Pap Khouma. *I was an Elephant Salesman. Adventures Between Dakar, Paris, and Milan*. Ed. Oreste Pivetta, trans. Rebecca Hopkins, intro. Graziella Parati. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University press, 2010. Pp. 138. ISBN 978-0-253-35522-5. \$ 18.95.

In the past thirty years Italy, like other southern European countries, has become a destination for migrants in search of a better way of life. Initially indifferent to the incoming others, as their numbers increased and public discourse began to talk about a social emergency, Italians started to perceive migrants as a threat to their safety, their economic conditions, and their imagined identity as a culturally homogeneous community. By the late 80's, immigrants came to be seen as an unwanted category of people, and were increasingly subjected to negative stereotypes and racist attacks. First released in 1990, Pap Khouma's autobiographical novel *I was an Elephant Salesman* was one of the first attempts to challenge discriminatory discourses and reclaim the immigrants' right to self-representation. Khouma's novel gives a name and a face to the African migrants who were settling in Europe in the 80's, and familiarizes readers with their struggle to make a dignified living as salesmen, while coping with the dangers and the hardships of a life lived at the margins. The novel's translation, today, brings to English-speaking readers a sad yet hopeful story of modern migration, while introducing them to a crucial aspect of contemporary Italy and other European communities who are struggling to come to terms with their multicultural identity.

After leaving his home country of Senegal, a place where social immobilism and corruption have taken away even people's desire to dream, the narrator heads first to the Ivory Coast and then to Europe, where he settles temporarily on Italy's Adriatic Coast. Unable to make it to Germany, or to settle in the land of the former colonizer, where the Senegalese community is hostile to newcomers and the Foreign Legion turns him down, the narrator eventually returns to Italy. Here, with his travel partners, he faces once again the challenges of being a poor, illegal and dark-sinned immigrant. Because of their fear of being deported, the narrator and his companions live under false identities and are unable to make connections with anyone, including the people who show them solidarity. Furthermore, in order to keep a low profile, immigrants cannot respond to the humiliations, the threats or even the physical abuse received from the locals or the police. Their situation worsens as immigration increases, and, in 1987, the government grants immigrants residency permits, changing their status from "shadows" to "men." As the narrator experiences first-hand after his second return to Italy (he temporarily goes back to Dakar), in the late 80's the country's indifference towards immigrants turns into hostility, and the police are constantly at the immigrants' back, confiscating their goods, which is practically everything they own, and challenging their newly gained rights to speak up and defend themselves against discriminations. However, these difficulties do not discourage new associations, such as the one directed by the narrator, from fighting for the immigrants' right "to live like regular people". Migrants like Khouma fight back also by telling their side of the story. Literature becomes a counter-narrative of power, the means to subvert hegemon-

ic discourses about culture, and foster the process of transcultural understanding that naturally takes place when, as we read in the novel's conclusion, "Many stay and meet Italian girls. They fall in love. There are weddings and then separations and divorces, and still more marriages. Babies are born" (138).

As Khouma contends in *I was an Elephant Salesman*, telling his story brought him luck. After the first bestseller written with the journalist Oreste Pivetta, Khouma became a professional writer and journalist himself, and founded the journal of migrant literature "El Ghibli". Khouma's novel, however, seeks to bring luck also to the many others who have been unable to make their voice heard.

Since the 90's, migration literature has managed to impose itself on the Italian literary landscape and is now in its second phase, as authors moved away from personal testimonies on the experience of migration, to write fiction dealing with cultural hybridity and the creation of identities that transgress national and cultural boundaries. However, as Graziella Parati argues in the novel's introduction, this would not have been possible without foundational texts such as Pap Khouma's autobiographical novel *I was an Elephant Salesmen*. Hence, as Parati also contends, Khouma's first novel is still a "mandatory point of reference" both to understand who the modern migrant is, and to gain a new perspective on the destination culture, one that brings to light Italy's inner contradictions instead of reinforcing artificial myths of cultural and moral superiority. Thanks to Rebecca Hopkins's translation, which preserves the work's ethical intentions without neglecting its ironic tone, *I was an Elephant Salesman* is also an enjoyable reading and easily captures the readers' attention, while prompting them to reflect on uncomfortable issues related to today's globalized world.

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***Mafia Movies. A Reader.* Ed. Dana Renga. Toronto; Buffalo, N.Y.; London: University of Toronto Press. Pp. 400. ISBN 978-0-8020-9665-4. \$ 37.95.**

In the last several years, the mafia phenomenon has become a more visible presence not only in the media (with Roberto Saviano's case as the most evident example) but also as the subject of books (novels, docu-fiction, criticism) and films, and as a topic of sustained discussion in schools and university courses, both in Italy and in the United States. For the growing number of students and scholars dealing with mafia issues, the collection edited by Dana Renga is an excellent new resource.

Centered on the representation of mafia on screen in Italy and the United States, *Mafia Movies* includes forty essays on both classic and more recent films and TV series addressing mafia's complex and ambivalent manifestations, perceived at once as a social and political plague and as a captivating legend.

Divided into two sections, covering respectively American and Italian mafia movies, the volume opens with two introductory essays that provide cohesion