandage covering a deadly wounded body in order to show how they do not serve to heal but merely to conceal what is underneath them."[78] The operation rendered through the metaphor of bandage removing is, in that context, also the interpretative move enabling the students to deconstruct the ideological content of the film—interestingly, a moral play on the legitimacy of personal justice—in order to excavate the regimes of complicity of which the

[77] Opera Universitaria, ed. *Sottosviluppo, potere culturale, mafia*. Palermo: Quaderni universitari palermitani, 1972.
[78] Pintacuda, Ennio. "Considerazioni per una ricerca di strategie politiche per lo sviluppo della Sicilia." In *Sottosviluppo, potere culturale, mafia*, edited by Opera Universitaria, 11-27. Palermo: Quaderni universitari palermitani, 1972, 13.

film itself, willingly or not, was a manifestation.[79] Such an approach could not be more distant from that of the antimafia movement four-five decades later. Although the window-into-the-world framework through which Pintacuda came to terms with the value of cinema within militant and political settings is not substantially altered, any critical engagement with films, if not the very possibility that there may be anything at all underneath the textual surface, seems lost. In yet another overlap with the indigenous religious tradition, the consumption of antimafia-centered films in educational contexts presents striking resemblances with the catechesis of the masses by means of popular religious media throughout the centuries. Both are forms of mediation structured and registered as granting access to (divine or antimafia) truth on the condition that the very dynamics of the process remain unquestioned. Accordingly, the antimafia film canon could be compared to a passionary, the medieval hagiographic collection dedicated to the lives of martyrs,[80] whose authenticity and value have been scrutinized only in more recent times. Antimafia biopics, in other words, are taken at face value, interpreted as transparent renditions of an exemplary life supposed to inform the young audiences' behaviors and attitudes. Timid criticisms raised by the activists and educators I interviewed concerned almost exclusively the subgenre's overreliance on melodrama, often expressed as a slight annoyance toward romantic and family-drama subplots but always justified as intrinsic to contemporary cinema's storytelling techniques. Moreover, even when skeptical towards the prominence of private affairs in antimafia films, most activists do not fail to notice that melodrama's intensified affective dimension, rather than being a source of second-rate entertainment, fosters forms of attachment and identification eventually contributing to the educational purpose of the film by curbing the metaphysical elements that would otherwise foreclose them.[81]

Second, the ecumenism of the antimafia (and consequently antimafia-approved cultural

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[79] See Uva, Christian. *L'immagine politica. Forme del contropotere tra cinema, video e fotografia nell'Italia degli anni Settanta*. Milan: Mimesis, 2015.

[80] Significantly, although very well present in the early days of the civil religion, the idiom of martyrdom has entered the mainstream in relatively recent times, as attested by the fact that only from the mid-2010s on biographies of mafia victims feature references to martyrdom in their very titles. An earlier occurrence of this phenomenon is Torcivia, Mario. *Il martirio di don Giuseppe Puglisi: una riflessione teologica*. Saronno: Monti, 2009, which predates mainstream variations on the theme such as Naro, Massimo. *Pino Puglisi per il Vangelo. La testimonianza cristiana di un martire siciliano*. Sciascia, Rome, 2014; Sardo, Raffaele. *Don Peppe Diana. Un martire in terra di camorra*. Trapani: Di Girolamo, 2016; Cavadi, Augusto. *Peppino Impastato martire civile*. Trapani: Di Girolamo, 2018; Scaglione, Fulvio. *Padre Puglisi, martire di mafia*. Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 2018; Sirna, Pio. *Rosario Livatino: identità, martirio e magistero*. Trapani: Il pozzo di Giacobbe, 2020.

[81] Gledhill, Christine. "Rethinking Genre." In *Reinventing Film Studies*, edited by Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams, 42-88. London: Bloomsbury, 2000; Zarzosa, Agustin. "Melodrama and the Modes of the World." *Discourse* 32, no. 2 (2010): 236-255.

production), that is, its pretension to tackle universal issues related to civil life and the common good that concern the entire citizenry, disguises the massive extent to which its educational project is fractured along class lines. Not only is the core of the movement, though not exactly homogeneous, "gender-integrated, urban, and educated middle-class,"[82] thus extraordinarily different in its composition from the previous waves of antimafia activism, but also its outlook towards the project is organized around a class-based understanding of the struggle. Thus, the urban poor are its obvious recipients and the promotion of middle-class values is its platform, while the upper classes are exonerated from the burden of cultural re-education.[83] This helps explain the movement's uncritical adoption of the majoritarian strand of "political" cultural production for which Pierpaolo Antonello and Florian Mussgnug coined the expression "post-hegemonic *impegno*" [commitment, engagement]. They define it as "an ethical and political position channeled through specific cultural and artistic activities, against any restrictive ideological brace," marking the shift "from macropolitics to micropolitics," from emancipatory and class struggle to an idea of engagement grounded on individual action.[84] This influential notion resonates much broadly within Italian culture scholarship, inspiring as well a compelling debate on mafia-related cultural production, and notably cinema. Scholars have inquired how the transmission of *impegno*, in the words of Dom Holdaway, "function[s] as a performance [requiring the viewer to] participate within a process of *impegno* and experience a form of pleasure in doing so" and how this in turn leads to the establishment of an "engaged constituency."[85] More than a textual or authorial attribute, *impegno* is "a privileged *system* within the contemporary film [and television] industry: a self-referential and self-sufficient system based on production, socio-cultural legitimacy, and taste-making."[86] Essential to this dimension is a compelling contradiction that the two scholars brilliantly single out. On the one hand, they notice that within the Italian film industry forms of hegemonic (top-down, conventionally leftist, associated with neorealist and post-neorealist political cinema, oppositional)

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[82] Schneider, Peter, and Jane Schneider. *Reversible Destiny*, cit., 161.
[83] Idd. "Dalle guerre contadine alle guerre urbane: Il movimento antimafia a Palermo." *Meridiana* 25 (1996): 47-75.
[84] Antonello, Pierpaolo, and Florian Mussgnug. "Introduction." In *Postmodern Impegno: Ethics and Commitment in Contemporary Italian Culture*, edited by Pierpaolo Antonello and Florian Mussgnug, 1-29. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009, 11.
[85] Holdaway, Dom. *A Return to* Cinema d'Impegno*? Cinematic Engagements with Organized Crime in Italy, 1950-2010*. Phd Dissertation. Warwick: University of Warwick, 2013, 249. See also, O' Leary, Alan, ed. "The Politics of Italian Cinema: Genres, Modes, and Scholarship. A Roundtable." *The Italianist* 33, no. 2 (2013): 236-320; O' Leary, Alan. "Political/Popular Cinema." In *Italian Political Cinema: Public Life, Imaginary, and Identity in Contemporary Italian Film*, edited by Giancarlo Lombardi and Christian Uva, 107-118. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2016.
[86] Holdaway, Dom, and Dalila Missero. "Il sistema dell'impegno nel cinema italiano." In *Il sistema dell'impegno nel cinema italiano*, edited by Dom Holdaway and Dalila Missero, 17-35, Milan: Mimesis, 2020, 35. Emphasis mine.

and post-hegemonic (bottom-up, a- or anti-ideological, fragmentary, mainstream) *impegno* coexist peacefully and seamlessly. On the other, "production, distribution, and criticism in Italy [in the end] promote practices that seem to *simulate*, with different degrees of legitimacy, […] a completely hegemonic *cinema d'impegno*, at least in its formal and above all marketing characters."[87] This is particularly relevant in the case of antimafia cinema. The markers of the hegemonic *impegno* of this form of cultural production are patent: high degree of socio-cultural legitimacy, state funding, official recognition of cultural and national interest,[88] distribution and marketing treating it as a topical political commentary, and an extreme internal consistency (in narrative, formal, and ideological terms). The broader process from which this emerged is the late 1990s reconfiguration of the film and television industry, whose most visible outcome, following the crisis of both genre and arthouse cinema, has been major cultural producers' massive investment on a more palatable *impegno* catered to middle-class audiences. New ideals of "quality" nourished new cinematic practices and, in line with a similar shift in European cinema, heritage cinema became the elective genre of middlebrow *impegno*. As Bélen Vidal writes, this genre places "the political past within living memory at the heart of its thematic concerns" through a middlebrow aesthetics informed by the adoption of "accessible narrative styles, emphasis on character and agency, and preponderance of genre tropes (in particular, melodrama)" that nonetheless often reflect on and address a past age of radical politics.[89] Starting from the observation that historical films often provide "conciliatory narratives […] driven by a desire to heal the wounds of the past and thereby seal them, to transform bad history into agreeable fantasies that allow for a sense of closure,"[90] Vidal disputes that recent European heritage does forge a new consensus on the meaning of the past. Instead, she locates its significance "in what its mediated aesthetics and self-insertion in the public sphere have to say about contemporary attempts at 'normalizing,' or coming to terms with, the past," time and again through the idea of collective victimhood and the demand to bear witness through affect.[91] Spain's

[87] Idem. Emphasis mine. See also Fisher, Austin. "Impegno, Cultural Capital, and the Politics of Confusion." *The Italianist* 33, no. 2 (2013): 300-304.

[88] For an overview of the impact of the "riconoscimento di interesse culturale e nazionale" sanctioned by the Minister of Culture, see Manzoli, Giacomo, and Marco Cucco, eds. *Il cinema di stato: Finanziamento pubblico ed economia simbolica nel cinema italiano contemporaneo*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2017.

[89] Vidal, Bélen. "Radical Politics, Middlebrow Cinema: *Salvador* (*Puig Antich*) and the Search for a New Consensus." In *Middlebrow Cinema*, edited by Sally Faulkner, 156-177. New York-London: Routledge, 2016.

[90] Rentschler, Eric. "*The Lives of Others*: The History of Heritage and the Rhetoric of Consensus." In The Lives of Others *and Contemporary German Film*, edited by Paul Cooke, 241-60. Gottingen: De Gruyter, 2013, 243.

[91] Vidal, Bélen. "Radical Politics," cit., 173. See also Landsberg, Alison. *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

democratic transition, Vidal claims, has inspired the production of heritage films that reinforce a "middlebrow pedagogical project of generational transmission."[92] In a context far less invested in radical politics but unequivocally promoting a pedagogical project such as that of antimafia cinema, similar dynamics occur exactly at the same space: the crossroad of middlebrow aesthetics, political filmmaking, memory imperatives, and middle-class targeted audiences.

To summarize, in the last two decades, the antimafia movement has appropriated forms of cultural production, and film specifically, that promote antimafia values through the register of commemoration laden with melodramatic and ethical implication, with the aim of reinvigorating a pedagogical project whose momentum diminished following the partial disappearance of Cosa Nostra and its effects from Sicily's public life. Two apparent paradoxes lay in this appropriation. First, the movement does not exercise any degree of moral suasion on the industry and yet it embraces these forms of cultural production quite uncritically, deeming them suitable for the project's implementation in spite of their extraneousness to it. Second, both the movement and the industry uphold middle-class values such as legality, morality, education, civic virtue, responsibility, and moderation, masqueraded as universal, which nonetheless seek to address simultaneously a homogeneous audience group (the engaged constituency) and marginalized social groups (the recipients of the antimafia's pedagogical project). In the remainder of this section, I turn to Pierfrancesco "Pif" Diliberto's *La mafia uccide solo d'estate*, easily the most significant example of antimafia cinema in the 2010s, to illustrate how these paradoxes are resolved through the new articulations of commemoration, heritage, and life stories that in recent years have become dominant in the sphere of antimafia-related cultural production.

"All the antimafia education I got comes from Pif," an upper-class Palermitan friend replied when asked about the antimafia pedagogical initiatives she attended while studying at one of the most prestigious high schools of the city in the mid- to late-2000s. The density of this casual remark was not lost on me, attuned as I was to the cultural and symbolic value of Pif's work especially for youths, Sicilian and not. A familiar face for most Italian television audiences, the Palermo-born eclectic showman (radio and TV host, novelist, screenwriter, actor, and director) has built a formidable career navigating the intersections of entertainment, activism, and postmodern *impegno*. As a television author, Pif specialized in the peculiar format of investigative infotainment he learnt in his years as a correspondent for *Le Iene* ("The Hyenas," a reference to the Italian title of Quentin

[92] Idem.

Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*), a popular Mediaset show mostly made up of satirical and oftentimes controversial reportages on political and current affairs. Moving away from *Le Iene*'s moralism and sensationalism, he authored and hosted MTV Italia's *Il Testimone* ("The Witness"), an experiment in "light anthropology,"[93] to borrow television critic Aldo Grasso's fitting characterization, investigating disparate aspects of Italian life.[94] Armed with a hand-held camera, a good dose of narcissism, and a voracious curiosity, Pif offered a platform to an array of marginal figures and groups who often found themselves enabled to draw attention to the kind of social and political claims they had been struggling to advance in the public sphere. The host's ability to support, empathize, and create complicity with his informants contributed to enrich the show with an emotional intensity in general foreign to the genre. Individuals and associations related to the antimafia movement, in particular, benefited from the show, for Pif and his collaborators devoted one episode of every season to the topic. Thanks to *Il Testimone*, anti-racket NGO Addio Pizzo (to which three episodes pay tribute) became known outside the Palermo area and so did journalists, storekeepers, relatives of mafia victims, and activists who in the years following their apparition on the show gained some degrees of notoriety. Though very diverse, all the mafia-related episodes illustrate in a powerful manner the forms of proximity and connivance antimafia actors are forced to live with, frequently overstressing the exclusionary dynamics experienced by those who resist a system presented as intrinsic to the organization of Sicilian life. To reinforce this aspect, most episodes are set in small villages where these dynamics can be captured more conspicuously when compared to the anomie of the city. The quotidian heroism of the antimafia episodes' protagonists is astutely built by underscoring the climate of fear and hostility surrounding these "good citizens". For instance, everyday situations such as grabbing coffee or taking a stroll are framed as potentially fatal; interviewees are usually asked if they fear for their life; Pif's remarks highlight the absurdity of a society that does not protect those who fight to make it better. Accordingly, for viewers accustomed to the chain of martyrdoms displayed by antimafia cinema, the life stories that *Il Testimone* showcases may indeed strike a familiar chord, but distances them from the canon on account of the inner ordinariness of the protagonists. The arcade owner refusing some-hundred euros to a friendly regular customer claiming to have paid upfront for a gift delivered to some people who

[93] Grasso, Aldo. "*Il Testimone* di Pif cambia rete ma non sostanza." *Il Corriere della Sera*, July 8, 2021.
[94] To provide an example of the wild variety of topics treated in the show, the first season of *Il Testimone* features reportages on antiracket activism, religious vocation, the porn industry, family life in the circus, gay activism, Roma communities, life in prison, holiday entertainers, blind people, and a Chinese-in-Italy beauty contest.

will not cause any nuisance is a reassuring figure anyone can easily relate to. Hence, the sympathy he cannot but arouse when he shares with Pif the unfortunate (but far from tragic) consequences of pressing charges against his extortionist, which include receiving pressure from friends and family to withdraw the denunciation, crossing path with the perpetrator and his family on an almost daily basis, and losing most customers. Likewise, the journalist who ran a quasi-amateur local television channel starring in the episode "Lo scassaminchia" (*scassare*, to wreak + *minchia*, penis) works in such improvised conditions that the viewer tends to appreciate more his dreamy vocation and messy way of life than the political effectiveness of his action.

Although reaching a near-cult status among young audiences, *Il Testimone* did not enjoy the kind of popularity that Pif obtained with his debut feature, *La mafia uccide solo d'estate*, a tragicomic coming of age story on growing up in a mafia-ruled territory. The film follows Arturo, a perceptive schoolboy and then a gawky young man whose life has unfolded almost entirely as a consequence of mafia violence, from conception (the slowest spermatozoon fecundated the egg after a nearby mafia shooting scared the others) to fatherhood (the son's education as a decade-long antimafia pilgrimage through the commemorative stones of mafia martyrs). "The mafia has always affected the lives of everybody, especially mine," opens the voice-over narrator of the film while the camera nervously pans over some of Palermo's most famous sights, suggesting how the mafia's influence "saturates Palermo and produces a cultural and material contagion that, through systematically enacted violence, slowly threatens to control and dominate the entire society."[95] As a product of 1970s-80s middle-class Palermitan culture and its reticent collusion with the crime syndicate (the so-called "grey area"), Arturo indeed comes of age with a paradoxical unawareness of the mafia while being to a very large extent shaped by it. Throughout the film, his sentimental education—his romantic love for his classmate Flora being the narrative backbone of the film—progresses in parallel to a slow and accidental discernment favored by the serendipitous contacts with the protagonists of the struggle against the mafia whose tragic deaths he witnesses with uncanny regularity. As his feelings for Flora grow after an initial resistance due to the eavesdropped revelation that "in Palermo women kill more than strokes" he learnt from common people who refused to admit that the murders of policemen, judges, and other civil servants were somehow imputable to the mafia, Arturo also develops an unlikely veneration for Prime Minister Giulio

[95] Delfino, Massimiliano. "A Cinematic Anti-Monument against Mafia Violence: P. Diliberto's *La mafia uccide solo d'estate*." *Annali di Italianistica* 35 (2017): 385-401, 390.

Andreotti. In the eyes of the kid, only one of the most powerful and controversial individuals in the history of modern Italy could provide moral and emotional guidance in his romance. Trying to impress his beloved and inspired by the statesman, the protagonist embarks on a series of adventures, including a career as a child journalist, that puts his worship to test. The film follows his maturation, framed as the process through which he became gradually more cognizant of the impact of the syndicate on his everyday life as well as of the limitations of Andreotti's antimafia action (or rather the lack thereof). The realization that the very embodiment of political power held an ambiguous attitude towards one of the worst plagues of the time—and of the protagonist's life and community—allows the naïve boy to acquire a pre-political consciousness, a purely emotional understanding of the *intreccio* and its social consequences experienced through its incidental reverberations on the everyday. Later on, when twenty-something Arturo met Flora again in Palermo a decade or so after she had left Sicily for Switzerland due to her father's inability to run his bank in the new climate established by antimafia investigations, he will open her eyes to the *intreccio*. Eventually, she will leave her job as assistant of Salvo Lima, the powerful Andreotti emissary who will be murdered owing to his inability to overturn the Maxi-trial sentences through the appointment of a complicit judge, and marry the protagonist.

The development of Arturo, the ordinary child of 1970s-80s Palermo, reflects at the individual level the contemporaneous growing awareness of the citizenry, reinforcing the analogy between the individual and the social that Massimiliano Delfino identified as the main cipher of the film's "biological reading of the mafia."[96] The Maxi-trial, showed through a montage of archival sequences and presented as the moment in which "Palermitans discovered the existence of the mafia thanks to judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino," bridges Arturo's childhood and adulthood, as though an entire community could reach maturity only after having acknowledged the tragic nature of the plague affecting it. Likewise, two digitally manipulated archival sequences mark a sort of double epiphany for the protagonist: in line with the commemorative strand of antimafia cinema, they happen to be two state funerals, dalla Chiesa's and Falcone's. In both, iconic excerpts of the broadcasted ceremonies are intermixed with scenes featuring Arturo that simulate the texture of the original image, a technique borrowed from *Forrest Gump* (Robert Zemeckis, 1994) to which Pif's film is much indebted, so as to insert further the fictional character in the mediated history of the struggle. In the first case, young Arturo anxiously surveys the parterre of state personalities

[96] Ivi, 392.

present at the funeral hoping to meet his idol Andreotti, who did not attend ("I prefer baptisms over funerals," he later explained), leading to the boy's disillusionment. In the second case, Arturo and Flora, after their turbulent reencounter at an older age, participate in the collective celebration of the antimafia martyr that united the whole city in a protest against both the rule of the mafia and the complicity of the state, and they finally kissed and professed their love. These moments amplify the pedagogical project of the film by inscribing the ordinary citizen of Palermo into the collective memory of the antimafia. They serve to depict him as a non-neutral witness who had slowly but steadily come to grasp the meaning of what surrounded him—namely, the deadly impact of the mafia, but also the collective force and moral superiority of the community opposing it. What is of interest to us in this context is that this takes place in continuity with what Millicent Marcus has labeled "the memorialist tradition" of antimafia films, the latter being conceived of as "cinematic tomb inscriptions designed to transmit the legacy of moral engagement and social justice for which their protagonists died."[97] On a surface level, *La mafia uccide solo d'estate* invokes explicitly mourning and memorialization as key components of antimafia pedagogy in the final sequence in which, as already mentioned, Arturo and Flora educate their son "to recognize the evil of the world" by means of a guided tour across the memorial plaques commemorating antimafia martyrs. On a deeper level, however, the film itself, in Massimiliano Delfino's interpretation, "performs a rewriting of history that requires full participation from the audience," therefore enabling a reading of it as "a didactic tool that, rather than merely glorifying the actions and sacrifices of the dead, acts on the sensitivities of the living."[98] This illuminates well the rationales behind the film's appropriation by the antimafia movement, which elected it to a major cultural reference and a precious instrument in disseminating knowledge about the history of both the mafia and the civil and institutional resistance against it. This, also, resonates with a paradigm shift in antimafia-promoted cultural production that may be considered a byproduct of the saturation of the antimafia discourse I will address in the last section of this chapter. A growing number of activists are in fact slowly turning their backs to the pantheon of antimafia martyrs to explore, still from a position firmly rooted within the commemorative framework, a variety of less-known life stories of ordinary mafia victims (professionals, storekeepers, police escort, collateral victims, etc.). An activist very

[97] Marcus, Millicent. "In Memoriam: The Neorealist Legacy in the Contemporary Sicilian Anti-Mafia Film." In *Italian Neorealism and Global Cinema*, edited by Laura E. Ruberto and Kristi M. Wilson, 290-307. Detroit: Wayne University Press, 2007, 292.
[98] Delfino, Massimiliano. "A Cinematic Anti-Monument," cit., 399.

close to antimafia NGO Libera, history schoolteacher and writer Alessandro Chiolo, expresses this anti-heroic turn in a powerful manner in his introduction to a compendium of biographical portraits of mafia victims:

> These stories and these people have become part of me as a living being, of my approach to think of and live my life. […] Writing about the mafia and the actual lives [it had taken away] gives vigor to my existence: a common thread and an ideal horizon that like a compass orients my daily actions, actions that shall not be heroic but commensurate with our abilities and possibilities.[99]

While the historical figures featured in *La mafia uccide solo d'estate* (police chief Boris Giuliano, magistrate Rocco Chinnici, prefect Carlo Alberto dalla Chiesa, judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino) belong to all effects to the pantheon, they are presented as both ordinary and accessible to the protagonist, and by extension to the audience. The imaginary Arturo through his amateur journalistic deeds, not unlike the real Chiolo in his work as antimafia essayist, elects these exemplary figures as ethical guides and role models, while the film invites its audiences to follow the lead of the young protagonist in celebrating their legacy. For this reason, one activist I interviewed could eagerly affirm, "*La mafia uccide solo d'estate* speaks of, to, and for us." From an activist's perspective, the film indeed contributed to the struggle against the mafia not only by popularizing it far and wide and developing further the ethical discourses I have discussed at length, but also by sustaining—materially and morally—its actors. Activists (Addio Pizzo, specifically), in fact, while not involved in the writing of the film, contributed to its making by scouting locations and providing services that Pif feared could have been otherwise managed by less trustworthy figures, displaying a perhaps exaggerated awareness of the economic and ethical repercussions of filmmaking in Palermo. Moreover, the film is dedicated to "the boys of the Catturandi police squad, the Quarto Savona 15, and all police escorts fallen while fulfilling their duties," a tribute that makes explicit from the get-go the filmmaker's allegiance toward an institutional antimafia above suspicion. From a local's perspective, it matters that the filmmaker's direct experience of life in Palermo, validated through autobiographical markers scattered all over his works, copious references to the sentimental and cultural geographies of the city, and an omnipresent voice-over narration consciously eliciting complicity from the audience, is so prominent to *La mafia uccide*

[99] Chiolo, Alessandro. *Dietro ogni lapide. Morti per mafia, vivi per amore*. Palermo: Di Girolamo, 2020, 13.

solo d'estate.

In accordance with the commemorative imperative of antimafia cinema, it is not Sicilian life in abstract to be effectively represented throughout the film, but its specific 1970s-80s middle-class Palermitan manifestation filtered through Pif's experience. According to Millicent Marcus, the moving away from the heroic to the ordinary, alongside the foray into romantic comedy and the intrusion of a TV aesthetics, make the film "a striking effort to update and reactivate the monumental history of the struggle."[100] The moral imperative of bearing witness and transmitting memory in defiance of the codes of *omertà* as well as the commitment to the regimes of truth undergirding antimafia culture enable Pif to forge "an ethically charged relationship between a representation and its audience."[101] In this respect, the film would seem to fit unquestionably within the civil religion paradigm, a framework often used by the filmmaker himself in promoting the film.[102] Nonetheless, what Marcus seems to underestimate while praising the film for its mobilizing power is exactly what Vidal notices in relation to the allegedly political European heritage film: retrospective readings of the political past through middle-class values and middlebrow modes of address ultimately ends up "normalizing" its radical potentials. It is not by chance then that both values and modes of address are mediated in Pif's film by nostalgia, an affective modality informing the director's approach to the historical reconstruction of the epoch by means of the mediation of pop culture (and its consumption) and the recourse to the coming-of-age generic conventions. Moreover, the vintage imaginary conjured through nostalgia, combined with self-orientalizing tropes and the adoption of a crowd-pleasing format of European popular cinema (*Amélie* [*Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain*, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001] being an obvious source of inspiration), favored the circulation of the film abroad and its popularity at home.[103] This modality, however, bears a specific significance in the context of antimafia cultural production, as what it expresses, according to Morreale's sharp reading,

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[100] Marcus, Millicent. "From Comedy to Commemoration: Pierfrancesco Diliberto's *La mafia uccide solo d'estate*." In *Mafia Movies: A Reader*, edited by Dana Renga, 300-5. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019, 2nd edition, 301.
[101] Ivi, 305.
[102] For instance, "*La mafia uccide solo d'estate*, incontro tra Pif e Bolzoni." *La Repubblica video*, https://video.repubblica.it/spettacoli-e-cultura/la-mafia-uccide-solo-d-estate-incontro-con-pif-e-bolzoni/147558/146074, last accessed September 24, 2021.
[103] Dalton, Stephen. "*The Mafia Kills Only in Summer*." *Hollywood Reporter*, https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/mafia-kills-summer-la-mafia-661363/. Bradshaw, Peter. "*The Mafia Kills Only in Summer*, Review: Larky Coming of Age Tale" *The Guardian*, June 30, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/jun/30/the-mafia-only-kills-in-summer-review-pierfrancesco-dilberto-palermo-mafia. Catsoulis, Jeannette. "*The Mafia Kills Only in Summer* Is a Comical Look at the Mob." *The New York Times*, March 5, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/06/movies/review-the-mafia-kills-only-in-summer-is-a-comical-look-at-the-mob.html, last accessed September 8, 2021.

is "a paradoxical nostalgia for the 'filmability' of the mafia, for the time when it was possible to narrate it through established formulas."[104] Orphan of the antimafia film with its predictable dramaturgy, stereotyped characters, and inescapable moral lesson, *La mafia uccide solo d'estate* attests to the incapability of the civil religion framework to be operational in the present time, besides the worn-out rhetoric of remembrance and bearing witness. This new articulation of commemoration, heritage, and life stories falls short in recuperating the radical potential of antimafia activism—the social and political antimafia proper—and clashes against the paramount problem of the mafia's representation and representability in the present time.

[104] Morreale, Emiliano. *La mafia immaginaria*, cit., 275.

“Close the Door, Feel the Mafia”: The Sensual Politics of a Mafia Museum

In June 2008, the drowsy Arab-medieval town of Salemi, a hillside center halfway between Palermo and Trapani, had been shaken by an unusual municipal election, which threw it under the national spotlight. For the town, it was the third time in the history of modern Italy to be put in that position. The first time, one century and half earlier, was when Risorgimento leader Giuseppe Garibaldi picked the town as Italy’s new capital, albeit for one night only, before he and his young volunteering troops, “i Mille” (“The Thousand”), moved to Palermo. Then, in 1968, when the Belice Valley earthquake razed several historic centers, including (but not amongst the most dramatic cases) Salemi’s, and rendered almost 100,000 people homeless, forced to choose between emigration and over a dozen years in the Nissen huts.[105] While reconstruction proceeded at a painfully slow pace, further accentuating the sense of hopelessness experienced by rural Sicily at large, new towns sprouted up across the valley in ways that rendered visible the lack of central planning and coordination.[106] With the notable exception of Nuova Gibellina, rebuilt by prominent artists and architects according to utopian mayor Ludovico Corrao’s vision of a total integration of art into “the warp and weft of the civic environment as a whole,”[107] most villages underwent ruination. This was the case of Salemi: its town center is still not fully rebuilt to this date, and decrepit edifices intersperse with renovated and yet often unoccupied tuff buildings. Finally, forty years later, the election and the resulting municipal government that raised attention to the life of the town again.

The destiny of Salemi in 2008 was common to that of most small centers in Southern Italy—a crippling depopulation due to youth emigration; social and cultural stagnation; an economy revolving around an agricultural sector hooked on EU funds; crumbling infrastructures and communications; and a pervasive sense of abandonment perfectly encapsulated by the quasi deserted town center. A one-man party running on a program that reflected on the legacy of both the Risorgimento and the earthquake triggered popular enthusiasm across the town. In the face of the stark conditions just described, the polity’s hopes coalesced around the eccentric political proposal spearheaded by art critic and TV celebrity Vittorio Sgarbi’s Revolution Party. The former host of

[105] Ginsborg, Paul. *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988*. London: Penguin, 1990, 345-347.
[106] Badami, Alessandra. *Gibellina: la città che visse due volte. Terremoto e ricostruzione nella valle del Belice*. Rome: Franco Angeli, 2019, 113-145.
[107] Murray, Simon. *Performing Ruins*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2020, 64. See also La Monica, Giuseppe, ed., *Gibellina: ideologia e utopia*. Palermo: Ila Palma, 1981.

Sgarbi quotidiani, a 20-minute daily show broadcast from 1992 to 1999 that launched the pundit as one of the most pugnacious TV journalists and intellectuals backing Silvio Berlusconi ("the Dobermanns")[108], was not new to similar ventures, having held office in local administrations and served as member of Parliament almost without interruption since the early 1990s. Nor was the Salemi campaign, supported by a centrist coalition and endorsed by the local kingpin (temporarily sidetracked by a mafia-related conviction), exceptional for the self-professed non-politician who throughout his career joined a dozen of parties—from the Monarchists to the Post-fascists, from the Communists to the Environmentalists—consistently engrossed by his ability to garner attention and stir controversies. For a couple of decades, not by chance coinciding with the Berlusconi era, Sgarbi's signature style became his political platform,[109] and that seemed to work out just fine for the Sicilian townspeople. "My name alone—the newly elected mayor declared—will make Salemi known in the entire world. Basically, the largest and least expensive marketing campaign the citizens could hope for."[110] Excited by such a promise as well as annoyed by the rebranding of the town as "Sgarbilandia,"[111] the townspeople put their trust in the thaumaturgic and emancipatory powers of the show business in an additional illustration of the back-and-forth between politics and television characterizing *Berlusconismo*, the hegemonic political culture of the time.[112]

The newly formed city council featured an eccentric mix of minor celebrities (a singer, a fallen prince, a photograph, an artist-provocateur, a curator, a talk-show sociologist) in charge of running departments of no less eccentric denomination (Human Rights, Dreams, Beatitude, Inebriation, Nothing). Through an array of initiatives, some purely Dadaist and as such ridiculed by the citizens, the Sgarbi administration demonstrated its commitment to generate media buzz around the town's life. In compliance with the decade-long regional trend of heavy economic and affective investment in the tourist industry, whose deleterious effects on the land and its inhabitants are still unaddressed, the administration aimed to ease the town's conversion into a hyped destination. Fully mobilized to support Sgarbi's project, the grammar of the Risorgimento—literally, resurgence or rebirth—was recuperated to underpin all sorts of initiatives, from publicity-seeking diplomatic

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[108] Stille, Alexander. *The Sack of Rome*. London: Penguin, 2006.
[109] Ginsborg, Paul. *Silvio Berlusconi: Television, Power, and Patrimony* London-New York: Verso, 2004, 102-131.
[110] Quoted in "Sgarbi eletto sindaco di Salemi." *La Repubblica*, June 30, 2008, https://www.repubblica.it/2008/06/sezioni/politica/elezioni-sicilia/risultati-ballottaggi/risultati-ballottaggi.html. See Rotella, Sebastian. "Mayor Is What Puts Ruined Sicily Town on the Map." *Los Angeles Times*, April 17, 2009, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2009-apr-17-fg-zany-mayor17-story.html, last accessed November 30, 2020.
[111] La Licata, Francesco. "Tra le meraviglie di Sgarbilandia." *La Stampa*, September 24, 2008.
[112] Padovani, Cinzia. *A Fatal Attraction: Public Television and Politics in Italy*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.

affronts to China and Iran to the campaign to requalify the urban center through the sale of abandoned houses for the symbolic price of one euro. The town prepared itself for the arrival of the "i nuovi Mille" ("The New Thousand"), a flock of celebrities rumored to have purchased one-euro houses and be ready to move in at any moment. During the frantic months of the Sgarbi administration, a witness admitted scornfully, in the feverish chattering of cafes and squares people amused each other with the perspective of having oil magnate and Inter F.C. president Maurizio Moratti, Academy-Award winner Giuseppe Tornatore, songwriter Lucio Dalla, and even the then Microsoft chairperson Bill Gates as neighbors.

Even the 1968 earthquake entered the thaumaturgy narrative of the administration through "Progetto Terremoto" ("Earthquake Project"), a factory of young creatives directed by Salemi's "creativity councilor" Oliviero Toscani, the inflammatory photographer globally renowned for his advertising campaigns for the fashion brand Benetton in the 1980s and 1990s. For a couple of years, before Toscani's abrupt divorce with the Mayor, the factory coordinated marketing campaigns and events organization—the two pillars of the Sgarbi era. Overlooking how the experience of the catastrophe had been integrated into the memory of the community, let alone incarnated by the ruins dotting the urban landscape,[113] the symbolic appropriation of the earthquake as a signifier of disruptive renewal was a telling clue of the administration's approach to governance. So was the main initiative and only relic of the era (apart from the never operating escalator meant to bring tourists from the valley up to the town or the few short-lived businesses borne out of the same elation), the enterprise that would have done justice to its global ambitions—the Mafia Museum.

The creation of a mafia museum in a region where ruling classes and cultural elites alike have fully (that is, ostensibly) embraced antimafia rhetoric is no surprise. At the turn of the millennium, as mafia violence and the grip of the syndicate on the life of the region seemed to fade away, the issue of remembrance, as we have seen, became a privileged locus for antimafia activists to rearticulate the struggle against the mafia in new terms. The blueprint of the Holocaust, which "has in many ways shaped the discourse on collective, social, and cultural memory, serving both as touchstone and as paradigm,"[114] inspired also the debate on mafia museums. Many evoked explicitly Berlin's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and Jerusalem's Yad Vashem as models to aspire

[113] Rostan, Michele. *La terribile occasione. Imprenditorialità e sviluppo in una comunità del Belice*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998, 13-31.

[114] Hirsch, Marianne, and Leo Spitzer. "The Witness in the Archive: Holocaust Studies/Memory Studies." *Memory Studies* 2 (2009): 151-170, 151.

to or, more ingeniously, as self-evident references justifying almost any claim to memorialize the mafia. In a similar fashion, the struggle against Cosa Nostra began being refashioned as the Sicilian equivalent of the antifascist Resistance, thus motivating unlikely parallels with memorial sites and museums in Central and Northern Italy.[115] Local and regional governments saw in the promotion of mafia-themed museums, memorials, archives, and documentation centers a good occasion to acquire antimafia credentials and social legitimacy at a low cost, both financially and politically. In 2010, for instance, a few weeks after the inauguration of the Salemi museum, the cultural department of the regional administration established a scientific committee for the foundation of a "museum of memory and legality"[116], which met only twice throughout the year before being dismantled. An activist invited to join the committee voiced his suspicion of having been involved in a public-relation campaign orchestrated by the president of the regional government Raffaele Lombardo, at the time investigated for vote-buying, and confessed to have set his expectations accordingly.

Elderly antimafia activists, who have entertained similar ideas for decades, put only limited trust in the wavering support of local politicians. Petitions and proposals had circulated in the local media sphere since at least the mid-2000s. In particular, Umberto Santino and Anna Puglisi's Centro di documentazione "Peppino Impastato" has been remarkably active in creating an antimafia front devoted to the cause of "the big house where everyone can get in to know, to remember, to resist, and to move ahead."[117] Critical of the "museum form," Santino called for a "polyvalent structure—a historical museum of the mafia and the antimafia, a didactic itinerary, a library, a film archive, a research institute, and a conference room, all in one place—[…] a living space, not just a museum to visit, built on the actual involvement of the citizenry."[118] The "Museum of Memory and Struggle," as the memorial-laboratory was initially named avoiding any explicit reference to Cosa Nostra, saw the light only on May 23, 2018, on the day of the 26th anniversary of Falcone's killing, when Mayor Orlando conferred to the Centro Impastato the municipality-owned Palazzo Gulì, a few hundred meters from the Cathedral. Ten years earlier, the Centro had turned down the municipality's offer of boss-of-the-bosses Totò Riina's confiscated villa, a more symbolically charged destination that nonetheless presented structural and logistical difficulties deemed insurmountable by Santino. The

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[115] See "Tanti memoriali per non dimenticare." *Mezzocielo* 148 (2015): 14-15.

[116] Assessorato dei Beni Culturali e dell'Identità Siciliana, Regione Siciliana. "D.A. 035 – Comitato scientifico per le attività di ricognizione storica, definizione e fondazione del Museo della Memoria e della Legalità." August 10, 2010, http://www.regione.sicilia.it/beniculturali/dirbenicult/provvedimenti/altro_download.asp?field=Documento&key1=254, last accessed June 6, 2021.

[117] Palazzolo, Egle. "Una casa aperta a tutti dove si possa dare appuntamento al mondo." *Mezzocielo* 148 (2015): 16.

[118] Palazzolo, Egle. "Un progetto per un percorso. Intervista a Umberto Santino." *Mezzocielo* 148 (2015): 8-9, 8.

new center took the name of "No Mafia Memorial." Since then, it has mostly hosted photography exhibitions—sometimes more in line with its civic mission (e.g., on journalist and mafia victim Mario Francese), more often catering to the tourists swarming the street of the building (e.g., "Sicilian Bandits" or the long-anticipated "Narcos between Fiction and Reality")—and events for schoolchildren. In doing so, it drifted away from its original plan for a pole to serve the needs of the local community.[119] A more revealing parable is that of the Centro Internazionale di Documentazione sulla Mafia e del movimento Antimafia (CIDMA) in Corleone, a groundbreaking research center inaugurated in 2000 in the wake of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (also called the Palermo Convention), turned in a matter of years into a TripAdvisor-certified tourist excellence. Its main attraction consists of the original folders of the Maxi-trial, artfully monumentalized (but never properly archived) to make an impression on the tourists enthralled by, as a critic wrote, this "organ unwillingly and yet predictably disseminating the epic of the mafia."[120]

The two cases, all their contradictions notwithstanding, sprung from an organic commitment to the struggle against Cosa Nostra and represented the crowning achievement of a long journey to incorporate mafia-themed and antimafia-related institutions into Sicily's cultural heritage. Salemi's Mafia Museum, instead, presented already from its genesis no points of contact with the antimafia movement, and even less so with its call for a space of reflection, remembrance, and cultural promotion. The brainchild of Turin-based tourism economist Francesca Traclò, the project had been embraced by Toscani and Sgarbi simply as a means to attract visitors through the global appeal of the Sicilian organized crime group. The political rationales behind the institution, if there were any at all, troubled the antimafia movement, already more than mistrustful of the real intentions of the project, for the memories of the anti-antimafia campaigns conducted by the mayor in the 1990s still loomed over. Nearly every public declaration of Sgarbi on the topic of the museum proved the activists' concerns reasonable. "We thought of a museum to archive Cosa Nostra, to seal it behind the glass of an exhibition, because we want to imagine it dead, defeated,"[121] Sgarbi declared in the

[119] On the other hand, the Centro Impastato does represent an invaluable resource for mafia scholars with its vast specialized library and archive and has been instrumental in the dissemination of knowledge on the history of the mafia and, most crucially, the antimafia. For an overview of the history and activities of the Centro, including the No Mafia Memorial, see Santino, Umberto, Anna Puglisi, and Sylwia Proniewicz. *La memoria e il passato: Dal Centro Impastato al No Mafia Memorial*. Palermo: Di Girolamo, 2020.

[120] Bonina, Gianni. *L'isola che trema. Viaggio dalla Sicilia alla Sicilia*. Rome: Avagliano, 2006, 237.

[121] Quoted in "Inaugurato il museo della mafia dedicato a Leonardo Sciascia," *Leonardo Sciascia Web*, May 11, 2010, https://www.amicisciascia.it/pubblicazioni-dell-associazione/todomodo-rivista/rassegna-stampa-todomodo/item/342-inaugurato-il-museo-della-mafia-dedicato-a-leonardo-sciascia.html, last accessed June 4, 2021.

days preceding the May 2010 solemn inauguration at the presence of the then President of the Republic Giorgio Napolitano. Hosted on the last floor of the museum pole, a former Jesuit college, the mafia museum was inaugurated as the latest installment of a cluster of small-sized museums—namely, archaeology, sacred art, Risorgimento, and traditional bread-making; all tightly related to the territory and its history. Nicolas Ballario, the Piedmont-native collaborator of Toscani who at the time supervised all sorts of cultural initiatives promoted by the administration, assumed the role of artistic director; Palermitan sculptor Cesare Inzerillo curated the setting-up of the exhibition and designed the multimedia installations that constitute the centerpiece of the museum. Toscani himself realized the museum logo, a Sicily-shaped blood stain, which, amongst the polemics, had been featured for over two years in a controversial and very costly advertisement poster strategically placed at the arrival area of the Palermo airport ("Weekend in Salemi? The Mafia Museum Is Only Our Thing [Cosa Nostra]," it read).

Before delving into the specifics of the Salemi museum, I want to address a few questions as to what kind of museum a mafia museum could possibly be: What kinds of objects should it display, what experiences foster, and what people target? While these questions inform the multifarious approaches through which any exhibition project whatsoever takes shape, their pregnancy in the context at stake here is heightened by the distinctive traits that, regardless of the actual content and set-up of the museum itself, are peculiar to the endeavor of "seal[ing Cosa Nostra] behind the glass of an exhibition." To put it simply, the issue is to identify the conditions of possibility for the musealization of a crime organization. Every actor I interviewed in the course of my Salemi fieldwork—those who contributed to the creation of the museum most vocally so—distanced themselves from Sgarbi's claim that "the mafia is dead and we must acknowledge that,"[122] interpreting it as the umpteenth contentious statement from the then-mayor meant to attract press coverage and possibly result in a scandal. Yet, if cleansed of anything even slightly provocative, Sgarbi's claim as well as the apprehensive reactions it triggered point to the heated question of the nature of the mafia museum, which began being widely (though informally) debated as soon as the news of the project broke out. Memory was immediately singled out as the main axis a mafia museum must be built on, even though it will soon become evident how its understanding differed from antimafia's emphasis on remembrance. Torn between the refusal to associate the museum to a memorial and the recognition that cultural memory, history, and trauma constituted a sort of

[122] Quoted in Laura Anello, "Salemi, la mafia diventa museo," *La Stampa*, May 5, 2010.

ineludible foundation for articulating a meaningful discourse on the mafia, the museum creators (essentially, Ballario and Inzerillo assisted by the "Progetto Terremoto" team) addressed this question well aware of its potential shortcomings.

As Silke Arnold-de-Simine claims, museums, and specifically museums dealing with cultural memory, "perform a public role in remembrance in which they are expected to represent a broad social or at least political consensus, producing narratives that form an integral part of national [or regional] identity politics."[123] Therefore, the main challenge that the Salemi museum had to face was the fact of being disconnected from both the antimafia movement and the local community while at the same time not being put in the position to eschew them. Whether conceived of as a rhizomatic social movement or as a standpoint from which to look at Cosa Nostra, the antimafia in particular was a major concern for the curators. "The very foundation of a mafia museum in Sicily is an antimafia act," Inzerillo explained to me: the involvement of historians, magistrates, or activists is nothing but a minor aspect, far from defining what the museum stands for. However, the issue of what kinds of memories the museum can attend to, lacking the contribution of the custodians of institutional memory, remained unsolved.

In a study (or, better, a memorial-museum-in-book-form) on the memories of the Cultural Revolution through the remediation of its textual, visual, and material traces, Jie Li embarks in the ambitious project of "curating" a memorial museum of the Mao era by envisioning potential exhibits. To do so, she approaches the project with a threefold aim—"cultivating conversations between accounts of utopia versus catastrophe; transmitting testimonies across generations; and curating exhibits of primary documents and traces that illuminate broader memory-making processes."[124] Rather than just selecting "primary documents, indexical traces, and material remains [that] attest to the past by emerging from it," Li probes those as "utopian ruins" of the Mao era, that is, as realities produced by propaganda that testify to the survival of Maoist utopian blueprints as ruins, reminding the audiences of "the forward-looking, anticipatory outlooks of earlier generations."[125] The combination of and tension between prospective (the yet to come of the utopia) and retrospective (the already destroyed of the ruin) points of view that points out how the production of memory entails "a multilayered process involving acts of documentation and

[123] Arnold-de-Simine, Silke. *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia*. New York: Palgrave, 2013, 2.
[124] Li, Jie. *Utopian Ruins: A Memorial Museum of the Mao Era*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020, 4.
[125] *Ivi*, 7.

transmission, erasure, and excavation."[126] In this sense, the scholar-turned-curator contrasts state-sponsored amnesia by means of the promotion of an imaginary institution, the memorial museum, committed to "mediate empathetic encounters with the past through an engaging collection of testimonial voices, images, and objects."[127] Concretely, Li charts out these utopian ruins through a variety of "fact-making" genres and institutions (e.g., police archives, journalism, photography, cinema, and museums), detecting records of dissent and disasters that either escaped the vigil eyes of the state or benefited from the loosening of censorship in recent decades.

Though embedded in contemporary China's postsocialist memory and media ecology, Li's work opens up compelling perspectives to rethink the nexus of violence, trauma, and memory through the *medium* of the museum.[128] In the first place, the shift from material objects to utopian ruins underscores the importance, unanimously acknowledged by new museology proponents, of moving beyond the static, individual artefact (the artwork, the ethnographic object, the zoological specimen, etc.) to focus instead on the exhibition display as the key meaning-making moment. This, in turn, enables a second shift—from object- to experience-centered approaches to the museum—predicated on the corporeal involvement of the visitor as well as on their affective understanding of the narrative constructed by the exhibition. Hence, the emphasis on witnessing in, by, and through the museum (inspired by the notion of media witnessing meant as witnessing performed in, by, and through the media).[129] What is peculiar to a museum dealing with violence and trauma, whether related to Cosa Nostra or to the Cultural Revolution, is how the ethical dimension of witnessing is complemented by and affirmed through the display of atrocities that renders the visitor's experience emotionally taxing. While this display may be actively geared towards the establishment of a memory community, recognizing itself before these mediated testimonies of suffering or perhaps even in the fact of experiencing trauma vicariously,[130] it would be misleading to overlook the trivial and yet all-pervading dimensions of sensationalism, voyeurism, and spectacularization embedded in it. This is not just a matter of reckoning with the ambiguous nature of such a museum. It is rather to contest that witnessing in itself can create a homogeneous audience, let alone a community, and

[126] *Ivi*, 264.
[127] *Ivi*, 262.
[128] Henning, Michelle. *Museums, Media, and Cultural Theory*. London: Open University Press, 2006, 70-98.
[129] Peters, John Durham. "Witnessing." In *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*, edited by Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski, 23-48. New York: Palgrave, 2009.
[130] Arnold-de-Simine, Silke. *Mediating Memory*, cit. highlights how these dynamics associate the work of the memorial museum to that of visual media, and cinema in particular, as theorized by Walker, Janet. *Trauma Cinema: Documenting Incest and the Holocaust*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005; Kaplan, E. Ann, and Ban Wang, eds. *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004.

that more or less explicitly ethical objectives suffice to extricate the institution from the set of exploitative, commodified, and unsavory aspects associated with the phenomenon of dark tourism.[131] Granted, an openly antimafia exhibition framework would resignify the morbid display of violence by charging it with a moral and political density that otherwise would be up to the already informed visitor to grasp. It would also provide a different temporal horizon to the museum, resonating with Li's prospective and retrospective points of view—respectively, the mafia-induced ruination of the physical, human, and moral geographies of the territory and the utopian longing for a society that, after the extinction of the syndicate, would have been shaped by ideals of social justice.[132] But to what extent could an antimafia framework emerge from the get-go in a project whose existence *only*, to reiterate again Inzerillo's words, is an antimafia act?

The museum centerpiece is a dark room the visitors access after passing beyond a large sign that reads "10 booths / the order doesn't matter / enter one at the time / close the door / feel the mafia / exit / close the door again / move to the next booth," and a more discreet one informing that minors are not allowed in the room. The booths are black wooden three-square-meter voting booths, numbered one to ten. Each is a multimedia installation, activated by a photocell once the visitor, coming in from the total darkness of the room, closes the door behind them. Only when the video starts, the light of the small screen illuminates the interior of the booth, making visible the usually arresting scenic and sculptural elements.[133] This assemblage reflects the theme of each cabin, spanning from the more ordinary "Religion," "Information," and "Power" to the less predictable "Water," "Slaughterhouse," and "Health." The videos, made by the "Progetto Terremoto" team under the supervision of Inzerillo, give each booth its meaning. Those, too, are formally and conceptually wide-ranging, having in common just the length of 1-2 minutes, the opening title with the logo of the museum, and the closing intertitle providing information, usually in the form of stats and data, on the phenomenon treated—or just alluded to—in each booth.

All the videos fall into one of three categories: the traditional reportage, featuring talking heads and linear editing ("Extortion," "Family," and "Health"); the surrealist documentary, offering

[131] Podoshen, Jeffrey S. "Dark Tourism in an Increasingly Violent World." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Dark Tourism*, edited by Philip R. Stone, Rudi Hartmann, Tony Seaton, Richard Sharpley, and Leanne White, 173-187. New York: Palgrave, 2018.

[132] Gambini, Diego. "L'utopia palermitana: i gesuiti nella 'primavera' palermitana." *Laboratoire Italien* 22 (2019): https://doi.org/10.4000/laboratoireitalien.2837, last accessed June 17, 2021.

[133] For instance, a collection of religious paraphernalia, a slaughterhouse, a red baroque gilded chair whose upholstery matches the red Damask wallpaper, a statue of a skeleton wrapped in an oversized trench coat, a prison parlor, a solitary cell.

a visionary mini-lecture on topics such as the biology of the human body or mind manipulation ("Water" and "Information"); and the collage film, a Soviet-inspired frantic montage of televisual segments ("Slaughterhouse," "Power," and "Church").[134] To provide but one example, the booth no. 003, "Slaughterhouse," is a neon-lit, white-tiled, ingrained and minimalist room, the lamp and a dirty rug hanging on the wall being the only props. Entering in, the acidic smell of cleaning products, surprisingly resisting ten years of neglect, hit the visitor. The lights stay on as the video plays: the first sound, shockingly loud, is the scream of a slaughtered pig over the logo of the museum, interlaced throughout the video with yells and cries (human and not) in order to forge the horrific sound fabric upon which images of slaughtered pigs and mafia murders alternate. Framing this display of horror, first, the opening of game show "The Wheel of Fortune" and his host Mike Bongiorno's signature greeting "Allegria!" ("Rejoice!"). Then, it appears the famous invective of then-unknown rank-and-file Sicilian politician Totò Cuffaro (the future president of the region known as Totò "Kiss Kiss" [*vasa vasa*] who eventually served a 5-year jail sentence for favoring the mafia) against talk-show host Maurizio Costanzo and his guest Giovanni Falcone.[135] In hindsight, Cuffaro's cutthroat attack against not only an antimafia icon but also, and more critically, the transformation of mainstream media into a formidable antimafia platform is taken at face value as a scandalous mafia apology, and as such incorporated into the "Slaughterhouse" video. The juxtaposition is ominous: the overpowering flow of blood and murder, gunshots and screams, dread and shock accompanied by a metallic voice singing the praises of the party under whose rule all those horrors occurred. It matters little that Cuffaro had a point: the antagonizing rhetoric weaponized against the Sicilian political elite obscured the renewal processes internal to the party, which nurtured an antimafia vanguard within its ranks and cost to some of the party leaders their

[134] If the reference to the Soviet avant-garde, and in particular to the oeuvre of Dziga Vertov and Esfir Shub, may seem far-fetched with regards to the work of some twenty-something enthusiasts, it is relevant to acknowledge how in the Italian context that tradition has been revitalized and vulgarized by the pre-primetime satirical TV strip *Blob*, a 20-minute daily montage created by Enrico Ghezzi in 1989 and still aired to this date. See Rajewsky, Irina O. "'Metatelevision': The Popularization of Metareferential Strategies in the Context of Italian Television." In *The Metareferential Turn in Contemporary Arts and Media*, edited by Werner Wolf, 415-444. Leiden: Brill, 2011; for a genealogical approach, see Bertozzi, Marco. *Recycled Cinema: Immagini perdute, visioni ritrovate*. Venice: Marsilio, 2013.

[135] The speech deserves to be reported in its entirety in the somehow clumsy English translation of the subtitles: "Your consciences are responsible for the damage you have done to Sicily and the slanders you have said about the best people. The mafia journalism you have done tonight is for Sicily worse than ten years of politics. In Sicily there is an awful attack against the best ruling class of the 'Democrazia Cristiana' party."

lives.[136] All that matters, instead, is to put a face, or rather a voice with a marked accent, to the incestuous liaisons between politics and Cosa Nostra, reinforcing an association already stated so loudly by the very metaphor of the voting booth as the container of "everything mafia." The bottom line of the installation, as always, is spelled out by the closing intertitle, which reads (in the original English translation):

> In the whole history of Cosa Nostra, the official victims are far more numerous than international terrorism victims, but as a matter of fact there is [not] an exact estimate of this datum, because the 'lupara bianca'[137] victims, the famous way which doesn't leave trace of the victim, are countless.

Leaving aside the thorny issue of who counts as a mafia victim,[138] the finale is a good illustration of the spirit of a museum that stubbornly refuses to convey information (data, in its idiosyncratic wording) and privileges instead evocations and hints, as in the rhetorically powerful solution of pitting mafia against "international terrorism" in terms of death toll.

The frantically paced or undecipherable videos, the claustrophobic cubicle, the awe-inspiring settings, the contrast between the catacomb-like exterior and the hyper-stimulating interior contribute to overwhelm the visitor through anxiety-inducing stimuli. It is a form of meaning making that forecloses rational and didactic aspects in favor of perceptual and oblique ones, grounded on the belief that, as Ballario put it, "the mafia cannot be understood, let alone explained, but only felt." Though coming from an outsider to both mafia and Sicilian culture, the artistic director's statement bears close resemblance to a widespread sentiment shared among several antimafia actors, including journalists, photographers, and even magistrates. In recent times, in fact, many have openly admitted their discomfort in the face of a mafia whose material—or rather sensory—expressions are no longer recognizable. "I do not know how to photograph it because I do not see it," confesses antimafia icon

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[136] Amongst the most notable DC mafia victims, provincial party secretary Michele Reina, regional party secretary Rosario Nicoletti, president of the region Piersanti Mattarella, and Palermo mayor Giuseppe Insalaco. Of these, only Mattarella is celebrated as a martyr.

[137] Literally "white shotgun," a journalistic term referring to a mafia killing method that consists in leaving no traces of the victim's body, either buried or dissolved in acid.

[138] Antimafia associations tend to include anyone who in one form or another was actively engaged in the fight against the mafia, plus the so-called innocents, i.e., homonyms, collateral casualties, mafia victims' relatives, etc. They are unwilling to include anyone vaguely related to the mafia, even if neither affiliated nor charged with any criminal offences in their lifetime, such as mafiosi's relatives and the lumpenproletariat living (and dying) in mafia strongholds. As a consequence, numbers vary wildly according to the source, even of several thousand units, and there is nothing even close to an "official" count. The same applies to the "victims of international terrorism," a locution so foggy that one would not know where to start to criticize it.

Letizia Battaglia. [139] "I can feel the mafia around me, but I cannot see it," a magistrate with thirty years of experience explained to anthropologist Naor Ben-Yehoyada.[140] This echoes also Inzerillo's goal to "tell the mafia, or better to create an atmosphere, so as to compel the visitors to experience what we all did feel at the time [the 1980s and early 1990s] when you could easily see a corpse laying on the street while on the bus to school."

The second major space of the museum is the so-called "newspaper labyrinth," an exhibition path of mafia-related newspaper front pages apparently meant to provide a "non-biased" history of Cosa Nostra, from Italy's Unification to 2010, as seen by national and local journalism.[141] To anyone acquainted with the vicissitudes of Cosa Nostra, the story told by and through the labyrinth reserves no surprises—a succession of iconic episodes, some already memorialized as newspaper covers, and a carousel of familiar faces and photographs deeply rooted in the collective imaginary of the mafia. Nonetheless, there is something troubling about the labyrinth, especially when considering what the rest of the museum exhibition (in 2010) comprised large-format portraits of mafia and antimafia icons; an installation on the mafia's infiltration in the renewable energy sector; and a 20-minute compilation video of 1980s and 1990s news segments alternated with film extracts, including of course *The Godfather*. Compared to the rest of the museum, the labyrinth is in fact the only informative moment—the only, that is, that addresses the mafia if not as a historical phenomenon, at least as something more than an environmental plague corrupting every facet of life in the island. Apparently, then, this is where the visitor gets explained, rather than made felt, what the mafia is, or had been. That this happens through newspaper front pages flattens the complexity of mafia history on three levels. First, it turns it into a history of murders, arrests, and sentences—a history told in the present tense that emerges in the folds of crime news, in its over-the-top tones, outraged titles, daily death counts (a signature custom of *L'Ora*), and gory pictures, all actively making Cosa Nostra at the same time object and source of spectacle. Second, it renders it a war fought between two armies, the judicial and police apparatuses of the state, with which information aligns (if not identifies) itself, and the military wing of Cosa Nostra, pushing to the distant background, barely

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[139] Cited in Bolzoni, Attilio. "Dov'è? Dove si è nascosta?" *La Repubblica*, *Mafie* blog. January 9, 2017, http://mafie.blogautore.repubblica.it/2017/01/dove-dove-si-e-nascosta-4/, last accessed June 18, 2021. The blog entries, penned by the crème de la crème of the antimafia movement, are collected in Bolzoni, Attilio, ed. *La mafia dopo le stragi. Cosa è oggi e come è cambiata dal 1992*. Rome: Melampo, 2018.
[140] Ben-Yehoyada, Naor. "Getting Cosa Nostra: Inquiry, Justice, and the Past in Southwest Sicily." Unpublished draft, 2019. I want to thank the author for sharing the draft with me.
[141] Palermo's *L'Ora* takes the lion's share, with *La Repubblica* coming as a distant second, and just a handful of covers from *Il Giornale di Sicilia* and *Il Corriere della Sera*.

perceptible, the *intreccio* of political, economic, and mafia interests as well as the scarcely news-worthy contributions of civil society. Third, it makes it a Palermo history, a curious circumstance in the context of a museum in the Trapani province oddly silent on its mafia, characterized by a more complex *intreccio* between politics, entrepreneurial classes, financial institutions, freemasonry, and transnational organized crime as well as a far less violent and spectacular history than its Palermo equivalent.

As I raised similar objections to Inzerillo, who see any space of the museum as subordinated to the booths, his answer indicated to me that the ways in which I tried to make sense of the labyrinth were grounded on a wrong assumption.[142] According to the artist, the sight of the people lost in the labyrinth, the small crowds formed around the most iconic images, the maddening soundscape (a typewriter sound so intense and up-tempo to recall a machine gun), the decontextualized and blown-up newspaper pages, and their appalling images meant to hinder a detached reading of the labyrinth as a history-telling avenue. In ideal reception conditions, disorientation, instead, wins over narrative stability, estrangement over comprehension. The contradictions I registered, he agreed, could be correct if only the museum had been built with historical or didactical concerns in mind. "None of us ever thought of making a history or a memorial museum," Ballario insisted while explaining to me why Inzerillo's artistic vision was the key to the whole project, "thus any criticism about what a history museum or a memorial does that our museum does not is based on a misunderstanding. Basically, this is not even a museum; this is a multisensory, multimedia, and multimodal art installation authored by Cesare Inzerillo."

What is striking of Inzerillo's vision is not much his persuasion that the mafia is everywhere, but rather its privatization: the belief that in a time of faltering mafia and antimafia, nearly every discourse on the mafia must be assembled upon individual, experiential, and subjective grounds. "I am not a mafia expert, that is for sure," said Inzerillo, "and I am far from being a witness either because I have no story to tell: I am a person who has felt the mafia and, as an artist, I am best equipped to make others feel it." Here lies the heresy of the Salemi Mafia Museum. It dramatizes the profanation of what the civil religion intended (and failed) to promote: the ideal of a community coming together in the struggle against the syndicate obliterating all social, political, and economic differences between its members in the name of a common cause modulated through the seemingly

[142] Moreover, Inzerillo observed that my experience of the museum was not "right," since I never encountered other fellow museumgoers during my multiple visits.

universal language of legality and a shared justice-centered value system. Within the ranks of the antimafia, that is, in antimafia-approved cultural production, the process of privatization of Cosa Nostra, as we have seen, has turned to the individual. In spite of the gradual shift to ordinary, more relatable life stories, the question of what kinds of memories and experiences are worth transmitting clashes with multiple forms of cultural production and promotion that operate outside of the civil-religion symbolic regime and nonetheless seek to disseminate a no less powerful antimafia message. This is what makes the Mafia Museum an outstanding example. In this respect, while Inzerillo's use of the first-person present tense as a marker through which the history of mafia violence is re-elaborated in a subjective dimension is not substantially different from, say, Chiolo's or Pif's, his refusal to adopt the position of the witness represents the true point of contention. Thus, from a strict antimafia perspective, what is hard to accept is the construction of the entire museum set-up as the vision of one person who refuses to speak on behalf of a community or a movement, making instead his own personal memories a matter of replicable sensations induced in an audience who is neither mobilized nor educated. The second life of the museum revolved specifically around such a divisive stance.

"The mafia museum was a wrong entity, a child of its time," admits Giuseppe Maiorana, president of the Belice museum network and former cultural councilor in the current Democratic-Party administration elected in 2014 and reconfirmed five years later. Our interview took place at the Center for Socio-Economic Research in Southern Italy (CRESM), a Gibellina social cooperative dealing with rural development, community regeneration, and social inclusion founded in the wake of the early-1970s earthquake reconstruction activism. As we talked, Maiorana insisted on giving me a tour of Belice/Epicenter of Living Memory, a little museum narrating the struggle of the local community to rebuild its territory through participatory democracy and popular mobilizations, as a way to illustrate what he called the "re-appropriation" of the Salemi mafia museum he supervised. Lingering in front of a cabinet filled with the ties that the 100-protester delegation from the Valley had to buy on the spot to access the Parliament in Rome in 1968 and confer with the national authorities,[143] the former counselor wondered out loud how the Salemi museum had no such items—symbolic markers, testaments, and vestiges of the struggle. The "re-appropriation" then had to pass from a radical shift in the regimes through which the "truth of Cosa Nostra" could be grasped: from

[143] Comitati popolari, Comitato antileva ricostruzione sviluppo, Centro Studi Iniziative Valle Belice. *Belice. Lo stato fuorilegge*. Milan: Edizioni della Libraria, 1970, available at http://www.trapaninostra.it/Libri_New///Belice_Lo_Stato_fuorilegge.htm, last accessed July 8, 2021.

the sensory and experiential to the symbolic and intellectual, from authorial feelings to community voices. Significantly, Maiorana's first action was to rename the museum as Officina della legalità (Legality Workshop), a purely performative gesture meant to reaffirm the pedagogical mission of the museum. Then, he offered the two rooms of the museum previously occupied by the painting exhibitions to local youth associations and artists appointed with the task of reclaiming the museum for the community. Both rooms include mafia-themed works and photographs as well as drawings related to the issue of migration. As for the former, three artworks stand out for how they illustrate in a particularly effective way the meaning of the "re-appropriation" process. One is a *carretto* (or Sicilian painted cart), a cornerstone of regional folk culture known for its colorful and stylized illustrations drawn from local traditions (especially episodes from the chivalric epics popularized for many centuries in puppet theatre and storytelling shows),[144] repurposed by Palermo-based collective Laboratorio Saccardi through a suggestive superimposition of the original folk elements with antimafia-related ones. Recuperating the essence of the *carretto* as a wandering picture book, the artists insert the antimafia within the repertoire of traditional folk culture by turning iconic magistrates (and themselves) into modern-day Paladins or situating knight battles in the Capaci motorway this chapter has departed from. The other artwork is large-scale black-and-white mural "The Weight of the ~~Mafia~~ State in Italy," which depicts Italy flipped horizontally as a weighing scale, with one large bowl on the Northern regions ("Absence") counterbalanced by six smaller ones on the opposite end, each crowded with half-a-dozen individuals (mafia victims and schoolchildren). Lastly, the poster "Legality Workshop" is an illustrated rendition of the pedagogical initiatives catered to the local schoolchildren that, alongside portraits of the institutional figures, activists, and educators (including Maiorana) involved in the project, features aphorisms and keywords related to today's antimafia semiotic universe.[145] A fourth artwork, exhibited in neighboring Vita only for reasons of space but fitting perfectly with the "new" spirit of the mafia museum, exemplifies best the "re-appropriation" process (and also, considering it is exposed in another town, its limited completion). The main outcome of a school laboratory with children aged 8 to 11 coordinated by local cultural operators, the work consists of a series of photographs in which students and

[144] Croce, Marcella, and Moira F. Harris. *History on the Road: The Painted Carts of Sicily*. Saint Paul, MI: Pogo Press, 2006.

[145] Among the former, "We must learn to recognize it again," "We have an important legacy to start from," "Legality is not a millstone," "Let's fight the mafia-ness [*mafiosità*] inside ourselves;" among the latter, "Resilience," "Memory," "Future," "Participation," and "Culture of Beauty."

coordinators re-enact the most iconic portraits of mafia victims.[146] The photographs' life extends beyond the museum setting, for they are also exhibited as an advertising poster in front of the town hall and as cards for a board game that has never been developed. The project's life, instead, had an even more extensive reach, for the "facilitators of legality," as the group members were called, were invited to learn about the individual biographies of the figures they had to embody and to spread their message across their community. For nearly all of them, it was their first encounter with life stories that, according to one project coordinator, will help shape their future.

The emphasis on school children as the privileged recipients of the antimafia message is, at this point, nothing but commonplace: I personally cannot recall any antimafia event I attended during my three-year fieldwork where teenagers were not the majority of participants (including a workshop for chartered accountants and a few jargon-heavy academic conferences). Nor is the conflation of antimafia and civic education any less ordinary, as if no ideal of social justice or democracy can circumvent the fight against organized crime and the undergirding primacy of legality as its foundation.[147] What is worth highlighting about the "re-appropriation" of the mafia museum is how the burden of memory and community-building has fallen onto the shoulders of young people who not only have no expertise whatsoever, but also have no first-hand experience of the mafia because, as Inzerillo would put it, they have never "felt" it. Their knowledge, in other words, is almost entirely mediated by the state apparatuses (the school in the first place and through it the police and the judicial), while mistrust toward non-aligned forms of mediation (mainstream media conceived of as spreaders of mafia mythology) is actively encouraged as well. This state-sanctioned mediation is what ultimately has been musealized in the process of "re-appropriation," a mediation that still passes through a strong individual dimension,[148] but nonetheless addresses the

[146] The list of victims is quite telling with regards to the shifts I discuss in this chapter. Contrarily to the stable pantheon of mafia victims, made up of state figures (magistrates, law enforcement officers, and journalists), the exhibition includes activists (Peppino Impastato), trade unionists (Placido Rizzotto and Accurso Miraglia), collateral victims (Barbara Rizzo and her two children, killed in a bombing attack), relatives of mafia victims (Felicia Bartolotta, mother of Impastato and wife of a mafioso), and witness of justice (Rita Atria, a teenager who decided to denounce her family but committed suicide after apprehending of the death of Paolo Borsellino). Maria Scavuzzo, one of the coordinators of the project, interpreted photographer Letizia Battaglia, the only living of the pantheon, as a due homage to the person thanks to whom, she claimed, we know how the mafia looks like.

[147] Schneider, Peter, and Jane Schneider. '"Educating for Legality": Citizenship and the Antimafia Movement in Sicily.' In *Manufacturing Citizenship: Education and Nationalism in Europe, South Asia, and China*, edited by Véronique Bénéï, 170-192. New York: Routledge, 2007.

[148] Instances of this are the carretto makers adding in their self-portraits in the artworks, the muralists contrasting the absence of the state with recognizable historical figures, the poster reporting the words of the educators spearheading the project, and the "facilitators of legality" being tasked with spreading the antimafia teachings in their own kin network.

community as both a tool and the end of education itself. Tellingly, though, the museum exists in a state of near abandonment: three out of ten booths are out of order, the 20-minute video is barely decipherable due to a malfunctioning projector, the sculptures have not been dusted off in a long time, and some pictures are about to come off. The "new" exhibitions have been clearly put together on a tight budget, as attested by the picture captions carved in the walls with a biro. The room housing the ruins of the "wind mafia" installation is closed to the public. There are simply no personnel beyond the ticket office, no informational materials (leaflets, audio guides, explanatory panels, etc.), and, quite surprisingly for a museum envisaged to boost tourism, no merchandising. Strolling around the museum alone, as it has been the case for my visits, is a somehow spectral experience. While this is a shared destiny for most Sicilian museum institutions surviving outside the tourist circuit, a condition that speaks volumes of the place of culture in an economically depressed and politically short-sighted region, the vicissitudes of the mafia museum, as I have shown, are emblematic also of the broader reconfiguration of the symbolic economy of the antimafia.

What It Used to Be: The Religion's Funeral

> We killed them by forgetting what they did.
> We betrayed them by sealing our lips in fear.
> Like Christ, we nailed them to the Cross.
> Men of loyalty: Paolo Borsellino and Giovanni Falcone;
> Names you already know: via d'Amelio and the Capaci highway.
> Who celebrated it after all? Just Cosa Nostra.
> They will never die.
> Wrapped inside our hearts,
> You can hear them like never before.
> They fought for us, for freeing our hearts
> From the omertà and the terror that this city provides us with.
> I remember those days:
> In every newspaper people were slaughtered as if they were beasts.
> Bursts and smoke used to cover the sky in terror.
> Falcone and Borsellino: our great heroes, our great heroes—
> We killed them.

As the end credits of Franco Maresco's *La mafia non è più quella di una volta* roll over neo-melodic singer Mario D'Annunzio "Anime vaganti" ["Wandering Souls"], the audience is predictably caught off guard and filled with dread. The lyrics I fully transcribed above condense in a striking manner the main tropes of today's antimafia cultural production and as such could constitute an ideal summary of what has been discussed thus far. The structural dimensions of the struggle most related to the civil religion are assembled here in a synthesis that would likely please the crowds gathered on a packed antimafia commemoration. Yet, the context could not be far more removed than that. In *La mafia non è più quella di una volta*, a scathing commentary on the degeneration of the civil religion paradigm seen from the twofold perspective of the institutional antimafia and the cultural underworld orbiting around the mafia, D'Annunzio and more broadly the neo-melodic scene he belongs to are in fact expression of the latter. Hence, the verisimilar feeling of foreboding aroused by a cultural practice associated with the crime syndicate—in part wrongly, as I will later show—that appropriates antimafia rhetoric and, even more unsettlingly, does so without the slightest hint of irony or revulsion.

The film revolves around two events organized on May 23 and June 19, 2017 to commemorate the killings of Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino on their 25th anniversary, both attended and commented on by photographer Letizia Battaglia, 82 at the time. The first is an obvious choice: Palermo's antimafia ceremony of the Giornata della Legalità [Legality Day], a one-day series of events culminating in a mass rally in front of the Falcone Tree at the presence of the highest authorities of the state and the movement as well as *engagé* celebrities. The second, wildly unimaginable until a few years ago, is the musical event "Neomelodici per Falcone e Borsellino" at the ZEN, the housing project neighborhood whose national reputation for being a nest of crime and social degradation is second only to the now-partially-demolished "Vele di Scampia" in Naples (the setting of Matteo Garrone's *Gomorrah*, 2008). In the role of the uncompromising representative of a wholesome Palermitan and antimafia culture, Battaglia transverses these two festival spaces, often provoked by the director and unable to hide her malaise for the lost authenticity of both current-day movement and (lumpen) popular culture. This is a role Battaglia has been performed quite regularly in the last decade or so—roughly speaking, from her cameo in Wim Wenders's *Palermo Shooting* in 2008 to Kim Longinotto's biographical documentary *Shooting the Mafia* in 2019, for not mentioning the myriad of television shows and documentaries on the city in which she is regularly interviewed. After decades of relative neglect, this exposure is a peculiar form of public recognition of her work as photojournalist for Palermo newspaper *L'Ora* in the 1970s-80s and, to a lesser extent, as antimafia and environmentalist activist, cultural promoter, and politician.[149] In recent years, her photographs being at last extensively exhibited and debated in Italy and abroad,[150] Battaglia has been enjoying a local icon status. Attestations of this are her appointment in 2018 as artistic director of both the most popular religious festival of the city (the Festino di Santa Rosalia) and the most secular one (the Palermo Gay Pride) or, more perceptibly, the near impossibility of having a conversation with her in public not interrupted by selfie requests, hugs, and kisses every other

[149] Battaglia, Letizia, and Sabrina Pisu. *Mi prendo il mondo ovunque sia. Una vita da fotografa tra passione civile e bellezza*. Turin: Einaudi, 2019. In English, see Alfano Miglietti, Francesca, ed. *Letizia Battaglia: Photography as a Life Choice*. Venice: Marsilio, 2019; Battaglia, Letizia. *Passion, Justice, Freedom: Photographs of Sicily*. New York: Aperture, 1999. Among the many cultural initiatives spearheaded by Battaglia, three deserve a mention here: the foundation of publishing house "Edizioni della Battaglia" and feminist review *Mezzocielo* in the early 1990s and the creation of the Centro Internazionale di Fotografia, a public-funded exhibition space hosted in the Zisa Cultural Shipyards, in 2017. The film documents the genesis of the latter in a moving sequence where Battaglia confides her hopes for her Centro becoming the vanguard of Palermo's cultural life.

[150] Karagoz, Claudia. "Double Exposures: Embodiment, Vulnerability, and Agency in Letizia Battaglia's Photography." *Journal of Italian Cinema and Media Studies* 9, no. 3 (2021): 349-65; Povoledo, Elisabetta. "A Sicilian Photographer of the Mafia and Her Archive of 'Blood'." *The New York Times*, June 7, 2017.

minute. The strong personality of the photographer—glowing, charismatic, impetuous, empathic, and very affectionate—, which helped her pursue a career in the male-dominated world of mafia photojournalism, works in the film as a counterpoint of Maresco's bleak worldview, a trademark signature of his oeuvre.

The encounter between two of the most distinguished Palermitan artists brings to the forefront the crucial issue of *impegno* in the context of Sicilian (cultural) life—hopeful and forward-looking for the photographer, reticent and disillusioned for the filmmaker—[151] and, somehow tangentially, its specific antimafia configuration. Contrarily to Battaglia, Maresco has never shown any attachment to the antimafia cause in its activist and institutional incarnations, albeit much of his work provides valuable insights on mafia culture from an unambiguously antagonistic perspective. Consistent throughout the decades, the filmmaker has never failed to express a certain cynicism toward the appropriation of the fight against organized crime by sectors of the state (politics, specifically), a criticism obliquely addressed also to Mayor Orlando, whose "grand narrative of Palermo" comprises the near-complete eradication of the mafia.[152] Battaglia's private and public figure instead represents much more for both activists and the antimafia discourse at large. Among the former, she is held in great esteem as the single individual who has done the most to render the crime organization visible, her mafia-related photographs being ubiquitous across the whole spectrum of antimafia activities (reworked in school projects, carried at marches, featured in associations' websites and publications, exhibited in antimafia documentation centers, etc.).[153] For the latter, as Paula Salvio puts it, "Battaglia's photojournalism extends a pedagogical tradition

[151] A significant precedent is the short documentary commissioned by Rome's MAXXI – National Museum of XXI Century Arts *La mia Battaglia* ("My Battaglia"/"My Battle," 2016) that Maresco devoted to the photographer. In there, a lively conversation on hope, doubt, and commitment between the two anticipates and prepares the endless series of jokes and pranks that Battaglia and Maresco direct to each other in *La mafia non è più quella di una volta*.

[152] In part, Maresco's popularity as a public intellectual in Palermo is also due to his critical stance toward mayor Orlando, whom he challenged on several occasions in relation to issues concerning cultural heritage and institutions as well as municipal patronage. The filmmaker, who candidly admits to have voted the mayor at every electoral appointment, is in fact one of the few critical voices in a cultural scene almost worshipping Orlando and his "visions" (or "narratives") for the cultural development of the city. A telling attestation of Maresco's maverick status was the main event of the 2019 edition of the literary festival Una Marina di Libri, organized by the Palermo unit of *La Repubblica* newspaper and sold out in a few hours, titled "Ma Palermo è tornata felicissima? Dialogo con Orlando e Maresco," an intellectual boxing match in which the two discussed whether the city has become a Mediterranean cultural capital or irredeemably lost its identity. Unusually for this kind of event, the audience cheered, clapped, and booed the contenders, while the day after local newspapers and personalities on social media speculated on who won the match and for what reasons.

[153] From Maresco's voice-over commentary in the film: "A guiding light and a lodestar for an antimafia in crisis–less and less effective in its action, more and more contaminated by shady figures whose presence obfuscates its credibility before the eyes of the so-called civil society—, Letizia is one of the greatest photographers in the world. For fifty years her pictures have shown the mafia like no one has ever done before."

associated with social documentary and biography […] [breaking] silences and complicities with violence through [the kind of] storytelling and story-taking practices" that the scholar identifies as the main vehicle through which antimafia activists establish connections grounded on solidarity, grief, and mourning with the communities they work with.[154]

Maresco's public figure, while somewhat more polarizing, withdrawn, and discomforting than Battaglia's, occupies a similar position in the local intellectual and artistic scene as one of the most recognizable critical voices. Though actively avoiding both the media spotlight and public approval, Maresco has always been very keen in expressing through his work as filmmaker, cultural organizer, and public intellectual a kind of moral integrity and rigor. In the local public sphere, customary are his complaints on what he perceives as the process of homologation and degradation that Palermo has undergone in the last decades,[155] a position resonating with Pasolini's indictment of the Italian path to modernization and the subsequent corrosion of regional and popular cultures.[156] This stance comes from a special dedication to forms of Palermitan life deemed extinguished that Maresco and his former artistic partner Daniele Ciprì have demonstrated throughout the 1990s-2000s. Their work—most notably, the corrosive series of sketches *Cinico TV* (1992-1996) and *I migliori nani della nostra vita* ("The Best Dwarves of Our Lives," 2006) as well as the feature films *Lo zio di Brooklyn* (*The Uncle from Brooklyn*, 1995) and *Totò che visse due volte* (*Totò Who Lived Twice*, 1998)—explored extreme social marginality. It attended to a truly derelict humanity thrown in a post-apocalyptic landscape and presented as visceral, blasphemous, inarticulate, primordial, tragic, pre-moral, and uncontaminated.[157] The two filmmakers and then Maresco alone after their artistic breakup in 2007 have perfected an idiosyncratic "documentary" form. Their production,

[154] Salvio, Paula. *The Story-Takers: Public Pedagogy, Transitional Justice, and Italy's Non-Violent Protest against the Mafia*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017, 114.
[155] Maresco, Franco. "Cos'era Palermo e cos'è." *Gli asini* 58-59 (2019): 101-109. See also OMA. *Palermo Atlas*. Milan: Humboldt Books, 2018.
[156] On Maresco (and Ciprì) as Pasolini's heirs, see Cervini, Alessia. "Ultimi." In *Lessico del cinema italiano*, vol. III, edited by Roberto De Gaetano, 291-358. Milan: Mimesis, 2016.
[157] Morreale, Emiliano, and Valentina Valentini, ed. *El sentimiento cinico de la vida. Il cinema, i video e la televisione di Ciprì e Maresco*. Palermo: Il Genio, 1999; Morreale, Emiliano. *Ciprì e Maresco*. Alessandra: Falsopiano, 2003; Hampson, Ernest. "Daniele Ciprì and Franco Maresco: Uncompromising Visions, Aesthetics of the Apocalypse." In *Italian Cinema: New Directions*, edited by William Hope, 131-150. Bern: Peter Lang, 2005; Seger, Monica. *Landscapes in Between: Environmental Change in Modern Italian Literature and Film*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015, 122-138.

driven by "the titanic effort to build its own form" [158] and therefore its own "self-contained world,"[159] results fully rooted in the cultural milieu of (a mostly lumpen) Palermo. The consistency of their oeuvre is stunning, characterized as it is by a distinctive visual style (a black and white grainy photography, wide panoramic frontal shots, usually one or two human figures immersed in a landscape of ruins) and a very high degree of authorial self-consciousness (expressed in the form of a metacommentary on film and television language, often self-referentially). The latter aspect kept being a peculiar cipher of Maresco's solo production as well, whereas the former lost traction in favor of a more pressing engagement with reality, even if residues of formalist experimentation emerge timidly at times. This also implies a changing attitude toward the mafia. Ciprì and Maresco have tackled the topic extensively in television sketches and film episodes marked by grotesque brutal humor,[160] formulating "from an almost instinctive insider perspective [...] the least moralistic and most irrevocable condemnation to the universe of Cosa Nostra."[161] The insider perspective alluded to is that of the filmmakers' direct experience of and fascination with a lumpen Palermo inevitably overlapping with the sections of the city where the mafia's labor force resides and toils. Maresco's solo work—namely, *La mafia non è più quella di una volta* and its pseudo-prequel *Belluscone: Una storia siciliana* (*Belluscone: A Sicilian Story*, 2014)—echoes the sense of bewilderment evoked above in the face of the mafia's "new" identity and public perception following the arrest of the last Corleonese, boss of the bosses Bernardo Provenzano in 2006. It is because the mafia, quite literally, is no longer what it used to be that Maresco in order to understand it (not as the end in itself, but as a means to the present condition) has to turn his camera toward its alleged cultural underworld and resort to a more didactic, explicative documentary form. In the last

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[158] Morreale, Emiliano. *Ciprì e Maresco*, cit., 13. I have explored elsewhere how this form, by taking up subalternity in a quasi-postcolonial fashion, displays the limits of a hegemonic conception of realism whereby the encounter between cinema, spectator, and the world as well as their individual nature are organically and dialectically defined. What it yields instead is, I argue, a peripheral realism determined by unevenness, incongruity, dislocation, and inequity, which ultimately helps pinpoint the work of Maresco within a (global) Southern critical tradition. See Fidotta, Giuseppe. "Per un realismo periferico: *Belluscone* tra crisi e subalternità." In *La forma cinematografica del reale. Teorie, pratiche, linguaggi*, edited by Alessia Cervini and Giacomo Tagliani, 253-262. Palermo: Palermo University Press, 2020. I borrow the notion of peripheral realism from Warwick Research Collective. *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015, esp. 49-80.

[159] Longo, Abele. "Palermo in the Films of Ciprì and Maresco." In *Italian Cityscapes: Culture and Urban Change in Contemporary Italy*, edited by Robert Lumley and John Foot, 185-195. Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2004, 189.

[160] The examples are innumerable and scattered across the prolific work of the two filmmakers. Among the most memorable ones, one could mention the superhero "Mafia Man" or the ape-like mafiosi learning to use the gun (a *2001: A Space Odyssey* parody) from *Cinico TV*; the boss antagonizing a most improbable Christ for resurrecting his enemy Lazarus in *Totò che visse due volte*; the recurrent invitation to vote "good friend of friends" Totò Cuffaro for President of Sicily throughout *I migliori nani della nostra vita*. For an almost exhaustive overview, see Morreale, Emiliano. *La mafia immaginaria*, cit., 281-298.

[161] Ivi, 287.

instance, this proves to be unable to provide answers either.

Belluscone elucidates this epistemological conflict explicitly. Initially conceived as a traditional reportage on the fatal attraction between Silvio Berlusconi, Sicily, and Cosa Nostra (e.g., archival footage, voice-over commentary, interviews with magistrates, politicians, pentiti, etc.), the film promptly turns into a mockumentary on the mystery of Maresco's disappearance. Following the investigation led by film critic Tatti Sanguineti, the constantly misled audience discovers that the project developed into an inquiry on the neo-melodic music scene in Palermo. As a sort of Virgil escorting a Dante-like Maresco through the netherworld and a double to Sanguineti decoding the raw footage for the audience, local television host and neo-melodic impresario Ciccio Mira acts as a qualified and yet reluctant informant. Throughout the fragments the film is made of, he introduces the director to the culture of neo-melodic music, its infrastructure, and its characters, while shying away from discussing openly (but never from hinting at) the interrelationships between that universe and organized crime. Acknowledged as an old-fashioned figure for his distorted sense of honor and principled entrepreneurship (in Maresco's words, for being "a remnant of a lost humanity"[162]) in contrast to the singers' unflinching opportunism and egotism, Mira, whose appearances make the film switch to black and white so as to mark his anachronistic nature, is a typical Maresco character. A full-blooded Palermitan well versed in the art of making do, even a hustler in his own, keenly aware of the compromises that the environment he works in asks from him, as cynical as the filmmaker but far more vivaciously so, almost a mythical trickster. His arrest at the end of the film halts the inquiry on the neo-melodic scene, replicating the failures (and the fate) of the reportage on Berlusconi: a melancholic impossibility to come to terms with the horror of a world that Maresco finds no longer recognizable, let alone appealing and worth discovering, despite having been filming it for over thirty years. *Belluscone* stages quite linearly the conflict between two cultures, that is, the mafia and the lumpen, whose present-day configurations seem impossible to grasp and the means through which they have been traditionally read—e.g., the mafia movie, the *fiction*, the reportage, the essay film, etc.—seem ineffective. Nonetheless, kaleidoscopic structure aside, the film also attempts its own kind of sociological analysis and provides indeed a rare documentation of a little-known subcultural phenomenon in its material articulation (consumption practices and audiences,

[162] Inzerillo, Andrea. "Conversazione con Franco Maresco." *Rapporto Confidenziale*, https://www.rapportoconfidenziale.org/?p=31935, last accessed September 15, 2021.

star system, production culture, transmedia distribution, and, of course, the social network intersecting with the mafia).

Building on this knowledge of the neo-melodic scene and the renewed eagerness of Ciccio Mira, *La mafia non è più quella di una volta* constitutes a further step in Maresco's unique examination of mafia culture, valuable because, as we have seen, conducted in parallel with the merciless demythologization of antimafia culture I will later come back to. Replacing Erik and Vittorio Ricciardi, the main singers of the previous film (and authors of the cult song "Vorrei conoscere Berlusconi" ["I Want to Meet Berlusconi"]), is the tragic figure of Cristian Miscel, a young man who had become a neo-melodic singer after an apparition of Judges Falcone and Borsellino he had while in a coma. Affected by severe neurological disorders, the young singer's story, a whirlwind of abuse where the roles of victim and perpetrator swap all the time, occupies a long disturbing segment of the film meant to expose the coexistence within the neo-melodic milieu of mafia ethos, codes, and imaginary—the subject of *Belluscone*—and quasi-hallucinatory antimafia manifestations. Neither shared values nor elements of the hegemonic rhetoric, these manifestations are empty signifiers floating around the main cultural environment targeted for the last three decades by the antimafia pedagogical initiatives. To some extent, they are testimonies if not to the relative success of the antimafia project, at least to the circulation of an emotional and ethical lexicon, here intersecting in uncharacteristic ways with the no less emotionally and ethically charged one of the neo-melodic music genre. Obviously, this is not to say that anything vaguely relatable to the antimafia, even in the most abstract sense of the term, does sustain the flaunted commitment of either Miscel or the "Neomelodici per Falcone and Borsellino" event. Little doubt that what is at stake here is a purely performative short-circuit, so much so that both Miscel and the concert organizers credit Falcone—the archetypal antimafia judge—for what he had done for the poor of Palermo (e.g., building kindergartens, improving street lighting, fixing the sewerage system) and skillfully circumvent any reference to the fight against the syndicate. Not by chance, the concert itself, despite having been commissioned, we learn from Mira's roundabout confession, by "someone important," ends hastily after a shady emissary lets the organizers know how inappropriate it was for the people who matter there. However, to understand the implications of this short-circuit, we need to pause here to turn to the specifics of neo-melodic culture.

Originating from Naples and its distinct popular music tradition, neo-melodic Neapolitan-language songs are an omnipresent feature of the soundscape of Southern Italy's popular neighborhoods. Besmirched by an ill reputation fed by the cultural elite's hostility and the

widespread misconception that the genre actively promotes criminal lifestyles and behaviors, neo-melodic in recent years has nonetheless expanded its reach beyond the confines of the "alternative culture industry phenomenon."[163] *Gomorra*, the film first and then the TV series (*Gomorrah*, 2014-ongoing), played a pivotal role in acquainting Italians to the genre's excessive sentimentalism, vocal embellishments, and incomplete fusion of "a modern (but not 'progressive') 'Orient' and an outdated (but not 'vintage') 'West'."[164] Its ever-growing contamination with rap, hip-hop, Latin-pop, and dance music elements also speaks of the attempts at crossover into mainstream music from singers who aim to carve for themselves a comfortable niche between the two industries. Courted by trash television producers for the over-the-top and self-aggrandizing style, singers have in effect become regular presences in talent and reality shows, while talk shows keep inviting them to comment from an allegedly sympathetic position on mafia-related news, luring them into dissociating themselves from the syndicate and proclaiming their admiration for the antimafia.[165] Even though such condescending requests are a staple of mainstream street-level journalism in the Mezzogiorno— in Palermo's popular markets it may happen to bump into a reporter asking a produce seller to repeat after them that "the mafia is a pile of shit" or "the mafia sucks"—, the neo-melodic case is more than just yet another example of Southern Orientalism. The scene, as Jason

[163] Pine, Jason. "Transnational Organized Crime and Alternative Culture Industry." In *The Routledge Handbook of Transnational Organized Crime*, edited by Felia Allum and Stan Gilmour, 335-49. New York: Routledge, 2011.
[164] Pine, Jason. *The Art of Making Do in Naples*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012, 78.
[165] Just to provide a very telling example, I want to report the full speech by television host Enrico Lucci on the first episode of his show *Realiti* (June 6, 2019) prompted by a Sicilian neo-melodic singer's dismissal of the antimafia. Addressing the singer, Lucci says: "Why don't you listen [*pointing to himself*] to this poor asshole here? You go buy a book on the history of Sicily, your land. There you will find the names of the great Sicilian heroes. They are, for instance, Pio La Torre, secretary of the Communist Party killed by the mafia [*audience starts clapping*]. Then, Piersanti Mattarella, brother of our President of the Republic. There are many many more [*audience keeps clapping*]. Peppino Impastato. Today is the anniversary of the Carabinieri foundation: You know how many carabinieri have been killed by the mafia? We must say it: The mafia is shit. [*audience claps harder*] And then, after you'll have studied the history of Sicily and the people who made it great, you'll always remember the two greatest Sicilian men who marked a new era in the fight against the mafia in Sicily, in Italy, and in the whole world. They are our brothers..." The singer intervenes, annoyed: "Borsellino and Falcone." Lucci, again: "Bravo! They will be forever with us. [*standing ovation*] Forever in our heart, in our mind." Another guest yells at the singer: "Clap with us! Come on." The camera lingers on the members of the audience and the guests, most of them looking sincerely moved. Another guest, addressing the singer: "Stop following bad models." Lucci, wrapping up: "You got it. Read history. You promise you do it? Okay."
The episode aroused a great deal of controversy as a short excerpt featuring the singer's allegedly shocking anti-antimafia statement ("These people [judges and magistrates] made important life choices well aware of their [potential] consequences. They must like both the sweet and the bitter ones") became viral and exposed the national television agency to all sorts of scandalized reactions. The network responded with an official statement insisting that through its programs, shows, and series, Italian national television engages in a daily awareness campaign against the mafia and for the memory of its martyrs. The following week, Lucci transmitted a longer clip of the interview (expunged of the incriminated sentence) to emphasize how clear his stance was vis-à-vis the antimafia. Next, he interviewed prosecutor Alfonso Sabella from whom he received a much-appreciated official antimafia absolution, later used by the network in promotional materials.

Pine argues, is indeed "a contact zone where the art of making do brushes up against organized crime [and] heterogeneous epistemologies, sensibilities, and practices commingle."[166] Mafia bosses' patronage and investment in the industry as well as their familiarity with neo-melodic singers (generally brandished by both sides) are well-known realities undergirding a troubling concern over the relationships between the scene and organized crime, which has produced scholarly conflicting interpretations.[167] According to Salvatore Giusto, the role of the Camorra inside the Neapolitan scene, rather than merely economic and profit-oriented, needs to be understood as "systematic," for the reproduction of the modalities of political networking that the author calls "subaltern publicity" is "infrastructural to the reproduction of organized crime forms of hegemony over the daily lives of [neo-melodic] producers and consumers."[168] Simply put, the Camorra thrives on the neo-melodic at a symbolic level as well, for the latter constitutes a political tool through which the former imposes its cultural domain over the territory. This position differs only slightly from mainstream accounts of neo-melodic music depicting it as a pure aesthetic prosthesis of organized crime culture by overstating mafia apologies in lyrics, singers' troubles with the law, and on-stage homages paid to the so-called "friends hosted by the state" (i.e., inmates).[169] Pine's analysis, instead, convincingly demonstrates how neo-melodic music and the Camorra inhabit a shared space crisscrossed by affective intensities, most notably a desire for self-determination crystallized in the performance of personal sovereignty. Echoing antimafia legend Roberto Saviano's claim that "it is not just military recruitment, it is an actual sentimental education,"[170] Pine maintains that the circulation of public feelings articulated by neo-melodic music partakes in the shaping of affective-aesthetic atmospheres that only outside the contact zone could look like (that is, be mistaken for) complicity. The Camorra and neo-melodic music, therefore, are part of an atmospheric state of things, which far from being system-like has indeterminacy as its organizing principle. The practice of the art of making do ("l'arte di arrangiarsi"), common to Camorra affiliates, neo-melodic entrepreneurs, and Neapolitan

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[166] Ivi, 9. See also Straw, Will. "Visibility and Conviviality in Music Scenes." In *DIY Cultures and Underground Music Scenes*, edited by Andy Bennett and Paula Guerra, 21-30. London-New York: Routledge, 2018.

[167] For a critical overview of the debate, Perna, Vincenzo. "Killer Melodies: The Musica Neomelodica Debate." In *Made in Italy: Studies in Popular Music*, edited by Franco Fabbri and Goffredo Plastino, 194-206. New York-London: Routledge, 2013.

[168] Giusto, Salvatore. "'One of Us': The Neomelodic Music Industry as a Camorra-Mediated Space of Subaltern Publicity in Contemporary Naples." *Global Crime* 20, no. 2 (2019): 134-155, 152.

[169] Ravveduto, Marcello. *Napoli... Serenata calibro 9. Storia e immagini della camorra tra cinema, sceneggiata e neomelodici*. Naples: Liguori, 2007.

[170] Saviano, Roberto. "Canzone criminale. La musica di Gomorra." *La Repubblica*, February 2, 2012, https://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli-e-cultura/2012/02/12/news/saviano_neomelodici-29737271/, last accessed September 17, 2021.

lower classes alike, is what guarantees opportunities within “the open fields of potential where there are no essential margins.”[171]

In the star-centered neo-melodic industry, where one’s own network, reputation, and popularity outweigh any artistic consideration, the singers’ ability to establish meaningful connections with their audiences is paramount for their survival inside the highly competitive and overcrowded environment of the scene. This aspect draws attention to the various forms of immediacy that innervate the scene—from the apparently unmediated access to the singers (the pervasiveness of phone numbers, traded with the fans and regularly featured in video clips and on social media, is indicative) to the centrality of song requests, wishes, and greetings in concerts and local television music shows. Unlike mass-media celebrities, neo-melodic singers must “promote feelings of self-identification with their own public figures among their fans through reiterated processes of direct interaction with them.”[172]As Gigi D’Alessio, the only singer to have reached global pop star status, confessed in a scandalous 2008 interview to *Vanity Fair*, the level of proximity to the fans in the scene is such that turning down an invitation could have nefarious consequences for one’s career—if not bodily integrity, when mafia bosses are involved.[173] Social networking and fan engagement are so crucial for singers that, as Giusto and Carlo Russo document, “they spend most of their workdays talking to and texting with their fans, sharing intimate details about themselves, dispensing love advices, and sometimes exchanging sexual favors. All, of course, at a good price.”[174] Such emotionally loaded connections, incommensurably more critical in neo-melodic songs and public performances than the rare and vague criminal references overstressed by mainstream media, hint at the more extensive proximity between artists, producers, and audiences taking place at affective, physical, and social levels. Neo-melodic songs illustrate this proximity from an “indigenous” point of view by dramatizing “the lives, affect, and intimate phenomenology of socially marginal subjects such as unemployed, housekeepers, precarious workers, poor students, [...] gangsters, sex-workers of various genders, fugitives, inmates, and their families.”[175] In this respect, the twofold process of folklorization and criminalization of neo-melodic music by

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[171] Pine, Jason. *The Art of Making Do in Naples*, cit., 309.
[172] Giusto, Salvatore. “‘One of Us’,” cit., 149.
[173] Hooper, John. ”The Mafia’s Own Minstrel Comes Clean." *The Guardian*, December 2, 2008, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/dec/02/mafia-italy, last accessed September 19, 2021.
[174] Giusto, Salvatore, and Carlo Russo. ”Note Neomelodiche: estetica sociale, economia politica e reti di scambio asimmetrico nello spazio periferico napoletano.” *Antropologia* 4, no. 1 (2017): 7-31, 13
[175] Ivi, 8-9.

mainstream media and cultural elite participates to the century-old climate of distrust toward the so-called dangerous classes and their culture, especially relevant in Southern urban contexts.[176]

This helps us grasp why the "antimafia" neo-melodic concert, regardless of the motivations that led Mira and his associates to stage it, could stir up such a turmoil across different milieus, ward off almost all the artists contacted by the impresario, outrage the local intelligentsia, and represent for Maresco an irresistible occasion for ridiculing mafia and antimafia cultures. The documentation alone of such an odd enterprise bears value. The filmmaker in fact does deserve credit, already with *Belluscone*, for having cast a light on the Palermitan neo-melodic scene, "a den of monstrous creatures" perfectly integrated into his authorial trajectory but also a space whose public image oscillates between commonsense condemnation and self-interested publicity. Little is known of the regional scene, despite the fact that it is strongly connected (notably, with Naples and the Northern European ethnic communities) and that Palermo and Catania are "major hubs for the production, distribution, broadcast, and performance" of neo-melodic music.[177] The two cities are also home to many singers, authors, and entrepreneurs who no longer see moving to Naples as an indispensable career step (but Neapolitan language classes still are). In addition, several representatives of the neo-melodic pantheon are native to the island (e.g., pioneers Gianni Celeste, Gianni Vezzosi, and Carmelo Zappulla, and their heirs Niko Pandetta, Daniele De Martino, and Tony Colombo), although their songs seldom feature geographical, linguistic, or cultural markers. The affective and performative repertoire of the Sicilian neo-melodic does not present sensible differences to its Neapolitan counterpart, except for a recalibrated dialectic of public and private spheres. Based on the few sources available, that is, journalist and legal investigations, and well aware of their prejudicial standpoint, it is fair to assume that Sicilian neo-melodic singers tend to perform more often in public settings.[178] Infamous among those are local television shows and religious festivals organized by neighborhood committees (that may be including mafiosi) and funded through

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[176] Benigno, Francesco. "The Imaginary of a Sect: Literature, Politics, and the Nineteenth-Century Origins of the Camorra." *Annales* 68, no. 3 (2013): 755-89; Id. *La mala setta. Alle origini di mafia e camorra, 1859-1878*. Turin: Einaudi, 2015.

[177] Pine, Jason, and Francesco Pepe. "Transnational Neomelodica Music and Alternative Economic Cultures." *California Italian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2013): https://escholarship.org/content/qt0rm113j6/qt0rm113j6.pdf?t=nr5qke&v=lg, last accessed September 19, 2021.

[178] Ferrara, Calogero, Francesco Petruzzella. *La mafia canta. I neomelodici, I loro popolo, le loro piazze*. Rome: Zolfo, 2021. See also the photo-reportage D'Agati, Mauro. *Palermo Unsung*. Göttingen: Steidl Verlag, 2009.

clandestine lottery and individual contributions (that may be obtained through extortion practices).[179]

Here, however, my interest does not lie in the scene itself but in the symbolic meaning created by *La mafia non è più quella di una volta* by putting it in a dialectic exchange with the seemingly far-removed antimafia world. The depiction of the antimafia celebration of May 23 in the film is in fact no less astounding than the implausible neo-melodic event, especially to a viewer accustomed to the publicity of both the movement and its ideals. As I have shown, apprehensions over the contamination of the movement, corroborated by various scandals, are integral to today's antimafia discourse. Yet, it is customary to relegate these cases to the individual initiative of a few rotten apples; even when critical voices within, or close to, the movement raise more structural concerns, the symbolic and pedagogical dimensions of the antimafia project—that is, the civil religion—are left unscathed. These, on the contrary, are exactly the target of the film, as illustrated by the few sequences on the actual celebration. The "nave della legalità," a ship filled with over one-thousand high-school students from all over the country departing from Civitavecchia (Rome) and reaching Palermo's shores at dawn, is indistinguishable from any of the cruise ships invading the port and aggravating the process of touristification of the city center. A cheerful young crowd wrapped in gadgets, shirts, and banners disembarks, slowly getting ready to the parade that will culminate at the Falcone tree, while some students rehearse the moves of a choreography and a street vendor sells popcorns and cotton candy. Then the camera, lost in the gaudy atmosphere, catches journalist Pino Maniaci, the "scassaminchia" of the abovementioned *Il Testimone* episode. Interviewing ordinary people about the legacy of Falcone and Borsellino, he obtains only the aggressive answers Maresco got at the beginning of the film while doing the same. "You must have looked high and low for them," Battaglia rightly insinuates with her characteristic mixture of candor and craftiness (an allusion resonating with the *Variety* reviewer's observation that "Maresco manages to find only the most cretinous peasant faces as subjects for his mocking lens"[180] and more

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[179] It is also possible that this perception depends on the sources' keen appetite for episodes of "complicity," as an outsider would put it according to Pine, which makes them oblivious to the more private, intimate, and non-criminal dimensions of the phenomenon. Unfortunately, to the best of my knowledge there is little to no scholarly work conducted in Sicily to complement such reductionist views. The only academic study on neo-melodic music in Sicily I am aware of is Tumminelli, Giuseppina. "Identità, produzione di senso, appropriazione e consumo. Una ricerca esplorativa sulla musica napoletana a Palermo." *Esperienze sociali* 99 (2016): 93-109, which explores youth consumption of neo-melodic music.

[180] Weissberg, Jay. "Film Review: *The Mafia Is No Longer What It Used to Be*." *Variety*, September 9, 2019, https://variety.com/2019/film/reviews/the-mafia-is-not-what-it-used-to-be-review-1203326699/. In the same vein, another reviewer observes, "obviousness played for both laughs and outrage is the strategy from the outset," Ward,

broadly with the disapprobation of Maresco's methods within the documentary community). This becomes for the filmmaker an opportunity to challenge the photographer to attend the parade, which she has avoided to do for several years. From there on, Battaglia's growing disenchantment in the face of the antimafia celebrations that the film craftily documents takes on a symptomatic value, for her past and moral authority sanction which forms of commemoration should be granted legitimacy. "The only thing missing here is the smell of roasted pork," she jokes, revealing her distress. "Would you have imagined twenty-five years ago that such a nightmare could have become real?" Maresco rubs it in. "How could I? At that time, we were crying, not singing. I could not have expected this. Perhaps I should not have lived this long," she replies dead serious. Then, her pensive expression being alternated with footage from the 1992 human chain protest, she weighs in, "I am more than just upset, humiliated, or offended. It is a prank to turn the memory of these tragedies, maybe even unknown to these youths, to a countryside festival. What can we do? What is the alternative to this?" The last question gives the filmmaker an opening to introduce the initiative that would hardly qualify for Battaglia's hoped-for alternative but is certainly one of a kind, the "Neomelodici per Falcone e Borsellino" concert.[181]

By superimposing the two events, *La mafia non è più quella di una volta* advances a bleak reflection on the "performances" of antimafia activism in the absence of a sustained engagement with the social, political, and ethical demands supposed to undergird it. In effect, the film suggests, once the civil religion paradigm has lost its ability to mobilize the citizenry, what remains of it is an empty shell— rituals, symbols, and myths that, drained of their functions, persist as spectacle. The

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Sarah. "*The Mafia Is No Longer What It Used to Be*: Venice Review." *Screen Daily*, September 11, 2019, https://www.screendaily.com/reviews/the-mafia-is-not-what-it-used-to-be-venice-review/5142827.article, last accessed September 20, 2021.

[181] Unfortunately, a controversy blown up to the point of driving state-owned Rai Cinema to withdraw its support and refuse to broadcast the film on national television obscured the film's proper political intervention. In the final minutes of the film, as Maresco wraps up by chronicling recent mafia-related news, he mentions President of the Republic Mattarella's silence in relation to the groundbreaking sentence on the so-called Trattativa that condemned high-rank secret service officers and politicians for having struck a deal with mafia bosses in order to stop the 1993 terrorist attacks. Even if it is a well-established practice for Presidents not to intervene on matters of justice in the name of the separation of powers, the bearing of the event was such that public opinion (and Maresco) could not hide astonishment for the lack of an intervention from the state's highest authority. After all, many reasoned, the sentence, if brought to its logical conclusions, would undermine the state's legitimacy and authority (over the fight against organized crime—and much more), therefore the President, that is, the guarantor of the Constitution, had to take a firm stance. Mira, invited to comment on this strange circumstance, expresses his approval for the behavior of a man who, being a "true Palermitan, does not speak," and confesses his acquaintance with the Mattarella political dynasty dating back to his youth. As always with Mira, his affectionate words and heartfelt benevolence, dramatized in an animated sequence, serve his hidden goal, in this case a pardon request to a nephew of his. On the disparaging images of a "Neomelodici per il Presidente Mattarella" concert attended just by one boy and the sounds of a techno-music remix of the national anthem, the film fades out and the end credits start rolling on Mario D'Annunzio's song.

destiny of Falcone and Borsellino, historical figures who over the decades have acquired a mythical pre-eminence and become objects of worship, is a great illustration of how wildly different instances of actual, performative, and bogus antimafia activism could lay claim on their legacy and repurpose it in novel ways. The spectrum is as wide as to incorporate nearly every public dimension: it would be a mistake reducing these complexities to a false equivalence of performative and bogus manifestations of an otherwise pure antimafia, as the film tends to do by idealizing Battaglia's position. For instance, when the pornographer speaking at a local elite-school incites students "to love [Falcone and Borsellino] more than we love saints and the Madonna because they sacrificed themselves for us," she offers a civil-religion performance that bears discomforting resemblance with the May 23 celebration ridiculed by the film and the lyrics of the neo-melodic ending song. Likewise, Miscel's apparition story could be considered as a heretical variant of an ever-present sign carried out at antimafia marches—the iconic photograph of the two judges by Tony Gentile, also reproduced in Miscel's T-shirts, and the slogan "Their ideas walk on our legs."[182] The entanglement of remembrance, legacy, action, and vocation conjured by it is not as different as it would appear at first, except for the singer's unwillingness to relate it to the (struggle against the) mafia. Indirectly, Maresco explains this by defining the film as being about "an ongoing tragedy—the mafia—that is no longer dealt with except that in TV shows: in the best-case scenario (note the irony), Pif is the face of the antimafia. This flattens everything out: TV shows, institutional commemorations, neo-melodic singers."[183] Such illuminating and yet disheartening observation allows Maresco to situate his work in dialogue with Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, of which he says the film be "a poor person's version."[184] The well-known concept of the spectacle as "a social relation between people […] mediated by images"[185] reverberates with the film's critique of the antimafia's civil religion as the symbolic infrastructure through which the production of the spectacle is realized. In the indistinguishable mashup of rituals, myths, and slogans, Battaglia's quest for an alternative cannot but pass through the desertion of the civil religion and the re-appropriation of the struggle by politics.

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[182] On Gentile's photograph as a cultural icon, see Canright Chiari, Eleonor. "The Whisper with a Thousand Echoes: Tony Gentile's Photograph of Falcone and Borsellino." *Modern Italy* 21, no. 4 (2016): 441-52.

[183183] Morreale, Emiliano. "*La mafia non è più quella di una volta*. Intervista a Franco Maresco." *minima moralia*. September 16, 2019, https://www.minimaetmoralia.it/wp/altro/la-mafia-non-piu-quella-volta-intervista-franco-maresco/, last accessed September 15, 2021.

[184] Idem.

[185] Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone Books, 1994 [1967], 12.

Chapter 2

Beauty Militancy:
Tourism, Urban Palimpsests, and the Becoming-Environmental of the Mafia

> [Falcone was] aware that the work of magistrates and prosecutors had to be on the same wavelength with common sense [*il sentire d'ognuno*]. The fight against the mafia—the first *moral problem* of our beautiful and disgraced land—, then, must not be just a matter of repression, but a cultural, moral, and even religious movement involving everyone so that everybody can get used to *feel the beauty* of the smell of freedom as opposed to the stench of moral compromises, contiguity, and complicity.
>
> Paolo Borsellino[186]

Paolo Borsellino pronounced these words in his last public appearance before his killing on July 19, 1992, an antimafia celebration commemorating Giovanni Falcone, to describe his characterization of antimafia action. It was a tragic moment in the life of the judge and, along with Falcone, antimafia uber-martyr: the slaughter of his colleague a handful of weeks earlier in Capaci on May 23 made him realize he would have been soon the next target of Cosa Nostra's deadly violence. At that point, the rumor that the materials for the bomb that would have killed him had been delivered in Palermo had already reached him. Cognizant of his imminent death following Falcone's, Borsellino spent his last fifty-seven days in a frantic state. From some key *pentiti* he apprehended dreadful information as to the ongoing dealings between top-level bosses and public servants active in the fight against the mafia, some of whom he considered valuable collaborators and friends. In parallel, he ran against time to produce evidence on the connections between Cosa Nostra and high profile Northern-Italian industrialists (including Berlusconi) as well as to strike a decisive blow against the families based in Western Sicily. He claimed to have knowledge of the secrets about Falcone's death and be ready to reveal them. In addition, he attended public, private,

[186] In *Quello che i mafiosi non sanno*, edited by Nicolò Mannino. Trento: Publiprint, 1993, 68. Emphasis added.

and secret meetings with ministers, members of Parliament, and high-ranking figures within the secret service, the police, and the judicial.[187]

The discoveries of Borsellino during his last days of life, which he would have unveiled at a hearing scheduled the day after his murder, were jotted down on a red notebook that he always carried with him but had never been found on the scene of the crime. The movement named after the notebook, "Movimento delle agende rosse," founded by Borsellino's younger brother Salvatore in 2007 has become over the years the driving force of a conspiracy-prone and anti-establishment fringe of the antimafia movement that holds that in the Borsellino's murder case (and beyond it) Cosa Nostra was just the paramilitary arm of the Italian state. In a milder and more accredited theory, the judge fell victim to the workings of rogue intelligence agencies in cahoots with state officials and high-profile politicians. Missing pieces in the reconstruction of the murder—most notably the fetishized notebook and *pentiti*'s declarations about unidentified outsiders involved in the planning of the murder—fostered all sorts of speculations. Falcone and Borsellino, the most prominent public figures of the struggle against the mafia throughout the 1980s and the leading judges of the Antimafia pool, were indissolubly connected by the tragic circumstances of their deaths. To them, rigorously together, are dedicated streets, parks, sport centers, auditoriums, libraries, and schools in virtually every Italian province.

Although it has been claimed that "for Cosa Nostra, to have killed Falcone without killing Borsellino would have been, in a sense, to leave business unfinished,"[188] numerous commentators, including judges and prosecutors, have recently started to set Falcone's and Borsellino's deaths (or, in antimafia jargon, "May 23" and "July 19") apart. As I have already mentioned earlier, Falcone spent the last year of his life in Rome, working for the Ministry of Justice on an ambitious project for instituting a special prosecuting authority in charge of the fight against the mafia, which he was to head himself. The establishment of the *Direzione Nazionale Antimafia*, along with that of the nationwide investigating authority known as *Direzione Investigativa Antimafia*, would have caused irreparable damage to organized crime, especially if led by the person who knew Cosa Nostra better than anyone else. In this sense, Cosa Nostra's self-preservation depended on its ability to stop the soon-to-be nationwide antimafia attorney once and for all. Borsellino's killing is usually explained by the judge's closeness to Falcone and the likelihood that he would have taken the position devised

[187] On Borsellino's last days, see the biopic *Paolo Borsellino. I 57 giorni* (*Paolo Borsellino. The 57 Days*, Alberto Negrin, 2012). See also Lucentini, Umberto. *Paolo Borsellino*. Rome: San Paolo, 2003.
[188] Jamieson, Alison. *The Antimafia: Italy's Fights against Organized Crime*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999, xix.

by his friend for himself and followed in his footsteps (although Borsellino declared that he had no interest in the job).

Many have started questioning this version of the story and hinted at the fact that July 19, unlike May 23, was not only unnecessary to Cosa Nostra, but even counterproductive. They notice that before the killing, restrictive antimafia legislation had run aground in Parliament and only the pressure of popular protests following July 19 convinced legislators to move forward. They also point to judicial evidence attesting that a first round of secret negotiations between mafia and state representatives occurred in June 1992 only to be suddenly interrupted after Borsellino's killing. In order to resume them, Cosa Nostra had to plant and detonate bombs in the summer of 1993 on tourist sites in Rome, Florence, and Milan in a shocking display of impotence. Finally, they report *pentiti*'s declarations indicating the unanimous opposition of all mafia bosses to the killing of Borsellino proposed by boss of the bosses Totò Riina, who two decades later, in his only statement from prison, cryptically admitted that "*they* killed that one," implying that it was not the mafia. Accordingly, Salvatore Borsellino and many others speak of July 19 not as a mafia slaughter, which is an uncontroversial definition for May 23, but as a state slaughter. Anyone willing to grapple with the story of the murder investigation, an intricate series of red herrings and mysteries, would not fail to recognize spy novel ingredients, including very dubious and even timelier suicides and a shadowy villain known as *faccia da mostro* (Monster Face).[189]

If the content of the red notebook is still and probably would always be subject to wild speculations, it is nonetheless possible to imagine that Borsellino had come to realize that sectors of the state were conspiring with Cosa Nostra. Such awareness fuels and supports the claims of the strand of the antimafia movement recognizing itself in the title of a pamphlet penned by a famous investigative journalist, *È Stato la mafia*, an ungrammatical wordplay meaning both "It was the mafia" and "The mafia is the State."[190] For this group, that after the bombs of 1993, ensuing the arrest of Riina and his replacement at the helm of the Sicilian Mafia Commission with the moderate boss Bernardo Provenzano, Cosa Nostra laid down its arms is counterintuitively considered the final victory of the mafia, which no longer needed to fight because it had simply no institutional opponents left. From the mid-1990s to the present time, the mafia is supposed to rule through what

[189] See Abbate, Lirio. *Faccia da mostro. Omicidi eccellenti e stragi di mafia*. Milan: Rizzoli, 2021. See also Torrealta, Maurizio. *La trattativa. Mafia e Stato. Un dialogo a colpi di bombe*. Milan: Rizzoli, 2010; Borsellino, Salvatore, ed. *La Repubblica delle stragi. Il patto di sangue tra stato, mafia, P2 ed evasione nera*. Rome: PaperFirst, 2018.
[190] Travaglio, Marco. *È Stato la mafia*. Rome: Chiarelettere, 2014.

the hardliners call the "submersion strategy." Even among non-hardline groups, the belief that Cosa Nostra is stronger than ever and for this reason alone it wants to avoid any action that would attract public attention goes unquestioned. This is the underpinning of what I shall call the becoming-environmental of the mafia, the paradoxical conviction that the mafia is nowhere to be seen not because of its downfall or, to be less optimistic, the severe crisis it has been undergoing since the mid-1990s, but because it had come to penetrate any facet of life in the island. The reference to the environment, in this respect, helps me ground this condition to space and in the following pages I will examine a variety of spatial manifestations of the becoming-environmental of the crime syndicate. In addition, in a time of global climate change and environmental crises, it also conjures up collective anxieties about and perceived threats to life as it is.

Among the mysteries of Borsellino's last days, a minuscule one opened this chapter. It is the mystery of a man condemned to death, a self-defined "walking dead" running against time to save his life, who nonetheless finds the time to speak to a crowd of young Palermitans about Falcone's legacy and ends up talking about beauty. I could hardly imagine a more explicit attestation of the primacy of the project of cultural re-education promoted by the antimafia movement that I have analyzed in the previous chapter. This falls into the realm of ordinary antimafia action, although the circumstances certainly make it remarkable. What is extraordinary, at least to me, is the mention of "the beauty of the smell of freedom," which indeed constitutes an original twist to a cultural script revolving exclusively around the primacy of legality,[191] and its association to common sense. To my knowledge, no one has ever paid attention to this moment, and reasonably so: antimafia commemorative speeches are hardly anything more than a chain of heartening platitudes, irrespective of the verve and rhetorical skills of the speaker.[192] Yet, the twofold move of equating the fight against the mafia to the pursuit of beauty and predicating it on common sense is something that needs further reflection.[193]

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[191] Schneider, Peter, and Jane Schneider. '"Educating for Legality," cit.

[192] See Mascali, Antonella. *Le ultime parole di Falcone e Borsellino*. Rome: Chiarelettere, 2012; Grasso, Piero. *Paolo Borsellino parla ai ragazzi*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 2020.

[193] It is worth mentioning that prominent folklorist and mafia apologist Giuseppe Pitrè registered already in the early twentieth century that "in [Palermo's] popular neighborhoods, the term mafia and its derivatives meant and still means beauty, grace, perfection, and excellence. […] To the idea of beauty it is also connected to those of superiority and worth." In Pitrè's infamous definition, "a mafioso would be a man of courage and a mafiosa a beautiful and proud young woman." The ethnologist's ideas about the mafia, including his understanding of *omertà* as deriving from the root of *uomo* [man] and therefore being a quintessentially manly attribute in Sicilian culture, are largely discredited today and stain his otherwise relevant intellectual legacy as one of the leading ethnologists of turn-of-century Europe and of the most renowned Sicilian intellectuals in contemporary history. Quotes from Rizzo Nervo, Gaetano. *Il fascino*

I found another instance, or perhaps more appropriately a demonstration, of this twofold move in the bestselling children's book on the subject of the mafia, a novel widely read in elementary schools across the country titled *Per questo mi chiamo Giovanni* ("This Is Why My Name Is Giovanni"). Curiously, Falcone's death takes once again center stage. The protagonist is a well-meaning dad who upon learning of a case of bullying in the son's elementary school decides to drag his child into a one-day Falcone pilgrimage to impart him a 160-page long lesson on civic education and legality through the example of the judge. The day after the eye-opening tour, the boy will denounce the bully, who in turn will end up in juvenile prison. Future historians will find in the novel a brilliant illustration of early-twenty-first-century middle-class dullness and petty moralism, whereas contemporaries are only left to worry about what gets taught and assigned in elementary schools during civic education classes. In the passage of our interest, the author interrupts his alter ego's history lesson on May 23 to manifest his incredulity in the face of such a brutal event. He writes, "Every time I think of that moment, I cannot help but think of one thing. […] There is not a single spot in the world more beautiful than that landscape. How could [the mafiosi who killed Falcone] do a similar thing in the presence of so much beauty? How could they prevent another human being from enjoying that sight again?" This is a thought-provoking variation on Borsellino's ideal of beauty as the ultimate horizon of antimafia action whose power resides in its common sense. Here, in fact, the narrator gestures to a gap, almost anthropological in essence, between a common person and a mafioso established through the capability to recognize and value beauty. The gap, which intuitively would pertain to the sphere of ethics and politics, morphs into a question of aesthetics, albeit with a strong ethical component. Mafiosi do not (just?) break the social contract by going against the state's laws and corrupting democratic life, most critically the break the somehow moral mandate of beauty—the right to rejoice at it, the duty to preserve it, the obligation to fight for it, the hope to carry a life under its sign.

On this premise, beauty has become a source of activist agency, which I claim to be mediated through an essentially cinematic imaginary. It is in this respect that in this chapter I attempt to trace the assimilation of beauty into the antimafia discourse via cinema. Throughout it, I explore the interconnections of beauty, culture, and politics, departing from the traditional scholarly focus on bodies and landscapes in order to encompass the broader variety of objects, practices, and ideals

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della medusa: mafia è bello. Cosenza: Luigi Pellegrini, 1992, 58 and Lupo, Salvatore. *History of the Mafia*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, 6.

undergirding the work of activists and cultural producers committed to fight the mafia. I argue that bestowing ethical values on beauty helps turn an allegedly apolitical and universal value into a formidable resource. As such, it is strategically deployed to bridge otherwise insurmountable gaps—in the first place, between wildly different social actors (the activist and the local communities, the local cultural industries, the administration, and outsiders),—while also pushing forward a post-political platform erasing conflicts and negotiations over the stakes, forms, and goals of antimafia action.

This investigation adopts a consciously eccentric standpoint; that is, tourism. If it is evident that beauty and its pursuit are integral to practices of tourism, the inclusion of the mafia and the fight against it into the equation may sound quite puzzling at first. Yet the tourism industry in Western Sicily, as the abundant examples in the following pages demonstrate, has moved in recent years from hiding anything related to the crime syndicate (or, during the mafia wars, hiding the tourists in gated holiday resorts) to integrating mafia and antimafia experiences into the tourist offer. Tourism proves to be an excellent standpoint also in relation to one of the ambitions of this dissertation to chart out the new social and political articulations of the struggle against the mafia nourished by hegemonic movie-made mafia imaginaries for two reasons. First, it allows me to ground these articulations in space, forcing me to travel across places crisscrossed—or, more appropriately, haunted—by traces of mafia and antimafia history. In a time when the reality of the mafia escapes even most locals who have dedicated their lives to fight against it, this aspect alone renders tourism a particularly dense site of inquiry. Second, it asks me to engage in a deeper way with the circulation of this movie-made imaginary across several locales, for it informs tourist perceptions and expectations as well as products and experiences. The remarkable presence of cinema at the core of the mafia-tourism nexus is in itself a good indication of the multifaceted functions of the medium in the manufacture and transmission of mafia history and, more centrally, of the antimafia public narrative of the city. On the immediate level, cinema has popularized the image of the city as a space of ambivalence wherein mafia violence, antimafia resistance, and a porous buffer area between the two coexist. Attending to how this image is rendered by tourism adds further complexity to the issue.

In the first section of this chapter, I provide an overview of the appearance of the mafia in the tourist experience first by sketching out the history of destination Sicily, the image of the island established by the tourism industry, and then by heeding to the overlaps between mafia and tourist imaginaries and their material concretions. The traces of the mafia in destination Sicily are contentious objects and practices against which both the local public opinion and the antimafia

movement have rallied, denouncing them as late-capitalist aberrations. Here I focus specifically on the two most loathed ones, the mafia gadget and the mafia tour, and attempt to try to make sense of them from multiple perspectives.

The following two sections take as their point of departure one tour offered by antimafia tour operator Addiopizzo Travel, an atypical and yet extremely significant actor within both the antimafia movement and the tourism industry. By focusing on spatial relations and forms of cultural production and promotion that align themselves with the antimafia value and belief system, these two sections address the material realities of Cosa Nostra within the complex dialectic of invisibility and hypervisibility (or more generally, presence and absence) that has characterized any discourse on the mafia over the last two decades. In the second section, I use their blockbuster No Mafia Walk Tour as a narrative pretext to chart out the becoming-environmental of the mafia in the urban fabric of Palermo. I do so by reconstructing the history of the city from the adoption of beauty as an utopian ideal of governance and urban development in the mid-nineteenth century to its exploitation in the twenty-first-century touristified city, through the catastrophic urban reconstruction of the 1950s (the Sack of Palermo) marking the entrance of Cosa Nostra into the administration of the city. Through the ethnographic description of the tour, I aim at making visible the role that cinema played in fashioning an image of Sicily that reverberates in what tourists expect and what antimafia tourism instead offers, which I would argue are informed, respectively, by Hollywood and by antimafia cinema. The latter would be a the center of the last section, which departs from Addiopizzo Travel's One-Hundred Steps Tour, a film tour in disguise based on antimafia biopic *I cento passi* (*One-Hundred Steps*, Marco Tullio Giordana, 2000), in order to understand the shifting grounds of militancy for today's antimafia activists. Antimafia cinema, again, comes to the fore as a privileged locus of mediation, a space wherein post-political (or ethical) stances on the struggle have supplanted the sphere of politics, clearing the ground for their uncontroversial adoption among activists.

Traces of the Mafia in Destination Sicily: Resorts, Gadgets, and Tours

The budding size of the tourist sector in Sicily, combined with the radical changes of the global tourism industry in recent times, has brought about a substantial diversification of the offer, well reflected in the variety of previously overlooked locations, venues, experiences, and products now marketed as "attractions." Since a multiplicity of actors vying for attention and legitimacy in an increasingly crowded market have hurried to seize the opportunities provided by the only flourishing sector of the regional economy, tourism has become a symbolic space saturated with competing images and metanarratives. Today, the once hegemonic view of the island as a seaside destination inflected with both mass appeal (e.g., cheap accommodation, public beaches, low living cost) and exclusivity (e.g., luxury hotels and destination, archaeological sites) survives as somehow residual, undercut by the conjoint effort of private companies and public institutions to impose cultural tourism as the dominant development model. This move is not unique to Sicily; on the contrary, the global magnitude of the shift toward event- and heritage-based tourism at the expense of forms of consumption perceived as static and passive and therefore less value generating is a well-studied reality.[194]

As decades of scholarship on culture and globalization have abundantly shown, homogenizing dynamics of (cultural) production, exchange, and consumption coexist with processes of valorization of sectoral and regional differences "in a kind of volatile, perhaps dialectical, co-constitution."[195] In a globalized world where culture is "marked by an *organization of diversity* rather than by a replication of uniformity,"[196] cultural tourism embodies this tension in several manners, most notably through the appeal to highly formalized outsider-oriented performances. The disingenuous promises of cultural density and transparency that such performances hold out,

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[194] See Timothy, Dallen J. *Cultural Heritage and Tourism: An Introduction*. Bristol: Channel View, 2011, 83-102; Smith, Laurajane. "The Cultural 'Work' of Tourism." In *The Cultural Moment in Tourism*, edited by Laurajane Smith, Emma Waterton, and Steve Watson, 210-234. New York: Routledge, 2012, 121-134; du Cros, Hilary, Bob McKercher. *Cultural Tourism*, New York: Routledge, 2015, 120-134.

[195] Mazzarella, William. "Culture, Globalization, Mediation." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 345-367, 349. See also Appadurai, Arjun. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy" and "The Production of Locality." In *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, 27-47 and 178-199. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996; Robertson, Roland. "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity." In *Global Modernities*, edited by Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson, 25-44. London: Sage, 1995; Tsing, Anna. "The Global Situation." *Cultural Anthropology* 15, no. 3 (2000): 327-360; Lee, Benjamin, and Edward LiPuma. "Cultures of Circulation: The Imaginations of Modernity." *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 191-213; Garcia Canclini, Nestor. *Imagined Globalization*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

[196] Hannerz, Ulf. *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, 237, author's emphasis.

alongside the reduction of complex phenomena to consumable simulacra, contributed to make tourism at large a "bad object" for scholars of culture. The paucity of scholarship on tourism in a field as receptive to cultural dynamics and social transformations as film studies is staggering,[197] all the more so when considering the mutual dependencies of the film and tourism industries across multiple geographical scales and the multifarious convergences between the two disciplinary objects and their histories.[198] This lack cannot be explained exclusively by the triviality of tourism vis-à-vis forms of serious mobility that define the experience of dwelling-in-motion for most of the world's inhabitants, which instead have attracted the interest of film scholars.[199] Instead, I would argue that the problem lies in a common misperception of tourism that precludes critical engagements with its underlying processes of mediation. This is far from suggesting that the topic has not attracted critical engagements. Tourism, the standard complaint goes, is a corrupting force further accelerating the concomitant processes of social disintegration, environmental degradation, and cultural homologation brought about by neoliberal globalization.[200] Less antagonistic views equally stress the impact of tourism as a distortion of a sort, as a social practice enforcing the reproduction of stereotypes that ultimately imposes reification and commodification to the local realities affected by it.[201]

Such understandings of tourism, however poignant and politically relevant their applications may be, suffer from a fetishization of culture accompanied by condescension toward the tourist, a

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[197] Sampaio, Sara. "Confronting the Gaze, Gripping the Virtual: A Cultural Materialist Perspective on Cinema-Tourism Studies." In *The Routledge Companion to Media and Tourism*, edited by Månsson, Maria, Anna Buchmann, Cecilia Cassinger, and Lena Eskilsson, 53-60. New York: Routledge, 2021.

[198] See Crouch, David, Rhona Jackon, and Felix Thompson, eds. *The Media and Tourist Imagination: Converging Cultures*. New York: Routledge, 2005; Crawshaw, Carol, and John Urry. "Tourism and the Photographic Eye." In *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory*, edited by Chris Rojek and John Urry, 176-96. Routledge: New York, 1997; Strain, Ellen. *Public Places, Private Journeys: Ethnography, Entertainment, and the Tourist Gaze*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003; Choe, Youngmin. *Tourist Distractions: Traveling and Feeling in Transnational Hallyu Cinema*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

[199] See for instance Parvulescu, Anca. *The Traffic in Women's Work: East European Migration and the Making of Europe*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014; Engelen, Leen, Kris Van Heuckelm, eds. *European Cinema and the Wall: Screening East-West Mobility*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014; Gott, Michael. *French-Language Road Cinema: Diaspora, Migration, and the "New" Europe*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016. Dickinson, Kay. *Arab Cinema Travels: Transnational Syria, Palestine, Dubai, and Beyond*. London: BFI, 2016; Cahill, James Leo, Luca Caminati, eds. *Cinema and Exploration: Essays on an Adventurous Practice*. New York: Routledge-AFI, 2020.

[200] D'Eramo, Marco. *The World in a Selfie: An Inquiry into the Tourist Age*. New York-London: Verso, 2021. See in relation to Mediterranean tourism, Turner, Louis, John Ash. *The Golden Hordes: International Tourism and the Pleasure Periphery*. New York: Constable, 1975.

[201] Graburn, Nelson. *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976; Desmond, Jane. *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

figure akin to that of the alleged credulous spectator of early cinema.[202] Dean MacCannell's canonical *The Tourist* illustrates both shortcomings in tracing the emergence of the act of sightseeing to the specifically modern experience of life as dominated by instability and inauthenticity, which led modern individuals to develop "a fascination for the 'real life' of others."[203] In this account, tourists buy into two promises at once: the existence of a putative intimate and real ("life as it is really lived") and the access to that dimension through the performances of "staged authenticity" that according to the sociologist constitutes the key component of tourism. Here the equation of tourism, simulacra, and false consciousness, like in its multiple declinations elsewhere,[204] leaves little room for considering media and mediation as constitutive of tourism. The too-easy conflation of the phenomenological experience of tourism and the semantics of the inauthentic and the staged does not permit us to account for the deep material and symbolic tensions undergirding the lived reality of tourism in a given locale. This is the necessary prelude for attaching weight to tourist imaginaries in order to recognize the entanglements of meaning, ideology, and desire at their core.

In Sicily, conflicts over the diversion of resources from the citizenry and the infrastructural and logistical interventions to accommodate tourism's needs have enlivened the life of virtually any government. By growing unconstrained at the expense of stagnant or less profitable sectors, tourism has created forms of economic dependency that trickles down to the micro-level of the resident, making him or her a potential stakeholder of the industry via social media and online platforms. In spite of its burden on the lives of most Sicilians—for the growth of the industry is turning almost any islander into a member of the region-wide host community—, the question of the new spatial and economic configurations that tourism is forcing upon Sicily at large seems confined to administrative matters. Public opinion has shown reticence in addressing tourism-induced malpractices and misdemeanours. Activists, as I will show for the case of Palermo in the next section, do raise criticism, and forcefully so, but only through guerrilla marketing techniques, given that the traditional avenues of the public sphere are not accessible to them.[205] With typical local fatalism, tourism, or more specifically mass tourism, is hardly perceived as an environmental and

[202] Gunning, Tom. "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator." In *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*, edited by Linda Williams, 114-133. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995 [1989].
[203] MacCannell, Dean. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California, 1999 [1976], 91.
[204] Eco, Umberto. *Travels in Hyperreality*. New York: Hancourt, 1972.
[205] On the techniques developed by locals to "protect" their community, see Boissevain, Jeremy. "Introduction." In *Coping with Tourists: European Reactions to Mass Tourism*, edited by Jeremy Boissevain, 1-26. New York: Berghahn, 1996, 14-20.

social threat to which resistance could be opposed, and so neither deleterious effects nor possible remedies are objects of public debate.

In contrast to their reticence to focus on the real costs of tourism, local media are circumspect and often suspicious when it comes to its symbolic dimensions. One issue in particular has caused apprehension over the years: the emerging role of the tourism industry in redefining the image of the island, that is, the rebranding of destination Sicily in compliance with the mantras of twenty-first-century marketing. In this respect, tourism fuels pre-existing anxieties about the public perception of Sicily. News articles and op-ed pieces with a predilection for alarmed tones abound in the local mediascape and, though vexed by provincialism and an open bias for anything mass, they express legitimate exasperation over the "misrepresentations" circulated by the culture industry from time immemorial, a situation now worsened by their amplification via the Internet and social media platforms. Clearly, this exceeds the outlandish Southern preoccupation for *bella figura* (beautiful appearance, attire, or image) caricatured by anthropologists and tourist guidebooks alike.[206] A rebranding of the island based on assumptions that public opinion perceives as ludicrous, misleading, or dishonest does not in fact pertain only to the realm of the symbolic: tourists will actively seek out to give meaning to their experience according to pre-constituted schemata while the industry will go to great lengths to ensure their manufacture. Those schemata are in place in the very idea of a tourist destination,[207] and their formation on a mass scale in Sicily is a relatively recent phenomenon with reverberations worth heeding to.

In her study on the imaginary of Italy born of mass tourism, Stephania Malia Hom has argued that the idea of "the beautiful country" encompasses a repository of tradition and authenticity as well as of leisure and aesthetic pleasures that "figuratively palliate the manifold anxieties linked to globalization."[208] The notion of Italy as a tourist destination, Hom maintains, displays such cohesiveness in character and culture that it cannot but run counter the notion of Italy as a political state, marked instead by stark differences and inequalities. Peripheral to the nation-state not only geographically, Sicily however partakes of a similar tourism-enforced cultural homogeneity that

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[206] Del Negro, Giovanna. *La Passeggiata and Popular Culture in an Italian Town*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004; Pipyrou, Stavroula. "Cutting Bella Figura: Irony, Crisis, and Secondhand Clothes in Southern Italy." *American Ethnologist* 41, no. 3 (2014): 532-546; Lonely Planet. *Sicily*. Melbourne: Lonely Planet Publications, 2017, 282. For a non-ironic account of *bella figura* as a configuration of *civiltà* (i.e., civility and civilization), see Silverman, Sydel. *The Bells of Civilization: The Life of an Italian Hill Town*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1975.

[207] Aime, Marco, Davide Papotti. *L'altro e l'altrove. Antropologia, geografia, turismo*. Turin: Einaudi, 2012.

[208] Hom, Stephanie Malia. *The Beautiful Country: Tourism and the Impossible State of Destination Italy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015, 218. See also Berrino, Annunziata. *Storia del turismo in Italia*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011.

posits it, in line with MacCannell's theory evoked above, as a respite from and an alternative to "modern" life. The stress put on an alleged Sicilian lifestyle centered on leisure that locals are willing to share with the tourists contradicts the less fanciful reality of poverty and stagnation that renders the island a very affordable destination for the affluent visitors while hooking up the residents on tourism. The stereotype of Southerners as full-time practitioners of the art of *il dolce far niente* (sweet idleness), which originated in the first half of the nineteenth century to explicate the unaccomplished modernization of the region, has been successfully deployed to replace local lumpen-proletarians with the "figurative tourists in their own lives."[209] Nonetheless, it would be deceiving to assume a straightforward distinction between false fronts and intimate reality, positioning poverty at the margins of, if not entirely exterior to, the border zone where the tourist-local encounter occurs.[210] The lesson of Giuseppe Tornatore's award-winning hit *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* (*Cinema Paradiso*, 1988), probably the most widely circulated film made by insiders, demonstrates an unexpected persistence: romanticizing underdevelopment as "traditional culture" acquires more value in relation to the eroded sense of collective and community identity in late capitalist societies.[211]

Scholars have long maintained that mass tourism works according to a similar longing for the experience of a cohesive, that is, accessible and consumable, cultural otherness.[212] In response to that demand, actors within the Sicilian tourism industry—in the broadest sense of the term, anyone benefiting financially from interactions with tourists—have contributed to manufacturing tradition, or more often revamping and embellishing markers of popular culture, consumption, and life in

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[209] Ivi, 53-59. Although Hom provides a convincing analysis of the stereotype and its circulation, I do find her attempt to "metamorphose" the south into Italy questionable, here as much as in other occasions throughout her book. In the context of a work mostly concerned with the cleavage between Italian political realities (oddly reduced to questions of national identity and the modern state) and related tourist imaginaries this is not a minor remark. At the same time, this is not a specific flaw of the otherwise excellent study either, but a symptom of the wider tendency within North-American Italian studies to fetishize an idealized homogeneous national culture at the expense of less appealing regional cultures, formations, and arrangements.

[210] Bruner, Edward. *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

[211] Rumble, Patrick. "Tornatore e l'America: il cinema dell'anamnesi." In *Sicilia e altre storie. Il cinema di Giuseppe Tornatore*, edited by Valerio Caprara, 11-20. Naples: ESI, 1996.

[212] Salazar, Noel B. "Imagineering Otherness: Anthropological Legacies in Contemporary Tourism." *Anthropological Quarterly* 86, no. 3 (2013): 669-696. See also Clifford, James. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1997, esp. 17-46; Urry, John. *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. London: Sage, 1990.

general. Street food and puppet theatre are just two of the most visible examples.[213] Of course, the looming presence of the mafia is fully integrated in this process, and not from a minor position.[214]

Historically, the belatedness of Sicily's entry into the tourist age also depended on the entanglements of crime, underdevelopment, and their impact on the public image of the island. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the region would be usually spared from the Grand Tour, a sign perhaps of its exclusion from the "European civilization project" that those well-heeled travelers were contributing to shape by journeying around (and writing about) its ancient ruins.[215] The exceptional travel accounts from the time, included the well-known *Italian Journey* by Goethe and *A Tour through Sicily and Malta* by Patrick Brydone, provide an inventory of aggravations, from the filthy and poorly lit city streets to the lack of lodging, from the deplorable road network to the terror of bandits.[216] Later on, the gruesome repression of brigandage through which the new Italian state militarily crushed the opposition to conscription and taxation by Southern peasants produced a visual archive whose broad circulation across multiple regions and platforms strengthened further the perception of the Mezzogiorno as unruly and utterly dangerous.[217] In the nineteenth century, at the inception of modern tourism, the same widespread insecurity that induced landowners to rely on the nascent "violence industry" (that is, the mafia) to protect their estates and prevent their toilers from organizing contributed to make the island an unappealing destination, with the exception of a few safe havens like Taormina. The twentieth century largely reversed this course, as unprecedented cultural novelties such as seaside tourism, mass leisure, and the institution of paid holiday, alongside the political centralization of the industry, incentivized regional growth, thus leaving a local, culturally specific imprint on the nascent tourist culture of the island. The Fascist regime's "civilizing mission," which partly coincided with the politicization of both leisure and the

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[213] Alajmo, Roberto. *L'arte di annacarsi. Un viaggio in Sicilia*. Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2010, 7-16.
[214] Cavadi, Augusto. *Mafia Explained to Tourists*. Trapani: Di Girolamo, 2008, 8-13. See also Kington, Tom. "How to Spot a Mafioso: A Tourist's Guide." *The Guardian*. March 14, 2008, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/mar/14/italy.internationalcrime, last accessed May 10, 2022.
[215] Wokler, Robert. "Rites of Passages and the Grand Tour: Discovering, Imagining, and Inventing European Civilization in the Age of the Enlightenment." In *Finding Europe: Discourses on Margins, Communities, Images*, edited by Anthony Molho and Diogo Curto, 205-222. New York: Berghahn, 2007. See also Black, Jeremy. *Italy and the Grand Tour*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003; Bouchard, Norma, and Valerio Ferme. *Italy and the Mediterranean: Words, Sounds, and Images of the Post-Cold War Era*. New York: Palgrave, 2013, 43-54.
[216] Coluccello, Rino. *Challenging the Mafia Mystique: Cosa Nostra from Legitimization to Denunciation*. New York: Palgrave, 2016, 11-16.
[217] For a historical overview of *brigantaggio* and the making of Italy, see Davis, John. *Conflict and Control: Law and Order in Nineteenth Century Italy*. London: Macmillan, 1988. For a comparative perspective, see Hobsbawm, Eric J. *Bandits*. London: Penguin, 1972, and Blok, Anton. "Social Banditry Reconsidered." In *Honor and Violence*, 14-28. Cambridge: Polity, 2001 [1972].

private sphere, translated into a serious effort to develop domestic tourism by creating an extensive tourist bureaucracy and instituting leisure mass activities. Travel magazines such as Touring Club Italiano's *Vie d'Italia* and popular films of the period such as Raffaello Matarazzo's *Treno popolare* (*Tourist Train*, 1933) and Mario Camerini's *Grandi magazzini* (*Department Store*, 1939) contributed to the affirmation of an ideal of tourism as a working- and lower-middle-class practice well suited for spurring nationalist sentiment.[218] In Sicily, as arrival numbers steadily increased, industry-driven development was not limited to the obvious construction of tourist facilities: it included as well the improvement and expansion of the road, sewer, and water supply networks, although infrastructures were still dramatically inadequate. Anti-statist critics remarked that Sicilians had seen their living conditions improve because the central government was concerned with rendering the outsiders' sojourns more comfortable.[219]

From the 1960s to the 1990s, in part to circumvent the structural deficiencies characterizing the tourist offer and avoid the nuisances of mafia violence, the holiday resort complex—a quintessential gated community limiting interaction with locals to a bare minimum—epitomized the peculiar form of Southern inclusion envisioned by the national government in the manufacture of destination Italy. Financed through the *Cassa del Mezzogiorno* (Southern Development Fund), the network of holiday villages drew inspiration from the French Club Méditerranée's colonial ideal of uncontaminated tourist haven protecting its guests from the unpleasant outside realities.[220] For an irony of fate, at the time when the resort gathered momentum in the collective imaginary as the prototypical Mediterranean holiday location (for what it offered as much as for what it proscribed),[221] Cosa Nostra, after having indirectly damaged Sicilian tourism for decades, entered the industry through financial investments in tour operators and the direct involvement in resort

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[218] De Grazia, Victoria. *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, 179-186. See also Bosworth, R.J.B. "Tourist Planning in Fascist Italy and the Limits of Totalitarian Culture." *Contemporary European History* 6, no. 1, 1997, 1-25; Lasansky, D. Medina. *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004.

[219] Cassar, Silvana. "Tourism Development in Sicily during the Fascist Period." *Journal of Tourism History* 1, no. 2 (2009): 131-149.

[220] Battilani, Patrizia, and Donatella Strangio. "Tourism as a Tool for Territorial Cohesion: The Cassa del Mezzogiorno in Italy during the 1950s." In *Inter and Post-War Tourism in Western Europe, 1916-1960*, edited by Carmelo Pellejero Martinez and Marta Luque Aranda, 159-175. New York: Palgrave, 2020. For an overview of the entanglement of tourism and coloniality in the Mediterranean, see Gregory, Derek. "Colonial Nostalgia and Cultures of Travel: Spaces of Visibility in Egypt." In *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage: Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism*, edited by Nezar AlSayyad, 111-151. New York-London: Routledge, 2001; Obrador Pons, Pau; Mike Crang, Penny Travlou, eds. *Cultures of Mass Tourism: Doing the Mediterranean in the Age of Banal Mobilities*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2009.

[221] Löfgren, Orvar. *On Holiday: A History of Vacation*. Los Angeles-Berkeley: University of California, 1999, 151-209.

construction. In the following years, as reports and inquiries have attested, mafia influence in the tourism industry stretched beyond the holiday resort, a fact hardly surprising when considering the weight of the sector for the Sicilian economy and the diversification of the syndicate's (legal and illegal) economic interests.[222]

Slightly more surprising is the penetration of the mafia in the fabric of the tourist experience, even in destinations partially or completely untouched by the reach of the organization. In this context the mafia, no longer meant as a criminal organization, takes on the form of a "symbolic resource" perceived at once as too distinguished to spare from the commodification of local culture and too thorny to handle like any other typical product or character. And it is in relation to the association between Sicily as a tourist destination and the mafia that the public opinion strives to exercise its influence in order to censor, or at least inflict damage to, initiatives that are deemed to bring discredit to the island or, more cynically, to the respectability of the industry as a whole.

This brief historical overview shows how baffling the association of tourism and the mafia on the ground that the former could benefit from the latter would have been until not much ago. That this is no longer the case exemplifies well the shifting meaning of Cosa Nostra in present-time Sicily from an actual crime organization to an accretion of imaginaries. It is not by chance then that tourism, a set of cultural practices whose elective spaces (i.e., destinations) are "neither the origin nor the object of an imaginary, but rather a materialization of it,"[223] represents an ideal standpoint from which to grasp what the "mafia" is ostensibly purported to be.

To be clear, I am not claiming that tourism produces the mafia: I doubt it would be possible to abstract the two entities to such an extent that we could identify one single industry-driven tourist discourse able to transform a crime organization into a monolithic, albeit unreal, attraction catered to sightseers. It is instead the overlaps of tourist and mafia imaginaries that produce discrete objects, discourses, and practices carrying implications that are paramount to the refashioning of the mafia into a symbolic resource. Some are obvious: for instance, that the industry no longer expurgates any mafia reference from the image of destination Sicily is evidence that the latter does not constitute a

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[222] Di Girolamo, Giacomo. *Cosa grigia*. Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2012, 47-58; Turano, Gianfrancesco. "C'era una volta il villaggio Valtur." *L'Espresso*, March 11, 2013. http://espresso.repubblica.it/affari/2013/03/11/news/c-era-una-volta-il-villaggiovaltur-1.51741, last accessed May 10, 2022. On Cosa Nostra's diversification, see Sciarrone, Rocco, Attilio Scaglione, Alida Federico, Antonio Vesco. "Lo spettro dell'area grigia. I 'professionisti' di Cosa Nostra a Palermo." In *Alleanze nell'ombra. Mafie ed economie locali in Sicilia e nel Mezzogiorno*, edited by Rocco Sciarrone, 127-173. Rome: Donzelli, 2012.

[223] Leite, Naomi. "Afterword: Locating Imaginaries in the Anthropology of Tourism." In *Tourist Imaginaries: Anthropological Approaches*, edited by Noel B. Salazar and Nelson Graburn, 260-278. New York: Berghahn, 2014, 264.

public security concern since "a perceived safe distance and environment" is a prerequisite even for forms of tourism based on the reproduction of actual death or macabre events.[224] Likewise, it is rather intuitive to posit that the insertion of any sort of mafia content into the image of destination Sicily cannot but be ethically sensitive, raising concerns about nearly every aspect ranging from political positioning in relation to mafia history to potential funding of criminal activities. Other implications require us to dig more into the material realities of tourism in Sicily.

The mafia-themed gadget regularly sold at souvenir stores across the island is a perfect example of the overlaps of tourist and mafia imaginaries. It features a limited variety of characters reproduced across multiple objects: Vito Corleone and the rural mafioso and his wife are the only stars of the genre; the former being featured in snow globes and handgun-shaped mugs; the latter in terracotta whistles, oven mitts, and bottle openers; both in aprons, lighters, magnets, and postcards. Less common but more attuned to postmodern sensibilities are the grotesque pinstripe-suited shotgun-holding Homer Simpson (featured in T-shirts saying "The Godfather is me") and the three wise monkeys, a Japanese cultural symbol that has traveled far enough to stand for mafia's code of silence, or *omertà*.[225] The phenomenon is relatively recent and concerns mostly the main tourist destinations of the island, including those located in areas with very low mafia density. In localities with a strong mafia tradition, such as Palermo, the phenomenon is especially divisive. In the tract between the Cathedral and the Quattro Canti square, the most tourist trafficked area of the city, souvenir stores display their merchandise directly on the street and the parade of mafia gadgets is somehow overwhelming. Already at a purely economic level, mafia gadgets stand out for their quirkiness. According to a souvenir storekeeper in Palermo I informally interrogated, they are amongst the least sold and the best displayed items, an apparent paradox explained by their tongue-in-cheek ability to classify the stores displaying them as frivolous and inexpensive. In the same vein, the owner of a stylish store mostly filled with homemade ceramic souvenirs said to me that not selling mafia-related gadgets signalled to the potential customer that their store deals only with "serious" stuff. In this sense, the gadget operates as a socio-economic marker implicitly discriminating a mass clientele on the ground of a too straightforward correlation of purchase power

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[224] Stone, Philip. "Making Absent Death Present: Consuming Dark Tourism in Contemporary Society." In *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism*, edited by Richard Sharpley and Philip Stone, 23-38. Bristol: Channel View, 2009, 37.
[225] Ravveduto, Marcello. *Lo spettacolo della mafia*, cit., 97.

and cultural capital, the latter mobilized in the expected repudiation of the mafia souvenir as epitome of kitsch.[226]

Even though the storekeepers I have spoken with refused to grant any ethical or political importance to the mafia souvenir,[227] this object is a prime target of committed opinion leaders. Moreover, grassroots and individual initiatives calling for their ban, such as the Change.org petition signed by over 6,000 concerned citizens or the occasional social-media denunciation of an outraged tourist-celebrity, signal the presence of disrupting feelings seeping through the many cracks of destination Sicily.[228] Mild forms of moral panic circulate in the public sphere through interventions that claim that mafia gadgets, as the petitioners expressed in an amusing turn of phrase, "far from being innocuous, raise the bar of addiction to illegality every day, especially among the youth."[229] Petitioners' vehemence and sincerity notwithstanding, it is clear that the Cosa Nostra they all refer to—the one that some of them fought against or even saw their dear ones succumbing to—is completely unrelated to the one allegedly glorified in the stores. Reacting to the several calls for a ban, Palermo's Mayor Leoluca Orlando drew a crucial distinction between "products openly supporting the mafia," an offense contemplated by the Italian criminal code's article 414 as incitement and apology of delinquency, and "products that in the collective imaginary *evoke* the mafia" that, though despicable, are "legally and formally thorny to ban."[230]

In fashioning the gadget as a stand-in for Cosa Nostra and their sale as a communal endorsement of organized crime, petitioners charge the souvenir with cultural determinations in large part foreign to this category of objects and even more so to the affective relationships they activate. As Susan Stewart notices, "we need and desire souvenirs of […] events whose materiality

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[226] On the articulations of class and (social, cultural, and symbolic) capital in relation to kitsch, see Greenberg, Clement. "Avant-Garde and Kitsch." In *Art and Culture: Critical Essays*, 3-22. Boston: Beacon Press, 1961.
[227] One store employee joked with me that her bosses would swap all the mafia gadgets for Falcone and Borsellino equivalents on the very day the two antimafia judges would become at least one tenth as famous as don Corleone. "Do they really want Falcone and Borsellino on an apron though?" she asked, without specifying whether she was referring to her bosses or to tourists.
[228] The petition is significantly titled "Enough with Products and Gadgets That by Evoking Mafia Symbols Spread the Culture of Illegality." *Change.org*, https://www.change.org/p/basta-con-l-apertura-di-attivit%C3%A0-e-la-vendita-di-prodotti-e-gadget-che-richiamando-simboli-di-mafia-diffondono-la-cultura-dell-illegalit%C3%A0. See La Paglia, Grazia. "Stop ai gadget di mafia: quasi cinquemila firme a sostegno della petizione di Rete 100 passi." *La Repubblica*, Palermo edition, August 27, 2015, https://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/08/27/news/_stop_ai_gadget_di_mafia_quasi_cinquemila_firme_a_sostegno_della_petizione_di_radio_100_passi-121735599/?utm_source=change_org&utm_medium=petition, last accessed May 10, 2022.
[229] Idem.
[230] "Gadget sulla mafia a Palermo, botta e risposta tra Orlando e Rita Dalla Chiesa." *Giornale di Sicilia*, September 29, 2019, https://palermo.gds.it/foto/cronaca/2019/09/26/palermo-dalla-chiesa-stop-ai-souvenir-mafiosi-orlando-faccia-qualcosa-50c908f2-b109-4b43-a82d-2eeddb18003f/1/, last accessed May 10, 2022. Emphasis mine.

has escaped us, events that thereby exist only through the invention of narrative."[231] Regardless of the semiotic relationship between the object and the event or location it indexes, what the souvenir is supposed to evoke is the now-distanced experience that the possessor must supplement with his or her own narrative. Then, it seems less worth asking whether the tourist-cum-souvenir-possessor is a mafia enthusiast or a gullible consumer swindled by callous storekeepers too intent to ruin the reputation of their territory on a global scale than what kind of "mafia experience" evoked by the souvenir he or she can recount. In fact, once we take the gadget's ability to activate memories and therefore narratives at face value, it is indeed legitimate to wonder how a tourist would relate his or her travel memories to the mafia—or more abstractly to mafia culture.[232]

Could it be prompted by witnessing the daily transgressions (e.g., a double-parked car, a discount offered upon the refusal of a regular receipt, a bus ride gone unpaid, etc.) that substantiate what the petitioners called the "culture of illegality," a culture in plain sight and yet to be magically hidden from the judgmental tourist gaze? Could it be instead the narrative upshot of a chain of yearned misrecognitions, deliberate exoticizations, and overemotional happenstances with the underprivileged background actors begrudgingly inhabiting the margins of the tourist drama (e.g., unlicensed parking attendants, beggars, street vendors, etc.), perhaps all reworked as comical anecdotes? Could the mafia possibly be a shorthand for the reality of underdevelopment, misgovernment, and corruption that even the average tourist, caricatured as a middle-aged, unhealthy-looking Middle-American couple lacking in sophistication and street smarts, would discern?

These questions point to three distinct aspects common to Southern life, extensively discussed by anthropologists and political scientists under the respective rubric of lack of *senso*

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[231] Stewart, Susan. *On Longing*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, 135. See also, Morgan, Nigel, and Annette Pritchard. "On Souvenirs and Metonymy: Narratives of Memory, Metaphor, and Materiality." *Tourism Studies* 5, no. 1 (2005): 29-53. For an overview of the debate, see Hitchcock, Michael, and Ken Teague, eds. *Souvenirs: The Material Culture of Tourism*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2000, and more recently Swanson, Kristen. "Souvenirs, Tourists, and Tourism." In *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Tourism*, edited by Alan A. Lew, C. Michael Hall, and Allan M. Williams, 179-188. Malden: Wiley, 2014.

[232] On the intersections of cultural memory, tourism, and loss mediated by the souvenir (and consumerism more broadly), see Sturken, Marita. *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

civico,[233] Orientalism,[234] and bad governance.[235] Though taken together they may lead to sweeping generalizations rather than rigorous analysis, these aspects capture effectively the new anxieties magnified by mass tourism regarding the image of itself that Sicily strives to project to the outside world. As we have seen, public opinion has long elected the issue of "misrepresentations" by the culture industry to a matter of serious concern, calling out those who would put Sicilians to shame through the depiction of a poverty-stricken, primitive, violent culture or, more benevolently, of a pre-modern community ruled by nature. Complaints span cultural, political, and economic domains, for the underpinning concern is that national media's prejudicial depictions could have a negative impact on tourism.[236] The mafia gadget turns that set of grievances upside down. It does so by upholding that as long as these images pay off, they must be placed on the market because they are part of a cultural repertoire worth re-appropriating and reworking especially by locals (who feel then legitimated to express irritation at the news of an Austrian mafia-themed sandwich store also on

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[233] Banfield, Edward C. *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*. New York: Free Press, 1958; Putnam, Robert D. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993; Blok, Anton. "Behavior Codes in Sicily: Bypassing the Law." *Behemoth* 2 (2010): 56-70. The Italian reception of this body of work has been to say the least vigorous, in particular among historians and sociologists. Though largely discredited, many key concepts elaborated there (i.e., the association of underdevelopment and lack of *senso civico*, the notion of "amoral familism," the persistence of feudal customs) still circulate in the national public sphere in ways that according to Salvatore Lupo betray (and serve) their Orientalizing functions. See Lupo, Salvatore. "Il conio del capitale sociale," cit.; Id. "Storia del Mezzogiorno, questione meridionale, meridionalismo." *Meridiana* 32 (1998): 7-52. For a similar critique extended to the survival of such outdated paradigms in English-language scholarship on Southern Italy, see Birindelli, Pierluca. "Collective Identity Inside and Out: Particularism through the Looking Glass." *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology* 6, no. 2 (2019): 237-270.

[234] Schneider, Jane. "The Dynamics of Neo-Orientalism in Italy." In *Italy's Southern Question: Orientalism in One Country*, edited by Jane Schneider, 1-24. Oxford: Berg, 1998; Petrusewicz, Marta. *Come il Meridione divenne una questione. Rappresentazioni del sud prima e dopo il Quarantotto*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1998; Moe, Nelson, *The View from Vesuvius*, cit.; Teti, Vincenzo. *La razza maledetta. Storia del pregiudizio antimeridionale*. Rome: Carocci, 2011; Basile, Giuseppe. "Said nonostante Said. Il dibattito sull'*Orientalism in one country* e i processi letterari di orientalizzazione del Mezzogiorno italiano." In *Identità, migrazioni e postcolonialismo in Italia*, edited by Bruno Brunetti and Roberto Derobertis, 94-110. Bari: Progedit, 2014.

[235] Cannari, Luigi, Marco Magnani, Guido Pellegrini. *Critica della ragione meridionale: Il Sud e le politiche pubbliche*. Bari-Rome: Laterza, 2010; Trigilia, Carlo. "Diseguaglianze pubbliche e private nel Mezzogiorno." *Meridiana* 94 (2019): 119-136.

[236] In 2011, the regional government commissioned a large-scale quantitative study of the image of destination Sicily amongst tourists. The 64-page final report, titled "Sicily: Myth and Images of a Global Tourist Destination" (http://pti.regione.sicilia.it/portal/page/portal/PIR_PORTALE/PIR_LaStrutturaRegionale/PIR_TurismoSportSpettacolo/PIR_Turismo/PIR_Areetematiche/PIR_Linkutili/PIR_Attrattiva_Sicilia2014/Sicilia.Attrattiva.turistica.pdf) shows that the issue of representation is perceived as particularly pregnant: a considerable part of the surveys deal with how press, television, cinema, and the web contribute to determine tourist inflows. Registering the failure of the regional government's tourism promotion, the report suggests three significant interventions: the introduction of web- and social-media-based promotional strategies, the centralization of the offer through an implementation of funding for large-scale events, and the consolidation of the regional film commission. Only the last recommendation will be followed: the former director of the tourist department who commissioned the report will lead the reorganization of the agency and head it for almost a decade. I discuss the restructuring of the film commission and its impact on the representation of the island in chapter 3.

account of brand devaluation).[237] At this level, the mafia gadget exists at the cheaper end of the tourist merchandise spectrum, one species of the genus of commodities all too feebly connected to a historical or folkloric tradition, just like the majolica pinecone and the Moorish head vase.

For activists who have never stopped denouncing the perils of making the mafia and its value and belief system "heroic survivals of other times"[238] the object conveys the threat of trivializing Cosa Nostra and with it, inevitably, the memories as much as the perspectives of the struggle against it. Yet, a cursory look at these grotesquely tacky artefacts would suffice to refuse such caution, for it is patent that even the slender solemnity of folklore is nowhere to be found. In fact, the gangster film, more than the historical reality of the crime syndicate, is the domesticated, unthreatening cultural universe whose miniatures tourists comfortably carry in their pockets or hang on their fridges.[239] After all, what kind of verisimilar relationship could it exist between Sicily, Sicilians, or Sicilian culture and the snow-blanketed head bearing a vague resemblance with Marlon Brando in *The Godfather* or, for that matter, the image of Homer Simpson in the fashion of Al Capone? This semiotic (and ethical) gap marks an end of innocence of sort, a symbolic shift from passive victimization (expressed by the begrudging local public opinion) to active commodification of culture (manifested in the self-orientalizing distortions required by mass tourism).[240] The made-in-China mafia gadget authenticates the dematerialization of Cosa Nostra, its transformation into a free-floating signifier attached—in this case, metonymically—to destination Sicily, parallel to the one far more insidious proposed by Hollywood.

Mafia tours constitute a more elusive object of study, for their presence in history hides beneath legitimate accounts of hospitality, leisure, and mobility across the island. The relative opacity of the mafia tour, which also explains the dearth of analyses and debates not prompted by

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[237] The reference is to a Viennese sandwich shop "Don Panino," which named its products after mafiosi and antimafia martyrs. The shop became the target of another but more successful petition by Rete 100 Passi, the NGO that started the campaign against the mafia gadget, https://www.change.org/p/la-memoria-di-falcone-e-impastato-non-pu%C3%B2-essere-offesa-da-un-panino-austriaco, last accessed May 10, 2022.

[238] Triolo, Nancy. "Mediterranean Exotica and the Mafia 'Other' or Problems of Representation in Pitré's Texts." *Cultural Anthropology* 8, no. 3 (1993): 303-316, 313.

[239] Hom raises a similar point in relation to what she identifies as "one of the most popular souvenirs currently sold across Italy," the "Ciao Bella" T-shirt featuring the stereotypical pickup line written in the fashion of the Coca-Cola logo. Specifically, she notices that "the chosen brand logo embodies the excess consumption championed by globalization—and the so-called empire via 'coca-colonization'—in which personal identities are formed primarily through the purchase and display of consumer brands. […] By transforming the pickup line into a globalized commodity like Coca-Cola, this souvenir T-shirt domesticates the threats of linguistic, gendered, and cultural difference." Hom, Stephanie Malia. *The Beautiful Country*, cit., 189.

[240] Yudice, George. *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

moral panic, makes it difficult to approach it as a well-defined example of tourist experience, akin for instance to naturalistic or food tours—content, that is, that tourists accost with clear-cut prospects and expectations. The mafia tour establishes playful relationships with patrons who are constantly entertained, often teased, and yet never triggered, as if all the parties were cognizant of participating in a highly staged performance centered on preconceptions to be eventually (and reassuringly) confirmed. This, along with the promise of bringing the association of Sicilian culture, tourism, and Cosa Nostra back to the materialities of urban life and mafia history, renders it a lens through which to look at the production and reproduction of mafia imaginaries.

Since the configurations of publicity with regard to Cosa Nostra must be predicated either on its unambiguous denunciation or on its folkloric-mythic trivialization via Hollywood, the mafia tour exists in the increasingly narrow interstice between ethical (i.e., antimafia) and film (i.e., *Godfather*) tourism. In this space, usually policed by the public opinion, a mafia tour would morph into an antimafia one as soon as it falls under the spotlight.[241] Hence, the difficulty of studying ethnographically these ever-changing cultural performances caught in a dialectic of secrecy and disclosure, a juxtaposition of silence, rumor, and outrage that ultimately renders them almost impenetrable to the ethically minded student for whom conducting research in disguise is not an option. On the other hand, confirming whether staged holdups are an actual practice and whether tourists do fall for them make little difference if instead we move center stage the persistence of the mafia tour in the media, which opens up more stimulating perspectives for untangling the nexus of tourist, media, and mafia imaginaries.

Recent research has shown that in spite of the tourism industry's widespread fear of disintermediation, travel magazines and newspaper sections provide what is considered reliable and widely trusted guidance, while "guidebooks still sell in record numbers,"[242] testifying the resilience

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[241] An exemplary case is that of a Trapani-based tourist entrepreneur whose mafia tour offering was publicly denounced in 2017. Cashing in on this unexpected visibility, though pretending to be a victim of Google Translate, the man carried out a publicity campaign for promoting his tour, then rebranded "No Mafia = Antimafia Tour" (the equal sign is the chef's kiss). As the media-fueled outcry was going on, the company's revamped website, later replaced by a more sober one, inaugurated an antimafia history section comprising long excerpts from Wikipedia (in Comic Sans font, if my memory serves me right) and pictures of antimafia martyrs. The news of the tour traveled across the globe and its traces can be found in mainstream news outlets based in Europe (France, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Malta, Croatia, and Albania) and beyond (Canada, Vietnam, and Jamaica). See "Mafia Tour Makes Victims' Blood Boil." *Deutsche Welle*, March 27, 2017, https://www.dw.com/en/mafia-tour-makes-victims-blood-boil/a-38137936. The entrepreneur's statement following the media outrage are available in their entirety at https://www.easytrapani.com/blog-dettaglio.php?id=206% and https://www.easytrapani.com/blog-dettaglio.php?id=215, last accessed May 10, 2022.

[242] Eskilsson, Lena, Maria Månsson, Jan Henrik Nilsson, and Malin Zillinger. "Tourist Information Search in the Age of Mediatization." In *The Routledge Companion to Media and Tourism*, cit., 382-391, 386. See also Peel, Victoria Margaret, Anders Sorensen. *Exploring the Use and Impact of Travel Guidebooks*. Bristol: Channel View, 2016.

of formats purportedly challenged by new media's knowledge ecologies. Instead of subverting hierarchies and democratizing knowledge production, as Internet utopians had hoped for, new media have established feedback loops between producers and consumers leading to creation of content better attuned to mass sensibilities, including orientalist and voyeuristic impulses. Symptomatically, whereas travel literature used to downplay the possible impact of the mafia on the tourist experience, nowadays its presence is overstated in order to cater to international audiences' demands, intensified by the relatively recent penetration of mass tourism into all corners of the globe and the subsequent competition for unique attractions and experiences. A telling example is the controversial article "Reiseziel Mafia" [Destination Mafia], an itinerary for readers who wish to "travel in the footsteps of the mafia" appeared in the travel section of the German daily *Die Welt* in July 2015 and immediately turned viral within the Italian media ecosystem.[243] Much to the mafia scholar's disappointment, by advising the aspiring tourists to start their mafia tour either in Palermo for "mafia reality" or in Catania for its "filmic representation" (or recommending John Dickie's history book *Cosa Nostra* and *The Godfather* as preparatory materials), the article explicitly locates the reality of the mafia within a continuum between history and fiction cinema. Attesting that this interval is the space inhabited by twenty-first-century Cosa Nostra, the piece demonstrates how tourism exposes better than any cultural practice the implications of a crime organization reduced to cultural, symbolic, and affective repertoire. In order to operate within the parameters established by the tour framework, a proper mafia metanarrative has to permeate Sicilian life at large, to saturate its air like an atmospheric factor: this is what I call the becoming-environmental of the mafia. Thus, Commissario Montalbano, Andrea Camilleri's fictional detective globally popularized by the RAI TV show with the same title, becomes "a mafia hunter;" the island is still largely ruled by *omertà*; vanishing, being dismembered, or being dissolved in acid is the destiny of anyone, safe a few lucky ones, who stands up against the syndicate.[244]

Regardless of the specific dimension of any individual tour package—whether it condemns the mafia tout court or flirts with its mythologies; whether it encompasses the mafia within the

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[243] Vitzthum, Thomas. "Reiseziel Mafia." *Die Welt*, July 5, 2015, https://www.welt.de/print/wams/reise/article143540595/Reiseziel-Mafia.html. See also "In Sicilia alla ricerca della mafia: è il tour che parte dalla Germania." *Giornale di Sicilia*, July 8, 2015, https://gds.it/articoli/cronaca/2015/07/08/in-sicilia-alla-ricerca-della-mafia-e-il-tour-che-parte-dalla-germania-0872555e-be87-4d45-9397-0940d65e33d9/; Giardina, Roberto. "Tedeschi in ferie con la mafia." *Italia oggi*, July 7, 2015, https://www.italiaoggi.it/news/tedeschi-in-ferie-con-la-mafia-2001833, last accessed May 10, 2022.

[244] Along the same lines, Mihaylova, Neli. "Sizilien auf den Spuren der Cosa Nostra Entdecken." *Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 26, 2015, https://www.allgemeine-zeitung.de/ratgeber/reise/reiseberichte/europa/sizilien-auf-den-spuren-der-cosa-nostra-entdecken_16196448, last accessed May 10, 2022.

broader "Sicilian culture" experience or isolates it as a historical (and tourist) exception—, one defining characteristic of the mafia tour is the presence of violent death. The shapes that this presence takes inform the creation of the atmosphere especially contested by public opinion, as attested by editorials that at their mildest define mafia tours as a public shame and their proponents as publicity-seeking profiteers. The question of violent death and its atmospheric propagation in the present is frequently at stake in the criticisms against the mafia tour as well. For this reason, I want to turn here not to an actual mafia tour but to two literary renditions, a fictional one of a very early age (actually, a proto-mafia tour) and a non-fictional one involving two prominent local actors.

The first is a minor episode of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's Unification epic *Il gattopardo* (*The Leopard*, 1958), which also illustrates the mafia tour's functioning as mediating intercultural encounters.[245] Chevalley, a Piedmontese diplomat at the service of the newborn Italian kingdom, is sent to the imaginary village of Donnafugata to confer with the prince of Salina, the upstanding protagonist of the novel. The nobleman invites his guest to enjoy a day of rest in his property before turning down the Piedmontese's proposition of a seat at the Italian Senate with a celebrated "little lecture" on Sicilians hankering for oblivion and death. Omitted in the 1963 film adaptation by Luchino Visconti, the episode features the prince's beloved nephew Tancredi and the diplomat. Realizing how much discomfort the atmosphere of the village is causing to Chevalley, who tried hard "to convince [himself] that he was in a place that was, after all, part of his own nation," Tancredi volunteers to show him around. The night at Salina's lavish estate lowered Chevalley's guard, who, no longer perceiving anything and anyone around him as terribly sinister, ceased to be in constant fear for his life. For Tancredi this is ideal, for he can mischievously yield to "the singular island itch to tell foreigners tales that were revolting but unfortunately quite true." As the two walk on the village's main street, the host points the most noticeable landmarks to the guest—not historical or scenic sites, but settings of violent crimes. The succession is remarkable: a nobleman first kidnapped and then "returned [to his family] by instalments" (that is, first the finger, then the foot, lastly the head); a parish priest poisoned during the Mass celebration; a string of unpunished and apparently unmotivated murders. The young man is an excellent guide in that he elicits strong emotional responses from his companion through well-crafted stories. Providentially, he is also a sensitive one and upon noticing Chevalley's growing distress and taking pity on him, having "passed three or four places […] almost more evocative, abstain[s] from telling their tales

[245] Tomasi di Lampedusa, Giuseppe. *The Leopard*. New York: Pantheon, 1960 [1958].

and talk[s] about Bellini and Verdi, perennial curative unction for national wounds." By falling back on the more polished but no less sensational and excitable world of opera, the chaperon dispels, or better diverts, the range of emotional intensities he shrewdly built up himself and so the tour is quickly brought to its inevitable end.[246]

The Donnafugata stroll is an unsolicited exploration of the violent history written in the "architectural palimpsests" of a Sicilian village like any other, decipherable and therefore transmittable only through the intervention of the local mediator.[247] As a humorous intermezzo in a chapter on Sicily' cultural otherness before the new Italy, the proto-mafia tour lampoons the numerous "discoveries" of Sicily by Northern Italian writers, especially the much-influential 1876 Franchetti-Sonnino report (which famously described acts of violence as "necessary and normal, although harmful, like the heavy rains that make the year's harvest rot in their fields").[248] However, as an episode of "terse metaphysical angst,"[249] it gestures to a mystical, arcane practice bordering necromancy, that is, the invocation of both violent death and the spirits possessing urban spaces and histories alike.

Being the episode a prototype, it features two concomitant dimensions that later instantiations of the mafia tour trope would set apart, namely the comedic and the metaphysical. The former is today the dominant framework for representing the encounter between cultural outsiders and organized crime mediated by tourist professionals, a postmodern feast of dark humor, simulation, fragmentation, levity, cynicism, and metafiction. The narrative trope of the local swindler escorting foreigners around sketchy neighborhoods whose residents are to be dreaded is so trite that it can be found already in a novel from 1930.[250] More recently, in the opening scene of musical comedy *Ammore e malavita* (*Love and Bullets*, Manetti Bros., 2017), getting robbed in

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[246] Ivi, 197-200.

[247] Huyssen, Andrew. *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003. Inevitable the reference to the short exchange between opera singer Anthony Corleone and his father Michael in *The Godfather Part III* as the two men walk around the Sicilian countryside. "How can a place so beautiful be so violent?" ask the young man. The Godfather, maybe disinclined to the complexities of a well-thought-out historical or anthropological explanation, simply answers "History."

[248] Quoted in Moe, Nelson. *The View from Vesuvius*, cit., 243. Besides Moe's analysis of the report (237-249), see also Lupo, Salvatore. *History of the Mafia*, cit., 62-69; Gribaudi, Gabriella. "Images of the South: The Mezzogiorno as Seen by Insiders and Outsiders." In *The New History of the Italian South*, edited by Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris, 81-113. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997.

[249] Onofri, Massimo. *Tutti a cena da don Mariano. Letteratura e mafia nella Sicilia della nuova Italia*. Milan: Bompiani, 1995, 185.

[250] Comandè, Giovanni Maria. *Don Giovanni Malizia*. Palermo: Sandron, 1930, 280-287. See Monastra, Rosa Maria. "Letteratura e mafia tra le due guerre (e oltre)." In *L'isola e l'immaginario. Sicilie e siciliani del novecento*, 55-75. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1998.

Scampia during a mafia tour (obviously staged, as the audience realizes after seeing the tourist guide aggressively hiding away stroller-pushing moms and birthday party posters) is celebrated as “the ultimate touristic experience.” Similarly, in the Sicilia Film Commission-funded web-series *A Famigghia: A/R nelle terre del Padrino* (“The Family: A Round Trip in *The Godfather* Land,” Angelo Campolo, 2016), fake mafia tours are the only way to make a living for a trio of penniless lads from Messina glorified (and even studied!) for impressing a new direction to Sicilian tourism at large. Combining tourist stereotypes with stereotypes about tourists alone is an enduring trope in Italian comedy, from the iconic episode of *Totòtruffa ’62* (Camillo Mastrocinque, 1961) in which the protagonist manages to sell the Fountain of Trevi to a clueless American to the series of lowbrow comedies known as *cinepanettoni* having for protagonists trashy Italian holidaymakers in upper-class destinations. The unproblematic addition of mafia elements to the mix demonstrates the coexistence of tourist and media imaginaries within a gamut of cultural practices that spectacularize, and ultimately reify, Sicilian life.

On the other end of the spectrum, when devoid of its entertaining or satiric elements, the mafia tour trope encapsulates somber, mournful experiences of both lived space and the everyday, as briefly hinted at by the *Leopard* episode. This metaphysical dimension, which I relate to the becoming-environmental of the mafia as a constitutive quality of the experience of urban life (specifically but not exclusively in Palermo), will become in the next section my starting point for setting antimafia tourism apart from the forms of mafia-related tourism I have been focusing on throughout this section. As an ideal bridge between the two, I want to report the testimony of antimafia prosecutor Roberto Scarpinato of a private, informal mafia tour he was given by novelist Roberto Alajmo, a casual event outside of antimafia tourism proper but already prefiguring it in more than one way.

> As he spoke, I could not help but think of Varanasi, the Indian city that celebrates death, which I had visited some years earlier, where Indians gather when they feel close to the end so as to wait for death on the shores of the sacred Ganges. There, in that remote place, bodies buried on a never-ending pyre whose ashes are dispersed in the waters while an interminable psalmody goes on in the background. Here, in Palermo, a place equally “devoted” to violent death, an endless stream of ghosts, of people murdered on the streets, on the squares, on the junctions, while the sirens of the armoured cars urge you to remind, as if it were possible to forget, that death, here as much as in Varanasi, is the protagonist of the city. Sometimes, an obscenely patent protagonist; more often, occult and silent. To

> the lives interrupted by violent death, one must add the inner deaths of those who have repudiated the best part of themselves by coexisting with the mafia's system of power, sometimes out of convenience, more simply because they could not live with the perspective of their own death.[251]

The long quote from one of the leading figures of the antimafia movement demonstrates how the urban palimpsest of Palermo, a city of violent death, ghosts, and murders, could not easily lend itself to the trivialities of mafia-themed tourism, a practice thus far embedded in a postmodern consumerist sensibility. To understand the mafia-media-tourism nexus in Palermo requires us to traverse a tormented history whose deadly traces are inscribed in the fabric of the city and brought back to life by the practices of antimafia tourism.

[251] Scarpinato, Roberto. "Una specie di Varanasi." in Alajmo, Roberto. *Almanacco siciliano delle morti presunte*, 59-63. Palermo: Il Palindromo, 2013, 59-60.

The Palermo Palimpsest: Melodramatic Imaginations of Beauty, Loss, and Resistance

Every Saturday morning a small crowd congregates underneath the monumental staircase of the Teatro Massimo in Palermo, Italy's largest opera house and Europe's third after Paris and Vienna. The scene is usually quiet. One or two horse-drawn carriages lie around waiting for the tourists who want to make the most of the morning's tolerable warmth before heading to the beach. The appalling traffic jams, resulting in the familiar cacophony of car horns and occasional invectives, belong to the weekdays: for the standards of the square, there is a fair level of silence. Acquaintances bump into each other and exchange pleasantries; tourists roam idly, eyeing the theatre in awe. On the façade of the building, engraved on the architrave held by six Corinthians columns, an epigraph reads: "Vain is the pleasure of scenes which do not aim to prepare for the future."

Palermo is a city that nowadays few would associate to the future, let alone knuckle down to prepare for it. Much of its life is backward looking; a perceptible sense of stasis permeates its administration, institutions, and culture. Not yet a tourist fairground like Syracuse, Cefalù, or Taormina, where most facets of public life orbits around and responds to the demands of the industry, the Sicilian capital seems to move steadily toward the "mono-cultural system of the tourist paradigm with its standardization of consumption as well as of spaces and rhythms of life."[252] An alliance between local government, entrepreneurs, and multinational corporations, stimulated by the inscription of "Arab-Norman Palermo" in the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2018, has in fact promoted a recognizable city brand that, exhibiting the marks of its own neoliberal rationality, fashioned the old city center as a pristine space of consumption. In the process, history and tradition, now turned into the city's main appeal along with natural beauty, are undergoing a commodification process perceptible even to a casual observer: the signs of the transformation are anything but hard to catch.[253] Subjected to the fluctuations and extractive logics of the tourism industry, artisans, grocers, and cultural workers alike are adapting their trades to a far vaster but transient customer base. Via Maqueda and Corso Vittorio, the old city's main streets, witness the feverish openings of

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[252] Prestileo, Federico. "Palermo al tappeto." *Menelique* 2, no. 3 (2020): https://www.menelique.com/21-palermo-tappeto/, last accessed January 31, 2022. See also Picone, Marco. "Shifting Imaginaries: Gentrification and the New Touristic Images of the Inner City of Palermo." In *Representing Place and Territorial Identities in Europe: Discourses, Images, and Practices*, edited by Tiziana Banini and Oana-Ramona Ilovan, 37-50. New York: Springer, 2021.

[253] Prestileo, Federico. "Geografie del turismo a Palermo: Un monopolio territoriale." *Etnografie del contemporaneo* 3 (2020): 49-61.

food parlors and souvenir stores, buskers mangling folk songs, and umbrella-weaving guides chaperoning herds of bewildered foreigners. Hop-on-hop-off buses, horse-drawn carriages, and soberly decorated three-wheelers are omnipresent, and so are the waiters standing in front of their joints reeling off menu specialties to those who answer their greetings. Police officers watching over the city hall, fifty meters away from Quattro Canti, spend most of the day preventing people from cooling off in the nearby sixteenth-century fountain.

The image of a whole city at the tourists' service is nonetheless deceiving. Critical voices within the local community coalesced around an anti-touristification organization confederating activists around Southern European cities exposed to the shortfalls of mass tourism. Palermitan activists are well aware of inhabiting a field of contradiction, not least for the fact that their community includes Airbnb hosts, tourist workers, ethical tourism advocates, and uncompromising tourism opponents. Among their initiatives, a wheat-paste poster campaign denounced the unauthorized occupation of public space by bars and restaurants, the deterioration of work conditions, the alarming die-off of traditional commercial activities, and the rise in housing and commodity prices (singling out ice creams sold for 4 euros). Confirming the activists' fears, the municipal administration recently joined forces with home rental behemoth Airbnb for "regeneration projects" in two low-income neighborhoods conveniently adjacent to the Cathedral and the Royal Palace through street artworks, urban farms, and other colorful interventions: excited news reports celebrating the arrival of the first tourists followed shortly.[254] Even the most outspoken critics are willing to concede that the old city center is far better off than it used to be a few decades ago, when locals, let alone visitors, would have gone for a night stroll with some trepidation. Nevertheless, they would not hesitate to denounce a situation that got out of hand in which the life of the city had to adapt to the rhythms of mass tourism, and not vice versa. In effect, the deterioration of cultural and night life in pre-pandemic Palermo features prominently among the concerns of local activists, perhaps an indicator of the majority's class, age, and social background but also of the city's public vocation. Different was the case when the appeal to the future-oriented aesthetic pleasure found its way onto the honey-colored stone from where it has been cautioning onlookers

[254] Ruta, Giorgio. "Nel quartiere Danisinni arrivano i turisti." *Rai3 News*, July 9, 2021, https://www.rainews.it/tgr/sicilia/video/2021/07/sic-danisinni-turisti-0fe0bac7-434d-4c11-bd8a-0051c1b44aea.html, last accessed May 10, 2022; Brunetto, Claudia. "Murales, giardini e l'asilo per rinascere. Danisinni diventa una meta turistica." *La Repubblica*, Palermo edition, August 4, 2021. For a critical overview, see Pecile, Veronica. "La rigenerazione urbana a Ballarò tra legalità, beni comuni e gentrificazione." In *Le eredità delle crisi. Dalla storia al futuro, traiettorie di risposte possibili*, edited by Pietro Frascani, 530-560. Milan: Feltrinelli, 2019.

for one century and a half. Ripe with contradiction and anticipation, the age that gave birth to the opera house is worth briefly overviewing as a starting point for reconstructing the history of the present that the small crowd we left waiting in the piazza is eager to learn. In the following pages, I am going to provide a rough sketch of mid- to late-nineteenth-century Palermo as a way to introduce the atmospheric traces of Cosa Nostra over a city seemingly liberated from the syndicate and as such welcoming and safe for tourists.

The final phase of the Bourbon rule and, even more so, the integration of Sicily into the newly found nation-state in 1861 caught the city in a frantic state. A refined industrial and commercial bourgeoisie had set up some of the first manufacturing plants of Southern Italy, while also partially replacing a poorly aged aristocracy in the agricultural sector. The promise of a further assimilation into the continental economy had brought a wind of change, which an observer had registered by noticing how hard it was to distinguish a well-off Palermitan from his or her equivalent in London or Paris.[255] International trends, in fact, would arrive in Palermo within the shortest span of time after their affirmation in the cultural capitals of Europe. The richest local dynasty, the Florios, and their epigones, whose surnames reveal the blending of cosmopolitanism (Whitaker, Ingham, Ducrot) and tradition (Lanza, Branciforte, Alliata), had exploited—or, in the aristocrats' case, survived—the dismantling of the feudal order and gained unprecedented wealth, enthusing a Southern jet set attended by even properly titled royals and pre-mass-media celebrities.[256]

Between the 1860s and the 1890s, boosted by the export sector (citrus fruits, sulphur, wine), the Sicilian economy had been experiencing a period of grace bracketing the protracted stagnation of the previous half millennium and the definitive abandonment of the aspiration of making Italy an export-oriented agricultural economy due to the unattainable competition with Russia and the United States. A few years after Unification, local and foreign capital had converged around the construction of a modern railway network linking sulphur mines, ports, and economic centers, only later extended to wine-producing areas and tourist destinations. A complex of family-run factories guaranteed a relative self-sufficiency in sectors as diverse as the engineering, tanning, and food

[255] Capuana, Luigi, cited in De Seta, Cesare, and Leonardo Di Mauro. *Palermo*. Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1980, 155.
[256] Cancila, Orazio. *I Florio. Storia di una dinastia imprenditoriale*. Milan: Bompiani, 2008. The popularity of the "Sicilian dynasty" is attested by the recent literary case, Auci, Stefania. *The Florios of Sicily*. New York: Harpers Collins, 2020. According to historian Francesco Benigno, the Florios also deserve credit for "accompany[ing] and sometimes le[ading] the rise of a new national ruling class, the first cohort of Southern rulers, and specifically Sicilians, to occupy prominent positions in the state administration." Benigno, Francesco. "Una 'Dynasty' siciliana." *Meridiana* 64 (2009): 257-263, 261.

industries.[257] Due to a combination of factors, including economic policies catered to the interests of the Northern industrialists and the intensification of long-distance transportation and commerce, the island would disappear from the map of global capitalism almost overnight at the turn of the century.[258] Over a century later, the Italian economy as a whole will go down the same path, proving correct the reputation of Sicily as the political and economic laboratory of the country.[259]

The Massimo theatre is a marvelous embodiment of the dreams of a bygone age. Fully showing its industrious face to Europe, the emerging bourgeoisie erected a monument to itself, which in the spirit of the time could but not be an opera house. Much criticized over the forty years of its construction, the edifice in fact captures the paradox of a city striving to project a modern image of itself to the continent while lagging far behind in basic services and infrastructures (namely, drinking water and a proper draining system, adequate housing, schools, hospitals, and transportation network).[260] Inaugurated in May 1897, only two weeks after the first screening of a motion picture in the island, the theatre constitutes one of Sicily's most remarkable architectural wonders and a vestige of delusional grandeur. The construction of the theatre was the meeting ground between modern urban planning, administration, and capital throughout the last third of the nineteenth century. With the Neapolitan viceroys and their unpopular cohort gone, the local ruling class had entertained ambitious development projects ("capitalist rationalization with modernizing ambitions,"[261] a historian put it), or at least aspired to leave behind the interregnum between feudalism and capitalism casting its shadow on the island for most of the nineteenth century. These dreams, as is often the case, found their expression in urban development, albeit always wavering between the "unsophisticated Haussmannization" of the city plans and the exquisite eccentric styles of private architecture, where architects Giambattista Basile and his son Ernesto towered amongst the most recognizable of their time. Palermo's municipal government turned "fend[ing] off its inevitable provincialism"[262] into a political priority, oblivious to the wave of protests and popular

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[257] Cancila, Orazio. *Storia dell'industria in Sicilia*. Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1995, 133-149.

[258] Bevilacqua, Piero. *Breve storia dell'Italia meridionale dall'Ottocento a oggi*. Rome: Donzelli, 1993, 59-74.

[259] Crushed between the damaging interests of Northern Europe, a monstrous sovereign debt, the structural limits of an industrial sector based on small- and medium-scale districts, and the vanished competitiveness of salaries and prices lower than average in Europe but not in a globalized world, today's Italy looks uncannily like turn-of-the-century Sicily. See Gotor, Miguel. *L'Italia del Novecento. Dalla sconfitta di Adua alla vittoria di Amazon*. Turin: Einaudi, 2019, 495-501.

[260] Cancila, Orazio. *Palermo*. Bari-Rome: Laterza, 1988, 293-379. See also De Spuches, Giulia, Vincenzo Guarrasi, and Marco Picone. *La città incompleta*. Palermo: Palumbo, 2002.

[261] Barbagallo, Francesco. *Mezzogiorno e questione meridionale (1860-1980)*. Naples: Guida, 1980, 48.

[262] Kirk, Terry. *The Architecture of Modern Italy*, vol. 1, *The Challenge of Tradition, 1750-1900*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, 217.

violence against the new order brought about by the Unification.[263] The master plans of 1860 and 1885, aptly called "grandiose" and "pharaonic," displayed the government's aspiration to confer—symbolically as much as sensorially—the status of regional capital to Palermo.

North of the theatre, where medieval walls once cordoned off the city from the rural hinterlands, the revolutionary government of 1848 had built a street, via Libertà, with the primary goal of creating jobs for the mass of unemployed that had supported the uprisings. With the Bourbon rule reinstated, the king approved the continuation of the works in order to connect the city to his hunting estate at the Parco della Favorita. Following the Unification, the area started developing more organically. Along the northern axis of via Libertà, a string of *villini liberty* (Art Nouveau style villas), high-end hotels for the international upper-bourgeoisie, and the monumental Giardino Inglese had replaced the estates. A crucial moment in this story, the prestigious fourth National Exhibition of 1891-92, sponsored by Sicilian Prime Ministers Francesco Crispi and the Marquis of Di Rudinì, further expanded this development. The immense area of the exhibition up to the border with via Notarbartolo and the Giardino Inglese, bought off by the government and then left prey to speculation at the end of the event, became the ideal location for the elegant *villini* sprouting around until the 1930s. The new ruling class, integrated into the circuits of global capitalism also in terms of lifestyle, consumption, and sociability, began to leave the centuries-old palaces of the center for the newly built edifices. Their luxurious private residences north to the historical city, across via Libertà and via Notarbartolo, acquired a peculiar standing as the symbols of the almost legendary epoch in which the city became a top destination for a cosmopolitan elite, both aristocratic and bourgeois, at the inception of the (not yet mass) tourist age. Further north, the vast citrus orchards granting the Conca d'Oro (the Golden Basin) its name created a homogeneous landscape interrupted only occasionally by hamlets occupied by farmers and their families. Passed the fields and the Mount Pellegrino, the gulf of Mondello, a former swampy marshland reclaimed in the year of the Expo, had earned the status of favorite summer destination among the upper classes, which in a couple of decades turned a run-down fishing borough into a haven of sailing clubs, gentlemen's circles, lidos, and, obviously, *villini*. "This ardent and fervent city," an Expo 1891 promotional publication maintains, "wrapped with the splendors of sky, earth, and sun, palpitating with verve and worthy of admiration for its architecture, makes self-evident why people have labeled it 'the very happy

[263] Riall, Lucy. *Sicily and the Unification of Italy: Liberal Policy and Local Power, 1859-1866*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 198-221.

Palermo'."[264] The Libertà neighborhood, brimming with beauty as it was, had become a synecdoche of the city to come.

Little known by the flocks of tourists crossing it to reach the beach, today the same area is evidence of the extent to which the dream of development had gone awry in the twentieth century. Hardly an urban area in Southern Italy has changed so radically and abruptly as the quiet Palermitan neighborhood in the span of five years, from 1958 to 1963. The force of the massive and conflict-ridden urban redevelopment effort that reshaped the area was such that it passed to history as the Sack of Palermo. The event was a turning point in the history of complicity between politics, economy, and the mafia and its effects reverberate deeply in the present time. Although generally associated with the appointment of mafia-associated politicians Salvo Lima and Vito Ciancimino at the helm of the municipal government in 1958, as, respectively, mayor and public works councillor, its origin dates back to World War 2.

During the first half of 1943, in preparation of the invasion of July that will free Europe from Nazi-fascism, the bombing of the city center by the allied forces caused the loss of 40% of the housing stock, pushing one fifth of the population into homelessness. Lacking the impulse of the industrial and commercial sectors of the Belle Époque and following a rural exodus due to the mechanization of agriculture, the construction sector guaranteed a livelihood to an impoverished working class as both the city's main employer and the force behind the development of public housing in the former agricultural estates. In 1946, the establishment of a mostly formal special autonomy for the island prompted a considerable enlargement of the bureaucratic workforce, turning the regional government into a very appealing employer for the thousands of villagers who had left the countryside once the hopes of a redistributive land reform evaporated.[265] In the first few years of the postwar period, in sum, due to the combined forces of urbanization and the expansion of the public sector, population growth registered a historical peak. Housing had become an emergency. The regional government's "reconstruction plan" of 1947, contrarily to what its name suggests, sanctioned the principle that "the old must degrade into the decrepit,"[266] pushing many residents to abandon the city center to a destiny that only the unrestrained touristification of the last decade reversed. A "new Palermo" had to come to life: the area that half a century before had housed the

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[264] Quoted in D'Agostino, Mari. "Palermo." In *Città italiane. Storie di lingue e culture*, edited by Pietro Trifone, 355-412. Rome: Carocci, 2015, 368.
[265] Catanzaro, Raimondo. *Il delitto come impresa. Storia sociale della mafia*. Padova: Liviana, 1988, 180-183.
[266] De Seta, Cesare, and Leonardo Di Mauro. *Palermo*, cit., 168.

upper bourgeoisie of the Belle Époque was to host the new middle class, while less ambitious urban sprawls were established westward and southward to host the lower classes. The outcomes of this process were dire.

> When the building boom ended, a good portion of the city center still lay in ruins; much of the rest was a half-abandoned slum; and some of its finest private homes—baroque and Liberty alike—had been demolished. The verdant periphery had disappeared under concrete; most of the lemon groves of the Conca d'Oro had fallen to the bulldozer. Before this transformation, it was hard to detect the signs of the city's underworld in its fabric of building and streets. The Sack of Palermo turned every crumbling baroque palace, every jerry-built council estate, every aspirational apartment stack into a monument to corruption and crime.[267]

High-story condominiums had replaced *villini*, confiscated by the municipality and then tore down with dynamite, and a handful of mafia-owned or -associated construction companies, enjoying all sorts of privileges thanks to their unmediated access to the local government, thrived. The wealth produced by the Sack, which commentators interpret as the phase of primary accumulation within the economic trajectory of Cosa Nostra,[268] allowed the syndicate to enter the global narcotics trade from a relatively advantaged position and from there to further its grip over politics and the economy, both locally and nationally. Uneven distribution of profits and wealth among mafia families provoked two mafia wars (1962-1963 and 1981-1984) whose death toll make the far lengthier Irish Troubles and Basque conflict pale in comparison.[269]

There is no doubt that the Sack speaks of something more profound than the sheer destruction of *villini* and orchards and their substitution with much disparaged tower blocks at the time regarded as emblems of a European-flavored urban modernity. Ultimately, confronting the transformations occurring in Palermo from the late-1940s to the early-1960s with those of Italy's largest urban centers in the same period, neither the demographic "explosion" nor the subsequent real-estate speculation present exceptional characters in themselves.[270] Naples and Rome, not Palermo, gained

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[267] Dickie, John. *Cosa Nostra*, cit., 222.
[268] Violante, Luciano. *Non è la Piovra*, cit., 154-161.
[269] Deaglio, Enrico. *Raccolto rosso, 1982-2010. Cronaca di una guerra di mafia e delle sue tristissime conseguenze*. Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2010, 9.
[270] Ginsborg, Paul. *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988*. London: Penguin, 1990, 228-231, 287-290. See also Berdini, Paolo. *Breve storia dell'abuso edilizio in Italia: dal ventennio fascista al prossimo futuro*. Rome: Donzelli, 2010. A fictional reconstruction of the real-estate frenzy is Calvino, Italo. "A Plunge into Real Estate." In *Difficult Loves*. London: Vintage, 1999 [1957].

international visibility for this blight through, respectively, Francesco Rosi's film *Le mani sulla città* (*Hands over the City*, 1963) and Pier Paolo Pasolini's novels and early films.[271] Nevertheless, the symbolic and affective charge of the event has affected the history of the city in a way that has no equivalent in postwar Italy. On a symbolic level, the Sack did sever ties with the then-obsolete dreams of Belle Époque Palermo, embodied by the detonated *villini* and the anonymous tower blocks, and with a model of development grounded on laissez-faire liberalism. In effect, the Sack illustrates the new system of clientelism and patronage typical of Southern Italy engendered through the establishment of the Christian Democratic Party as an intermediate body between the central government and the local communities securing the distribution of income through public investment.[272] In the new state of things photographed by the Sack, Cosa Nostra moved up from being "an element of (parasitic) mediation between property and labor,"[273] as Leonardo Sciascia famously defined it, to an additional intermediate body stabilising this very system through a firm control over votes, workforces, and economic enterprises. The *intreccio*, that is, the "intertwining between political, economic, and mafia interests,"[274] is certainly not a postwar phenomenon; on the contrary, the mafia has flourished thanks to a century-long "reciprocity of favors," to quote Paolo Pezzino's study on post-Unification Sicily's "violent modernization."[275] What the Sack brings into sharp focus is instead the codependency of government, business, and organized crime, with the latter developing into a transmission belt capable of neutralizing the "obstacles" posed by the normal functioning of the public and private sectors such as bureaucracy, regulations, and market competition. As Antonino Blando sums it up, "the physical and cultural destruction of a city coincided with the establishment of a strategic relationship between mafia power and political power and with the consolidation of an electoral basis that from then on will always award the majority of votes to the [Christian Democratic] party."[276]

Legendarily, the then-mayor Salvo Lima, a high-profile politician widely rumored for his closeness to the top echelons of both the mafia and the party, inaugurated the Sack with the not

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[271] See Rhodes, John David. *Stupendous, Miserable City: Pasolini's Rome*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.
[272] Chubb, Judith. *Patronage, Power, and Poverty in Southern Italy: A Tale of Two Cities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982; Gribaudi, Gabriella. *Mediatori. Antropologia del potere democristiano nel Mezzogiorno*. Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1980.
[273] Sciascia, Leonardo. *Pirandello e la Sicilia*, quoted in Schneider Peter, Jane Schneider. *Reversible Destiny*, cit., 108.
[274] Ivi, 18.
[275] Pezzino, Paolo. *Una certa reciprocità di favori. Mafia e modernizzazione violenta nella Sicilia postunitaria*. Milan: Franco Angeli, 1990.
[276] Blando, Antonino. "Percorsi dell'antimafia." *Meridiana* 25 (1996): 77-91, 79.

exactly auspicious words, “Palermo is beautiful, let’s make it more beautiful.” Beauty, any Palermitan would maintain, was the very victim of the collective sacrifice represented by the Sack, certainly not its beneficiary. In this, there is a strong affective charge binding together different generations of citizens, comprising those who have no direct experience of the long-gone neighbourhoods and orchards. To all of them indistinctly, the iconic photographs of the *villini* with their eccentric turrets, dormer windows, arcs, and floral decorations in a typical mixture of neo-Renaissance, Gothic, and neo-Moorish architectural influences conjure a profound melancholia infused with a sense of injustice for what a journalist emphatically but accurately enough described as “the victory of profit over beauty.”[277] Their ubiquity on social media groups celebrating yesteryear’s city attests the soundness of such a shared feeling. These images of loss—of a distinctive cultural heritage as well as of fin-de-siècle splendor and zeal in sharp contrast with the dreaded fate of backwardness—draw attention to the consequences of the rule of the Christian Democratic Party *and* the mafia as much as to the symbolic and affective resonances of that rule in the present time.

Today, Cosa Nostra’s disappearance from public life forces us to reckon with the catastrophes of the *intreccio* in a different manner, pushing to the fore the evidence that the syndicate throughout its history seldom has operated through violence or even lawbreaking. In this sense, putting emphasis on the *intreccio* as integral to Cosa Nostra’s identity was an operation that for decades had pertained exclusively to the kind of political opposition articulated by the left at both local and national levels. From that perspective, to establish continuity between criminal, political, and economic misdemeanours and to posit that as endemic to the state of things of the time—or to the Cold War order, we would say in hindsight—meant to advance alternative imaginaries of government and therefore of society.[278] At present, in contrast, it is uncontroversial that “political dominion and governance” and “power-sharing agreements” would feature among the typifying

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[277] Pottino, Paola. “Ville e palazzine Liberty: com’era Palermo prima del ‘Sacco.’” *La Repubblica*, Palermo edition, March 30, 2019, https://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/03/30/foto/ville_e_palazzine_liberty_com_era_palermo_prima_del_sacco_-222850925/1/, last accessed December 12, 2021.

[278] Exemplary in this respect are Pantaleone, Michele. *Mafia e politica, 1943-1962*. Turin: Einaudi, 1962; Id. *Il sasso in bocca*. Bologna: Cappelli, 1970; Id. *L’industria del potere*. Bologna: Cappelli, 1972; Gatto, Simone. *Lo stato brigante*. Trapani: Celebes, 1978. See also the 1972 Antimafia Parliamentary Commission’s Minority Report authored among others by Sicily’s PCI leader Pio La Torre and Communist judge Cesare Terranova, both killed by Cosa Nostra, now available at https://archiviopiolatorre.camera.it/img-repo/DOCUMENTAZIONE/Antimafia/03_rel.pdf, last accessed May 10, 2022.

characteristics of mafia organizations, as recently advanced by Letizia Paoli,[279] a perspective that turns organized crime into a key component of capitalist governance.

There are numerous episodes in the history of Cosa Nostra that could illustrate the *intreccio* as effectively as the Sack, although no one probably could render its impact over the polity as dramatically. The massacre of Portella della Ginestra perpetrated by Salvatore Giuliano and brought to fame by the Francesco Rosi film titled after the bandit (1962) is a brilliant example. The same could be said for the fabled contribution of the syndicate to the Allied invasion of Sicily in July 1943 and the subsequent appointment of mafiosi at the helm of local administrations during the military occupation or for the organization's involvement in the separatist movement that dreamt to turn Sicily into the 49th state of the US.[280] The period from 1970 to 1993 is shockingly rich of such moments—two decades or so that began with a failed neo-fascist coup, to which the mafia withdrew support at the last moment, and ended with the terrorist attacks through which Cosa Nostra forced the state to the negotiating table.[281] The Sack, however, presents a different consistency. Unlike the episodes I just mentioned, it has never been the object of conspiracy theories or ambiguous reconstructions: there is simply no opacity in it. Its outcomes are before everybody's eyes half a century later in the form of the tower blocks overlooking the city and in the chalky pavement of the beach near Brancaccio where the construction debris had been dumped and still lie untouched. The names of its perpetrators are not to be found in police records but in building licences and government decrees changing land destinations. The Sack is not just an episode of the century-long history of the *intreccio*, but its promotion to structure of governance, entrenched in the material realities of the Sicilian capital.

I identify an ideal line connecting these three episodes of the history of Palermo—the late-nineteenth-century Belle Époque, the mid-twentieth-century Sack, and the early-twenty-first-century touristification—in the persistence of beauty as a component of the city's different development and governance models. The Belle Époque ruling class had actively pursued aesthetic beauty in their lifestyle and private architecture but also in the adjustment of Palermo's public architecture and urban plan to the standards of a regional capital, recognizing in it a promise of

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[279] The other typifying characteristics are longevity, size, formalized complex structure, cultural apparatus, and multifunctionality. Paoli, Letizia. "What Makes Mafias Different?" *Crime and Justice* 49 (2020): 141-222.

[280] Lupo, Salvatore. *History of the Mafia*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, 187-197. Id., *The Two Mafias: A Transatlantic History, 1888-2008*. New York: Palgrave, 2009, 103-112.

[281] Of great interest, given the authors' experience in the Antimafia Pool and standing amongst the most respected magistrates in Italy, is Caselli, Gian Carlo, and Guido Lo Forte. *Lo Stato illegale. Mafia e politica da Portella della Ginestra a oggi*. Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2020.

futurity. Their successors repudiated such aspirations and eagerly capitulated to a system of power that consecrated abuse and speculation to governance practices, inaugurating a practice of environmental ruination that restored corruption to its original meaning of decaying matter. It was slow violence in the sense proposed by Rob Nixon as "delayed destruction […] dispersed across time and space [whose] calamitous repercussions played out across a range of temporal scales."[282] Finally, present-time Palermo with its 647,422 inhabitants, its 726,075 pre-COVID annual tourist arrivals (comprising the small crowd still waiting at the piazza of the Teatro Massimo), and its projected 1.5 million cruise passengers, is a city ruled by the principle that beauty, after all trade networks were rerouted away from the island, is the only resource left. The Belle Époque taught Palermitans that wealth and hopes might disappear overnight; the Sack reiterated the lesson for beauty. Therefore, it is no surprise that an important sector of the antimafia has elected beauty as its core principle and tourism, the act of pursuing beauty, as its platform. In the remainder of the chapter, I will explore how the work of antimafia tour operator Addiopizzo Travel embraces and promotes this principle through distinct practices of antimafia tourism and ideals of militancy. To start doing so, we finally join the group we will travel with for a much shorter excursion.

Giusy, an antimafia activist and long-time associate of Addiopizzo Travel, hurries to gather the small crowd together before splitting it into two groups based on language, keeping the Italian speakers for herself and destining the others to the care of a colleague. Her ease and resolute manner reveals a savoir-faire strengthened by the force of habit. Because it is my first time doing the No Mafia walking tour, I joined the far smaller Italian group with the prospect that a shared basic knowledge of national (if not mafia) history and culture would allow me to grasp the core elements of the tour more easily. I repeated the tour several times throughout my fieldwork—with less experienced guides, different target groups, and at different times of the year—and observed similar dynamics unfolding, albeit some groups proved themselves more difficult to deal with because of their assumptions about the mafia being an essential feature of an ill-defined Sicilian identity. The stops, too, may vary to a very limited extent in order to respect the tight three-hour schedule, but the substance of the tour does not.

The "substance" is what Giusy spells out from the get-go when in introducing the tour she explains the rationale behind the choice of Teatro Massimo as our starting point. She stresses the importance of distinguishing the real from the imaginary mafia so as to insist that an antimafia tour,

[282] Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2013, 2.

though enmeshed in the factitious and leisurely sphere of tourism, deals only with the former. Not only does it not trade in staged authenticity and performances, but also it promises access to a dimension simply impenetrable to most people, including locals. As such, it is a revelation of sorts. To grant access to this dimension, however, Giusy must leave behind any misunderstanding as to what the tour is for and, most crucially, against. Or to put it in religious terms, for truth to be disclosed to and received by the adepts, they must renounce their prior beliefs.

"We have an insidious enemy other than the actual mafia," she informs my group. An artful pause follows. "That is the Hollywood-made mafia." While North Americans usually pick up the reference immediately, she has to spell it out for the Northern Italian couple doing the tour with me. The allusion is to the ending of *The Godfather Part III*, a sequence set on the opera house steps in which, after a montage of five plotlines alternated with the performance of *Cavalleria Rusticana* sung by Michael Corleone's son Anthony, a killing attempt against the ageing godfather takes the life of his daughter Mary.[283] The sequence is a compelling starting point for a tour meant to demystify the mafia. In the film, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, an opera in one act about infidelity, honor, and revenge set in a nineteenth-century Sicilian village, serves to reinforce a stale depiction of the Sicilian character as prone to violence and abuse, an irrational being driven by uncontrollable passions, a natural-born mafioso.[284] Stefano, a more histrionic and expansive guide, likes to counter that depiction with his self-admitted archetypical Sicilianness, which he overplays throughout the tour with the flair of a consummate actor and a great deal of dialectal expressions and hand gestures. Reversing the association proposed by the opera but not its underlying logics, Stefano puts forward an antimafia stance as the true expression of a regional character molded by centuries of foreign domination and injustice.

Moreover, the use of the Massimo theatre, at the time closed to the public due to renovations that lasted over a quarter of century, as a shooting location throws a light on the asymmetries of power over the city's cultural heritage and life in general, denied to its citizens and easily available to the fancies of foreign capital. If the 1997 reopening of the theatre on the centenary of its inauguration signaled for many observers a crucial step in the recuperation of the built environment

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[283] See Franke, Lars. "*The Godfather Part III*: Film, Opera, and the Generation of Meaning." In *Changing Tunes: The Use of Pre-existing Music in Film*, edited by Phil Powrie and Robynn Stilwel, 31-45. New York: Routledge, 2017.

[284] Hart, Elizabeth. "Destabilizing Paradise: Men, Women, and Mafiosi." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 28, no. 2 (2007): 213-226. On the relationships between the opera, mafia codes, and their circulation in popular culture, see Nicaso, Antonio, and Marcel Danesi. *Organized Crime: A Cultural Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2021, 113-128.

following decades of mafia-induced abandonment and misgovernment,[285] the beginning of the tour in the same location points to a similar commitment to recuperation but on the symbolic and imaginary levels. As Giusy explains to us, starting the tour where the acclaimed mafia saga ends constitutes a conscious move on the side of the association to enter into a dialogue with the imaginary mafia that the tour intends first to dispel and then to replace. In reality, the word dialogue intimates a dialectical relationship in the idea of cultural exchange and knowledge transmission that does not fully reflect what the stakes are for the activists. Indeed, a dialogical component is constitutive of the tour: the guide asks questions to the patrons, at times even challenges them, and he or she receives in return more questions. Occupying several positions at the same time (e.g., cultural mediator, insider, militant, tourist guide, local resident, "mafiologist," and so on), he or she is interrogated on virtually any aspect of the city, although the company had to adopt a strict policy concerning what guides are authorized to discuss in response to official complaints filed by licensed tourist guides.[286] Similarly, the guides, especially the more experienced ones, feel the pulse of the audience and tweak the tour content in order to retain its interest.

The word enemy used by Giusy, instead, captures a more poignant dimension of the tour. Political theorists and jurist Carl Schmitt famously identified in the friend-enemy distinction the central tenet of the concept of the political, which later influenced scholars of different orientations.[287] By drawing attention to this relation, Giusy sets up an antagonistic frontier, wholly illusory in essence, on the terrain of popular culture and consumption, recognizing the latter as a

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[285] Schneider, Jane, and Peter Schneider. *Reversible Destiny*, cit., 235-259.

[286] The Italian tourist legislation establishes a crucial difference between *guida turistica* (tourist guide) and *accompagnatore* or *accompagnatrice turistico/a* (escort or chaperon), which I am ignoring by using the English term guide for both figures. A *guida* is a licensed professional, often holding an art history, history, or tourist studies university degree, authorized to accompany "single individuals or groups in museums, galleries, archeological sites, and so on, illustrating historical, artistic, and natural attractions." An *accompagnatore* or *accompagnatrice*, who also holds a special license, is allowed to provide information "of tourist interest about areas not falling under the competence of guides." I draw this distinction from Santagata, Renato. *Diritto del turismo*. Turin: UTET, 2018, 116-118. In light of it, Addiopizzo Travel guides, who are mostly not *guide* but *accompagnatori* or *accompagnatrici*, are liable to a fine if caught divulging information about the city's heritage. On the other hand, local *guide*, who see in the company an unfairly advantaged competitor too pampered by the media, opinion-makers, and politicians, are always on the lookout for Addiopizzo Travel guides giving "unauthorized" information and in a couple of occasions managed to get the company fined by a policeman passing by. A spokesperson claimed that both times a guide answered a tourist's question about the name of a church or a monument: I can attest myself that the tour does not include anything that the current law sanctions as "falling under the competence of guides." This overall marginal factor often provokes an amusing misapprehension, for guides tend to be more alert and nervous in crowded settings because of the presence of guides, whereas tourists interpret this posture as related to the threat of being overheard by mafiosi.

[287] Schmitt, Carl. *The Concept of the Political*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996 [1932]. See Kelly, Duncan. *The State of the Political*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003; Mouffe, Chantal. *The Return of the Political*. London-New York: Verso, 1993 and *On the Political*. New York: Routledge, 2005; Žižek, Slavoj. "Carl Schmitt in the Age of Post-Politics." In *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt*, edited by Chantal Mouffe, 18-37. London-New York: Verso, 1999.

field of struggle. It is tautological that the enemy of the antimafia is the mafia: that relation of enmity has established the principle of association ("one fighting collectivity of people confront[ing] a similar collectivity," in Schmitt's words[288]) through which the movement had come together as such. This is the sphere of politics proper.[289]

Referring to Hollywood as the enemy "other than the mafia" establishes a straightforward connection between real and imaginary mafia in which the "dream factory" is put to blame for having almost single-handedly assembled and disseminated the mythology of Cosa Nostra. The association website page promoting the Walk Tour plays on this in a short section reporting comments from former tour attendants, namely, "A portrait of the real mafia," "A myth-busting Palermo-loving moment of resistance," and, the most revealing one, "From now on I will look at mafia movies with different set of eyes." These mini-reviews highlight the shocking truth-telling power of the tour, contrasted with cinema's deceptive myth-making.[290] In this new relation of enmity, abstractions (what is Hollywood?) and asymmetries (what does the conflict amount to from Hollywood's perspective?) are so conspicuous that only the hyperbolic, occasionally delusional rhetoric of the tourist discourse could sustain them. Even though we are to concede that the struggle against Hollywood—meant as a shorthand for the imaginary mafia—could take on a political hue, in that it tackles a global collective imagination has an impact, though very indirect, over the island, its inhabitants, and its culture,[291] no collective social or political force could possibly arise from this conflict.

In this sense, for antimafia activists longing to reach out to cultural outsiders, *The Godfather* saga constitutes a critical meeting ground wherein conflicting understandings of the meaning of the syndicate for Sicilian life can be articulated. Outsiders is what I want to place emphasis on since no local would give any credit to the trilogy when it comes to the credibility of its Sicilian sequences.

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[288] Schmitt, Carl, cit., 28.

[289] For a complementary perspective on the political character of the mafia grounded on Schmitt, see Santoro, Marco. *Mafia Politics*. Cambridge: Polity, 2022.

[290] Curiously, the Italian version of the same page features instead comments dealing exclusively with the educational and the political ("very instructive," "raises awareness and motivates to commit oneself [to the struggle] regardless of one's provenance"). See https://addiopizzotravel.it/default.asp?p=Vacanza&tour =17 and https://addiopizzotravel.it/default.asp?hl=it&sort=0, last accessed May 10, 2022.

[291] That *The Godfather* somehow speaks of Sicilian culture is a belief shared not only by clueless tourists. For instance, in Belotti, Raymond Angelo. *The Godfather and Sicily: Power, Honor, Family, and Evil*. New York: SUNY Press, 2021, 34, one can read that "the honor code brought to the United States by Don Vito and his compatriots emerged from a Sicilian culture that lacked the communal enterprise, social and economic institutions, educational influence, and civic virtue to mollify the oppression of centuries of foreign domination." For a sharp critique of the persistence of this ideological misreading, see Lupo, Salvatore. *The Two Mafias: A Transatlantic History, 1888-2008*. New York: Palgrave, 2010, 161-183.

It would suffice to bring up the sequence of the stroll in Corleone in the first instalment when Michael Corleone asks his Sicilian bodyguard, "Where have all the men gone?" and the latter replies "They're all dead from vendetta" to appreciate how ridiculous any claim to represent life in the island, or even the Sicilian mafia, could be.[292] Notwithstanding, *The Godfather* is taken to provide a simplistic and yet effective answer to the question of what the mafia is regardless of cultural and social contexts, let alone historical accuracy. Its phenomenological and epistemic implications reverberate beyond the fictional text in ways that, to the activists, are simply not acceptable. For them, the island must bear no connection whatsoever to the film and tourism is the one place where to sever these ties.

An underlying ambiguity characterizes the attitude of the company with regard to the impact of cinema. Scapegoating it for the undeserved reputation of Sicily hinders that the same stock of mental images enthuses tourists to attend the tour and shapes the very expectations that the tour itself intends to redirect. In other words, what drives tourists to the No Mafia walk tour is a curiosity toward Cosa Nostra that the unmediated experience of the city could not satisfy. Contrary to my own expectations, I found out by chatting with the patrons that many would have rather attended a mafia tour, had that option been easily available to them, since their interest lay in the mafia, whereas antimafia—or more in general activism, social change, and politics—would leave them cold. In a different iteration of the tour, a patron whistled *The Godfather* theme tune throughout the whole walk (three hours!) and the fact that the tour guide was the only person not irritated by this circumstance indicates, in addition to an outstanding forbearance, that similar behaviors are customary.

The contours of the Hollywood-made mafia are clear, intuitive even. What kind of image (or counter-image) of the mafia does the tour propose? The solution to this question is refracted across the several stops of the walk, emotionally and historically loaded sites in front of which the group pauses to listen to the guide. Oddly, almost none of them bears a direct connection with Palermo's mafia history (e.g., high-profile killing sites, confiscated and reallocated mafia properties, antimafia shrines and plaques, etc.), which is impressive considering that the sheer mass of antimafia spatial

[292] The same does not apply to Italian-American culture (or, for that matter, mafia), which instead has a far more complex relationship with the saga as attested by the wealth of publications reflecting on these connections in occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the first episode. See for instance Wilson, Michael. "With *The Godfather*, Art Imitates Mafia Life. And Vice Versa." *The New York Times*, March 22, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/09/movies/godfather-mafia.html, last accessed May 10, 2022; Santopietro, Tom. *The Godfather Effect: Changing Hollywood, America, and Me*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022.

markers around the city, in itself somewhat conspicuous, is extremely high in the area covered by the tour. On the one hand, Addiopizzo Travel organizers single out this aspect as distinguishing their offer from that of mafia tours, that is, an explicit rejection of the voyeuristic, morbid mandate to "show" the mafia and its deadly effects. On the other hand, this absence points to the existence of a specific antimafia imagination at work in the repurposing of the struggle for the tourist's sake. This imagination, I would argue, is fundamentally melodramatic.[293] In what follows, I identify its three main components as encapsulated by the walk tour.

The first component is the emplaced moral dichotomy of good and evil. Rather than simply indexical, the relationship between locations and mafia history is symbolic and analogical. The Teatro Massimo, as we have seen, stands for the "insidious enemy," the Courthouse for the judicial, the cart maker's store for folk culture, the Cathedral for the Church, the Town Hall for politics, and an iconic bakery-cum-restaurant for anti-racketeering. In a shrewd exercise of duplicity, the tour narrative underscores the coexistence of mafia and antimafia manifestations within the same institution, mostly by resorting to brief biographical sketches deemed representative. Therefore, for instance, the Town Hall is Lima and Ciancimino, the political architects of the *intreccio*, but also antimafia mayor Orlando. Likewise, the Cathedral is both don Mario Frittitta, the Carmelite arrested (and absolved) for being the confessor of a prominent mafia boss, and don Pino Puglisi, the beatified priest slayed by Cosa Nostra in 1993. The Courthouse is both Falcone and Borsellino, the model mafia martyrs, and the *corvo* ["raven," named after the French noir film *Le Corbeau*/*The Raven*, Henri-Georges Clouzot, 1943], the anonymous letter-writer who insinuated that Falcone secured the deposition of a key informant by guaranteeing him impunity for his future vendettas. And so on. Through this double shift from the actual site to the institution and from that to the individual, the imposition of an oversimplified narrative revolving around heroes (mostly martyrs) and villains (mafia bosses and politicians) forces out of the frame several layers of complexity, supplanting the nuances of historical reconstructions with a populist suspicion, if not open condemnation, of anything institutional.[294] The omission of the key role played by looked-down-upon institutions such

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[293] Brooks, Peter. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976.

[294] Within such a framework, for instance, political parties are demonized for having let the mafia into the heart of the state, while it is omitted that the vituperated Christian-Democratic Party from the late 1970s on had also led effective political action against the mafia. The renewal internal to the party, which provoked the marginalization of the figures most compromised with the syndicate, gave way to the rising star of Orlando and, tragically, to the murders of high-level party officials and administrators (most of whom are not considered martyrs by the movement because of their proximity with shady sectors of the party or the government). See Lupo, Salvatore. *Antipartiti. Il mito della nuova politica nella storia della Repubblica (prima, seconda e terza)*. Rome: Donzelli, 2013, 184-197. See also Stancanelli,

as parties, agencies, and governments is not too relevant in itself, even less so for a guided tour that obviously cannot measure up to the standards of current historiography.

It becomes relevant, however, in relation to the second component, that is, the personalization of the struggle. Here is where cinema, after having framed the debut of the tour, comes back into the picture. Whereas *The Godfather* saga is the enemy, the best ally for the movement is to be found in the corpus of antimafia martyrs biopics produced by state-funded or -owned companies from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s. Their titles often feature the titular character, always a man immolating himself for the advancement of the cause. Cashing in on their popularity, guides reference them extensively in order to orient the tourists, particularly the national ones, across the intricacies of mafia history whose main figures are mostly known through cinema.[295] Cinema, in this respect, does constitute a repertoire of figures conjured to enliven the tour alongside, for instance, folkloric tales or local proverbs, though (allegedly) requiring less cultural mediation than the latter. However, it does much more than this. Since, in truly melodramatic fashion, antimafia cinema's protagonists "embody and enact, rather than represent, socio-ethical values,"[296] it also evokes a well-defined emotional vocabulary of suffering, grief, disillusionment, and tragedy.

The tour narrative is fully contained within the temporal boundaries of the regional affirmation of the Corleone mafia rule and its disastrous fall. I already insisted on the distortions engendered by reading a century and a half of mafia history through the lenses of its most brutal and mediatized chapter. Here I bring the argument further by arguing that turning the Corleone exceptionalism into *the* mafia narrative gives way to the third component of the antimafia's melodramatic imagination, that is, excess. A logical outcome of positing the fight against the mafia as a metaphysical war between good and evil, excess denotes the absence of limits on what the mafia could do and has indeed done, despite the proclaimed existence of rules of conduct and codes of honor. Excess gestures to the unpredictable, abrupt, life-threatening force of mafia violence to which

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Bianca. *La città marcia. Racconto siciliano di potere e di mafia*. Venice: Marsilio, 2016. See also Di Figlia, Matteo. "Trent'anni dopo. Linguaggi e liturgie nella 'Primavera' di Palermo." In Montemagno, Gabriello. *Da Ciancimino a Orlando: Ascesa e caduta della 'primavera' di Palermo*, v-xxxi. Palermo: Istituto Poligrafico Europeo, 2014.

[295] Since antimafia cinema has been a staple of the massive cultural re-education project underwent by young Palermitans since the 1990s (including all Addiopizzo Travel members), as I will show in chapter 3, the guides demonstrate an excessive faith in how widely watched these films are outside of the city. Taken for granted references at times escape the tourists as much as the name of worshiped martyrs, which may say absolutely nothing to them.

[296] Gledhill, Christine. "Prologue: The Reach of Melodrama." In *Melodrama Unbound: Across History, Media, and National Cultures*, edited by Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams, ix-xxv. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018, xxi.

far too many have fallen victim. It manifests itself in the descriptions of murders filled with morbid details, in the gloomy atmosphere built through disparaging narratives of death and loss, in the thrilling prospect of yet another burst of violence. One question from the patrons of the several No Mafia walk tours I attended has never failed to arise: if the tour guide feared for his or her life. I found this recurrence surprising, especially coming from tourists whom I expected to be aware of the incidence of violent crimes in the destination of their choosing. What I found truly shocking was that the activists would answer positively, though conceding that the strength of the movement consists in distributing such hazard among thousands of people and therefore making no one especially exposed to retaliation. At this point, we were dwelling without any uncertainty on melodramatic excess, with the more reassuring historical evidence quickly fading behind us. To the best of my knowledge, not a single activist connected to the antimafia movement has ever been killed. Even if we stretch the notion of activist beyond the movement to account for political activists, the most recent episode would date to 1988: the murder of co-founder of Lotta Continua Mauro Rostagno, who happened to be targeted for his journalistic activity rather than for a generic activism. The same can be said for Democrazia Proletaria party cadre Peppino Impastato, a figure I will discuss in detail in the next section. Nonetheless, in compliance with a tour narrative in which the only characters who fought against the syndicate had been murdered (Orlando being the only exception), the perspective of martyrdom becomes the norm to which even a tour guide must lend support to.

Skillfully conveyed through rhetorical, dramatic, and narrative artifices, the melodramatic imagination of the antimafia operates as a platform for establishing an affective relation with the patrons. Throughout the tour, affective responses play an important role as the guide makes the tourists work up, feel at ease, bummed out, and cheered up. The effect is most visible at the last stop of the tour, a run-down playground in piazza Magione funded by the association in 2016. There, the guide gives a goodbye speech weaving together all the threads of the tour in a narrative of civil awakening and everyday activism through ethical consumption (including ethical tourism). The site itself does not make a good impression, for its days seem to be numbered. And yet, at the end, the tourists feel not just moved, but mobilized even. “I can’t believe we’ve contributed to defeating the mafia,” an American woman, deadpan serious, told her husband at the end of the tour. I reported this casual observation to president of Addiopizzo Travel Dario Riccobono, who observed that as

the company grew and gained greater recognition across different media and news outlets,[297] mass tourists slowly replaced the more politically committed and socially responsible patrons of earlier times. "Our tour," he commented, "is a civic-educational path in no way related to the defeat of the mafia, which is not and must never be something that citizens alone could aspire to." Yet, for how much he disavowed the woman's reaction, the tour's built-in sense of commitment justified it, while the transmission of an antimafia ethos grounded on melodramatic imagination nurtured its underpinning mobilization.

[297] See for instance, Onstad, Katrina. "A New Way to See Sicily." *New York Times*, May 6, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/08/travel/08sicily.html; Hooper, John. "A Sicilian Offer Some Travelers Won't Be Able to Refuse." *The Guardian*, November 3, 2009, https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2009/ nov/03/sicily-holiday-mafia-addiopizzo-travel; Nathan, Nancy. "Sicily Tours Spotlight Brave Fight against the Mafia." *USA Today*, June 12, 2015, https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/destinations/2015/06/12/palermo-sicily-mafia-tours-addiopizzo/71061406/; Jacobson, Philip. "Addiopizzo: The Grassroots Campaign Making Life Hell for the Sicilian Mafia." *Newsweek*, September 17, 2014, https://www.newsweek.com/2014/09/26/addiopizzo-grassroots-campaign-making-life-hell-sicilian-mafia-271064.html, last accessed May 10, 2022. For a scholarly account of the company's work, see Forno, Francesca, and Roberta Garibaldi. "Ethical Travel: Holidaying to Fight the Italian Mafia." In *Reinventing the Local in Tourism*, edited by Antonio Paolo Russo and Greg Richards, 50-63. Channel View: Bristol, Buffalo, and Toronto, 2016.

Beauty Militancy: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Antimafia Action

As I sat down on a rock on the top of the sun-drenched hill overseeing the Palermo airport, Ermes Riccobono, an Addiopizzo Travel member, pulled out his phone to show me a video. It was a welcomed occasion to catch breath, exhausted as we were after a strenuous two-hour hike in the midst of a summer sultry day. Ermes was my guide on "The One-Hundred Steps Tour," a tour dedicated to Giuseppe "Peppino" Impastato, a Marxist militant from Cinisi (near Palermo) killed by Cosa Nostra in 1978 at the age of thirty. Heat aside, the private tour had been pleasant and perfectly planned. The organizers at Addiopizzo Travel were careful as always in balancing out the militant and the naturalistic souls of the trip. In addition, Ermes, a man in his early thirties, made a great chaperon. His cosmopolitan outlook, an awareness gained through the experience of alternative structures of social relations and the potentials for collective action they promote or inhibit, colored his talk with a peculiar shade of pessimism. It was no small detail: having lived in "the continent," a local expression designating interchangeably the rest of Italy and Europe, has become a source of social capital, especially among the youth who are expected to share a civic-oriented value system different from that of their more sedentary peers.[298] Unlike the Sicilians resigned to the unalterable nature of the social order, those who have experienced life in "the continent" tend to embrace the idea that structural change depends also on habits, mentalities, and ways of feeling. Change in such domains obviously implies a stretched, porous temporality at odds with the alarming incapability of the political elite to think in terms exceeding one single term of office or, for that matter, with the volatility of civil society initiatives in the face of perennial economic, social, and public health crises. Ermes and the other Addiopizzo Travel members "carry out" social change via the dissemination of new ways of seeing, feeling, and showing Sicily, largely and unknowingly predicated on cinema.

All of a sudden, his words and movements acquired an unexpected solemnity, for he was to perform the final act of the tour. Or rather, the film extract we were about to watch was to do that: afterwards, he told me, we will have a few minutes to mull it over before driving back to the city and parting ways. I was savoring the gravity of the situation, keeping my excitement for the moment to come at bay. As a film researcher absorbed into the study of mafia and antimafia cultures, any

[298] Gucciardo, Gaetano. "Diseguaglianze, fiducia e capitale sociale nel Mezzogiorno." *Meridiana* 79 (2014): 165-192. See also note 233.

reference whatsoever to cinema would have heightened my attention and rendered me more receptive to details I would have otherwise ignored. Because in many respects the tour is a barely disguised film tour, at that point, after a full day, I was in between weariness and restlessness, my mind racing in a whirlwind of mental notes, half-baked hypotheses, and fatigue. For a second my own impatience at Ermes scrolling through his video gallery surprised me for how it surpassed appreciation for a much-welcomed respite. It did so also because I foreknew what he would have shown me—literally, by heart—, so there was little to discover on that side; nor would the perspective of mulling over (perhaps a subtle plea for two minutes of silence after hours of uninterrupted conversation) have added anything either. My excitement, instead, was coming from my awareness of taking part in what Ermes implicitly considered a transformative moment. It was an initiation of sorts and one, to my own delight, fully grounded on an act of cinematic mediation. Nonetheless, that was occurring during a tour, which I regularly paid for, and I was in Ermes' eyes a tourist, albeit of an odd variety since I did disclose my status as researcher doing participant observation. A few questions arise from this apparent contradiction. What kind of initiation could tourists be part of? How could they be included into a community in express violation of their status as transient outsiders without lasting connections to that place? To what extent could such a moment circumvent the staged authenticity of any tourist performance, granting access to something deeper and maybe more real?

The "One-Hundred Steps Tour," being a tour in the footsteps of a militant, explicitly articulates an ideal of antimafia action and outreach that is at the same time dumbed down for the tourist's sake and intensified through the emplaced engagement with Impastato's life story. This friction makes it a good standpoint from which to consider the shifting ground of militancy across the most enterprising sector of the movement as well as the renewed meaning of antimafia action in the present scenario. The tour unfolds across several locations marked by the spectral presence of the militant: his house in Cinisi (now a museum-cum-bookshop), the Radio Aut headquarters in Terrasini, the barn where he was murdered, the railway tracks blown up by the mafia to stage his death as a failed terrorist attack, and lastly the hill that we climbed for two hours just to watch the video. For each place, the guide (or trip leader, in Addiopizzo Travel lingo) delivers a short speech tying together biographical traces, fragments of antimafia history, and social commentary into a mobilizing narrative of resistance. It is a history declined in the present tense as living legacy, but also scaled down to provide a model to follow in the everyday struggle to stem the tide of

illegality.[299] Turning every tour into an antimafia education crash course is for the Addiopizzo Travel activists an imperative rendered all the more urgent by what they call "the northward expansion of the palm tree line." The expression, coined by Leonardo Sciascia in the 1960s, refers to "the climate suitable to the growth of the palm,"[300] or, out of metaphor, to the broadening growth medium supporting the infiltration of mafia capital (and culture) in Northern Italy and Europe.[301] The tourist is addressed, or better interpellated, at once as actual citizen and as potential militant, because antimafia intervention coincides with a pedagogical project addressing the meanings and practices of active citizenship, paradoxically irrespective of Cosa Nostra itself.

I focus on this specific tour among the half-a-dozen I attended not only for the unequivocal use of cinema I will examine in a moment but also because of the prominence of what Impastato has come to embody for the antimafia movement at large. At present, Impastato is primarily an antimafia martyr, included as such in the pantheon developed by the movement during its metamorphosis into a civil religion throughout the 1990s. Even though I already addressed this moment in history as well as its reverberations in the present time in the previous chapter, here I just want to highlight the apparent incongruity of such inclusion. The movement, in fact, set apart public servants killed in the line of duty, mostly judges, magistrates, and police whose example has been instrumental in the promotion of legality and patriotism in opposition to mafia culture and its exploitation of *sicilianismo*.[302] Within this project of national (and nationalist) integration, which implied also the coming to power of a new ruling class, Impastato comes off as a very odd figure: an internationalist revolutionary for whom the struggle against the mafia never meant to reaffirm the supremacy of the state. Running for municipal election in the weeks prior to his death, Impastato had been a driving force behind protest marches, land occupations, environmentalist initiatives, and

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[299] This is also the key aspect discriminating Addiopizzo and Addiopizzo Travel philosophies with respect to tourism. For the anti-racketeering NGO, the tourist's contribution consists mainly in financing pizzo-free commercial activities and in inspiring, though indirectly, other business owners to turn in their extortionists and join the ranks of the association. Whether tourists enjoy a week at a holiday resort or attend an antimafia tour every day leaves the association indifferent. From the perspective of the antimafia travel company, instead, it matters not only what tourists do, obviously, but also what they learn.

[300] Sciascia, Leonardo. *Mafia Vendetta*. New York: Knopf, 1964, 117. See also Blim, Michael. "Contemplating the Palm Tree Line." In *Italy's "Southern Question." Orientalism in One Country*, edited by Jane Schneider, 279-284. New York: Routledge, 1998.

[301] For a variation of the palm tree line theory on a global scale, see Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff. *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America Is Evolving toward Africa*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

[302] On mafia's exploitation of *sicilianismo* as subversive archaism, see Herzfeld, Michael. *Subversive Archaism: Troubling Traditionalists and the Politics of National Heritage*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2022, 6-7. See also Schneider, Jane, and Peter Schneider. "Mafia, Antimafia, and the Question of Sicilian Culture." *Politics & Society* 22, no. 2 (1994): 237-258.

construction workers' unionization in the area.[303] From a proper Marxist standpoint, he saw the fight against the mafia as a singular component of a broader and more radical struggle, to which it had to be subordinated. Recognizing the prominence of mafia-driven accumulation within the local configuration of capitalist relations, Impastato and socialist-leaning antimafia more in general comprehended the defeat of Cosa Nostra only as a means to an end—as instrumental to the struggle against capital and the withering away of the state.[304]

Today, the inclusion of Impastato into the pantheon of a movement nobody would suspect of harboring anti-capitalist and anti-state views speaks of the will to incorporate disparate constituencies across generations, cultures, and the political spectrum, a process in large measure supported by state-funded cinema and television.

The worshipping of a militant martyr by other militants is not odd in itself: Impastato's historical figure is indeed a more easily relatable one for most activists (antimafia and not, past and present) than judges, magistrates, and police. A political cadre roaming across the party constellation on the left of the moribund Communist Party in search of "a bare organizational structure" and some "institutional security,"[305] he worked during a phase of Italian history (known as *riflusso*) that presented young radicals with "the stark choice between withdrawing into private life […] or of supporting the politics of the armed organizations."[306] Impastato countered these disaggregating forces through the grassroots mobilization of the local youths around cultural initiatives, founding the association "Musica e cultura" and shortly after the unapologetically combative Radio Aut, a platform for his vehement, mocking attacks against the Cinisi mafia that eventually costed him his life. Reporting from "Mafiopoli," Impastato's weekly show *Onda Pazza* [Crazy Wave] was an almost Dadaist experiment in political antagonism wherein the malfeasances of Cinisi's mafia bosses, politicians, and entrepreneurs rather than just simply and openly denounced became the substance through which ridiculing local systems of power and exploitation in the most inventive

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[303] See Behan, Tom. *Defiance: The Story of a Man Who Stood Up to the Sicilian Mafia*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2008. In Italian, see Vitale, Salvo. *Nel cuore dei coralli. Peppino Impastato, una vita contro la mafia*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2002. Impastato, Giuseppe. *Lunga è la notte: poesie, scritti, documenti*, edited by Umberto Santino. Palermo: Centro Impastato, 2002-2014. See also Bartolotta Impastato, Felicia. *La mafia in casa mia*, edited by Umberto Santino and Anna Puglisi. Palermo: La Luna, 1986. Santino, Umberto, ed. *Chi ha ucciso Peppino Impastato*. Palermo: Centro Impastato, 2008.

[304] See Fana, Marta. "Communists Against the Mafia." *Jacobin*, February 2, 2019, https://jacobinmag.com/2019/02/italian-mafia-communists-socialists-capitalism, last accessed May 10, 2022. For a Marxist reading of antimafia history, see Santino, Umberto. *Mafia and Antimafia: A History*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2015.

[305] Quoted in Santino, Umberto. "Peppino Impastato: la memoria difficile." *Meridiana* 40 (2001): 21-41, 30.

[306] Lumley, Robert. *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978*. London-New York: Verso, 1990, 307.

manner.[307] Finding common ground in the circumstance of operating within a climate of social and political apathy, today's antimafia activists single out this action on the intellectual-cultural front of the struggle as a source of inspiration.[308] Therefore, if the fight against Cosa Nostra corresponds to the dismantling of mafia culture, today's activists find in Impastato an early model in the wake of antimafia judge and martyr Paolo Borsellino's apocryphal incitement to "talk about the mafia, to do it on the radio, on television, in the newspaper."[309] This was not the case for Impastato himself, who, like the string of Sicilian socialists and communists slaughtered by the mafia before him, would have never conceived of his militancy as mainly antimafia.

This aspect, along with many others related to Impastato's communist militancy, could not find its way into the tour narrative. After all, as the journey progressed, a protagonist other than Impastato took center stage, perhaps a foreseeable circumstance given the name of the tour: the character played by Luigi Lo Cascio in the Impastato biopic *I cento passi*. Scenes from the film were integrated into the tour narrative, even when they betrayed their fictional nature, and so were the unlikely and over-the-top quotes from the Impastato character. I had obvious objections and expressed them. "Well, it is just a movie that does what movies do," Ermes conceded when I asked him about the outspoken repudiation from Impastato's friends and comrades. To belittle the film's

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[307] While some groups within the Autonomia movement, with which Impastato aligned himself during his last years, were embracing "anti-institutional creativity" as a lifestyle response to the demands of late capitalism and tinkering with pirate radios and a Baudrillard-inspired strategy of symbolic disorder, he tended to dismiss those as navel-gazing and foolish degenerations of the struggle. The modalities through which the "creative wing" of Autonomia and the Cinisi group experimented with the medium of radio presented indeed significant overlaps, namely in the use of desecration, humor, and counter-information. The political horizon, however, diverged wildly. See Bologna, Sergio. "The Tribe of Moles" and Bifo [Franco Berardi]. "Anatomy of Autonomy." In *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*, edited by Sylvère Lotringer and Christian Marazzi. New York: Semiotext(e), 1980 [1978], 36-61 and 147-171. In English, two indispensable guidebooks to navigate Italy's post-1968 radical left universe are Wright, Steven. *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*. London: Pluto Press, 2017 [2002] and Balestrini, Nanni, and Pietro Moroni. *The Golden Horde: Revolutionary Italy, 1960-1977*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021 [1988]. On the "creative wing" specifically, see Maniscalco, Dario. *Dai laboratori alle masse. Pratiche artistiche e comunicazione nel movimento del '77*. Verona: ombre corte, 2014. On radio experimentation in the long-1968 far-left universe, see Renzi, Alessandra. *Hacked Transmissions: Technology and Connective Activism in Italy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020, 41-64.

[308] For a critical genealogy of the cultural front supremacy in the historiography and cultural memory of 1968, see Ross, Kristin. *May '68 and Its Afterlives*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002.

[309] It is worth noting how the Borsellino quote informs and gives justification to "antimafia" enterprises grounded on the equation of antimafia struggle and the mere act of talking about the mafia. For instance, translated in five languages, it greets the visitors of Corleone's Centro Internazionale di Documentazione sulla Mafia e del movimento Antimafia (CIDMA) who are then required to take a guided tour in order to visit the Center. The guides, all Corleone-born, very fluent in English, and aged between 16 and 21, are members of the social cooperative running the Center. The one with whom I took the tour asserted that her very questionable mafia knowledge came from her being "a native of the very den of the mafia and having breathed this history." That alone, she continued, "compelled her to talk about it."

significance for both the movement and the tour as just making the story of an exemplary life known to the public and nothing else was a slightly deceptive move on his side.

To begin with, even that recognition had greater implications than what Ermes implicitly acknowledged. Greeted by a critic as the film holding "out the hope of doing for the antimafia movement what *Schlinder's List* did for a wider consciousness of the Holocaust,"[310] *I cento passi* turned a real-life Marxist militant into a recognizable symbol of resistance during a period of intense political and economic uncertainty. In the late 1990s, a series of short-lived center-left governments restructured the Italian economy to meet the parameters of the Maastricht Treaty to access the Eurozone, failing to shore up popular support and deliver institutional reforms. "The long-standing tradition which identified left-wing politics with the politics of participation and grassroots democracy, of learning citizenship though practice, had been left woefully in abeyance," historian Paul Ginsborg maintained.[311] Italian political cinema at the turn of the millennium, still largely state-funded, moderately left-leaning, and to a remarkable extent involved in the "gradual and steady rebuilding of Italian film culture,"[312] turned to the configurations of leftist militancy in an almost obsessive attempt to understand how it melted into thin air. Nostalgia and sentimentalism informed the incorporation of proper counterhegemonic projects—the fundamental chapter of left-wing terrorism and more broadly the various assemblages of the so-called extra-parliamentary left—into "a sanctioned account [proposing] a sectional memory that presents itself as the national memory […] [and] mythologiz[ing] the patrimony of the center-left in the Second Republic."[313]

Co-produced by Rai Cinema, the film production arm of the public television network Rai, and distributed by Istituto Luce, a state-owned company infamously identified with the propaganda machine of the Fascist dictatorship, *I cento passi* is a glaring example of this process. The Impastato character came to embody an array of public feelings connected to desire and resistance as a sort of state-promoted middleclass counterpart of the no-global activist demonized by mainstream media

[310] Pugliese, Stanislao G. "*I cento passi*." *American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (2001): 1110. See also Stanley, Alessandra. "How an Anti-Mafia Film Struck an Italian Chord." *The New York Times*, February 7, 2001; Small, Pauline. "Giordana's *I cento passi*: Renegotiating the Mafia Codes." *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* 3, no. 1, 2005, 41-54. For an overview of the film, see de Stefano, George. "Marco Tullio Giordana's *The 100 Steps*: The Biopic as Political Cinema." In *Mafia Movies: A Reader*, edited by Dana Renga, 320-328. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.
[311] Ginsborg, Paul. *Italy and Its Discontent: Family, Civil Society, State (1980-2001)*. New York: Palgrave, 2003, 311.
[312] Marcus, Millicent. *After Fellini: National Cinema in the Postmodern Age*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002, 7.
[313] O'Leary, Alan. *Tragedia all'italiana. Italian Cinema and Italian Terrorism, 1970-2010*. Berne: Peter Lang, 2011, 226-227.

during the same years.[314] As an icon of resistance—not only to mafia, but most critically to patriarchy, corruption, and conservatism at large—, its image became pervasive across the most disparate contexts, perfectly encompassing populist and teenage vitalities, aspirations for change, and collective enthusiasms no longer conveyed by the neoliberal center-left. The film turned into a quasi-cult object particularly for those who, born a decade or so after the death of its protagonist like Ermes and myself, were children during the early-1990s popular upheavals that marked the birth of the Sicilian antimafia as a national movement and came of age at the zenith of Berlusconi's power.[315] As teenagers, we had treasured the character's defiance in the face of a conservative social milieu. We had marched on the notes of the Modena City Ramblers song dedicated to the film's hero at literally any protest we attended on the island ("And now your life you can change / only if you're willing to walk / screaming without fear / counting one-hundred steps along your way"). Our school representatives had liked to fashion themselves as "the new Peppinos," implicitly asking us to associate the ominous mafia boss of the film with the principal, the mayor, the education minister, or Berlusconi himself according to the needs of the circumstance. We had repeated the film's most memorable sentences without knowing whether Impastato or the screenwriters had come up with them in the first place. Little of that had to do with the mafia for us—nothing at all for me, having spent my adolescence in a city incorrectly reputed for being "babba" (Sicilian for innocent and ingenuous, that is, without mafia). Our assumption proved to be spot on. Already in the film press book, director Marco Tullio Giordana yearning to dispel any critical misunderstanding indicated that *I cento passi* "is not a film about the mafia." The claim may be surprising for the casual viewer and stunning for the antimafia militant. "It is [a film] about a group of young folks who dared to change the world," the director added, before concluding with the eye-opening claim that "if today Sicily has changed […], we owe it to the example of people like Peppino, to their fantasy, pain, and joyful disobedience."[316]

Unsurprisingly, once Ermes ended scrolling through his video gallery, the extract I was about to watch was the one taking place at the exact same location we had just reached. Less than twenty

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[314] See Della Porta, Donatella, Massimiliano Andreatta, Lorenzo Mosca, and Herbert Reiter. *Globalization from Below: Transnational Activists and Protest Networks*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006, 136-149.

[315] On the "nationalization" of the antimafia, see Moge, Charlotte. "La Mobilisation antimafia de 1992." *Rivista di studi e ricerche sulla criminalità organizzata* 2, no. 1 (2016): 32-60. See also, Schneider, Jane, and Peter Schneider. *Reversible Destiny*, cit., 216-234. On social opposition to Berlusconi, see Ceri, Paolo. "Challenging from the Grass Roots: The *Girotondi* and the No Global Movement." In *Resisting the Tide: Cultures of Opposition under Berlusconi*, edited by Daniele Albertazzi, Clodagh Brook, Charlotte Ross, and Nina Rothenberg, 83-93. New York: Continuum, 2009.

[316] Giordana, Marco Tullio. "I cento passi." In *I cento passi*, press book, 2000.

years after the shooting of the sequence and more than forty from the events it is supposed to depict, I found myself once again contemplating a scene I knew by heart, though growing older I learnt to mistrust. The oft-cited sequence, commonly known as "the beauty scene," features two militants of the far-left Democrazia Proletaria party, Peppino Impastato and his friend (and future biographer) Salvo Vitale, scrutinizing from above the ongoing expansion of the airport, an infrastructural project also instrumental to the growth of the drug-trafficking ring connecting the Sicilian capital and the US.[317] The two are taking pictures to be exhibited far and wide so as to make visible the intervention's deleterious effects upon the natural environment, the expropriation of peasants' land, and the destruction of a fishing settlement. All of a sudden, the protagonist has an illumination: "This airport is not that ugly, after all," Peppino states in front of a baffled Salvo. "In the end," he continues,

> Even the worst things, once they are completed, find their own logic, a justification in the mere fact of existing. Look around. They built these shacks with aluminum windows, poor materials, and no plaster. People moved in and decorated the balconies with flowers, put some nice curtains, hung the laundry out, and bought television sets. After a while, all this had become part of the landscape to the point that no one remembered what it used to be anymore. Then, instead of politics, class struggle, demonstrations, and all this nonsense, we must remind people what beauty is. We must teach them to recognize it, to defend it. Do you understand? Beauty is crucial. Everything descends from it.[318]

For Ermes those words were a political platform, and so were they for the many young antimafia activists I have encountered throughout my fieldwork in Western Sicily. Dismissive as I was of that appeasing and cheesy rhetoric, at first I could not appreciate why that extract would culminate a tour that in the organizers' minds meant "to restore dignity to our country and raise the profile of the people who are fighting for change."[319] Nor was I able to understand why a film that had been accused by those close to belittle the causes Impastato actually fought for,[320] good

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[317] For an exhaustive account, see Blumenthal, Ralph. *The Last Days of the Sicilians: The FBI Assault on the Pizza Connection*. New York: Times Books, 1988.

[318] On the critical reception of the beauty scene, see Vitale, Salvo. "La bellezza e Peppino Impastato." *Antimafia Duemila*, February 23, 2014, https://www.antimafiaduemila.com/home/opinioni/235-politica/48010-la-bellezza-e-peppino-impastato.html, last accessed May 10, 2022.

[319] "Our Mission," *Addiopizzo Travel Website*, www.addiopizzotravel.it/ default.asp?p=chisiamo&hl=en, last accessed May 10, 2022.

[320] Impastato, Giovanni. *Oltre i cento passi*, Milan: Piemme, 2007; Santino, Umberto. "La mafia al cinema, tra stereotipi e impegno civile." In *Mediamafia. Cosa Nostra tra cinema e TV*, edited by Andrea Meccia, 7-26. Trapani: Di Girolamo, 2014.

intentions and positive attitude notwithstanding, could play such a key role in a tour devoted to the memory of the militant "above and beyond stereotypes."[321]

The following winter, I attended a series of meetings held at the Palermo headquarters of Libera, the largest antimafia association in Italy founded by Turinese priest Luigi Ciotti, intended to stimulate public debate on the need to adapt antimafia's strategy to the changed scenario of today's struggle. During one of those, some authoritative figures of the Sicilian antimafia universe convened to address that thorny issue from the standpoint of imagination—and militant imagination, specifically—, starting from the assumption that in a historical moment when the Sicilian Mafia was, as the title of the meeting had it, "invisible and liquid," the old strategies were no longer operational.[322]

The screenwriter of *I cento passi*, Claudio Fava, intervened in his capacity of president of the Antimafia Commission at the Regional Parliament and long-time activist thrown into the public arena after the murder of his father Giuseppe in 1984. Provocative and contradictory, his speech contained an unanticipated invective against antimafia cinema, a pillar of the strategy all of a sudden dismissed as useless, if not harmful, since its "silly pretensions to redeem souls" make it fail to reach the miserable and disadvantaged lower-class population that constitutes the bulk of the mafia workforce. Antimafia cinema, Fava implied, preaches to the choir—an imaginary constituency referred humorously as *ceto medio riflessivo* (the pensive or self-referential middle class)—and as such is ineffective in changing mentalities, attitudes, and behaviors.[323] Coming from the politician who ran for president of the region with a New Left coalition, Fava's hint to the subalterns let me foretaste a vaguely Gramscian reappraisal of class-conscious cultural production aspiring to constitute a cultural and social bloc opposed to the dominant one.[324] What followed could not have been further from that: after all, was not "his" Peppino the first Marxist theorist of politics and class struggle as nonsense? He claimed, in fact, the beauty scene being his most successful achievement because in theorizing the struggle against the mafia as a struggle for beauty it universalized both its demands and its recipients, while at the same time relocating the struggle into the field of ethics,

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[321] From "Our Mission," *cit*.
[322] Paoli, Letizia. "Mafia and Organised Crime in Italy: The Unacknowledged Successes of Law Enforcement." *West European Politics* 30, no. 4 (2007): 854-880.
[323] Minuz, Andrea. "Le forme simboliche: sintassi, semantica e pragmatica dell'interesse culturale." In *Il cinema di Stato: Finanziamento pubblico ed economia simbolica nel cinema italiano contemporaneo*, edited by Marco Cucco and Giacomo Manzoli, 171-236. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2017.
[324] Crehan, Kate. *Gramsci's Common Sense: Inequality and Its Narratives*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016, 36-42.

thus moving away from the divisive realm of politics. By doing so, he concluded, the film has become "a generational manifesto" for its ability to speak to a segment of the Sicilian youth growing skeptical of the antimafia's dominant rhetoric, all centered on "a too easy didacticism." For an audience accustomed to the decades-long project of "cultural re-education" aimed at fighting the mafia through schooling and a consequential assessment of the value of antimafia cinema based on its contribution to the project,[325] the words of Fava were somehow puzzling. "He knows he has some things to be forgiven for," whispered an audience member next to me, probably referring to Fava's work for the infamous *Il capo dei capi* (*The Boss of the Bosses*, 2007), an epic miniseries on Salvatore "Totò" Riina causing such an outcry that the Justice minister urged (unsuccessfully) Berlusconi's Mediaset to stop airing the show.[326]

The two puzzlements—my own in front of the restoration of the one-dimensional simple-minded martyr of *I cento passi* in the context of a militant tour and the Libera audience's in front of the easy dismissal of a taken-for-granted strategy of antimafia cultural politics—share much more than the reference to a single, though nearly ubiquitous, sequence.[327] From a different perspective, the two episodes are testimonies of the uneasy refashioning of the relationship between the local struggle against organized crime and the earlier adoption of the cinematic medium as a tool for social justice. They also speak of the shift prompted by the reconfiguration of the mafia presence on the territory, that is, the rise of alternative forms of militancy and political identities grounded on a new perception of the mafia phenomenon, at once barely detectable and therefore more menacing. Moreover, they conjure up struggle and cultural politics on the apparently unpolitical terrains of tourism, ethics, and mainstream media and in doing so advance an agenda that unites unanticipated forms of militancy. Finally, they attribute to the concept of beauty a crucial function in closing the ranks and expanding the base, while making antimafia cinema its privileged carrier.

In other words, the power of the beauty scene consists in its ability to capture the shifting ground of militancy in post-Cold-War Sicily at a time when "matters of politics and class struggle"

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[325] "Antimafia cinema [is] entrapped in its own rhetoric, its own teaching, and its own compulsory screenings for the schoolers." Minuz, Andrea. "Il nostro Far West," *Il Foglio*. June 13, 2016.

[326] See Palestini, Leandro. "Fermate quella fiction su Riina. Mastella contro Mediaset, è polemica." *La Repubblica*, November 27, 2007, https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2007/11/27/fermate-quella-fiction-su-riina-mastella-contro.html, last access July 2, 2019. See also Renga, Dana. *Watching Sympathetic Perpetrators on Italian Television:* Gomorrah *and Beyond*. New York: Palgrave, 2019, 69-75.

[327] Besides the above mentioned examples, I recorded references to the beauty scene during my fieldwork in settings that could not be more diverse. Namely, an anti-gentrification demonstration, a seminar on the local grey economy, a street-art event, a screening of a semi-professional film about the 1940s farmers' struggles in Central Sicily, a demonstration in solidarity of a militant whose car had been set on fire overnight, and two political rallies.

amount to "bullshit," and so it registers the foreclosure of the emancipatory horizons formerly opened up by radical politics. By promoting the pursuit of beauty as an ideal of militancy and associating it to the fight against the mafia, the scene establishes an ethical grammar that since then has long penetrated the political life of Sicily, extending even beyond the antimafia universe.[328] In a region with some of the highest unemployment and emigration rates of Europe, the promises of beauty have replaced those of progress, social justice, or affluence—and not by chance, tourism, the only prosperous industry of the island, has reaped the fruits of such a process.

It is obvious that tourism, both as a social practice and as an economic driver, deals with beauty. Its practitioners chase it in any corner of the globe, stimulated by the simulacra produced by a combination of industries and actors. The whole tourism industry thrives on its pledges: stepping outside the boundaries of the everyday, experiencing self-transcendent emotions (e.g., joy, elation, wonderment, etc.), and finding meaning in the sublime encounter with nature, history, people, and local cultures. Beauty, exactly like tourism and for similar reasons, is a subject treated with unease or suspicion by scholars of culture. Art theorist and critic Arthur Danto famously decried the disappearance of beauty from both art practices and aesthetic theories as early as the 1960s, a collective act of abjuration from artists, critics, and theorists who stopped considering it the supreme purpose of art.[329] According to aesthetic theorist Federico Vercellone, beauty, far from having vanished, has come to find its place in a "different land of forms—which have moved from art to life, inhabiting the contemporary symbolic imagery."[330] Design, advertising, fashion, and mass media—but we should add tourism as well—have become the twentieth- and twenty-first-century provinces of beauty, now mediated through the process, experience, and content of consumption.[331] This is not the ideal of beauty pursued by the Addiopizzo Travel founders, who coined the slogan "Educating to Beauty" for promoting their company, although one can argue that the mediation of consumption is crucial in this case as well.

As Dario Riccobono explained it to me,

[328] For example, one could think of the 2017 presidential election. In that occasion, Fava's New-Left coalition "I cento passi per la Sicilia" ran against and lose to the right-wing party "Diventerà bellissima" [She will become very beautiful], a name inspired to a quote of a mafia victim on a mafia-free Sicilian future.
[329] Dantho, Arthur C. *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art*. Chicago: Open Courts, 2003. See Hickey, Dave. "Enter the Dragon: On the Vernacular of Beauty." In *The Invisible Dragon: Essays on Beauty*, 1-18. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009; Steiner, Wendy. *Venus in Exile: The Rejection of Beauty in Twentieth-Century Art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
[330] Vercellone, Federico. *Beyond Beauty*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2017, 112.
[331] Eco, Umberto. *On Beauty: A History of a Western Idea*. London: Secker & Warburg, 413-428.

> When we speak of educating to beauty, we mean assisting the tourists in discovering and appreciating the beauty of our land. This is self-evident for a tour operator. Yet, beauty for us has not to do simply with monuments, palaces, landscapes, the sea, or the local cuisine. We add our own touch to it. To us, beauty lies in resisting the mafia and hearing the stories of those who have done so. If you eat a pizza at Impastato's [a pizzeria in Cinisi owned by Giovanni, Peppino's brother], you will find it excellent in itself, but you will find beauty in the fact of being there. This is the beauty of ethics.

The association of beauty and ethics resonates with the widespread concern shared by philosophers and art theorists, mostly but not exclusively subscribing to conservative positions, who maintain that late-capitalist globalization has indeed managed to demote the ideal of beauty to a marketing side effect.[332] Even though this association runs through the history of Western philosophy at least since Plato, it has turned into a matter of serious concern in recent times. Addiopizzo Travel's mission reflects this set of tensions well. In particular, it resonates with Elaine Scarry's oft-cited theorization of the nexus of beauty and justice published in the year before the release of *I cento passi*. Scarry's main argument is that aesthetic fairness elicits ethical fairness through what she calls "the pressure toward distribution," a demand to extend perceptual care from the perceived to its surroundings, which in turn gives way to "an inclusive affirmation of the ongoingness of existence, and of one's own responsibility for the continuity of existence."[333] By attending to beauty, in other words, one undergoes a radical decentering, an act of "unselfing" that drives us "to be in the service of something else."[334]

Beauty here is an ideal devoid of conflict—almost a datum—, and so is justice, whose too easy conflation with ethics passes over the set of struggles, negotiations, and arrangements through which justice comes about. Both Scarry and the Peppino Impastato of the beauty scene conceive of beauty as a mobilizing force, something people need to be reminded of in order to take action for the collective good. Addiopizzo Travel mission combines these two orders of beauty—aesthetics and ethics—through a tour offering striving to integrate militant antimafia education and the pleasures of nature and sightseeing. Tours regularly stop in "beauty spots," that is, lookouts from

[332] See Scrutton, Roger. *Beauty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009; Sontag, Susan. "An Argument about Beauty." *Daedalus* 131, no. 4 (2002): 21-26.
[333] Scarry, Elaine. *On Beauty and Being Just*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, 92.
[334] Ivi, 113.

which the patrons can enjoy the landscape while reflecting on the words of the guide or the antimafia testimonial invited to provide his or her testimony.[335]

The beauty scene, in this respect, pre-enacts the culmination of any tour, with the patron and the guide or testimonial assuming the role, respectively, of Salvo Vitale and Peppino Impastato. This is far from being a singular instance of a particularly fortunate film. Nearly every antimafia film, in fact, features such openings of perceptual acuity, abrupt narrative interruptions where the soon-to-be-martyr teaches his disciples to appreciate nature, landscapes, monuments, and so on.

In the biopic on don Pino Puglisi *Alla luce del sole* (*Come into Light*, Roberto Faenza, 2005), the titular character conducts his redeemed proletarian youngsters in the woods to look up at the stars and contemplate the beauty of nature. It is a short sequence made of three scenes, the first and the last focused on the kids expressing enthusiasm for the discovery of beauty and the middle anticipating the looming martyrdom. "These are the same stars you have in Brancaccio, except you never raise your heads to look at them there," asserts the priest to the aweing group in a tongue-in-cheek manner establishing the pervasiveness of beauty even in the most degraded—that is, mafia-ridden—contexts just a moment after having revealed his final wishes to his assistant.

In *Placido Rizzotto* (Pasquale Scimeca, 2000), a film that premiered in Venice in the same edition of *I cento passi* (but in a short-lived collateral section) and therefore cannot have been influenced by the beauty scene, the protagonist reaches the peak of Rocca Soprana to look over his town upon his return from war. A young shepherd sits next to him and questions him on the cities he saw during his time outside the island. The boy is already an adept at beauty since he can tell, in his own words, "which city is beautiful and which is ugly—for instance, Agira: beautiful; Nicosia: ugly—but always looking at them from above." Later on, the shepherd's good vision will cost him his life for he will witness Rizzotto's murder and be condemned to death for that. And the list goes on.

[335] The liminal position of the testimonials—eyewitnesses, initiated, commoners, informants—grants them access to a multiplicity of social and cultural spheres and their capability to communicate across disparate audiences greatly improves their standing amongst the tourists. In their stories, which even rowdy teenagers always listen to in an almost religious contemplation, first-hand accounts of their own encounters with the crime syndicate are carefully alternated with ethical considerations tailored for the group in attendance. With students, the primary target of anything antimafia, questions of lawfulness and good citizenship blend with a warm encouragement to heed to higher moral standards than those of the previous generations of Italians. Adult tourists are invited to ponder on how their quotidian actions, from grocery shopping to supporting a candidate at a local election, might contribute to the reproduction of mafia power. Though insiders in some measure, testimonials make themselves relatable to the cultural outsiders through a rigid narrative device, a parable of awareness from involuntary connivance to militancy.

There are several possible explanations for the meaning of beauty in antimafia cinema. At the risk of sounding cynical, one may read the beauty scene and its heirs and forerunners as the filmmakers' mite to the agencies contributing to on-shooting location, a way to redress preemptively the harm that such representations might cause to a territory depicted as violent and unsafe. Less disparagingly, one may legitimately interpret these moments as sincere expressions of hope, faith, and desire in the "ongoingness of existence," to put it in Scarry's words, in the face of evil and impinging death. One may also read them in relation to the filmmakers' need to make the antimafia struggle relatable to a national audience completely oblivious of what the crime syndicate is beyond mafia mythology and not too prone, at the peak of Berlusconi's era, to believe in legality as the driving force of the cultural re-education project to which these films contribute. Although I find all these explanations convincing, I would instead argue that the beauty scene and its variants prefigure tourism in a particular fashion. To be more accurate, they anticipate the aesthetic and ethical pleasures embedded in the perspective of being there as a tourist of a special kind, one fully aware of the meaning of what Riccobono calls the beauty of ethics. It is in this respect that the spectator is interpellated as a beauty militant—a perspective responsible tourism by virtue of one's ethical consumption. The language of beauty militancy evacuates the struggle from politics, for the "responsibility for the continuity of existence" needs to be agreed upon neither in its form nor in its content.

Chapter 3

The Labor of Authenticity:
Regionalism, Television, and Production Cultures

> The creature curls itself around its prey, covering it and knotting its long tentacles around it. […] The knots it ties strangle its prey, which is paralyzed by its very contact. It has something of the aspect of scurvy and of gangrene. It is a disease shaped into a monstrosity. […] This monster is the creature that seamen call the octopus, scientists call a cephalopod, and which in legend is known as a kraken. English sailors call it the devilfish.
>
> Victor Hugo[336]

On a late afternoon in May, the crew rushed to get the last shot of the day done before the sun set. The shabby square in the popular neighborhood of La Kalsa, Palermo, had been filled with props and cordoned off by the production team, assigned to keep the gathered onlookers away from the set. The scene is a flashback, set in the early 1980s, depicting a slaughter committed by future mafia leaders Totò Riina and Bernardo Provenzano at the height of the Second Mafia War, which would eventually consecrate their Corleone faction to rule over all the Palermo families. Most onlookers grumbled at the sight of fake blood poured on the pavement, volubly expressing their disappointment for yet another "mafia TV" shooting. It was my eighth visit on the set of the second season of *Il Cacciatore/The Hunter* (Cross Productions-RAI, 2018-present) and I had witnessed this spectacle nearly every time an outdoor shooting captured the attention of a few passers-by. As a native Sicilian myself I am accustomed to these protests, having grown up with them in my own household. This time, however, something unexpected happened: after the first shot, a group of six- to eight-year-old male street urchins, yelling in dialect, scattered around the scene and started addressing the actors with colorful invectives. Unlike the many locals who argue that Sicilian history, culture, and natural beauty ought to make it onto the national screens, not just mafia violence, the kids had more technical grievances, though still related to matters of correct

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[336] Hugo, Victor. *The Toilers of the Sea*. New York: Penguin, 2002, 350-351.

representation. "How the hell are you carrying that gun?" one shouted at the bemused actor interpreting future "boss of the bosses" Riina. "Is that the way you'd die, moron?" another added. The line producer, already nervous for the tight schedule, whispered to the ear of one of his assistants, "Find out how to do it right and kick them out." Some minor episodes of confusion followed. After a couple of ruined takes, three local workers—a production assistant, a video technician, and the dialogue coach—managed to distract and appease the kids by letting them mime the correct development of the scene for the amusement of the few spectators who were paying attention to them rather than the actors.

One year earlier, a 52-year-old man was sitting in front of the television set with his 14-year-old daughter andenjoying, along with over a million Italians, the sixth episode of the first season of *Il Cacciatore* on Raidue. The title of the episode is "Famiglia" ("Family"). It is not possible to know whether the man was an aficionado of the show, but it is nonetheless reasonable to assume that that had that been the case, he would not have watched it with his daughter. At that point, she must have known very little about his father's life prior to her birth: that he had lived in Sicily and then had to leave, that he had changed his name, and that nothing concerning that period has ever made for a great topic of conversation at family dinners. She is aware of the father's old name, though, and that would turn out to be enough of a problem for the man when unexpectedly that name pops up on the screen in a freeze-framed block blue-lettered caption, also featuring his moniker, affiliation, and number of murders committed. This visual artifice "*à la* Tarantino"[337] led to dramatic consequences. The girl stared at the man, speechless and shocked, and ran to her room. Almost a quarter of a century had passed from the day when Pasquale Di Filippo had turned *pentito* and entered the witness protection program. Although he had never been a big shot in Cosa Nostra, as the son-in-law of "king of La Kalsa" Tommaso Spadaro, the most important smuggler in the history of the mafia, and a member of Leoluca Bagarella's hit squad, he provided a decisive testimony that contributed to wipe out of the Corleone faction. The show, the man thought, has not been fair to him and his relationship with his daughter was suffering for this injustice. Accordingly, six months later, Di Filippo announced a one-million-euro lawsuit against Rai, accusing the company to have credited him a fivefold increased number of murders, depicted him as a torturer, and failed to acknowledge his crucial contribution to the fight against the mafia. "I paid for what I did but I could never absolve

[337] Guarnaccia, Fabio. "*Il Cacciatore*, la scrittura." *Link*, April 19, 2018, https://www.linkideeperlatv.it/cacciatore-la-scrittura/, last accessed on March 26, 2020.

myself," he confessed to a journalist, adding that his recondite hope was that once his daughter "will read this interview, she will find out they were lying about [him]" and perhaps speak again to him.[338]

When I brought up the Di Filippo story with a producer, his reaction startled me. First, he accused the man of being publicity seeking, a clearly unreasonable allegation when it comes to a *pentito* still fearing for his life after so many years.[339] Then, after conceding that the controversy was good publicity for the show and not an actual bother for the company, he admitted that that was only the tip of the iceberg. Numerous people from the city's popular neighborhoods with whom he had some chance to interact informally, he told me, were always eager to express their appreciation of the show and at the same time to complain that the use of real names for mafiosi, including out-of-the-spotlight low-rank soldiers, was causing trouble for many. The producer could not hide his pride, as an unexpected yet fathomable demonstration of the show's "power to do good" unfolded before his eyes.

These two vignettes illustrate the serious investment in the pursuit of authenticity from the makers of *Il Cacciatore*, a series that distinguishes itself from the mass of popular mafia-themed shows that have helped manufacturing the common sense knowledge on the mafia, its powers, businesses, and deeds as well as the social fabric of the territory in which they took place. They also show how perturbing the outcome of this pursuit can be, especially given that political, ethical, and moral considerations about what mafia television is and does—or must be and do—are nearly impossible to extricate from the practices and experiences of mafia television itself. The seemingly negligible episode of the street urchins' set invasion is telling in three respects. First, it speaks to the customary attitude of the local populace towards films and TV shows set on the island: a sincere excitement at the glamour being precipitated in the everydayness of Sicilian life, combined with an excoriating awareness that the sole appeal of that life is its potential to be encapsulated in a mafia story. Second, it hints at a specific value in the idea of rendering the filming more authentic through the recourse to forms of "know-how" unavailable to the crew, even when the actual expertise of the sources may be questionable. Third, it shows the differential of affective labor at work in the contradistinction between the "Romans," as mainstream media professionals are commonly called, trying to extract value even from a distressing circumstance like a film set incursion, and the local

[338] Palazzolo, Salvo. "Quattordicenne scopre in tivù che il padre è un pentito. Lui ora chiede risarcimento." *La Repubblica*, October 2, 2018.
[339] Palazzolo, Salvo. "Il pentito di Cosa Nostra: 'I boss hanno festeggiato per quelle scarcerazioni." *La Repubblica*, May 8, 2020.

workforce, often tasked to deal with "their own people" irrespective of the actual labor they have been hired to perform. Whereas that episode displays a sincere and well-intentioned aspiration to authenticity, the Di Filippo story and the other untold experiences of hardship caused by *Il Cacciatore* are instead testament to the conundrums behind its effective pursuit by the show. The producer's assessment of this achievement within ethical parameters, that is, the "power to do good" as some extra-judicial faculty to impart justice, shows clearly the problematic understanding of mafia television by its own makers as much as their obliviousness to the impact of their work over the local community.

In the following pages, I set out to explore the frictions, effectively condensed by these two episodes, between local and national culture, labor, and community in the context of the making of a mafia television show in the former "capital of the mafia." It is in this respect that authenticity becomes a contested terrain upon which several actors (national and local media workers, institutions, audiences, and myself as a participant observer) negotiate the significance of mafia television, and cultural production more in general, in relation to a traumatic phase of recent Italian history "not yet fully owned."[340] Taking the widespread popularity of mafia television—not just a cornerstone of Italian television history, but a true vernacular genre in itself—as my point of departure, I interrogate its functions and implications for the contemporary film and television industry as well as its dissemination of specific forms of knowledge about mafia culture exposed to impacting local realities. To do so, I seek to address the lived knowledge and experiences of the workers involved in the making of a mafia show as a means of problematizing commonly held assumptions about the genre, seeing in it just a cynical and exploitative form of entertainment and a stock of trite stereotypes. The goal of my intervention is neither to recover the genre as socially and historically relevant to the fight against the mafia (a belief in which some of its practitioners still indulge), nor to reject the potentially harmful effects of the gap between an all-powerful imaginary mafia and a real one largely absent from the public life of the island.[341] My interest, instead, lies in shifting focus from the textual to the social dimension of mafia television in order to establish how what has been a staple of Italian media culture for three decades could still be perceived as a controversial object not only for its audiences but also for its makers. I argue that major transformations in television production in Italy, including processes of decentralization and new

[340] Caruth, Cathy. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996, 151.
[341] Dainotto, Roberto. *The Mafia: A Cultural History*, cit.; Morreale, Emiliano. *La mafia immaginaria*, cit.

articulations of space, capital, and labor, have affected the genre well beyond the simple adoption of global television standards and rendered it a site of struggle for the different actors involved in its making. Following the lessons of production studies,[342] I conceive of these conflicts as the manifest, and perhaps inevitable, outcome of the interactions between two production cultures—that of the "Romans" and that of the locals. The stakes of heeding what John T. Caldwell called the "'indigenous' interpretative framework of local production cultures"[343] are raised by the culturally specific friction that local workers, the majority of whom can correlate Cosa Nostra with their lifeworld, come to embody. The below-the-line status of these workers engenders the paradox of a form of cultural production that marginalizes the very knowledge and experience it intends to depict. This chapter is an examination of this margin, that is, the "indigenous" spaces where the politics of creative labor intersect with the cultural performance and material practices of filmmaking. While struggle over the meaning of their work among social actors with different sensibilities is intrinsic to all forms of cultural production, two additional layers of conflict characterize mafia television, one precipitated by its elusive subject matter and the other by the context within which it takes place and upon which it has impact.

Interrogating mafia-related cultural production from the perspective of authenticity raises the very complex issue of knowledge production and dissemination in relation to the mafia, which has been at the center of recent anthropological research. In a reversal of earlier scholarship engaged in the explanation of the crime syndicate through the analysis of socio-economic, religious, and cultural formations,[344] anthropologists of Cosa Nostra have begun questioning their very object of study, that is, the "ontological presupposition that 'the mafia exists'."[345] Starting from the acknowledgement of "changing epistemological frameworks and paradigm shifts to approaching and conceptualizing the phenomenon,"[346] researchers have interrogated how knowledge about the mafia is produced and what kinds of categories, practices, and values are embedded in the different

[342] See note 29.
[343] Caldwell, John T. *Production Culture*, cit., 15.
[344] Hess, Henner. *Mafia and Mafiosi: The Structure of Power*. Lexington, MA: Heath, 1973; Blok, Anton. *The Mafia of a Sicilian Village, 1860-1960*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974; Schneider, Jane, Peter Schenider. *Culture and Political Economy in Western Sicily*: New York: Academic Press, 1976, 173-201.
[345] Puccio-Den, Deborah. "Judging the Mafia: Categorization under Law and Moral Economies in Italy (1980-2010)." *Diogenes* 60, nos. 3-4 (2015): 12-26, 12.
[346] Puccio-Den, Deborah. "Mafiacraft: How to Do Things with Silence." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 9, no. 3 (2019): 599-618, 601; Ben-Yehoyada, Naor. "Getting Cosa Nostra," cit.

forms of its production.[347] As Deborah Puccio-Den argues, for scholars to "explore the 'mafia' [requires] indexing the conjunctures and speculations around this mysterious entity, describing the acts (social, judicial, or graphic) performed in the attempt at 'breaking the silence' in and around this secret phenomenon, and at solving the multiple problems linked to its indeterminacy (impunity, invisibility, unrepresentability)."[348] By inquiring on how "the mafia as an entity [has been] constructed by the legal and judicial apparatus of the state,"[349] this body of scholarship acknowledges the centrality of the state in the definition and dissemination of mafia knowledge complementing its attempts "to monopolize the custodianship of economic action and to guide the moral regulation of individuals."[350] Although non-state actors such as the media seldom receive any credit, it would not be hyperbolic to claim that the forms of mafia knowledge they contribute to disseminate have, on many levels, a broader impact than the one officially produced by the state. In arguing so, I am not rehearsing the claim made by popular criminology that discourses shaped by and spread through the media, "by broadening the parameters of knowledge about crime and criminality, provides a point from which to develop a more contemporary set of questions foundational to the field," in our case, of "mafiology."[351] Nor am I especially committed to debunk myths and conspiracy theories propagated by the media, or to disentangle the factual from the imaginary, in order to re-establish the legitimacy of state-sanctioned mafia knowledge as though mafia television could undercut Italians' awareness of the threats posed by, if not the very existence of, organized crime. Yet, I want to lay emphasis on the tensions playing out in the sphere of knowledge production, especially when the state-sanctioned form of mafia knowledge, which permeates media representations with varying degrees of ambiguity, uneasily interacts with the beliefs of an interpretative community whose knowledge and experience inform their approach to the genre.

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[347] Rakopoulos, Theodoros. "The Social Life of Mafia Confession: Between Talk and Silence in Sicily." *Current Anthropology* 59, no. 2 (2018): 167-191; Id. "Who We Speak with: Gossip as Metatalk in a Mafia and Antimafia Universe." *Voci. Annuale di scienze umane* 49 (2019): 89-105; Di Bella, Maria Pia. *Dire ou taire en Sicile*. Paris: Éditions du Félin, 2008.

[348] Puccio-Den, Deborah. *Mafiacraft: An Ethnography of Deadly Silence*. Chicago: HAU Books, 2021, 11.

[349] Santoro, Marco. "Mafiacraft, Witchcraft, Statecraft; or the Politics of Mafia Knowledge and Knowledge of Mafia Politics." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 9, no. 3 (2019): 631-637, 633.

[350] Ben-Yehoyada, Naor. "Getting Cosa Nostra," cit.

[351] Raftner, Nicole, Michelle Brown. *Criminology Goes to the Movies: Crime Theory and Popular Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2011, 7. See also Schneider, Peter. "On Mafiology." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 7, no. 1 (2002): 145-149.

This alone seems to me a valid reason to draw attention to the making of a television show that included issues of authenticity, originality, and cultural legitimacy among its main guiding principles. In the first section, I introduce the features of and controversies around mafia television from its inception with *La Piovra*/*The Octopus: The Power of the Mafia* (RAI, 1984-2001) to the present time. In the following section, I discuss the meaning of authenticity by proposing a fundamental distinction between a semiotic and an anthropological perspective, which I then apply to the work of select professional figures involved in the making of *Il Cacciatore*. In order to problematize authenticity and avoid simply equating it to the encounter between two production cultures united in their efforts, I turn to the local film infrastructure to identify how this pursuit is locally understood—specifically, as integral to policies, pedagogical projects, and ideals of citizenship related to the struggle against the mafia. Finally, I tie the cultural significance of authenticity to the moral economy sustaining it in order to understand how, from the perspective of labor, the show holds the promise of reconciling industrial and ethical imperatives.

The Fabrications of Mafia Television

The recent history of Italian television has been characterized by the deliberate exploitation of genres, formats, and models imported from abroad and adapted to the taste of the national audience. In the mid-1970s, local private television channels, quickly followed by media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi's Fininvest (then Mediaset), entered a market that until then had operated as a state monopoly. Because of these private channels' limited production capabilities, foreign imports were their main resource to fill the schedule and thus US soap operas and police series, Japanese animation, and South American telenovelas started to flood the airwaves.[352] Within a few years, this process had managed to radically disrupt the landscape hitherto dominated by the mildly pedagogical project of national broadcasting company Rai.[353] "Neo-television," as Umberto Eco called the post-liberalization TV era, shaped a whole new sensorium, new temporalities, and new imaginaries,[354] but also ramped up competition to attract audiences and advertising revenues. Whereas private networks could count on a seemingly endless stream of imports, Rai was struggling to accept the ideal of a "television catered to the tastes of the audiences [rather than] institutionally concerned with collective cultural uplifting."[355] After a few years of paralyzing uncertainties, the company began taking advantage of a well-developed production infrastructure to innovate its programming and so "moving into an industrial phase of *fiction* [TV drama] production and training producers, directors, screenwriters, and actors for the new job."[356] Restructuring the traditional model of the *sceneggiato*—the adaptation of canonical and typically

[352] See Pellitteri, Marco. "The Italian Anime Boom: The Outstanding Success of Japanese Animation in Italy, 1978-1984." *Journal of Italian Cinema and Media Studies* 2, no. 3 (2014): 363-381.
[353] See Noam, Eli. *Television in Europe*. New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991 and Bourdon, Jérôme. *Du Service public à la télé-réalité. Une Histoire culturelle des télévisions européennes 1950-2010*. Bry-sur-Marne: INA, 2011 on the continental dimension of these shifts in governance, market regulation, and funding policies.
[354] Eco, Umberto. "A Guide to the Neo-Television of the 1980s." In *Culture and Conflict in Postwar Italy: Essays on Mass and Popular Culture*, edited by Zygmunt G. Baranski and Robert Lumley, 245-255. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990. See Ortoleva, Peppino. *Un ventennio a colori. Televisione private e società in Italia (1975-1995)*. Florence: Giunti, 1995; Menduni, Enrico. *Videostoria. L'Italia e la TV*. Milan: Bompiani, 2015; Grasso, Aldo. *Storia critica della televisione italiano*, 3 vols. Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2019.
[355] Colombo, Fausto. *Il paese leggero. Gli italiani e i media tra contestazione e riflusso*. Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2012, 239.
[356] Richeri, Giuseppe. "Hard Time for Public Service Broadcasting: The RAI in the Age of Commercial Competition." In *Culture and Conflict in Postwar Italy*, cit. 256-269, 263. On the political and cultural consequences of the end of the monopoly, see Balbi, Gabriele, and Giuseppe Richeri. "The Final Days of the RAI Hegemony: On the Sociocultural Reasons behind the Fall of the Public Monopoly," *Journal of Italian Cinema and Media Studies* 3, nos. 1-2 (2015): 63-79; Scaglioni, Massimo. "A Change of Season: The Demise of Political Cultures and the Triumph of 'Television Neo-Culture'." In *Media and Communication in Italy: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives*, edited by Fausto Colombo, 85-93. Milan: V&P, 2019.

nineteenth-century literature—, Rai in fact founded its new course via a homegrown variety of TV drama grounded in a prestige-oriented mixture of cinematic and media-event characteristics.[357] This format, known in Italian as *fiction*, aimed to provide the social body of a distressingly Americanized audience with "the national antidote to *Dallas*."[358]

In such polarized context, a single *fiction*[359] appeared to accomplish all Rai was striving for: formal quality, social commitment, topical narratives and controversial subjects, realist aesthetics, a melodramatic atmosphere, and the much longed-for "internationalization from within" to contrast the competitor's alleged corruption of national television and its audiences. *La Piovra/The Octopus: The Power of the Mafia* (RAI, 1984-2001) marked the inception of a new era of television production in Italy,[360] hailed by a staggering average of thirteen-million viewers for the first five seasons and an unequalled peak of 61% audience share. The focus of the show on the mafia is more than a coincidence, for the crime syndicate has always be regarded by the Italian cultural industries "as an unsurpassed resource for the conception and development of stories in which the entire panoply of archetypes, motives, and ingredients of popular narration […] unfolded."[361] The *fiction*'s longstanding impact on the Italian cultural vernacular is attested by the fact that the term "piovra," the Italian word for octopus as well as a subtle wordplay on the infamous Fascist secret police OVRA, has become synonymous with Cosa Nostra in common parlance. Aired during a phase of unprecedented mafia violence and the Maxi-trial,[362] *La Piovra* was interpreted by many authoritative critics as a live commentary on current events. This aspect drew much concern, as Rai cunningly championed its record-breaking product by speculating on the audiences' ignorance of the phenomena depicted by the show and the confusion between fiction

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[357] Buonanno, Milly. "The Transatlantic Romance of Television Studies and the 'Tradition of Quality' in Italian TV Drama." *Journal of Popular Television* 1, no. 2 (2013): 175-187, 183.

[358] Buonanno, Milly. "From Literary to Format Adaptation: Multiple Interactions between the Foreign and Domestic in Italian TV Drama." *Critical Studies in Television* 4, no. 1 (2009): 65-83.

[359] It is indicative of the originality of the format discussed here that contemporary accounts refer to it as "film in [x] parts" or "made-for-television film" so as to stress cinematic qualities at odds with the average television product of the time. The word *fiction* will enter common usage only years later.

[360] Buonanno, Milly. *Italian TV Drama and Beyond*. Bristol-Chicago: Intellect, 2012, 49-87; Giomi, Elisa. "Public and Private, Global and Local in Italian Crime Drama: The Case of *La Piovra*." In *Beyond Monopoly: Globalization and Contemporary Italian Media*, edited by Chiara Ferrari and Michela Ardizzoni, 79-100. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010; Bauman, Rebecca. "Masculinity, Melodrama and Quality TV: Reviewing *La Piovra*." *Journal of Italian Cinema and Media Studies* 6, no. 2 (2018): 209-222; Buonanno, Milly. "When the Local Goes Global: The Transnational Appeal of the Italian Mafia Story." *European Television Crime Drama and Beyond*, edited by Kim Toft Hansen, Steven Peacock, and Sue Turnbull, 139-156. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2018.

[361] Buonanno, Milly. *Italian TV Drama*, cit., 59.

[362] Dickie, John. *Cosa Nostra: A History of the Sicilian Mafia*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004, 293-310.

and reality. On the one hand, the company insisted on presenting *La Piovra* as a timely reflection on and a faithful representation of the syndicate. To better ground this claim, ample resonance was given to the contribution of Orazio Barrese, a journalist of Palermo-based newspaper *L'Ora* and mafia expert credited by Academy-award-winning screenwriter Ennio De Concini for bringing to the final product "a rigorous scientific approach."[363] In addition, in order to build momentum while also attending to public service's mandate, Rai provided the stage for the public debate on *La Piovra* to unfold before a considerably large audience. A variety of events was put in place to allow the show to gain "a firm place in the agenda of national political debate"[364] throughout its decade-and-a-half life. Through them, the network explicitly displayed how it conceived of the newborn genre of mafia television as a vehicle to address the burning issue of Cosa Nostra as proposed by the show and later picked up by its epigones. To put it concisely, mafia television was born out of deeply political concerns, which in order to be articulated as such had to be rendered through the grammar of actuality (as opposed to fiction, hence entertainment).[365] It is worth noticing that this was occurring at a time when the massive influx of foreign imports made the national elites, including Rai's government-appointed executives, alert to the threat of cultural imperialism and the subsequent marginalization of the public sector. *La Piovra*, therefore, could not have been "just" entertaining: it had to be newsworthy, rousing, and controversial. Cosa Nostra, which at that time was just coming out of a bloody internecine war and prone to take the conflict to the heart of the state, made it so.

Among the collateral events in support of the show, "The Mafia: From Film to Reality," a debate broadcasted after the last episode of the first season, results particularly relevant. It featured director and mafia movie specialist Damiano Damiani, politician and relative of mafia victim Sergio Mattarella, antimafia bishop Antonio Riboldi, historian of Mezzogiorno Giuseppe Giarrizzo, some antimafia activists, and a few dubious figures called to "defend" the good name of Sicily. Live from a Palermo gentlemen's club "too similar to the one depicted in the *fiction*,"[366]

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[363] Fratelloni, Cristina. "Il commissario e la bella mafiosa." *L'Ora*, March 10, 1984. See also Barrese, Orazio. "Sussurri, reticenze, ma anche grida." *L'Ora*, March 21, 1984.

[364] Buonanno, Milly. *Italian TV Drama*, cit., 51.

[365] In Ivi, 52-53 Buonanno reports the curious anecdote of a proposal sent to Soviet newspaper *Pravda* by some viewers of the show, hugely popular in the USSR, to offer political asylum to Commissario Cattani. While the author takes this implausible fact as evidence of *La Piovra*'s global popularity, I am evoking it here as an indicator of a hegemonic way to read the show through an evidentiary lens.

[366] Romano, Antonella. "Lauria, una storia lunga cent'anni con i Florio, le Olimpiadi e il jetset." *La Repubblica*. March 15, 2002. In the article, the journalist quotes one of the protagonists of the debate defining it as "an unjustifiable trial." The malice of the producers is indeed evident in how the depiction of the Circolo Lauria (more than the club itself)

a lawyer denigrated the show for generating "an exasperating climate of suspicion" around local expressions of entrepreneurship via "novelesque literary devices." Next to the lawyer, the vice-president of Banco di Sicilia, playing the advocate of the integrity of the regional economy, stammered an unconvincing explanation for Sicily's titanic banking sector at odds with a depressed economy and poverty, a blatant sign of the influx of "narcolire" into the financial sector. The television debate, aside from causing embarrassment to the Palermo bourgeoisie and sincere rage among Sicilian audiences,[367] involuntarily demonstrated how the border "from film to reality" has always meant to be crossed. For the *fiction* to be relevant, it could not restrain itself from stirring up its audience against the collective evil represented by Cosa Nostra. However, for *La Piovra* intended to target the national body at large, it had to enact a remarkable displacement of the Southern Question, the interpretative framework used to explain Italy's uneven development, to transform the mafia from one of the causes of Sicily's backwardness into a nationwide plague whose tentacles extended out beyond the criminal sphere.

From that point on, *La Piovra* informed the popular understanding about the syndicate as much as the concomitant Maxi-trial sessions broadcasted live on television or the clamorous interviews by Enzo Biagi to top mafiosi such as Tommaso Buscetta and Luciano Liggio. With the latter two, Italians were exposed for the first time, at least in such an impactful way, with the reality not of the mafia, which was already at that point a stable presence in the life of the nation, but of the individual specimens known as mafiosi.[368] Although more than a century of (mostly print) media coverage of mafia trials and murders, let alone the pivotal role played by mafia movies, helped disseminate a stereotypical image of the mafioso, the Maxi-trial and the Biagi interviews gave it a more nuanced phenomenological density. The ways in which mafia bosses spoke made an impression on the commentators of the time, used as they were to the phony Sicilian of the mafia movies: a language of affectation, authority, and pragmatism, of theatrical pauses and

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resonates with that of the masonic lodge featured in *La Piovra* through lighting and set design. See also Stancanelli, Bianca. "Viale Lazio, ma esiste?" *L'Ora*, March 21, 1984.

[367] Giarrizzo, Giuseppe. "Ma non è stata una cosa seria." *L'Ora*, March 22, 1984.

[368] One notable exception is Raffaele Cutolo, known as "The Professor," the architect of the structural reform of the Neapolitan Camorra (Nuova Camorra Organizzata) who was already at the point a familiar face for the Italian audiences, being him, as Isaia Sales commented, "the most media-driven of the mafia bosses." Cutolo is in fact the subject of several novels, films, and songs. Giuseppe Tornatore, the most prominent Sicilian director, debuted in 1986 with *Il Camorrista*, a Cutolo biopic inspired by the biography published two years prior by journalist Joe Marrazzo, who also made a very popular television documentary on the boss. See Francesco Patierno's 2018 archival documentary *Camorra*.

studied inflections, and of dignity.[369] Nevertheless, the places from where these mafiosi were speaking mattered even more: jail parlors, courtroom cages, witness stands—unambiguous spatial markers of a state whose pledge to defeating the syndicate was at that point no longer doubtable.

La Piovra's Cosa Nostra stands in sharp contrast with the one Italians were getting familiar with in the same years. The "impressive mythopoetic impact of its imaginative and symbolic power,"[370] in fact, proved to be more consequential and gripping for the popular imagination than the one proposed by journalists and opinion leaders. The show's image of a criminal organization that already had politics, international finance, the judiciary, the Freemasonry, the Vatican, and a handful of national and foreign secret service agencies dancing to its tune helped disseminate the conspiratorial fantasy of "the Great Plot"—"a coherent political project" that culminated with Cosa Nostra seizing the direct management of the Italian state.[371]

Not only knowledge but public feelings and perceptions as well were influenced by the show. The death of the brave Commissario Cattani, still holding a place in the country's collective memory a quarter of century later, caused public outcry because of its potentially demoralizing effect on the *actual* ongoing fight. In the course of one of his first state visits as head of the government in 1994, not by chance in *La Piovra*-obsessed Russia, Silvio Berlusconi stated: "Let's hope we won't be making such things as *La Piovra* anymore. What we all did is a true disaster that the whole world is watching. These works export a really negative image of our country."[372] Turned into an omnipotent social evil and an all-encompassing explanation to Italy's dark mysteries, *La Piovra*'s Cosa Nostra became the most visible indicator of what Milly Buonanno called the "political career" of the show, a string of deceptive, instrumental re-appropriations of this imaginary syndicate at the expense of a sounder evidence-based discourse about organized crime. The morning after the airing of the Cattani death episode, top mafiosi's lawyers interviewed by a journalist at the Palermo courthouse expressed their grief and sorrow for the hero's defeat, barely able to dissimulate their satisfaction for the persuasive portrayal of a "higher and far more

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[369] Piazza, Salvatore. *Mafia, linguaggio, identità*. Palermo: Centro Studi Pio La Torre, 2010.
[370] Buonanno, Milly. *Italian TV Drama*, cit., 51.
[371] Tranfaglia, Nicola. *La mafia come metodo nell'Italia repubblicana*. Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1991; Lupo, Salvatore. *History of the Mafia*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, 266-275.
[372] Quoted in Fumarola, Silvia. "Spenta *La Piovra* resta la mafia." *La Repubblica*, October 17, 1994. Fifteen years later, a less self-controlled Berlusconi would admit he wished to "strangle the authors of *La Piovra* and *Gomorra*" since they "turned the sixth most powerful mafia of the world into the most popular one." Quoted in "Berlusconi contro *Gomorra* e *la Piovra*." *La Repubblica*, April 16, 2010.

dangerous criminality" to which their modest defendants could not possibly belong.[373] In the same years, President of the Antimafia Parliamentary Commission and former judge Luciano Violante penned a pamphlet on Cosa Nostra tellingly titled *Non è la Piovra* [It Isn't he Octopus].[374]

The importance of *La Piovra* for the development of mafia television does not simply lay in its status as the foundational moment of the genre, but more critically in the continuous influence it has exercised in the decades to come. According to Morreale, between 1998 and 2008, mafia-themed television series amounted to 10% of the total production output, in part also thanks to broadcasters and producers' proclivity for reliable formulas to sustain the contemporary growth of the *fiction* sector.[375] Shows depicting organized crime through the paranoid and melodramatic lens of the archetype reached such a scope that the genre, though developed differently by public and private networks in the two subsequent decades, became a cornerstone of Italian television. For Rai, and particularly its main channel Raiuno, the legacy has been exploited by expressly emphasizing the "social-drama strand" of the genre, engaging "in a piecemeal struggle to construct a national epic."[376] Biopics of judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement agents, methodically condemned to martyrdom, have abounded. Such portrayals have never failed to draw criticism for constructing a Manichean universe inhabited by morally superhuman heroes, repugnant supervillains, and a multitude of complicit, nameless, tongue-tied secondary characters. The tragic years of 1992 and 1993, when the fight against the Sicilian mafia rose to unparalleled levels of tension and civic participation, have been constantly represented in an incessant process of rewriting public history, reminiscent of a collective trauma elaboration.[377] In spite of a pedagogical mandate watered down by the imperatives of commercial competition, television's public sector has continued to employ Cosa Nostra as a powerful repertoire of allegorical fantasies targeting a unified national collectivity supposed to recognize itself in the unattainable ethos of the antimafia lone hero.[378] Inside Berlusconi's Mediaset, instead, the production company Taodue specialized

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[373] Bolzoni, Attilio. "È una morte inverosimile." *La Repubblica*, March 22, 1989.
[374] Violante, Luciano. *Non è la piovra*, cit.
[375] Morreale, Emiliano. *La mafia immaginaria*, cit., 212-213. See also Buonanno, Milly. "Storie di mafia tra cronache e immaginario. Da *La Piovra* a *L'ultimo padrino*." In *Se vent'anni vi sembran pochi. La fiction italiana, l'Italia nella fiction*. Rome: ERI, 2010.
[376] Barra, Luca and Massimo Scaglioni. "Saints, Cops and Camorristi: Editorial Policies and Production Models of Italian TV Fiction." *Series* 1, no. 1 (2015): 65-76, 68.
[377] Renga, Dana. *Unfinished Business: Screening the Mafia in the New Millennium*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013, 6-16.
[378] For example, *Brancaccio* (Rai Fiction, 2001), *Giovanni Falcone* (Rai Fiction, 2006), *Paolo Borsellino* (Rai Fiction, 2012).

in US-style action cop shows and embraced industrial standards quite unique within the mainstream television environment.[379] The original model of *La Piovra*, emptied of any social aspirations and confined within rigid generic boundaries, has gradually been rendered more morally and narratively complex in order to allow "room for a rawer worldview, for pure, unleavened action, for the criminal viewpoint, for teamwork, and for a crisp, precise style."[380] More recently, following the introduction of quality-TV standards in the Italian television landscape by pay-TV network Sky,[381] the boundary between the two models has become uncertain: Mediaset has started turning to socially aware biopics dedicated to figures only tangentially present in the antimafia pantheon, and Rai has revamped its signature social drama series with more stylish, action-packed, and light-hearted shows.[382]

Making mafia television in Italy has always meant reconciling the contradictions between generic formulae and social commitment, entertainment and ethics, spectacle and denunciation.[383] The most successful shows, from *La Piovra* to *Gomorra* (*Gomorrah*, Sky Atlantic, 2014-2021) and *Il Capo dei Capi*, caused controversy beyond their objective merits, as demonstrated by the multiple calls for their cancellation from the highest state and local authorities.[384] A decade-long debate throughout national news outlets on whether these shows actually work as recruitment tools for organized crime is reignited any time a new production draws public attention. Until a few years ago, mafia television was perceived as an exhausted form laden with cheesy rhetoric, sensationalism, and uplifting messages,[385] with a much-criticized penchant for portraying a stereotyped, primitive South. Today, however, the greater availability of and access to crime drama from countries other than the US and the UK, the diversification of

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[379] For example, *Ultimo* and *Ultimo 2* (Taodue, 1998, 1999), *Squadra Antimafia*/*Antimafia Squad* (Taodue, 2009-2016), *Rosy Abate* (Taodue, 2017-2019).

[380] Barra Luca, and Massimo Scaglioni. "Saints, Cops, and Camorristi," cit., 69.

[381] Barra, Luca, and Massimo Scaglioni, eds. *Tutta un'altra fiction. La serialità pay in Italia e nel mondo: Il caso Sky*. Milan: V&P, 2013; Barra, Luca, and Massimo Scaglioni. "Towards a New Model for Italian TV Fiction: Sky Italia Originals and the Struggle for Difference." In *A European Television Fiction Renaissance*, edited by Luca Barra and Massimo Scaglioni, 145-164. New York: Routledge, 2021.

[382] For example, the four-instalment biopics *Liberi sognatori*/*Ordinary Heroes* (Taodue, 2018) for Mediaset and the series *Catturandi* (Rai Fiction-Rodeo Drive, 2016), *Maltese: Il romanzo del commissario*/*Maltese* (Rai Fiction, 2017) and *La mafia uccide solo d'estate*/*Mafia Kills Only in Summer* (Rai Fiction-Wildside, 2016-2018).

[383] Morreale, Emiliano. *La mafia immaginaria*, cit., 265-274.

[384] See Cucco, Marco, and Luca Barra. "Quid pro quo. Le serie tv, il territorio e il "problema" Gomorra." In *Geo–fiction. Il volto televisivo del Belpaese. Casi di studio a confronto*, edited by Teresa Graziano and Enrico Nicosia, 133-143. Rome: Aracne, 2017, on the frictions between film commissions, public funding, and negative representations of the territory.

[385] Minuz, Andrea. "Il nostro Far West," cit.

programming instigated by the post-network revolution, and the emergence of a more sophisticated generation of filmmakers, producers, and audiences have made mafia television an inventive and cosmopolitan genre. *Il Cacciatore* constitutes a dazzling example of this trend. Nonetheless, the imaginary of organized crime proposed by mafia television "unceasingly feeds on the ambivalent myth—swinging between moral condemnation and secret admiration—of the supremacy of Cosa Nostra."[386] In doing so, it fails to reflect the reconfigured geography of Italian organized crime in a phase in which the Calabrian 'ndrangheta and the Neapolitan camorra have taken over the Sicilian mafia's domains. Most crucially, what I shall call the distinctive "national vocation" of mafia television—its aspiration to speak to and on behalf of the nation already foregrounded by *La Piovra*—continues to regulate its narrative (and moral) principles. The battle between good and evil, the adoption of the state's perspective, the appeal to good citizenship and civic virtue, and a complete disregard for the social and political roots of Cosa Nostra are its most recognizable signs.

The troubled genesis of *Il Cacciatore* bears testimony to the major shifts undergone by Italian television drama in general, and mafia television specifically. In 2011, young screenwriters Silvia Ebreul and Marcello Izzo developed a script from former antimafia prosecutor Alfonso Sabella's memoir *Cacciatore di mafiosi* ("Mafiosi Hunter"),[387] a gripping account of the investigations that between 1994 and 1999 yielded the arrest of about 100 mafiosi then at large. Sabella, who spoke fondly of his involvement in the project, allowed the writers to interview him for many hours, thereby complementing their thorough research with his irreplaceable experience in fighting organized crime. The final script repeatedly failed to attract interest from producers, until Pietro Valsecchi's Taodue optioned it for a one-year development. According to Ebreul and Izzo, the Mediaset subsidiary characterized the project with an industrial imprint, with the aim of "replicating the formula" of the successful action cop show *Squadra Antimafia*, and by doing so distorted the premises of the original concept, most critically by fabricating killings and bombings for spectacular purposes. Having regained control of the project once the option expired, the screenwriters found the long envisaged home for their script in Rosario Rinaldo's Cross Productions, a small independent company specializing in high-range content for mainstream television. Rai joined the project shortly after, seeing it as an occasion to inject new blood into Raidue, the youth- and genre-oriented public channel. In the immediately preceding years, the

[386] Buonanno, Milly. *Italian TV Drama*, cit., 148.
[387] Sabella, Alfonso. *Cacciatore di mafiosi*. Milan: Mondadori, 2008.

appearance of *Gomorra* (on pay TV) had revitalized the worn-out model of mafia television through the adoption of an array of quality-TV inspired solutions: hyperrealism, complex storytelling, ambiguous characters, a large ensemble cast, and controversial subject matter.[388] Hence, *Il Cacciatore* writers comfortably defined their creation as being "a child of *Gomorra*."

With a first season split in two halves (directed respectively by Stefano Lodovichi and Davide Marengo) airing in 2018, a second season (directed by Marengo alone) airing two years later, and a last season (directed by Marengo and Fabio Paladini) airing in late 2021, the series is one of the most cutting-edge crime dramas to appear on Italian small screens. It follows the vicissitudes of prosecutor Saverio Barone, a complex character driven by ambition and personal obsessions, who in 1994 joins the antimafia pool. From there he conducts the investigations that will lead to the capture of high-profile mafiosi from the "terrorist" faction of Cosa Nostra, most notably Leoluca Bagarella), Giovanni Brusca, and his brother Enzo. Together with his colleague Carlo Mazza, Barone works against time to find and free Giuseppe Di Matteo, the teenage son of a *pentito* kidnapped by Cosa Nostra in order to pressure his father to withdraw his confession. After a 779-day detention, the child is strangled and his body dissolved in acid, an event that plunges Barone into a profound crisis and destabilizes his professional and family life. His enthusiasm becomes renewed, however, through an unlikely partnership with a policewoman, Francesca Lagoglio, who provides him with proofs of a police cover-up to prevent the arrest of Bernardo Provenzano, the new Cosa Nostra leader in favor of the reconciliation with the Italian state. The capture of Provenzano's right-hand man Pietro Aglieri and Barone's departure from the antimafia pool, due to the collusion between Cosa Nostra and some sectors of the state, are at the center of the third season.

The powerful story of the show, along with sophisticated photography, stylish direction, and widely praised performances, helped the series to gain a high profile.[389] According to the show's producers, social media engagement and platform streaming data attest to a success that

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[388] Renga, Dana, ed. "*Gomorra, la serie*: Beyond Realism." *The Italianist* 36, no. 2 (2016): 287-354; Buonanno, Milly. "When the Local Goes Global," cit.; Renga, Dana.*Watching Sympathetic Perpetrators on Italian Television:* Gomorrah *and Beyond*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2019, 193-229. For a broader overview, see Scaglioni, Massimo. "(Not So) Complex TV. Framing Seriality as a Practice via Contemporary Models of Italian Television Fiction." *Mediascapes* 6 (2016): 8-20.

[389] Pickard, Michael. "Hunting Season." *Drama Quarterly*, April 8, 2018, http://dramaquarterly.com/hunting-season/, last accessed on March 26, 2020.

mere share numbers (lower than expected) were unable to capture.[390] In addition, protagonist Francesco Montanari's Best Actor Award at the first Cannes International Series Festival projected the show into the high-end television market, [391] boosting its international distribution sales (including its acquisition by Amazon Prime) and its status at home.

Il Cacciatore has been credited by several commentators for moving away from the Rai "benchmark template"—the social-drama *fiction*—and for adopting the form and content of a global television series.[392] *Variety* characterized it as "emblematic of Rai's new course which is a bit less ratings-obsessed and more quality-based," while also praising it as "unique amid the multitude of Italian mob shows" because of its uncommon level of accuracy in the portrait of a little-known phase of antimafia history.[393] "The convincing and original product that mark[ed] a huge step forward for made-in-Italy television," according to weekly magazine *L'Espresso*, has been also extolled for depicting a cultural context usually pigeonholed by television productions and for adopting a tone at odds with the foundations of the genre.[394] As a series that draws so heavily from the US model of quality television and the rigid conventions of mafia television, *Il Cacciatore* stands out from the crowd of similar shows. Critics have recognized two aspects in particular as its main reasons of appeal: the first-person involvement of a protagonist of the state's fight against Cosa Nostra (the "mafiosi hunter" Sabella) and an open commitment to authenticity wrongly deemed to be just an outcome of the latter.[395] Their excitement is easily understandable when considering mafia television's decade-long mystification of Sicilian reality and Cosa Nostra. Whereas the iconic mafioso wearing a *coppola* cap and holding a sawn-off shotgun has become

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[390] See Caldwell, John T. "Para-Industry, Shadow Academy." *Cultural Studies* 28, no. 4 (2014): 720-740 for a discussion of the methodological dimension of media industry's reflexivity and posed transparency.

[391] See Dielby, Denis D., and C. Lee Harrington, eds. *Global TV: Exporting Television and Culture in the World Market*. New York: New York University Press, 2008; Lotz, Amanda D. *The Television Will Be Revolutionized*. New York: New York University Press, 2014, 131-161; Johnson, Derek, ed. *From Networks to Netflix: A Guide to Changing Channels*. New York: Routledge, 2018; Shahaf, Sharon, and Chiara Ferrari, eds. "Disruption: Remaking Global Television Culture." *Critical Studies in Television* 14, no. 2 (2019).

[392] In different occasions, the series' authors (in particular, screenwriters, director, and creative producer) have acknowledged their debt to *Narcos* (Netflix, 2015-2017) and *Mindhunter* (Netflix, 2017-present).

[393] Vivarelli, Nick. "Rai's The Hunter falls prey to Amazon Prime Video." *Variety*, April 4, 2018, https://variety.com/2018/tv/global/canneseries-rai-thehunter-amazon-prime-video-fare-1202742244/, last accessed 13 March 2021.

[394] Dondi, Beatrice. "Per una volta tifiamo per il cacciatore." *L'Espresso*, March 27, 2018.

[395] See Armelli, Paolo. "5 motivi per vedere *Il Cacciatore*." *Wired*, March 13, 2018, https://www.wired.it/play/televisione/2018/03/13/motivi-cacciatore-rai2/; "Perché *Il Cacciatore* è una serie TV e non una fiction." *Il Post*, March 14, 2018, https://www.ilpost.it/2018/03/14/il-cacciatore-rai-alfonso-sabella/; Mancuso, Mariarosa. "*Il Cacciatore* non è fiction." *Il Foglio*, March 21, 2018; Tavaro, Gianmaria. "Con *Il Cacciatore*, la RAI vuole fare l'americana." *Esquire*, March 21, 2018, https://www.esquire.com/it/cultura/tv/a19508024/cacciatore-serie-tv-fiction/. All websites have been last accessed on March 26, 2020.

an obsolete narrative figure after *La Piovra* popularized the image of a globalized corporate mafia, the genre still adopts the literary trope of the outsider hero confronting a community ruled by *omertà* to insinuate that all islanders are either openly or covertly complicit.[396] Even if the mafia is no longer depicted as the relic of a bygone form of social organization that it has never been,[397] Sicilian life appears doomed to an unredeemable state of cultural and economic backwardness of which the mafia is at the same time symptom, cause, and outcome. To the extent that the picturesque has been widely deployed to conjoin the iconographic and the anthropological horizons of the genre, therefore making it utterly inauthentic in its world-making capabilities, local audiences and actors could not perceive mafia television as anything more than parasitic. This is the context for the "indigenous" workforce's tepid and reluctant relationship with mafia television, which it generally considers to be the "necessary evil" upon which their livelihoods depend. The pursuit of authenticity is therefore an issue that is especially worth exploring from the perspective of the local production culture, since it is from there that the significance of something as contentious as the making of a mafia show in Sicily takes on a greater meaning. It is for this reason that the professed investment in authenticity by the makers of *Il Cacciatore* roused an enthusiasm in such workers, tasked to contribute to a project that resonated, however inchoately, with local sensibilities.

[396] Di Gesù, Matteo. *L'invenzione della Sicilia. Letteratura, mafia, modernità*. Rome: Carocci, 2015.
[397] Schneider, Jane, Peter Schneider. *Culture and Political Economy in Western Sicily*, cit.

Text, Language, World-Building: On Semiotic Authenticity

Locating authenticity "before and outside the text" may be daunting, given that the concept is associated simultaneously with the immediacy of experience and the expression of truthfulness, and is variously understood as a perceptive mode, an aesthetic category, a social construction, and a moral ideal.[398] In the case of the film and television industries, authenticity is the main rationale justifying on-location shooting and the massive production efforts, both financial and organizational, sustaining it. In an era in which technological developments have enabled postproduction to replace shooting as the elective locus of creation, the choice of interfacing numerous agencies and administrations, coordinating several dozens or sometimes hundreds of workers, managing logistically challenging operations through quasi-military regimens, and adding considerable economic strain on an already wholly risky investment should be interpreted as deliberately meaningful.[399] Authenticity is, additionally, a major governing concern in the work of a variety of professional figures who are constantly engaged in "authentic world-building," or at least verisimilar or credible variations of it. Nevertheless, film studies has tended to approach the question of authenticity from a standpoint that disregards altogether the role of production, adopting instead the perspective of either reception (how audiences perceive a given film, its plot, setting, or character to be authentic)[400] or textuality (for instance, historical accuracy in period films).[401] Television studies, on the other hand, has hosted a more compelling debate that until recently has been dominated by an almost exclusive focus on specific televisual genres with a high degree of performativity, such as talk and reality TV shows.[402] Contesting the received idea of these programs as oscillating between the extremes of the completely staged and the true to life, these studies have shown how the complex orchestration of affective labor, production artifice,

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[398] Taylor, Charles. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991.

[399] Geuens, Jean-Pierre. "The Digital World Picture." *Film Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (2002): 19-30; Rodowick, D.N. *The Virtual Life of Film*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

[400] Jancovich, Marc. "'A Real Shocker': Authenticity, Genre, and the Struggle for Distinction." *Continuum* 14, no. 1 (2000): 23-35; Monk, Claire. *Heritage Film Audiences*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011, 92-115.

[401] Zemon Davis, Natalie. "'Any Resemblance to Persons Living or Dead': Film and the Challenge of Authenticity." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 8, no. 3 (1988): 269-283; Rosenstone, Robert. *History on Film/Film on History*. New York: Routledge, 2012, 175-186; Stubbs, Jonathan. *Historical Film: A Critical Introduction*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013, 37-60.

[402] See Grindstaff, Laura. *The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, 115-148; Aslama, Minna, and Mervi Pantti. "Talking Alone: Reality TV, Emotions, and Authenticity." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 9, no. 2 (2006): 167-184; Sender, Katherine. *The Makeover: Reality Television and Reflexive Audiences*. New York: New York University Press, 2012, 105-135.

confessional forms, genre conventions, and audience expectations does indeed help to construct a shared perception of "realness." Of all these elements, however, audiences—their expectations, perceptions, and varying levels of subversion in their readings—have achieved the upper hand. The notion of emotional realism—the sense that "real is not knowledge of the world but a subjective experience of the world: a 'structure of feeling'"[403]—is still a prominent reference in the debate on authenticity, testifying the latter's relation to spectators more than to producers and texts. Indeed, even when film and television scholarship has come to terms with the idea of authenticity as both a production and a textual value,[404] audiences' potential reward of gaining "access to what they presume to be a trustworthy, unfiltered experience of life" in a given locality is understood as its ultimate goal.[405]

In order to move away from the question of realism and its perception, I propose two distinct understandings of authenticity that will help elucidate its meaning for mafia television and for the (labor and audience) communities that come together through it. First, a semiotic notion of authenticity, by which I mean the static, predetermined, inner-referential set of properties that belong to the architecture of a text and inform its encounter with the reader. This is a form of authenticity associated with interpretation: what we consider real (and realistic) or true (and truthful) on the basis less of our own knowledge and experience of the social world and more of the trust in the "tacit contract" between producers and viewers.[406] Here, in the spaces opened up by the multifaceted relationship between the real and its representation, I locate most of the debates within film and television studies that I have sketched above. This is also an ideal that, as I discuss below, local professionals embraced in relation to specific assignments, thereby contributing to the verisimilitude of the show: a perspective conceptualized and experienced by my informants as an expression of craftsmanship (or a "job well done"). Second, an anthropological notion of authenticity, through which I instead refer to a dynamic, transformative, and context-specific repertoire of cultural practices that are concerned with the social implications of meaning making. This is inevitably a space of contestation, for all the actors involved not only bring different

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[403] Ang, Ien. *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*. New York: Meuthen, 1985, 45.
[404] Esser, Andrea. "The Appeal of 'Authenticity': Danish Television Series and their UK Audiences." In *The Global Audiences of Danish Television Drama*, edited by Pia Majbritt Jensen and Ushma Chauhan Jacobsen, 39-56. Gothenburg: Nordicom, 2020.
[405] Hsu, Hua. "Walking in Someone Else's City: *The Wire* and the Limits of Empathy." *Criticism* 52, nos. 3-4 (2010): 509-28, 510; Fuqua, Joy V. "'In New Orleans, We Might Say It Like This…': Authenticity, Place, and HBO's *Treme*." *Television & New Media* 13, no. 3 (2012): 235-242.
[406] Casetti, Francesco. *Communicative Negotiations in Film and Television*. Milan: V&P, 2002, 51-69.

perspectives to questions of authenticity, but also modulate them constantly according to the needs and priorities of the production process. Contrary to the former notion and its fundamental promise of objectivity (for instance, via the assessment of the indexical relations between the real and its representation), this is an open-ended space where the affective, ethical, and political dimensions of authenticity come sharply into view, and in doing so forge the boundary between local and national production cultures. To grasp its implications is necessary to take into account how the below-the-line "indigenous" workforce of a national production could advance any claim to authenticity in the first place, being apparently subdued by its position within the filmmaking hierarchy.

In a convincing survey of the scholarship on regional cinema, Alex Marlow-Mann noticed that it elected "cultural specificity and authenticity [as the core element] that distinguishes the regional film from the national mainstream."[407] Propelled by the same anxieties that in the 1990s led anthropologists and geographers to investigate place-making and cultural identity—the fear of the erasure of cultural specificities and the homogenization of disparate (film) cultures under the pressure of neoliberal globalization—this body of work initially proposed a fetishization of the regional as authentic and oppositional. Subsequently, it has shifted to a more nuanced awareness of "locally specific manifestations of larger cinematic modes, genres, and styles" *within* specific "production contexts and distribution and exhibition strategies."[408] Through this shift, it is possible to interrogate authenticity as a set of values generated by and through the filmmaking process, rather than a mere after-effect of the encounter between texts, producers, and audiences. This becomes even more pertinent when attending to the specificities of what Marco Cucco has labelled "the devolution of Italian cinema" (and television, by extension).[409] Engendered by regional administrators' belief that the film industry is "a catalyst for local development," the process has led to the "regionalization" of film and television productions. In the context of this chapter, this translates as the pursuit by the "Romans" of the authenticity underlying regional cultures, characters, and flavors in the absence of any basic connection to the region. It is from this perspective, therefore, that the "indigenous" workforce comes into sight as a sort of enabler whose

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[407] Marlow-Mann, Alex. "Regional Cinema: Micro-Mapping and Glocalisation." In *The Routledge Companion to World Cinema*, edited by Rob Stone, Paul Cooke, Stephanie Dennison, and Alex Marlow-Mann, 323-336. New York: Routledge, 2017, 325.
[408] Ivi, 324.
[409] Cucco, Marco. "From the State to the Regions: The Devolution of Italian Cinema." *Journal of Italian Cinema and Media Studies* 1, no. 3 (2013): 263-277.

creative labor contributes largely to the shared goal. This pursuit, nevertheless, cannot be dissociated from the disputes over its meaning generated by the encounter of two distinct, equally invested yet diversely motivated creative communities, given that the idea of authenticity I propose here is essentially relational and transformative. The investments of the local production community alone, in fact, would not be a determining factor had producers and above-the-line talent not been interested in including them in the process; after all, the same "indigenous" workforce has been responsible for decades of mafia television, its peaks as well as its troughs. At the same time, it would be hard to imagine this pursuit without an intervention on behalf of the workforce that cannot be accounted for without considering how it differs, as an interpretive community, from the "Romans."

A good illustration of this tension comes from the work of *Il Cacciatore* dialogue coach Enrico Roccaforte, an actor from Palermo hired by Cross Productions to translate parts of the original script into Sicilian. This professional role is rare within the Italian film and television industry, which even in the cosmopolitan decades of massive co-productions and multilingual casts has always resorted to post-synchronization to eliminate the kinds of on-set contingencies that would make a dialogue coach necessary.[410] As direct sound recording became common practice in recent productions, the cultural legacy of post-synchronization expressed in the "linguistic, vocal standard of the *doppiagese* (or 'dubbish,' the artificial language of cinema [and television])"[411] kept regional dialects at a distance, preferring instead a preposterous accented Italian that was regularly mocked by local audiences. The "mafioso accent" invented by the dubbing of *The Godfather* persists unabated in today's media soundscape,[412] attributed with few philological scruples to Italian-American and Sicilian mobsters alike. From this perspective, *Il Cacciatore* producers' choice to hire a dialogue coach is to be regarded as further evidence of the commitment to a semiotic conception of authenticity. Nonetheless, Roccaforte does not take part in the writing process and is not credited as a "creative," although his tasks exceed the "mere" act of translation. In fact, he also trains the actors and corrects their pronunciation—a frequently tortuous process because all the main actors are from outside Western Sicily—and sits next to the director during the actual shooting. As the only person speaking Sicilian in front of the preview

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[410] Sisto, Antonella. *Film Sound in Italy: Listening to the Screen*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014.
[411] Ivi, 161.
[412] Ferrari, Chiara. *Since When Is Fran Drescher Jewish? Dubbing Stereotypes in* The Nanny*,* The Simpsons*, and* The Sopranos. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010, 35.

monitors, he is consulted repeatedly for most dialogue scenes. In the regimented world of filmmaking, where constant direct access to the director is a privilege granted to a few select figures and even fewer have the authority to advise him or her to do a retake, Roccaforte's position indexes, also physically, how critical is for the makers of the show to obtain a certain degree of linguistic accuracy. The actual dynamics of this achievement, however, illustrates power differentials that, on the one hand, reaffirm the on-set hierarchies temporarily disrupted by the dialogue coach's uncharacteristic prominence and, on the other hand, show the extent to which even semiotic authenticity is the offshoot of a complex of negotiations rather than an integral goal of the filmmaking process.

Once a week in the course of the production process, Roccaforte meets with creative producer Fabio Paladini to go through the shooting script for the following seven days, with Paladini having the last word on which changes will make it to the final version. The dialogue coach prepares to the meeting by jotting down a rough translation of the script, initially written in plain Italian language, which he then reads aloud to the producer, helped in this by his professional acting training and mellow voice. Neither translation nor dialogue coaching are skills Roccaforte has ever practiced before, although he would maintain that as a Palermitan and as an actor they both come natural to him. Since the show is aired without subtitles, "hard-core Sicilian is not an option," and for this reason Paladini, a Northern Italian, acts as a sounding board, aiding the coach to strike the balance between authenticity and intelligibility. The negotiations do not concern just how much Sicilian must end up in the final script but also and more importantly when and where, given that different characters, obviously, receive different treatment. "Enrico knows the language, but I know the characters," Paladini affirmed; "so it is based on how I 'feel' a given character that I approve or reject his suggestions;" in the same way, "I can 'feel' if a given fugitive is a villa-and-helicopter or hidden-in-a-barn kind-of-guy." Paladini's "feelings," as much as the screenwriters', are radically different from those of Roccaforte. The latter, having grown up in a neighborhood with a strong presence of organized crime, claimed to know first-hand "how those people speak."

With this offhand remark, Roccaforte casually affirmed his authority closing off any possibility for demurring that "those people," by which he curiously referred to mafiosi only, do not belong to a distinct social (or linguistic) group, as he seemed to imply, but inhabit the most diverse strata of society. It is almost self-evident that growing up in a popular neighborhood of

Palermo in the 1980s and 1990s, as Roccaforte did, could expose one to close encounters with people *rumored* to be affiliated to or working for the syndicate since those areas constituted the bulk of mafia's exploitable labor pool. However, it is mystifying, though explicable by the coach's need to paint himself as a natural-born cultural mediator, to think of "those people" as a class in and of itself whose access is precluded to the uninitiated. On the contrary, bottom-up accounts of mafia organizations, both academic and not, have convincingly demonstrated impressive levels of proximity between the criminal and the non-criminal sphere, oftentimes in the form of complete overlaps (hence the apathetic reaction of ordinary people upon learning that, say, the butcher or the mechanic's helper has been convicted for mafia).[413] This is to say that "those people," when by that we mean the mafia proletariat, speak exactly like anyone else in the neighborhood, including Roccaforte and his family, whereas if we expand the definition to include top-level mafiosi, such as those whom the coach in effect makes speak, a first-hand knowledge of their language is questionable. Then, one could also object that the linguistic variety due to social stratification also reverberates in space, for the real-life mafiosi represented in the show come from distinct linguistic areas of Western Sicily, some of which are foreign to the coach by his own admission. It is clearly pointless to expect the dialogues of a television show to hold up to any philological criticism, even when the existence of a professional figure like the coach would not make such an analysis just an exercise in punctiliousness. This becomes more evident when one compares Roccaforte's own first-hand knowledge, regardless of the abovementioned limits concerning the rendering of mafiosi's language, with what is instead available to screenwriters Izzo and Ebreul and creative producer (as well as screenwriter for season 2 and 3 and co-director for season 3) Paladini. Besides Sabella's testimony, there are only three kinds of sources the "creatives" could rely on: journalistic accounts, book-interviews with mafiosi, and trial records. Taken as a whole, this body of literature might succeed in depicting, or at least providing a glimpse into, the psychology of a character, yet it simply could not do justice to the historical dimensions of the phenomena treated by the show, not to mention the social and cultural universe in which it is set.[414] Roccaforte, as much as most local workers, is acutely aware of that universe.

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[413] Dino, Alessandra. *Mutazioni. Etnografia del mondo di Cosa Nostra*. Palermo: La Zisa, 2002; Calaciura, Giosuè. *Malacarne*. Milan: Baldini & Castoldi, 1998.

[414] In particular, screenwriters Ebreul and Izzo and creative producer Paladini mentioned during our interviews Lodato, Saverio. *"Ho ucciso Giovanni Falcone", la confessione di Giovanni Brusca*. Mondadori: Milan, 1999; Id. *Trent'anni di mafia*. BUR: Milan, 2008; Monticciolo, Giuseppe. *Era il figlio di un pentito*. Rizzoli: Milan, 2007; and the trial

Language is not neutral, and this is especially true for texts where the use of dialect matters. In the history of Italian cinema, Neorealism set an important precedent in regard to the association between language and cultural authenticity by elevating local dialects, along with non-professional performers and vernacular landscapes, to distinguish of regional identities that would ultimately be assembled into a new image of the nation.[415] The limits of this project were brought to light in the so-called "discovery" of Southern Italy that, formerly concealed by the fascist modernizing project, was then presented as the locus of a pre-modern—that is, authentic—social world, "fostering a representation of the nation […] fond of a picturesque image of its underdevelopment."[416] The contradiction internal to the Neorealist project between what has been called "Orientalism in one country"[417] and the forms of differential inclusion of Southern life has never been resolved completely. Its legacy is still visible in the ways in which mafia television has treated Sicily and its regional culture as well as its social and political organizations. The values attached to dialect, then, are symptomatic of a more deeply rooted attitude.

In *Il Cacciatore*, language is one the main vehicles through which the show professes its allegiance to a discourse of authenticity,[418] and is a way to shed light on the disparities between the different actors involved. In reality, almost all inhabitants of the island's urban centers speak both Italian and Sicilian fluently. Code switching is common when speakers are familiar with each other, whereas Italian is prevalent in more formal, public settings and Sicilian in informal, domestic ones. In the mid-1990s, the period in which *Il Cacciatore* is set, Italian or Sicilian monolingualism was restricted to an insignificant fraction of the population.[419] The chances at that time of people in their forties and fifties, like most characters of the show, being monolingual are virtually nil, as standard language and dialect coexisted across all social environments.[420] Yet, the use of dialect in the series is class-based rather than situational, for mafiosi seem unable to speak

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recordings available to stream on www.radioradicale.it/processi. See also Guarnaccia, Fabio. "*Il Cacciatore*, la scrittura," cit.

[415] Pitassio, Francesco. *Neorealist Film Culture, 1945-1954*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019, 63-80.

[416] Ivi, 72.

[417] Schneider, Jane, ed. *Italy's Southern Question: Orientalism in One Country*. New York-Oxford: Berg, 1998.

[418] I am grateful to Luca Barra for making me notice that the use of dialect in recent Italian TV dramas has to be understood within the "path dependence process" engendered by pay-TV series *Romanzo criminale* and *Gomorrah*, which established a model later adopted by Rai and Mediaset.

[419] Respectively 3.5% and 5.5% of the total population according to Bentley, Delia. "Language and Dialect in Modern Sicily." *The Italianist* 17, no. 1 (1997): 204-230, 209.

[420] D'Agostino, Mari. "Spazio, città, lingue. Ragionando su Palermo." *Rivista Italiana di Dialettologia* 20 (1996): 37-92.

Italian even when their interlocutors are not Sicilians. Giving credit to the voice-over opening of *La terra trema* (*The Earth Trembles*, Luchino Visconti, 1948), which famously states that "in Sicily, Italian is not the language of poor," one wonders why the same treatment applies to the men who belong to what Guy Debord once called "the *model* of all advanced commercial enterprises."[421] On the opposite side, law and justice representatives even in intimate scenes do not resort to more than a few dialect expressions throughout the two seasons. One of these exceptions, emblematically, is Saverio Barone's reading of the beginning of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in Sicilian to open the show's first episode, perhaps the most blatant illustration of the genre's national vocation. In other words, it appears that the assumptions behind whether standard language or dialect fits best have more to do with the character's membership of a specific group than with the circumstances that make "a contextualization strategy" like code switching more likely to occur in real life. [422] During our interview, Roccaforte recognized a certain fallacious logic in this choice, at least in relation to his own lived experience, but interestingly he also admitted that audiences would have been confused by, for example, Sicilian-speaking prosecutors. This presumed confusion, too, is revelatory of the national vocation of mafia television. In fact, it points to a prejudicial association of dialect and social backwardness, corroborating the image of the Sicilian-speaking mafia as stemming from an unaccomplished process of modernization and that of the Italian-speaking nation-state as its nemesis. In doing so, it also exposes how the forms of cultural mediation underpinning the pursuit of authenticity operate through power imbalances that ultimately shape the encounter between the national and the local production culture. Understanding authenticity only as an outcome of this encounter, however, would not adequately explain what is at stake for either group, nor why it carries such weight in the context of mafia television.

Before moving on to chart this set of issues, I want to linger on a peculiar event I attended during my Palermo fieldwork that attested the unusual degree to which the show was registered as invested in authenticity and the kind of critical values attached to it by local actors. During the 2019 edition of the "Marina di Libri" book fair, the Palermo police force organized a series of

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[421] Debord, Guy. *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*. London-New York: Verso, 1990, 67. Emphasis in the original.

[422] Alfonzetti, Giovanna. "The Conversational Dimension of Code-Switching between Italian and Dialect in Sicily." In *Code-Switching in Conversation: Language, Interaction and Identity*, edited by Peter Auer, 180-211. New York: Routledge, 1998.

collateral events on media and the mafia culminating in a public debate with *Il Cacciatore* director Marengo and creative producer Paladini. Already the invitation, from no less than the police, to speak about the making of the show is significant. To add substance to the occasion, it also included Palermo's *questore* (head of police) Renato Cortese and head of the anti-crime division Giovanni Pampillonia, the two highest local police authorities who, like most top-rank police and military officials in Sicily, cut their teeth in the near-legendary antimafia operations of the 1990s. Histrionic journalist Felice Cavallaro acted as the moderator. Half a dozen of actors and crewmembers showed up in a display of camaraderie: before the event began, pointing at actor Alessio Praticò (Enzo Brusca in the *fiction*, though often mistaken for Giovanni), Cavallaro shouted "The real Brusca is among us!" amidst great hilarity. Cortese, recalling his actual arrest of Brusca, confirmed the resemblance. The event started with the mandatory denunciation of the deleterious influence of mafia television on youth and vulnerable audiences, which the show's makers refuted on the ground of how unambiguously the *fiction* sides with the "good ones" as well as by using the involvement of antimafia icon Sabella as a shield against any allegation of moral ambiguity. Marengo praised the prosecutor's contribution for "injecting a sense of high justice" into the script, while also enriching it with real-life details that resonated with the experience of the two officials. Cortese, in fact, provided a thorough description of the operation leading to the Bruscas' capture and the filmmaker made a point of honor in having reconstructed it as faithfully as possible. An excited conversation between the two over the minutiae of the arrest raised the enthusiasm of an audience captivated by the astounding expertise of the filmmakers, to which the two officials also paid homage. An annoyed Cavallaro, having failed a couple of times to move the debate back to the ills of mafia television, posed a belligerent question to Marengo and Paladini. "To the authors of *Il Cacciatore*, a *fiction* that treats the mafia plague very seriously, I cannot help but ask this: How could you move from making *Sirene* [Rai's first fantasy *fiction*, set in Naples and having four mermaids as protagonists], which is something, I mean, I don't need to say it, to *Il Cacciatore*?"

"I can take your provocation," Marengo said immediately, halting Paladini from replying that he had nothing to do with the mermaid series. I looked around and felt that the audience was tense, perhaps more for the ethical contradiction the host tactlessly revealed than for his insolence in doing so. As I attempt to envisage the feelings circulating among the public, I suspect that it has experienced a mild sense of betrayal for a maker of images authenticated by the most authoritative

eyewitnesses, images speaking so effectively of a struggle many in the audience could deeply relate to, was being unmasked as, indeed, just a maker of images. Replying in that capacity, he staked his professionalism out, making it all about artisanship, experimentation across genres, and creative innovation, although something seemed to have been broken. The journalist himself registered the thorny situation he created, and awkwardly wrapped up. "The great actor Luigi Lo Cascio can play [antimafia martyr] Peppino Impastato in *I cento passi* and [*pentito*] Totuccio Contorno in *Il traditore*. We can therefore recognize the character of a great director and a great screenwriter in their ability to move from *Sirene* to *Il Cacciatore*." Halfhearted applauses followed. The local cultural elite's disdain for mafia television so poignantly expressed by the journalist (who also has a couple of writing credits for minor mafia TV miniseries) does not deserve more attention in this context. What is of greater interest to us, instead, is the filmmakers' inability to push authenticity beyond the confines of craftsmanship—"quality-driven work [carried out with] obsessional energy,"[423] as Richard Sennett has it—and frame it as vital to a not strictly technical set of discourses as well, ideally within the realm of ethics or politics. Compared to Lo Cascio, the example Cavallaro used in his maladroit attempt to save face, Marengo and Paladini may come off as equally talented (if one takes versatility to be a reliable indicator), but certainly not as committed, given the credentials of antimafia artist enjoyed by the Palermitan actor. Admittedly, Cavallaro's implicit reasoning struck a chord with the local cultural elites and conveyed well their feelings toward mafia television: after three decades of exposition to mafia narratives exploiting the syndicate as a homegrown variety of James Bond's SPECTRE, the romantic antimafia stances espoused by films and television shows' protagonists as well as Manichean good-versus-evil stories are simply not enough. Needless to say, implying a straightforward opposition between political commitment and entertainment and blaming artists for not having an uncompromisingly militant filmography is no less preposterous. However, from the perspective of the local community, one must hold accountable those who represent it, its struggles, and its sufferings for how they do so. Pursuing authenticity equals, in this respect, to the promise of a fair representation achieved without relinquishing the commercial standards imposed by (the format of mafia) television. This sought-after accomplishment bears political potentialities that, as the debate made abundantly clear, are not even present in the above-the-line talent's perspective, nor can they emerge organically from the text itself. Therefore, turning to the "indigenous" workforce and the

[423] Sennett, Richard. *The Craftsman*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008, 243.

symbolic and material infrastructures within which it operates allows us to capture the less accessible dimension of authenticity through which these political potentialities come to the fore.

Between Film Infrastructure and Moral Economy: On Anthropological Authenticity

For several decades, the local film infrastructure in Sicily has inhabited a grey area, nurtured by practices of informal and unregulated labor in conjunction with the workings of organized crime. Forced to adapt to the territorial logics of Cosa Nostra, on-location shooting often needed to be authorized by the competent criminal authority, as local bosses extorted the equivalent of rent from production companies and, in the worst case, stepped up to provide services and goods whose poor quality, unsurprisingly, never seemed to attract complaints. Producers as a consequence tended to avoid the areas of the island most impacted by the crime syndicate, by passing off the East Coast as Western Sicily, Catania as Palermo, and "Romans" as locals. When this could not be done, one of the men they had to strike a deal with in order to shoot in Palermo—until his arrest for bank robbery in the late 1990s—was Enzo Castagna. This almost mythical figure—a factotum, producer, impresario, mortician, and mafia henchman—ran the informal infrastructure through which filmmaking could take place in the region: a one-person film commission hired out by filmmakers such as Pier Paolo Pasolini, Damiano Damiani, Francesco Rosi, Luchino Visconti, Vittorio De Sica, Francis Ford Coppola, and Michael Cimino.[424] The main asset of the Agenzia Castagna was its control of about 20,000 underprivileged workers, whom its manager could hire out either as extras or as agitators, according to the circumstances, forcing film producers to resort to his service if they did not want to see their film sets invaded by people strolling in front of the cameras.[425] Hilarious anecdotes about the "Godfather of Sicilian extras"[426] still circulate among local film workers two decades after his fall. Until the end of the 1990s, Castagna's centralization of many logistical and operational aspects of on-location filmmaking relied on forms of radical informality, a perfected art of making do. This skillful exercise corresponds to what Jason Pine defines as "the entrepreneurial arts of independent employment in the informal economy," which turned the local film scene into a contact zone.[427] With hindsight, the Agenzia contributed significantly to thwarting the development of a local film industry, meant as a legitimate, formal sector of the creative economy. Alongside similarly predatory businesses operating in the sector at the local level, it also precluded the emergence of forms of integration

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[424] See *Enzo, domani a Palermo!* (Franco Maresco and Daniele Ciprì, 1999).
[425] Marceca, Romina. "Scacco alla dinasty che reclutava comparse." *La Repubblica*, July 25, 2014.
[426] Möller, Olaf. "Ciprì e Maresco." *Film Comment* 40, no. 3 (2004): 13.
[427] Pine, Jason. *The Art of Making Do in Naples*, cit., 161.

(or structural cooperation) between distinct production cultures, since the national had no incentive to develop long-term connections with the local. This affected the representations of the local social world as well—a reality little known or understood, and therefore distorted by a common-sense view of Sicily in terms of underdevelopment, traditional customs, and, of course, mafia mythology.

Around the mid-2000s, the commanding entrance of the regional government into the media sector stimulated a complete redevelopment of the film industry according to logics previously foreign in that context. Until that point, Sicily hosted a modest number of runaway productions in the absence of a true infrastructure, whereas local productions rarely reached the national stage.[428] Then, a government-driven fourfold action transformed the regional media landscape. Firstly, the creation of the Sicilia Film Commission redesigned the identity of the island as filming location.[429] Secondly, the establishment of a film fund run by a publicly owned production company (later absorbed by the film commission) began to compensate for the lack of local private investment in continuity with the developmental logics that have informed Southern Italy's postwar economy at large and the cultural sector specifically. Third, the foundation of the documentary film branch of the prestigious national film school Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia energized the local segment of the industry by attracting aspiring young filmmakers from all over the country. Lastly, the co-production of the short-lived soap opera *Agrodolce* (Rai Fiction-Rai Educational-Regione Siciliana, 2008-2009) trained a generation of film workers and initiated the construction of a (now abandoned) state-of-the-art film studio. Public investment, in sum, provided film and television productions with a level of resources, infrastructure, and skilled workforce unimaginable even a few years earlier. As a result, the number of films and TV shows made in Sicily spiked, further stimulated by financial incentives and cheap production costs. Nevertheless, because a proper local film industry never took off, the local workforce, more technically and artistically prepared than ever, had to learn how to navigate between semi-underground (local) and mainstream (national) productions, tending to identify only

[428] Giorgi, Sergio, and Deborah Young. "The Dream of a New Sicilian Cinema." *Cineaste* 23, no. 1 (1997): 20-23; Brunetta, Gian Piero. *Il cinema italiano contemporaneo*. Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2009, 660-665. See also Morreale, Emiliano. *Lampi sull'isola. Nuovo cinema siciliano*. Palermo: Edizioni della Battaglia, 1996.

[429] Nicosia, Enrico. "La Sicilia e il cineturismo." In *Percorsi di geografia tra società, cinema e turismo*, edited by Leonardo Mercatanti, 379-393. Bologna: Patron, 2011; Ponton, Douglas Mark, and Vincenzo Asero. "The Montalbano Effect: Re-Branding Sicily as a Tourist Destination." *On the Horizon* 32, no. 4 (2015): 342-351.

the former as an articulation of creative practice.[430] An *esprit de corps* started to develop among these workers, who shared the frustration of being forced to take lower-status positions alongside and for the "Romans" in order to acquire the technical, professional, and financial means to pursue personal projects. This, in most cases, has involved working on mafia-themed films and television shows, the prevailing category for productions set in Sicily.

A veritable process of formalization invested a sector before then loosely regulated: accordingly, bureaucratic standardization and the adoption of film-friendly policies followed the path set by the nation-wide regionalization of cinema and television. In the early days of the new regime, the local workforce learnt to diversify and broaden its services as the old "art of making do" started to encompass apparently endless layers of bureaucracy. *Il Cacciatore* extras casting director Ugo Polizzi, for instance, had built his remarkable extras database by foraging for "new faces"—surveying Palermo's neighborhoods on his Vespa, pulling people over, and enticing them with the prospect of being featured on screen—while boning up on complex legislation and red tape. Formalization does not equal homogenization: the broader process of cinema and television's devolution occurring roughly at the same time across the country panned out in the local context in accordance with socially and culturally specific factors. Worth underlining among those is that the film commission spearheading the requalification of Sicily as a filming location distinguished itself by embracing the hegemonic "culture of legality" promoted by the antimafia movement and enforced by local authorities. As an "indigenous" workforce came to life, professionally speaking, in a more organic manner, the same antimafia postures started to inform the local production culture at large. A large-scale antimafia pedagogical project unfolded in the 1980s and early 1990s, aiming to "construct a civil society whose citizens would repulse clientelism and the exchange of favors."[431] The Palermitans entering the labor force at that time, now in their late forties and early fifties, brought with them a worldview greatly influenced by such ideas.[432] The promotion of legality, democracy, and civic-mindedness informed a new ideal of citizenship that spread through the polity. According to Polizzi, this implied both a firm commitment to do a "clean job" and a willingness to go above and beyond in support of the local community's welfare and development.

[430] Muscio, Giuliana. "Sicilian Film Productions: Between Europe and the Mediterranean Island." In *We Europeans? Media, Representations, Identities*, edited by William Uricchio, 177-194. Bristol: Intellect, 2008.
[431] Schneider, Jane, and Peter Schneider. *Reversible Destiny*, cit., 260-289; Gunnarson, Carina. *Cultural Warfare and Trust: Fighting the Mafia in Palermo*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008, 161. See chapter 1.
[432] Schneider, Jane, and Peter Schneider. "'Educating for Legality,'" cit., 172.

In most local workers' view, this takes the form of additional emotional labor to meet the needs of every local fellow, enterprise, or collaborator at the disposal of producers. In a similar spirit, *Il Cacciatore* location manager Christian Peritore considers himself "a production man who is accountable to and for [his] own community."

While I am far from claiming that Sicily's regional film infrastructure is somehow related to the antimafia movement, there are overlaps between how the former operates and what the latter asserts. This circumstance has more to do with the climate that modulates cultural production, especially when publicly funded, than with top-down political decisions. The same cultural climate, in fact, informs the ways external actors are expected to behave. The few attempts by mafiosi to shake down producers are usually reported to the police, as happened to *Il Cacciatore* producer Rosario Rinaldo during the making of *Il Segreto dell'acqua* (Magnolia-Rai, 2011).[433] Production companies applying for funds or subsidies have been required to produce special documentation attesting that none of the beneficiaries has criminal records and to disclose sensitive financial information at law enforcement's request. In the disbursement of regional funding, films or television shows that "spread, directly or indirectly, messages in contrast with […] the interest of public health, human rights, and freedom of expression" or that "incite violence and discrimination" are automatically excluded, while artistic quality and the valorization of the local context are highly esteemed.[434] In addition, labor laws have been enforced with a diligence uncommon for the standards of both the regional labor market and the creative industries.

In the wake of these reforms, national productions set in Sicily were required to adapt to the new regime's conditions, most notably in relation to the employment quotas for local labor and the development of "local-related content" (defined as "regional landscapes, traditions, recent events, food and wine culture, and Sicilian identity").[435] Even though the effectiveness of these regulations in changing the producers' attitudes should not be overstated,[436] that national

[433] "Palermo, 41 arresti per mafia. Tentata estorsione alla fiction con Scamarcio." *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, October 23, 2012.
[434] Sicilia Film Commission. "Avviso pubblico cofinanziamento," http://www.siciliafilmcommission.org/Content/Images/uploaded/Bandi/Produzioni/APQ%202019/Avviso%20Pubblico%20cofinanziamento%20film%20e%20audiovisivi_2019.pdf, last accessed on March 26, 2020. It is worth pointing out that even though in the product evaluation process as for Table 1 (11-12) qualitative criteria could grant as much as 38 points (out of 100), Sicilia Film Commission's officials maintain that funding is "automatic," i.e., assigned exclusively on the basis of quantitative factors.
[435] Ivi, 11.
[436] Cucco, Marco. "Regioni alla ribalta: vizi e virtù di un incipiente federalismo cinematografico." *Bianco & Nero* 578 (2014): 12-20.

productions on average have, since the mid-2000s, come to Sicily more often, stayed longer, and hired more locals is evidence of major improvements. The intensified presence of television productions has paved the way for a more diverse representation of the territory.[437] As the extractive and alienating hit-and-run production model has been supplanted by a more direct involvement of the local production culture, the latter has gained a greater leeway for creative contribution, though seldom credited as such.[438]

"What makes my job essentially creative," commented Peritore, "is that, in the face of shrinking budgets and tighter schedules, I take on the production designer's and the director of photography's work in that I must propose locations with the kinds of graphic, topographic, and plastic features that will require little to no intervention." And it is in this arrangement that, from the location manager's perspective, authenticity surfaces as a crucial production value because, as he poignantly put it, "[his] direct competitor is not a better location manager but CGI," and therefore he must provide productions with shooting sites that are both highly functional and uniquely real.[439] Here authenticity assumes a greater significance in relation to territorial identity, conveying meaning to what ceases to be the mere backdrop of action, and instead condensing the cultural and social relevance of the landscape idea.[440] *Il Cacciatore* reflects the symbolic density of the natural and built environments generally ignored by mafia television through a particular emphasis on the spatial dynamics at play in the rendering of actual events. The different approaches taken by the national and the local workforce are once again thrown in stark relief. While the director of *Il Cacciatore* admitted to considering Sicily as "a sour, mysterious […] borderland contested and fought over by rival forces,"[441] inadvertently mobilizing the Orientalizing rhetoric of mafia television, the location manager has centered on the question and function of authenticity as a matter of much more serious concern. For instance, in the case of the crucial Brusca brothers' arrest, one of the most significant and emotive sequences in the program, he was compelled to find a nearby site, an alternative to the one in which the real events had taken place, outside of

[437] It is worth mentioning in this context the extremely successful police TV series *Inspector Montalbano* (Palomar-RAI, 1999-ongoing), which seldom deals with mafia issues.
[438] See Mayer, Vicki. "Bringing the Social Back In: Studies of Production Culture and Social Theory." In *Production Studies*, cit., 15-24.
[439] See Curtin, Michael, and Kevin Sanson, eds. *Voices of Labor: Creativity, Craft, and Conflict in Global Hollywood*. Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2017, 90-99.
[440] Lefebvre, Martin. "Between Setting and Landscape in Narrative Cinema." In *Landscape and Film*, edited by Martin Lefebvre, 19-59. New York: Routledge, 2006.
[441] Marengo, Davide. "Note di regia." *News RAI* 62, no. 9 (2020): 6.

Agrigento, about 130 kilometers far from Palermo. To come up with a credible solution, he examined the topography of the Bruscas' hideout and its surroundings, and singled out some key spatial features, guided by the assumption that the alternative should bear a close resemblance to the original location, regardless of needs of the script. As the real arrest occurred thanks to a set of ingenious tricks to monitor the area and identify the hideout, its faithful representation would have required a specific spatial arrangement: Peritore had to overcome the producers' insistence on simply finding a functional space that would have, in his words, "betrayed the truth." Such were his efforts that, in the end, the neighborhood in which the shootings took place and that of the real arrest are practically indistinguishable.

The extras' selection constituted another demonstration of the show's commitment to authenticity. For the intense two-day extras casting of the second season of *Il Cacciatore* Polizzi gathered less than a thousand aspiring actors in the Zisa Cultural Shipyards, a former industrial park in Palermo converted into a cultural pole. The crowd was mostly made of retirees, students, unemployed, freelancers, and the special category of quasi-professional actors who gravitate around the industry without being able to make a living out of it known as "the regulars." Interrogated on the reasons behind their participation, people would unanimously answer either "easy money" or curiosity for the shiny, exciting world of filmmaking. No one seemed to acknowledge the theme of the show, besides the customary complaints for the scarcity of non-mafia productions. After hour-long waiting, each candidate sat down for a quick interview with the second assistant director (occasionally helped by Polizzi), who would assign a role according to a single criterion that most people, even when they admitted their concern being just the stipend, found somehow disappointing: the adherence between their real-life occupation and their character's. This correspondence would have made possible for non-professional actors to perform what they actually do in daily life in a spontaneous manner and therefore facilitated otherwise awkward crowd scenes. In addition, assuming that an attentive spectator would not have failed to notice "the right faces in the right places," the natural behavior of the extras and their physical features would have obviously benefited the show's mandate. Thus, real-life waiters served at Barone's wedding party; one of the photographers who documented the Maxi-trial in the 1980s took the pictures commissioned by Brusca for a cover-up plot; and as a local newspaper reported, a Palermo police officer played the front-line cop guiding the assault squad to the Bruscas'

hideout.[442] Besides the visible disappointment of those fancying being someone else for one day, this rule of thumb had other consequences due to the fact that mafia television productions involves almost exclusively four types of performers (and *Il Cacciatore* is no exception): middle-aged, scruffy, thug-looking mafiosi; older and respectably tedious lawyers and judges; good-looking younger policemen; featureless passers-by. Women, of course, could hardly get anything more than the role of passerby. Physical strength in men might get them a coveted position in a mafia or police squad, opening up the possibility of an upgrade from extra to minor role (hence, doubling the stipend) should the person be requested to speak, or most likely shout. Men above forty years of age were the ones most likely to get what were deemed as prestigious roles (namely, mafioso, policeman, or lawyer), while women and youth had to content themselves with roles that would not guarantee them to "be seen on TV," the standard against which extras assess the success of their performance.

This phase of the pre-production process is also a privileged observation point from which to experience directly how, as one gripper eloquently explained to me, "everybody in Palermo is sick of mafia stuff." Although socially stratified and culturally diverse, the "extras" population, Polizzi explained with ironic understatement, responds "very mildly" to mafia television. An exception are "the regulars," who instead have decades-long love-hate relationships with the genre. During the two-day extras casting of the second season of *Il Cacciatore*, Polizzi introduced me to all the "regulars" who showed up, because he insisted that to understand mafia television, speaking with them is far better and more entertaining than watching the programs themselves. Listening patiently to one "regular" listing with dignity the dozen of ways he died on screen since 1989 (hogtied, throttled, shot in the guts, skinned alive, and so on) clearly illustrated to me how easy it would be to get "sick of mafia stuff" from the local community's standpoint. None of the "regulars" I spoke with were ultimately given a role, since the presence of these recognizable, characteristic figures might have threatened the overall stability of the casting; a few admitted that their careers struggle to take off because none of the roles available in a mafia show could valorize their professionalism. To the second assistant director and the people coordinating the casting, however, those exclusions were not only fully justified by the quality standards set up by the producers, but also, and more remarkably, by the prospects for a higher form of authenticity.

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[442] Marceca, Romina. "Un poliziotto-attore nel *Cacciatore*: 'Io a caccia di Brusca, ma solo per finta." *La Repubblica*, Palermo edition, February 20, 2020.

Recent scholarship on creative labor in the cultural industries has finally surpassed the long opposition "between those who uncritically celebrate the aesthetic, expressive individuality and potential for individual emancipation offered by cultural work, and those who would disregard its apparent 'freedoms' as merely complicit in the consolidation of a hegemonic, recursively 'flexible,' neoliberal regime."[443] In achieving this, it has restored the concept of moral economy to describe the coexistence of market-driven economic instrumentality and non-instrumental political and social values underpinning workers' activity.[444] Rather than considering a moral economy as a corrective to, or a fatality of, the market economy,[445] this scholarship has rightly stressed that "questions such as exploitation, inequality, and domination" should be incorporated into a moral-economy analysis. This is all the more crucial given how the approach draws "attention to positive possibilities of media and cultural goods for the flourishing of individuals, communities, and societies" and therefore opens promising avenues for enhancing the critique of media and culture.[446] In this spirit, Vicki Mayer has reworked the concept to analyze the making of post-Hurricane Katrina HBO show *Treme* and its producers' ability to secure low-paid or unpaid jobs through recourse to "a particular kind of call to work as a form of boosterism for the local economy and the culture that both sustains and emerges from it."[447] As Mayer convincingly illustrates, the producers' strategy worked best with extras, who, lured by the redemptive promises of a show "imbued with a near spiritual investment in the city as portrayed through the program," responded in droves to the call to "help New Orleans through media labor."[448] What comes into view in this analysis is the moral dimension of authenticity as a driving force that propelled extras' commitment by founding, as Mayer elaborated elsewhere, "social relationships that recognized the individual's unique role *in* the place and, thus, value *to* the place."[449]

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443 Banks, Mark. "Moral Economies and Cultural Work." *Sociology* 40, no. 3 (2006): 455-472, 456.
444 Murdock, Graham. "Political Economies as Moral Economies: Commodities, Gifts, and Public Goods." In *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*, edited by Janet Wasko, Graham Murdock, and Helena Sousa, 1-40. Oxford: Blackwell, 2011.
445 Palomera, Jaime, and Theodora Vetta. "Moral Economy: Rethinking of a Radical Concept." *Anthropological Theory* 16, no. 4 (2016): 413-432.
446 Hesmondhalgh, David. "Capitalism and the Media: Moral Economy, Well-Being, and Capabilities." *Media, Culture & Society* 39, no. 2 (2017): 202-218, 207, 210.
447 Mayer, Vicki. "The Production of Extras in a Precarious Creative Economy." In *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Local Labor*, Michael Curtin and Kevin Samson, 63-73. Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2016, 64.
448 Ivi, 68, 66.
449 Mayer, Vicki. *Almost Hollywood, Nearly New Orleans: The Lure of the Local Film Economy*. Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2017, 80.

Il Cacciatore put to work a similar moral economy, a space where professional figures interacted with each other through different frameworks that coalesced, quite fortuitously, in a synergic manner. Power imbalances and mutual loyalties certainly structured the encounter between the two production cultures, and I have personally witnessed as many instances of local workers being shamed for their alleged lack of professionalism as I have of "Romans" being accused by whispering locals of being "sellouts." However covert or subtle, a great deal of these confrontational exchanges implicitly framed a wider set of negotiations over the significance of creative labor and/in mafia television, as the investment of the "indigenous" workforce comprised ethical and political dimensions unfathomable to the "Romans." In this respect, authenticity prevails both as the rationale behind local labor's emotional investment and as a crucial element of its on-screen outcome.

From the perspective of the talent, this outcome has been credited specifically to Paladini, the creative producer and script editor who supervised the development of the project in all its phases from a position, previously almost unknown in the Italian television industry, akin to that of a showrunner.[450] As the journey from the three-season script to the final product was complicated by recurrent uncertainty over whether the series would be renewed for the following seasons, Paladini was the executive decision-maker on the set whose authority stemmed from his knowledge of all the developing plot lines as well as his familiarity with 1990s mafia history. It was the detail-oriented and considerate off-the-record showrunner, in effect, who enforced the pursuit of authenticity as a top-down directive. From the perspective of the local crew, however, this investment had to do with the extent to which the vicissitudes of prosecutor Barone/Sabella hit a raw nerve. For once, they found themselves working on a *fiction* that celebrated the victory of the state and civil society, bringing to the fore the vulnerabilities of Cosa Nostra without trivializing its deadly sovereignty. This aspect, along with the depiction of the Sicilian populace as neither the victims nor the accomplices of the mafia, has been recognized by many crewmembers as a galvanizing push to "put [their] hearts in the project." More than just providing "realistic" settings, performances, and characters, the "indigenous" workforce's contribution has tackled the most despised shortcomings of mafia television at the local level—the fake renditions of backwardness and the picturesque.

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[450] Guarnaccia, Fabio, and Luca Barra, eds. "Autori seriali." *Link* 23 (2018).

Like any location manager, Peritore is obviously proud to bring a project to places where a film or television production has never been before. The additional challenge of working on a mafia show is that the formulaic environments of the genre (the pristine countryside, the derelict farmhouse, the chaotic city avenues, the quaint open markets) are somehow constitutive of its identity: the idea of replacing them with something more authentic receives lukewarm support from the producers. In the pre-production process of *Il Cacciatore*, however, both the locals and the "Romans" could agree, each according to their own rationales, that "the places must have looked different." For the "Romans," this meant giving the show a more edgy look through original settings; for the locals, it was a matter of embedding a mafia story in the places where it would rightly belong, which corresponded to spaces of modernity such as tunnels, dams, quarries, new residential neighborhoods, fascist-era buildings, and industrial warehouses. The creation of a new type of authenticity in relation to the mise-en-scene is just an example of the many accounts I gathered from both interviews and informal on-set conversations with "indigenous" workforce, who often stressed how their creative intervention had contributed to "righting the wrongs" of mafia television. This is a paramount instantiation of what I identify as the anthropological notion of authenticity. One local actor with a minor role, for instance, bragged to me that he went as far as study the wiretapping records featuring the mafioso he was interpreting so that he would not have run the risk of playing "the Italian *fiction*'s mafioso who exists only in the heads of some people." A production assistant, a "Roman," joked that even electricians felt entitled to complain when one scene did not look "right" to them and that their objection would then travel all the way to the director, who would consider it for the following take. Comparing it with her prior experiences on set, she revealed that she had found it rather "anomalous." A few locals, too, referred to the atmosphere animating the shootings as unusual. Oddly, the "indigenous" workforce on-set did not perceive *Il Cacciatore* as regular "mafia work", with many registering to varying degrees what Peritore called a "virtuous synergy between talent and the crew, all eager to do their utmost." Grounded on a serendipitous alignment between the industrial needs of the national production culture and the ethical concerns of the local one, this synergy epitomized an affective register that had an impact over the material practices of filmmaking and its textual outcomes. Attending to the margin of the filmmaking process—that is, to the work ethics, views, and experiences of "indigenous" below-the-line workers—has enriched my understanding of *Il Cacciatore* with the awareness that the uneven and yet productive distribution of creative

responsibilities across the workforce in the making of mafia television cannot be fully disentangled from ethical and political concerns. The multifarious ways in which workers actualize those concerns through contingent impromptu choices, like almost any aspect of the methodical chaos of filmmaking, is nearly impossible to perceive on screen. Yet, as I have shown, this issue matters inasmuch as, by amplifying the voices of the mafia television workers, a genre with exploitative and prejudicial propensities can open up instead a formerly unforeseen horizon of emancipatory potentialities. Authenticity matches fairness and righteousness in that it provides several professional figures an access point to the moral economy activated, though at times obstructed and foreclosed, by the *fiction*'s need to build (anti)mafia worlds somewhat out of sync with the generic standards of mafia television.

In exploring the forms through which *Il Cacciatore*'s makers attained an uncommon level of authenticity, I do not intend to single out the show as a unique unidentified object mysteriously landed on the Italian television screens. On the one hand, most of the labor and production dynamics I sketched above have become less exceptional due to the reconfiguration of the national film and television sector and its intertwinement with the local film infrastructure I discussed earlier. Moral economies not too distant from the one activated on the set of the show would become less and less exceptional as national and local production cultures develop structural connections over time. On the other hand, the show in effect fits well within the parable of mafia television: its originality—included the pursuit of authenticity I have especially focused on—partakes to the genre-wide shift toward quality-TV-oriented productions catered to international markets and, as such, includes "highbrow elements" typical of "the new televisual aesthetics articulated via the crime drama."[451] This also explains the lukewarm reception of the local community, which I registered as particularly momentous in follow-up interviews with extras during the airing of the second season. Condemning the show for being "too slow, artsy, and eccentric," they observed that the final product did not match the passion and professionalism they witnessed themselves on the set, let alone the claim to civic engagement characteristic of mafia television's marketing. An extra, more dismissive of the show than the rest of the group, confided to me: "I cherish one moment of my work at the show and that is the shooting at the bunker-courthouse [of the Maxi-trial]. Being inside that place, a shrine every Palermitan *must* visit, gives

[451] Morreale, Emiliano. *La mafia immaginaria*, cit., 269, 271.

to you more than any show on earth could. Once you are inside it, it is as if you can sense what the struggle [against the mafia] meant." He then glossed ironically, "television cannot do that."

Conclusion

Antimafia Media Culture: An Open Question

Two mafia-related events bringing Cosa Nostra back to international headlines after decades-long silence marked the beginning and the end of this research.

On November 17, 2017, boss of bosses Totò Riina, also known as *la belva* (The Beast) and *u' curtu* (Shorty), died at 87 in a prison hospital in Parma, where he was serving 26 life sentences. At that point, Riina had spent the last quarter of century in almost complete isolation and the last ten years in and out of prison hospitals. The day before his death, which happened to be his birthday, the Minister of Justice allowed the family to visit the boss, although he had already been put in a medically induced coma. Religious authorities disposed that the funeral had not to be officiated, while also trying to prevent the boss from being buried in the local cemetery. With his rustic and modest appearance, Riina has never overawed or commanded respect, if not for his reputation as a cold-blooded, merciless strategist, but his last public photograph disclosing the signs of a very long disease carved on his body perhaps instilled piety in many. National media reported the news with a high degree of detachment, without any mention of the spontaneous initiatives meant to celebrate the death of the boss that took place around Southern Italy. A *New York Times* article featured a mock funeral poster where antimafia martyrs "rejoice in announcing the happy event."[452] Obviously, some among the living had good reasons to rejoice as well: gone with Riina were the most brutal mafia rule, the season of massacres and unconstrained violence, and a bundle of secrets that may have changed the course of history.

At the end of June 2021, the news of the imminent release of Giovanni Brusca after 25 years of prison provoked a nationwide outcry. Brusca, who we encountered in the previous chapter as the antagonist of the second season of *Il Cacciatore*, was initially to serve several life sentences for the over 150 murders he admitted in court, but his collaboration with the state granted him a shortened sentence. Within the already much brutal Corleone-led coalition of mafia families, he

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[452] Longrigg, Claire. "How Totò Riina's War on the Italian State Almost Destroyed Cosa Nostra." *The Guardian*, November 18, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/18/how-toto-riinas-war-on-the-italian-state-almost-destroyed-cosa-nostra; Horowitz, Jason. "Salvatore Riina, Italian Mafia's Boss of Bosses, Dies at 87." *New York Times*, November 18, 2017, last accessed May 29, 2022. See also Bolzoni, Attilio, Giuseppe D'Avanzo. *The Boss of Bosses: The Life of the Infamous Totò Riina*. London: Orion, 2016.

stood out for his ruthless ferocity, which gained him the nicknames *u' verru* (The Pig) and *lo scannacristiani* (The People-Slayer). In that case, national media reacted by inciting protests and reminding the public opinion of the Giuseppe Di Matteo case, the teenage son of a *pentito* kidnapped, detained for 779 days, and dissolved in acid. Politicians of all stripes rushed to be at the forefront of the populist surge against the release. Controversy arose around the opportunity of an *ad personam* decree that would extend Brusca's sentence beyond its legal term, albeit such a measure would have represented a massive disincentive to break the code of secrecy for aspiring and future *pentiti*. Among the very few figures in favor of Brusca's release, former Antimafia judge and President of the Senate Pietro Grasso, despite defining the *pentito* "one of the worst criminals in history," pointed out that the mafioso's action—his crimes as much as his key contribution not the fight against Cosa Nostra—earned him a commensurate sentence.[453]

I cannot help but read these two stories allegorically, recognizing in the two bodies and their contested committal an expression of a past that cannot be left behind. They register the permanent state of exception regulating the relation between state, civil society, and Cosa Nostra according to which constitutional or even basic human rights become suddenly contentious as soon as a mafioso may benefit from them. They also make evident the power of news media in raising and coordinating public outcry, which in turn pushes unscrupulous politicians to pledge to take action against individuals perceived as a social threat even when terminally ill or legally rehabilitated. For a nation accustomed to historical amnesias and compromises, the intensity of such reactions is certainly abnormal. I would argue that these signs of democratic erosion demonstrate the success of antimafia media culture as effectively as the facets of the project of cultural re-education I have illustrated throughout this work. Consider the impact on the casual spectator of a couple of new films or TV shows per year retelling over and over the massacres perpetrated by the Corleone *cosca* and their associates in the 1980s and early 1990s, obviously readapted to contemporary sensibilities.

Paula Salvio has argued that the pedagogical impulse of the antimafia movement, enacted through story-taking and storytelling, has rendered possible "a process of transitional justice" that

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[453] Pianigiani, Gaia. "Mafia Killer Who Became a Turncoat Is Released from Prison in Italy." *New York Times*, June 1, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/01/world/europe/italy-mafia-killer-informant.html; Tondo, Lorenzo. "Anger as Notorious Sicilian Mafioso the 'People-Slayer' Is Freed." *The Guardian*, June 1, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/01/sicilian-mafia-killer-freed-jail-giovanni-brusca, last accessed May 29, 2022.

allowed for redressing the legacies of massive human rights abuses.[454] Her main argument is that antimafia activism established a "public memorial landscape [dominated by] stories of resistance and refusal"[455] rejecting the focus on passive victimhood, while also aspiring to transform society, culture, and the economy through "a desire for new beginnings—what [Hannah] Arendt describes as *natality*."[456] By extending our focus beyond praiseworthy activist initiatives in order to take into consideration a broader media and social ecosystem, the idea of a society in and of transition seems to be a less poignant description of the present condition. Mafia-themed cultural production is slowing a transition already underway on the ground, in the local communities affected by a film-induced cognitive dissonance between their own experience of the crime organization (that is, the lack thereof) and its daunting manifestations on screen. The appropriation of the latter by the movement, justified by the legitimate will to keep the guard up in a phase of lessened awareness, constitutes an additional hindrance to the resolution of a conflict of such scale and urgency.

This dissertation has explored the social repercussions of the imaginary of the mafia created and disseminated by cinema and later appropriated and reworked by local and national culture industries, antimafia activists, and the public opinion. Taking seriously the antimafia essence of such an imaginary, in some circumstances even in the face of its preposterousness, I have excavated it not through its features but through the values upheld by it. This, in turn, has led me to interrogate the ethical obligations of attending to memory, beauty, and authenticity as constitutive of Sicily's antimafia culture. The importance of different processes of mediation as well as the role of a constellation of media actors are so prominent in this story that I would argue that antimafia culture is ultimately an instance of media culture. If that is the case, it is also because its actors are media personalities (in many cases even media professionals) for whom antimafia action corresponds to an ethical and cultural struggle to be fought through the media. This is one of the few beliefs upheld by the movement at large and its local and national supporters in a scenario otherwise dominated by conflicts over the meanings and forms of antimafia action in the present time.

In an exhaustive study of mafia-themed literature in Italy published in 1996, literary historian Massimo Onofri reports the words of Sicilian novelist Gesualdo Bufalino in response to

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[454] Salvio, Paula M. *The Story-Takers*, cit.
[455] Ivi, 13.
[456] Ivi, 19. Author's emphasis.

an interviewer asking what struck him about Giovanni Brusca's arrest. He answers, "The boss requesting from jail his silk shirts. The jewels found in his hideout, the Jacuzzi, the old paintings. You can tell that bosses, exactly like common people, are going through a process of *telenovelization*. Traditional patriarchy crumbling inside a shredder."[457] Onofri glosses over Bufalino's statement in a way that I find particularly meaningful, especially at the dawn of the media culture I reconstructed throughout this dissertation.

> We conclude on this suggestive reference to bosses stultified from telenovelas, characters in search of an author within the literary landscape delineated here. And with this image of the boss subjugated by television we embrace a new hope: that this crumbling will soon turn into a complete downfall. No matter if, for this to be possible, television must triumph.[458]

Twenty-five years later, history has partly realized Onofri's wish: if it would certainly be an overestimation to speak of a complete downfall, the triumph of film and television seems objective. This dissertation illustrated such a triumph.

Antimafia Media examined the multifarious ways through which the antimafia movement and the local culture industry have fed each other in the last two decades, while also benefiting from and speculating on the global popularity of the Sicilian mafia. Grounded on an ethnographic approach, the dissertation demonstrated how the crime syndicate, currently undergoing what is probably the worst crisis in its century-long history, has morphed into a symbolic resource widely mobilized by the local culture industry to attain credibility, legitimacy, and economic gains. By attending to the work of a variety of cultural actors in and out former capital of the mafia Palermo, it maintained that the local culture industry's re-elaborations of mafia history and mythology enabled the circulation of a politically deleterious imaginary of the syndicate grounded on its cinematic mediations rather than on its actual manifestations. The emergence of this easily accessible and commodified movie-made mafia imaginary underpins the current surge of mafia-themed cultural production, which I charted out in relation to the workings of the film and television, tourism, and cultural heritage industries. Through a wide range of cases ethnographically documented spanning from mafia museums and tourist tours to the making of a

[457] Onofri, Massimo. *Tutti a cena da Don Mariano*, cit., 241.
[458] Ivi, 242.

TV series belonging to the popular genre of mafia television, *Antimafia Media* illuminated largely unknown forms of cultural production that nonetheless have a massive impact over Sicily's social and economic life. Moreover, it explored the ambivalent complicity of the hegemonic faction of the antimafia movement toward mafia-themed cultural production, arguing for a reassessment of the entanglements of activism, social imaginary, media making, and cultural politics in light of the ongoing economic recession and social distress affecting the region.

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