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## Titillating Cuts

### *Genealogies of Women Editors in Italian Cinema*

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**ABSTRACT** The article analyzes the experiences of Italian women editors as examples of the complex interplay between modes of resistance and acceptance developed by women professionals in a male-dominant film industry. Retracing the evolution of the profession of editor from the silent era to the 1970s, the article navigates the genealogies of Italian women who worked in the cutting room. These women used their creative and professional skills to overcome obstacles imposed by a film industry that otherwise reproduced entrenched patterns of gender and class discrimination. In particular the case of Ornella Micheli, a professional editor who worked on more than sixty films between the 1950s and the 1970s, reveals a practitioner who fitted into the mechanisms of her working environment, but also developed her own personal strategies to affirm her professional status and ensure the continuity of her career. **KEYWORDS** feminist genealogies, Italian cinema, Ornella Micheli, production studies, women editors

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This article discusses the experiences of Italian women film editors during the central decades of the twentieth century, with a particular focus on Ornella Micheli, a professional editor who worked for more than two decades in the postwar years. Micheli's career is discussed in relation to the precarious conditions that have characterized the work of female professionals throughout the history of Italian cinema. All the individual experiences mentioned in this article are analyzed as reflections of "structures of feeling" in the Italian film industry.<sup>1</sup> Raymond Williams considers these as "practical consciousness," or expressions of "meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs" that stimulate practical action. These range from "formal assent with private dissent, to the more nuanced interaction between selected and interpreted beliefs, and acted and justified experiences."<sup>2</sup> The experiences of women editors are read in relation to Williams's framework, and the practical and material consciousness of the postwar Italian film industry, which consistently reproduced traditional patterns of

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gender and class discrimination that forced women to seek modes of resistance and/or acceptance.

The bond between women and editing has a long history in Italian filmmaking, as Italian women developed a close relationship with the invisible and manual professions of the cinema industry. From the anonymous cutters of the silent era to the first professional editors of the 1930s and 1940s up to the present, women editors have been overshadowed by the male professionals who occupied the more decision-making and creative positions. This issue of visibility reflects the relationships of power within the industry, yet the continuity of women practitioners in the cutting room suggests the existence of more complex dynamics. These dynamics can be traced back by analyzing the individual experiences of female professionals in relation to the broader context of film production in order to uncover the “structures of feeling” that characterized their professional lives.

Micheli was one of many professionals who worked mainly for Italian “exploitation” and popular genre features in the 1960s and 1970s, when this kind of low-budget production represented the core of the Italian film business in terms of both investment and box office income.<sup>3</sup> The films were characterized by industrial and standardized modes and by authorial detachment, in that individual directors were not interested in developing their own stylistic signatures. This meant that Micheli, unlike editors working in higher-budget and art-house productions, was less dictated to and directed in her work by senior creative figures. She was also well integrated into the mechanisms of the Italian film industry: the daughter of Roberto Rossellini’s key grip, Micheli apprenticed under one of the most acknowledged female editors of the time, Jolanda Benvenuti, who also worked with Rossellini. Micheli worked as an assistant editor from the end of the 1950s, when she began her professional career, until 1981, when she worked on her last film, *Porno Holocaust* (1981), directed by Joe D’Amato. The crucial years of her professional life were during the so-called golden age of the Italian film business and reflect its production culture in the few decades in which it was a major international player.<sup>4</sup>

Micheli’s filmography includes more than sixty titles, mainly ones directed by popular cult filmmakers such as D’Amato, Riccardo Freda, and Lucio Fulci. Among many others, Micheli edited gothic films such as *Raptus* (*L’orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock*, 1962) and *The Ghost* (*Lo spettro*, 1963); spaghetti Westerns like *I’ll Dig Your Grave* (*Sono Sartana, il vostro beccchino*, 1969) and *The Man in the Silver Saddle* (*Sella d’argento*, 1978); the sexploitation film *Sweet Kisses and Languid Caresses* (*Oh, dolci baci, languide carezze*, 1970);



FIGURE 1. Women at work in an editing room in the early 1960s, pictured in Roberto Bencivenga, “The Production Assistants” (Le segretarie di produzione), *Così* 7, no. 18 (April 30, 1961): 13. Courtesy the “Comizi d’amore” research project online database, <http://sites.unimi.it/comizidamore/accedi/>.

horror films like *Don't Torture a Duckling* (*Non si sevizia un paperino*, 1972) and *Beyond Darkness* (*Buio Omega*, 1979); and the pornographic horror film *Sexy Nights of the Living Dead* (*Le notti erotiche dei morti viventi*, 1980).<sup>5</sup> Thanks to the continuity of her professional life, it is possible to find her name, but only on a quantitative basis (in other words, by tracking her work from the film credits), since she is not listed in the main professional index of the time, *The Italian Cinema Yearbook* (*L'annuario del cinema italiano*).<sup>6</sup> Her work on

genre feature films, which were excluded from the canon of Italian cinema for decades, contributed to her invisibility, unlike in the cases of Benvenuti and Tatiana Casini Morigi, who worked with critically praised directors.<sup>7</sup>

The long history of invisibility of female practitioners like Micheli points directly to questions of historiography and methodology, illuminating the intersection of issues shared by both women's film history and production studies. In other words, the way the Italian film industry has been investigated so far requires an additional effort in terms of methodology in attempts to investigate the historical contributions of women to Italian filmmaking. Interviews and traces of material culture were essential tools for this article, which aims to build an archaeological approach to women's film history and to reconstruct marginalized production cultures. It investigates the gaps left by traditional sources and institutional accounts of film history, which have rarely taken into account matters such as the materiality of work and the contributions of below-the-line professionals, and difficult-to-quantify aspects like social and professional capital.<sup>8</sup> The result is a "film scholarship without films" that allows us to, as Shelley Stamp puts it, step into "a world where women circulate, have agency and make meaning" by tracing back, as Jane Gaines says, "the industrial conditions of women's meaning making."<sup>9</sup>

Micheli's experience can be traced back only through secondary sources. As she passed away almost ten years ago, the main source for this research is an interview I conducted with her brother Bruno, who worked as her assistant from 1964 to 1981.<sup>10</sup> Even though she was the trusted editor of the cult director Lucio Fulci, there is only one recorded interview with Micheli available that is (unsurprisingly) entirely centered on Fulci.<sup>11</sup> The popular films that she edited in the 1960s explicitly appealed to male spectators and still represent cult objects for a predominantly male fandom that in general reveres the figure of the director, following the traditions of art-house film criticism.<sup>12</sup> When Fulci died in 1996, the testimonies of his collaborators, like Ornella and Bruno Micheli, were collected as behind-the-scenes anecdotes for fans, but these naturally focused on the director's persona and style. Given the partial nature of these sources, it is essential to frame them in a broader reconstruction of the general mechanisms that characterized the Italian film industry, and more specifically the working conditions of its editors. This further complicates the previously discussed question of methodology, given the heterogeneous nature of the sources available and their limited correspondence with those of Anglo-American production studies.<sup>13</sup> As such, the next section provides an overview of the state of the

Italian film industry during Micheli's career and the sources available, showing their limits and their possibilities.

### SPOTLIGHTS AND BLIND ALLEYS IN ITALIAN PRODUCTION STUDIES

As a preliminary approach, it is necessary to reconsider the sources that enable us to find traces of women in the Italian film industry. Production studies is a relatively new field, and gender studies has only recently found a place in Italian film studies. This partially explains both the difficulty in accessing archival sources and the lack of interest in the material and working conditions of film practitioners in studies of Italian cinema. However, there are many sources available, and they served as a solid ground for this research.

To date, investigations of the Italian film industry have followed three main paths. One is anecdotal, involving interviews with practitioners conducted by film critics, such as Goffredo Fofi and Franca Faldini's *The Adventurous History of Italian Cinema* (*L'avventurosa storia del cinema italiano*, 1981).<sup>14</sup> The main contribution to the history of editing is Stefano Masi's book *In the Dark of the Cutting Room* (*Nel buio della moviola*, 1985), which is a collection of oral testimonies. Masi is a film critic, director, and journalist, and his interviews reflect a specific interest in editors—including a few women editors—who have worked with acknowledged directors.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, although Masi's work represents a fundamental reference for this article, it is important to stress its partial perspective, due to the author's view that editing is subsidiary to directing. Indeed, as Francesco Di Chiara and Paolo Noto point out, these "anecdotal" contributions nurture a persistent "adventurous" narrative of the Italian film industry that gives practitioners a mythological aura based on subjective notions of talent and improvisation.<sup>16</sup> The second group of studies considered here are historical investigations that take an economic and institutional perspective, for example the classic study by the Marxist film critic Lorenzo Quaglietti, *An Economic-Political History of Italian Cinema, 1945–1980* (*Storia economico-politica del cinema italiano, 1945–1980*, 1980), which analyzes the intervention of Italian politics into the structures of film production.<sup>17</sup> This economy-centered approach was followed many years later by more systematic investigations supported by archival research, including Barbara Corsi's *With a Few Dollars less* (*Con qualche dollaro in meno*, 2001) and Daniela Manetti's book on the Fascist period, *A Very Powerful Weapon: Film Industry and State During Fascism, 1922–1943* (*Un'arma poderosissima: industria cinematografica e Stato durante il fascismo, 1922–1943*, 2012).<sup>18</sup> However, in privileging aspects

such as financing, production (and producers), and legislation, these studies do not offer a perspective on working conditions, labor, or gender.<sup>19</sup> The last group of studies on the Italian cinema industry mainly focuses on technological advancements with no specific address to their relationship to labor and gender.<sup>20</sup>

A few studies published in the 1970s did deal with the intersection of work, creativity, and gender issues in the postwar context, perhaps thanks to a favorable cultural and political scenario that coincided with the peak of the Italian feminist movement and the significant weight of unions in Italian politics and institutions of the time. The most relevant contribution in this respect was a special issue of the Italian film journal *Bianco e Nero* on women in cinema, edited by Cinzia Bellumori and published in 1972.<sup>21</sup> Bellumori surveyed the presence of female professionals, from workers in film stock development plants to actresses, combining quantitative and qualitative sources to analyze how the Italian cinema industry systematically excluded women from decision-making and creative positions. Covering two decades, from 1950 to 1969, Bellumori explicitly engaged with a feminist perspective and linked discrimination in the Italian film industry to the broader inequalities that affected female workers in general. This study represents the only systematic attempt to date to investigate the role of female practitioners in the postwar Italian film industry. Scholars and institutions today are focusing their attention on present conditions.<sup>22</sup> In 1977 the journalist Patrizia Carrano published a book on the relationship between women and Italian cinema that engaged with contemporary feminist debates in relation to women's representation in Italian erotic cinema.<sup>23</sup> Carrano asserted that the crisis regarding women and their representation was partially understandable as a consequence of male hegemony in the Italian film industry, and that Italian male-dominated film criticism could be only counteracted with a female-centered film culture—female film critics and directors. Carrano explicitly accounted for the difficulties of women working in the Italian film industry, but her journalistic approach and militant tone made her study more a testimony than a neutral documentary source on practitioners' working conditions.

Given these few empirical and primary materials, complementary sources such as professional and technical manuals, industry press, contracts, archival materials, and oral testimonies are essential for the reconstruction of the actual working conditions of Italian women film professionals. In particular the 1956 manual for film producers edited for the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia (CSC) by Valentino Brosio and a 1966 handbook on cinema techniques by Paolo Uccello are primary tools for understanding the role of



editing in Italian postwar filmmaking, and the working conditions and procedures in the cutting room.<sup>24</sup> The unavailability of technical manuals on film editing could be explained by the lack of formal training for this profession at the CSC, where training for editors was part of their program in film direction. A specific training program for editing was not inaugurated until 1983.

Archival sources play a crucial role in this research, in both a positive and a negative way. Access to the documents of trade unions such as the National Association of Producers (Anica) and the CSC film school is complicated due to matters of gatekeeping and leakage.<sup>25</sup> With regard to trade unions, their division into three separate organizations—Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL), Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori (CISL), and Unione Italiana del Lavoro (UIL)—which were in turn organized into local divisions, makes any attempt to find historical records particularly challenging. Even when individual union officials have been sympathetic to this research, the findings were partial and did not lend themselves to the discovery of general trends of the kind that can be traced in other archival sources. Indeed, most of the complementary archival research was conducted using the papers of the production manager Mara Blasetti, stored at the Cineteca di Bologna.<sup>26</sup> As a rare case of an archive belonging to a female film professional, it allows the study of materials relating to women's working conditions and filmmaking practices. This collection covers the same years as Micheli's career and includes private correspondence as well as production plans that provide data on the pay gaps between professionals above and below the line.

### THE FEMALE EDITOR IN ITALIAN CINEMA

From the first footage discovered of Esfir Shub's *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927) to the digital fan-labor practice of vidding, women's creativity has established a privileged relationship with editing that leads to unexpected results in different cultural and historical contexts.<sup>27</sup> Monica Dall'Asta and Alessandra Chiarini interpreted women's preference for editing in cinema as a consequence of the material conditions of film production that inform the hierarchical structures of commercial cinema.<sup>28</sup> These conditions have changed over time, as the strong presence of women in the silent era suggests. With regard to editing, Giuliana Bruno's study on Elvira Notari and the contributors to the Women Film Pioneers Project have demonstrated that female editors played a primary role in many national film industries since the early decades of cinema.<sup>29</sup> Most of the trends outlined by Kristen Hatch in her article on the American editor Margaret Booth can also be found in the Italian context.<sup>30</sup>

In particular, the transition from the anonymous and serial work of the “cutter” in the early years to the creative, recognized profession of the editor marked a similar path for Italian women working in the cutting room.

As shown by a photograph of female workers in an editing room included by Vittorio Mariani in his 1916 *Practical Guidebook on Cinematography* (*Guida pratica alla cinematografia*), in Italy, as in the United States, “assembling reels and cutting negatives was tedious work that often fell to young working-class women.”<sup>31</sup> However, with the advent of Fascism in Italy, and its ambition to build a full-fledged national film industry, this situation changed rapidly. In particular starting in the 1930s, the efforts of the Fascist state to centralize and control cinema production prompted the institutionalization of the industrial apparatus, including film criticism, which launched a huge debate over the definition of national cinema.<sup>32</sup> Despite considerable scholarly attention to this delicate phase of Italian film history, little has been written on how this process actually affected women professionals. In any case, it is significant that at the CSC at its foundation, in 1935, women could only specialize in acting and *scenotecnica*, which trained professionals in makeup, costume, and set design.<sup>33</sup> This strongly gendered film training program responded to a broader change in the consideration of the cultural function of cinema, but also corresponded to the gradual segregation of women from Italian public life during the Fascist regime.<sup>34</sup>

With regard to editing in particular, considering both the strong presence of women in the cutting room in the previous decades and the lack of specific training in this profession at the CSC, this process was more nuanced. Stefano Masi affirms that editors were “by definition the most obscure among the close collaborators of the director,” yet this was precisely the period that editor Mario Serandrei attributed to his “high stature as an intellectual” in promoting the editor as fundamental to the creative process of filmmaking.<sup>35</sup> This change to Serandrei’s status reflects the institutionalization of the film professions in the 1930s, and the partial erasure of their artisanal and technical nature in favor of their aesthetic and intellectual aspects. This process coincided with the establishment of the unquestioned centrality of the director, relegating manual professionals like editors to subsidiary yet still crucial positions. These changes in characterization of roles appealed to many male assistant directors, who were promoted to “professional” editors and gradually overtook women, who nevertheless continued to do manual and creative work, often uncredited.<sup>36</sup> This created a hierarchy in the cutting room, where the figure of the cutter,





FIGURE 2. Women working in an editing room, pictured in Vittorio Mariani, *Practical Guidebook on Cinematography (Guida pratica alla cinematografia)* (Milan: Hoepli, 1916), 217.

usually a woman, was downgraded to a lower position, generally of assistant editor under the supervision of chief editors, who were mostly men.

Despite this, the career continuity of a small group of female editors already active in the 1930s suggests a more complex dynamic that cannot be reduced to a simple pattern of exclusion and discrimination, but rather hints at the coexistence of strategies of resistance to and acceptance of the “unwritten rules” of the film industry.<sup>37</sup> One emblematic example is Maria Rosada, a chief editor at Cinecittà studios and a professor of editing at the CSC in Rome. The exceptionality of Rosada’s case proves the existence of female editors in decision-making and senior institutional positions, and at the same time confirms the strong link between women and editing that allowed her to gain a professorship even among the mostly male teaching staff. The exceptionality of this case further illustrates how the success of female professionals was influenced by complex dynamics based on individual prestige and social capital that more often prevented women from succeeding. In this respect, a particularly revealing episode that involved Jolanda Benvenuti, Micheli’s mentor, counterbalanced the

positive experience of Rosada, and further complicates any attempt to frame the experience of female professionals in a predictable “success versus invisibility” dichotomy. Benvenuti was the trusted editor of Roberto Rossellini at the time of his neorealist trilogy *Rome, Open City* (*Roma città aperta*, 1945), *Paisan* (1946), and *Germany Year Zero* (*Germania anno zero*, 1948), widely considered a milestone of postwar Italian cinema. In *Rome, Open City*, the director substituted for Benvenuti’s name that of her well-known male counterpart, Eraldo Da Roma. Many years later, in an interview released in the early 1990s, Benvenuti recalled her exclusion:

I didn’t care. . . . But now, see . . . they didn’t put me [in the credits] because they didn’t put women’s names . . . they didn’t let me put it even in *Paisan* . . . but who wasn’t aware that I’d worked on *Rome, Open City*? Everyone knew that, I was the only one left. They put everyone else’s names, they left out just me.<sup>38</sup>

The financial statements for the film provide further proof of the importance of her work, since her pay (64,875 lire) was higher than Da Roma’s (60,000 lire), and in fact the highest among all the female practitioners involved, with the exception of the lead female actor, Anna Magnani.<sup>39</sup> Benvenuti discovered her exclusion from the credits after the film’s release and did not complain at that time because the suppression of women’s names from film credits was accepted even among female professionals. She never asked Rossellini for the reasons behind his decision, and they continued to work together for many years.

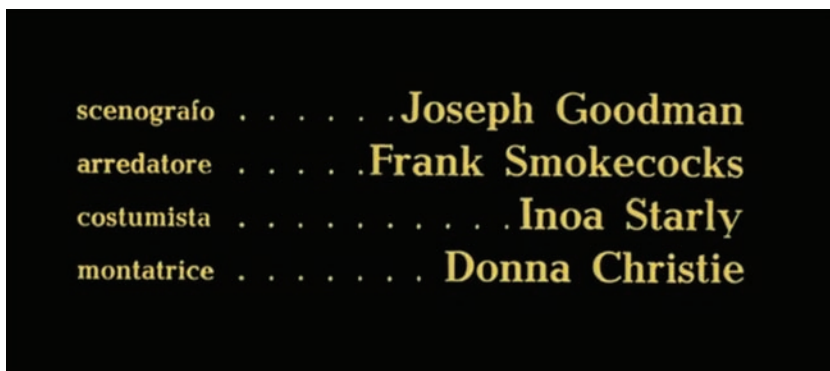


FIGURE 3. Film credits from *Raptus* (*L’orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock*, dir. Riccardo Freda, 1962), in which Ornella Micheli is credited as Donna Christie. Italian genre productions often used foreign pseudonyms for film crew in order to imbue the imitations of foreign prototypes (such as gothic horror films or Westerns) with a degree of “authenticity.”

It is important to stress that the production of *Rome, Open City* was surrounded by material constraints and other difficulties caused by the devastation of World War II. The Italian film industry had been shattered by the German occupation, and all its infrastructure in Rome built by the Fascist regime was shut down. Like other professionals who worked with Rossellini on the film, Benvenuti had to deal with the scarcity of basic equipment, especially film stock, and had to adapt to the extreme working conditions imposed by the improvised nature of the production. Thus her creative and technical contribution was not limited to editing, but covered many other aspects, like directing and sound recording. Her exclusion from the credits of *Rome, Open City* has meant the exclusion of a female professional from one of the key narratives around the “miraculous” efficiency of the Italian film industry during this period. The case perfectly illustrates the high cost she paid—namely, her name’s suppression from the film’s credits—despite having built a trusted relationship with the director. At the time she naturalized this discrimination, which was based on both gender and class. Indeed, in the interview, when she reports on her work with Rossellini, she refers to him as *dottore*, the Italian formal appellation for people with a college degree.<sup>40</sup> This confirms what Benvenuti recalled in another interview: “There were many other girls like me that worked as editors. But we didn’t have any tutelage. None of us had a college education. At the time, for being a director, you needed a college degree. For being an assistant director, you needed a college degree. . . . We uneducated girls had no say in the matter.”<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, at the time, formal training for film professionals was regarded as not unlike a college education, an idea that coexisted with the traditional artisanal mindset that characterized the Italian film industry. This double bind mirrored the patterns of gender and class discrimination in Italian society at the time, which in turn prevented women from accessing prestigious careers and higher education. After the war, and increasingly during the 1950s, Italy witnessed a project for the “moralization” of society that targeted women as mothers and wives and discouraged them from working outside the home or participating in public life.<sup>42</sup> With the 1960s and the economic boom, the traditional place of women in Italian society began to be questioned, but as historical investigations into the labor market have demonstrated, discrimination against female workers persisted and was backed up by legislation.<sup>43</sup> A law formally establishing equal pay for both sexes passed in 1956, but women could not access the magistracy or managerial positions in Italian public institutions until 1963, when employment contracts that allowed women to be fired if they married were also



FIGURE 4. Jolanda Benvenuti in a cutting room, from *Jolanda and Rossellini, Indiscreet Memoirs, 1991–94* (*Jolanda e Rossellini, memorie indiscrete 1991–94*, dir. Paolo Isaja and Maria Pia Melandri), 1995.

abolished.<sup>44</sup> As such, the existence of female professionals in the Italian film industry must be read in a general context of subjugation that was reinforced and at the same time transgressed through informal habits and behaviors.

As a profession relatively accessible to women, film editing reflected gender discrimination in some ways. As a postproduction and below-the-line professional, the editor was less recognized and less remunerated than on-set practitioners like cinematographers. During the postwar years the practice of paying fixed amounts, negotiated in advance in relation to the prestige of the editor, was established regardless of how many hours a job might require. This encouraged professional editors to collaborate on several projects at the same time out of financial necessity and often compromised the quality of their work, which was increasingly handed over to assistant editors. Small productions, typically genre features, limited the hiring of assistants and film checkers in order to save money, and thus editors had to work even more quickly to

make enough money to survive. In this kind of production, editors worked for less than the standard eight to ten weeks usually accorded to bigger projects.<sup>45</sup> Collaboration with acknowledged directors was essential for building social capital and assuring continuity of work, so much so that a small group of reputable editors used their prestige to obtain more projects, became similar to small firms, and monopolized the market by establishing long-term collaborations with particular directors. Unsurprisingly, the frequent demotion of female editors to assistants corresponded with their being paid lower wages, exacerbating their precarious status. Indeed, assistant editors and film checkers (the assistants specifically responsible to assemble the cuts, who were mostly women) were hired and paid weekly, with shifts of ten to twelve hours per day. Other lower-grade professions related to editing were also dominated by women, including workers at film processing plants. These factories usually employed female workers at low pay with few chances of promotion to more remunerative managerial or executive positions.<sup>46</sup>

The few female editors who achieved prestige adapted to this system, which also encouraged familial and friend-based networking and discouraged new entrants. The fact that there were no formal training structures increased the likelihood of access via informal means such as family ties, which represented a general and established practice in the Italian film industry, where since the 1930s personal recommendation had been the primary means for professional recruitment.<sup>47</sup> This particular aspect further proves how women professionals adapted, contributed to, and influenced the “structures of feeling” of the Italian film industry. Indeed, industry workers frequently provided access to the film professions for their relatives and lovers, importing emotional baggage into the workplace and its professional relationships. An emblematic example of this is the Oscar-winning editor Gabriella Cristiani, who started her career alongside her lover Franco “Kim” Arcalli, whom Stefano Masi referred to as “her man, and then her master.” In her interview in Masi’s book, Cristiani accounts for her professional experience as a reflection of her relationship with Arcalli, as her private and emotional life coincided with her career progression.<sup>48</sup>

Private and familial relationships were essential aspects of the artisanal mindset that characterized the Italian film industry, which was substantially based on forms of nepotism across all of its structures. Starting from the wage system, project-based modes of production fostered the reproduction of gender biases and social inequality.<sup>49</sup> Precarious labor promoted the re-traditionalization of gender roles at work, which assigned a growing importance to pre-capitalist and

informal social structures.<sup>50</sup> In the case of Italian film workers, the resulting bonds, usually based on familial relationships and acquaintances, were influenced by socioeconomic circumstances where gender, race, and class biases were also at play.<sup>51</sup> As such, the continuity between the family and the working environment can be read beyond the lens of Italy's infamous "amoral familism." The American anthropologist Edward C. Banfield coined this notion in 1958 as the result of his fieldwork in a rural community of southern Italy.<sup>52</sup> Banfield observed that the members of the community showed exclusive interest in the economic benefits of their nuclear families, leading to chronic social backwardness and economic underdevelopment.

It is interesting how this notion contributed to Italian society's long-lasting resistance to modern capitalism and how family business models actually represented the Italian adjustment to a capitalist economy, which reproduced masculine and patriarchal authority in its production structures.<sup>53</sup> The Italian film industry likewise based the majority of its structures on familial ties. As such, it reproduced pre-capitalistic understandings of labor and privileged familial connections over other forms of professional networking. By encouraging the hiring of relatives, the system increased the exclusivity of the community of practitioners, blocking social mobility and creative independence. It is interesting to note that, excluding the few accounts on the Italian film industry that engage with a feminist perspective, like Bellumori's and Carrano's, professionals and film critics have described this environment by stressing positive values like friendship and comradeship. Indeed, the history of Italian practitioners is mostly based on accounts emphasizing instrumentality and contingency, as well as common sense and community. The sense of belonging, as the example of Benvenuti proves, naturalized inequalities and prevented dissent, which also explains the lack of unionization among Italian female below-the-line film professionals.<sup>54</sup> However, it is important to take into account of the testimony of Clara Tonini, an assistant editor and trade union steward interviewed by Carrano, which explicitly referred to the obstacles women faced in becoming professional editors. Tonini affirmed that it was very unlikely to achieve that position until age thirty-five to forty, when there were fewer female chief editors, since at that age the majority of women had left their jobs to take care of their families. Tonini also referred to specific difficulties relating to her role as union steward, and affirmed that being a single woman made her experience bearable.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to these structural conditions, material and technical aspects contributed to the gendering of Italian film professions as a product of those



“technologies of gender” that Teresa de Lauretis demonstrated not only as essential for the capitalist division of labor, but also as expressions of “several interconnected sets of social relations—relations of work, of class, of race, and of sex/gender.”<sup>56</sup> In editing, the enclosed nature of the workplace enabled the relative persistence of women in the cutting room as private-public dichotomies overlapped with the gendering of Italian film professions. In general, private and enclosed spaces have been crucial in the history of women’s creativity. As de Lauretis noted, “Women’s activity has been marked by a recurrent connection between knowledge and confinement.” The consequent “non-recognition of official history” put women in the position of establishing their own history by the “very contradiction” of speaking from the space of their confinement, in other words, from that “room of one’s own” that “constructs a discursive space in which not woman, but women are represented as a social and affective instance.” The result is a “history always in process, here and now, and based in practice, contradiction, heterogeneity.”<sup>57</sup> This is certainly true in the case of Italian female editors, since their persistence in the film industry was tied to a complex and contradictory alternation of acceptance and transgression. The award-winning editor Lucia Zucchetti recently stated:

There is a pride that goes with being in a male dominated industry. . . . I have to say, however, that editing is possibly the one specialization in film where women have been given more access and that I believe is because an editor contributes a lot but does all the work locked in a dark room, behind the scenes—their contribution is not apparent.<sup>58</sup>

Since she was “not the little girl who used to sing and dance in front of an audience,” Zucchetti was “quite comfortable with being behind the scenes,” and preferred to have a “rewarding relationship” with her collaborators.<sup>59</sup> In the cutting room, social interactions were limited to two or three individuals, and issues of authority played out face-to-face and were closely affected by individual skills. This makes film editing very close to craftswomanship.<sup>60</sup> Confinement, manual skills, and the limited weight of authority in the small working environment of the cutting room helped women to maintain and strengthen their privileged relationship with editing.

This is underlined by Italian manuals and technical books, which use a gendered vocabulary to describe the entire editing supply chain. For instance, the Italian term for film checker, *passafilm*, is always preceded by the feminine article *le*. Similarly, film development plants are described as all-female

environments, and female and male editors themselves use metaphors of midwifery and sewing to describe their work. These allusions perform through language the gendered quality of the manual work and skills attached to editing, as well as the gendered nature of the workplace. In the case of lower-grade professions, like those in film development plants, the all-female environment made waged labor more socially acceptable for women outside the domestic sphere, in a social and historical context that discouraged any work that distracted women from their “natural” aspirations of wives and mothers. As demonstrated in this overview, both traditional expectations of female social roles and the specific demands of the film industry influenced women’s access to film professions, consolidating patterns of gender discrimination that mirrored broader understandings of the relationship between women and creativity.

#### **ORNELLA MICHELI: A WOMAN EDITOR CAUGHT BETWEEN PROFESSIONALISM AND FAMILISM**

Ornella Micheli’s career corresponded with the peak of Italian cinema production in the 1960s, when the increased rate of production—to almost two hundred films per year—promoted the standardization of the industrial apparatus.<sup>61</sup> The artisanal skills of Italian professionals were pivotal to the rationalization of costs, thanks to these individuals’ agreeable attitude to standardization and the recycling of materials and equipment. Editors like Micheli became specialists in maximizing results for low-budget productions. Her filmography reflects the eclectic skills required for her job, as she was working on different film genres at the same time, reproducing the same standardized practices. The low-budget nature of Italian genre productions exacerbated many difficult aspects of the editors’ working conditions, and Micheli’s experience provides an interesting example of how female practitioners dealt with these constraints.

To date, historical critiques of Italian film genres such as spaghetti Westerns, Euro-spy, and horror have usually interpreted the presence of women in terms of increasingly sexualized female characters on-screen; the contributions of invisible female practitioners have generally been overlooked.<sup>62</sup> The apparent clash between the display of women’s images as pure spectacle and the invisibility of women’s labor behind the scenes must be reevaluated to give a more nuanced historical account of the relationship between women and cinema. As Pam Cook noted in relation to American grindhouse and exploitation films of the 1950s and 1960s, low-budget Italian productions were conceived as commodities for male markets, and were therefore considered “trash movies generally . . .

unworthy of serious critical attention,” yet they “present serious problems for feminists.” These films, which explicitly took advantage of misogynistic stereotypes and embedded capitalist and patriarchal production structures, “produce contradictions, shifts in meaning which disturb the [same] patriarchal myths of women on which [they rest].”<sup>63</sup> I suggest that these contradictions are even more striking when considering the work of below-the-line female practitioners like Micheli. Popular Italian genres like exploitation films are at odds with the conventions of mainstream and classical cinema and were excluded from the aesthetic canons of national cinema for decades.<sup>64</sup> More specifically, popular Italian films transgress the canons of realism and transparency, which traditionally conceal practitioners’ labor and repress film’s materiality in order to assert the credibility of the *mise-en-scène*.<sup>65</sup> The resultant “excessive, over-present materiality” that appears on-screen, such as the emphasis on low-cost special effects or the repetition and recycling of footage, emphasizes the role of manual labor and consequently the ability and skills of film professionals to adapt to challenging production contexts.<sup>66</sup> As such, the unexpected visibility of women’s work in these controversial films represents further proof of contradictions in the patriarchal structures of Italian cinema.

A brief overview of Micheli’s filmography highlights an extraordinary proximity to the careers of other female editors of the period, like Giuliana Attenni, who worked with Stefano Vanzina (Steno) and Mariano Laurenti, directors of low-budget comedies. In their thirty-year experience, both Micheli and Attenni each edited more than sixty genre features, under just a handful of directors. This trend became more remarkable in the late 1960s as a consequence of the boom in national production, and in response to the precariousness caused by increased fragmentation of labor in the Italian film industry of the time.<sup>67</sup> As with medium- to high-budget productions, a strong personal relationship with a director was pivotal in ensuring continuity in employment. For this reason, there was little competition among editors. Indeed, Micheli’s brother Bruno recalled the friendly environment:

When my sister and I were working in the cutting room . . . in Fono Roma studios, we met a lot of people we already knew. There was a café and a canteen, so we used to have lunch with the other editors—and I remember that we often ate with the elder female editors and it was a very pleasant time. No competition. Everyone *owned* their own directors.<sup>68</sup>

Bruno’s testimony confirms a genealogy of women editors who maintained good relationships because they did not need to compete for jobs, despite the



FIGURE 5. Film credits from *Don't Torture a Duckling* (*Non si sevizia un paperino*, dir. Lucio Fulci), 1972.

precariousness of their employment. Bruno recalled Micheli's collaboration with Fulci as based on mutual understanding: "Lucio was really satisfied with Ornella's work. Her editing was tight, rhythmic, so after one week the director already had his edited copy." Fulci rarely visited the cutting room and hardly ever demanded modifications, since Ornella "knew how Fulci shoots." In other words, Ornella was rather independent, and her professionalism was particularly appreciated. She enjoyed working with Fulci because he was "very respectful of someone who knows his job."<sup>69</sup>

Professionalism was central to genre productions, and the choice of editor was strategic when it came to saving time and money. Micheli was quick to understand the director's needs at the preliminary screening, then in the cutting room she made her decisions alone. This relative independence required further skills to fulfill economic imperatives: for instance, starting in the early 1970s, films frequently used stock footage instead of more expensive, newly shot content, and it was the job of the editor to insert this without compromising the quality of the film. Moreover, the frequent reuse of discarded material from previous films heightened the responsibility of editors to maximize the content used in finished productions. Finally, editors like Micheli could collaborate on international coproductions without leaving their hometown. That this profession required little mobility made it more accessible for women, but nevertheless it required intensive working patterns. As Bruno Micheli recalled, they would work in the cutting room for entire nights, and their familial connection probably facilitated Micheli's work. Indeed, the relationship between the editor and his or her assistant was based on concentration as well as physical and

mental closeness. Bruno stressed that his role was similar to a surgical assistant: Micheli had the leading role of the surgeon and made the crucial decisions and technical gestures, and he had to pass her the right cut, following and anticipating her plan for the composition.

The centrality of Micheli's familial bonds, especially with her brother, stressed the need for a family who understood the job in a period when women's work in general was still contested. Indeed, Micheli came from a family of film professionals: her father was Rossellini's key grip, and thanks to him she started her apprenticeship with Benvenuti, then worked with the famous editor Roberto Cinquini.<sup>70</sup> She then married the production manager Piero Donati, brother of the producer Ermanno Donati, and worked on many occasions with her husband, as well as with other members of the Micheli family who were hired as technical staff on the same productions. This is the reason, at least in Bruno's account, that Micheli's collaboration with Fulci ceased following the director's decision to stop working with "the Michelis"—a decision for which Bruno did not offer an explanation. Despite having worked with Fulci for fifteen years, Micheli's professionalism was not enough to keep her job.

Through the example of Ornella Micheli, I have stressed the complexity of the experiences of women film editors by highlighting broader historical patterns of gender and class discrimination within the Italian film industry. Although female practitioners were excluded from top-level positions, their skills and creativity nurtured every aspect of filmmaking. Editing is one of the most emblematic examples of this dynamic of constraint and necessity, further confirmed by the strong presence of women in this field. De Lauretis's notion of "feminist genealogy" has allowed me to trace a twofold movement from the collective—and almost entirely obscure—history of Italian female editors to the specific case of Micheli. In this respect, Micheli's experience could be considered both as individual and as offering access to a collective narrative that still requires investigation through new genealogies.

Through the case of Micheli and her related genealogy of female editors, I have attempted to uncover the interplay between resistance and alignment to the patriarchal mechanisms of the film industry that characterized women editors' work in the middle decades of the twentieth century. It is precisely by retracing these dynamics and showing them in relation to other genealogies of women practitioners that we can place new "feminist bricks" in the building of women's film history.<sup>71</sup> ■



FIGURE 6. From the interview with Ornella Micheli in the extras of the DVD *The Psychic* (Neo, 2005).

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#### NOTES

1. The reference is to Raymond Williams, “Structures of Feeling,” in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 128–35. See also Christine Gledhill, “Introduction,” in *Gender Meets Genre in Postwar Cinemas* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 1–12.

2. Williams, “Structures of Feeling,” 132.

3. On the importance of popular film production for postwar Italian cinema see Vittorio Spinazzola, *Cinema e pubblico. Lo spettacolo filmico in Italia* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1985); Barbara Corsi, *Con qualche dollaro in meno. Storia economica del cinema italiano* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 2001).

4. The postwar years represented a lively season for Italian cinema. The 1950s and the 1960s witnessed the peak of its domestic and international popularity in terms of production, circulation, and consumption. As Barbara Corsi has demonstrated, in the



1960s, the Italian film industry and market was second only to the American. Corsi, *Con qualche dollaro in meno*, 2001.

5. A preliminary survey of Micheli's filmography was conducted by cross-checking the results of two online directories, the Internet Movie Database and the Italian Cinema Database by Anica (National Association of Italian Film Industries) with the film credits (when possible, given the difficulty of finding copies of Italian genre films of the 1960s and 1970s). All the translations from Italian are by the author.

6. *The Italian Cinema Yearbook*, edited by the journalist Alessandro Ferrà starting in the 1950–51 season, was a yearly publication aimed at film professionals. It listed the films produced and coproduced in Italy and available for distribution; names and contact information for practitioners, divided into professional categories; and operating film theaters all over the country. The parameters for the inclusion in the *Yearbook* are unknown, but it is very likely that practitioners voluntarily paid to be listed, as in the case of other professional indexes like *Set. Guida categorica professionale per lo spettacolo* [*Professional Guide for Entertainment by Category*] (1971). These kinds of indexes had the practical aim of advertising professionals to production companies.

7. Tatiana Casini Morigi was the editor for directors like Alessandro Blasetti, Ettore Scola, Alberto Sordi, and Pier Paolo Pasolini. I will touch on the case of Jolanda Benvenuti, Micheli's mentor, presently.

8. In film production, "below the line" is a term derived from the layout of the top sheet of a film budget. The "line" separates the costs of the creative, mainly on-set, crew (director, cinematographers, actors) from the technical, mostly off-set, practitioners (editor, operator, location manager).

9. Shelley Stamp, "Feminist Media Historiography and the Work Ahead," *Screening the Past* 40 (2015): <http://www.screeningthepast.com/2015/08/feminist-media-historiography-and-the-work-ahead/>; Jane Gaines, "Film History and the Two Presents of Feminist Film Theory," *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 114. On "film scholarship without films" see Jon Lewis and Eric Smodin, eds., *Looking Past the Screen: Case Studies in American Film History and Method* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

10. The interview was conducted by the author on April 2, 2016.

11. This interview is available in the extras of the DVD release of Lucio Fulci's *The Psychic* (Neo, 2005). I also benefited from access to two unreleased interviews with Bruno Micheli, kindly loaned by the FreakOrama production house, which helped me in contacting and interviewing Bruno.

12. Scholarship on cult cinema has demonstrated the gendered nature of cult film reception and fandom. Joanne Hollows specifically named it the "masculinity of cult" in "The Masculinity of Cult," in *Defining Cult Movies: The Cultural Politics of Oppositional Tastes*, ed. Mark Jancovich (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 35–53. It is interesting to read these contemporary developments in continuity with the gendering of the audience that characterized cult film genres at the time of their release. Indeed, the 1960s and the 1970s witnessed a radical masculinization of Italian film audiences, as discussed in Mariagrazia Fanchi, "Tra donne sole: Cinema, Cultural Consumption and the Female Condition in Post-war Italy," in *Film-Kino-Zauscher: Filmrezeption. Film Spectator: Film Reception*, ed. I. Schenk, M. Tröhler, and Y. Zimmermann (Marburg,

Germany: Schüre, 2012), 305–18; Damiano Garofalo & Dalila Missero, “Lontane da Voghera’: Italian Housewives as Consumers and Spectators between Public and Private Spheres, 1954–1964,” *The Italianist* 38, no. 2 (2018): 174–188.

13. This is particularly evident when comparing the informal and artisanal organization of the Italian film industry with the structures that characterized Hollywood in the same years. Two well-documented studies are John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Miranda Banks, *The Writers: A History of American Screenwriters and Their Guild* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015).

14. Goffredo Fofi and Franca Faldini, eds., *L'avventurosa storia del cinema italiano. Raccontata dai suoi protagonisti 1960–69* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1981). I also group in the same category the only volume that includes a contribution on the history of unions in film industry, *La città del cinema* (1979), which, other than its opening essays, is entirely composed of interviews with film directors, actors, film critics, and other practitioners. Assessorato alla cultura et al., *La città del cinema. Produzione e lavoro nel cinema italiano 1930/1970* (Rome: Napoleone, 1979).

15. Stefano Masi, *Nel buio della moviola. Introduzione alla storia del montaggio* (L'Aquila, Italy: Lanterna Magica, 1985).

16. Francesco Di Chiara and Paolo Noto make specific reference to Fofi and Faldini's book in “Appunti per una storia un po' meno avventurosa: produzione e cinema italiano 1945–1965,” in *Backstage. Studi sulla produzione dei media in Italia*, ed. Luca Barra, Tiziano Bonini and Sergio Splendore (Milan: Unicopli, 2016), 103–15.

17. Lorenzo Quaglietti, *Storia economico-politica del cinema italiano, 1945–1980* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1980).

18. Daniela Manetti, *Un'arma poderosissima: industria cinematografica e Stato durante il fascismo, 1922–1943* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2012).

19. A recent development in this field is the ongoing AHRC-funded project “Producers and Production Practices in the History of Italian Cinema, 1949–1975” hosted by the University of Warwick. See [https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/film/research/current/italian\\_producers\\_project/](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/film/research/current/italian_producers_project/).

20. See for instance Giacomo Manzoli and Guglielmo Pescatore, *L'arte del risparmio. Il cinema a basso costo in Italia negli anni Sessanta* (Rome: Carocci, 2005); Federico Pierotti, Paola Valentini, and Federico Vitella, eds., “Cinema italiano: tecniche e pratiche,” *Quaderni del CSCI. Rivista annuale di cinema italiano*, no. 13 (2017).

21. Cinzia Bellumori, “Le donne del cinema contro questo cinema,” *Bianco e Nero* 11, nos. 1/2 (1972). *Bianco e Nero* is edited by Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia (CSC), the main Italian film institution founded by the Fascist regime in 1935. The CSC has ever since been the most prestigious training school for film professionals in Italy.

22. In 2016 the Italian Centro Nazionale delle Ricerche [National Council for Research] promoted the project “Donne e audiovisivo (DEA)” on the gender gap in film and television industries. See [http://www.irpps.cnr.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/rapporto-GapCiak\\_definitivo.pdf](http://www.irpps.cnr.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/rapporto-GapCiak_definitivo.pdf).

23. Patrizia Carrano, *Malafemmina. La donna nel cinema italiano* (Rimini, Italy: Guaraldi, 1977). Carrano is an intellectual and journalist who writes mainly for progressive and popular

magazines like *Panorama* and *Tempo*, and women's magazines like *Annabella*. In the 1970s she collaborated with *Noi Donne*, a women's magazine edited by the Unione Donne d'Italia, a women's association founded in 1945 and close to the Italian Communist Party.

24. Valentino Brosio, *Manuale del produttore di film* (Rome: Edizioni dell'ateneo, 1956); Paolo Uccello, *Il cinema. Tecnica e linguaggio* (Alba, Italy: Edizioni Paoline, 1966).

25. Neither the Anica archive, stored at the Cineteca Lucana, nor the CSC's national film school documents are organized or catalogued.

26. Mara Blasetti, the daughter of the director Alessandro Blasetti, donated her documents along with her father's archive, which she personally collected and ordered for decades. It is interesting that while her father's archive has been widely studied, Mara's materials have been mostly neglected, despite Cineteca's efforts to promote the study of its collections. My investigation into this rare archive is still ongoing. Some preliminary results were published in Dalila Missero, "Carissima Mara, mi auguro di firmare tantissime fatture di films organizzati da lei: frammenti di cultura produttiva nell'archivio di Mara Blasetti," in "Cinema italiano: tecniche e pratiche," 203–8.

27. Vidding is the practice of creating videos from existing footage from various media sources, essentially a cut-and-paste method. After studying fan videos edited by female *Star Trek* fans, Francesca Coppa pointed out that "to make a vid, to edit footage to subtext-revealing music . . . put technology at the service of desire." In other words, the practice of "vidding," which is mainly based on editing, is a chapter in the long history of female creativity that uses technology as a means to express desire outside the structures of the mainly hegemonic creative industries. Francesca Coppa, "Women, *Star Trek*, and the Early Development of Fannish Vidding," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 1 (2008): <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/44>.

28. Monica Dall'Asta and Alessandra Chiarini, "Found Footage: Women without a Movie Camera," *Feminist Media Histories* 2, no. 3 (Summer 2016): 1–10.

29. Giuliana Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Kristen Hatch, "Cutting Women: Margaret Booth and Hollywood's Pioneering Female Film Editors," in *Women Film Pioneers Project*, ed. Jane Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta, Center for Digital Research and Scholarship (New York: Columbia University Libraries), <https://wfpp.cdrs.columbia.edu/essay/cutting-women/>.

30. Hatch, "Cutting Women."

31. The picture was reproduced again in Federico Pierotti, "Colorare le figure. Il lavoro femminile sulla pellicola," *Bianco e Nero*, no. 570 (2011): 115.

32. In 1935, the screenplay writer and film theorist Luigi Chiarini founded the already-mentioned CSC, a national public school for film professionals, with the goal of providing structured training to film practitioners. This effort could be read as an attempt to control the informal structures of Italian film production, which was then organized into impenetrable yet informal professional guilds. For a general picture of the intervention of the Fascist state and the rise of film criticism in the 1930s see O. Caldiron, ed., 1934–1939, vol. 5 of *Storia del cinema italiano* (Venice and Rome: Marsilio-Edizioni Bianco e Nero, 2006).

33. Alfredo Baldi, “‘Tutti in tuta bleu.’ Cronache del CSC (1934–1945),” *Bianco e Nero*, no. 566 (2010): 33.

34. On the Fascist ideal of femininity and its consequences for women see Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

35. Stefano Masi, “Il contributo dei direttori della fotografia e il ruolo di costumisti, scenografi e montatori,” in *1940–1944*, vol. 6 of *Storia del cinema italiano*, ed. Ernesto G. Laura and Alfredo Baldi (Venice and Rome: Marsilio-Edizioni Bianco e Nero, 2010), 234. Mario Serandrei was a close collaborator of the director Alessandro Blasetti in the 1930s. Like many other film professionals of the time, he worked in varied roles: assistant director, screenplay writer, editor. By the end of the 1930s he was a professional editor, with a long career that only ended in 1966 with his death.

36. Masi, *Nel buio della moviola*, 25.

37. Ilaria Antonella De Pascalis, “Tenere insieme i pezzi: le montatrici,” *Quaderni della CSC. Rivista annuale di cinema italiano*, no. 11 (2015): 222–23.

38. These statements and the following are part of an interview with Jolanda Benvenuti in the early 1990s: *Jolanda and Rossellini, Indiscreet Memoirs, 1991–94 (Jolanda e Rossellini, memorie indiscrete 1991–94, 1995)*.

39. This document, dated September 15, 1945, is reproduced in Stefano Roncoroni, *La storia di Roma città aperta* (Bologna and Recco, Italy: Cineteca di Bologna—Le Mani, 2006), 399–401.

40. According to Rossellini’s biography, he never went to college because of his rebellious personality. He belonged to the upper middle class and came from a prestigious family, and it is precisely this matter of class that explains why Benvenuti called him “dottore.” Indeed, until the late 1960s with the democratization of higher education, college was almost inaccessible to the popular classes. See Gianni Rondolino, *Roberto Rossellini* (Turin: UTET, 1989), 17–22.

41. Quoted in Masi, *Nel buio della moviola*, 114.

42. The 1950s were characterized by a project of “Catholic reconquest of the society . . . a boom of the social and political influence of the Church.” Marco Barbanti, “La classe dirigente cattolica e ‘la battaglia per la moralità,’ 1948–1960. Appunti sul regime clericale,” *Italia contemporanea*, no. 189 (December 1992): 607. However, even left-wing parties and organizations promoted traditional understandings of the family and of the private sphere, as the scarce presence of female activists until the subsequent decade demonstrates. See Maria Casalini, *Famiglie comuniste. Ideologie e vita quotidiana nell’Italia degli anni Cinquanta* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011). For a general reconstruction of the debates on femininity in Italy see also Sandro Bellasai, *La legge del desiderio. Il progetto Merlin e l’Italia degli anni Cinquanta* (Rome: Carocci, 2006); Perry Wilson, *Women in Twentieth-Century Italy* (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010); Penelope Morris, ed., *Women in Italy, 1945–1960: An Interdisciplinary Study* (Basingstoke, England, and New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2006).

43. See for instance Eloisa Betti, “Il lavoro femminile nell’industria italiana. Gli anni del boom economico,” *Storicamente* 6, no. 33 (2010): [https://storicamente.org/lavoro\\_femminile\\_donne](https://storicamente.org/lavoro_femminile_donne).

44. Women were barred from becoming magistrates because they were considered incapable of rational decision making or reliable judgment.

45. Also the minimum pay for editors, as for most of the technical film professions, was established from week to week. The minimum wage was fixed by national contracts between the professional guilds, the unions, and the association of film producers. It is interesting to note that cinematographers began to work on contract with standards closer to those of the directors around the 1950s. See Otello Angeli, "Strutture produttive, contratti, organizzazione sindacale," in *La città del cinema. Produzione e lavoro nel cinema italiano 1930/1970*, ed. Assessorato alla cultura et al. (Rome: Napoleone, 1979), 60–65.

46. This is well demonstrated by Cinzia Bellumori in her survey of female workers in the film processing plants. Bellumori, "Le donne del cinema contro questo cinema," 6–30.

47. Fabio Andreazza, "Entrare in campo. La raccomandazione come forma di reclutamento negli anni '30," in "Cinema italiano: tecniche e pratiche," 197.

48. Masi, *Nel buio della moviola*, 232–35.

49. Doris Ruth Eikhoh and Chris Warhurst, "The Promised Land? Why Social Inequalities Are Systemic in the Creative Industries," *Employee Relations* 35, no. 5 (2013): 495–508.

50. Mark Banks and Katie Milestone, "Individualization, Gender and Cultural Work," *Gender, Work and Organization* 18, no. 1 (2011): 70–89.

51. Deborah Warr, "Gender, Class, and the Art and Craft of Social Capital," *Sociological Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (2006): 497–520.

52. Edward C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (Glencoe, IL: Research Center in Economic Development and Cultural Change, 1958).

53. Simone Ghezzi, "Familism as a Context for Entrepreneurship in Northern Italy," *Human Affairs* 25, no. 1 (2015): 58–70.

54. Unfortunately statistics on this historical trend are not available, yet both Bellumori and Carrano reported this as a compelling issue for female workers. Bellumori, "Le donne del cinema contro questo cinema," 21–26; Carrano, *Malafemmina*, 35–39.

55. Carrano, *Malafemmina*, 53–54.

56. Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 9.

57. Teresa de Lauretis, "Feminist Genealogies: A Personal Itinerary," *Women's Studies International Forum* 16, no. 4 (July–August 1993): 393, 401.

58. Quoted in Roger Crittenden, *Fine Cuts: The Art of European Film Editing* (Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2006), 31.

59. Quoted in Crittenden, *Fine Cuts*, 31.

60. The vocabulary around artisanal and craft labor is for the most part gendered (e.g., words like "craftsman" and "craftsmanship") and mirrors the traditional understanding of manual and skilled labor as male. With regard to editing, it is interesting to notice how the same aspects are used to confine women's creativity to a subsidiary position in the broader framework of film production.

61. For a reconstruction of how this process took place in the 1950s see Simone Venturini, *Galatea S.p.A. (1952–1965): Storia di una casa di produzione cinematografica* (Rome: Associazione italiana per le ricerche di storia del cinema, 2001).

62. In their works on popular Italian genres, both Maggie Günsberg and Flavia Brizio-Skov analyze the relationship between these films and gender in terms of women's visibility on screen. Maggie Günsberg, *Italian Cinema: Gender and Genre* (Basingstoke, England, and New York: Palgrave, 2005); Flavia Brizio-Skov, ed., *Popular Italian Cinema: Culture and Politics in a Postwar Society* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2011).

63. Pam Cook, "Exploitation' Films and Feminism," *Screen* 17, no. 2 (1976): 123, 127.

64. Richard Dyer and Ginette Vincendeau, eds., *Popular European Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 8–9.

65. Kristina Pia Hofer, "Exploitation Feminism: Trashiness, Lo-Fidelity and Utopia in *She-Devils on Wheels* and *Blood Orgy of the Leather Girls*," *Transatlantica*, no. 2 (2015): 6.

66. Elena Gorfinkel, "'Dated Sexuality': Anna Biller's *Viva* and the Retrospective Life of Sexploitation Cinema," *Camera Obscura* 26, no. 3, 78 (2011): 107.

67. Angeli, "Strutture produttive, contratti, organizzazione sindacale," 54–56.

68. Author interview with Bruno, April 2, 2016. Fono Roma studios, founded and based in Rome from 1931, is still today one of the primary Italian service companies for editing and postproduction. Fono Roma rents cutting rooms and editing equipment to different film and television productions. For this reason, it was common for editors working on different projects to run into one another there.

69. Author interview with Bruno, April 2, 2016.

70. Cinquini was a prolific editor who worked for both low- and high-budget productions. In particular he edited critically appraised films like *Kapò* (1960) and the Oscar-winning *Divorce Italian Style* [*Divorzio all'italiana*] (1963). To better understand how the professional networks worked in this specific case, consider the example of Riccardo Freda's *Lust of the Vampire* [*I vampiri*] (1957). The film was edited by Cinquini and produced by Ermanno Donati (Ornella's brother-in-law) and Piero Donati (Ornella's husband). Ornella's first credited works as chief editor were two films by Riccardo Freda, *Samson and the 7 Miracles of the World* [*Maciste alla corte del Gran Khan*] (1961) and *Maciste in Hell* [*Maciste all'inferno*] (1962).

71. I borrow the expression "feminist bricks" from Sara Ahmed's most recent book, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), where she explicitly avoids citations from white male thinkers. For Ahmed, "Citations can be feminist bricks: they are the materials through which . . . we create our dwellings. My citation policy has affected the house I have built" (6). Similarly, finding a room for Italian women professionals in the "building" of cinema history require us to state clearly what kind of materials we are looking for. As such, "feminist genealogies" could be properly intended as "feminist bricks."