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**Author:** Emiliano Guaraldo

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Di Bianco, Laura. *Wandering Women: Urban Ecologies of Italian Feminist Filmmaking*. Bloomington (IN): Indiana University Press, 2022. Pp. 242. ISBN 9780253064653. \$ 25.00 (paperback). \$ 46.61 (hardcover). \$ 21.50 (Kindle).

Laura Di Bianco's seminal work, *Wandering Women: Urban Ecologies of Italian Feminist Filmmaking*, takes the reader on an illuminating journey to discover the profound contributions of Italian women filmmakers in recent decades. In the shadow of global cinema's grand planetary narratives, the creative efforts of Italian women filmmakers have too often been overlooked, even when, as in the case of Elvira Notari, they represent foundational figures of extreme importance for the cinematic medium.

At the heart of her exploration, Di Bianco charts an impressive constellation of eight women filmmakers, spanning across three generations – Cecilia Mangini, Mariangela Barbanente, Marina Spada, Francesca Comencini, Alice Rohrwacher, Wilma Labate, Roberta Torre, and Eleonora Dancò. Each director, in their unique creative journey and artistic practice, has woven narratives and crafted images encapsulating Italy's complex transition from an agricultural society to an industrialized nation, and from the decay of industrial modernity into the ecological crises of the present, creating cinematic mirrors reflecting this path towards the planetary transformations of contemporaneity.

Within these cinematic milieus, as anthropogenic *flaneuses*, women traverse deserted cities and toxic geographies, emblematic of the changes wrought by industrial modernity. Di Bianco vividly describes these journeys as “[women] searching for a place within the shifting landscapes of an Italy transitioning from an agricultural to an industrial society, rushing toward modernity” (p. 1). The seismic shifts caused by industrialization give rise to the stark landscapes of the Anthropocene. The “pollution of the sea and other bodies of water, the cementification of the land, the abandonment of mountains, and the erasure of nature in the city” (p. 6) become unavoidable facets of the contemporary Italian experience. These narratives, however, do not merely serve as a grim chronicle of industrial expansion and collapse. They also capture the inherent paradox that within these desolate cityscapes, which represent the inability of contemporary cities to sustain communities (p. 6), seeds of life-sustaining ways of being could still be sown and nurtured.

The theoretical backbone of *Wandering Women* is built on a feminist ecocritical approach to literature, cinema and media exemplified by recent, influential works of scholars such as Serpil Oppermann, Elena Past, Serenella Iovino and Monica Seger, among others. Di Bianco compellingly argues that the urban filmmaking of the directors she analyses not only offers a critique of environmental degradation but also brings “awareness of women's marginal social positions and invisibility in deteriorating urban environments” (p. 7), suggesting the potential for a transformation in the narratives we construct about the world we inhabit.

The first chapter of the book is dedicated to the seminal feminist filmmaker Cecilia Mangini. Her films shed light on the social and cultural transformations that impacted the Italian South from the 1950s through the 1970s, with a particular emphasis on the evolving role of women within these changes. With Mariangela Barbanente, Mangini is also the co-writer and co-director of the 2013 documentary *In viaggio con Cecilia* (*Traveling with Cecilia, 2013*). This film chronicles a journey the two women embarked on to revisit the settings in Apulia that featured in Mangini's films, with particular focus on Taranto and Brindisi, geographies significantly impacted by environmental violence and socio-sanitary crisis due to chemical contamination. Mangini's work exposes the intertwining of planetary destruction with women's marginalization and exploitation, a notion central to the early ecofeminist discourse in the 1970s. The juxtaposition of Mangini's early films with *In viaggio con Cecilia* forces viewers to acknowledge Taranto and Brindisi as sacrifice zones of Italian petro-chemical modernity, embodying the stark intersections of environmental and gendered injustice.

The second chapter of the book, *Urban Wandering, Scrapbooking, and Filmmaking*, exemplifies both the broad range of creative subjects studied in the book and Laura di Bianco's versatile analysis. This chapter is dedicated to Marina Spada's works, set against the backdrop of Milan, and uniquely incorporates excerpts from the filmmaker's film production diaries, contributing to a richer understanding of Spada's creative process and visual imaginary. It also reflects Di Bianco's methodology of film analysis, an approach characterized by an intimate, situated, and considerably relatable perspective. As a result, Spada's *oeuvre* emerges as a body of work that sheds light on the invisibility of women within the landscapes that define the Anthropocene epoch. These locations, including postindustrial urban spaces, degraded city outskirts, and the construction sites of the extractive and gentrifying neoliberal machine, are often portrayed through the lens of a wandering character in a deserted city, an approach at times reminiscent of Michelangelo Antonioni's cinematic language.

In chapter three, the author turns her attention to Francesca Comencini's films. While these films may not overtly address environmental concerns, they subtly encompass an ecological dimension that reaches beyond traditional portrayals of the environment. Her works subtly embody an ecological consciousness through the narrative lens of female characters and their role as mothers and caregivers. Through the intimate struggle of these characters, Comencini's films underline how the act of caring – for others, for oneself, for non-human entities, and for spaces – becomes a silent form of ecological engagement. These films underscore how such acts of nurturing are critical not just for individual survival, but also for the well-being of larger communities, non-human inhabitants, and the environments they occupy. In this way, Comencini's films contribute to a broader critique of the current neoliberal *zeitgeist*: a pervasive ideological interpretation of the world that “is not only violent against women but also cause crises of care that can be overcome by seeking justice against forms of oppression deeply rooted in sexism and by welcoming the idea of an inclusive city as well as an expanded notion of family” (p. 89).

Chapter four delves into the work of three filmmakers: Alice Rohrwacher, Wilma Labate, and Roberta Torre, specifically focusing on films that revolve around female adolescents. The analysis in this chapter is built on themes of waste and refuse, patriarchal violence, abjection, invisibility, debasement, and the male gaze. Di Bianco takes a deeper look into the spatial practice of walking - viewing it not merely as a physical act but as a form of introspection, a tool of alienation from oppressive societal control structures, and ultimately as a practice that fosters life and re-habitation. These films, according to Di Bianco, in different ways seem to “confirm a trend in women's filmmaking of placing and investigating female subjectivity in urban contexts and choosing the city as the privileged setting to narrate contemporary Italian society and its ecological crises” (p. 143).

Di Bianco closes the book with a chapter dedicated to Eleonora Danco's experimental, fragmentary, performative essay film *N-Capace* (N-Able, 2014). The most captivating concept that Di Bianco distills from her analysis of this film is perhaps the notion of ‘psychogeology’. Di Bianco employs this concept, which is a further evolution of the Situationists' psychogeographical practice, to interpret the mobility and the “pedestrian speech acts” (p. 155) performed by the filmmaker in her unique cinematic narrative. While the film remains solidly anthropocentric, the “captivating leitmotifs of the pickaxe, the recurrent gesture of digging, seemingly to peel off pavement from the street or the topsoil off the surface of the earth, the symbolic attempt to destroy new construction, and the vertical trajectory of the film, all point towards a psychogeology of the film” (p. 170).

The book is enriched by the inclusion of what the author defines as *fegatelli*, literally little livers, a term taken from film production lingo. These *fegatelli* are intended to represent additional footage spliced between main scenes during the movie editing process. In the context of the book, they are brief case studies of films by other directors that are not discussed in the primary chapters. These

insightful *figatelli* serve to highlight that, beyond the meaningful filmography at the core of Di Bianco's exploration, there lies a vast and uncharted territory of films yet to be analyzed and understood.

As one closes the final chapter of Laura Di Bianco's *Wandering Women: Urban Ecologies of Italian Feminist Filmmaking*, it is impossible to overlook the book's multifaceted contributions. Di Bianco's meticulous research and incisive analysis competently bring together ecocriticism and film studies and attest for the author's strengths in both theoretical and formal understandings of cinematic practice. Her work also serves as an invitation for a deeper reflection on how cinema – and more broadly, the arts – can reflect and engage with the social and ecological crises transforming our relationship with the planet today.

Di Bianco's in-depth exploration of the selected films illustrates an alternative perspective on environmental engagement that foregrounds the interconnectedness of life forms and spaces. The films do not simply offer a critique of industrialization and environmental degradation. They also construct narratives that acknowledge the reciprocal relationships between humans and their environments, underscoring the idea that socio-political and ecological issues are intrinsically connected.

What sets *Wandering Women* apart is its multifaceted dialogue about gender, urban ecology, and filmmaking as a practice of worldmaking and care. Di Bianco's work demonstrates that understanding Italian cinema – and indeed, global cinema – necessitates an exploration of the entanglements of social, environmental, material, and cinematic realities. By doing so, Di Bianco adds a valuable perspective and a working model to the fields of cinema studies, Italian studies, feminist film scholarship, and the environmental humanities. Her book presents a unique intersection of these fields, acting as a resource for scholars, students, and filmmakers alike.

Di Bianco not only reclaims the space for these eight filmmakers within global cinema but also lays the groundwork for further inquiries into the vast, under-explored terrain of Italian women's filmmaking and its intersections with the environmental humanities. While the book represents a significant contribution to the scholarly field, it also prompts readers to wander and to project a different gaze towards their surrounding environments, ultimately encouraging a radical change of perspective towards one that is inclusive of peripheral experiences and marginalized forms of knowledge.

EMILIANO GUARALDO  
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia