

authorities in the defeat of the Homestead and Pullman strikes, along with employer policies that led to the death of 146 women in the Triangle Shirtwaist fire in 1911, the use of machine guns by Rockefeller guards against strikers and their families in Ludlow, Colorado, three years later, and finally to the federal government's campaign against opponents of World War I.

Students of Italian-American radicalism will be interested in the chapter devoted to Luigi Galleani, the anarchist leader who built a dedicated cohort of supporters among a small group of Italian anarchists in the United States. Following along the lines of Paul Avrich's seminal book, *Sacco and Vanzetti: The Anarchist Background* (1991), Gage describes how in speeches and in the pages of his *Cronaca Sovversiva* Galleani unapologetically advocated the use of violence as a tool of retaliation against capitalism. Galleani's views influenced a small group of Italian anarchists to engage in scattered violent activities against the symbols of power, a campaign that escalated following his deportation and the arrest of Sacco and Vanzetti in the spring of 1920. This insular ethnic radical environment ultimately produced the "galleanista" Mario Buda, the person identified by Avrich as the likely Wall Street bomber.

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*Gangster Priest: The Italian American Cinema of Martin Scorsese.*

By Robert Casillo.

Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 2007.

600 pages.

*Gangster Priest*, the first volume to comprehensively address those of Martin Scorsese's films that deal most directly with Italian-American identity, is a timely and essential contribution to Scorsese scholarship. In particular, Robert Casillo accomplishes in-depth readings of some of the director's most well-known feature films, such as *Casino*, *Goodfellas*, *Mean Streets*, *Raging Bull*, and *Who's That Knocking at My Door?* Also of great value is the author's analysis of a fifteen-minute short feature made during Scorsese's college years, the longer documentary *Italianamerican*, and the lesser known mob comedy *It's Not Just You, Murray*. Casillo sets out to rescue these films from a critical abyss that frequently looks toward signs of Italian America in Scorsese's oeuvre in terms of "local colour, as a pretext for personal nostalgia, or as the object of merely anthropological or ethnological interest" (xviii). As Casillo convincingly demonstrates in the preface to the volume, previous studies devoted to one of Hollywood's most prized directors, mostly written by Italian Americans, generally tend to attack or disregard the director for what is seen as a simple equation of Italian American equals gangster. Indeed, the volume's title problematizes this long-lasting, hotly debated stereotype and announces Casillo's main agenda: To look at the complicated intersections between ethnic identity and religious iconography in a mob context in order to better understand psychologies of violence ingrained therein.

The bulk of the volume consists of lengthy chapters dedicated to close readings of the five Scorsese feature films mentioned above, plus one chapter on *Italianamerican*. *Gangster Priest* also includes an early chapter that argues that the director, although considered a “Third Generation Italian American Artist,” closely identifies with his ethnic origins, which reach the apogee of their expression in the five features. Another chapter on the environs of his “First World” discusses those elements from his childhood that most greatly conditioned his opus: For one, Casillo positions Elizabeth Street and Little Italy as primal locations from which the director draws inspiration. These are not, however, the idyllic streetscapes and porch stoops that one might recall from the first two *Godfather* films. Instead, these are true “mean streets” that are “seriously flawed” (69) and replete with Mafia turf wars. Moreover, the author discusses Scorsese’s persistent asthma that propelled him off the streets and into the movie theater in search of distraction and amusement, but where he also found artistic inspiration.

The single greatest influence on Scorsese, however, was exerted by the persistent presence of the Catholic Church. Recall, of course, that Scorsese was an altar boy and, until he turned his full attention toward making movies, his life goal was to become a priest. The Church and the cinema: Scorsese’s main influences. In this section, Casillo intricately outlines those cultural tenets of Catholicism that would most fascinate and shape the director, above all the intersections between religion and violence, which he reads through the lens of French theorist Rene Girard. The author pays particular attention to the works of Girard, whose seminal text *Deceit, Desire and the Novel* asserts that desire is essentially mediated by a third party, or, as he claims, is triangular. Girard’s work on desire and ritual is apropos to Scorsese’s Italian-American films, particularly in terms of the limitations imposed on self-improvement and the subtle intermingling of aggression and contrition. As Casillo points out: “The Italian American world in which Scorsese grew up, and which he depicts in his films, is a highly sacralized and ritualized society within which individuals are hierarchically defined and differentiated” (108). Finally, this chapter lays out and defines some of the key tenets of Mafia code and culture necessary to read the subsequent chapters, such as the cult of masculine honor and recourse to violence and vendetta, the essential commitment to *omertà*, or silence before the law, and the primacy of respect in a climate dominated by rustic chivalry.

Overall, the volume is composed of fine analyses that stand on their own yet also complement one another and work as a cohesive whole. These readings evidence the wonderful and intricate openness of Scorsese’s cinema, which, as Casillo points out, is best left “imperfectly understood” (xvii). *Gangster Priest* is meticulously researched and includes a wealth of secondary sources. In fact, over 160 pages of notes accompany the roughly 420 preceding pages. On the one hand, such attention to previous scholarship lays the groundwork necessary to read these films in this new and welcome light. On the other, this approach contains two slight limitations. One, the reader at times might feel adrift in a sea of references to secondary sources, and as a result Casillo’s nuanced analyses are overwhelmed by the desire to turn to the back of the book and consult the notes. Second, the notes might have been accompanied with a “list of suggested readings,” which would more specifically guide the interested scholar.

The volume is enriched by twenty images from seven of the films discussed. These stills are well chosen and speak to the author’s main concerns. Images of Charlie

Civello seeking pseudocontrition in a church in opening scenes from *Mean Streets*, of Henry Hill and wife-to-be Karen after her initiation into ritualized Mafia violence, or of a tortured Jake La Motta in the empty, amorphous boxing ring that opens *Raging Bull* evoke a central trope running through Scorsese's body of work: Religion might for some be considered a prophylactic against gangsterism and mob thinking, but in the end, it is as flawed as those who practice it, or like to think that they do.

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*Mafia and Outlaw Stories from Italian Life and Literature.*

Translations and Introduction by Robin Pickering-Iazzi.

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.

180 pages.

While *La Cosa Nostra* has come to be known in the United States through the words and images of Mario Puzo, Francis Ford Coppola, and Martin Scorsese, the English-speaking audience has long wanted for an interpretative key to comprehend the Mafia's cultural and political presence in Sicily and the Italian peninsula. What sets Robin Pickering-Iazzi's fascinating collection of literature and testimonials apart from other texts about the Mafia is that the reader enters in *medias res* an ongoing conversation among Italian authors and witnesses about Mafia mythology and reality. Even a cursory review of the myriad texts contained within *Mafia and Outlaw Stories from Italian Life and Literature* testifies to the vast difference between the American and Italian perceptions of the secret society famously encoded by an ideology of honor, *omertà*, and individual autonomy.

Pickering-Iazzi's comprehensive introduction profiles each author or witness represented in the collection and chronicles important moments in Mafia history, noting that contemporary scholars generally locate the Mafia's beginning in the founding of the modern Italian nation in 1860 and the development of agrarian capitalism (5). The earliest recorded references to the Mafia as a criminal association appear simultaneously in state documents (Prefect Marchese Filippo Gualtierio's alert in 1865 to the Italian government about the dangerous conditions in Sicily brought about by Mafia activity) and in literary works (Gaspere Mosca's two-act comedy *I mafiusi di la Vicaria* first staged in 1862 in Palermo). Seemingly inspired by these first two written references to the Mafia, Pickering-Iazzi selected both works of fiction and nonfiction that span over a century of Italian history.

Two-thirds of the included texts are short stories from such renowned Italian authors as Giovanni Verga ("The Golden Key," 1884), Grazia Deledda ("The Hired Killer," 1928), and Anna Maria Ortese ("Montelepre," 1955), and excerpts from autobiographies such as Livia De Stefani's *The Mafia at My Back* (1991). Verga's suspenseful short story, while not explicitly about the Mafia, clearly paints the armed field guard Surfareddu as a hired protector of wealthy estates who strong-arms anyone who dares