

A photograph showing the lower legs and feet of several people standing on a red carpet. The people are wearing dark trousers and shoes, and one person on the right is wearing a black ruffled dress and high heels.

Italian Contemporary Screen Performers

Training, Production, Prestige

Edited by

Luca Barra · Cristina Formenti

Mariapaola Pierini · Francesco Pitassio

OPEN ACCESS

palgrave
macmillan

Italian Contemporary Screen Performers

Luca Barra · Cristina Formenti ·
Mariapaola Pierini · Francesco Pitassio
Editors

Italian Contemporary Screen Performers

Training, Production, Prestige

palgrave
macmillan

Editors

Luca Barra
Department of the Arts
Università di Bologna
Bologna, Italy

Cristina Formenti
Department of Arts, Culture and Media
University of Groningen
Groningen, The Netherlands

Mariapaola Pierini
Department of Humanities
Università degli Studi di Torino
Torino, Italy

Francesco Pitassio
Department of Humanities and Cultural
Heritage
Università degli Studi di Udine
Udine, Italy



ISBN 978-3-031-67309-2

ISBN 978-3-031-67310-8 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-67310-8>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2025. This book is an open access publication.

Open Access This book is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this license to share adapted material derived from this book or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this book are included in the book's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the book's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

This work is subject to copyright. All commercial rights are reserved by the author(s), whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed. Regarding these commercial rights a non-exclusive license has been granted to the publisher.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover illustration: © Carlo Bollo/Alamy

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

If disposing of this product, please recycle the paper.

The volume stems from the research project *F-ACTOR. Forms of Contemporary Media Professional Acting. Training, Recruitment and Management, Social Discourses in Italy (2000–2020)*, funded by the Ministry of University and Research, Italy, Progetti di ricerca di Rilevante Interesse Nazionale-PRIN, Call 2017.

F  **ACTOR**

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This volume offers a comprehensive understanding of the multilayered professional role of film and television actors and actresses within the contemporary Italian screen media landscape. More precisely, by focusing on a carefully thought-out selection of Italian film and television stars that have reached success from 2000 onwards, the volume underscores how the renewal that the Italian media industry has undergone starting from the late 1990s has impacted the training, recruitment, career management, promotion and PR, and validation strategies of this category of media professionals. While the generation of stars that since the postwar era had been making Italian cinema world-renowned disappeared—together with that mode of production—new cohorts of actresses and actors who required different skills and mediators came to the fore.

This edited collection is informed by the four-year-long research project *F-ACTOR. Forms of Contemporary Media Professional Acting. Training, Recruitment and Management, Social Discourses in Italy (2000–2020)*, funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research, which adopted a cutting-edge methodological framework that conflates established performance studies and stardom/celebrity studies together with media production studies. The volume brings to the foreground how since 2000 the various stages of the professional life cycle of an Italian leading actor or actress have changed. To this end, the edited collection is divided into three parts that correspond to as many crucial aspects in the professional life cycle of a film and television actor or actress:

training and early career paths; career management; promotion and validation strategies. More precisely, aside from a substantive theoretical and methodological introduction, the book comprises a series of chapters, authored by specialists in Italian film and television studies based in Italy, the UK, and the US. Each chapter focuses on a well-known Italian actor, actress, or related professional, whose creative and operational abilities and career pathway best epitomize one of the peculiarities of the professional development of contemporary Italian screen stars.

CONTENTS

Introduction: Working Stars	1
Luca Barra, Cristina Formenti, Mariapaola Pierini and Francesco Pitassio	
Taking Off: Training and Early Career	
Antonio Albanese: Drama, Comedy, and Everything in Between	29
Alma Mileto	
Luca Argentero: The Charm of Understatement	39
Giancarlo Lombardi	
Marco Giallini: Career Development in the Cultural Industries	47
Luca Antoniazzi	
Luca Marinelli: “You Have to Learn to Trust Your Own Face”	57
Giulia Muggeo	
Benedetta Porcaroli: “Don’t Call Me Baby”	65
Danielle Hipkins	

Alba Rohrwacher: An Unconventional Actress with an Academic Training	73
Paola Zeni	
Toni Servillo: An Actor “Fallen” into Cinema	81
Armando Petrinì	
Mirella Bordoni: Teaching Acting with the “Costa Method”	89
Marta Marchetti	
Tatiana Lepore: The Role of the Acting Coach between Creative Mediation and Functionality	97
Mariapaola Pierini	
Work and Play: Career Management	
Giuseppe Battiston: Enough with the Latin Lover	111
Paola Bonifazio	
Silvia Calderoni: A Techno-Heart Athlete	119
Alessandro Amaducci	
Coco Rebecca Edogamhe: A Very Ordinary Girl	127
Matteo Marinello	
Pierfrancesco Favino: Italianness, Masculinity, and Performance of a Popular <i>Antidivo</i>	135
Alberto Scandola	
Sabrina Ferilli: Negotiating Sexuality, Femininity, and Ageing through Authenticity	143
Nicoletta Marini-Maio	
Valeria Golino: Transnational and Global Italianness	153
Sara Pesce	
Caterina Murino: Global Ambitions, Italian Roots	163
Emiliano Rossi	
Jasmine Trinca: The Smiling Girl Goes #Metoo	171
Emiliano Morreale	
Laura Muccino and Sara Casani: Casting Directors and the Crafting of Italian TV Stardom	179
Dana Renga	

Beppe Caschetto: How a Talent Agent Can Build a Film and Television Performer	187
Luca Barra	
From Market to Fame: Promotion, Acknowledgement, Celebrity	
Monica Bellucci: Internationalizing Italian Beauty	199
Stephen Gundle	
Alessandro Borghi: (Reluctant) Celebrity, (Self-) Promotion, and Social Networks	207
Catherine O’Rawe	
Margherita Buy: Accounting the Career of an Aging (<i>Anti</i>)Diva	215
Cecilia Brioni	
Paola Cortellesi: Artistic Versatility, Gender Equality, and the Use of Promotional Interviews in the (Re-) Negotiation of a Star’s Image	223
Cristina Formenti	
Matilda De Angelis: Naked Ambition	231
Silvia Vacirca	
Elio Germano: Not Just an Actor	241
Luca Peretti	
Riccardo Scamarcio: The Transference of Energy and the Enigmas of Intimacy	249
Louis Bayman	
Greta Scarano: A Versatile Contemporary Celebrity	257
Maria Elena Alampi	
Checco Zalone: Popular Performance, Italian Masculinity, and Transmedia Promotion	265
Francesco Pitassio	
Alberto Barbera: Enhancing Italian Actors and Actresses through Film Festivals	277
Roy Menarini	

List of Films, TV Series, TV Shows	285
Subject Index	295

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Maria Elena Alampi is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Exeter for the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) project *A Girls' Eye View: Girlhood on the Italian Screen since the 1950s*. She completed her PhD at the University of Birmingham with a thesis titled *The New Italian Cinema of Precarity*, which will be published by Peter Lang as a runner-up in the 2022 Emerging Scholars Competition in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies for Literature & Culture. In 2020, she co-founded the Cinematic Precarity Research Network.

Alessandro Amaducci is a video artist and Associate Professor at the Università degli Studi di Torino. His research deals with video art, animation, music videos, digital cinema, live video, and in general experimenting new technologies for moving images (video art, digital cinema, digital animation, music videos, screendance, and fashion film), topics on which he has written numerous volumes and essays. His more recent book, written with Eleonora Manca, is *Fashion Film. Nuove visioni della moda* (2021).

Luca Antoniazzi is Assistant Professor in Media Studies at the Università di Scienze Gastronomiche. He was a postdoctoral research fellow at the Department of the Arts, Università di Bologna working on Italian television actors and cultural work. Previously he worked on European audiovisual media circulation and the cultural policy of film archiving. He has published both in Italian and international reference journals

such as *Cinéma&Cie*, *Cinergie*, *Information Communication and Society*, *Museum Management and Curatorship*, and *The Moving Image*.

Luca Barra is Professor of Television and Digital Media at the Department of the Arts, Università di Bologna. His research mainly focuses on TV production and distribution cultures, comedy genres, the international circulation of media products, and contemporary media landscape. On these topics, he published four books in Italian, and co-edited six volumes, including: *A European Television Fiction Renaissance: Premium Production Models and Transnational Circulation* (with Massimo Scaglioni, 2021), and *Taboo Comedy: Television and Controversial Humour* (with Chiara Bucaria, 2016). He is one of the editors-in-chief of “VIEW. Journal of European TV History and Culture.”

Louis Bayman is Associate Professor of Film Studies at the University of Southampton. He has written on a wide range of aspects of Italian cinema, from melodrama to horror and from realism to the concept of the popular. He is the author of the monograph *The Operatic and the Everyday in Postwar Italian Cinema* (2014) and has recently completed a study of the collaboration of Anita Ekberg with Federico Fellini for the collection *Anita Ekberg: International Blonde*.

Paola Bonifazio is a Professor of Italian Studies and chair of the Department of French and Italian at the University of Texas at Austin. Her research interests are in Italian film and media studies, film history and theory (including non-fiction and non-commercial films), feminist and postfeminist theories, and gender studies. She is the author of *Schooling in Modernity: The Politics of Sponsored Film in Postwar Italy* (2014) and *The Photoromance* (2020). She is also one of the editors of the online peer-reviewed journal *gender/sexuality/italy*.

Cecilia Brioni is Lecturer in Modern European History at the University of Aberdeen. Her research explores the history of representations of Italian youth in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in a variety of popular media. Her current research focuses on self-representations of youth, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality on the video-sharing platform YouTube Italia. Her most recent publications include the monograph *Fashioning Italian Youth: Young People's Style and Identity in Italian Popular Media, 1958–75* (2022).

Cristina Formenti is Lecturer in Film Studies at the University of Groningen. She is the author of *Il mockumentary: la fiction si maschera da documentario* (2013) and *The Classical Animated Documentary and Its Contemporary Evolution* (2022), as well as the editor of *Polvere di stelle. Cinema e cronaca in 41 immagini del quotidiano La Notte* (with Andrea Chimento, Elena Mosconi, and Stefania Parigi, 2023), *Mariangela Melato tra cinema, teatro e televisione* (2016) and *Valentina Cortese: un'attrice intermediale* (2019). She is President of the Society for Animation Studies and sits in the Governing Council of Visible Evidence.

Stephen Gundle is Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick. He is the author of several works of cultural and film history, including *Bellissima: Feminine Beauty and the Idea of Italy* (2007), *Mass Culture and Italian Society from Fascism to the Cold War* (with David Forgacs, 2007), and *Glamour: A History* (2008). He has also written two books about film stardom: *Mussolini's Dream Factory: Film Stardom in Fascist Italy* (2013) and *Fame Amid the Ruins: Italian Film Stardom in the Age of Neorealism* (2020).

Danielle Hipkins is Professor of Italian Studies and Film at the University of Exeter. She has published widely on gender representation in postwar Italian cinema and on the relationship between gender, memory, and cinema. She is Principal Investigator of the AHRC-funded project "A Girls' Eye View: Girlhood on the Italian Screen since the 1950s," together with Romana Andò.

Giancarlo Lombardi is Professor of Italian and Comparative Literature at the College of Staten Island and at the CUNY Graduate Center. He has published extensively on European and North American women writers, Italian screen studies, cultural studies, and, most recently, American and transnational serial drama.

Marta Marchetti is Associate Professor in Performing Arts at La Sapienza Università di Roma. She teaches classes on Contemporary Theatre History and European Theatre. She is also the author of *Camus e Dostoevskij. Il romanzo sulla scena* (2007) and *Guardare il romanzo. Luca Ronconi e la parola in scena* (2016).

Matteo Marinello is a Research Fellow at the Università di Bologna. He teaches television history and theory at the Universities of Bari and Padua,

and he obtained his PhD with a research project on the relationship between comedy and politics in the history of Italian TV (1969–82).

Nicoletta Marini-Maio is Professor of Italian and Film Studies and Chair of Film and Media Studies at Dickinson College. Her academic work centers on Italian film and media, particularly the intersections between politics and the collective memory, gender power relations, girlhood, and the creative culture. She is the author of *A Very Seductive Body Politics: Silvio Berlusconi in the Cinema* (2015) and co-edited the volumes *Set the Stage! Teaching Italian through Theatre. Theories, Methods, and Practices* and *Dramatic Interactions*. She is the founder and editor of *gender/sexuality/italy (g/s/i)*, and is also the Vice President of the American Association for Italian Studies.

Roy Menarini is Professor of Cinema and Cultural Industry at the Università di Bologna. He is senior editor (and former chief editor) of the journal *Cinergie. Il cinema e le altre arti*. He co-directs the Culture, Fashion, Communication (CFC) and Italian Research Network in Celebrity Studies (INC) international research centers. He has published numerous essays on contemporary cinema and on topics such as film criticism, cinephilia, and film analysis.

Alma Mileto is a Research Fellow in Film and Media at the Department of Modern Literature and Cultures of La Sapienza Università di Roma. She has written essays in national journals (including *Fata Morgana*, *Arabeschi*, *Biblioteca teatrale*, and *Cinema e storia*). She is the author of *La voce del reale. Il rapporto voce-immagine nel cinema documentario* (2023) and editor-in-chief of *Fata Morgana Web*.

Emiliano Morreale is Professor in Film Studies at La Sapienza Università di Roma. His principal research interest lies in Italian cinema from 1945 onwards. He is the author of, among others, *L'invenzione della nostalgia. Il vintage nel cinema italiano e oltre* (2009), *Così piangevano. Il cinema melò nell'Italia degli anni '50* (2011), *Cinema d'autore degli anni sessanta* (2011), and *La mafia immaginaria. 70 anni di Cosa Nostra al cinema* (2020). He also co-edited the anthology *Racconti di cinema* (with Mariapaola Pierini, 2014). He was formerly a member of the selection board of Turin Film Festival and Venice Film Festival and curator of the Cineteca Nazionale.

Giulia Muggeo is Assistant Professor at the Università degli Studi di Torino. Her main research interests are Italian cinema, popular cinema, intersections between film and television, stardom and celebrity. She is the author of *Marcello Mastroianni: echi e riscritture di un attore* (2017) and *Star Domestiche. Le origini del divismo televisivo in Italia* (2020). With Giacomo Albert, Giulia Carluccio, and Antonio Pizzo, she co-edited *Ciao Maschio. Politiche di rappresentazione del corpo maschile nel Novecento* (2019) and with Giulia Carluccio, Federica Mazzocchi and Mariapaola Pierini *Effetto Magnani. Sguardi sull'attrice e sulla diva* (2022).

Catherine O'Rawe is Professor of Italian Film and Culture at the University of Bristol. She is the author of *Stars and Masculinities in Contemporary Italian Culture* (2014) and co-author of *Divi: la mascolinità nel cinema italiano* (2015). She recently published *The Non-Professional Actor. Italian Neorealist Cinema and Beyond* (2023), and has written widely on stardom, gender, and genre.

Luca Peretti is Assistant Professor of Italian Studies at the University of Richmond. He is the author of *Un dio nero un diavolo bianco. Storia di un film non fatto tra Algeria, Eni, Solinas e Sartre* (2023) and has co-edited volumes on terrorism and cinema (2014), Pier Paolo Pasolini (2018), and Italian cinema and Algeria (2022).

Sara Pesce is Associate Professor at the Università di Bologna. Her research focuses on acting, celebrity culture and fashion, and the historical roots of the Hollywood industry. She is co-founder of the Italian Research Network on Celebrity Culture. She is the author of *Dietro lo schermo* (2005), *Memoria e immaginario* (2008), and *Laurence Olivier nei film* (2012). She is also editor of two collections on film melodrama (*Imitazioni della vita*, 2007) and on time, memory, and paratextual media (*The Politics of Ephemeral Digital Media*, 2015).

Armando Petrini is Professor of Performing Arts at the Università degli Studi di Torino. He has worked mainly on the history of acting, with particular reference to the actors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Gustavo Modena, Ruggero Ruggeri, Ettore Petrolini, Carmelo Bene, and Carlo Cecchi). He is the author of *Gustavo Modena. Teatro, arte, politica* (2012), *Fuori dai cardini. Il teatro italiano negli anni del primo conflitto mondiale* (2020), and *Carmelo Bene* (2021).

Mariapaola Pierini is Professor of Film Studies at the Università degli Studi di Torino. She is the author of *Prima del cinema. Il teatro di Orson Welles* (2005), *Attori e Metodo. Montgomery Clift, Marlon Brando, James Dean; e Marilyn Monroe* (2006), and *Gary Cooper. Il cinema dei divi, l'America degli eroi* (2011). She is co-editor with Emiliano Morreale of *Racconti di cinema* (2014), with Giulia Carluccio and Emiliano Morreale of *Intorno al Neorealismo. Voci, contesti, linguaggi e culture dell'Italia del dopoguerra* (2016), and with Giulia Carluccio, Federica Mazzocchi, and Giulia Muggeo of *Effetto Magnani. Sguardi sull'attrice e sulla diva* (2022).

Francesco Pitassio is Professor of Film Studies at the Università degli Studi di Udine. He is co-editor with Dorota Ostrowska and Zsuzsanna Varga of *Popular Cinemas in East Central Europe. Film Cultures and Histories* (2017) and is the author of *Ombre silenziose* (2002), *Maschere e marionette. Il cinema ceco e dintorni* (2002), *Attore/Divo* (2003), *Il cinema neorealista* (with Paolo Noto, 2010), and *Neorealist Film Culture, 1945–1954* (2019). He acted as the Principal Investigator of the research project *F-ACTOR. Forms of Contemporary Media Professional Acting. Training, Recruitment and Management, Social Discourses in Italy (2000–2020)*.

Dana Renga is Professor of Italian and Dean of Arts and Humanities at the Ohio State University. She is a specialist in Italian film and television. She is the author of *Watching Sympathetic Perpetrators on Italian Television: Gomorrah and Beyond* (2019) and *Unfinished Business: Screening the Italian Mafia in the New Millennium* (2013). She is also co-author of *Internal Exile in Fascist Italy: History and Representation of 'Confino'* (2019) and editor of *Mafia Movies: A Reader* (2nd ed, 2019). She is currently working on a book called *#castingstardom*, which is a project on casting practices in the US and in Italy.

Emiliano Rossi holds a PhD in Cinema, Photography and Television from the Department of the Arts, Università di Bologna, where he is a postdoc Research Fellow. His research focuses on TV studies. He is responsible for the Television and Web TV Laboratory at the Università di Bologna-Alma Mater Studiorum and is the author of *Schermi di trasporto. Storia, produzione, immaginari* (2023).

Alberto Scandola is Professor of Film Studies at the Università degli Studi di Verona. His research interests include performance studies, star

studies, contemporary Italian cinema, and French auteur cinema. Among his publications are *L'immagine e il nulla: l'ultimo Godard* (2014), *Greed* (2017) and *Il corpo e lo sguardo. L'attore nel cinema della modernità* (2020).

Silvia Vacirca is a postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Università degli Studi di Parma. Her research focuses on the relationship between cinema, fashion, and the arts. She is the author of *Fashioning Submission. Documenting Fashion, Taste and Identity in WWII Italy through 'Bellezza' Magazine* (2023).

Paola Zeni is a postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Università degli Studi di Torino and teaches Acting Studies in Cinema and Media at the Università degli Studi di Padova and Fashion Forms and Languages at the Università degli Studi di Torino. She is the author of *L'amazzone bianca. Luisa Ferida attrice e diva nell'Italia fascista* (2022).



Valeria Golino: Transnational and Global Italianness

Sara Pesce

Although not yet a senior actress, Valeria Golino has worked long enough to cross different eras in film history and a few national borders. Her international fame started in 1986 with the Volpi Cup Award in Venice for *Storia d'amore* (*Love Story*, Citto Maselli). To date, she has received 73 awards. Although she is now an established Italian star and filmmaker well-known to European audiences, prior to *Respiro* (*Breath*, Valeria Golino 2002), her popularity in the US has been greater than in Italy. Her untrained screen personality appeared in the US in the 1990s, after *Rain Man* (Barry Levinson, 1988), when Hollywood stardom underwent a deep transformation concerning values and identity norms of gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and nationality (Everett 2012). At that time, the developing politics of multiculturalism helped film narratives open to gender counter-normativity and social complexity. Golino's professional identity was indeed molded in the ambiance of an independent US cinema embracing cultural diversity (found in *Side Streets*, Tony Gerber, 1998, with Golino's polyglotism). This was an epoch when agents strived to comply with a film industry that understood sexuality and race as the

S. Pesce (✉)
Università di Bologna, Bologna, Italy
e-mail: sara.pesce@unibo.it

© The Author(s) 2025
L. Barra et al. (eds.), *Italian Contemporary Screen Performers*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-67310-8_16

153

most welcomed forces of destabilization of white male command and standardization.

Also, whilst iconic feminist figures were scarce, new female stars begun do be framed in the conceptual category of “chick flick,” Meg Ryan being the face of this genre and Julia Roberts—Golino’s competitor for *Pretty Woman* (Garry Marshall, 1990)—the body. Golino intersected the chick flick phenomenon due especially to her carefree, independent sexuality (possibly a variation of Isabella Rossellini’s). This imposed a stigma to the actress, as was the case with other actresses who fell in the same category, whose diminished worth (artistic, cultural, or political) could easily be extended to their appreciative audience. At the same time, she differentiated from glamorous models of seduction. In *Hotshots! 2* (Jim Abrahams, 1993), her Ramada is a parody of free sensual release contrasting the straightforwardness of Michelle’s caricatural sex appeal, conveyed by a stylish Brenda Bakke. For decades Golino has impersonated abroad primarily modern women with a highlighted idiom—bodily, linguistic, personal. This occurred in a period stretching across the, millennium, marked by a new pervasiveness of Method acting techniques, notions and traditions. The increased loosening of its technical and conceptual boundaries induced an integration of “the total merger of actor and character” with the notion of universalism, helping actors “cross eras, classes, even ethnicities” (Enelow 2015, 3–4). Golino’s slightly accented speech, brisk bodily expressivity, and hand gesticulation introduced diversity and idiosyncrasy in different genres, from comedy to romance and social drama. In *Side Streets*, she is a restless fashion designer. In *Rain Man*, she complies with 1980s materialism as an agent’s secretary for Lamborghini, earthly and sensible. Her frank expressivity, direct gaze, and willful movements stand out as different from Dustin Hoffman’s mannerisms and Tom Cruise’s contained excesses.

For four decades the American, Italian, French, Greek, and British film industries have intersected in Golino’s professionalism, fabricating a global image synthesized, for instance, in the recent televisual character of Paola Lambruschini (*The Morning Show*, 2019–present). Politically engaged, intellectual, maternally sensual, and congruent with the vaguely archaic southern Italian beauty she inhabits, she nevertheless connects—in a healing posture—with an American television anchor involved in a sexual misconduct scandal reverberating #MeToo. Far removed from the “*mater dolorosa*” paradigm and from the folklorization of the peasant, half-undressed, and cleavage-baring woman that marked the postwar

female stardom, when Italian divas were humble figures ascended to the bourgeoisie, Golino carves a peculiar film persona abroad that is not oversimplified, gigantic, or transgressive enough to be iconic. Unlike her contemporary Monica Bellucci, the Mediterranean goddess heir of an eroticism branded by Sophia Loren's oriental blinking eyes and overly full-figured shape, Golino brings instead a peculiar, off-key bodily style. This is exemplified in jerky, whimsical, even off-tune roles, as in Valeria Bruni Tedeschi's *Les Estivants* (*The Summer House*, 2019), or in ordered motherly figures, such as *Alive* (Frédéric Berthe, 2004), with her convulsive affectionate expressionism. Although she is also volcanic and the rough sensual fragility of her voice might be reminiscent of Claudia Cardinale—who in the 1960s stretched this Latin eroticism to middle-class women (De Benedictis 2005, 134)—her Hollywood fortune is based on an irregularity that reverberates forms of anomaly in the feminine performance also found in the late 1980s Italian pop music scene, championed by Gianna Nannini. Her substantial peculiarities are also appreciated in French cinema where stars become “vernacular,” overcoming the opposition between national and international, and blurring the boundaries between art and pop cinema (Nacache 2005, 28).

Golino's international career has not unfolded along a path created by producers and studios as in the case of her predecessors. In the vacuum of a mainstream industry, the chances of an actress being hired for a role have been less based on high-scale production engineering than on the job of agents and casting directors, or affinities of intentions with other actors or filmmakers. Golino enters an international “reference system”, built by agents connecting her to the film industry of both sides of the ocean and by her long-term alliances with filmmakers and actors, based on mutual esteem. From the she-gangster in the direct-to-video crime drama *Spanish Judges* (Oz Scott, 2000) to Diego Rivera's elegant wife in *Frida* (Julie Taymor, 2002), the sophisticated Bond-girl type in *Ca\$h* (Éric Besnard, 2008) and the eighteenth-century aristocrat in *Portrait of the Young Lady on Fire* (Céline Sciamma, 2019), her film persona exemplifies a global lifestyle. So does her public persona. Endowed with excellent linguistic skills, publicized as cross-cultural (half Greek, half Italian) and geographically mobile, she “leads a nomadic life ... and plays a determining role in forming her star image” (Landy 2008, 184). Started in Italian cinema by the most subversive director, Lina Wertmüller, Golino conveys a feminine condition as independent as

it is precarious: “Free, sensual and conflictual, provocative and destabilizing, Mediterranean (marine) and salvific, ancient and contemporary” (Manetti and Jandelli 2018, 174). Such a typology emerges vigorously in *Respiro*. Not incidentally, her star debut in the Italian scene is due to a filmmaker who graduated from the New York University adapting the basic situation of John Cassavetes’ landmark *A Woman Under the Influence* (1974) and transplanting it to Lampedusa (Kevin 2003, 46). The actress’ visceral, immersive acting conflates with the island’s natural environment. Golino’s Grazia reaches a tactile communicativeness with her unpolished utterances, her disharmonic poses, and intense hypnotic gaze, and modernizes an archaic femaleness merging with sea, wind, and light.

What makes Golino iconic is her ability to represent a kind of paralysis of growth, conveyed by a voice that sounds immature and by some sort of adolescent clash between self-compression and emotionality. This becomes her trademark, reverberating chick lit’s heroines—overly compulsive, neurotic, insecure, and bold (Ferris and Young 2006, 4), and therefore intersecting an international female audience “caught between their postmodern, feminist lives and the prescriptions that still expect them to maintain a traditional feminine image” (Ferris and Young 2006, 7). Persistently, Golino impersonates spontaneously sensual *signore*, especially in France (*La vie très privée de Monsieur Sim*, *The Very Private Life of Mister Sim*, Michel Leclerc, 2015) or smiling whimsy mothers (*Un baiser papillon*, *A Butterfly Kiss*, Karine Silla, 2011). She adapts brilliantly to French comedy’s rhythms, gestures, talk, conflating eternal earthliness and modern sexual agency (*Olé*, Florence Quentin, 2005). She is sometimes a character actor (simply “the Italian” in *San Antonio*, Frédéric Auburtin, 2004) or a minor figure serving as the reflection of the male character’s interiority (*36 Quai des Orfèvres*, *36th Precinct*, Olivier Marchal, 2004).

Alternating participations and leading roles is a constant for Golino. Her adaptability and equally high standards in primary or secondary roles testify to her commitment as a professional, putting “an emphasis on impersonation, on a distinction between star and role” (Gheraghty 2000, 192). Golino arrives for instance to accept a very small part in Gavras’ *Adults in the Room* (2019), for the sake of the political commitment and the authorial trademark. “The actor as a performer is defined by work and is often associated with the high cultural values of theatrical performance ... The more actors are known only for their performance, the more cultural value they are likely to be given” (Gheraghty 2000,

188). The insight of Golino's comments on her own roles discloses her authority. In Golino's own words, while discussing *La guerra di Mario* (*Mario's War*, Antonio Capuano, 2005), her authentic self is much more normal than her exorbitant characters, less free, more seductive, and more compliant with her environment. She also explains her research into her characters' humanity, who might be seen as wrong or failing. Rooted in her capabilities to shift meaning and signify something clear-cut to the audience, Golino's acting assumes the style, form, and integrity of an "auteur" (Dyer 1986, 174) and resonates with what Method acting recognizes as the actor's creativity. Indeed, her acting embraces the basics of a Method's ideal gone global, its outstanding realism based on the emphasis on the character's inner life. This notion of cinematic naturalness entails a vision of the individual as divided between an authentic inner self and a potentially repressed outer self.

This also helps promote film stars as unique and authentic individuals in the contemporary context of the dissemination of celebrities (Gheraghty 2000, 63). What makes Golino's work accomplished in the public eye is the popularization of a belief concerning an actor's human material. Engaging unsatisfied needs, using creatively personal fragilities, and connecting with the character's sensorial world, an actor induces each spectator to mirror in his or her universal performance. Handling aspects of human experience connected to vulnerability and deep personal needs is an actorial practice developed by Lee Strasberg's Method and his disciples in the Actors Studio. It has also broadly circulated in the new millennium not exclusively among insiders of a specific work-group or school stemming from Method acting. In the U.S., we may find these ideas in schools encompassing the Stanislavskian approach, such as the Tisch School of the Arts at NYU, or in the legacy of Sanford Meisner's teaching at Neighborhood Playhouse. Or in the Stella Adler tradition in California—the Stella Adler Academy of Acting and theatre, Los Angeles, or The Rehearsal Room, San Diego. They are epitomized in the writings of famous acting coaches working in the US and Europe, such as Susan Batson and Ivana Chubbuck, who shift the emphasis from actors' exceptionality to their ability to make their ordinary qualities valuable. These ideas are showcased in Europe too, in many major screen performances that emphasize the individual's normality, purity and humility. They are actorial forms that update largely and diversely the Stanislavskian matrix, as in the case of the Costa method at Centro sperimentale di cinematografia or the Duse International di Francesca De Sapio in Rome,

and a myriad of schools, work-groups, trainings, and artistic experiences scattered across Italy and other European countries, including workshops of well-known acting coaches of Stanislavskian descent. Moreover, performance, as opposed to leisure and the private sphere, flags the star as having cultural value, a principle that works very well for Golino's engagement with Italian cinema, a milieu marked by the myth of the "anti-divo" and "anti-diva" (Carluccio and Minuz 2015). Based more on artistic than commercial credentials, her symbolic capital is represented by awards, social engagement, and auteur-film directing, including two awarded films and the latest work for television (*L'arte della gioia*, *The Art of Joy*, 2024), plus campaigning for Greenpeace and withdrawing completely from social networks. It is even represented by a demure handling of a private life highly exposed to gossip (especially her liaison with sex symbol Riccardo Scamarcio) and rich in glamorous components and elegant red carpets. Televisual seriality also appears as a means to credit the star's artistic brand (Barra 2020), perpetuating a cinematic imagery (*La vita bugiarda degli adulti*, *The Hidden Life of Adults*, 2023, elaborates on *Respiro's* characterization), or validating an esteemed cinematic milieu (adapting Goliarda Sapienza's *The Art of Joy* calls attention to the writer's partner, Citto Maselli, who directed Golino's cinematic debut).

Golino's Italian career is deeply embedded in the early millennium auteur-cinema and suffers from its iconographic and psychologic homologation (Pierini 2017, 24), a kind of "average cinema" recognizable in a range of recurring roles, faces and bodies, gestures, voices, and dictions (Menarini 2010, 45). Golino adds to this with her peculiar touch, the contrast between the dazzling eyes and a self-hiding smile being her expressive trademark, her psychic energy condensed in a tense upper lip. Recurrently seen in roles as a mother—marketable for an international audience and praised in festivals (*Lasciami andare*, *You Came Back*, Stefano Mordini, 2020)—she embraces many maternal typologies of Italian cinema, once described by Federico Fellini as "mater dolorosa, virgin mother, martyr mother, mamma Roma, she-wolf, motherland, mother Church." This explains why she happens to interpret twisted personalities, or a Gorgon (*Il sole nero*, *Black Sun*, Krzysztof Zanussi, 2007) without generating incongruities in the general design of her film persona. Her frequent Neapolitans, even minor characters, are middle-class figures endowed with a touch of whimsy. A master of ordinary trauma, she has been awarded prizes for impersonating mothers endowed

with a universal inner truth, as in *La guerra di Mario*. The film *La scuola cattolica* (*The Catholic School*, Stefano Mordini, 2021) is another example: in a milieu of passive or distracted caregivers, hers is playful and girlish, a victim suffering in silence, like numerous of her contemporary peripheral figures expressing a social paralysis, a concealed violence in Italian behaviors (*La kryptonite nella borsa*, *Kryptonite!*, Ivan Cotroneo, 2011).

From *Respiro* to *La vita bugiarda degli adulti*, the element of water connects several of Golino's roles across cinema and television, imbued in a Neapolitan tradition (championed by Mario Martone) which associates water with creation and conceives maternal femininity as a supreme, silent intelligence elevating the world (Angelini 2003, 133). Water is also an element of characterization in Golino's auteur work: in *Miele* (Honey, Valeria Golino, 2013), swimming in the sea is a ritual of regeneration. In the Netflix series, Golino conveys a disenchanting sensuality that inspires a young woman's journey of self-discovery. Her non-compliant acting enquires about the mature female body's superimpositions, reverberating her own unconventional allure, and her non-conformity to certain social standards, including her liaisons with younger men.

In major and minor roles, as *5 è il numero perfetto* (*5 Is the Perfect Number*, Iğort, 2019), her Neapolitan characterizations conflate the city's labyrinth with the character's inner quest, the cityscapes turning functional to a portrayal of the anti-diva. In *Per amor vostro* (*For Your Sake*, Giuseppe M. Gaudino, 2015), a screened sexuality, a self-constrained body, and a shy look, the undertones, and tentative gestures convey this anti-star stance, which works excellently as a counterbalance to Golino's stylish and purposive public persona. This bond between the actress and Naples is reminiscent of illustrious cases, such as Magnani's bond with Rome. Indeed, it benefits from the rich Neapolitan productive environment—industrious proximity of resources and imagery, a range of autochthon filmmakers and writers, a musical scene, a community of workers, artists, and extras, nurturing and reverberating Golino's reach for dissonances and color. With this Neapolitan connection, Golino updates Magnani's motif of the capital as an adoptive "motherland" turned into a theatre of maternal performance. A peculiar case of *prestige star* (Jandelli 2020), Golino develops a dichotomic persona, hovering between centrality and periphery (of roles and geographies), between spectacle and auteurism, gossip and commitment.

REFERENCES

- Angelini, Franca. 2003. *Rasoi. Teatri napoletani del 900*. Rome: Bulzoni.
- Barra, Luca. 2020. "La televisione rimossa, la televisione enfattizzata. Attori italiani e piccolo schermo." *Fata Morgana Web*, November 1. <https://www.fatamorganaweb.it/attori-italiani-e-piccolo-schermo/>.
- Carluccio, Giulia, and Andrea Minuz, eds. 2015. "Nel paese degli antidivi." *Bianco e Nero* 581.
- De Benedictis, Maurizio. 2005. *Acting. Il cinema dalla parte degli attori*. Avigliano, Roma.
- Dyer, Richard. 1986 (1979). *Stars*. London: BFI.
- Enelow, Shonni. 2015. *Method Acting and Its Discontents. On American Psycho-Drama*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Everett, Anna. 2012. *Pretty People. Stars of the 1990s*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Ferris, Suzanne, and Mallory Young, eds. 2006. *Chick Lit. The New Woman's Fiction*. London: Routledge.
- Gheraghty, Christine. 2000. "Re-examining Stardom: Questions of Texts, Bodies and Performance." In *Reinventing Film Studies*, edited by Gledhill, Christine and Linda Williams, 183–201. London: Arnold.
- Jandelli, Cristina. 2020. "Quanto vale un capitale simbolico? L'attore di prestigio italiano nel suo contesto produttivo." *Fata Morgana web*, November 16. <https://www.fatamorganaweb.it/quanto-vale-un-capitale-simbolico/>.
- Kevin, Lally. 2003. "Respiro." *Film Journal International* 106, no. 6: 46.
- Landy, Marcia. 2008. *Stardom Italian Style. Screen Performance and Personality in Italian Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Manetti, Beatrice, and Cristina Jandelli. 2018. "Una protagonista plurale. Miele da Mauro Covacich a Valeria Golino." *L'avventura*, no. 1: 165–186.
- Menarini, Roy. 2010. *Il cinema dopo il cinema. Dieci idee sul cinema italiano 2001–2010*. Recco: Le Mani.
- Nacache, Jacqueline. 2005. "Group Portrait with a Star: Jeanne Balibar and French 'Jeune' Cinema." *Studies in French Cinema*, no. 1: 49–60.
- Pierini, Maria Paola. 2017. "Per una cultura d'attore. Note sulla recitazione nel cinema italiano." In *L'attore nel cinema contemporaneo. Storia, performance, immagine*, edited by Pedro Armocida and Andrea Minuz, 19–30. Venice: Marsilio.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this license to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

