

auteuse theory: a blog on women's cinema

Emanuela Piovano's "Le stelle inquiete/ Simone and Gustave"

Flavia Laviosa



The publication of *Off Screen: Women and Film in Italy* in 1988 and *The Women's Companion to International Film* in 1990 (marked the beginning of an international interest in Italian women filmmakers. Ten years later, *Dizionario delle registe: L'altra metà del cinema*, the first and laudable attempt to produce a comprehensive and detailed volume on Italian women directors, informed international academia of the remarkable number of women operating in the film industry and the impressive quality of their work. More recently, three additional publications--*Glass Ceiling. Oltre il soffitto di vetro. Professionalità femminili nel cinema italiano*; *Lost Diva Found Woman. Female Representations in New Italian Cinema and National Television from 1995 to 2005*; and *I Morandini delle donne. 60 anni di cinema italiano al femminile* – further document and recognise the vast contribution made by women (actresses, directors, screen writers, producers and costume designers) to the history of Italian cinema.

The complex and variegated galaxy of contemporary Italian cinema includes multiple generations of women filmmakers all engaged in exploring new genres and hybridised aesthetics. Although working in a hostile climate of economic austerity, talented, energetic, innovative voices and creative forces take various directions and continue to gain international recognition. There is great need for research that evaluates the continued and rising visibility of women directors whose works provide a multifaceted definition of Italian cinema and who represent a rich and vital artistic make-up within the obstacles and contradictions that regulate the Italian national context. These directors interweave private spheres and public events, explore contemporary realities, re-examine intellectual figures, and revisit historical wounds, while producing a montage of artistic documents and provocative testimonies. The range and quality of their diverse works offer great promise for the future of women behind the camera in twenty-first century Italy.

Director and producer Emanuela Piovano's most recent film *Le stelle inquiete/Simone and Gustave* (2010) is the first feature film made about the French philosopher Simone Weil (1909-43). *Simone and Gustave* is not a bio-picture, but it is specifically about an unknown fragment of Weil's life, the summer months that she spent in 1941, when in July she was forced to leave German-occupied Paris to avoid anti-Semitic prosecution. She moved to St. Marcel, near Marseille, in the Ardèche region of southern France, where she was a guest at the vineyard owned by the philosopher-farmer Gustave Thibon and his wife Yvette. Piovano gives an intimate portrait of Weil, choosing to present her feminine side and private relations, in the broad context of her social activism, political theories and philosophical thought. The film conjugates the art of cinema with history, poetry, mysticism, philosophy and social militancy. As Weil familiarizes herself with working conditions on the farm, she engages in extended philosophical conversations and exchanges of views with the Catholic, royalist and spiritualist Gustave. Inevitably a burning intellectual passion for new ideas ignites their encounters.