

## Razza cagna: *mondo* movies, the white heterosexual male gaze, and the 1960s–1970s imaginary of the nation

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(Received 16 March 2018; final version accepted 23 July 2018)

This article investigates the role, reception, and socio-cultural, political relevance of *mondo* movies in the context of late 1950s–early 1980s film and documentary. The *mondo* genre debuted with reportage films about sexuality in Europe and reached its pinnacle with Gualtiero Jacopetti's assemblage films. The historical context in which this genre evolved, and white masculinity was rearticulated and positioned at the centre of the national imagined community, is mapped focusing both on gender and race constructions and on the *gaze* identifying, encoding and decoding the sensationalist presentation of postcolonial/ decolonising Otherness. A brief review of some of the author's published work on 1962–1971 *mondo* movies introduces *Cannibal Holocaust* (1979) and director Ruggero Deodato's controversial reflection on the white, capitalist, sexist, Western and neo-colonial anthropological gaze.

**Keywords:** *mondo* movie; white male gaze; Italian imagined community; racism; postcoloniality

### Introduction

This article aims to investigate the role, reception, and socio-cultural and political relevance of *mondo* movies in the context of Italian film and documentary from the late 1950s to the early 1980s. The *mondo* genre debuted with reportage films about sexuality in Europe and reached its pinnacle with the assemblage films of Gualtiero Jacopetti, Franco Prosperi and Dino Cavara. The historical context in which this genre evolved, and in which white masculinity was rearticulated and positioned at the centre of the national imagined community, will be mapped focusing both on gender and race constructions and on the *gaze* identifying, encoding and decoding the sensationalist presentation of postcolonial/decolonising Otherness. *Mondo* movies (1962–1980) will be read *contrapuntally* (Said 1994, 79) in the context of a documentary tradition that – especially within left-wing circles – aimed at mapping/giving voice to people, events and ideas that modernity had placed centre stage or at the margins of Italian society. The focus will be on the crisis of masculinity in cinema and sexual mores in sensationalist documentary (which sought to investigate cultural transformations and/or *pre-modern* remnants in post-war and post-colonial capitalist society). A brief review of some of my publications on *mondo* movies will introduce the work of filmmaker Jacopetti and the *sexy-mondo* genre,<sup>1</sup> both spanning the 1960s to the 1970s and sharing a similar sensibility and gaze, followed by *Cannibal Holocaust* (1979) – Ruggero Deodato's controversial reflection on the white, capitalist, sexist, Western and neo-colonial anthropological gaze.

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The importance of linking representations of masculinity in film with the male gaze on colonial and postcolonial worlds and with an analysis of the national imaginary is best explained if we consider how fascist and post-fascist ideas about the hegemonic subject and his characteristics reshaped the nation between the 1920s and the 1950s. Since modernity, first the state and then the nation, as gendered, racialised and classed historical products, have been shaped by and have shaped ideas of mankind, citizenship, and sovereignty. In Italy, as historians Michele Nani, Silvana Patriarca and Alberto Maria Banti have shown, first the Risorgimento and then Unification spread controversy over the characteristics, needs, and aspirations of the nation in gender, class, and race forging or reshaping specific ideas of hegemonic/idealised masculinity and femininity (see Nani 2006; Patriarca 2010; Banti 2011).

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, and in the midst of rapid social and cultural change brought about by the post-war industrial boom, the hegemonic subject – ideally (and in practice) male – found himself caught between modernist aspirations and anti-modernist fears, a rejection of the fascist ideal of the strong, manly leader/soldier/peasant and the mystique of the virile partisan/industrial worker.<sup>2</sup> Nation, masculinity and the male gaze are closely intertwined, connecting the way different hegemonic masculinities are articulated and images of the nation are imposed by law and popularised by both commercial culture and art. In the post-war period, the idea of Italy as a white and Mediterranean nation and Italians as white and yet Mediterranean – a contradictory construction inherent in the fascist conception of Italian imagined community – had to be formally relinquished (Ben Ghiat 2005; Giuliani 2018). Nevertheless, the imaginary surrounding the racial identity of Italians despite poverty, emigration and the North/South divide was still driven by the colonial and fascist credo that ‘we are not black’ (Giuliani 2015, 1–16).

In addition, during the 1950s–1960s economic boom, Italy and Italians underwent a *whitening* process of resignification that took the defeated, ruined country from a subordinate political and economic position in the post-war geopolitical balance to joining the ranks of the war-winning (and *whiter*) world’s leading powers. Italy’s ascent to this new status supplanted the international hegemonic view of the country as structurally incapable of self-government, generally – or historically, in the case of Italy – a mark of the ‘uncivilised’ and ‘racially inferior’ (Lumley and Morris 1997; Dickie 1999; Moe 2002). As the fascist assertion of superiority of the white Italic male and female bodies (and, by extension, of the nation) gave way to a *whitening* process, hegemonic masculinities and the white hegemonic gaze were rearticulated in the name of a post-fascist patriarchal and racist conception of the national imagined community (Ellena 2015; Patriarca 2015; Perilli 2015). The use of the term ‘hegemonic white masculinities’ (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) implies that there was not just one but many and even conflicting versions, and that they had important effects on the way gender roles and ideas of normative femininity were, and still are, forged.

My exploration of hegemonic masculinities is applied to a specific time in Italian history when profound social transformations caused fierce criticism of fascist patriarchal masculinity. The economic boom, the rise of mononuclear families, as well as mass consumption of industrial goods and cultural products, accompanied women’s sexual independence and political participation despite their decreasing employment rates in the manufacturing and third sectors.<sup>3</sup> Patriarchy in its new guise thus needed to be validated (and its centrality restored) by a discursive and political/legal structure through a rearticulation of men’s and women’s different positionalities and gaze. That same structure needed to accommodate Fordist imperatives and ideas of progress and mass consumption, with a nod to the *goodness* of the past as opposed to dehumanising, chaotic, *bad* modernity. This was especially evident in Italian film-making, where a celebration of tradition was accompanied by a white, male *anti-modernist* gaze behind the camera.<sup>4</sup>

The attempt to quash the *revolt from the margins*, whether in Italian society or in the decolonising countries, was visible in both *mondo* and *sexy-mondo* movies from the late 1950s. Efforts abounded to socially and discursively curb the aspirations for emancipation of radical female subjectivities and the insurgent ‘wretched of the earth’ (Fanon 2001), both domestically and abroad. A case in point was the political and social resistance to legal reforms (from the 1970 divorce law to the new family law in 1975 and the legalisation of abortion in 1981) or the unwillingness to relinquish the former colonial possessions in Somalia displayed by predominantly male politicians and government members (see Pes 2014, 417–38 on this subject). Legal impediments to the recognition of the black postcolonial minority were introduced (Deplano 2017), while the post-war governments’ cultural policy attempted to preserve even in schoolbooks and children’s publications a male and white viewpoint on human differences, characterised by remnants of inferiorising, colonial attitudes (Gabielli 2015). Blackness was symbolically kept outside the borders of the imagined community, while non-hegemonic, race- gender- and sexuality-based subjectivities were restricted to the domain of consumption.<sup>5</sup>

The symbolic re-articulation of a racist, sexist and heterosexist patriarchal imaginary in the public sphere, to which both *mondo* and *sexy-mondo* movies contributed in important ways, also attempted to reconfigure normative masculinity and reassert the hegemony of the white heterosexual male gaze over those unsettled margins. Normative masculinity, developed as an offshoot of the traditional patriarchal norm conflating male supremacy with matrimonialism and women’s confinement to domestic quarters, was in considerable tension with the hegemonic masculinities emerging in the post-war period – and was forced to deal with cultural and social reconceptualisations of ideas of virility, marriage, liberty, sexuality and love.

### Documentary tradition: the ‘right to look’ at the margins

In the aftermath of the Second World War, documentaries became the main medium for giving space to the poor and to marginalised *subaltern cultures*, previously neglected by the totalitarian gaze of the Istituto Luce and the more recent focus on colonial battles and world wars. With hundreds of documentaries released between 1945 and the end of the 1950s, this sophisticated yet extremely popular genre soon became one of the most important tools for helping Italians overcome post-war trauma and build a new sense of *civitas*, a post-Fascist, neo-realist imagined community (Bertozzi 2008, 97–127).

Between the mid-1950s and the early 1970s, several well-known Italian filmmakers ventured into documentary and cine-reportage. Among them were Michelangelo Antonioni, Roberto Rossellini, Ermanno Olmi, Alessandro Blasetti, Cesare Zavattini, Vittorio de Seta, and Pier Paolo Pasolini.<sup>6</sup> As a wave of social and cultural transformations swept across the country, directors turned their attention to the consequences of the war, the plight of the poorer urbanised classes, and the lives of factory workers. Set against an ever-changing backdrop was the widening gap between the booming industrial North and the poor and rural areas of the South. In that sense, there is a close relation between Italian documentary in the post-war period and neorealism. Among the first to employ a realist/neorealist gaze were Antonioni’s feature on the river Po, shot between 1943 and 1947 (*Gente del Po*, 1947), and documentaries on and about the war, where, as Bertozzi argues, ‘people’s lives emerge amid precariousness and weakness, and a sense of fatality that is far removed from the pomposity of the regime’ (Bertozzi 2008, 91).

With Fascism gone, so was the claim that a unique self-reflexive reality existed and could be documented. Yet, the purpose in neorealism and documentary was still that of collapsing the

distance/difference between the actors' on-screen roles and the audience – as well as portraying the manifold diversity of *real lives* in unknown/neglected worlds of Italian society.<sup>7</sup> There was a twofold assumption underlying documentary's lyric and dramatic narrative. First, that it was possible to grasp not just one but the many *realities* of those miserable subalterns that the fascist gaze had left out of history. Second, that the director's gaze could maintain a neutral positionality, despite the ubiquitous voice-over signalling authoriality and bias. Looking at ethno-anthropological documentaries through the lens of postcolonial studies, and at those depicting the South in particular, this attitude may be read as slightly patronising. Works by Gian Vittorio Baldi, Luigi Di Gianni, Lino Del Fra, Gianfranco Mingozzi, Cecilia Mangini, Giuseppe Ferrari and Vittorio De Seta reveal a reading/appropriation of the Other's world that did not give careful thought to the implications of the 'right to look' (Mirzoeff 2011) nor to the adoption of a hegemonic gaze. Bertozzi describes these movies as characterised by the 'savagely force of inhabiting images' (2008) and a spiritual proximity of subject, object and audience. If that is true, then these magnificent pieces of political art, all differences aside, were indeed poised between 'anthropology and spectacle' (2008, 112) and driven both by nostalgia for pre-modern forms of life and by condemnation of the living conditions on the margins of society – something that only a specific privileged positionality could/was allowed to indulge in. Within an emancipatory discourse opposing *good to bad* modernity, the ontologising gaze on the Other was believed to serve an ethical and social purpose.

This is also true for the documentaries addressing the decolonising/post-colonial global South. Among them were Pasolini and Guareschi's *La rabbia*, which did poorly at the box office and was pulled from distribution within days of its opening despite being a remarkable feature; Pasolini's *Appunti*; and Rossellini's *India*, which was a great success, thanks in part to a docuseries hosted by Rossellini on Italian and French television (Giuliani 2017a, 95–113; 2018).<sup>8</sup> It was from that same perspective that they interpreted the post-war period, the Cold War, the new geopolitical order, and cultures and fears in the decolonising/post-colonial South. In the opening scene of *India Matri Bunhi* or *India, madre terra (India, Mother Earth)*, Mumbai is presented as an emblem of *bad* modernity, to which Rossellini opposes his narration of the country's more intimate daily life practices through a gaze that, escaping realism's typical semblance of objectivity, privileges instead an ethnographical take (Caminati 2012, 58). Nonetheless, when the *reality* of life in India is experienced through its protagonists, it is their viewpoint and feelings that apparently lead the narrative, rather than his own 'Western knowledge' (Caminati 2012, 66). Although Pasolini's emphatic take on the subaltern Other can be ascribed to his *pan-southern* attitude, he too, like Rossellini, argued that cinema's essence lies in its ability to penetrate and reside in *reality*: 'I love cinema because cinema allows me to be steeped in reality. It's a kind of personal ideology, of vitalism, of love of living inside things, life, reality' (Caminati 2012, 31).<sup>9</sup>

Such semblance of *reality* was taken to extremes by mockumentaries, fictional versions of documentaries that gained international cult status with Gualtiero Jacopetti's productions in the early 1960s. Jacopetti (1919–2011) was a fascist militant and volunteered for service in the Second World War. In 1944, he joined the anti-Nazi partisan brigades. After the war, he started a career in journalism (with *Oggi*, *Settimana Incom*, and *Corriere della Sera*) and grew close to Indro Montanelli. He founded and directed the weekly magazine *Cronache della politica e del costume* (1953), a precursor of *L'Espresso*. His career in film was influenced by Alessandro Blasetti, who involved him in productions that, from the late 1950s onwards, paved the way for his future work. With Paolo Cavara and Franco Proserpi,<sup>10</sup> he became the standard-bearer for the genre launched in Italy by Blasetti and Vanzi<sup>11</sup> and called *mondo* after the title of his film.

By *mondo* movies we mean those shockumentaries [...] that scandalised and made a deep impression on Italians (but also Americans and Europeans) from the sixties onwards, depicting realities that were far removed from the Western [sic] through disturbing and shocking images. Mysterious exoticism and violent rituals, ancestral spells and integral nudity, wild nature and tribal [sic] ceremonies constitute the fulcrum of *mondo* movies, which aim to explore taboos [sic], visualising and bearing testimony to the most disconcerting events in distant continents. (Bruschini and Tentori 2013, 17)<sup>12</sup>

Among the most influential directors of the genre were Alfredo and Angelo Castiglioni, Antonio Climati (photography director of *Mondo cane*), Mario Morra, and Ruggero Deodato, whose *Cannibal Holocaust* will be discussed in the last section of this article.<sup>13</sup> The opening credits and promotional material of *Mondo* films placed great emphasis on the claim that the *whole truth, nothing but the truth* would be shown about the shocking world that lay outside the bounds of white, small bourgeois morals. Documentary's feeble pretension of telling truths unknown to the general public was supplanted here by the directors' full endorsement of the duty to document, even though many scenes were deliberately fabricated (as in Jacopetti's films).

Like Blasetti, Vanzi, and the earlier *sexy-mondo* movies,<sup>14</sup> Jacopetti assembled footage from national and international film archives. His movies, though, had a far greater circulation and became cult classics (Goodall 2013, 229–231). Following *Mondo cane* (which competed at the 15<sup>th</sup> Cannes Film Festival), they were released both in Italian and in English with German, French, Spanish and Portuguese subtitles and distributed in Europe, the United States, and South America (Fogliato and Francione 2016). Differences in style and general aim aside, there were many similarities between *mondo* directors. Found-footage assemblage, choice of sound-track (mocking and ironic vs. lyric and dramatic), voice-over tone (ironic/poetic/descriptive) and linguistic register were the common structural elements used to deliver their authoriality and political views on post-war societies. While images and commentaries reflect each director's ideological take, reinforcing the *visuality-as-the-dispenser-of-self-evident-truth* nature of photography/film (Tagg 1988),<sup>15</sup> they all shared a focus on cultural massification and criticism of the changing cultural and social (especially sexual) mores.

In particular, Goodall (2013, 230) argues that Jacopetti's *mondos*:

[...] enjoyed a unique blend of serious investigative journalism/reportage; exotic and dramatic adventure narrative; tabloid magazine-style sensationalism; *National Geographic*-style visual beauty; the rapid-fire edit of disparate sections – Jacopetti called these 'shock cuts' [...]. The other important *mondo* elements were aural. These included a [...] expensive musical score, usually composed by Italian musical maestros such as Riz Ortolani, Piero Piccioni and Ennio Morricone. The rich musical aspect of the film caused consternation among documentary purists and film critics in particular, yet led to huge sales in soundtrack LPs, many of the 'songs' becoming famous outside of the film world.

### The white male gaze in *mondo* movies

The re-centring of the white male heterosexual gaze revealed both a *state of crisis* of old forms of hegemony and the attempt to establish new ones over those social structures defined by race, gender and class that until recently fascist and colonial patriarchy had governed. This is clearly seen in Jacopetti's *Mondo cane* exploitation film series (*Mondo cane*, 1962; *La donna nel mondo*, 1963; *Africa addio*, 1966; *Addio zio Tom*, 1971, *Mondo candido*, 1974),<sup>16</sup> where the positionality expressed through voice-over and choice of images reflects a viewpoint clearly shaped by prejudice towards those who do not seem to fit with a distinct model of masculinity and whiteness. Despite their different style and political background, what Jacopetti and Pasolini had in common was a shared criticism of Italian bourgeois masculinity, contempt for consumerism and

conformism, and a profound distrust of the emancipatory struggles of formerly colonised and subaltern populations.

The hegemonic white male gaze in cinema never met with stiff opposition from alternative visual productions. Nevertheless, both Italian and international feminist movements and the intellectual and activist production espousing criticism of white supremacy and colonialism *interpellated* film and documentary makers – who incorporated both the debates and resistance to the new insurgent gaze in their work. While Fellini offered his reading of feminist criticism of Italian gendered culture in *8 ½* (1963) and *City of Women* (1980), international criticism of the world of art and culture was more or less directly echoed in Italian and international cinema (think of anti-pornography mobilisation in the US or Carla Lonzi's condemnation of the widespread male chauvinism in arts production and exhibitions in Italy).

The hegemonic gender culture was in need of an overhaul, as evident both in *Mondo cane* and in *La donna nel mondo*. A new post-fascist, capitalist, marketable set of masculinities needed to be forged. And these needed to be in continuity with traditional ideas of virility, family and domestic hierarchy (partially rearticulated by Fascism), and with ideas of sexual liberation, romantic love and urbanised family that since the late 1950s had swept through post-war Western societies. In the *Mondo cane* series, denigration of consumerism and liberal democracy on one hand, and colonial nostalgia on the other, serve the purposes of a construction *by contrast* of new foundations for a post-fascist and post-colonial Italy. All that is non-normative (non-white, non-bourgeois, non-heterosexual, not male-centred) is thus highlighted in *Mondo cane*, *Mondo cane 2* and *La donna nel mondo* through a juxtaposition of imagery from Western and non-Western cultures, and sensationally portrayed as grotesque or horrific. Women's emancipated consumerist behaviours are repeatedly ridiculed (especially in *La donna nel mondo*). The successful spectacularisation of normative and non-normative female bodies and actions allows a repositioning of the ideal spectator within the space of the nation along implicit ideals of beauty, social behaviour, and male power to look, appropriate and act.<sup>17</sup>

Many are the hegemonic and non-hegemonic models of masculinity portrayed by Jacopetti & Co. While the white coloniser – the virile icon of the tanned, prolific and sexually voracious man popularised by Fascism – is favoured, the elegant dandy is also cherished. At the opposite pole are the low-class and culturally peripheral southern Italian young men. While filming the celebrations for Rodolfo Valentino's birth anniversary in Puglia (*Mondo cane*), the camera indulges in long shots from below of the local male populace. The grotesque effect is all the more striking when contrasted with the elegant demeanour of actor Rossano Brazzi, besieged by a different horde of barbarians (US fans who treat him like an object of sexual consumption), in the scene that follows.

The attempt to forge a new model of hegemonic masculinity is clear if we consider how, in the same years, peripheral and non-hegemonic masculinities had come under scrutiny in the work of the most important post-fascist intellectuals, artists, and filmmakers. Neorealism and Italian-style comedy – most famously by Luchino Visconti, Mario Monicelli, Mario Bolognini, and Federico Fellini (Manzoli 2014, 11–22) – addressed the quandaries and quagmires of urbanised masculinities undergoing shifts and changes. As Jacqueline Reich argues, since the late 1950s the crisis of normative masculinity and the emergence of competing hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities had been highlighted through the contrapuntal image of the *inetto*:

The *inetto* articulates the traditional binary opposite of the masculine, as it is constructed in Italian culture and society, and as it relates to sexuality: the cuckold, the impotent and the feminized man. Rather than active, the *inetto* is passive; rather than brave, he is cowardly; rather than sexually potent, he is either physically or emotionally impotent. His shortcomings and failings are in direct opposition to the prescribed masculine norms deeply rooted in Italian culture. (Reich 2004, 9)

The figure of the *inetto* embodied men's growing sense of inadequacy about their ability to comply with the heteropatriarchal diktats emanating from normative and hegemonic masculinities. That sense of inadequacy was stemming from the inability to balance traditional Italian gender culture with the models imposed by consumerist society, Fordism, and the advertising industry, which expected men to be protagonists of consumption, both as objects and as subjects (Goffman 1979; Perilli 2012, 91–126). The period spanning the late 1950s to the mid-1970s was marked by social unrest. As social movements began challenging traditional political party culture, feminist and gay movements reshaped public and domestic spheres; the crisis of industrial labour was accompanied by factory workers' struggles, and the conservative and neo-fascist backlash complicated the symbolic references underpinning male hegemony.

Different approaches to normative and hegemonic masculinities in neorealism and Italian-style comedy on one hand, and *mondo* movies on the other, can be ascribed to the director's gaze (reflexive or rejecting), its positionality (hegemonic, normative, or non-hegemonic) and its aim – be it revelatory or mocking, willing to ponder the flaws in the normative model of masculinity or, on the contrary, imposing a new or old normativity.

In Jacopetti's work, the contrast between the white, virile model of masculinity and the crisis of white masculinity is inseparable from criticism of the decolonising world – which, in keeping with the colonial orientalist tradition, is expressed through an investigation of sexuality and racialised gender models that is deeply stereotyped. The struggles for equal pay, legal equality and the reform of family law marked a turning point in the way gender relations were structured in Italy and Europe, both in the private and public spheres and in the workplace. The international scene was deeply marked by the wars of national liberation leading to the independence of Algeria (1962) and, before that, of Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana (1957), French Guinea (1958), Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. These events and those that after 1965, following violent reprisals, led to the liberation of Zimbabwe and the Portuguese colonies of Angola (1974) and Mozambique (1975) clearly resonate in Jacopetti's work.

In *Africa addio* (1966), Jacopetti's *warrior* recounts the end of colonialism and the beginning of the 'end of the Africa we loved, the enchanted Africa of explorers', providing a counter to the vanishing masculinity of the *inetto*. The film was as much a success as it was the subject of great controversy. It won a David di Donatello in the year of its release (and a National Board of Review Award in 1967), but the Italian minister of Cultural Heritage and Activities refused to hand Jacopetti the prize, and the film was eventually banned in 14 countries. Five years later, Jacopetti and Proserpi's *Addio zio Tom* (1971) also sparked a wave of protests, and the film was censored across the country soon after Italian and African university students interrupted a screening in Bologna.<sup>18</sup>

*Africa addio* portrays decolonising African countries through a colonial gaze: the revolutionaries enjoying independence are depicted as miserable fanatics ready to disfigure the colonial sense of beauty and order, kill their fellow man, and devastate their own land. In their quest for gruesome sensationalism, and to underscore the blind violence of African peoples left with no (white) guide, Jacopetti, Stanislao Nieveo and Antonio Calmati had no scruples about filming the brutal murder of three Muelist kids by mercenaries who were riding in the directors' truck, waiting for a cue before firing their machine guns. On that count, Jacopetti was prosecuted by Rome district attorney Pasquale Pedote.<sup>19</sup>

*Addio zio Tom*, a crossover between mockumentary and historical film, was entirely shot in Haiti. Despite Jacopetti defending his work as 'the epic of African negroes', and despite a few critics viewing it as a critique of global capitalism and colonialism,<sup>20</sup> the film features brutal scenes whose sole purpose was to dehumanise the slaves and depict slavery as the only system

capable of restraining black people's basic instincts – leaving no room for a critical analysis. Just like in other *mondo* movies, it is the gaze behind the camera and the close-ups of black faces and bodies that assign those same faces and bodies a negative (ugly/animalised/indecent) meaning. Such is the case with the scenes describing 'men, women and puppies' supposedly having fun at the public castration of a slave charged with deflowering a girl who was to be sold 'as a virgin' (45:20–47:05); or the 'natural' laziness, stupidity, and filthiness of black slaves in the plantation's main house (56:00–58:30); or, finally, young women's apparent joy in enduring daily rape by the plantation owners and their sons (1:35:00–1:42:00).<sup>21</sup>

The less famous *Mondo Candido* (1975) forgoes footage assemblage in favour of a narrative that spans the centuries. The film follows gullible and naïve Candide as he journeys from Voltaire's eighteenth-century Westphalia to the contradictions of the present day, searching for his beloved Cunegonde amidst New York's skyscrapers, IRA landmines on Irish roads and Israeli female troops in Palestine before ending up in an unspecified place where hippies worship their own *dervish*. As in other *mondo* movies, Jacopetti combines his taste for the grotesque (scenes set in the eighteenth century are replete with human *monsters*) with political criticism, disdain for consumer society, scorn for female sexual liberation, and a celebration of male virility and sexual appetite. Candide is the eternal child, whose knowledge of sex does not go far beyond engaging in cunnilingus with his beloved. He is portrayed as an outsider to a corrupt society – as though love and fidelity, and pure women, had no place in the real world.

Normative femininity is construed by contrast in these works of docufiction through denigration of deviant femininities both in the West and in the de- or post-colonising world, in continuity with a 'scopic regime' (Tobing Rony 1996) that since colonial times has fixed normativity through the visualisation of the abject, the monstrous, or the good savage. While documentaries focusing on *ancient persistences* celebrated what was left of the female figures and gender roles of the past, docufiction resorted to stereotyped figures to define by contrast, and in moralistic terms, the Western ideal of woman. In *Mondo cane* and *Mondo cane 2, La donna nel mondo, Addio zio Tom* and *Africa addio*, a fascination with the exoticised black woman (coupled with denigration of her inferiority) intertwined with the white male desire to look at and consume *diversity*. Whether masked as a critique of slavers' violence or as a realistic assessment of the need for a colonial guide, both narratives proved to be a great success with audiences.<sup>22</sup>

In *sexy-mondo* movies, whose fortunes lasted about two decades, the 'scopic regime' put the spotlight on changing sexual mores in Italy, Europe and the whole world, feeding a voyeuristic imaginary that indulged in perversion, female naked bodies, and sexual oddness to titillate the audience's consumerist lust for sex. After the release of *Europa di notte*, double shooting guaranteed international distribution. A tamer version was usually produced for the Italian market – strictly monitored by state authorities and the Catholic Church – while a more risqué one was released to more liberal markets. The first *sexy-mondo* movies (Blasetti's *Europa di notte* and Vanzi's *Mondo di notte*, to which Jacopetti contributed the voice-over scripts) focused mainly on striptease acts and topless dancing (including at the famous Moulin Rouge in Paris), night clubs, brothels, women's mud fights and other bizarre performances; full-frontal nudity first appeared in the late 1970s (Bruschini and Tentori 2013, 25). The viewpoint adopted was that of the white male heterosexual spectator (the first film investigating other forms of sexuality implying a homoerotic viewpoint was *Tomboy*, 1977, by Claudio Racca).

Between 1959 and 1980 hundreds of films were produced under the umbrella of the *sexy-mondo* genre, but signs of decline began to appear in 1964.<sup>23</sup> Very few films were released after the turn of the decade, and the rise of the porn industry delivered the final coup de grâce. Besides Mario Gervasi's *Africa nuda, Africa violenta* (released and censored in 1974), the last successful

Italian *mondo* movies were Bruno Mattei's *Le notti porno nel mondo* (1977) and *Emanuelle e le porno notti* (1978) (Giuliani 2018, 160–162), *Sesso perverso mondo violento* (1980) and *Sexual aberration* (1980). The last two featured that blend of sexual oddness and violence often typical of those who followed in Jacopetti's steps. The commodification of the sexual imaginary was a common trait of *mondo* movies, in which the hegemonic consumerist masculinity defined how excessive female sexuality should be included in the imagined community of the nation: the oddness of the female Other, together with that of the postcolonial racialised Other, was made into an object of mass consumption that, in turn, redefined gender norms and normative masculinity.

### **Postcolonial paternalism, anthropological cannibalism and sexism revealed: *Cannibal Holocaust***

Despite belonging to a different genre, *mondo* developed as an offshoot of cannibal movies, as evident in Ruggero Deodato's *Cannibal Holocaust* and Umberto Lenzi's *Cannibal Ferox* (1981) – both shot at the time of the *mondo* crisis. This allows me to explore how the cannibal genre provided continuity and counterpoint to the *mondo* world, while exacerbating some of its features. *Cannibal Holocaust*, in particular, fits into *mondo*'s voyeuristic mould and yet provides some of the harshest and most innovative criticism of the genre launched by Jacopetti. Deodato's target is the epistemic violence inherent in the anthropological gaze on the colonial/racialised Other (hence the imagined community behind the gaze, as in *Cannibal Ferox*). Or, more precisely, his target is the exoticising manipulation of the Other's postcolonial reality by journalism, academia and cinema.

Cannibal cinema was launched in Italy as a sub-genre of exploitation film by Umberto Lenzi's *Man from the Deep River* (1972), among others. Besides Deodato and Lenzi, it included among its ranks Bruno Mattei, Antonio Climati and Joe D'Amato. Deodato (1939–) began his directing career with Italian-style detective fiction (*poliziotteschi*). In the late 1970s and 1980s he went on to become one of Italy's best-known horror filmmakers – along with Mario and Lamberto Bava, Lucio Fulci, Pupi Avati and Dario Argento (see Tentori and Cozzi 2007; Lupi 2012). *Cannibal Holocaust* is the second episode of *The cannibals trilogy*, which also includes *Ultimo mondo cannibale* (1977) and *Inferno in diretta* (1985). The movie was banned in several countries besides Italy for showing animal slaughter, sexual assaults and brutality (6 February 1980, *visto censura* no. 74702). Deodato himself, together with screenwriter Gianfranco Clerici and the producers Franco Palaggi, Alda Pia and Franco Di Nunzio, was handed a four-month suspended sentence on obscenity charges.<sup>24</sup>

The film was shot in two different styles: Part I (titled *The Last Road to Hell*) was shot in 35mm, while Part II (*The Green Inferno*) was shot in 16mm with scratched film and a hand-held camera, so as to resemble an amateur movie. (Lupi 2003). Focussing on the construction of the hegemonic subject in Italy and the West through the representation of the Other as a hideous barbarian, *Cannibal Holocaust* shows how the latter, though depicted as a cannibal, is in fact cannibalised by the scopic regime, which needs him/her in order to reinstate by contrast the centrality of the hegemonic (male, heterosexual and white) viewpoint.

The movie is about a documentary film crew sent to Amazonia by New York University anthropology professor Harold Monroe to film the last cannibals. It begins with the ending, when a rescue team recovers reels the crew left behind before disappearing and eventually their remains. This is not, however, the most disturbing aspect of the film: the film crew's expedition will turn out to have been marked by unprecedented violence and an unchallenged colonial attitude. The

opening scene shows a representative of Pan American Broadcasting System, a US television network interested in airing the footage. In his praise of first-world achievements – the next step after the ‘conquest of the Moon’ will be the conquest of the entire universe – he draws a comparison with ‘stone age tribes still practising cannibalism’. Yet while he is talking about a society (supposedly the Stone Age one) rooted in the survival of the fittest, what plays out on the screen are images of the crowded streets of New York. In the following scenes, the crew members are seen talking about their trip, showing no fear of their impending fate.

Scenes of extreme violence have a twofold aim in Deodato’s film: they are both spectacular in and of themselves and a tool of criticism used to denounce the constant spectacularisation of that same violence by television and the cinema. The film crew – the director Alan, his girlfriend Faye and the two cameramen, Jack and Mark – is only interested in the more shocking aspects of the indigenous lifestyle in the Colombian forest. When nothing remarkable happens, they have no qualms about stirring up events. The narrative is replete with scenes emphasising the barbarian nature of the indigenous population, from the murder of an adulterous wife to the rape and dismembering of a woman by members of a rival tribe, to the killing of a pregnant and ill woman, a banquet of human flesh, and the rape and impalement of a young girl. Other scenes, however, blur the dichotomy between civilised and barbaric, normative and abnormal, hegemonic and subaltern, subject and object of looking that Jacopetti and other *mondo* movie directors had skilfully created. Such is the case with Jack and Mark’s rape of a girl who is then impaled, or the massacre of natives set alight in their huts by the crew while Alan and Faye make love, seemingly oblivious to the screams of pain in the background. The constant craving for violence that accompanies both the crew’s actions and the filmic narrative is evident in two scenes: the amputation of the guide’s leg and the wounding of a young indigenous man (so as to easily trail him to the village). In his criticism of the unethical representation of violence by the Italian and Western media, Deodato is admittedly targeting the consumption of images, imaginaries and bodies at the centre of *mondo* movies.

Nonetheless, the whole film gives a grotesque description of the indigenes, who let professor Monroe check their teeth, skin and skulls as though they were dogs: they eat human flesh voraciously, like wild rabid animals, as if they deserved nothing but anthropological surveys and death (at the indiscriminate hand of the army soldiers in the rescue team). Their behaviour is constantly under scrutiny or talked about by Monroe and his team. They, on the other hand, remain silent: they eat, rape, and kill in silence. They have no voice, as though they were zombies just able to roar, eat and murder. They walk fast, as though they were horses trotting, and knuckle-walk, like monkeys.

It remains to be seen whether such characterisation of the indigenes is functional to a filmic narrative that claims to owe its style to *mondo* movies (Deodato is a great fan of Jacopetti’s work, as the title *Ultimo mondo cannibale* clearly indicates) or whether it has to do with the director’s critique of their approach. Both sides of the argument are seemingly valid: Deodato is hiding behind two viewpoints and reaping the benefits of both the shocking and the questioning of it. What is interesting here is that Deodato claims to be aware that transforming humans into zombies is colonial in nature – a sort of disclaimer, as Luca Caminati has argued after Mary Louise Pratt with regard to Pasolini’s documentaries: ‘the Western narrator pre-emptively absolves himself of possible colonial sins, volunteering the purity of the first-comer’ (Caminati 2007, 21; Pratt 1992). While Pasolini’s *strategy* involved the narrator’s self-proclaimed innocence at the beginning of a travel story, Deodato claims to have *lost* his innocence due to his and his narrative’s encounter with the (alleged) reality of indigenous (physical) and Western (epistemic) cannibalism.

The white male postcolonial gaze is sugar-coated and re-positioned as an unaccountable dispenser-of-truth: likewise, the image of the barbarians vs. the imagined community in Deodato's mind lets him witness the persistence of colonial violence while identifying with the audience, which, safely seated in a movie theatre, does not personally venture into the jungle (whether it be New York or Amazonia). The twice-mediated gaze (through the film and through its internal critique) is what absolves them from being somehow accomplices in cannibalism. It is, then, a sort of meta-cannibalism, which is also helped by the strangeness of the film's setting: New York, more than Amazonia, signals that Italians should avoid complicity in the (US) neo-colonial anthropological violence. After all, they have *never* killed (alleged) cannibals (in colonial times) nor would think of killing them now, would they?

## Conclusion

From the late 1950s through to the 1970s, Italian documentaries mirrored the main events along the timeline of modernity, emphasising the contradictions between modern and pre-modern Italy and within modernity itself. The focus on what had been left out of modernity was a cornerstone of neorealist and post-realist features, while new possible scenarios, trends (and abjections) were the hallmark of sensationalist exposés. Nonetheless, the appropriation of the social realities they were supposed to give voice to was a common trait. Whether the political aim was to endorse decolonising/postcolonial cultural diversity and national pride (Rossellini and Pasolini) or prove inferiority on the basis of European (fascist) standards of superiority (Jacopetti), appropriation, domestication, and de-subjectivation of the disembodied *Other* is always implied.

The *mondo* genre, in particular, was founded on a core of intertwined themes: visibility-as-the-dispenser-of-self-evident-truth, the exoticisation of Other contexts (only recently emerged from colonial rule and hence a litmus test for the degree of civilisation achieved not so much by the colonised as by the former colonisers) and a re-reading of the colonial archive. Images of *savagery* were conjured up as inherent traits of Other non-modern and non-capitalist worlds, calling for the return of colonialism lest the *atavistic* peoples abandoned by their *imperial guides* fall back into barbarism (Jacopetti). Or as evidence of the (*un*)*speaking* perversion and corruption of modern sexual mores (*sexy-mondo* movies). Or, finally, as the mark of barbarism and violence – equally common in the Self and its uncivilised Other (Deodato). The focus was on the idea of the exoticised Other (the non-normative, monstrous, racialised barbarian) – a useful device for reinstating the male erotic gaze over hypersexualised and exoticised female bodies (*sexy-mondo* movies); for letting an even more classist, sexist, male chauvinist and nostalgic intellectualism engage in the construction of a superior European Western Self (Jacopetti); or for levelling self-indulgent, strategic criticism at the violence of the modern gaze (Deodato).

Symbolic cannibalism, in the sense of a male colonial mentality that devours and whitens its object of racialised erotic desire and colonial conquest-possession (Giuliani 2017a; Giuliani 2018, 149–168), was a legacy of the slavery-based construction of the black subject – now reduced to a marketable object of pleasure or denigration and rearticulated within the domain of the anthropological gaze of benevolent (post)colonial voyeurism.

Commodification of the Other's body and its pervasive racialisation enabled the construction of the Italian imagined community's standards (and spatial co-ordinates) of *whiteness*. The object of erotic, exotic pleasure and scopophilic desire remained an object with no voice of his/her own, whose sole purpose was that of satisfying the white (usually male) one-directional will to look/know/possess an entire society or culture. The Other's racialised body was not granted legitimacy and equality, and it was allowed access to the white hegemonic space only on condition that it be

configured as a visually (*kn*)own-able object.<sup>25</sup> As long as it is subordinate, the presence of the black body serves to continuously reaffirm the hegemony of whiteness and the white male's 'right to look.'

### Acknowledgements

This article was made possible through support from the FCT – Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology, and funded under the Strategic Programme (UID/SOC/50012/2013) and the Postdoctoral Grant SFRH/BPD/101889/2014. It was also financed by FEDER – European Regional Development Fund through the COMPETE 2020 - Operacional Programme for Competitiveness and Internationalisation (POCI), and by Portuguese funds through FCT in the framework of the project 029997. Reference: POCI-01-0145-FEDER-029997. I would like to thank Silvia Loffredo for language editing and proofreading.

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### Notes

1. The term *sexy-mondo* movie was coined by Antonio Bruschini and Antonio Tentori.
2. See Saraceno 1998; Ruspini 2007, 285–304; Bellasai 2012, 191–210; Rebutini 2015.
3. The number of women employed in factories and in the public and non-profit sectors grew steadily during Fascism despite the regime's unfavourable policies, eventually making up 25 per cent of the total workforce. Women entered the workforce in record numbers during the Second World War, replacing men who had joined the armed forces, both in traditionally male jobs and in the war industry. Their employment rate stagnated from 1959 until the early 1970s – in 1950 as in 1970, it was stable at around 33 per cent of the paid workforce, with a significant decline in the 1960s. On the other hand, there was a steady growth of domestic worker jobs, and of housewives looking to bring in extra income with odd jobs that paid under the table. From a quantitative point of view, as well as in terms of questioning traditional patriarchal models, this period and especially the boom years between 1959 and 1963 were not marked by radical change in women's economic empowerment. Nevertheless, young women's exodus from the countryside to the cities and the decline of the rural family model marked a key turning point in the emergence of a new female subject. See Willson 2009, 61–128 and Betti 2010.
4. Giacomo Manzoli provides a key analysis of 1970s film representation of Italian masculinity 'in crisis' (2007). See also dell'Agnese 2007, 14–27; Bracco 2007, 75–78; Rigoletto 2014; Reich 2004; O'Rawe 2014; and Fullwood 2015.
5. On the link between feminist movements and 1970s erotic cinema, see in particular Giuliani Caponetto 2013, 109–123. On the representation of feminist movements and their socio-cultural revolution in Italian *commedia dell'arte* and *commedia sexy* from the late 1950s to the 1970s, see respectively Manzoli 2014, 11–22; Rigoletto 2014, 58.
6. Roberto Rossellini, *India*, 1959; Ermanno Olmi, *Venezia città moderna*, 1957; Alessandro Blasetti, *Quelli che soffrono per noi*, 1953. Cesare Zavattini collaborated with Vittorio de Sica on many of his movies and with Rossellini on the project *Viaggio in Italia*; he also directed *Cinegiornali liberi* and *Cinegiornali della*

- pace*. Vittorio de Seta directed some of his best films between 1954 and 1959, amongst which *Isola di fuoco*, 1954 and *I dimenticati*, 1959. Pasolini directed *La rabbia*, 1963, *Comizi d'amore*, 1964, *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, 1964, *Appunti per un film sull'India*, 1968, *Appunti per un'Orestiade africana*, 1970, *Le mura di Sana'a*, 1971.
7. Brunetta 2010, vol. 2, 22–37. On the realist manifesto by Giuseppe de Santis, Mario Alicata, Antonio Pietrangeli and Carlo Lizzani see Bertozzi 2008, 99ff.
  8. The film was accompanied by two television documentaries: *L'India vista da Rossellini*, ten 20-minute episodes with studio commentary broadcast by RAI's (Radiotelevisione Italiana) first channel in 1959, and its French version *J'ai fait un beau voyage*, a five-episode series broadcast the same year by ORTF (Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision Française).
  9. On Pasolini's pan-southern attitude/ideology, see Marabello 2011. Pasolini's quote is from Castaldini 1967.
  10. 'Franco Prosperi was a marine biologist who, along with Stanislao Nievo, had published popular books about such scientific adventures. Paolo Cavara was a young and ambitious film director who personally shot and supervised many of the scenes in *Mondo Cane*. The cinematographer Antonio Climati was already a veteran news cameraman, infamous in Italy for his aggressive style of capturing news footage' (Goodall 2013, 230).
  11. *Europa di notte* and *Mondo di notte* were shot in 1959 by Blasetti and Vanzi, respectively. Jacopetti wrote the voice-over script for both movies.
  12. For a cinematic contextualisation of *mondo* movies see Shipka 2011, 59–70, although the author associates the flourishing of this genre with the phenomenon of mass immigration to Italy – which actually began in the early 1990s.
  13. Alfredo and Angelo Castiglioni directed, amongst others: *Africa ama*, 1971; *Magia nuda*, 1976; *Addio ultimo uomo*, 1978. Antonio Climati and Mario Morra co-directed *Ultime grida dalla savanna*, 1975. Ruggero Deodato directed *Cannibal Holocaust*, 1981.
  14. Among the movies released between 1959 and 1975 were *Le orientali* (1959), directed by Romolo Marcellini with voice-over by Indro Montanelli (1959); *America di notte* (1960), by Giuseppe Scotese; *Io amo, tu ami* (1961), by Alessandro Blasetti. See also works by Luciano Marinucci and Mino Loy, Renzo Russo, Renzo Rossellini (Roberto's son), Ettore Fecchi, Osvaldo Civirani, Roberto Bianchi Montero, Luigi Scattini, Bruno Mattei, and Joe D'Amato.
  15. John Tagg has noted the use of the photographic image as a 'regime of truth' (1988).
  16. For an interview with Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi on their own perspective 40 years later, see *The Godfathers of Mondo* by David Gregory (USA, 2003).
  17. 'Un film [*La donna nel mondo*] che ha battuto in presenze ed incassi lo strepitoso successo già ottenuto con *Mondo cane*'. *La Stampa*, 22 February 1963; 'Finalmente, presto all'Ideal l'ultimo film di Jacopetti. Tre anni di ricerche e di lavoro. Più impressionante di *Mondo cane*, più polemico di *Africa addio*. Sequestrato, processato, assolto!' *La Stampa*, 27 March 1972.
  18. 'Scontri a Bologna per un film razzista'. *L'Unità*, 10 October 1971, 6, and 'Assolti i dimostranti contro *Addio zio Tom*'. *La Stampa*, 15 December 1971, 7; both quoted in Petrovich Njegosh (2015, 161). On the post-ban edited version (1972), Petrovich Njegosh has noted that: 'The film is available in different versions, both in Italian and English. The original version of 118 minutes was pulled from distribution over plagiarism allegations by Rimini public prosecutor Giuseppe Scarpa; the film was re-edited (1972, 136 minutes) and its title changed to *Zio Tom*: this is the version including archive footage, to which I refer in my analysis. The edited version was released in English with a slightly shorter running time (123 minutes) and the title *Goodbye Uncle Tom*. For sources and further details see Wikipedia.it under *Addio Zio Tom*. Finally, [...] the film is sometimes referred to as *Farewell Uncle Tom* (e.g., on several posters for the US market), and it is not clear whether it is a liberal translation of the Italian title or a reference to the English version' (2015, 161).
  19. G.G. 'Non potevo evitare la morte dei negretti'. *La Stampa*, 3 April 1965.
  20. Adele Gallotti, 'Jacopetti difende il film sequestrato', *La Stampa*, 18 October 1971; for a rehabilitation of Jacopetti as an anti-colonialist film maker, see Maurizio Fogliato and Fabio Francione 2016, 26. In *The Godfathers of Mondo*, referring to *Addio zio Tom*, Prosperi defines it as 'openly anti-racist' (40:14–40:18).
  21. See Gaia Giuliani 2018, 136–138. In *The Godfathers of Mondo* Prosperi confirms Jacopetti and his own position towards decolonising countries in Africa: they had no right of liberty and independence (31:00–31:40).

22. For box office numbers of the first three movies in the series, see *Stampa sera*, 10 January 1964. In 1962, journalist Guido Aristarco had written about the spectacularisation of the animalised other in *mondo* movies: 'Il mito del selvaggio nel cinema italiano'. *La Stampa*, 11 May 1962.
23. B.L. 'Rendono sempre meno i film della serie sexy'. *La Stampa*, 24 April 1964. In the article, continued weak performance at the box office is taken as a sign that the genre will eventually disappear or, 'hopefully' transform into 'better cinema'.
24. See 'Sei condanne per violenza a *Cannibal*'. *La Stampa*, 5 June 1980.
25. The same dynamic has been noted with regard to both plantations and colonial territories, in which the slave owner's/settler's whiteness and wealth were measured by the number of black bodies available to him. See for instance literary works by Toni Morrison, and Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*.

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### Italian summary

Il presente articolo vuole indagare, nella cornice della produzione documentaristica e cinematografica tra la fine degli anni cinquanta e l'inizio degli anni ottanta, il ruolo, la ricezione e il significato culturale, sociale e politico del cosiddetto filone dei *mondomovie*, inauguratosi con i reportage sulla sessualità in Europa e solidificatosi nei collage di Gualtiero Jacopetti. Il contesto storico in cui esso si sviluppa verrà cartografato e ricostruito a partire da un'analisi che pone al centro le costruzioni di genere e razza: un'analisi dello 'sguardo' che identifica, codifica e decodifica la cosiddetta diversità sensazionalistica mi permetterà di comprendere come si riarticolò in questa fase storica la mascolinità bianca in Italia e come essa venne ripositionata al centro della comunità immaginata nazionale. In questa cornice, e all'interno di un'analisi che riepiloga alcuni dei miei studi già pubblicati sui *mondomovies* prodotti tra il 1962 e il 1971 (Giuliani 2017 and 2018), procederò ad analizzare *Cannibal Holocaust* di Ruggero Deodato (1981) per la riflessione controversa che ha offerto sulla natura neocoloniale e occidentale, bianca, capitalista e sessista dello sguardo antropologico.