recent historically and also dramatically different from the preceding novels. In common with the previous texts is the 'otherness' of the dead mother. It creates the same directional tension between daughter-narrator (despite portions devoted to the dead mother's self-critique) in order to develop an understanding of the bond between them and how the societal role of each is defined (distorted) by patriarchal expectations.

This volume is a methodical application of psychoanalytical feminist theory from the end of the twentieth century to a body of women's narrative from the same period (excepting, of course, Morante, although clearly her inclusion has an obvious matrilineal connection to the Italian women's discourse of the 70s and 80s). The author carefully denies a direct causal relationship between theory and practice but, like Adalgisa Giorgio in *Writing Mothers and Daughters*, she posits the connection. Her selection of daughter-narratives fit skillfully into her chosen theoretical framework: how can women step outside of the patriarchal conceptual system (the symbolic order) in order to express a new symbolic order. The key is first recognition of sexual difference and of the mother. Sambuco has carefully articulated her method and attributed its many facets and origins to the relevant feminist philosophers. She applies this measurement to each single text and evaluates how each daughter-protagonist makes steps in the direction of denying the patriarchal as she attempts tracing her path toward subjectivity. Sambuco's selections and analyses lend new and productive ideas to the consideration of women's texts from that period but likely to more recent ones as well. Female-to-female intersubjective communication and the mother-daughter trope continue to enlighten our analyses of literature in the new millennium.

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***Popular Italian Cinema. Culture and Politics in a Postwar Society.* Edited by Flavia Brizio-Skov. London; New York: I.B. Taurus, 2011. Pp. 283. ISBN 978-1-84885-572-4. Np. (Hardback).**

Part of a trend in Italian cinema studies to examine non-canonical works, the collection of essays in editor Flavia Brizio-Skov's *Popular Italian Cinema—Culture and Politics in a Postwar Society* analyzes films that have received less than their due attention. The book's aim is to understand how genres such as the peplum, the western, horror films and the *commedia all'italiana* were not merely escapist but instead meaningful reflections of significant changes to Italian society and politics in the postwar era. Many of these films enjoyed great commercial success either in Italy or abroad, which may be partly to blame for their relative absence in traditional film scholarship. What a reader of this book will welcome is the inclusion of a number of works that might have slipped under the critical radar. Another laudable aspect of the collection is its examination of the popular reception of these films and its connection of their success to the surrounding cultural and political climates of their release. This proves useful for some (though not all) of

the contributions, but it also sets up a methodological structure that limits the amount of in-depth analysis of content and film technique. Brizio-Skov's claim in the introduction that the broad cultural horizon represented in the collection should lead us to consider it "exhaustive on the subject in question" might be the first sign to give us pause (2).

While the overview of the chapters in the introduction is helpful for a navigation of the topics covered, it reveals (possibly by accident) a major disconnect between the chapters that is the book's weak spot. The first four essays are grouped together under the subheading of "Popular Genre Cinema," while just one essay falls under "Ritual and Cinema" and the final two under "Violence and Cinema." In fact, the first section of essays does read as a cohesive unit, and is the strongest in terms of critical analysis (best exemplified in the first chapter by Frank Burke). In "The Italian Sword-and-Sandal Cinema from *Fabiola* (1949) to *Hercules and the Captive Women* (1961): Texts and Contexts," Burke engages in thoughtful close-readings of peplum films and makes a convincing argument that their self-reflexive and irreverent mixing of high and low culture fell at just the right historical and cultural moment. Of particular note is Burke's inclusion of three "pre-pepla" in setting up his analysis: Alessandro Blasetti's *Fabiola* (1949), Riccardo Freda's *Spartaco* (1952), and Mario Camerini's *Ulysses* (1954). The second chapter, "Horror Cinema: the Emancipation of Women and Urban Anxiety" by Andrea Bini, provides a good periodization of Italian horror films: a first period of "Gothic" films and their emphasis on female monsters; a second period in the 1970s with the Italian *giallo*; and a third period in which explicit gore was foregrounded. While Bini states that these films suggest a society confronting the phenomenon of the "modern woman," his secondary claim about urban anxiety in the late 60s and 70s remains inconclusive. The editor herself contributes the third chapter: "Dollars, Bullets and Success: The Spaghetti Western Phenomenon." Her introductory remarks, though they examine the genre's popular reception, fail to set up the remainder of the argument despite a number of excellent observations about the figure of the anti-hero and the attractiveness of this position of freedom and power for a female audience. The chapter is burdened by the weight of its film stills, which are small, of poor quality, and do little to prove the author's point. The final chapter of this section, "The Birth of the Comedy Italian Style," is again by Bini. He rightly advises us that we should not attribute the genre's origins, as most mainstream critical criticism has previously done, to *neorealismo rosa*, but should instead look further back to neorealism proper. Bini's argument would benefit, however, from looking more analytically at the ironic nature of the genre's success, namely that it was largely consumed by the very social class that it was satirizing.

The last three chapters seem unlikely additions to the collection as a whole. Though well-written and focusing on a fascinating subject, the fifth chapter, "Tarantula Myths and Music: Popular Culture and Ancient Rituals in Italian Cinema" by Flavia Laviosa, has little to do with popular Italian cinema and would be better placed in a broader work on Italian culture. The sixth chapter, "Popular Cinema and Violence: The Western Genre," again written by Brizio-Skov, is essentially a theoretical extension of her earlier chapter, and might have better served

the collection had it been integrated into that selection. She does convince us that representations of violence in the classic western, the spaghetti western and the post-western produce different kinds of spectatorship, but the argument could have been strengthened by more fully engaging in what the author claims to do: to connect the theme of violence in the western genre to the “violence” of film technique. The final chapter, “Women’s Drama, Men’s Business: Sexual Violence Against Women in Italian Cinema and Media,” another contribution by Laviosa, is an interdisciplinary work on representations of violence against women. There is a range of films covered in the chapter, from Vittorio De Sica’s *Two Women* (1960) to Fiorella Infascelli’s *The Wedding Dress* (2003), but it also includes a theatrical work, media coverage of a famous 1975 rape and murder case, and a documentary on a rape trial, all of which seem out of place in the larger aims of this volume. As such, the last half of the work suffers from the fact that the authors move farther afield from cinema proper. A final aspect that must also be mentioned about this volume in general is the fact that there are multiple contributions from the same set of authors, despite the number of illustrious scholars of Italian cinema in the United States and Britain that could have given the collection a more well-rounded balance.

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Per Peppino De Filippo attore e autore. A cura di Pasquale Sabbatino e Giuseppina Scognamiglio. Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane (collana: La scrittura teatrale. Studi e testi), 2010. Pp. 372. ISBN 9788849517927. € 40.

“Io, Peppino De Filippo uomo, voglio presentarvi Peppino attore-autore perché meglio di me, vi assicuro, nessuno lo conosce”: da questo noto “autoritratto”, che si può ammirare nell’avvertenza *Al lettore*, premessa alla raccolta *Farse e Commedie* (1971), prende spunto il volume collettaneo *Per Peppino De Filippo attore e autore*, a cura di Pasquale Sabbatino e Giuseppina Scognamiglio.

Il prezioso volume nasce dal tentativo di ridisegnare a 360 gradi il profilo artistico di Peppino, poiché se da un lato — spiega Pasquale Sabbatino — “la critica ha perlopiù privilegiato l’attore (teatrale, cinematografico e televisivo) rispetto all’autore e a danno dell’autore”, dall’altro Peppino nella sua autobiografia *Una famiglia difficile* (1976) “documenta e rivendica la propria autonoma figura di attore-autore accanto a Eduardo e, nella diversità, alla pari di Eduardo” (p. 6).

Le ricerche svolte negli archivi di Napoli e Roma da un gruppo di esperti e giovani studiosi del Dipartimento di Filologia moderna “Salvatore Battaglia” dell’Ateneo federiciano consentono di approfondire la storia dei singoli testi di Peppino e di aggiornare il catalogo delle sue opere teatrali. Il rinvenimento e la rivalutazione di numerosi copioni “inediti”, in dialetto e in lingua, risalenti agli anni Trenta e Quaranta, “offrono – aggiunge Sabbatino – nuovi spunti e numerose tessere per ricostruire criticamente il suo profilo di attore-autore, per avviare l’edizione critica delle opere teatrali di Peppino e per riscrivere con ricchezza di par-