

Allies, Chapter 6 describes the subsequent deterioration of this uneasy alliance amid the parliamentary elections of 18 April 1948. Chapter 7 gives a new perspective on the postwar political system in Italy that Giorgio Galli famously dubbed the '*Bipartitismo Imperfetto*', explaining how De Gasperi focused on 'excluding the Communist Party from the nation's government, while still containing them within the parliamentary arena' (p.169). The final chapter brings the reader up to 1994, and the collapse of the First Italian Republic in the wake of the Tangentopoli corruption scandals and the election of Berlusconi who, White states in the closing pages, 'fell far short of the standards set by the republic's founders' (p.209).

This final point highlights a slight weakness in White's analysis. Nostalgia at times obscures a more critical reading of Italy's postwar politicians. Conspicuous in its absence, for instance, is any reference to the discourse of '*partitocrazia*' or an emerging 'totalitarianism of the parties'. This term, coined by Liberal politician Giuseppe Maranini and later adopted by Guglielmo Giannini's *Uomo Qualunque*, conveyed the idea that the CLN did not correspond to a model of authentic democracy but in some way configured a sort of new 'single party' dominating Italian society.

While certainly not subscribing to this view of Italy's postwar government, I believe the short shrift given to such narratives (two pages are dedicated to *Uomo Qualunque* in Chapter 3) is insufficient in understanding their pervasiveness. Indeed, in the 1980s and 1990s, the far-right Lega Nord would use '*partitocrazia*' discourse as a stick with which to beat and weaken the Italian Republic, particularly in the wake of the Tangentopoli scandals. This discourse played a key role in the collapse of the First Italian Republic and the dissolution or fragmentation of the parties which, under De Gasperi, Togliatti, and Nenni, had played such a key role in its formation.

This, however, should not distract from what is a well-informed account of three veterans of the anti-fascist resistance who, in overcoming ideological differences, managed to forge a postwar Italian identity and continue the work of Italy's Risorgimento founding fathers of 1861. As we approach the 160th anniversary of this historic event, White's account of De Gasperi, Togliatti, and Nenni serves as a timely reminder that the project of 'making Italians' must not fall once again into the hands of those whose ideas hark back to the destructive ideas of fascism, militarism, and disdain for democratic governance.

George Newth

University of Bath

ghn20@bath.ac.uk

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**L'Italia sullo schermo. Come il cinema ha raccontato l'identità nazionale**, by GIAN PIERO BRUNETTA, Rome, Carocci Editore, 2020, 367 pp., €32.00 (paperback), ISBN 9788843098910

Gian Piero Brunetta, Professor Emeritus in History and Criticism of Cinema at the University of Padua, received the prestigious 'Antonio Feltrinelli' international award from the National Academy of Lincei in 2017 for his original studies on the history of Italian cinema. He is one of the world's foremost scholars of Italian cinema and his internationally recognised work has been translated into several languages. Brunetta is a prolific scholar, having authored and edited over 50 books on early Italian cinema and the silent era, neorealism, cinema as a tool for political

propaganda between the two world wars, the relationship between literature and cinema, the encounter between Hollywood and Cinecittà, and the many genres and generations of Italian filmmakers and artists throughout the twentieth century. Among his most relevant publications is *Storia del cinema italiano*, which was published in several volumes and editions from the 1970s to the 2000s.

According to Brunetta, Italian cinema, more distinctively than other national film traditions, has always, since its inception in 1905, expressed a strong commitment to being a witness to the history of its nation. Like literature and theatre, national cinema has reflected the spirit of major historical events and the drama of private stories, thus tracing the changes in its country and its people in the nineteenth century, documenting the world conflicts of the twentieth century, and reporting on the gradual postwar rebirth of the nation, all while reflecting the cultural climate and ideological orientation of each era. These uniquely strong connections between Italian history and cinema, where art meets life, and where fiction and non-fiction offer interpretations of reality, are at the centre of Brunetta's original and exhaustive investigation that has succeeded in persuading sceptical historians of the intrinsic value of filmic representations of events as reliable texts and privileged documents for historical research. A critical analysis and an in-depth overview of how Italian cinema has represented cultural, social, and political history constitute the vast and complex content of Brunetta's recent book, *L'Italia sullo schermo. Come il cinema ha raccontato l'identità nazionale*.

Brunetta's critical work on the history of Italian cinema is extensive, but never has it been so meticulously articulated and so clearly supported by a comprehensive study of audiovisual texts as in *L'Italia sullo schermo*, a dense volume that is the result of vast archival research and Brunetta's knowledge of history and cinema. The points enunciated in the Introduction and Chapter 1 find practical application in the main body of the volume – which is organised around 14 major chapters, each subdivided into several sections – and the book follows a systematic chronological progression centred on broad historical periods and thematic areas. In Chapter 2, the author reflects on how Italian cinema has widely portrayed national history since the Wars of Independence that led to the Unification of the country in 1861. Brunetta discusses the features, interpretations, and omissions of the filmic representations of the Italian Risorgimento (the most represented historical period in Italian cinema) and touches upon the complexities and divisive historical views of the questionable and glorified (or ideologically manipulated and failed) myth of geopolitical 'independence' as well as the military-driven conquest of a 'unified' Italy in 1861. Chapter 3 introduces silent-era cinema with its new divas, stories, melodramatic acting styles, aesthetics, and audiences. In this chapter the author applies a comparative analytical approach to contextualise these aspects in a broader European milieu of stars, fans, performances, and productions. This work is meticulous and comprehensive.

Chapters 4 and 7 address the relationship between cinema and the First and Second World Wars. Brunetta explains how cinema was used for ideological propaganda and became an effective tool for influencing national audiences through the big screen. Brunetta also analyses the critical role of European dictators such as Mussolini, Hitler, and Franco, and of Pope Pius XII, in promoting the development of cinema first and television afterwards. The dictators used cinema to launch their political campaigns and programmes, while the Vatican used it to disseminate the Christian faith.

Chapter 5 connects Italian history and economic conditions in the 1950s to the rest of Europe, focusing on the fast-developing industrialisation and rapid socio-economic growth of the postwar years. Brunetta stresses the role that fiction, non-fiction, and industrial cinema played in portraying these major epochal changes. Chapter 6 shifts the focus to the phenomenon of mass emigration as narrated both in Italian and American cinema, documenting the large exodus of Italian manpower and human resources from rural areas in search of fortune and a better life in distant, unknown promised lands.

In the following three chapters, Brunetta explores how cinema narrated times of war and conflict outside Italy. In Chapter 8, he illustrates the rich filmography of the Italian colonial expansionism in Africa featuring the new heroes of Italy's military campaigns; in Chapter 9, he addresses films covering the period of the Spanish Civil War, foreshadowing the Second World War; and in Chapter 10, he investigates cinema about the Second World War.

Chapter 11 discusses the lure and influence of Italian neorealism on world cinema, and Chapter 12 concentrates on how postwar cinema portrayed the rebuilding of the nation, the restoration of a national identity and dignity, the founding of democracy, and the cultural Americanisation of the country. Chapter 13 is about the relationship between cinema and life in autobiographical films and how the movie theatre becomes the place hosting the world. Chapter 14 is a homage to a select number of filmmakers of the *cinema dell'impegno* (that is, cinema of civic, cultural, historical, political, social, and artistic engagement), like Francesco Rosi, Bernardo Bertolucci, Ermanno Olmi, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, Pupi Avati, Marco Tullio Giordana, and Nanni Moretti.

*L'Italia sullo schermo* covers over 100 years of cinematic representations of Italian history, and the author navigates through international political and military crises, analyses socio-economic changes and cultural transitions, and moves from broader historical considerations to close readings of geographic areas. Brunetta discusses wars, colonisation and emigration, with the 'lenses' of cinema, documenting events, memorialising the building of the Italian nation and historicising the struggles and resilience of its people. The author's uniquely informed and informative approach situates each film within a precise artistic and cultural context while attending to a superbly detailed historical analysis. Brunetta's book is multi-disciplinary, as it encompasses multiple interconnected fields of study including politics and religion, art and science, sociology and anthropology, and economy and geography, thus offering the reader a kaleidoscopic and nuanced visual interpretation and understanding of history. *L'Italia sullo schermo* is a valuable resource for students and scholars of Italian and world history, film, and cultural studies.

Flavia Laviosa

Wellesley College

[flaviosa@wellesley.edu](mailto:flaviosa@wellesley.edu)

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### **Donne e scienza nella Roma dell'Ottocento,**

by FEDERICA FAVINO, Rome, Viella, 2020, 268 pp., €29.00 (paperback), ISBN 9788833132358

Federica Favino's book on science and society in nineteenth-century Rome opens with commentary on two iconographic representations. The first is a photograph of Elisabetta Fiorini Mazzanti (1799–1879) which, as Favino notes, was taken as if the botanist were posing in a diorama. Mazzanti is the only woman among the 99 subjects in a collection of photographs put together by the botanist Giuseppe De Notaris (1805–77). The second image depicts astronomer Caterina Scarpellini (1808–73), apparently the only woman in Italy at that time to have had a public (funerary) monument dedicated to her. In a country eager to erect a statue – preferably equestrian – for practically anyone (*monumentomania* is discussed in Chapter 4), Italy's lack of iconographic images of (non-saintly) women points to a selective omission that historians can turn around and use – as Favino does – as a powerful historiographical tool. Reconstructing the lives and work of Fiorini Mazzanti and Scarpellini in context, Favino offers an unprecedented cultural,