libro, inoltre, memorialistico nei suoi aspetti formali, è sostanzialmente narrativo, e mi meraviglio che non ve ne siate accorti; il racconto va dai modi saggistici a quelli del poema in prosa, dalle storielle di poche righe a quelle più lunghe, ai frammenti d'un presumibile romanzo" (69). Thus the figure of Dal Fabbro as anti-conformist, reflected both in the autobiographical and literary dimensions, comes to life in this perceptive and eminently readable volume. It provides excellent critical analyses of his writings, enriched by a vivid depiction of their cultural context. It adds a valuable contribution to his Renaissance and will, hopefully, lead not only to further critical studies devoted to Dal Fabbro's works but also to their revival in publishing.

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Meris Nicoletto. Valerio Zurlini. *Il rifiuto del compromesso*. Alessandria: Falso-piano, 2011. Pp. 383, ill. ISBN 9788889782163. € 22.

Best known for *Il deserto dei Tartari* (1976), the multi-awarded film adaptation of the eponymous novel by Dino Buzzati, Valerio Zurlini (1926-1982) is defined by Nicoletto "regista appartato" (15), absent from the list of the best *maestri* of Italian cinema of the Fifties and Sixties. Zurlini is grouped with Maselli, Petri, Brusati etc., but deserves to be considered beside the big names in filmmaking like Pasolini, Bertolucci and Bellocchio. In this monograph Meris Nicoletto follows chronologically Zurlini's career from the early days of documentary in the Fifties, to his feature films (1955 to 1976) and does justice to the neglected Bolognese director.

Nicoletto engages in a reappraisal of Zurlini's cinema and explains the reason for the little critical recognition and his fall into relative obscurity: "Il suo cinema, in apparenza 'superato' per le tematiche affrontate, è di fatto 'in anticipo,' per la capacità di captare le trasformazioni sociali e i mutamenti del pensiero del suo tempo." (12) Nicoletto finds in Zurlini's "poetica dei sentimenti" the *fil rouge* that unifies his cinema, the stories of young individuals, particularly women, facing all sorts of life difficulties. The scholar also documents Zurlini's problems in finishing his movies, often delayed, underfunded, rejected, precisely because they did not conform to the popular genres of the time.

The book in twelve chapters, examines Zurlini's entire *oeuvre*, his documentary production, his penchant for literary adaptations, his friendship and collaboration with Vasco Pratolini, his interest in painting. Ample space is given to the eight feature films (to each is devoted one chapter): *Le ragazze di Sanfrediano* (1954) from Pratolini's eponymous novel, *Estate violenta* (1959) a passionate love story set in 1943 at the end of World War II, *La ragazza con la valigia* (1961) a melancholy description of the tormented love story between two young people from different backgrounds, *Cronaca familiare* (1962), another adaptation from Pratolini, centering around the dramatic vicissitudes of two brothers, *Le soldatesse* (1965), *Seduto alla sulla destra* (1968), *La prima notte di quiete* (1972), and *Il deser-*

to dei tartari (1976). Chapter eleven, entitled “Il rifiuto del compromesso,” focuses on some unpublished work: *Gli anni delle immagini perdute* (1982), posthumous book edited by Vasco Pratolini, which contains three screenplays of unproduced films especially dear to Zurlini: *La zattera della Medusa* (1969), *Verso Damasco* (1973-74), and *Il sole nero* (1978). Such screenplays were rejected because they did not fit the parameter of commercial production. Nicoletto’s monograph ends with a chapter including a biography, a filmography as well as a list of Zurlini’s other written works. Nice black and white still photographs from each film enrich the book.

In Zurlini’s filmography we find a recurring theme: the ‘coppia impossibile’ and the brief encounter of lonely young individuals, whose love stories have no happy ending and no future. The director’s predilection for adolescents is clear in some of his titles where the *ragazza* takes center stage. *Le ragazze di Sanfrediano*, a free adaptation of Pratolini’s novel, marked the difficult start of Zurlini’s career, a film that was rejected and revised numerous times and not well received by critics, who considered it a degeneration of neorealism. Wrongly classified as a sentimental comedy *Un’estate violenta* tackles for the first time in cinema the fall of fascism and includes historical episodes, but focuses again on the impossible love story between two young people of different age. In *La ragazza con la valigia*, a film that takes a distance from *commedia all’italiana*, the most popular genre of the time, Zurlini follows the birth and growth of a love relation that ends in failure. The film deals with socio-cultural issues not fully explored at the time by contemporary filmmakers, such as the relation between an adolescent boy of the higher echelons of society and an older girl from the lower social classes. Especially poignant is the image of Aida (Claudia Cardinale, in her first major role) with her suitcase, symbol of the precarious existence of the young, naive *soubrette* trying to make a career as a showgirl, but constantly exploited by older men. This image is chosen by Nicoletto for the front cover of the book, while for the back a still from *Il deserto dei Tartari* well encapsulates the start and end of Zurlini’s cinematic career.

For *Le soldatesse* Nicoletto talks about “film scomodo” taking responsibility for a war that Italians did not want, a *mea culpa* limited to the fascists, which caused some negative reviews. This film shows a war with few heroes and no celebratory tones, as the background for a love story, once again the main theme for Zurlini. *Seduto alla sua destra* is a quite unusual film in that it focuses on the contrast between oppressors and oppressed and is set in a non-descript country in Africa during the assassination of a non-violent independence leader. In this movie the loneliness of the characters derives, not only from socio-historical conditions, but also from the existential drama of “ineluttabile destino di morte che accomuna i protagonisti e che prelude all’ultimo lungometraggio del regista.” (245)

Il deserto dei tartari, with a star-studded cast including Vittorio Gassman, Giuliano Gemma, Philippe Noiret and Jean-Louis Trintignant, with masterful soundtrack by Ennio Morricone, is an excellent version of Buzzati’s novel, set in a *Finis Austriae* atmosphere. This film is considered Zurlini’s testament and hints at the director’s journey towards death. The protagonist, Giovanni Drogo (Jacques Perrin), dies in perfect solitude, abandoned by everyone, sick with a physical and

metaphysical illness, the desert disease, which is also “malattia dell’anima.” (12) Loneliness and death accompany Drogo as well as the other characters in Zurlini’s filmography, such as the female protagonists of his previous films. In chapter ten Nicoletto truly shines by engaging in a theoretical discussion about faithful filmic adaptation and highlighting the visual and pictorial talent of both Buzzati and Zurlini, both deeply fascinated by metaphysical painting and by De Chirico. The chapter also provides a very accurate analysis of and a detailed comparison between the novel and the film.

In conclusion Nicoletto’s book is a well-documented and exhaustive monograph that fills a gap in the scholarly research on Valerio Zurlini, and pays tribute to a director, whose film production deserves more consideration.

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Tiziana Ferrero-Regis, *Recent Italian Cinema. Spaces, Contexts, Experiences*. Leicester, UK: Troubador Publishing, 2009. Pp. 296. ISBN 9781848760851. \$ 22.95.

Il volume *Recent Italian Cinema. Spaces, Contexts, Experiences* dell’autrice Tiziana Ferrero-Regis apre nuove riflessioni sul cinema italiano dell’ultimo ventennio grazie ad un’analisi multidisciplinare e “trasversale” di questo cinema. Per decenni la critica anglo-americana del cinema italiano si è concentrata sullo studio di un numero selezionato di film che poteva essere analizzato seguendo il paradigma della teoria del *film d’auteur*, dimenticando di riconoscere i cambiamenti avvenuti (ed in atto) nella cultura di massa, nella produzione e distribuzione dei film, e del veloce progresso della tecnologia, con il risultato di non riuscire ad apprezzare e capire il cinema italiano di questo periodo (al di là di alcuni film d’autore). *Recent Italian Cinema* tiene conto di questi cambiamenti ed esplora il complesso sistema multiforme di produzione, distribuzione e diffusione dei film italiani degli ultimi vent’anni. L’autrice sostiene che è oggi evidente che non si può più separare il cinema nazionale dall’influenza aggressiva che Hollywood ha sull’immaginario collettivo, sull’economia politica, sui termini di produzione e distribuzione. Per esempio, l’immediato successo del film di Daniele Lucchetti, *Mio fratello è figlio unico* (2007), alla sua uscita a Roma e a Milano, sarà immediatamente offuscato da quello del film americano: *Spiderman 3*. Sono i distributori americani, i quali operano in stretta collaborazione con gli *studios* di Hollywood, che decidono cosa “goes on the screens” e quando un film locale è “successful” (p. xvi).

Recent Italian Cinema s’interroga su cosa sia il cinema nazionale, di quanto fluidi siano i suoi confini, e di come esso sfoci sempre più in un cinema globale, apparentemente nazionale. L’autrice tratta dunque di “geopolitica” del cinema e della sua importanza nel comprendere quanto il cinema italiano recente abbia negoziato il proprio spazio di produzione e distribuzione nei mercati nazionali e internazionali, e di come e quanto abbia inciso sulla rappresentazione dei film.

Il volume *Recent Italian Cinema. Spaces, Contexts, Experiences* è diviso in tre