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## WOMEN IN ITALIAN FILM PRODUCTION (1949-1976): MID-MANAGEMENT ROLES AS SEEN THROUGH ANICA DATA AND ORAL HISTORY

### *Abstract*

This contribution offers an overview of women's labour in the Italian film industry between 1949 and 1976, the chronological span examined by the PRIN 2017 project *Modes, Memories and Cultures of Film Production in Italy*. It applies a thematic criterion to organise data from the Anica database, which aggregates the credits of all feature films and documentary films produced and co-produced in Italy from 1930 onwards. Moving from an overview of women's below-the-line labour, this analysis examines the remarkably scarce female presence in production mid-management roles (such as production supervisors and production and unit managers) in the postwar years. Highlighting the challenges of doing historical research on below-the-line roles, particularly when these are held by women, the article discusses the careers of some of the few women active in mid-management positions such as Jone Tuzi, Anna Davini, Bianca Lattuada, Mara Blasetti and Cecilia Bigazzi. Finally, the quantitative analysis performed on Anica data is complemented by a micro-historical analysis based on interviews conducted with unit manager and production supervisor Rosalba di Bartolo, who worked in the Italian film industry for four decades between the 1960s and the early 2000s.

### *Keywords*

Below-the-line; mid-management; Anica; quantitative analysis; oral history.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Defining women's role in Italian film production during the so-called "golden years" faces several nesting doll-like layers of challenge. The outermost layer consists in the generic challenge of talking about the history of the below-the-line professions, those who fall below the imaginary line separating "artistic" and "technical" jobs within a film's productive machine<sup>1</sup>. Going deeper, in the heart of this nesting doll is the challenge tied to the apparent invisibility of women in the film industry, although academic studies have begun to shed light on the issue in the last twenty years, also in regard to below-the-line roles<sup>2</sup>. This contribution uses and arranges thematically the archived Anica

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<sup>1</sup> See J.T. Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2008: 197-273 and Id., *Authorship Below-the-Line*, in *A Companion to Media Authorship*, edited by J. Gray and D. Johnson, Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2013: 347-369.

<sup>2</sup> Influential studies on women's labour in the Italian film industry are: C. Bellumori, "Le donne del cinema contro questo cinema", *Bianco e Nero*, 1-2 (1972); M. Dall'Asta, ed., *Non solo dive. Pioniere del cinema*

database aggregating the credits of “all the feature films, documentaries produced and distributed since 1930” in Italy<sup>3</sup>. In doing so, it offers an overview of women’s labour in the Italian film industry between 1949 and 1976, the chronological span examined by the PRIN 2017 project *Modi, Memorie e Culture della produzione cinematografica italiana* (Modes, Memories and Cultures of Film Production in Italy)<sup>4</sup>. Moving from an overview of women’s below-the-line labour, this analysis examines the remarkably scarce female presence in production mid-management roles (e.g., production supervisors, production managers and unit managers). It also draws on interviews with unit manager and production supervisor Rosalba di Bartolo, who worked in the Italian film industry for four decades between the 1960s and the early 2000s<sup>5</sup>.

## 2. BELOW THE LINE

Before embarking on the analysis, some critical issues concerning the use of the Anica database as a source need to be raised. The percentages calculated and discussed in this section and at the beginning of the next one are to be understood as indicative. This is due to the nature of the database, which was set up in 1987 on Aldo Bernardini’s initiative, as an internal “research project” of Anica, and financed by the Ministero del Turismo e dello Spettacolo and by the Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri<sup>6</sup>. Data entry began *a posteriori*, based on the manual transcription of film credits, which produced gaps and a margin of error that could be statistically significant. First of all, many below-the-line professions were not accredited, such as continuity supervisors and production assistants, who are not always listed in the film credits. Secondly, the transcription in the database may have failed to report names of professionals who were in fact credited in the films: one example above all is Beatrice Banfi, Pier Paolo

*mutò*, Bologna: Cineteca di Bologna, 2008; L. Cardone, C. Jandelli, C. Tognolotti, eds., *Storie in divenire: le donne del cinema italiano, Quaderni del CSCI*, 11 (2015); L. Cardone, M. Fanchi, “Che genere di schermo? Incroci fra storia del cinema e gender studies in Italia”, *The Italianist*, 31, 2 (2011): 293-303; L. Buffoni, *We Want Cinema. Sguardi di donne nel cinema italiano*, Venezia: Marsilio, 2018. See also the AHRC-funded project “Producers and Production Practices in the History of Italian Cinema, 1949-1975” that Prof. Stephen Gundle headed at the University of Warwick: “Reading Italian Film Credits” at Women in Italian Film Production, Warwick University, 15 March 2019, [https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/film/research/current/italian\\_producers\\_project/events/study\\_day\\_on](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/film/research/current/italian_producers_project/events/study_day_on) [accessed 6 December 2022]. For a transnational perspective, I refer to the ongoing project on silent film era *Women Film Pioneers Project*, curated by J. Gaines and R. Vatsal, M. Dall’Asta (2013); see also K. Hole *et al.*, *The Routledge Companion to Cinema and Gender*, London: Routledge, 2016 and C. Gledhill, J. Knight, *Doing Women’s Film History: Reframing Cinemas, Past and Future*, Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2015. The historical survey on women working within the American and British film industries of E. Hill, *Never Done. A History of Women’s Work in Media Production*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2016 and M. Bell, *Movie Workers: The Women Who Made British Cinema*, Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2021 were valuable references in writing this essay.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in [www.archiviodelcinemaitaliano.it/chi-siamo](http://www.archiviodelcinemaitaliano.it/chi-siamo) [accessed 6 December 2022], homepage of the online version of the archive, which contains a simplified version of the more extensive Anica database. On Anica’s archives M. Comand, S. Venturini, “Anica Cinematic Universe. Nuove fonti per lo studio dei modi e delle culture della produzione cinematografica italiana”, in *Gli archivi della produzione cinematografica (1949-1976). Fonti, strumenti, casi di studio*, special issue of *L’Avventura. International Journal of Italian Film and Media Landscapes* (2021): 13-34 (26-30).

<sup>4</sup> PRIN MMC 49-76, PI Mariapia Comand (Università degli Studi di Udine); Luisella Farinotti (Libera Università di lingue e comunicazione IULM), Vito Zaggarro (Università degli Studi Roma Tre), Sara Martin (Università degli Studi di Parma), <http://cineproduzione.uniud.it>.

<sup>5</sup> All translations from Italian into English are by the author.

<sup>6</sup> *Archivio del cinema italiano, vol. IV, Il cinema sonoro 1990-1995*, edited by A. Bernardini, Rome: Anica, 1995: I-II. See also Comand, Venturini, “Anica Cinematic Universe: 26-30.

Pasolini's continuity supervisor from *Porcile* (1969) to *Salò* (1975), does not appear for the latter in the Anica database, even though she is credited in the film. Further margins of error are to be attributed to the erroneous transcription of names and surnames, which may be missing or duplicated. The use of pseudonyms, widespread in film credits, also requires further research: for example, Mila Vitelli is the credited name for Maria Rosa Valenza; Bixie Bam stands for Beatrice Banfi. The assignment of gender and nationality to each entry based on the first name has clear ethical and methodological implications. An historical example is Fede Arnaud, active in Italy since the early 1940s in a variety of roles<sup>7</sup>. Her name is not recognizable as either female (Federica) or male (Federico) in the Italian language. Female professionals also appear both under their maiden and married names, which complicates the estimates. This is especially true in a field so prone to familism as the Italian film industry<sup>8</sup>. Rosalba di Bartolo, for example, often appears in the database under her married name, Rosalba Tonti, as does Vittoria de Fazio, born Vittoria Vigorelli. The quantitative reading, therefore, needs to be accompanied by a qualitative analysis.

The Anica database does not credit any female cinematographer, camera operator, assistant camera operator, props assistant, grip or gaffer, sound designer or production designer, and only a few set designers are indicated<sup>9</sup>. Conversely, one could observe a large female workforce made of seamstresses, hairdressers, costume designers, make-up artists<sup>10</sup> and – traditionally – editors: interestingly, women employed as editors or assistant editors are about 24% of editors credited in the Anica database, which rises to 39% when including foreign female colleagues employed in national co-productions<sup>11</sup>. The archived Anica database, consulted for the years 1949-1976, details this scenario, at least in quantitative terms. On the other hand, historical research on below-the-line professions, especially the ones performed by women, continues to be challenged by archival gaps, and women's memories of work in the industry remains consigned to the discretion of family archives or to ad hoc initiatives<sup>12</sup>.

Among the below-the-line roles, script supervision stands out as a highly gendered position: 78% of Italian continuity supervisors (known in Italian as *segretaria di edizione*) were women, working on about 85% of the entire national film output between

<sup>7</sup> Fede Arnaud Pocek (Venice, 1920) enrolled in the film school of the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in set design (1940), but she worked as a screenwriter and dubbing director for many years. In 1970, she founded the dubbing company Cine Video Doppiatori; she also directed dubbings for the Società Attori Sincronizzatori.

<sup>8</sup> S. Toso, E. Nazzari, *Fratelli d'Arte. Storia Familiare del Cinema Italiano*, Cantalupo in Sabina: Edizioni Sabiniae, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Female set designers employed in Italian film production during this period accounted for around 5% of credited set designers. However, they made a handful of films each, except for a few very prolific cases, including Gisella Longo, Giulia Mafai, Paola Mugnai, Lucia Mirisola and Mila Vitelli (Maria Rosa Valenza).

<sup>10</sup> With very few exceptions, all credited sewers are women, as are 70% of hairdressers, approximately 55% of costume designers, and 28% of make-up artists.

<sup>11</sup> On women editors, D. Meuel, *Women Film Editors: Unseen Artists of American Cinema*, Jefferson (NC): McFarland, 2016 and, on the Italian case, D. Missero, "Titillating Cuts: Genealogies of Women Editors in Italian Cinema", *Feminist Media Histories*, 4 (2018): 57-82.

<sup>12</sup> These include for example Mara Blasetti's collection, held at the Cineteca di Bologna, Beatrice Banfi's, held at the Pasolini archive (Cineteca di Bologna), or Myrta Guarnaschelli's at the Museo Nazionale del Cinema in Turin. See also B. Corsi, S. Moras, "Gli archivi della produzione cinematografica. Un'ipotesi di mappatura", in M. Comand, S. Venturini, *Gli archivi della produzione cinematografica (1949-1976)*: 65-74; L. Cortini, "Lavoro e industria nel cinema e nelle fonti audiovisive", *Economia della cultura*, 3 (2011): 265-274 and Id., "Il recupero degli archivi privati di cinema. Strategie, metodologie... utopie", in *Uomini e donne del Novecento. Fra cronaca e memoria*, edited by A. Aiello, F. Nemore, M. Procino, Mantova: Universitas Studiorum, 2015.

1949 and 1976. The label *segretaria* is perhaps indicative of the ways in which this profession channelled women into the film industry<sup>13</sup>. Like other female-dominated professions lent to this field – sewing, hair and to some extent make-up – secretarial work has been markedly feminised. It is worth highlighting that, in 1971, all the 140 pages of the Italian *Manuale della segretaria di edizione* exclusively used feminine articles<sup>14</sup>. The feminisation of this profession is also been documented in other film industries around the world. In Britain, for example, veteran continuity girl Tilly Day recounted that she took up the role in 1917 by answering an advertisement in a paper requesting a “very bright secretary, very ladylike”<sup>15</sup>. In the English language, the term “continuity girl” or “script girl” has only recently been converted to the more neutral “continuity supervisor” or “script supervisor”<sup>16</sup>.

Beyond the connection between the feminisation of secretarial work and that of continuity supervision, the skills required for this position have also been widely considered to be inherently female: “great resistance”, but also being organised, precise and having an eye for detail, “great visual memory, clarity and attention”<sup>17</sup>. The secretary must also “keep an eye on the director that gives orders, on the assistant that carries them out, on the actor, on the operator. She must observe, supervise and record everything to be able to compile her reports”<sup>18</sup>. Ultimately, she must master a level of attention that is both thorough and multi-layered, and thus highly valuable professionally, but which is often downgraded to the most “feminised” of skills, multitasking.

Despite this progressive feminisation of the role of *segretaria di edizione* during the 1950s, which led to its undervaluation both as a professional category and on a public level<sup>19</sup>, Anica data show that this role constituted the entry point to the role of assistant director for women. Between 1949 and 1976, approximately 8.3% of women were employed in this capacity, including some veteran continuity girls: Serena Canevari, Beatrice Banfi, Elsa Carnevali, Elvira D’Amico and Tersicore Kolossoff. Some of the most active female assistant directors also had a professional history in continuity: Vana Caruso, Maria Teresa (Mimmola) Girosi, Silvana Mangini, Marina Mattoli and Lucia Porfiri. Exceptional cases are Luisa Alessandri, Isa Bartolini, Carla Ragionieri and Monica Venturini, who previously worked as scriptwriters.

Half of the *Manuale della segretaria di edizione* is dedicated to notions of film production, cinematography, shooting, optics and lighting, projection, development and printing, and editing. This reveals the cross-cutting nature of the skills required of a continuity supervisor, even if transition from continuity supervision to other pro-

<sup>13</sup> On the gendering of this profession in the North American film industry, see M.J. Banks, “Gender Below-the-Line: Defining Feminist Production”, in *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, edited by V. Mayer, M.J. Banks, J.T. Caldwell, New York-London: Routledge, 2009: 87-98.

<sup>14</sup> L. Valdambri, *Manuale della segretaria di edizione*, Rome: Edizioni del Centro Studi e Sperimentazioni CineTV, 1971.

<sup>15</sup> T. Day, interview (1988) for BECTU History Project, <http://www.bectuinterviews.uea.ac.uk> [accessed 6 December 2022].

<sup>16</sup> P.P. Miller, *Script Supervising and Film Continuity*, Boston (MA): Focal Press, 1999.

<sup>17</sup> Valdambri, *Manuale della segretaria di edizione*: 3-4. For an English-language source, see P. Ross, “Continuity”, in *Women Talking: A Symposium on the Part Played by Women Technicians in Film Production*, Royal Photographic Society Pamphlet, 1944: 16.

<sup>18</sup> M. Williams, “The Continuity Girl: Ice in the Middle of Fire”, *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 10, 3 (2013): 603-617 (603).

<sup>19</sup> S. Harper, *Women in British Cinema: Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know*, London: Continuum, 2000, 4; Williams, “The Continuity Girl: Ice in the Middle of Fire”: 604, and S. Mayer, *The Cinema of Sally Potter: A Politics of Love*, London: Wallflower Press, 2009: 140.

duction departments was much less frequent for female professionals as compared to their male colleagues, who could boast more mobile career trajectories in the same years. Anica data show that, for men, continuity was only one brief occupation among many others and that they had a long career after taking up that position. An example of this is Alberto Salvatori, who was continuity supervisor in sixteen films before becoming sound engineer (in Pasolini's *Porcile*, 1969, among others) and later moving on to production (as assistant, supervisor and even producer himself). Alternatively, others such as Gennaro Balestrieri, Adolfo Dragone and Albino Cocco, Visconti's assistant director in a number of productions moved seamlessly between continuity and assistant direction. For women, instead, continuity took the form of a permanent position, difficult to move away from<sup>20</sup>. Anica data indicate a progressive feminization of the role: between 1949 and 1959, women occupy 79% of all script supervising credits; between 1960 and 1970 their number rises to 89%; between 1970 and 1976, a staggering 92% of credited script supervisors are women. In other words, according to Anica records, an average of 85% of the films shot between 1949-1976 are overseen on set by women.

### 3. PRODUCERS, PRODUCTION

The Anica database confirms male dominance in many production departments. Starting from the top of the pyramid, the handful of female producers represent the exception. Amongst them, Marina Cicogna and the Euro International Films<sup>21</sup>, Marina Piperno and the independent Reiac<sup>22</sup>, and Silvia d'Amico Benedicò (Suso Cecchi D'Amico's daughter), who produced Alfredo Giannetti's films (*La ragazza in prestito*, 1964; *Correva l'anno di grazia 1870* and the television trilogy *Tre donne: La sciantosa, 1943: un incontro* and *L'automobile*, 1971-72) and Roberto Rossellini's *Anno uno* (1974), *Il messia* (1975) and *Concerto per Michelangelo* (1976), among several others films from the 1980s onwards.

Other female producers still deserve a dedicated survey. Amongst them, the first two are Enrica Bacci and Fulvia Faretra. Bacci, founder of Venere Film and Alcyone Film, who was also the production supervisor of several Venere Film pictures and had a background in screenwriting (*Fuoco nero*, S. Siano, 1951; *I calunniatori*, M. Volpe e F. Cirino, 1956; *Le due sorelle*, M. Volpe, 1950). Faretra, founder of Faretra Film, a company specialised in documentaries, was the producer of Guido Leoni's *Di qua, di là del Piave* (1953) and Florestano Vancini's Sicilian trilogy (*Luoghi e figure di Verga, Più che regione* and *Portatrici di Pietre*, 1952). The activities of Giuliana Scappino and Liliana Biancini are also worth a mention. Scappino, head of Faser Film, produced her husband Sergio Capogna's *Un eroe del nostro tempo* (1960), *Plagio* (1969) and *Diario di un italiano* (1973). Biancini, daughter of production manager Ferruccio, and wife of producer Dario Sabatello, had an established career as an actors' representative and was

<sup>20</sup> In the UK, continuity supervisor Martha Robinson ends her memoir with a joyous declaration of independence from her old job, having managed to move from script supervision to scriptwriting: "I walked out on air. I had achieved the job I had dreamed of. I was on the way up the ladder. Continuity was behind me forever". See *Continuity Girl*, London: Robert Hale, 1937: 253.

<sup>21</sup> On Marina Cicogna see M. Giordana, "The Producer's Roles. La Euro International Films e i fratelli Cicogna attraverso una prima ricognizione delle fonti (1965-1970)", in *Gli archivi della produzione cinematografica (1949-1976)*: 153-164.

<sup>22</sup> On the Reiac archive refer to Chiara Grizzaffi's contribution in this volume.

known for producing a handful of crime dramas and thrillers during the 1960s (e.g., *Un angelo per Satana*, 1966; *Lovebirds-Una strana voglia di amare*, 1969). These and other twenty women producers identified in the Anica records over the same period boast sporadic achievements, averaging no more than a couple of films each. Their production formulas still await to be investigated<sup>23</sup>.

Moving on to analyse the structure of the production department from its basis, I have identified that female Italian production assistants [often credited as *segretari di produzione*] account for around 8.2% of the total, which rises to 12.5% when including foreign women working in national co-productions. Nevertheless, the bottleneck inevitably tightens as we move on to mid-management roles: only 1.7% of unit managers [*ispettori di produzione*] are women, (the number rises to 2.8% when we include foreign workers); just above 1% (reaching 2% if including non-Italian staff) of production managers [*direttori di produzione*] are women; finally, only fourteen Italian women are credited as production supervisors [*organizzatori generali*]<sup>24</sup>. In these three slightly permeable professional categories, the same few names circulate: leading the way is the backstage star of the golden years of Italian cinema, the well-known Jone Tuzi (sometimes spelled as Ione Tuzzi). In figure 1 Tuzi is indicated with the overextended masculine gender form 'direttore di produzione'. As a prolific production manager and production supervisor with Ponti<sup>25</sup>, Rizzoli and Cristaldi, Jone Tuzi worked with Camerini, Risi, Mastrocinque, Loy, De Robertis, Rossellini (*Roma città aperta*, 1945), Gentilomo (five films including *Lo sparviero del Nilo*, 1950 and *I lancieri neri*, 1962), Gallone (*Don Camillo e l'onorevole Peppone*, 1955), Castellani (*I sogni nel cassetto*, 1957), Monicelli (*Casanova '70*, 1965), Rosi (*C'era una volta*, 1967), De Sica (e.g., *La ciociara*, 1960, *Matrimonio all'Italiana*, 1964) and Petri (*La decima vittima*, 1965). Tuzi was also Dieterle's assistant in *Vulcano* (1950). Her sister, Wanda Tuzi, was an equally prolific continuity supervisor working from the post-war years to the end of the 1970s. Tuzi's extensive career achievements undoubtedly deserve dedicated research in Italian film archives, starting with Cristaldi and Rizzoli's collections.

<sup>23</sup> Clara Giannini (Oxford Brookes University), "Women behind the scenes owners of production companies founded between 1945 and 1959: N.A.R. Film and Roberta Film, Rita Farinelli and Antonietta Montanari Bianchi", paper presented at *Women in Italian Film Production* (University of Warwick, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Even if they are recorded in the Anica database, these professional categories do not always appear in the film credits. When they do, they are often indicated in the overextended masculine (e.g., 'direttore') or otherwise neutralised (e.g., 'organizzazione').

<sup>25</sup> Tuzi's employment at Carlo Ponti's Artisti Tecnici Associati (ATA) is confirmed by a curious circumstance: a win she made at the Italian football pools *Totocalcio*: "I milioni del totocalcio alla periferia della città". *L'Unità*, May 22, 1951: 2: "the lucky [winners] are three: Rocco Pistone, ragman; Silvana Merlini, mender; and Jone Tuzzi, production assistant at the ATA-FILM (Artisti Tecnici Associati) film company".

Figure 1 - Tuzi (left) described as “Direttore di produzione” at a cocktail party for *Ti ho sempre amato* (Costa, 1953), *Cinespettacolo*, 37, September 1953: 2



Tuzi, Bianca Lattuada and the lesser-known Bianca de Silva (production manager of, among others, Fernando Cerchio's *Cenerentola*, 1948, and Di Martino's first Italian-Turkish co-production *Sultana Safiyè*, 1954<sup>26</sup>) are the only three women production managers authorised to use the acronym ADC which stands for Associazione Direttori Cineproduzioni<sup>27</sup>. The ADC list began to appear in 1955 in the columns of *Cineproduzione italiana*, the magazine edited by the association. At the XVIII Mostra del Cinema di Venezia, the magazine also mentioned Tuzi when discussing the emergence of an authentic culture of *cineproduzione* which the ADC was promoting:

The 18th Venice Film Festival has now opened. Italy presents *Le notti bianche* by Luchino Visconti and *I sogni nel cassetto* by Castellani. This is the definition for the public. We love being able to say *Le notti bianche* by Pietro Notarianni and *I sogni nel cassetto* by Jone Tuzi<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> “Prima co-produzione italo-turca. La Sultana (Safiyé)”, *Cinespettacolo*, 22-23, June 1953: 4.

<sup>27</sup> Refer to “Elenco dei direttori di produzioni cinematografiche autorizzati ad usare la sigla ADC”, in *Cineproduzione italiana*, 2, May 1955: 19.

<sup>28</sup> I. Broggi, “Venezia e il progresso”, *Cineproduzione italiana*, July-August 1957: 3.

As for Bianca Lattuada (fig. 2) the *Araldo dello Spettacolo* defined her in 1949 as a “decisive and intelligent young woman, simple and straightforward” and a “smart little woman [who] will make a name for herself”<sup>29</sup>. She did not only join the ADC, but also had an active role as the association’s “auditor” (‘revisore dei conti’), together with Domenico Bologna and Carlo Civallero<sup>30</sup>. From the post-war period to the late 1970s, she was credited as the production manager and/or supervisor of about thirty films (fig. 3), half of them directed by her brother Alberto – from *Il cappotto* and *La lupa* (1952 and 1953) to *La cicala* (1980) she also worked with Fellini (*Luci del varietà*, 1950), Zampa (*Cuori senza frontiere*, 1950), Capuano (*Ballata tragica*, 1954), Franciolini (*Il letto*, 1954 and *Racconti romani*, 1955), and Damiani (*La rimpatriata*, 1963). In 1959, Bianca Lattuada also coordinated a BBC television programme on Italian cinema, realised in collaboration with Unitalia<sup>31</sup>.

Figure 2 - Portrait of Bianca Lattuada, *Araldo dello Spettacolo*, 33, March 1950: 1



<sup>29</sup> Califano, “Piccolo mondo di cinelandia”, *Araldo dello Spettacolo*, 65, July 1949: 2.

<sup>30</sup> “La prima assemblea dell’associazione tra i direttori di cine produzioni ADC”, *Cinespettacolo*, 4, May 1951: 15.

<sup>31</sup> “Affermazioni del film italiano all’estero”, *Cinemundus*, January 1959: 4.



Figure 3 - *Lattuada* credited as “Direttore di produzione” in *Cuori senza frontiere* (*Zampa*, 1950)



Anna Davini was also a key figure in post-war Italian cinema. Secretary of the Associazione Professionale degli Ispettori di Produzione Cinematografica (APIC)<sup>32</sup> and the only woman to be credited as unit manager [*ispettore di produzione*] on the ADC<sup>33</sup>, Davini was a lifelong unit manager on Matarazzo's films (*Catene*, 1949; *Tormento*, 1950; *Chi è senza peccato...*, 1952; *L'ultima violenza*, 1957), as well as in De Santis' (*Caccia tragica*, 1947), Emmer's (*Domenica d'Agosto*, 1950; *Camilla*, 1954), Zurlini's (*Estate violenta*, 1959), Loy's (*Le quattro giornate di Napoli*, 1962) and Soldati's (e.g., *Donne e briganti*, 1950; *È l'amor che mi rovina*, 1951). However, her name was linked above all to Luchino Visconti's: she was indeed the production manager of *La terra trema* (1948) and *Morte a Venezia* (1971) and the unit manager of *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960) and *La caduta degli Dei* (1969). At the end of her career, in 1972, Davini was awarded the “Una vita per il cinema” career award (in its 15th edition) for the categories of “production managers and technicians” (fig. 4)<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> APIC, chaired by Giorgio Riganti, was established on 9 August 1955, “Notiziario dell'UNAC”, *Cine-produzione italiana*, 5, August 1955: 18.

<sup>33</sup> Prior to the establishment of ADC, Davini was registered as production manager and inspector in the FILS [Federazione Italiana Lavoratori dello Spettacolo]. “Comunicazioni dell'Anica n. 96”, *Araldo dello Spettacolo*, 139, December 1950, and “Rassegna economica e professionale”, *Araldo dello Spettacolo*, 124, November 1951: 4.

<sup>34</sup> “La vita per il cinema. XV anno. I premi del lavoro 1972”, *Cinespettacolo*, 5-6, 1972: 1-4, e “Fotocronaca. La vita per il cinema”, *Giornale dello spettacolo*, 27, July 1972: 10.

Figure 4 - Anna Davini, awarded "La vita per il cinema" prize, Cinespettacolo, 5-6, 1972: 4



Medaglie d'oro « La vita per il cinema » a componenti della produzione: Alessandro Gori, Liana Ferri, Anna Davini.

Two other women stand out for their volume of activity. The first is Cecilia Bigazzi, who received the career award the year after Davini<sup>35</sup>. Bigazzi was the niece of producer Giorgio Venturini and cousin of Monica (Felt) Venturini, a director and producer herself, with whom she often worked. Throughout her career, Bigazzi was able to pursue a career trajectory similar to many of her male colleagues. Active from the early 1960s to the late 1980s, she initially served as production assistant (*Erode il Grande*, A. Genoino, V. Turžanskij, 1959; *Il sicario*, D. Damiani, 1961; and *Le baccanti*, G. Ferroni, 1961), and then, in the 1960s, as unit manager for some twenty films including Umberto Lenzi's "Salgarian quadrilogy". Bigazzi finally became production manager and production supervisor, working mainly in genre and erotic titles throughout the 1970s, among which *Una farfalla con le ali insanguinate* (D. Tessari, 1971) and *La svastica nel ventre* (M. Caiano, 1977). The second name is that of Anna Maria Campanile, who in 1966 founded Clesi Cinematografica with her husband Silvio Clementelli, later directing the company's productions. Before the foundation of Clesi, Campanile worked for a long time on films produced in various capacities by her husband, first serving as production assistant (also in the trilogy *Poveri ma belli*, *Belle ma povere*, *Poveri milionari*, D. Risi, 1957-1959), and then as unit manager with Zampa (*Il magistrato*, 1959), Monicelli (*Risate di gioia*, 1960), Petri (*I giorni contati*, 1962) and Vancini (as production manager for *La calda vita*, 1963).

Lastly, the case of Mara Blasetti, daughter of influential film director Alessandro Blasetti, closes this brief overview of female mid-management professionals. Unlike her colleagues, Mara Blasetti consciously entrusted her archive to the Cineteca di Bologna and her professional figure is enjoying more scholarly attention because of the wealth of archived evidence<sup>36</sup>. Because of her family connections, she came into the film industry by

<sup>35</sup> "Una vita per il cinema", *Cinema d'oggi*, 26, July 1973: 8.

<sup>36</sup> L. Cesaro, "'Ci sono scivolata dentro come se fosse la cosa più naturale'. Mara Blasetti: una vita consacrata al cinema", in *Sentieri selvaggi. Cinema e women's studies in Italia*, Arabeschi, 17 (2021) online;

the direction department (as a continuity supervisor and assistant director) and then went on to have a long career in production: she was considered a valued unit and production manager and production supervisor in major films, including international ones, working with Losey (*Modesty Blaise*, 1966), Polanski (*What?*, 1972) and Paul Morrissey (*Flesh for Frankenstein*, 1973, and *Blood for Dracula*, 1974), Cosmatos (*Cassandra Crossing*, 1976, with Rosalba di Bartolo as unit manager). In addition to her personal archive, the collection named after her at the Cineteca di Bologna preserves her “tools of the trade”, the production plans used with companies such as Columbia, Confidential, Istituto Luce, 20th Century Fox. This rich archival material gives us an account of the plurality of networks and wide-ranging relationships that became the hallmark of the “Blasetti way”.

The careers of these protagonists of production mid-management, female pioneers in a professional field dominated by men, deserve dedicated study and research with the aim of bringing to light their working practices<sup>37</sup>. Only through extensive archival research, it would be possible to relegate the “anecdotal” dimension conveyed by existing Italian oral history records, which affects so much of the memory of the Italian film industry, into the background<sup>38</sup>. In the next section I will attempt to overcome the scarcity of archival resources documenting below-the-line and mid-management professions, and add a micro-historical perspective to the quantitative data. The professional profile of Rosalba di Bartolo Tonti, a mid-management professional active between the 1960s and the early 2000s, can be outlined thanks to personal interviews held during the autumn of 2022 in Rome<sup>39</sup>.

#### 4. “I HAVE BEEN VERY LUCKY”: ROSALBA DI BARTOLO TONTI

Daughter of a Sicilian air marshal but a lifelong Roman citizen, Rosalba di Bartolo, born in 1943, had a dream: to be a surgeon. However, having been born a girl in a somewhat “traditional” family, she found herself enrolled in a high school for interpreters, one of many that were opening in the 1950s. She studied English and French and fell in love with the former: she enjoyed learning it because of it being “a concise and precise language that gets straight to the point”. Nothing could be further away from the dream

C. Giannini, C. Guido, “‘Mi farà piacere lavorare con un’amica che sa fare il cinema!!!’ Dal set alla produzione: il lavoro organizzativo di Mara Blasetti”, *La valle dell’Eden*, 34 (2019): 5-12; D. Missero, “‘Carissima Mara, mi auguro di firmare tantissime fatture di films organizzati da lei’: frammenti di cultura produttiva nell’archivio di Mara Blasetti” in *Cinema italiano: tecniche e pratiche, Quaderni del CSCI. Rivista annuale di cinema italiano*, 13 (2017): 203-208.

<sup>37</sup> On the organisation of film production in the 1950s V. Brosio, *Manuale del produttore di film*, Rome: Edizioni dell’Ateneo, 1956; L. Solaroli, *Come si organizza un film. Il manuale del direttore di produzione*, Rome: Bianco e Nero Editore, 1951; see also M. Argentieri, *Produzione cinematografica e televisiva*, Rome: Accademia, 1971.

<sup>38</sup> On the anecdotal dimension of Italian oral history records see F. Di Chiara, P. Noto, “Appunti per una storia un po’ meno avventurosa: produzione e cinema italiano 1945-1965”, in *Backstage. Studi sulla produzione dei media in Italia*, edited by L. Barra, T. Bonini, S. Splendore, Milan: Unicopli, 2016: 103-115. Making reference to F. Faldini and G. Fofi, *L’avventurosa storia del cinema italiano* (latest reprint Bologna, Cineteca di Bologna, 2021), the authors mention the persistent “adventurous” narrative of the Italian film industry that gives practitioners a mythological aura based on subjective notions of talent and improvisation. Faldini and Fofi’s book reports Jone Tuzi’s memories of *Roma città aperta*, *Quartetto pazzo* and *Vulcano*, and Anna Davini’s memories of *La terra trema* and *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* are mentioned in L. Micciché, ed., *La terra trema di Luchino Visconti. Analisi di un capolavoro*, Rome, CSC, 1994 and *Rocco e i suoi fratelli. Storia di un capolavoro*, Milan: Minimum Fax, 2010. For an international perspective compare Caldwell, *Production Culture*: 150 ss.

<sup>39</sup> I wish to thank Vivalda Vigorelli, continuity supervisor and casting director, for putting me in touch with Rosalba di Bartolo.

of cinema, which had pervaded the horizon of desire of young girls in the previous generation<sup>40</sup>. For Rosalba, cinema was a coincidence: a family friend worked for Carmine Gallone and his son, Carmine Gallone Jr., was looking for a secretary for the office in Via Lucullo. There she met the casting director Valentina Sturla, who introduced her to the International Film Service, a company managing organisation for foreign productions coming to film in Italy. At the International Film Service, di Bartolo was hired as a secretary in administration. She was no longer a simple office secretary but handled money, learnt how to manage it, and, thanks to her command of English, got in touch with Hollywood – 20th Century Fox, Columbia, Warner – but also with Bollywood: in fact, she worked in the R.K. Films production *Sangam* (1964), produced, directed by and starring Raj Kapoor, the first Indian movie filmed outside national borders. Rosalba remembers the countless Indian gold parures and luxurious saris that the diva Vyjayanthimala changed into twice a day and never wore more than once. At the age of twenty, it was an incredible experience (fig. 5).

Figure 5 - *Di Bartolo Tonti (holding the bouquet) with the Sangam crew at the airport, 1964. Courtesy of Rosalba di Bartolo*



<sup>40</sup> For a survey of inter-war female fandom through ephemera see M. Comand, A. Mariani, eds., *Ephemera. Scrapbooks, fan mail e diari delle spettatrici nell'Italia del regime*, Venezia: Marsilio, 2019.

In these years, di Bartolo Tonti worked in administration as an accountant, handling as much as 4 or 5 million lire a week, such as the budgets for the films *The Reluctant Saint* (E. Dmytryk, Columbia, 1962) and *The Victors* (C. Foreman, Columbia, 1963), partly filmed in the village of Campagna, in the Salerno area. While working on these two films, she met Mara Blasetti, who was already an established professional, working with many American companies: it was to be a lifelong professional and human partnership – “she almost adopted us”. With Blasetti as production manager or supervisor, di Bartolo worked on many productions, including *Gidget Goes to Rome* (P. Wendkos, 1963), *La linea del fiume* (A. Scavarda, Luce, 1975), *The Cassandra Crossing* (G.P. Cosmatos, Associated General Films, Champion Film Company, 1976), and in the Libyan production *Lion of the Desert* (*Asad al-šahrā*, M. Akkad, 1980)<sup>41</sup>. During our interview, di Bartolo recollected the daring production adventures, including a pseudo-hijacking by Libyans over Malta on the crew’s return flight.

Her role in administration continued throughout the 1960s in increasingly important productions: as assistant to David White, the auditor of *The Reluctant Saint*, she was involved in the administration of Zeffirelli’s *The Taming of the Shrew* (F.A.I., Royal Film International, 1967), in Richard Burton’s *Doctor Faustus* (Columbia, 1967) and *The Appointment* (S. Lumet, MGM, 1969). In the meantime, 1964 had been a year of fundamental change for her: with her new job for Encyclopaedia Britannica Films, di Bartolo switched from working in administration to actual production and met her future husband Giorgio Tonti, son of the veteran director of photography Aldo Tonti, cinematographer and camera operator himself. They got married, had two children, and began their 58 years of life together.

Rosalba’s Enpals record gives an account of an exponentially expanding filmography, a selection of which follows here. She was unit manager for *Le avventure e gli amori di Scaramouche* (E.G. Castellari, Zephir Film, Lisa Film, Jadran Film, 1976), *Arrivano Joe e Margherito* (G. Colizzi, C. Ponti, 1974), *La città gioca d’azzardo* (S. Martino, Dania Film, 1975), *Gran bollito* (M. Bolognini, Sandra Riccardi Infascelli, 1975) and *The Valachi Papers* (T. Young, Dino De Laurentiis-Euro-France Films, 1972), of which she recalled the explicit on-set intimidation the troupe suffered in the United States, since the film used the characters’ original names. It is notable, however, that the Anica database reports only a residual part of her filmography (five titles only<sup>42</sup>), a clear indication to embrace a circumspect attitude when approaching the Anica database.

Between the 1970s and 1980s, alternating work with foreign and Italian companies and other mid-scale film productions, Rosalba varied her activities as a production manager in television broadcasts and documentary series by Luce. At the same time, she continued to work with Italian commercial productions (*Vacanze in America*, C. Vanzina, Cecchi Gori, 1984; *Sotto il vestito niente II*, D. Piana, Artisti Associati, 1988; *Il deserto di Fuoco*, E. Castellari, 1997).

Rather than the passing of the years, an understandable deterrent to such demanding work as filmmaking, it was, above all, the advent of the digital – and the increasingly low quality of Italian productions – to distance Rosalba Tonti from her work: “this was no longer filmmaking”, she has recently recalled<sup>43</sup>. A profession that she had otherwise

<sup>41</sup> All these productions are recorded in the Mara Blasetti’s collection at the Cineteca di Bologna.

<sup>42</sup> *La città gioca d’azzardo*, *Cassandra Crossing*, *Le avventure e gli amori di Scaramouche*, *Arrivano Joe e Margherito*, *Le guerriere dal seno nudo*.

<sup>43</sup> The disruptive change in production practices that occurred due to the advent of video technology is a recurring theme in the memories of below-the-line Italian workers between the years 1949-76.

loved for a lifetime, to which she had dedicated her experience; a job that she would not have changed under any circumstances, and that had fulfilled her fully professionally, personally and economically – “Cinema paid well back then”. Indeed, she states that she never felt belittled in the work environment as a woman during her long career with foreign companies, where her professionalism was consistently recognised and valued. Instead, it was a different experience on Italian sets, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, which Rosalba did not recall with pleasure during our interview. In these years she suffered some harassment and general criticism: “it was, a bit, part of the Italian culture at the time, they felt threatened by the power of a woman,” she admitted, smiling.

Another notable point emerging from Rosalba di Bartolo Tonti’s experience is the propensity for familism in the film professions. However, unlike most of the cases of female professionals mentioned in this brief analysis, for which a certain familiarity with the film industries came because of family connections, in Rosalba di Bartolo’s case, her career initiated as a result of her personal and professional choices, independently from that of her husband, Giorgio Tonti, who instead came from a family with a long-standing reputation in the film industry. The two met thanks to their shared professional activity, and they carried on an everyday relational life made up of similar rhythms. Beyond the evident propensity to familism in the Italian film industry, it is worth reflecting on the fact that life partners who shared similar occupations were able to sustain a similar work-life balance that was otherwise unsustainable because of challenging rhythms on set, non-existent days off, frequent long trips abroad etc. If combining work and family time was complicated, many women chose, or were forced to choose, a different occupation. Rosalba recalled that many women she met during her professional life gave up their careers at some point because of unbearable work-life patterns, and even more so if they had children to raise. A common recollection in the oral testimonies of female film workers is precisely the absence of children by choice, even when married. However, here too Rosalba Tonti’s path breaks away from the norm because she had two children. A respected and esteemed practitioner and a pioneering figure in a professional sector dominated by men, she now enjoys the orange sunsets in her home in Castelli Romani and considers herself ‘lucky’.

The case of Rosalba di Bartolo, active for over forty years in several production mid-management roles, has a twofold value. On one hand it stands for its exceptional-ity, thus confirming the existence of a male-dominated productive sector, overviewed here with a quantitative scrutiny of the Anica database. On the other, it allows for a small step forward in the reconstruction of the professional lives of these unknown film industry workers, forcing the researcher to face the methodological challenges tied to the physical scarcity and dispersion and fragmentation of empirical evidence that documents technical film professions, and the complex logistics of doing field ethnography and oral history. In support of quantitative historical analysis, the need to gather testimonies of women who worked during the golden age of Italian cinema has now become paramount. More research is needed to identify those who are still around and available to share their memories. This would also allow scholars to investigate different historical periods. An extensive archival survey of both private collections and (film) heritage institutions will complement existing quantitative and qualitative knowledge of the professional networks and working practices of women in the Italian film industry and encourage further investigation into their significant and often neglected role and value.