

CONCLUSION

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John Dickie writes of a ‘strange feedback loop’ between Italy’s other Mafias and the media that represent them, and demonstrates how Mafiosi are both the producers and consumers of cultural representations of organized crime. Many of the contributors to this roundtable similarly note the ways in which images of mafia violence circulate among criminals and the televisual, filmic, and newspaper accounts of their activities. We see this in particular in Renga’s account of Sasà Striano’s double career as Camorrista and actor specializing in the representation of Camorristi, as well as in her reference to *Gomorra*’s Marco and Ciro, who model their identities after *Scarface*’s Tony Montana; in Dickie’s own account of nineteenth-century Camorristi and their penchant for theatrical representations of themselves. We see a circularity of violent images at work as well in recent onscreen and real-life reclamations of the Banda della Magliana, which O’Rawe and Karagoz link to Italy’s contemporary crisis of masculinity. Reading these papers, it almost seems that the feedback loop to which Dickie and others refer is a constitutive component of organized crime.

To what might we attribute this interdependence between Italy’s Mafias and its diverse medias? Dickie suggests that media representations of criminal organizations can provide them with history and coherence, the ‘ideological glue’ that they otherwise lack. Conversely, the Camorra and other groups such as the ’Ndrangheta, the Sacra Corona Unita, and the Banda della Magliana furnish medias in Italy and abroad with dramatic narratives that make good copy and sell tickets at the box office. In her introduction, Renga highlights the performative aspects of criminality in Italy, observing the ways in which it is cathartic for Mafiosi to act out their violent tendencies onscreen even as clan members model their actions after media representations of other Mafiosi. The relationships between Italy’s other Mafias and the medias that depict them reveal, to echo Pickering-Iazzi, the degree to which mafia identity is a cultural construct.

Robert Gordon draws attention to the wide array of texts and methodologies presented in this roundtable, noting ‘the sheer cartographic effort’ employed to interpret this ‘multiple field’. His allusion to maps is fitting: this collection of papers represents a first attempt to explore previously uncharted territory. Dickie’s ‘strange feedback loop’ conjures yet another kind of map, however: the one invoked at the beginning of Baudrillard’s *Simulacra and Simulation*.¹ Baudrillard’s map, which comes to precede the territory it represents, describes the postmodern rupture between the signifier and the signified. The circularity of violent images explored in many of these brief papers and their proliferation in fraught genres like the docudrama suggest that we are enmeshed in Baudrillard’s precession of simulacra, a disorienting territory indeed. Do our attempts to chart its virtual

contours align us with his cartographers, whose very efforts obscure — or even contribute to — an increasingly eroding sense of reality?

NOTES

- ¹ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995).

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