

As an Italian academic who has lived and worked in North America and Northern Europe, I am frequently saddened, but by no means surprised, by the cavalier references that my non-Italians colleagues frequently make to the mafia. On the one hand, they somehow assume it to be a rather prosaic and obvious aspect of daily life throughout Italy, and Italy alone. On the other hand, perhaps conditioned by “TV series such as *Gomorra*, the US ‘reality’ TV show *Mob Wives*” (1) or by Francis Ford Coppola’s *Godfather* movie trilogy, they talk of it as though the mafia were something cool, glamorous, almost enviable: the magic union of Svengali and Giorgio Armani.

In their book, Allum, Clough Marinaro and Sciarrone have competently collected an instructive introduction and, above all, fourteen original essays in criminology and the social sciences at large that, at the very least, can easily and immediately dispel such facile yet persistent conceptions of the mafia. For one, as all the essays patently exhibit, there are many mafias, not one, i.e., the Sicilian Cosa Nostra, the Campanian Camorra, the Calabrian ‘Ndrangheta, and the little-known Apulian Sacra Corona Unita. Indeed, as Luciano Brancaccio and Vittorio Martone explain in the second original essay in the book, even the Neapolitan and Campanian Camorra should be understood in the plural, i.e., as “Camorras”, given their “multiplicity of groups, their internal variations and their high conflict rates.” (31)

Secondly, as many essays concurrently indicate, all such mafias are more than capable of reining in their immediately profitable and inevitably violent activities in the short run, so as to seek prolonged and diffuse influence in the communities that they infiltrate, or manage secure revenue-streams *via* complacent white-collar experts and professionals, whether all of this happens in Italy or abroad. This quiet *modus operandi* is designed not to arise suspicion among the local law-and-order institutions, already-established criminal groups, and/or the populations at large. Thus, for example, the reader can reflect on the low-profile presence of the Italian mafias in the City of London, in select cantons of the Swiss Confederation and in Luxembourg, as capably discussed in the twelfth original essay of the book, “Italian mafias across Europe”, penned by Joselle Dagnes, Davide Donatello and Luca Storti (191–207). If anything, the reduced visibility of these criminal organisations is, ironically, made transparent by the more and more secretive character of the mafias compared to what they were like in the 19th century and, possibly, up to the 1950s or 1960s, at least in southern Italy. This increased secrecy has also affected the ‘Ndrangheta’s old and

quietly tolerant “[r]elationships with the Catholic Church” (56), which are discussed in the third original essay in the book, “‘Ndrangheta: A (post-)modern mafia with ancient roots”, written by Enzo Ciconte.

Thirdly, there is nothing cool, glamorous or enviable in suffering the consequences of mafia-related activities, whether in southern Italy, central and northern Italy (see the ninth, tenth and eleventh original essays, dealing with, respectively, Lombardy, Emilia Romagna and Rome), or abroad, meaning primarily in the Americas, Oceania and Europe (e.g., “Germany, France, the United Kingdom (UK), Spain, Switzerland, the Benelux countries and Romania” (Dagnes *et al.*, 193)). Any half-sane reader of this book is unlikely to find anything inspiring in the mafias’ very long list of crimes against: police officers and magistrates (e.g., “Giovanni Falcone, his wife and three bodyguards” (Alessandra Dino, 17) in 1992); innocent civilians; urban and rural landscapes and environments (e.g., the so-called “Sack of Palermo”, *ibid.*, 14); Italian immigrants abroad (e.g., the sorry plight of the Calabrian community in Australia, tackled in Felia Allum’s and David Bright’s penultimate original essay in the book); honest entrepreneurs (e.g., corrupt “public officials” favouring mafia-related clients over the genuinely deserving economic competitors (Salvatore Sberna and Alberto Vannucci, 94)); and ordinary tax-paying Italian citizens, who cannot receive adequate healthcare and/or use viable garbage-disposal facilities because of the mafias’ grip on local “public services” (Alessandro Colletti, 122).

Finally, the book concludes with a highly instructive chapter on the history and main characteristics of the “anti-mafia policies” developed in Italy since the 1960s (La Spina, 225). While avoiding the intricacies and details of the legal instruments and institutions created over the past six decades in order to tackle specifically the mafias, so as to reduce and prevent their diffusion and activities, the reader can grasp and appreciate the extent of the work done by both public authorities and civil society in order to counter the nefarious influence of organised crime in many parts of Italy.

The book is not a history of the Sicilian mafia or of southern mafias. For that kind of work, the reader will have to rely on a very different literature, of which there is certainly no dearth. Instead, this relatively compact volume (x + 291 pp.) gives a thorough account of:

(A) the scrutable trends of mafia-type criminality in Italy over the past twenty years; and of

(B) the latest known developments in their inner organisational structures and criminogenic relations with productive and political agents in the so-called “grey area” of non-affiliated enablers and facilitators of mafia-type activities (e.g., lawyers, accountants, bankers, etc.), in Italy as well as abroad.

As such, this book should appeal, *in primis*, to criminologists and social scientists. However, I would strongly recommend it to anyone who may have an academic or personal interest in understanding recent Italian history. Above all, I would recommend it to law- and policy-makers internationally, for Italy’s long tug-of-war with the mafias has many useful lessons to teach to countries and communities that have not yet experienced the scourge of criminal power syndicates operating in their midst, or that collude with such syndicates by offering far-from-transparent financial services—hence contributing to the enormous human suffering and grave social devastation that the mafias have been causing since the 19th century.

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