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popular Italian genres such as the peplum*, Italian horror emerged as a category of its own. Films such as Riccardo Freda’s* I vampiri/The Lust of the Vampire (1957) and Mario Bava’s* La maschera del demone/Mask of the Demon/Black Sunday (1960) and I tre volti della paura/Black Sabbath (1963) succeeded in integrating modern horror with traditional ‘Mediterranean’ themes, treating sexuality more openly than in more puritanical countries and creating mesmerising female characters, archetypally played by Barbara Steele*. One founding member of the genre is unquestionably Freda, who, as well as being a skilled creator of swashbucklers and adventure films, was an original explorer of the world of nightmares and fear, notably in L’orribile segreto del Dottor Hitchcock/The Terror of Doctor Hitchcock (1962) and Lo spettro/The Spectre (1963). The other is Bava; an accomplished cameraman for Freda’s I vampiri, he directed films which quickly attained cult status: I tre volti della paura, and others such as La frusta e il corpo/Night is the Phantom (1963) and Operazione paura/ Curse of the Living Dead (1966). All his films focus on sexual perversions and pathological states of mind, evoked through brilliant special effects and camera movements, creating a disorienting, nightmarish atmosphere. At the end of the 1960s, Pupi Avati* brought a personal approach to the Gothic and traditional horror themes in his directorial debut Balsamus, l’uomo di Satana/Blood Relations (1968) and Thomas ... gli indemoniati/Thomas ... The Possessed (1969), which he pursued with La casa dalle finestre che ridono/The House with the Laughing Windows (1976) and especially Zeder/Revenge of the Dead (1983). The theme of the ‘returning dead’ is dealt with within the framework of the macabre country fable, immersed in blood and grotesque humour. Through the 1970s the most prolific exponent of the genre was Lucio Fulci, whom many consider the inventor of Italian-style ‘gore’. Fulci specialised in fantasy horror, beginning with Non si sevizia un paperino (1972) and Sette note in nero/Murder to the Tune of the Seven (1977). Defined as the ‘poet of the macabre’ by French critics and extolled by magazines such as the American Fangoria, the unusual Fulci favours menace, repulsion and delirious visionary horrors, reworked from American horror films (the living dead, cursed houses, the buried alive, demonic possession). Films such as Zombi 2/Zombi Flesh Eaters (1979), Paura nella città dei morti viventi/Fear (1980), Il gatto nero/Black Cat (1981), Quella villa accanto al cimitero/The House on the Edge of the Cemetery (1981), L’aldilà (1981), Lo squartatore di New York/New York Ripper (1982), L’occhio del male/Manhattan Baby (1983), Murderock uccide a passi di danza/ Murderock (1984) and Il miele del diavolo (1986) exemplify Fulci’s approach to the genre, executed with Corman-style limited budgets and fast shooting, with a loyal and well-trained crew. Some are filmed on location in the US with dialogue in English for rapid foreign distribution.

Dario Argento’s* Suspiria (1977) brought a radical change to Italian horror film. The imaginary finally breaks free from narrative and Argento allows vision to take priority, in a kaleidoscope of glowing images which reflect an original poetry of the horrific. New directors in the genre have tended to take their cue from him. They include Bava’s son Lamberto Bava, with Macabro/Macabre (1980), Shark-Rosso nell’oceano (1984), Demoni/Demons (1985) and Demoni 2 (1986); the promising young Michele Soavi (Deliria, 1987; La chiesa/The Church, 1989; La seta/The Sect, 1991); and lesser lights such as Gianfranco Giagni (Il nido del ragno, 1988), Marcello Avallone (Spettri/Specters, 1987) and Alessandro Capone (Streghe/Witch Story, 1989). GVo

ITALIAN POLITICAL CINEMA (1960–94)

In the 1960s and the 1970s, by virtue of its creative vitality and variety, Italian cinema was able to compete with Hollywood productions, both at a national and a European level. The political film in particular, although sometimes derivative of Hollywood action cinema, reached the distinctiveness of a real genre. Its origins can be traced to the first Mafia movies, such as Pietro Germi’s* In nome della legge/In the Name of the Law (1949). Since then, almost two hundred others have been made, including the television serial La piovra/The Octopus, started in 1983 and reaching a peak of popular success with its fifth series in 1991.

Italian cinema dealing with the Mafia is like a house with a grand reception room on the first floor, a ground floor and a basement packed with comedies, parodies, cheap detective movies, etc. The most renowned tenant of the first floor is Francesco Rosi* with his masterpiece Salvatore Giuliano (1962), as well as Cadaveri eccellenti/Illustrious Corpses (1975), adapted from Leonardo Sciascia’s novel Il contesto. With Il caso Mattei/The Mattei Affair (1972), Lucky Luciano (1973) and Dimenticare Palermo/To Forget Palermo (1990), Rosi presented the two Mafias (Italian and North American) as one thing (‘Cosa Nostra’), reaching a radically pessimistic and ultimately questionable conclusion: to be a Sicilian is not just an accident of birth but an inescapable question of fate. On the same grand first floor we find Elio Petri*, the first to bring Sciascia to the screen with A ciascuno il suo/To Each His Own (1967), Damiano Damiani, who directed Sciascia’s Il giorno della civetta/Mafia (1968), and Paolo and Vittorio Taviani*, who started with Un uomo da bruciare/A Man for Burning (1962, co-dir. Valentino Orsini), the story of a Sicilian trade unionist (Gian Maria Volonté*, the key actor of the whole genre) murdered by the Mafia. With Damiani, however, and numerous other Mafia films (such as Perché si uccide un magistrato, 1975, and Pizza Connection, 1985) and the first series of La piovra, we move down to the ground floor. Its original tenant was Alberto Lattuada*, whose black comedy Il mafioso (1962), starring an irresistible Alberto Sordi*, had one fatal flaw: the Mafia is ubiquitous, so that, as Sciascia wrote, ‘the spectator is no longer led to think what is the Mafia, but rather what is not the Mafia’. The ground floor is also occupied by Florestano Vancini’s La
violenza: quinto potere/Violence: Fifth Power (1972) and Giuseppe Ferrara's Il sasso in bocca (1970), a skilful 'faction' about the history of the Mafia after 1945 and its connections with the ruling political class. In 1984 Ferrara appeared to slide down to the basement with Cenzo giorni a Palermo/A Hundred Days in Palermo and, ten years later, Giovanni Falcone (1993). Still on the ground floor, a special place is held by Pasquale Squitieri: Camorra (1972), I Guappi/Blood Brothers (1974), and his best film, Il prefetto di ferro (1977). The continued power of the Mafia in Sicily and southern Italy means that younger Italian directors are also attracted to the topic; for example Emidio Greco with Una storia semplice/A Simple Story (1991) and Ricky Tognazzi with La scorta (1993).

Italian political cinema divides into four thematic groups: 1) Fascism and the Resistance; 2) the police, the judiciary, and Christian Democrat power; 3) class struggle and revolutionary utopias; 4) 1970s student revolts and terrorism. Attempts have also been made to deal with Third World and anti-imperialist issues, producing 'Spaghetti Western'-like movies [ITALIAN WESTERNS] such as Damiani's Quin sable/A Bullet for the General (1966), Carlo Lizzani's Requiescant (1967), Sergio Corbucci's Il mercenario/A Professional Gun (1968), and others. Gillo Pontecorvo's La battaglia di Algeri/The Battle of Algiers (1966) and Giuliano Montaldo's Sacco e Vanzetti/Sacco and Vanzetti (1970) are other interesting examples. The first – and largest – group reached a high point with Bernardo Bertolucci's Il conformista/The Conformist (1970) and the Tavianis' La notte di San Lorenzo/The Night of San Lorenzo (1982). It also includes, among others, Ettore Scola's Una giornata particolare/A Special Day (1977), Gianni Puccini's I sette fratelli Cervi (1968), Giuliano Montaldo's L'Agone va a morire/And Agnes Chose to Die (1976), and four documentaries on Mussolini (mainly based on the newsreels of the Istituto LUCE*). Ideologically, they range from the ambiguous right (Squitieri's Clareta, 1984), to the intransigent left (Pier Paolo Pasolini's Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma/Salò, 1975). The most significant film in the second group is Petri's Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto/Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion (1969), scripted by Ugo Pirro*, who, together with Franco Solinas*, was at that time Italy's most politically committed screenwriter. In the third group we find Francesco Maselli's* Lettera aperta a un giornale della sera (1970), about the crisis of left intellectuals; Il sospetto (1973), about the Italian Communist Party under Fascism; and Petri's La classe operaia va in paradiso/Lulu the Tool (1971). The fourth group includes a dozen or so films, including Rosi's Tre fratelli/Three Brothers (1981), although the best examples come from younger directors like Gianni Amelio* (Colpire al cuore/straight to the Heart, 1983), Marco Tullio Giordana (Maledditi vi amerò, 1980), and Giuseppe Bertolucci (Segreti segreti, 1984). GVo

ITALIAN WESTERNS

Italian genre. The Italian Western, known in its home country as 'Western all'italiana' but popularly (and slightly disparagingly) referred to abroad as the 'Spaghetti Western', emerged as a world phenomenon with the release of Sergio Leone's* Per un pugno di dollari/A Fistful of Dollars in 1964. Leone's film did not spring from nowhere. The preceding years had seen the making of a number of German-Yugoslav Westerns based on the popular novels of Karl May and some twenty Italian-French-Spanish co-productions in the Western genre. Between the mid-1960s and 1978, no fewer than 400 Italian Westerns (mostly co-produced) were made, involving various permutations of the formula, though as the 1970s wore on the genre went into decline. The Italian Western emerged out of the ashes of the peplum*, in which many of its first practitioners – Sergio Corbucci, Riccardo Freda*, Mario Bava* and others, including Leone himself – were trained. The crews, too, were often the same, many having also formed second units for American spectacles shot in Rome or in Spain in the 1950s. Locations were mostly Spain (especially Almeria), but later Italy, Yugoslavia and Israel, with a brief foray into Monument Valley for Leone's C'era una volta il West/Once Upon A Time in the West (1968).

The Italian Western is both the most original and the most parasitic genre to emerge in Italy in the 1960s. It began as a counterfeit, not only an imitation of the foremost American genre, but under the pretence of being American, with directors, actors and technicians credited with English pseudonyms. It was bottom-drawer cinema, aimed at small-town audiences and churned out by small and medium-sized production companies, of which Alberto Grimaldi's PEA (which later used its profits to move upmarket) was the most prominent. From the beginning the genre was marked by violence, aggressivity and a fierce and hyperbolic element of male sado-masochism, pushed to the edges of parody but always with an eye to the market. Mannered and rootless, the Italian Western owed its success to its ability to function as pure, abstract, violent spectacle accessible to audiences regardless of nationality or culture, and it is no accident that it was the only form of Italian popular cinema to encounter no barriers to international diffusion. Gradually, there emerged something resembling the Western, though it was never quite the Western but rather a no-man's-land form of adventure. Five basic variations can be noted. First and most famous is the mannerist style pioneered in Leone's 'dollars' trilogy – Per un pugno di dollari, Per qualche dollaro in più/For A Few Dollars More (1965) and Il buono, il brutto e il cattivo/The Good, the Bad and the Ugly (1966) – and continued in films ranging from Tonino Valerii's I giorni dell'ira/Days of Wrath (1967) to Giulio Questi's off-the-wall Se sei vivo, spara/If You Live, Shoot (1967). Second, the picaresque, as exemplified by the 'Ringo' cycle starring Giuliano Gemma and directed by Duccio Tessari (such as Una pistola per Ringo/A Pistol for