

questions about truth, complicity, and political ideology broaden Hull's intervention well beyond the field of Italian American history.

Reading the four sympathizers' manipulations of the truth, their fears about democracy, and their complaints about modernity in the postwar US conjures up continual parallels to the twenty-first century that should captivate any reader. Their cynical take on technology is especially relevant today, as it is almost impossible not to replace the word *machine*—which they panned as both a means of escape and an existential threat to labor—with today's *smartphone*, *social media*, or *ChatGPT*. The book's insights into Americans' attitudes toward their future, its concise history of Mussolini's popularity in America, and its unsparing critique of the myths of Fascist propaganda make it an important and timely contribution to both scholarship on Fascism and to broader investigations of American political, intellectual, and ethnic history.

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*Martin Scorsese's Documentary Histories: Migrations, Movies, Music.*

By Mike Meneghetti.

New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022.

280 pages.

Martin Scorsese's narrative films, from *Mean Streets* (1973) to *Killers of the Flower Moon* (2023), have established him as one of cinema's great auteurs. He is lauded for his formal mastery, intellectual rigor, and the breadth of his thematic

concerns. These films have been the subject of innumerable journalistic and scholarly studies. But less attention has been paid to Scorsese's documentaries. When they have received critical scrutiny, it is usually in relation to his fiction films—as peripheral to them, as preparation for them, or as “a fine-tuning” of their “techniques and common themes” (2–3), as Mike Meneghetti observes in *Martin Scorsese's Documentary Histories: Migrations, Movies, Music*. The director himself has perpetuated “the critical demotion” of his documentaries by calling these works “smaller projects” (2). Contrary to the critics and to Scorsese, Meneghetti contends that the film and video documentaries have made significant contributions to the current “elevated status” of the genre and have “boosted its international reputation” (4).

The book's title refers to what the author calls the “insistently historical character” of Scorsese's nonfiction productions (5). Meneghetti's study mentions all of the director's documentaries made between 1974 and 2010 but concentrates on those whose core preoccupations are those cited in the book's subtitle: migration, movies, and music. Scorsese's best-known early documentary, *Italianamerican* (1974), is a forty-nine-minute investigation of the Italian American experience of migration and assimilation conducted through interviews with his parents in their New York City apartment. The “pervasive language of reclamation” (19) characteristic of the so-called ethnic revival of the 1970s shapes the film. But Scorsese's ethnic historiography relies on his parents' storytelling about theirs and their forebears' experiences rather than the usual conventions of ethnic revival films (voiceover exposition, archival film clips and photographs, witness testimony, and a narrative of immigrant hardship and eventual success). The historical orientation of *Italianamerican* would inform Scorsese's subsequent documentary work. In the late 1970s, he made *The Last Waltz* (1978), which mixed footage of The Band's final concert and interviews with members of the storied group, whose putative leader, guitarist, and main songwriter Robbie Robertson had decided to call it quits. (Robertson died in August 2023; one of his final projects was to compose the score for Scorsese's *Killers of the Flower Moon*.) Scorsese's “most distinguished non-fiction film” is often cited as “the exemplary concert documentary” and as an influence on subsequent entries in the genre (12). It also has been parodied; Rob Reiner's 1984 “mockumentary” *This Is Spinal Tap* featured Reiner as its voluble and fawning director, Martin “Marty” Di Bergi.

During the 1980s, Scorsese set aside his documentary work, and when he returned to it in the 1990s, “its methods and foci would be noticeably different” (2). Meneghetti observes that since the mid-1990s, Scorsese has taken advantage of the popularity and increasing cultural importance of documentary films to “resuscitate his nonfiction filmmaking practice” (4). Still, critics continued to regard the documentaries as ancillary to his fiction films or to cite

them to “corroborate claims” about aspects of Scorsese’s narrative works—his use of rock and other vernacular music forms, his cinephilia, and his ethnicity (4). According to Meneghetti, Scorsese’s nonfiction films and television productions “can and should be assessed *as* documentaries, without disproportionate recourse to discussions of the director’s Hollywood movies” (4–5). Separating the nonfiction from the narrative work enables the former to be considered as a “distinct mode of film practice” (5) and assessed in terms of its relationship to the history of documentaries and contemporary examples of the genre.

The book comprises an introductory essay, four chapters focusing on specific nonfiction films, and a concluding survey of Scorsese’s recent documentaries made for streaming services such as Netflix and Apple. The most insightful and original chapters are those about four music documentaries: *The Last Waltz*; *Shine a Light* (2008, chronicling two 2006 Rolling Stones concerts); “Feel Like Going Home” (the opening episode in *Martin Scorsese Presents: The Blues* [2003]) and *No Direction Home: Bob Dylan* (2005). (A caveat: When discussing Scorsese and music, Meneghetti repeatedly refers to the director as a member of the baby boom generation. In one instance, he writes that “like so many other baby boomers, his imaginative life has been built on a firm foundation of rock music” [107]. But Scorsese was born in 1942, while the Second World War was raging, four years before the postwar baby boom began. He therefore experienced the period’s rock music and youth culture as a young adult, not a teenager. Like his contemporary Bob Dylan, Scorsese’s cultural touchstones often predate the mid to late 1960s.)

Meneghetti considers the Band and Rolling Stones films in the same chapter, noting how both present “the concert stage as a largely self-enclosed utopia” in which “the rock group’s sense of achievement is restricted to their labor in this live setting” (63). This distinguishes them from *Woodstock* (1970), director Michael Wadleigh’s documentary of the legendary 1969 festival, which celebrates rock music as an expression of the 1960s counter-culture and its utopian ethos while drawing on the “observational focus on spontaneity and authenticity” (8) of the direct cinema practiced in the early 1960s by filmmakers such as D. A. Pennebaker, Albert and David Maysles, and Richard Leacock. (Scorsese was an assistant director of *Woodstock* and one of its editors.) Neither *The Last Waltz* nor *Shine a Light* examines their subjects’ relationship to a musical culture or community; highlighting the performers and their onstage interactions, they barely acknowledge the presence of audiences at the filmed performances.

Contradictions and contrasts are central to both films. *The Last Waltz*’s effort to honor The Band’s collective achievements “sits uneasily” with Robbie

Robertson's "concurrent attempts to reposition himself as an aspiring solo artist," his "plainly self-seeking endeavor" (63). Scorsese allots Robertson, his close friend, far more screen time than any of the other Band members in the concert scenes and the interviews, rendering *The Last Waltz* a star-making vehicle for him as much as a record of The Band's farewell performance. Like many other critics, Meneghetti notes that the film's overemphasis on Robertson's presence and perspective produces a skewed and sometimes inaccurate account of The Band's history. One of the film's harshest critics, The Band's (late) drummer Levon Helm, dismissed it as "equal parts fabrication and economic opportunism" (60). Meneghetti's thorough and often critical treatment of *The Last Waltz* acknowledges its virtues as cinema, particularly the concert performances, but he concludes that it is "finally an exercise in [Robertson's] self-mythologizing" (61).

The archival footage in *Shine a Light* illustrates that the Rolling Stones once offered "disruptive rock 'n' roll music" and occupied an "unruly place in the history of documentary filmmaking" (63). (*Gimme Shelter*, by Albert and David Maysles and Charlotte Zwerin, chronicles the band's 1969 US tour and its disastrous final concert at Altamont.) If the Stones' relationship to the '60s counterculture was ambivalent, they nonetheless personified the decade's zeitgeist of youthful rebellion, frank sexuality, and drug experimentation. But the Rolling Stones captured in Scorsese's film exude not rebellion or danger but "proficiency and control" (60). One of *Shine a Light's* most amusing and revealing moments comes when Mick Jagger and Scorsese, two notorious control freaks, clash over which songs to include in the concert setlists.

In the chapter "Personal Pilgrimages," Meneghetti discusses Scorsese's cinephilia and how the director has come to symbolize "fervent attachments to the movies, film histories, and the fading memory of 'cinema' as the twentieth century's quintessentially modern artform" (153). This focus, however, has "disproportionately framed how his key documentaries about film history are comprehended today" (154). *A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese through American Movies* (1995), *Il mio viaggio in Italia* (1999), and *A Letter to Elia* (2010) preserve "the classic cinephile's obsession with cinematic inheritance, a patrimony of films, and filmmakers whose authority determines the form of history" (154). But, argues Meneghetti, focusing on these films as simply auteurist histories evades the question of "what they really seek to document" (155). Scorsese's documentaries about Italian cinema and the Greek American director Elia Kazan "permit him to reconsider—and resuscitate—his own family's fading history." The films "generate maps for the director's memories about his family and their migration to America" while "disclosing a profound . . . sense of obligation to the receding past; to his parents, *Italianamerican's*

artless storytellers . . . and most importantly, to the prospect of reopening his family's historical migrations within the context of these present-day collections of film images" (156).

*Martin Scorsese's Documentary Histories: Migrations, Movies, Music* fills a gap in the voluminous literature about the filmmaker. It is a scholarly work that will undoubtedly be used in film studies courses. But Mike Meneghetti's critical assessment of Scorsese's nonfiction productions should attract a broader readership: admirers of his documentaries and those for whom the book will be an introduction to the lesser-known (and underappreciated) work of a director who, now in his ninth decade, remains a bold and essential artist in both narrative and documentary film.

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*Stories, Streets, and Saints: Photographs and Oral Histories from Boston's North End.*

By Anthony Riccio.

Albany: SUNY Press, 2022.

434 pages.

Given that *Stories, Streets, and Saints* begins with a deeply moving "In Memory of My Friend Anthony Riccio 1952–2022," by Tommy Damigella, and ends with an equally heartfelt epilogue titled "Anthony's Gift to Us," by James S. Pasto, it is only fitting to add my own fond memories of an old friend and fellow Italophilic scholar. I have read and reviewed several of Anthony's books, including *From Italy to the North End: Photographs, from 1972–1982* (SUNY Press, 2017). Riccio was manager of stacks and collections maintenance at the Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University, and he and I often shared the podium on "Little Italy" panels at American Italian Historical Association annual meetings. Over the decades, I attended many of his lectures and, not incidentally, photo-documented many of the places he has so eloquently written about and illustrated. Our last meeting was in 2017 when my wife and I went to the Litchfield Historical Society in Connecticut for a lively and informative talk about his book *Farms, Factories, and Families: Italian American Women of Connecticut* (SUNY Press, 2014).

Although Anthony Riccio will be missed, his work will not, as it is timeless. He has documented in images and words better than most academics