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INTRODUCTION

On Method Building: A Half-Century of Research on Gender and Labour in the Italian Audiovisual Industries

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Interviewed by Francesco Savio (alias Chicco Pavolini) in February 1974, in preparation for the oral history volumes *Cinecittà anni trenta*, prolific costume designer Maria de Matteis was asked to share her memories of the celebrated costume designer Gino Sensani (1888-1947)¹. Hinting discreetly at a sometimes uneasy professional relationship with a more prominent practitioner (her ‘maestro’, as the interviewer defined him)², de Matteis’ recollection problematised Sensani’s authorial input in the design of the film costumes that were credited to both (e.g., *Piccolo Mondo Antico*, 1941) and allowed memories of emotional labour to emerge. The designer described how she had to negotiate her position as an artist not only as Sensani’s assistant but also, in later years, as an accomplished and sought-after film professional collaborating with directors, screenwriters, and production designers (such as Mario Chiari in *War and Peace*, 1956). De Matteis made efforts to define her own professional worth not only in relation to her immediate collaborators, like Sensani, but also to her larger professional milieu. Responding to Savio’s final question on the importance given to costume design by her peers, de Matteis stated: “You felt, not important, but necessary, useful. A feeling of carrying, to that wall that was being built, of carrying your own stone too”³.

In over fifty years of political and scholarly writing on women’s work in the Italian audiovisual sector, authors have often had to prove the value of that work on the basis of its importance, necessity, or usefulness. Advocating for the value of women’s cinema has meant different things at different times, its meaning shifting in relation to the socio-political contexts in which analyses take place. But one of the fundamental questions

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¹ F. Savio, ed., *Cinecittà anni trenta. Parlano 116 protagonisti del secondo cinema italiano (1930-1943)*. Vol. 2 (*DEG-MOR*), Rome: Bulzoni, 1979, 450-458.

² *Ibid.*, 450.

³ *Ibid.*, 458.

at the heart of studies on women's work in the Italian film industry remains unresolved. From Cinzia Bellumori's 1972 study and up to Laura Buffoni's 2018 edited volume on women in Italian cinema, authors have continued to revisit the debate over *difference*, that is, the status of women's work as exemplary and/or self-evidently distinct (a difference which risks becoming internally homogenous and therefore exclusionary), and *individualism*, the idea that every person has their own unique set of experiences and points of view, which is therefore of intrinsic value⁴. Scholars continue to struggle with the question of how to avoid having to prove the "usefulness" of women filmmakers or the quality of their work, without at the same time falling either into the trap of an essentialist feminism of difference, or that of a postfeminist individualism that dissolves possibilities of community in favour of compromised notions of meritocracy and glass ceilings. Various iterations of this question lie, more or less visibly, in the foundations of the works presented in this special issue.

This special issue examines the lived experiences, working conditions, and career trajectories of women in various branches of the audiovisual sector in Italy and the power relations that govern(ed) them. The contributions retrace the roles and "shifting positionalities"⁵ assumed by women working in the Italian audiovisual sector from the Fascist dictatorship to the present day. The special issue was born out of our common interest in exploring how gender, as a multifaceted social construct, is currently being used by researchers to address and interpret historical and contemporary issues around labour in the Italian film and audiovisual media industries. Our intellectual curiosity was directed at questions of methodology that shape our interdisciplinary, inter/transnational, and intersectional film and media research, and it included our desire for an opportunity to engage in feminist collaboration methods based on mutual support and the creation of a safe space in which to think together⁶. Developing distinctly from various theoretical, linguistic, historiographic, and sociological traditions, our readings and personal experiences of researching labour in the audiovisual industries have been intrinsically connected with the continuous development of new digital tools that have allowed us to (re)orient our research in ways that are important, yet remained critically under-examined. Tracing, and at times testing, the contours of gender-based scholarly enquiry, the contributions selected in this special issue rewarded our initial curiosity, demonstrating a wide array of methodological approaches to the study of women's audiovisual work. By documenting women's presence behind the camera, both diachronically and synchronically, these contributions cut across disciplinary, hierarchical, and national boundaries to place Italian film and media scholarship in dialogue with an expanding global network of feminist media research⁷.

⁴ C. Bellumori, *Le donne del cinema contro questo cinema*, Rome: Edizioni Bianco e Nero, Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, 1970, 38; L. Buffoni, ed., *We Want Cinema: Sguardi di donne nel cinema italiano*, Venice: Marsilio, 2018, 15.

⁵ R. Pickering-Iazzi, "Introduction: Inventions of Women's Making, in History and Critical Thought", in *Mothers of Invention. Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, edited by R. Pickering-Iazzi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995: XII.

⁶ Italian feminist media scholars Dalila Missero and Giovanna Maina published an inspiring account of the practices, aims, and meaning of their shared experience of feminist academic friendship in "(Feminist) Academic Friendships: Discussing and Re-Thinking the Labour of Love", *The Italianist*, 41, 2 (2021): 241-246.

⁷ Key English-language studies on the subject include: A. Hastie, S. Stamp, "Introduction: Women and the Silent Screen: Cultural and Historical Practices", *Film History*, 18, 2 (2006): 107-109 and related journal contributions; V. Mayer, M.J. Banks, J.T. Caldwell, eds., *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, New York: Routledge, 2009; C. Gledhill, J. Knight, eds., *Doing Women's Film History: Reframing Cinemas, Past and Future*, Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2015; E. Hill, *Never Done. A History of*

In Italy, studies that interconnect gender and labour issues can be traced back to the 1970s, when the so-called second wave of feminist movements fostered ground-breaking investigations on women's employment in film and the creative-cultural sector more broadly⁸. After Cinzia Bellumori's seminal 1972 study, *Le donne del cinema contro questo cinema*, and Patrizia Carrano's 1977 *Malafemmina: La donna nel cinema italiano*, other engaged work, such as that by Lina Mangiacapre and by Annabella Miscuglio, Rony Daopoulo and Judita Hribar (both published in 1980), came at what would turn out to be the tail-end of the militant Italian feminist movement⁹. Another eight years went by before Giuliana Bruno and Maria Nadotti published the first English-language book on women in Italian filmmaking that moved beyond the question of representation to explore the complex relationship between women's work and moving images from a transnational perspective¹⁰. After a decade-long "phase of aphasia"¹¹ – caused, at least partly, by a widespread positivist view of nascent digital communication technologies as democratising, therefore erasing identity and social differences in media production and consumption – Italian studies on media and gender (almost exclusively understood to mean 'women') flourished at a fast pace after the turn of the century. These studies focused alternately and/or jointly on the tripartition of women as filmgoers, as filmmakers, and as objects of cinematic representation¹² and were in conversation with intermedial,

Women's Work in Media Production, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2016; K. Hole, D. Jelača, E. Kaplan, P. Petro, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Cinema and Gender*, London: Routledge, 2017; S. Loist, E. Prommer, "Gendered Production Culture in the German Film Industry", *Media Industries*, 6, 1 (2019): 95-115; S. Liddy, ed., *Women in the International Film Industry: Policy, Practice and Power*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020; M. Bell, *Movie Workers: The Women Who Made British Cinema*, Cham: University of Illinois Press, 2021; as well as the publications linked to the project "Calling the Shots: Women and Contemporary Film Culture in the UK" (2000-2015) by Shelley Cobb, Linda Ruth Williams, and Natalie Wreyford; and the publications linked to the project "Representing Women: Gendering Swedish Film Culture and Production" (2017-2022) by Maria Jansson, Louise Wallenberg, Ingrid Stigsdotter, and Frantzeska Papadopoulou.

⁸ Bellumori, *Le donne del cinema contro questo cinema*; M. Buonanno, *Naturale come sei. Indagine sulla stampa femminile in Italia*, Rimini: Guaraldi, 1975; P. Carrano, *Malafemmina. La donna nel cinema italiano*, Rimini: Guaraldi, 1977.

⁹ L. Mangiacapre, *Cinema al femminile*, Padova: Mastrogiacomo-Images, 1980; A. Miscuglio, R. Daopoulo, J. Hribar, eds., *Kinomata: La donna nel cinema*. Vol. 1, Bari: Dedalo, 1980.

¹⁰ G. Bruno, M. Nadotti, eds., *Off Screen. Women and Film in Italy: Seminar on Italian and American Directions*, London: Routledge, 1988.

¹¹ A. Cati, M. Fanchi, R. Maule, "Creative Industry and Gender: Reflections on a Non-Obvious Combination", *Comunicazioni sociali*, 3 (2014): 349-356 (351). Although undoubtedly a decade that showed little scholarly interest in Italian women filmmakers, it is worth noting that the 1990s saw the publication of the watershed study on Elvira Notari by Giuliana Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), as well as the second volume by Lina Mangiacapre, *Cinema al femminile* (Naples: MiniManifesta, 1994).

¹² A list of volumes includes: T. Sossi, *Dizionario delle registe: l'altra metà del cinema*, Roma: Gremese, 2000; M. Dall'Asta, ed., *Non solo dive. Pioniere del cinema italiano*, Bologna: Cineteca di Bologna, 2008; E. Mascherini, *Glass Ceiling: oltre il soffitto di vetro: professionalità femminili nel cinema italiano*, Città di Castello: Edimond, 2009; M. Morandini, M. Morandini, *I Morandini delle donne. 60 anni di cinema italiano al femminile*, Rome: Iacobelli, 2010; L. Cardone, M. Fanchi, "Che genere di schermo? Incroci fra storia del cinema e gender studies in Italia", *The Italianist*, 31, 2 (2011): 293-303; C. Jandelli, L. Cardone, eds., "Gesti silenziosi. Presenze femminili nel cinema muto italiano", *Bianco e Nero*, 570 (2011); F. Laviosa, "Cinematic Journeys of Italian Women Directors", *Studies in European Cinema*, 8, 2 (2012): 85-88; M. Cantini, *Italian Women Filmmakers and the Gendered Screen*, London: Palgrave, 2013; B. Luciano, S. Scarpato, *Reframing Italy: New Trends in Italian Women's Filmmaking*, West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2013; V. Pravadelli, *Le donne del cinema. Dive, registe, spettatrici*, Bari: Laterza, 2014; L. Cardone, S. Filippelli, eds., *Filmare il femminismo: studi sulle donne nel cinema e nei media*, Pisa: ETS, 2015; L. Cardone, C. Jandelli, C. Tognolotti, eds., *Storie in divenire: le donne nel cinema italiano*, monographic issue of *Quaderni del CSCS*, 11 (2015); L. Buffoni *We Want Cinema*; G. Maina, C. Tognolotti, eds., *Essere (almeno) due. Studi sulle donne nel cinema e nei media*, Pisa, ETS, 2018; M. Buonanno, F. Faccioli, eds., *Genere e media: non solo immagini*.

transnational, and film genre analyses¹³. Reflecting the growing vitality of the field, the Forum Annuale delle Studiose di Cinema e Audiovisivi (FAScInA) was launched in 2012, soon becoming an important platform for Italian researchers working on cinema and audiovisual media from the perspective of women's studies¹⁴.

In this renewed landscape, historical and contemporary research increasingly focused on the various professional roles occupied by women working in Italy's audiovisual media industries. Far from being an entirely novel approach¹⁵, academic attention to women's labour gained fresh impetus from the 2010s onwards following an outpour of studies that focused on the political-economic and industrial frameworks in which Italian films and audiovisual media are regulated, produced, and circulated to national and international audiences¹⁶. The Anglo-American debates around *production studies*¹⁷ and *media industry studies*¹⁸ provided useful labels for a diverse body of questions, theories, and methods emerging from Italy, even when authors were not explicitly writing from within that framework. Although gender does not necessarily constitute its primary research focus, the connections between gender and production studies are such that the latter has been recognised as having an inherently feminist impetus, as Miranda Banks' positional claim summarises:

Production studies is a feminist methodology. At its core, production studies often resists or complicates traditional power hierarchies, it has its origins in a nonbinary interdisciplinarity, and it has a capacity to highlight cultural inequities [...], a genealogy of production studies reveals its deep affinities with feminist scholarship: a tradition of research by and about women, as well as core themes that resist top-down hierarchies, that highlight production at the margins, and that make visible hidden labor¹⁹.

Soggetti, politiche, rappresentazioni, Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2020; D. Missero, *Women, Feminism and Italian Cinema: Archives from a Film Culture*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022; M. Buonanno, F. Faccioli, eds., *Gender Issues: Trajectories of Change in the Italian Mediascape*, monographic issue of the *Journal of Italian Cinema and Media Studies*, 11 (2023).

¹³ L. Cardone, "Noi Donne" e il cinema. *Dalle illusioni a Zavattini. (1944-1954)*, Pisa: ETS, 2009; V. Pravadelli, I.A. De Pascalis, eds., "Feminist/Gender Studies oggi. Nuove prospettive dal 2000", monographic issue of *Imago*, 3, 6 (2012); L. Cardone, S. Filippelli, eds., *Cinema e scritture femminili. Letterate italiane fra la pagina e lo schermo*, Rome: Iacobelli, 2012; V. Pravadelli, "Women's Cinema and Transnational Europe", *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 2016, 23, 4 (2016): 329-334; N. Fullwood, *Cinema, Gender, and Everyday Space. Comedy, Italian Style*, London: Routledge, 2015.

¹⁴ The Forum takes place annually at the University of Sassari. The 2021 edition of the Forum, celebrating its tenth anniversary, also provided the occasion for the co-editors of this special issue to meet for the first time and to start developing the idea of a common project. Accessed April 26, 2023, <https://fascinaforum.org>.

¹⁵ Bellumori's 1970 study adopted a sociological perspective to analyse, with quali-quantitative methods, the presence and contribution of women in both above- and below-the-line roles.

¹⁶ See for example: B. Corsi, *Produzione e produttori*, Milan: Il Castoro, 2012; F. Di Chiara, *Generi e industria cinematografica in Italia. Il caso Titanus (1949-1964)*, Turin: Lindau, 2013; L. Barra, T. Bonini, S. Splendore, eds., *Backstage. Studi sulla produzione dei media in Italia*, Milan: Unicopli, 2016; M. Cucco, G. Manzoli, eds., *Il cinema di Stato. Finanziamento pubblico ed economia simbolica nel cinema italiano contemporaneo*, Bologna: il Mulino, 2017; M. Nicoli, *The Rise and Fall of the Italian Film Industry*, London, Routledge, 2017; V. Re, ed., *Streaming Media. Distribuzione, circolazione, accesso*, Milan: Mimesis, 2017; M. Scaglioni, ed., *Cinema Made in Italy. La circolazione internazionale dell'audiovisivo italiano*, Rome: Carocci, 2020; M. Cucco, *Economia del film. Industria, politica, mercati*, Rome: Carocci, 2020; F. D'Urso, *Economia dell'audiovisivo. Politiche pubbliche e struttura del mercato*, Rome: Dino Audino, 2023.

¹⁷ J.T. Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2008; Mayer, Banks, Caldwell, *Production Studies*.

¹⁸ T. Havens, A.D. Lotz, S. Tinic, "Critical Media Industry Studies: A Research Approach", *Communication, Culture and Critique*, 2, 2 (2009): 234-253; J. Holt, A. Perren, eds., *Media Industries: History, Theory, and Method*, Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell, 2011.

¹⁹ M.J. Banks, "Production Studies", *Feminist Media Histories*, 4, 2 (2018): 157-161 (157).

Banks' words resonate in the pages of this special issue. Largely authored by women scholars who embrace a range of interdisciplinary and multi-methodological perspectives, this issue encompasses an extensive period of time, spanning from the 1930s to the 2020s. It deals with the multiform iterations of power relations and exclusionary practices in the workplace and foregrounds the creative and operational contribution of female professionals long excluded or marginalised by canonised film historiographies.

In organising the structure of the special issue, we have chosen to proceed in chronological order. By doing so, we aimed to provide a diachronic overview of labour issues impacting the Italian film and audiovisual industry through a gender lens. We also structured the issue diachronically to invite a reflection on the relationship between the methods chosen to research the gender dimension of labour in the film, TV and audiovisual media industries and the historical periods on which that research focuses. Each of the essays collected here variously adopt qualitative and/or quantitative research methods, drawing evidence from archives, interviews, quantitative datasets and close reading.

If first-hand testimonies are essential to giving voice to previously neglected experiences of working in the Italian film industry, what happens when this precious historical evidence (in the form of audio or print interviews, correspondence, diaries etc.) has never been formally recorded, conserved, and collected, nor is available through institutional repositories? Personal archives and collections can significantly help fill existing historiographical gaps. This is the case of Stella Scabelli and Michael Guarneri's contribution on "Paola Ojetti and Maria Basaglia: Two Women Workers in Fascist Italy's Cultural Sector". Scabelli and Guarneri's archival research furthers understanding of film culture in Fascist Italy and reveals how women of different social classes negotiated their place within the film industry. Threading together fragmentary evidence gathered from a number of historical repositories, including private and local archives, Guarneri and Scabelli compare the "eclectic and at times non-normative careers" of Basaglia and Ojetti, two intellectuals employed in cinema-related activities in the 1930s and 1940s. Bringing visibility to Basaglia and Ojetti's wide professional and social networks and their manifold contribution to the burgeoning of Italy's sound film industry, the authors reflect on the exclusionary patterns of employment based on gender, class, familial, and political affiliation. In doing so, the article demonstrates the detrimental legacy of this combination of factors for women's access to the profession and related specialisation in the following decades.

Family and corporate archives are used by Chiara Grizzaffi in her article "'Una ragazza che si arrangia': Notes on the Film Producer Marina Piperno". Examining the Aamod records of the Reiac film company and Piperno's family archive, Grizzaffi focuses on the figure of prolific independent producer Marina Piperno whose "fuori norma" (non-standard) professional identity and activities have never before been the object of scholarly enquiry. Grizzaffi complements archival sources with written memoirs by, and interviews held with, Piperno, to explore the correlation between the "rigid hierarchical organisation" of the Italian film industry and Piperno's professional "self-realisation". In doing so, the author demonstrates how the producer negotiated and voiced her gendered position within the industry as one of the few women in Italy working in above-the-line positions in the post-war years and beyond.

Oral history and interviews are key methodological tools of the project "Donne in onda. Voci, professioni e ascolto in radio e nei media sonori", upon which Marta Perrotta's contribution is based. "Women Working in Radio: Methodological Approaches Comparing Italy and the International Context" broadens the scope of the special issue by going beyond purely screen-based media to focus on broadcasting cultures and radio

production. Perrotta offers an international overview of radio scholarship, comparing the Italian context to the more established traditions in the UK, USA, and Germany. While highlighting some specific challenges related to the investigation of radio, a “light and volatile” medium, Perrotta clearly demonstrates that many of the historical and methodological issues that emerge in gender-based radio research are common to other audiovisual industries. These include the systematic removal of women from positions of visibility and the consequent dearth of female role models, the progressive feminisation of radio production coupled with horizontal segregation practices, and the reliance on insiders’ accounts of production sites and practices. As for the future of radio production studies, Perrotta calls upon new epistemologies that not only incorporate gender and sonic thinking but that also look at production dynamics across the entire screen and sound-based media ecosystem.

Oral history methods are also used by Maria Ida Bernabei in her article “Women in Italian Film Production (1949-976): Mid-Management Roles as Seen through ANICA Data and Oral History”. Bernabei combines interviews with original historical research into the database of the Italian national audiovisual industries association, ANICA, to quantify women’s contribution to the Italian filmmaking industry and to examine their specialisation in a variety of below-the-line, secretarial and administrative, roles. As explained by Bernabei, the ANICA database presents statistically significant margins of error due to internal and external factors, such as errors in manual transcription in the compilation of the database and the general lack of accreditation of below-the-line professions in film opening and closing credits. Even so, an examination of the ANICA database and similar historical repositories through an inclusive lens is valuable insofar as it forces historians of Italian cinema and media to pay closer attention to the gendered composition of the workforce and to challenge auteur-centred, text-based perspectives that still dominate critical and educational discourses associated with Italian cinema, both at home and abroad.

Quantitative data can provide crucial insights into the gendered dimensions of screen labour in Italy, from past to present, and open up novel and transdisciplinary collaborations that engage humanists, data scientists, and creative industry practitioners²⁰. In her article, “Women’s Labour in TV Series Production: A Comparative Analysis of Italian Generalist TV and Pay Platforms (2016-2019)”, Marta Rocchi carries out a comparative analysis of gender inequality, segregation, and mobility patterns in series production across Italian generalist TV and pay platforms in the three years before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Rocchi’s goal is not to produce “yet another statistic” that provides evidence of a problem that is now well-documented, but rather to observe the structures of gender inequality and discriminatory dynamics, so that more effective measures might be put in place to push against them. At the same time, the author reflects on the reliability and limits of IMDb as a data source for large-scale, transnational research into audiovisual media inequalities. Although Rocchi raises a number of crucial ethical and practical challenges in relation to its use, she concludes that certain

²⁰ Key European and Italian data-based reports include: EWA, *Where Are the Women Directors? Report on Gender Equality for Directors in the European Film Industry 2006-2013*, 2016; IRPPS/SIAE/DEA Donne e Audiovisivo, *GAP&CLAK: I divari di genere nel lavoro e nell’industria audiovisiva*, Rome: CNR, 2016; and the annual reports of the European Audiovisual Observatory, e.g., P. Simone, “Female Professionals in European Film Production 2022 edition”, *European Audiovisual Observatory*, October 2022, last accessed April 26, 2023, <https://rm.coe.int/female-professionals-in-european-film-production-2022-edition-p-simone/1680a886c5>.

forms of large-scale research render IMDb's use near-inevitable. That presumed inevitability is in itself, of course, an ethical conundrum.

The potential limitations and ethical concerns connected to the use of different data sources are also explored in Mariagrazia Fanchi, Matteo Tarantino, and Rosa Barotsi's article "Heaven Can Wait? Gender (Im)balance in Contemporary Italian Film Crews". Whereas data feminists Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein remind us that data are always "dirty"²¹, Fanchi, Tarantino and Barotsi argue that this is particularly true of film data, both user-generated and official. Similarly to Rocchi, the authors move beyond a "counting the women" approach to show the occupational dynamics of the female workforce in the Italian audiovisual industry, both in the present and the past, across a sixty-year period. Their conclusions confirm some of the most problematic systemic tendencies in the workplace. Specifically, despite some positive indicators over the past few years, which should make us cautiously optimistic, women's careers continue to be shorter and more precarious than their male counterparts'. Moreover, given the historical ties between the occupational feminisation and devaluation of certain professions, the authors point out that, whilst we need to celebrate rising percentages in areas where women are scarce, we should also be wary of tendencies towards feminisation in previously male-dominated roles.

In their article "Unsuitable Jobs for Women: Women's Behind-the-Scenes and Female On-Screen Representation in Italian TV Crime Drama", Valentina Re and Marica Spalletta rely on a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative, quantitative, textual, and production-centred tools, reflecting a growing international trend adopted in institutional reports on diversity in the audiovisual media industries²². The authors analyse the presence and roles of female characters in Italian crime TV series (2015-2022) while, at the same time, considering the various professional roles that women played in the production of these scripted dramas. Gathering gender equity insights from a sample analysis of a highly popular TV genre such as crime fiction, Re and Spalletta argue that such an approach could be extended to larger datasets that have already been created in previous studies. Their conclusions suggest that, while gender segregation remains strong behind the camera, a gradual transition towards gender balance is indeed in progress. On screen, on the other hand, the general under-representation of female characters is clearly exacerbated if looked through the lens of age, ethnicity, and race. These findings urgently call for a more systematic adoption of intersectional approaches in screen media research and the intervention of policy-making actors to help challenge racism and ageism on Italian screens.

Re and Spalletta demonstrate that diversity off-screen and on-screen are correlated, mirroring the results of other international studies²³. Bernadette Luciano moves from a similar premise to explore feminist filmmaking and representational practices in her article "Relational Feminist Practices On and Off-Screen: The Case of *Amanda* (2022) and *Giulia* (2021)". Luciano uses a case study approach to conduct a close reading of two recent Italian feature films: *Amanda*, written and directed by first-time feature director Carolina Cavalli, and *Giulia*, by director Ciro de Caro and co-written with leading

²¹ C. D'Ignazio, L.F. Klein, *Data Feminism*, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2020, 131.

²² Examples include reports by the European Audiovisual Observatory (Diversity and Inclusion in the European Audiovisual Sector, 2021; Gender Imbalances in the Audiovisual Industries, 2018) and the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (Study on Industry Good Practices related to Gender Diversity in the European Audiovisual Sector, 2019).

²³ See for instance the annual Hollywood Diversity Reports of the UCLA Entertainment and Media Research Initiative.

actress Rosa Palasciano. Both films centre on the life of unconventional young women who do not fit in and who yearn for genuine interpersonal connections. Luciano draws on intersectional feminist thought, affect theory, and the tradition of Italian feminism to analyse the film texts in light of their creative and production processes. Notably, the feminist concept of relational practice is utilised to understand how women's and feminist cinema is made. Luciano's approach offers an insightful integration between a macro-level quantitative examination of gendered dynamics in Italian contemporary film production and a micro-level qualitative analysis of the concrete strategies adopted by women professionals, namely collaborative practices of network building (*fare rete*).

This special issue brings together a range of work on women's artistic, creative, and technical contribution to Italy's screen industries that traverses micro-historical and qualitative, and macro and quantitative approaches. Whereas the gap between these approaches might sometimes seem incommensurable, we can recognise connections, thanks to their diversity, that would otherwise remain invisible. For instance, the failed attempts at networking with upper-class Ojetti by the lower middle-class Basaglia, as demonstrated by Scabelli and Guarneri's analysis of their archival correspondence, hint at underexplored class barriers to female solidarity during and beyond the Fascist regime. This, in turn, calls for intersectional research on the "class over gender" dimension that impacts women's ability to network and collaborate. Whether the class ceiling trumps the glass ceiling is a question also hinted at in Luciano's close reading of *Amanda*, where female solidarity is enabled thanks to a desolate but class-determined bourgeois setting. The issue of class and socioeconomic possibility is similarly implicit in the quantitative studies by Rocchi and by Fanchi, Tarantino and Barotsi, which focus on examining the longevity and mobility of women's careers in contemporary Italian film and TV industries. Their work highlights the importance of obtaining gender-disaggregated data in order to examine the correlations between the increasing precarisation of the sector, as confirmed by recent reports²⁴, and the dynamics of women's employment discussed by our authors.

There is still much to learn about the ways gender intersects with age, class or socioeconomic mobility, ethnicity, race and regional provenance and how these variables have structured existing cultures of exclusion in the Italian audiovisual sector. Gender-based research that meaningfully engages with intersectionality is a critical step in producing actionable guidelines and policies²⁵. Such a step is needed to push towards the elimination of structural disadvantages, as well as narrow ideological narratives regarding professional ability in the sector. A noticeable example is the scarce research on the compounded minoritization of women filmmakers of colour with or without access to Italian citizenship. The 2016 *Gap&Ciak* DeA report makes a brief reference to this aspect²⁶, calling for future research that focuses on the professionals who fall through

²⁴ S. Bologna, A. Soru, eds., "Dietro le quinte. Indagine sul lavoro autonomo nell'audiovisivo e nell'editoria libraria", *Serie: Itinerari di diritto e relazioni del lavoro*, 62, Fondazione Brodolini, 2022: 72-73.

²⁵ Over the past few years, several national governments have introduced in their public funding schemes various forms of incentives for film companies to involve female professionals. In Italy, gender-focused reward mechanisms were firstly introduced by the 220/2016 cinema reform law and subsequent implementation decrees. For a regularly updated overview of gender equity policies in the European audiovisual sector, see Le Lab Femmes de Cinéma website, last accessed April 28, 2023, <https://femmesdecinema.org/en/map-of-measures-per-country/>.

²⁶ DeA, *Gap&Ciak*, 26. Last accessed April 27, 2023, <https://www.irpps.cnr.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/rapporto-GapCiak.pdf>.

the cracks of gender-based analyses, as well as other intersectional identities whose discrimination cannot be explained by taking into account gender alone.

Recent research, including research emerging from this special issue, suggests that the field is developing in this intersectional direction. For example, through their quantitative analysis of TV crime drama, Re and Spalletta demonstrate the existence of a gendered ageist trend, which reduces screen roles for women (but not men) who are over 30 years of age. In other words, ageing women are further penalised for failing to conform to the dominant aesthetic standards of screen production²⁷. Whereas radio production should theoretically be exempt from these discriminatory practices, Perrotta's research indicates that these sexist and ageist double standards also apply to women's voices and that the marginalisation of women in radio dates back to the very origins of the medium.

In 2021, reflecting on the possibilities, challenges, and limitations of academic research to generate meaningful change in the screen industries, Melanie Bell stressed that oral histories, and women's accounts of past work experiences in particular, have the capacity to communicate experiential knowledge across generations and to inspire campaigns for change in a contemporary media landscape still rife with gender, race, and class-based inequality and discrimination²⁸. Several contributors in this special issue have provided evidence of the complex historic gendered patterns of employment in the Italian screen industries thanks to interviews with practitioners. Bernabei's interviews with Rosalba di Bartolo Tonti, a film production manager active since the early 1960s, for example, hint at the additional challenges she faced as a mother, and at the personal and professional compromises that she and women like her did (or did not) make in order to fit in. Insights into past negotiations of filmmaking work with motherhood and caregiving responsibilities (which are also class-based constructions, both materially and ideologically)²⁹ deserves further attention, especially as the sector has only recently begun to counteract such obstacles to women's participation in the creative industries³⁰.

In her conclusions, Grizzaffi reminds us that claims for gender equality cannot be separated from demands for better working conditions for all professionals in the audiovisual industry, lest they be doomed to failure. Similarly, we call for scholarship that engages more systematically with intersectional approaches to gender-based inequities³¹. In doing so, as argued by Kimberlé Crenshaw, we must avoid the pitfalls of mis-characterising and mis-using intersectionality as a mere re-hierarchisation of ex-

²⁷ Susan Sontag described this phenomenon as early as 1972 in her much-cited article "The Double Standard of Aging", *The Saturday Review*, September 23, 1972, 29-38.

²⁸ M. Bell, "'I owe it to those women to own it': Women, Media Production and Intergenerational Dialogue through Oral History", *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 18, 4 (2021): 518-537. See the AHRC-funded project 'Histories of Women in the British Film and Television Industries, 1933-89' (PI Melanie Bell, University of Leeds). Bringing archival and oral history research together, the project highlighted the hidden contribution of women working below-the-line in Britain's 20th century film and media industries.

²⁹ T. Dent, "Devalued Women, Valued Men: Motherhood, Class and Neoliberal Feminism in the Creative Media Industries", *Media, Culture & Society*, 42, 4 (2020): 537-553.

³⁰ *Raising Films* is a UK-based industry organisation launched in 2015 to advocate for better working conditions for parents and carers in the film industry: www.raisingfilms.com/. Major film festivals have also started to provide childcare services for professional attendees: *Le Ballon Rouge*, for example, is a 2019 joint venture of the Cannes Film Festival, the Cannes Marché and the Parenting at Film Festivals group: last accessed April 27, 2023, www.marchedufilm.com/fr/news/le-ballon-rouge-welcomes-kids-back-to-cannes/.

³¹ Our own research moves in this direction. Rosa Barotsi is PI of the project *Cinema Beyond the Industry: Contemporary Minoritised Italian Film Cultures* (co-financed by the European Union - NextGenerationEU); Gloria Dagnino is research associate in the *AGE - C Aging and Gender in European Cinema* project, funded by Volkswagen Foundation (PL Vinzenz Hediger, unit PI Francesco Pitassio). Carla Mereu Keating is researching the history of below-the-line workers in Italian film studios between 1930 and 1960.

clusionary factors and, by extension, of research agendas³². If it is true that all forms of oppression act in distinct ways and times on different individuals and social groups, it is also true that only cross-cutting, coalitional undertakings can aspire to real change, within and beyond the Italian audiovisual sector. Change, too, much as the making of a film, is a collaborative effort.

³² Intersectionality theorist Crenshaw has argued against such mis-characterisations in a 2019 interview. See J. Coaston, “The Intersectionality Wars”, *Vox*, 28 May 2019, last accessed April 27, 2023 www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination. To engage with the concepts of intersectionality and the related matrix of domination see K. Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color”, *Stanford Law Review*, 43 (1990): 1241; P. Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* [1990], New York: Routledge, 2022; Combahee River Collective, “Combahee River Collective Statement”, in B. Guy-Sheftall, ed., *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought* [1977], New York: New Press, 1995, 232-240.