

STUDIES OF ORGANIZED CRIME

Women and the Mafia

Female Roles in
Organized Crime
Structures

Edited by
Giovanni Fiandra

 Springer

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STUDIES IN ORGANIZED CRIME

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Women and the Mafia

Edited by

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Introduction

Giovanni Fiandaca

Our investigation into the role of women in organized crime sprang from the great tradition in Palermo of research on this subject—for example, the conference *La donna nell'universo mafioso* (Women in the Mafia Universe), organized by the Faculty of Educational Science in February 1997, and the works of Teresa Principato and Alessandra Dino, which include the outstanding book *Mafia e donna, le vestali del sacro e dell'onore* (Mafia and Women, Vestals of Honor and the Sacred) (Flaccovio, Palermo, 1997), as well as the research of Umberto Santino and Anna Puglisi.

But why extend the study of the role of women in mafia criminal activities to other criminal organizations not only in Italy but also in other countries? First and foremost, the subject has been studied very little, especially outside Italy, which gives the research a fascinating, “pioneering” character, although one fraught with understandable difficulties, such as establishing current data.

At the same time, the comparison between what occurs inside the Sicilian Mafia and other “mafias” helps us to better understand this world in Italy, brings out potential similarities as well as differences, and can help to debunk simplistic myths and widespread common clichés. In any case, this research is a valuable chance to further the understanding of organized crime internationally. As a research group, we are grateful to the City of Palermo for having supported and financed our studies as part of its project to encourage the development of a culture of legality.

In this introduction, I present some general considerations that should be kept in mind in studying this subject. The first is the need to control interpretive “preconceptions” as much as possible. Individual researchers are not blank slates and inevitably operate with preconceived concepts and hypotheses that may prejudicially influence the interpretation of data. However, these preconceptions should be kept in check as much as possible; research should be based on the empirical analysis of data instead of general preconceived ideas.

An empirical analysis of data obviously does not suggest denying that the role of women in organized crime is the result of a heterogeneous mix of factors; not all these roles can be analyzed using strictly empirical methods, and so interpretation

is to some extent unavoidable. Nevertheless, such interpretation should never completely disregard the empirical data.

I would like to present here some potentially influencing factors on this subject by first distinguishing between factors that are “endo-criminal” and those that are “exo-criminal”: the former refers to factors within the “logic” of criminal activity; the second deals with elements tied to the more general context, that is, socio-cultural or economic factors interacting with, although outside, the individual criminal. Endo-criminal factors include historico-criminological aspects, cultural codes, and the organizational structures of the specific criminal groups (i.e., rigid and centralized as opposed to fluid and horizontal; their complexity or simplicity; the primitive or technologically-evolved character of the organization and/or related criminal activity, etc.). For example, the cultural codes of established Italian mafias (Sicilian Mafia, ‘Ndrangheta, Camorra, etc.) show a traditional male chauvinist imprint and, as such, theoretically give little autonomous space to women; however, since the Calabrian ‘Ndrangheta is more horizontally structured than the Sicilian Cosa Nostra and is centered around *famiglie di sangue* (blood families), women may more likely play practical roles in criminal activities precisely because the *cosca* (gang) coincides with the natural family (see the chapters by Ingrasci and Siebert). So emerges the importance here of the organizational aspect with respect both to the cultural universe as well as basic values. The dimension I would define as organizational-instrumental reasoning about criminal activity also has a broader effect on the criminological level. In other words, the type of criminal behavior in question can also influence the space occupied by women. I refer here to more or less traditional associative conduct; active roles emerge here either of support or assistance or, on the other hand of leadership positions inside the criminal organizations, that is, extra-associative, or not necessarily associative, behavior related to so-called sophisticated crimes (criminologically a bit more advanced in terms of tradition), crimes such as drug trafficking, fraud, swindling, and money laundering.

Associative Behavioural Typologies

Several older judicial rulings reveal that the possibility that women might perform (generally nonviolent) auxiliary or supporting roles in criminal associations was considered as early as the nineteenth century. Consider those women who acted as a “*vivandiera*” (supplier or provider), “*postina*” (postman), or “*messaggera*” (messenger) for early associations of *briganti* (brigands or highwaymen). The fact that these supportive types of behavior frequently did not cross the line of punishability can also be explained through the cultural stereotype of criminals as male; this stereotype influenced even judges for a long period of time and has tended to penally “immunize” the behavior of mafia women, who are considered “passive subjects” completely dominated by their *mafiosi* menfolk.

On the other hand, although the phenomenon is statistically infrequent, women may at times even assume leadership roles in crisis situations, as when the male

boss is in prison, a fugitive, or otherwise unable to fulfill his role. For example, Massari makes this clear in relation to several cases of women in the Sacra Corona Unita: “The man’s absence, on one hand, and the temporary position of the woman, on the other, are directly related as well as logically consequent.”

Of course, another necessary condition for this to happen bears *mention*. Women in these cases are characterized by powerful, self-confident, enterprising personalities, as well as a heightened awareness of the culture of violence.

Examples are also found in other countries of women endowed with powerful criminal personalities who take the reins of the organization in periods of crises for the men; the chapters on Brazil, Argentina, and Japan, for example, all refer to this. In these cases, however, it is not always clear how much is due to the crisis situation because of the absence of suitable men and how much instead is due to the higher criminal potential of the women in question.

Extra-Associative Behavioural Typologies

In terms of extra-associative behavioral typologies, in other words behavior related to crimes not associative in themselves (such as drug dealing, fraud, money laundering, and management of illegal economic activities), the growing involvement of women in active roles tends to be observed more internationally. In terms of functional organizational reasoning within the logic itself of criminal activity, this phenomenon can be explained through circumstances in which women, precisely because they are women, are less suspected than men of carrying out illegal activities; because of this, they can more easily elude police investigations and magistrates’ inquests.

Now we come to the “exo-criminal” factors that influence the role of women in the criminal environment. With no presumption that these are complete, I list them as follows:

- Socio-cultural development, either general or contextual.
- Emancipation of women from the point of view of potential parity with men.
- Economic conditions such as employment crises, problems of economic survival, and popular life-style models inspired by the values of success and profit (more succinctly, economic need and/or greed).
- Psychological personality traits of these women in terms of strength of character, charisma, potential for aggressivity, predisposition towards violence, attitudes as a leader, and so on.

I include personality characteristics among the “exo-criminal” factors because the existence should be excluded of any real “criminal psychology” as an “innate” inheritance; certain psychological traits may predispose someone toward criminality if influenced by a context or involvement in a criminal environment. In this sense, I would refer to an interaction between personality characteristics and environment.

Having said this, let us focus particularly on the growing trend towards the emancipation of women, in the sense of their assuming roles generally less

subordinate to men. How and to what extent do forms of women's emancipation in this general sense encourage more active roles for women within criminal organizations and crime in general?

At first glance, it might seem that the growing phenomenon of women entering roles beyond those of traditional assistance and support (e.g., female "providers" or "messengers"), roles that call for more developed and sophisticated activities (e.g., female "money collectors," managers of businesses or shops, money launderers, etc.), might be explained in terms of cultural evolution and the personal emancipation of women with recognized roles of active collaboration or co-leadership and substantial parity with men. But questions remain: are we in a real sense dealing here with a form of expressive emancipation in a passage from cultural tradition to modernity? Or is this a form of "partial," "incomplete," or "apparent" emancipation characterized by a persistent hybridization between tradition and modernity?

As far as Italian "mafias" are concerned, this second concept seems potentially dominant since in them aspects of both modern emancipation and archaic primitivism co-exist. Analyses of women's cases in the chapters by Monica Massari and Ombretta Ingrassi, for example, are representative in this sense. Although they perform leadership roles as replacements for their "husbands," on one hand, these women are capable of exercising violence and power (legitimized, of course, by their relationships with their respective menfolk), while on the other they remain subject to the men's power and violence. Maria Serraino, an 'Ndrangheta woman with a **substantial** role as head of the family, suffered beatings and other psychological violence by her husband.

As Ombretta Ingrassi observes in her chapter, although "the apparent and presumed parity won by women inside the mafia syndicate may manifest itself in the dimension of work, it does not in the individual sphere." So could we be dealing here with a "pseudo-emancipation" (as she suggests) rather than an actual emancipation? Let us see how things stand in other countries from this point of view.

The chapters on Germany, Japan, and Argentina all make reference to "emancipation" and its possible link to the taking on of criminal roles by women. The development of illegal markets, connected in part to socio-economic evolution and globalization, offers greater opportunities for women as well; their growing entrance into the criminal world constitutes a reaction against discrimination, an instrument (though arguable) of emancipation from the perspective of gender equality. Manabu Miyazaki, for example, supports this thesis in Japan.

One possible link between the emancipation of women and their growing participation in crime is also theorized in the chapter on Germany, which refers, in particular, to the growing incidence (around 35.7%) of women in crimes such as money laundering.

But we should ask ourselves once again whether this is a real form of emancipation. One explanation might be that women in crime are "emancipated" by the family ties and trust between family members, authors of crimes that create illegal profits, and the women who launder the money. Then there is always the "criminal-functional" explanation; women stand out much less and are less

suspicious of money laundering as well. A link between the increase in women's education (in this sense educational emancipation) and the increase in active criminal roles is also suggested in the chapter on Argentina, although related to the remarkable growth in the number of women found guilty of retail drug dealing (aside from cases of women involved in power relationships and networks of political corruption). Essentially, two categories of women are involved in drug dealing; on one hand, women who have a diploma but are unemployed and enter the illegal circuit to satisfy basic economic needs; and, on the other hand, women who enter the drug trade to maintain a satisfying socio-economic status or out of greed. Although these women are more emancipated than in the past, in Argentina once again we are still dealing with forms of coexistence between the old and the new, between modernity and tradition. Crime appears as an instrument of emancipation only from a perspective of incomplete or distorted modernity: a sort of transition toward modernity. But do these links, problematic and ambiguous as they are, truly exist between crime, tradition, and modernity? When speaking of the apparent or incomplete emancipation of women, are we superimposing our moral prejudices on reality?

The research conducted by our group seeks to make the first, although perhaps incomplete, attempts at answering these sorts of questions.

I A History of Women in the Mafia

1

Doing It for Themselves or Standing in for Their Men? Women in the Neapolitan Camorra (1950–2003)

Felia Allum

In today's globalized world, "local" variables no longer seem relevant when analyzing different social, economic, and political phenomena. Transnational characteristics seem more appropriate. The same applies to the specific study of organized crime. Generic and interchangeable terms such as "transnational organized crime" or "mafias" are now used to describe and analyze different criminal groups such as Colombian cartels, Chinese triads, and Italian organized crime groups, suggesting that local differences among gangs are no longer fundamental since, in order to survive in the global economy, they have all adopted similar economic methods and therefore have come to resemble each other.

This would be a simplistic analysis of organized crime today, however, since cultural and local contexts still do play a considerable role in distinguishing different criminal groups. As Castells argues, "the more organized crime becomes global, the more its most important components emphasize their cultural identity, so as not to disappear In so doing, they preserve their ethnic, cultural, and, where possible, territorial bases. This is their strength. Criminal networks are probably in advance of multinational corporations in their decisive ability to combine cultural identity and global business" (Castells, 2000:210).

In this regard, the Neapolitan Camorra has always been and still is very different from its Sicilian counterpart, Cosa Nostra, in terms of origin, organizational structure, activities, and role in civil society and politics, so much so that Sicilian *mafiosi* make fun of Neapolitan *camorristi* and consider themselves superior and more professional. For example, Tommaso Buscetta described *camorristi* as "buffoons" to Judge Falcone (1993:99), and the *pentito* Salvatore Migliorino explained that *camorristi* showed off too much and acted too much in the open (interview, 22 August 1997:29). So, the regional contexts of the Sicilian Mafia and the Neapolitan Camorra clearly mark their differences, and this also applies to the role of women in both organizations.

Sicilian Mafia women are perceived as loyal and subordinate wives who do not interfere with their husbands' criminal projects or decisions. In contrast, Camorra women have always been much more involved and aware of their men's activities. They are not passive onlookers, but are the active backbone of this criminal organization, and have become increasingly involved, sometimes out of necessity,

sometimes because of a specific criminal intent. They do not find themselves on the margins of the Neapolitan criminal underworld, in the shadow of their fathers, brothers, cousins, husbands, children, and lovers. Over time, they have transformed themselves from being part of a strong, intimate support system into leading protagonists. Women take on active, formal roles in the Camorra not only as directors of “front” companies, but also in leadership positions, making strategic decisions regarding the clan’s activities, taking matters into their own hands, and even killing. For example, in May 2002, in Lauro, a town in the province of Avellino, a shoot-out between women from the Graziano clan and women from another clan (the Cavas) left three women dead and six injured (“Donne Killer,” *Cronache by Napoh*, 29 May 2002:1). This suggests that Camorra women are now definitely taking center stage as major players.

Three factors can help explain the transformation of women’s roles in the post-war period, particularly over the last twenty years: (1) changes in civil society; (2) the first Camorra war in the 1970s to 1980s with the opposition of two different criminal models; and (3) the Camorra’s flexible internal structure and lack of organizational hierarchy, these factors have given women the space and opportunity to become active in the realm of crime as well as in the private family sphere. As the Camorra has changed from a traditional criminal model of behavior into an efficient, modern, money-making machine with a flexible structure, so too has women’s behavior changed, shifting from traditional roles of support and loyalty to new active roles that include executive decision-making.

In general, the changing role of Camorra women largely reflects the broader changes in civil society in the post-war period. Women in Neapolitan society have become increasingly emancipated: they slowly moved from the private family sphere to the public sphere of work. Young women today have more social aspirations than their mothers and want to combine family life with work rather than just concentrating on the family as their mothers did. The same is happening in the criminal underworld; as Claire Longrigg said, “Neapolitan women play a full and active part in society, perhaps more than women from any other region of Italy, and the criminal underworld is no exception” (Longrigg, 1998:35).

Women’s emergence from invisibility into powerful visibility seems to have occurred in three stages:

- Stage one: 1950–1976: women as part of a support system
- Stage two: 1976–1990: women defending their men.
- Stage three: 1990–2000: women becoming criminals.

Of course, each of these stages builds on the previous one(s), and we must also bear in mind the differences among clans and regions. On the whole, however, this chronological approach does help to clarify the analysis.

In the first stage Camorra women are part of a support system like that described by Renate Siebert (1996) with reference to the Sicilian Mafia and the Calabrian ‘Ndrangheta (following the Sicilian code of conduct, i.e., what we could call “the Sicilian model” of providing emotional and financial support). Between 1950 and 1976, Camorra women provided a constant support system for *camorristi* both

informally as well as formally. However, even during this early stage, Camorra women begin to break away from traditional forms of behavior and display a voice independent of their men. In stage two, women defend their men. This model of behavior clearly moves away from the Sicilian model. Many changes took place during this stage due to conflicting criminal models: the first Camorra war in the 1980s between the *Nuova Camorra Organizzata* (NCO) led by Raffaele Cutolo, who sought to impose a Campania-based model, versus the smuggling gangs influenced by Cosa Nostra, the *Nuova Famiglia* (NF) alliance, which sought to impose a more traditional model based on the Sicilian code of conduct. This had implications for Camorra women and their behavior. During this war, although few women were visibly involved in top-level activities and most were only part of the support system, some women were openly involved and defended their men as much as possible. The media, however, did not perceive them as having much of an independent role because Mafia bosses would not permit it; but, as many judges have suggested, they may actually have played a much more important role than is generally believed, although this is difficult to document. In stage three, women become major players in the Camorra and criminals in their own right. This may be because there were no longer men suitable as leaders or because the women felt they had the skills to be as good as, if not better than, their male counterparts.

The crucial turning point in this chronology is between stages two and three, when Camorra women broke away from simply being a support system and became major players. The end of the first Camorra war in the early 1980s produced criminal chaos: there were so many different forms of Camorras, with different roles and activities, that a traditional code of honor like the Sicilian one could no longer prevail even in those clans that had been “Mafia-ized” (i.e., colonized by the Sicilian Mafia in the 1970s and 1980s). This enabled women to find a space where they could take on an active role. This third stage also coincides with the *pentito* phenomenon in Campania (criminals turning state’s witness in return for lighter sentences), which gave women the opportunity to assert themselves in reaction against the effects that these testimonies were having in destroying the clans.

Let us now consider more closely each of the three stages. During the first stage, women informally coordinated low-level Camorra networks. They created the conditions that encouraged their sons to become *camorristi*. They sold smuggled American cigarettes, petrol and drugs, and received stolen goods on street corners in order to earn money for their large, extended families. They stashed stolen guns and illegal goods, and even sheltered fugitive bosses from the police and judges. But they also played an essential role in the emerging organization, that of representing the Camorra in the local community: For example, “Donna Gemma,” wife of Forcella smuggler Pio Vittorio and mother of the future Forcella boss Luigi Giuliano, represented the Giuliano clan; and Fortuna, wife of Vincenzo l’Americano, was a powerful *guappo* (a Camorra wise guy) during the 1950s (Gribaudo, 1999).

Formally, they became directors of phantom “front companies” and received public contracts, as was the case in the 1960s of Maria Orlando, mother of Lorenzo Nuvoletta of the Nuvoletta clan (De Gregorio, 1983:89), or Antonietta Di Costanzo,

wife of Antonio Orlando, the uncle of Lorenzo Nuvoletta, also from the Nuvoletta clan (Feo, 1989:69).

However, one episode from this era that shows clearly the changing role of Camorra women, and how independent they were to become, is the story of the beautiful Assunta Maresca, known as “Pupetta” (Little Doll). Pupetta Maresca was the daughter of Vincenzo Maresca from Castellamare di Stabia, a man renowned for his criminal dealings. She was brought up in a semi-illegal context and fell in love with a local *guappo* from Palma Campania, Pasquale Simonetti, known as Pasquale ‘e Nola. He was a *guappo* in the traditional sense of the word and did business particularly with the “agricultural sector”; he worked in the fruit and vegetable market in Naples and dealt in smuggled goods. His style and power bothered other *guappi*, and one day in 1955 he was shot by a hit-man commissioned by his rival, another *guappo*, one Antonio Esposito. Pupetta was pregnant and devastated; since she believed the police knew who the culprit was but were not prepared to do anything about it, she drove to Naples with her younger brother, Ciro, and murdered Antonio Esposito in broad daylight. This episode and the following trial made international headlines that connected it to the “old Camorra,” as though they were dealing with the final traces of a traditional Camorra that would soon disappear. However, more importantly, this showed that Camorra women were different from Sicilian women; they were a support system, but also were prepared to speak their mind in public, become involved, and cross the line for their men. During the rest of this period, no such episodes came to light in the media. This stage was dominated by women who were part of the criminal support system and who helped to strengthen the different emerging Camorras.

The emergence of NCO Boss Raffaele Cutolo in the 1970s and his attack on smuggling clans closely connected to the Sicilian Mafia, such as the Nuvoletta, Bardellino, Zaza, and Giuliano clans, marked the beginning of the second stage of transformation in which some women came to the forefront to defend their men. These smuggling groups, highly influenced and, in some cases, even co-opted by the Sicilian Mafia, organized to form an anti-NCO alliance, the NF. So there were three different ideological criminal positions: the independent NCO, based on a Campania-Camorra idea, and the NF, divided into two groups, one influenced and co-opted by the Sicilian Mafia and one independent of the Mafia. All these gangs sought to project a strong image of a male-only Camorra, but this was far from reality. It is clear that during this period (1976–1990) women from the NF clans close to the Sicilian Mafia played the traditional role and conformed very much to the Sicilian Mafia’s code of conduct; they provided emotional and financial support while never attempting to become involved in criminal activities or decisions. This appears to have happened with the Nuvoletta clan from Marano, the Bardellino-Casalesi clan from the Caserta region, the Gionta clan from Torre Annunziata, the Limelli clan also from Torre Annunziata, and the Alessandro clan from Castellamare di Stabia.

The Casalesi clan from Casel di Principe is a good example showing the secondary role of women. Although it would become the most dangerous and economically successful clan in the region, its women would never appear to be as

independent and outspoken as other Camorra women. Women from this clan most resemble Sicilian Mafia women, and this may well explain why it has been so successful and resilient, even today.

Women taking on active roles and defending their men during this second stage came from the gangs not affiliated with Cosa Nostra. Three women really came to the fore during this phase: Rosetta Cutolo, sister of NCO Boss Raffaele; Anna Mazza, wife of Boss Gennaro Moccia and mother of the Moccia brothers; and Pupetta Maresca, partner of drug baron Umberto Ammaturo and sister of Ciro Maresca.

Raffaele Cutolo always maintained that his older sister knew nothing about his criminal activities and did only what he asked: “Rosetta has never been a *camorrista* . . . She only listened to me and sent a few suitcases [of money] to prisoners like I told her to” (*Il Mattino*, 4 November 1992). Nevertheless, it is clear that (1) Raffaele wanted to maintain a male-only organization based on principles such as criminal fraternity and solidarity and so could never be seen giving a role to a woman, his sister; and (2) maybe more important, he did not want to implicate her and therefore always argued she was innocent. Many of Cutolo’s lieutenants did not believe she held an important role because she was a woman. Former NCO lieutenant, now *pentito*, Pasquale Barra argued, “What has Rosa Cutolo got to do with it; what have *women* got to do with the Camorra?” (*Il Tribunale di Napoli, Sentenza nei confronti di Saviano Sabato*).

However, if we look at the facts, another picture appears. Rosetta Cutolo not only visited her brother on a regular basis in prison, she also received clan members in her home in Ottaviano (organizing them and their families, and finances), was a member of the team that helped Cutolo escape from the Avellino prison hospital, attended peace summits between NCO and NF leaders in 1981 and 1982, remained a fugitive until 1993, and, after being arrested, was released in 1999. Some have suggested that her long period as a fugitive was part of a pact her brother negotiated with the government (“his life for her freedom”) (Rosanova, interview, 3 January 2002). Judges have had no doubts about her full and active involvement in the Camorra: “Ms. Cutolo’s situation has undoubtedly been influenced by her brother’s way of life . . . which by no means excludes the determination and skills she deployed in achieving the NCO’s goals” (S1: 394). Rosetta clearly and intelligently looked after her brother’s criminal activities; she was no subordinate or passive bystander, but was fully involved in the clan’s activities and enabled it to survive while Raffaele was in prison. However, the clan would eventually be defeated. Rosetta demonstrates the limits of power conceded to Camorra women during this stage because the clan relied on her but did not want her to be seen as being involved or visibly active. In the next stage, women became more successful as they became criminal protagonists in their own right.

Anna Mazza became involved in Camorra activities when rival gangs murdered her husband, Gennaro Moccia, boss of Afragola, in 1976. She became known as “the Black Widow.” She supported her sons in avenging their father’s murder and became the leader of the gang, directing its activities and influencing its ideology: “Up to that point, Anna Mazza had just been the wife of a *capo*,” says Travaglino.

“That day, she became a *capo* in her own right—one of the most dangerous, certainly one of the most bloody” (quoted in Longrigg, 1998:17). Although she would not admit to being the driving force behind the clan, she led the group while her sons were in prison. When the eldest, Angelo, known as “Enzo,” became a leader of the Alfieri Confederation in the mid-1980s, her leadership role grew less important, although she still managed local criminal activities, as well as relationships with politicians, while her sons were involved in regional Camorra warfare. Today, it appears she still runs the clan, directs its activities, and visits her sons in prison.

Pupetta Maresca, who became known as “Madame Camorra” (De Gregorio, 1983:31), continued her criminal career when she was released from prison in 1964. She met and became the partner of drug baron Umberto Ammaturo, following him in his criminal activities (even though it appears he may have been involved in the murder of her son, Pasqualino). She was part of his support system. Their separation in 1982 did not mean the end of Pupetta’s Camorra activities. In February 1982, during the war between the NCO and NF, she made an appearance to defend her men, her *camorristi*, at a press conference: “To draw fire from her brother (Ciro), Pupetta Maresca created a spectacular diversion . . . She called a press conference at an exclusive press club on the seafront in Naples” (Longrigg, 1998:8).

As seen from this brief analysis of Camorra women in the second stage (1976–1990), only a few Camorra women were prepared to move beyond their role in the traditional support system. Those who did became involved in their men’s activities and defended them staunchly, following their court cases and maintaining contact with their lawyers. But they were still not as fully active and involved as the next generation would be.

Stage three in the 1990s was a period of chaos for the Camorra in terms of social, economic, and political activities. Its traditional reference point, the Christian Democratic Party, declined and disappeared, leaving the dominant Camorra groups with no sense of direction. This also coincided with the spread of the *pentito* phenomenon in Campania and major government repression against the Camorra. Thus, the different Camorra clans, both in the city and the surrounding areas, were in a state of flux. This period of change allowed, forced, or encouraged women to come to the fore regardless of whether the clan had been influenced by the Sicilian Mafia or not. The Sicilian model of total commitment, loyalty, and subordination had weakened except for a case in Casel di Principe.

In the hinterland of Naples, the Gionta clan, affiliated with Cosa Nostra, should have maintained the Sicilian model of a male-only organization where women were not active. But it did not. Valentino Gionta’s wife, Gemma, had always been an important figure as the boss’ wife. She appears to have been involved in different extortion scams, participated actively in meetings, and made important decisions concerning clan activities, although only as her husband’s representative. She was respected as such, but she was never seen as an active member since “she was only a woman” (Migliorino, interview, 22 August 1997:29). As in the traditional model, she was the figurehead director of front companies for the clan, but when most of the clan was in prison and depleted by the *pentito* phenomenon, some leadership was needed. Gemma felt that the decline of the clan caused by the revelations of state witnesses needed to be stopped and decided to do something

about it by becoming involved in the clan's activities in order to guarantee its survival. Thus, the Sicilian model was no longer respected. Taking messages to and from her husband in prison was no longer enough. Gemma Donnarumma's role as a full participant in Camorra activities can be seen clearly in an episode that took place in 1995. "Several clan members who were in prison decided to turn *pentiti*. To pressure them not to do so, Gemma forced their wives to dress in black, demand divorce, and give interviews on the subject so their husbands would be completely disowned" (Tribunale di Napoli, *Ordinanza custodia cautelare in carcere nei confronti di Donnarumma Gemma*).

In this regard, it is interesting to note that Camorra women reacted much more violently to the *pentito* phenomenon than Sicilian Mafia women. Maria Licciardi of the Secondigliano clan from Naples also sought to control the possible impact of the *pentiti's* statements to protect the clan. For example, the police established that, a few days after his escape from his protected location, *pentito* Constantino Sarno met Maria Licciardi to ask for money in return for retracting statements on the clan's activities. The Secondigliano Alliance was split on this problem; some wanted to pay him, others wanted to pretend to pay him and then murder him and his family. On 15 June 2001, Maria Licciardi was stopped in a car with her sister, Assunta, and her sister-in-law with a suitcase full of money (300 million lire, around 50,000 euros) that the judges believe she was on her way to deliver to him.

The Secondigliano clan is an example of the latest generation of Camorra clans; its women's behavior reflects stage three. Though not affiliated with the Sicilian Mafia, it had been part of the NF alliance and had a pact with Carmine Alfieri in the early 1980s. It was part of what became called the "Secondigliano Alliance" or the "New Campania Mafia," an alliance between the different clans from the city and immediate surrounding area (the Secondigliano clan, the Contini clan from Naples, and the Mallardo clan from Giugliano). Gennaro Licciardi, Eduardo Contini, and Francesco Mallardo led this strategic criminal alliance, which dominated the Neapolitan criminal underworld during the mid-1990s; there was a time when all three leaders and their supposed deputies were in prison. As a result, Gennaro Licciardi's youngest sister, Maria Licciardi, was left in charge of the clan's activities. Some argue that women have always played a fundamental role in the Secondigliano Alliance. When *pentito* Gaetano Guida, from the Capodichino neighborhood, was asked about the role of women in the Secondigliano Alliance, his reply was quite indicative:

They are on the front-line. It has always been like this in the Secondigliano clan, in the sense that women (wives, sisters, and mothers of the leaders) have always had an influential role in many decisions. Maria Licciardi, Gennaro's sister, is representative of this. She was his *confidante*. She took orders to and from her brother; she transmitted his orders and messages, even those of major importance. On more than one occasion, she transmitted his orders to kill. I don't recall the details but I know that, for our clan, talking with Maria Licciardi was the same as talking with Gennaro, the boss. I can add that Secondigliano women took on all sorts of jobs on behalf of the alliance: they took messages to prisoners, distributed money to members, organized activities, especially numbers running and extortion rackets. In other words, they constitute the backbone of the organization" (*RG GIP 996/99:51*)

Some prosecutors have argued that she had no real criminal intent but rather acted out of necessity. What is clear is that she managed to keep the clan together for a brief period until younger members believed they could do better and sought to diminish her power. A bloody feud broke out over a drug deal. Many were killed, and she was arrested in 2001.

It should be emphasized again that women in the city clans appear to have become more active and visible over the last ten years. When a power vacuum appears, intelligent women take over; they no longer merely defend their men but become active players. For example, Teresa De Luca Bossa was convicted of being the leader of a clan; in addition, the women of the Giuliano clan in the Forcella district, Carmela Marzano, Marianna Giuliano, and Ermina Giuliano (the wife, daughter, and sister of Luigi Giuliano, respectively), who all in one way or another had relationships with *camorristi*, became fully involved in clan activities when their men were sent to prison.

This brief overview of Camorra women in the post-war period has shown how their role changed from being part of a simple support system (after the Sicilian model) to becoming protagonists in their own right, either out of necessity or with criminal intent. Camorra women have been present in different ways during the post-war period either in supportive roles or in leadership positions. Without women the Camorra would probably not have survived. The question is whether they will still be allowed to play these important roles when the men come out of prison. What seems ironic is that, by becoming protagonists and participating in Camorra activities, these women appear to have broken away from the traditional model of female subordination, when in reality they have been defending a strong traditional male organization that seeks to control civil society, the economy, and politics and so block the modernization of southern Italy.

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2

Mafia Women: The Affirmation of a Female Pseudo-Subject. The Case of the ‘Ndrangheta

Renate Siebert

Women and Criminality/Women and Violence

Much debate has taken place over the last few years on the role of women in mafia-style criminal organizations. For a long time, popular opinion, the judgment of many experts, the evaluations of magistrates and judges¹ and the testimonies of mafia men have centered around the idea that women in these environments play only the passive roles of mother and wife, substantially hidden from the criminal acts perpetrated by their men. These women in the shadows appear to be, for all intents and purposes, living in traditional and premodern conditions, subordinate to the dictates of a patriarchal world not much different, in terms of family and private life, from the rest of the “traditional” world—the rural world undergoing the process of urbanization—that is, passive and backward women. Recent developments beginning in the 1990s, connected in large part with the testimonies of men (and a few women) who turned *state’s witnesses* and the destruction of previous organizational and family equilibria, have brought quite a different image into focus, one in powerful contrast to the earlier picture.

The aim of this chapter is to shed some light on these emerging trends in the context of the Calabrian mafia, the ‘Ndrangheta, starting from a more general consideration of female criminality and the relationship between women and violence. It is useful to examine the relationship between women and various forms of mafia-style criminal organizations at different levels: on one hand, as part of the general debate on the relationship between women and criminality, and on the other, in relation to the history and local characteristics of specific criminal organizations. Special attention will be paid to the question of the relationship between women and violence.

Female Criminality

We begin with one basic fact: in Italy, as well as all the other countries considered, the level of female crime is low compared to that of male crime, particularly as regards violent crimes. Female percentages for violent crimes in Italy have been

nearly constant over several decades (between 6 and 8 percent), while the trend has been increasing for crimes against property, robberies, and so on (between 10 and 18 percent). In Italy, the female prison population is similarly low, with numbers fluctuating over the last 50 years between 5 and 7 percent of the overall prison population.² Reports produced in this research project show similar trends in many other countries. The obvious difference in deviant conduct between men and women has been generally interpreted based on two different assumptions, which may be called the emancipation hypothesis and the gender hypothesis, respectively.

The Emancipation Hypothesis

This interpretation suggests that lower female criminal activity can be attributed to the substantial subordination of women in patriarchal contexts and backward living conditions, especially regarding their presence in the public sphere. During the 1970s, the hypothesis was advanced that, with the greater overall success of female emancipation, the quantitative gap between criminal acts committed by men and women would decrease since women would have increasing opportunities to pursue both legal and illegal careers. Although this hypothesis was never confirmed, it gave rise to ideas and debates on the nature and causes of female participation in crime. In fact,

Since the 1970s, no growth has been registered in the levels of arrests, reports, and convictions of women for violent crimes and, at least in Italy, percentages have also remained the same related to theft-type crimes, with the exception of shoplifting in large department stores and pickpocketing.³

The basic assumption of this first hypothesis, let us call it “emancipative,” is that female criminality can be explained in the same way as male criminality. This refuses to take into account gender differences that produce different feelings, emotions, attitudes, and behavior.

The Gender Hypothesis

This approach tends to analyze female deviant conduct, first, as conduct “in itself,” in other words, based on an analysis of the feminine as a social construct in relation to, as well as independent from, the masculine social construct. In this view, female criminality should not be considered a subspecies of general “normal” criminality, represented by data based on the observation of (more visible) male criminality, but rather a way of being and acting derived from history, long-term psycho-social processes, and the socializing processes that affect women. The specific quality and originality of these processes risk never being investigated if male conduct remains the measure of perception and evaluation of what women feel, think, do, and do not do.

Female socialization involves the internalization of the vulnerabilities and weaknesses of women’s sexual identity that leads to particular deviant behavior. In the

family contexts, girls are subjected to greater primary social control than boys and become accustomed to having fewer liberties. They tend more to sublimate than to act directly. Symbolic violence, which has for centuries conditioned the socialization of the difference between the sexes, is also perpetuated beyond the will of the individual. Pierre Bourdieu writes,

The passions of the dominated *habitus* (from the point of view of gender, ethnicity, culture or language), a somatized social relationship, social law converted into incorporated law, are not those which can be suspended by simple force of will, founded on acquiring a liberating consciousness. If it is completely illusory to believe that symbolic violence can be overcome with only the weapons of consciousness and will, this depends on the fact that the effects and conditions of its efficiency are deeply inscribed in the deepest area of the body under the form of dispositions.⁴

Add to this the fact that much female deviance is expressed, interpreted, and repressed as a psychological and psychiatric pathology. Women are “psychiatrized” more than men:

We can say that if criminal deviance in women is much lower than in men, it is also because, paradoxically, many more types of behavior and attitudes are forbidden to women with respect to men; in other words, the environment of female deviance is potentially much larger, even though interpreted differently, than that of male deviance That is to say, female deviance . . . is more frequently psychiatrized than criminalized.⁵

This last assertion recalls the long history of penal differentiation between women and men on both the practical and theoretical levels. For centuries, female imputability was diminished or blocked with reference to the ancient principle of *infirmitas sexus* (or *imbecillitas sexus*, as well as *fragilitas sexus*), borrowed from the tradition of Roman law:

Perhaps the ambivalence registered when a collective group must inflict a penalty on a woman can be interpreted precisely in this sense: women make up part of the community in an ambiguous way, certainly not as completely as men do; at times they are absorbed into it, at times they are excluded from it. Their sphere of belonging is participation in the community, but only to the extent that it is connected, fundamentally and dependently, to the family. They incarnate both social inferiority and a sublime closeness to the sacred in the sense they are carriers of life. Therefore they are publicly untouchable, since they are both sacred and inferior. Because of this, preference is to delegate their control to the family, the only entity to which they are tied by a real pact. When, for whatever reason, this control decreases or whoever exercises it prefers to delegate it to public powers, those ambiguous mechanisms of punishment are manifested under the banner of the politics of ‘symbolic attenuation.’⁶

Thus, female deviancy and criminality are constructed and defined between inclusion and exclusion, between the public sphere and private family sphere; these forms of deviance and criminality are, in part, still waiting to be narrated by the protagonists of these acts and, in any case, analyzed in general.

Women and Violence

As an introduction, the following is a brief list of theoretical and methodological indications that emerged during our research:

- It is important to proceed toward more clarification, description, and analysis of the roles and functions of women in mafia crime starting from the accounts and statements of the women themselves (since until now most available statements have been from male *mafiosi*, some of them collaborators and some not).
- It is necessary to read the sources free from the restraints of a widespread social representation that considers female deviance identical to male deviance, different only quantitatively (and, in any case, that uses as a reference point that implicitly defines male deviance as “normal” deviance).
- From an analysis of the specific mafia organization’s operations, female criminal practices need to be described by evaluating and defining individual female activity as *support*, *temporary delegation of power*, or even *sharing of power* (it should be mentioned that men act on all these levels).
- The question of *recognition* should be brought into focus: on whom and what does the fact depend that an order is followed on the part of members inside the organization? Power belongs to those who are able to make themselves obeyed. What happens if a woman gives orders that have not been legitimized by a man behind her (husband, brother, son)? For now, it would seem that a man’s recognition-obedience mechanism is engaged only in encounters with other men, except when temporarily activated toward a woman for a limited period while the woman is acting in the place of her man in prison.
- With respect to the central question of *power*, traces of definitions should be found in the statements of both women and men in order to understand whether the connections among wealth, the ability to arouse fear and exercise violence, the importance of patronage politics, and the awareness of one’s ability to mediate and exercise hegemony over relationships with others in a hierarchical manner (different aspects that make up what might be called *mafia power*) are all experienced in a significantly different manner by men and women as regards both the ability to exercise power and as the willingness to recognize it in others. Furthermore, an analysis seems warranted of the diversified relationships women of different social backgrounds in a mafia context entertain, on one hand, with state power and, on the other, with the power of the criminal organization. (The chapter by Rossi on the Argentine context distinguishes between women who use power/state domination and others who feel abandoned by the state: both are given as reasons for being involved with organized crime.)

One very important aspect regards *violence* and the specific ways this violence is expressed, acted out, or performed by women. For men as well as women, the relationship with violent activity is never detached from the violence experienced over the course of their lives. This relationship is not linear, however; it is instead controversial and contradictory, with at times perverse results. We know from

collaborators' stories that a coldness in killing, a freezing of feelings and emotions, and a substantial absence of a sense of guilt are part of mafia normality, and that this "spell" disappears immediately with a change of life (from *mafioso*, involved in this environment's consensual universe, to collaborator): there are stories of former *uomini d'onore* (men of honor), ruthless killers in the past, who become anxious over a potential break-in by a thief.⁷ No longer moralized and legitimized as a structuring activity of mafia activities, violence in this case suddenly reassumes all its frightening power over the individual.

In contrast to men, women are carriers of an unconscious historical memory of their body's intrinsic vulnerability: a meta-historical experience inscribed in the reproductive quality of the female body, which coexists with and is superimposed upon the individual method of relating to violence. Frequently added to this is a biographical experience of molestation and violence, at times sexual. Enzo Ciconte has reconstructed various episodes of sexual violence perpetrated by *'ndranghetisti* (members of the 'Ndrangheta):

The truth is, it is the *'ndranghetisti* themselves who engage in dishonoring their women. A *capobastone* (local underboss) in Nicastro was accused of attempted rape. In Seminara, a defendant was accused of "having deflowered four poor, unhappy girls." Again in Cirella di Platí, there was a case of rape by a *picciotto* (young apprentice *mafioso*) who broke into a house armed and forced a girl into "sexual congress." Near Palmi, an underboss "soothed the lascivious thoughts of a *picciotto*, the dearest of the group, by giving him the opportunity to sacrifice the virgin Bava on the altar of pleasure." In any case, when they were not raped, other forms of violence against women by *'ndranghetisti* were not infrequent.⁸

Therefore, historical memory and biographical memory place the female subjects specifically in a violent criminal context, a context that requires great coldness and indifference in manipulating violence and death since this constitutes part of a structured professional activity. I believe we find ourselves dealing with another issue in the difficult construction of an explanation for the lower "violent criminal ability" of women. There are cases of dissociation and collaboration on the part of women who have in this way liberated themselves from a violent relationship; first of all, these stories do not represent any rebellion against criminal violence carried out in their mafia environment, instead it was the violence experienced against their bodies that caused violent outbursts in these women. In these cases, the intimate violence that reached and touched these women became the detonator that jeopardized and destroyed that other soulless, chilling violence that acts as a basis and bond for mafia power.

We take as a given that the polarization between aggressive men dedicated to violence and war, on one hand, and peaceful women, reproducers of life, on the other, should be set aside as a stereotype or, in the best of cases, as a shared social representation from the past. Nevertheless, differences exist and should be studied closely. In recent years, historical studies of women's participation in Nazi violence and totalitarian-type contexts have revealed that substantial female subordination to a context of power with strong male and male chauvinist connotations does not inhibit women from also being active and acting violently themselves. They can be

executioners in some situations, yet victims in others. A large number of women were aware of and part accomplices in the activities of their husbands, brothers, and lovers in the SS, for example.⁹ Another line of research goes deeper into the relationship between women and war, and women and bloody violence. Again in the context of this research, it should be underlined that women are capable of cruel acts of violence, but, since they are not considered subjects in every sense of the word, their actions appear chaotic and occasional:

Male violence can be *moralized* as a structured activity—war—and, in this way depersonalized and idealized. Female violence, instead, has never led to anything good. It was too personalized and vindictive. . . . Collective male activity can be moralized, can take place within legitimate cultural confines. Outside a horizon fused with the history of war/politics, feminine violence breaks up into revolt, revolution, or anarchy: when things escape control. When women transgress, derealizing themselves as peaceful and peacemaking subjects, the options are limited. . . . Historically men who exceed the limits in violent acts face greater options.¹⁰

In a recent study on the history of “face-to-face killing” in the twentieth century, Joanna Bourke maintains that there is no substantial difference between women and men in the pleasure of killing; it is only that women, until now, have been forbidden the concrete exercise of violent wartime activities: “Women did not thrust bayonets into live flesh but rather imagined doing it.”¹¹ Nevertheless, the fact of desiring to exercise violence while simultaneously being materially obstructed from doing so (as outlined in the examples analyzed by the author: the two world wars and the Vietnam war) leads to violent forms of compensation:

Instead of being the “other” in war (as certain historians maintain), women have made up an integral part of the massacres and mythology that surrounded it. . . . The pleasure of violence was shared by women but, since the experience of combat was denied them, and thus its realistic and literary representation, they reacted by offering and sacrificing the bodies of their sons, boyfriends, and husbands on the fields of battle. Thanks to this violence, they earned the right to pain.¹²

In this analysis, it is not difficult to see a problematic picture that refers us back, for example, to the role of mafia women in promoting vendettas. After the removal from Cittanova of ten children, ordered by the Juvenile Court in Reggio Calabria, several mothers and other women from the family were given permission to visit them in their new home:

Some of these women had not renounced their “educational” work, to the extent that this type of lecture was given to a ten-year-old boy. “You are a Facchineri, and like a black falcon you must fall on your enemies; you are from a powerful, important family that has never let anyone walk over them.” Making use of the assonance between the surname [Facchineri closely resembles *falconiere* or “falconer” in Italian] and black falcon [*falco nero*], the women presented the child with a violent image he could use to identify himself. The child had to imagine being a predator, a member of a powerful breed, fearless, and ready for combat.¹³

Most analyses refer therefore to the experience of female violence in reference to wars; however, they also present interesting ideas for analyzing our research material precisely because, on one hand, mafia women are accustomed to violence in the relationships between members as well as between themselves and the world around them, and, on the other, they are subordinate and forced to express only certain forms of this violence and not others; Thus, the hypothesis could be advanced that these women represent real social capital for criminal organizations in their exercise of “territorial rule.” Dominated and subjugated for centuries, women have developed an ambivalent and dependent relationship with power and violence, as well as an ambivalent relationship with the condition of being a victim. Though the oppressive side of power is well known, power also attracts, almost perversely. This predisposition, or *habitus*, profoundly structures the relationship with the other, with men:

Since different socializations dispose men to love power games and women to love the men who play them; masculine charisma is, at least in part, the charm of power, the seduction that the possession of power exercises in itself on the bodies whose instincts and desires are even politically socialized.¹⁴

If this is true in general, then it has particular significance in contexts clearly marked by violence. Once again, hypothesizing an analogy between the war environment and the mafia environment, I would like to quote Virginia Woolf, who highlighted how the unequal relationship with power has significantly conditioned and structured the relationship between men and women in violent contexts. Women “have functioned as mirrors with the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man enlarged up to two times his normal dimensions. Without that power . . . the glories of all our wars would be unknown.” These mirrors were “essential for any heroic and violent action.”¹⁵

Women of the ‘Ndrangheta

From a reading of essays on the ‘Ndrangheta and local periodicals from the last twenty years and interviews with Magistrates Eugenio Facciolla (assistant prosecutor for the Direzione Distrettuale Antimafia, or DDA [District Anti-Mafia Administration] in Catanzaro) and Salvatore Boemi (former assistant public prosecutor for the DDA in Reggio Calabria and now deputy public prosecutor at the public prosecutor’s office in Reggio) an outline emerges that can be summarized as follows, though obviously with much caution: Through an enormous “modernizing” development during the 1970s and 1980s, the ‘Ndrangheta went from a rural mafia (connected to proceeds from extortion, kidnapping, and smuggling) to an entrepreneurial and financial mafia with vast branches in northern Italy and abroad (Germany, Eastern Europe, Australia, and Canada). Even though today the ‘Ndrangheta seems present across the entire territory of Calabria, we need to make some distinctions; Alongside communities under strong territorial mafia control one can also find communities where mafia presence is completely absent.

Furthermore, and this appears particularly important in analyzing activities and functions performed by women, some areas (especially the central-south part of the region) have a very old tradition, while others (the north) have only recorded a mafia presence since the 1970s. On one hand, this historical heterogeneity translates into heterogeneity with respect to the forms of criminality and diversity with respect to the individuals who compose the organization (family structures, class, ways of thinking); on the other hand, it has led to an overall underestimation of the mafia presence and its effects in northern Calabria. At a hearing before the Anti-Mafia Commission, Alfredo Serafini, public prosecutor in Cosenza, explained,

The problem of criminality in Cosenza began with a misunderstanding. Everyone had always considered Cosenza a sort of happy island with respect to Reggio Calabria more than Catanzaro. In reality, it was not like that. Cosenza had its own burden of criminality, perhaps a bit submerged, but no less important; above all it was a land of conquests by criminal organizations: the ‘Ndrangheta from the South, the Camorra from the North, and the Sacra Corona Unita from the East; these all put pressure on the area of Cosenza that represented a buffer zone.¹⁶

This special constellation of the territory, at the crossroads between influences of the *malavita* (underworld) from Campania and Puglia, can be easily read in the story of Florinda Mirabile, daughter of a Camorra clan boss who moved to the Piana di Sibari and, for a period when she was very young, the girlfriend of Pasquale Galasso, the state’s “superwitness” from the Camorra, whom she asked for help in using a gun to avenge the murder of her father, Mario Mirabile. Galasso procured a precision shotgun for her, but the vendetta was never carried out. Since 1995, she has been a state witness against the Calabrian gangs, and she received a light sentence during the Galassia trial. Newspapers took obvious pleasure in reporting on her because of her youth and beauty.¹⁷

Another aspect that historically characterized the ‘Ndrangheta is connected to its organizational structure, which is essentially based on family relationships: blood family and criminal family, or *cosca*, tend to coincide:

As opposed to the Sicilian Mafia, the ‘Ndrangheta continues to be divided into autonomous *‘ndrine* with no single command structure; the *‘ndrine*, in turn, are more and more made up of very broad parental and family bases. These continue to represent the backbone of the ‘Ndrangheta’s structure.¹⁸

The already cited Parliamentary Commission report states

As opposed to what many have believed for some time, the blood family as a basis for the mafia family, the family structure as a basis for the mafia organization, have revealed themselves—in the real situation in Calabria as well as in other very distant and different territories—to be an extraordinary instrument for safeguarding and expanding the ‘Ndrangheta. Precisely this “primitive” structure has allowed the ‘Ndrangheta to avoid the storm that struck Cosa Nostra, the Camorra, and the Sacra Corona Unita. The number of Calabrian state witnesses is definitely lower than for all the other groups for various reasons. The first, and most powerful, is that any Calabrian *mafioso* who decides to become a state witness must first bring legal actions against his own closest family members.¹⁹

One valuable example is the composition of the Serraino–Di Giovine clan, organized around the central figure of Maria Serraino, sentenced to life imprisonment and daytime solitary confinement for 12 months:

Maria Serraino is related by blood to members of the Serraino *'ndrina*, involved in the mafia war in Reggio Calabria between the Imerti–Condello–Serraino and the De Stefano–Libri–Tegano *cosche* (gangs). The Serraino family is made up of two groups of brothers, first cousins. First group: Francesco Serraino, called “*il boss della montagna*” (“the mountain boss”), Paolo Serraino, and Domenico Serraino (cousins of Maria Serraino); second group: Francesco Serraino, Alessandro Serraino, Domenico Serraino, Filippo Serraino, and Demetrio Serraino (brothers of Maria Serraino).²⁰

Since the question of becoming a state witness was posed at the beginning of the 1990s, the role of women has emerged strikingly in various ways. As seen in the testimonies of magistrates, the strategy of the 'Ndrangheta when dealing with those who turn state's witnesses has not been so much death or the threat of being killed as financial pressure. Assistant Prosecutor Boemi speaks of a subtle strategy because “in Calabria neither relatives of the state's witnesses nor even the state's witnesses themselves are killed. . . . The 'Ndrangheta has the systematic capacity of re-contacting those who have turned state's witnesses, all of them, one by one.”²¹ Rocco Lombardo, public prosecutor in Locri, is also convinced that “the 'Ndrangheta has the economic means available to pay state's witnesses much more than the government can and because of this can lead them to retract whatever they have stated or even prevent their confessions.”²² The go-betweens for these messages, this pressure, and these offers of money are the witnesses' wives. Boemi underlined this aspect in our conversation, and Assistant Prosecutor Facciolla described the case of a witness who returned to his ways precisely because of pressure on his wife's family members:

In other words, they preferred to return here, she with her children. . . . return to live in Cosenza; the husband went to jail and will not be released because he is no longer collaborating; he was arrested immediately afterward. The children no longer go to school, and sooner or later they will definitely fall back into their father's footsteps; they will get involved in something. . . . In fact, this person told me frequently, “I calculated that my husband would have either been killed, and so I would have been a widow, or he would end up in jail; so for me, all things considered, it was best they didn't kill him.”²³

In the above-cited case, the wife came from a noncriminal family. Facciolla commented, “In most cases the women come from families outside this phenomenon, but they end up completely embracing their husband's lifestyle.” Nevertheless, this may occur more frequently in Cosenza than Reggio Calabria.

Boemi recounted the story of an important case regarding the pressure against becoming a state witness transmitted by the women of the family. The wife came from a criminal environment. Antonio Libri, a hit man during the mafia war in Reggio Calabria, sentenced to life in prison for murder, expressed his desire to become a state witness, but changed his mind after meeting with family members:

I found myself looking at an insurmountable cliff when I faced the wife. The wife told me, “My husband must not become a state witness because we have to continue living in Reggio Calabria as honorable people”: a young woman, 25 years old. I tried to explain to her you could not live in Reggio Calabria as an honorable person if you were part of a killer’s family. This woman finally got to the point of telling me that if her husband continued in his decision to become a state witness, she would not even let him see his son, the only son he had; she told me she would practically speaking consider him dead. This shocked me because this young woman, in Reggio Calabria around the end of the 1990s, 1996–97, spoke with such hostility, I mean, with the force of a woman from fifty years ago. She was from another family of regular criminals; yeah, I remember this perfectly; his fifty-year-old mother . . . was completely blocked by the personality of this young, strong daughter-in-law. . . . In other words, I couldn’t get her to budge one inch—we talked for hours—and when I saw the husband the last time in Rome he started crying and told me, “If I lose my family, for me this would be another life in prison; I might as well sacrifice myself, because they guaranteed my son would be raised well.”²⁴

Overall, Boemi attributed a very important role to women:

Nowadays, women are so powerful in family groups; they carry such weight; the Libri example is not an isolated case. A woman who decides her husband must not become a state witness gets results . . . and somebody ends up doing life in prison; no, no, women count substantially.²⁵

More than being targets of so-called *vendette trasversali* (revenge against the next of kin), women have been used to pressure their family members who have either turned *pentiti* (state’s witnesses) or are on the verge of doing so. Facciolla also stressed this:

The woman has been the instrument of bringing intimidation, in the sense that the collaborating husband is approached through people who could approach the wife, family members, brothers, in-laws, etc. Here is another case: a family, a diehard *mafioso* brother, the other brother a state witness, and both of them married to two sisters. The sisters worked together to guarantee the state witness returned to the fold and the wife of the diehard got pressure from the wife of the boss, in prison under anti-mafia law 41bis, to get back on the right track, then in turn she promoted the idea to her sister.²⁶

During the Garden trial in Cosenza, various protests reached the newspapers from defendants’ wives who condemned their husbands’ serious health conditions in jail and made sure to emphasize that any potential absences from the trial because of sickness should not be confused with signs of *pentimento* (“repentance” or turning state witness). The use of the mass media appears to be a well-established element in the new communication strategies of the various mafias. Wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers play a leading role in this context. Angelina Corsanto, wife of Franco Muto, ‘Ndrangheta boss in Cetraro, linked with the Camorra and nicknamed “*re del pesce*” (“King Fish”), wrote a long letter to the newspaper *il Quotidiano* invoking “great intellectuals” who today “raise their voices in protest . . . against the power wrongly used by certain magistrates.” The letter closes by condemning the fact that “in my case, the most elementary rights are constantly violated: liberty and image.”²⁷ Three months later the woman was sentenced on appeal to five years in prison for *associazione mafiosa* (mafia

association). The ‘Ndrangheta strategy of attempting to reach the *pentiti* more through money than the threat of *vendette trasversali* nevertheless changes when the sentences become definitive, as in the Garden trial. Facciolla emphasized this: “The sentence became definitive in July 2000; from that date on, there was regular violence against the families of the collaborators. . . . There is now a real ongoing return to violence when dealing with collaboration in general.”²⁸

In the world of the ‘Ndrangheta, an overall image emerges of women in the midst of change. Women in the rural and traditional context, who took roles far from criminal activities as such, have now strikingly emerged in feuds and vendettas, in the incitement to vendetta, and in educating children in the vendetta. Those feuds were only apparently “private,” so to speak, quarrels connected to issues of insult and honor between families. The real fact is that they were wars—albeit between families—for criminal control of the territory. Facciolla explained:

This difference can already be made. We have an area that is typically rural, the area of the greenhouses around Catanzaro; in the past there have been bloody feuds with hundreds killed. . . . But here is the difference; that is a rural mafia where women know everything but keep quiet; they don’t say anything; they don’t talk; they never rise up to any role of primary importance. Instead, the mafia organizations that are not rural are the complete opposite; you could say modern or entrepreneurial, depending on what term you want to use. There, women are instead much more attentive. We have wives of subjects who are in prison for very serious crimes, bloody crimes, mafia crimes, and their wives are government employees; they also have fairly important jobs inside certain public administrations.²⁹

Perhaps we could say this: in the traditional, rural context women of a certain age and mothers also had an active role—though in a different way—in matters of the vendetta, while young women were the passive objects of functional, matrimonial strategies aimed at creating and reinforcing criminal alliances. *Pentito* Antonio Zagari underlined the criminal importance of women in families connected to the ‘Ndrangheta:

The rules of the Calabrian ‘Ndrangheta do not consider the possibility of female elements becoming members; nevertheless, if a woman becomes recognized as particularly worthy, she could become a member with the title “*sorella d’omertà*” (“sister of *omertà*,” the code of silence) without, however, swearing loyalty to the organization as is required for men; but it is hard to recognize this title for someone who is not already a wife, daughter, sister, girlfriend, or somehow related to the *uomini d’onore* (men of honor, *mafiosi*).³⁰

In some towns in Calabria marked by bloody feuds during the 1970s and 1980s, the entire civil context is compromised, which carries lasting consequences for new generations. Terror spreads among children in elementary school, especially in those classes with children from families disrupted by the feuds. “We no longer know how to act, what to tell these children,” says one young teacher. Little Michele’s teacher explained,

When you opened the door, the boy would jump underneath his desk. I asked him why and he explained he was afraid someone would come in who wanted to kill him. From then on,

the other children, terrorized by this explanation, also tried to take cover under their desks at any suspicious noise.³¹

According to Boemi,

When I arrived in Calabria in '72-'73, the thing that struck me most about women's participation in these sensational bloody events was the participation of women in the family feuds that bloodied the Calabrian countryside, especially along the Tyrrhenian Coast, and by Tyrrhenian Coast I mean Palmi, Gioia, Rosarno, Oppido itself, and above all Seminara and Cittanova. . . . The first thing I can say is that women, though not part of the Calabrian mafia, were still at the center of the mafia world at that time. Why mafia world? Because, while preparing cases for trial, especially those in Cittanova and Palmi, we arrived at the conclusion this was not a simple family feud, blood crying out for blood, the so-called *diritto barbaricino* (an ancient, unwritten code of Sardinian origin) that says the murdered family member can find peace only through the blood of the rival. In all the most important feuds in Cittanova, Palmi, Gioia Tauro, and Oppido, everything led us to believe or we wanted to believe in a personal affair, in other words a reaction. . . . But instead, in reality, groups already part of the 'Ndrangheta were behind it: groups of *mafiosi*, honored in the criminal sense, who took the need for reaction directly from mafia rules, so there was this endless series of continuous homicides that lasted over time, feuds that would start, seem to quiet down, and then explode again even five or six years later. . . . The losing families were frequently forced to actually abandon the territory; this happened, for example, in the Oppido feud, when the Mammoliti family got the better of the Barbaros; it happened in Gioia Tauro between the Piromalli and Tripodi families. So women are not passive subjects in feuds; women are active subjects, subjects who also, and with great power, call for a vendetta and are heard out of respect, even though they are not part of the organization.³²

Aside from the question of the vendetta and education in violence, women are also active when feuds turn into a mafia war. Rita Di Giovine, who has termed state witness and in the past was part of the Serraino-Di Giovine clan, spoke of this in her interview with Ombretta Ingrassi. Rita witnessed the mafia war from far away in Milan, but when she spent her vacation in Calabria, even she got involved:

My aunt and my cousin do everything. Me too when I was down in Calabria, not guns but I took my uncle around. I accompanied him in the car to some places or I went to get notes to take to my uncle; he called them "messages"; . . . the only ones who did any work down there during the mafia war were the women. When the guns arrived, it was my aunt who was the courier, my aunt who delivered them, or my cousin would go get, I don't know, a pistol, a rifle, whatever was needed and bring it to her father. And when they went outside their houses, they were always escorted by other women or wore wigs. . . . The men were always on the run or under forced house arrest so they would stay by themselves; in other words, they stayed locked up in the house and the ones who worked were the women. . . . Everything that happened was always through us women.³³

Thus these were active women, well aware of their role: nevertheless, Boemi also underlined another aspect of being a woman, or rather daughter, in the mafia family:

There is, however, another aspect and that is one of, let's say, alliances. Scriva (the first collaborator with justice in Calabria) told me that the power of a family grew through the

formation of new families and therefore through marriages. . . . So women here are truly passive subjects. . . . marriage constituted a means for increasing the power of the criminal group. . . . Women were absolutely constrained. I want to say this: Scriva said not only were women frequently forced into marriages of convenience, but daughters in mafia families had powerfully criminal upbringings; they could not frequent a whole series of people in civil society: first among these, the *carabinieri*, the police. When one of the daughters from these mafia families, I mention here the Pesce family in Rosarno since this resulted in a case of homicide, happened to flirt with a *carabiniere*, the girl was killed by her own family and disappeared into thin air. So, in this sense we have the figure of this woman, in the 1970s, extremely subject to mafia rules though she never took part in the mafia. This is what I remember.³⁴

Another case is that of Annunziata Giacobbe, a girl in love with the wrong man:

It was in the first few days in May 1983, a time for taking walks, when four *picciotti* (young mafia apprentices), sent by Vincenzo Pesce, followed her along a country path in Rosarno. They shot her and her cousin, who was only there by chance. Then while they ran away, they heard her moan. They came back cursing; they could not leave a job half done, but they had to do it in a hurry. The girl was dying but just to be safe one of the four slit her throat with a pruning knife. Annunziata was in love with one of the Pesce family, but the *capo cosca* (gang/family boss) could not stand him. She had no right to choose her own boyfriend.³⁵

Reference to the image of the traditional role of women in the rural world was exploited by women in the Aspromonte towns of Platì, San Luca, Africo, and Natile; in September 1995 around 60 women and children chained themselves together in front of the courthouse in Locri to protest the public prosecutor’s actions in the “Aspromonte” trial of 50 people charged with kidnapping and drug trafficking. Appearances can be deceiving, however; these actions—women chained in the square for more than 10 days; a rowdy protest in front of the Cosenza regional headquarters of RAI, Italian state television and radio; a delegation traveling to Rome for meetings with members of parliament; chants under the windows of the courthouse calling on the judges to “be magistrates and not avengers”³⁶; all this in the period between the public prosecutor’s final arguments and the issuance of the sentence—should be interpreted more from the point of view proposed by Principato and Dino³⁷ of a “new communication strategy” on the part of the mafia than as a traditional popular revolt.

The modernization processes in the ‘Ndrangheta have powerfully influenced the role of women in the life and criminal activities of mafia families. A hypothesis may even be made that female presence in the recent criminal activities of mafia *cosche* (gangs or families), such as those in the north of Calabria, may be more noticeable with respect to their involvement in traditional mafia families, but data are lacking to back this up. Nevertheless, according to Facciolla, “in the area of Cosenza this involvement of women is much more present than in other areas.” According to the magistrate, this is due, on one hand, to the fact that many men are presently in prison and, on the other, to a practical calculation by the mafia that reflects the fact that women receive favorable treatment from institutions; they are

less controlled than men; Rita Di Giovine also emphasized this fact in reference to the ‘Ndrangheta in Reggio Calabria: “women have never been controlled by the police.” According to Facciolla,

I have also noticed another trend recently; *mafiosi* tend not to involve their sons and therefore take greater advantage of the women’s situation; at any rate, they keep their sons in reserve, thinking that anyway if we—if the family boss is inside—if we have to watch out for someone, we will watch out for the son; we would rarely check the wife. . . . We have had situations, let’s say, where the wife of someone in prison under law 41*bis*, her husband a prisoner, actually contacted people and told them how they should act or not act, gave orders, made alliances and maintained relationships with several families of other prisoners. So, there you are, really a very important role.³⁸

The processes of women’s emancipation in general, along with the high level of secondary education for young women in particular, has definitely also influenced the change in the position of women inside the world of the ‘Ndrangheta. Nevertheless, the accounts of the two magistrates suggest that there are notable differences between the situations of mafia criminality that has remained anchored to its ancient, still isolated territories and that of a “modernized,” more urban mafia that has also spread into areas where it was not present previously. According to Boemi, the educational level of the women in the first case is not high on average, at least as regards the small towns in the province of Reggio Calabria:

I would say that frequently the men have been to school longer; in Jonica, forget it about it, there is a lot of ignorance there. Precisely the more traditional, the older the mafia is in mentality, the more women are kept on the fringes; the more you move toward a real modern mafia—for example, the one in Reggio Calabria—the more the presence of women counts.³⁹

This is also evidently true for the situation in the province of Cosenza. In Facciolla’s experience, the level of women’s education counts quite a bit:

In general it is higher, in the great majority of cases. But don’t misunderstand; we are also speaking of people who know how to acquire a sort of professionalism in the field. We have a state witness who has been collaborating since 1996; his wife was an official in the Cosenza city government during the 1980s and 1990s. Let’s say the level of education has an effect as well as the fact that, at any rate, these women knew how to separate themselves from their husbands’ activities from the public point of view; in the sense that while the husband still continues to dress, to interact with others, to maintain a style typical of a criminal, the wife distances herself. In Cosenza, we had wives or girlfriends of criminals, already convicted for mafia activities and definitively identified as *mafiosi*, who drive around in luxury cars and dress in designer clothes; they also pay attention to the way they dress. And another important thing, they manage activities from the economic point of view, since in most cases they are the ones who manage the bank accounts; they are the ones who do financial operations; they start up businesses like wholesale clothing stores; they start up wholesale gift shops, again because of what we talked about earlier. It is difficult to control wives in any contacts they may have with relatives, cousins, brothers, brothers-in-law, while on the other hand, the family of a purebred criminal is easier to control.⁴⁰

Regarding the criminal role filled, respectively, by sons or wives or sisters when the boss is in prison, Facciolla makes an interesting distinction between the attitudes expressed during times of peace and times of war between the *cosche*. For example,

If everything is going well and I respect the boss, then it’s okay with me that a woman or his son comes to tell me what the boss has said. But instead, women lose this position in situations of conflict.⁴¹

Both magistrates ruled out that there have been occasions when men have taken orders from women, except in cases (by now widespread) when women temporarily represent an incarcerated man. In response to my question of whether cases had been verified in which these women, once invested with temporary power, might show themselves too autonomous with respect to the man in prison, Facciolla replied,

That is a good question and perceptive because it is one I asked several state witnesses some time ago about the authorship of certain incidents. They said, “I could not accept the principle under which our boss was put in jail, but his wife brought us news and told us what we should and shouldn’t do.” So the wife would tell them “keep on killing” and they would keep on killing. And so I said, “But you guys, how much respect do you have for this person?” The answer was simple, really, every one of them told me the same thing. “Sir, look, it’s not like we respect Mrs. So and So as herself. We respect her for what she represents. We are associates of Mister Such and Such and he is in prison and his wife comes to tell us, look, my husband said you have to keep doing this and that and the other; we do it out of obedience to the boss.” So this is sort of an instrument or at any rate a connecting element between them and the imprisoned boss and this is something, like I said before, tied somewhat to history, to the origins of the mafia, the so-called ritual, the fact of believing, of obeying. . . . In fact, it was not acceptable to obey a woman, but, since she came from the boss, you just hang down your head and do it, that’s it. Another aspect plays a part in this discussion; lately, we have also noticed a sort of modernization in the criminal organization that may indicate a step forward with respect to the past. . . . [Women] have acquired a sort of greater respect compared to the past.⁴²

Furthermore, as Boemi mentioned, there may be situations in which formally the son was delegated the position of leader while the woman dominated in substance. This arrangement recalls something I have called elsewhere “the astuteness of female impotence,”⁴³ that is, a sort of female conduct, widespread in rural patriarchal societies, that allowed women to dominate the domestic family environment without eating away at the apparent patriarchal superiority of the man. Boemi says,

We feel that [*mafiosi*] have never substantially taken orders [from women]. Frequently, they have accepted certain decisions, because in Calabria, when a *capozona* (regional boss) or *capofamiglia* (family boss) is in prison, he always delegates a son, but only formally because frequently, in substance. . . . there are examples like Teresa Gallico who has always been looked upon with great respect even by her brothers, and not just her younger brothers either, but by the older ones. . . . It was Concetta Managò herself, from the Gallico family, who stated how much importance and respect the ideas of Antonio Gallico’s daughter had in that mafia family. Teresa Gallico—whom I arrested for mafia association but who was later acquitted—is a woman who was allowed to take part in her men’s discussions, her father

and brothers, both older and younger than her. Teresa Gallico is a woman who had, has a major function in the activities of that mafia group, even though she is not a member since everyone would say she has never been sworn in, however. . . . Here is a classic example: there are women, many women who have been charged and sentenced for extortion, such as the wife of a big mafia boss like Nino Imerti⁴⁴; she picked up the *mazzette* ("little bundles" or payments) for her husband. And her sister was also sentenced. So we have observed this participation, but I do not believe this is the principal aspect. Our investigations have led us to believe that women have more meaningful jobs; they may not be part of the organization, but they are still respected inside certain mafia groups.⁴⁵

Female state witnesses are rather rare in the 'Ndrangheta environment. Teresa Concetta Managò is in a certain sense an exceptional figure because of the fact that she turned state witness under witness protection and because of her overall story. She was sixteen years old when she married Francesco Condello; he too was very young. Both came from a working class family unrelated to mafia crime. The boy, together with his brothers, found himself in conflict with the local *malavita* when Francesco tried to open a bar near the beach without asking permission from those who controlled the territory, the Gallico family. In 1977, his younger brother, sixteen years old, was killed, and Francesco, twenty years old, joined another clan to avenge his murder; he became a fugitive. More than forty people died in the feud between the Condello and Gallico clans. In an interview with Clare Longrigg, Salvatore Boemi reconstructed the passage of the young couple, Francesco Condello and Concetta Managò, from the legitimate world to that of organized crime:

Condello did not want to name those people who had killed his brother, but decided to take justice into his own hands. So as soon as they got out of prison, he ruthlessly killed them one after the other. And she lived this real situation; she saw her husband change from a completely normal person into a dangerous assassin within just a few months. . . . He became a celebrity, a local hero. People thought he did the right thing in avenging his brother's brutal murder. The newspapers began writing about him; they started talking about him on television. It might have also been interesting to be the woman of a criminal who in any case enjoyed a certain respect in the social environment.⁴⁶

After years as a fugitive, Condello was betrayed by one of his men and killed by a car bomb in 1989. At thirty years old, Concetta Managò was left alone with her four small children and decided to join the rival clan. She became Domenico Gallico's lover and helped him kill three people, perhaps also as revenge on those who had betrayed her husband. After being arrested following several intercepted phone conversations that showed her involvement in these crimes, she decided to turn state witness. In a magazine interview she explained the reasons for her choice after the murder of her husband, and why she was the one who approached the rival clan by writing a letter to the Gallico family:

There were mothers who protested at school because of the presence of my children; I was afraid for them. In the letter, I wrote that my children had nothing to do with it and I wanted them to be left in peace. After a phone call from Domenico Gallico, we saw each other at Taureana di Palmi, after around a month. He told me, "Don't worry. I never thought

of touching your children.” Gallico was like my husband; he wasn’t afraid of anything. I was struck by his behavior. . . . We met in Taureana in the open. I believed him more than my husband’s friends. . . . Now, I bitterly regret the relationship I had because, among other things, after this I was accused of complicity in my husband’s murder and that is not true. I confessed my guilt in three murders, when I acted as a lookout for Domenico Gallico. I am extremely sorry. Today, I just feel indifferent towards him.⁴⁷

Salvatore Boemi says,

Effectively speaking, she is a woman who has suffered very much, has really experienced every phase, whether that of a woman who marries a young man who is then involved in a feud, or a woman who must marry this young *mafioso* who is then dramatically killed. Three, four months after this homicide, Cordova’s operations team in Palmi, through several intercepted phone conversations, discovered the woman had contacts with the Gallico group and specifically with Domenico Gallico. Not only did she have contacts, but the woman also agreed to track down the places where Gallico’s enemies hung out, to check out the areas. And several homicides were verified. This woman had always sworn she had never betrayed her husband, for many reasons, because she loved him, because she followed him, because she respected him for fifteen years, but the moment her husband’s group betrayed him, she no longer felt not only connected anymore to the group of traitors, but she almost felt better allied with the opposing group. Domenico Gallico, an intelligent *mafioso*, explained to her that either she stayed with them or she stayed with those who betrayed her husband. I always believed in the good faith of this woman; when her husband was alive, there were no proven contacts between her and Gallico. So for me, someone who knows and lives in Palmi, I knew her, a woman who was extremely afraid, I find nothing strange in the fact she always needed to rely on a powerful man. She had to choose . . . she had four young children, was left on her own because she had no family of her own, no strong family group, and had always maintained this: “Sentence me for the murders of those who betrayed my husband, I helped Gallico do these, but never tell me I betrayed my husband because I will not accept that.” . . . I had always thought the Condello group, that had managed to oppose a very powerful group like the Gallico family in Palmi, should be supported, with great caution but still supported, by the other dominant mafia group in Palmi, the Parrello family. And this woman opened up this scenario for me; she showed me, with some very serious elements, what part the Parrellos played in supporting her husband in the fight against the Gallico family and explained everything to me. In reality, this helped me reconstruct two or three organizational charts for the mafia families in Palmi. This woman carries all the weaknesses and strengths of a Calabrian woman who meanwhile, as a child of fifteen from a semi-mafia family, had already been thrown into the arms of a boy who was effectively already somewhat involved in the criminal affairs of Palmi, a woman who at sixteen years old, I think, had already had her first child with a fugitive husband and who went through a feud that saw around forty deaths. So she has lived this life in every sense of the word. Then, the moment she chose to collaborate with justice, everyone abandoned her, even her mother, if I remember correctly. So she went up north practically alone with these kids.⁴⁸

The Anti-Mafia Division in Catanzaro also has seen few female state witnesses. Facciolla tells of a recent case that demonstrates very well how few choices there frequently occur in conditions always and in any case marked by blackmail and violence. The woman in question, daughter of a criminal and sister of a boss who turned state witness and accused her of complicity, found herself in a difficult

position. On one hand, because of her brother's accusations, it would be better for her to choose to become a state witness. On the other, if she chose to become a state witness, her men (husband, lover, and the man she lived with), her son, and her daughters with their respective criminal husbands threatened to take away her youngest daughter, who she loved very much. "And so, here you are, this is really a disastrous situation, what I would call a real family disaster," the magistrate comments. "It is a strategic game played out over the body of this little girl; let's hope we resolve it quickly."⁴⁹ At times, female state witness is facilitated by the violence the man exercises over the woman's body. In these cases, it is not so much the criminal violence, of which these women are generally aware, but violence experienced first hand that can lead to disassociating from that world. One extreme example is represented by the case of Rita Di Giovine, who narrated her ordeal to Ombretta Ingrasci, giving a glimpse, among other things, of a chain of violence that involved all members of the family:

I saw my father beat my mother. . . . He always beat up my mother, even when she was nine months pregnant he hit her hard with a broom and broke two ribs. . . . I was a victim of violence from the age of seven till the age of nineteen. . . . I was brutally raped every other day or so until I found myself pregnant. . . . I had the child. . . . He found out about it when I started to collaborate; they told him out of revenge. Then it fell to my mother; because I asked you for help on my knees; I cried like a crazy woman; you even had your own son beat me, saying I was the whore; I was only seven years old.⁵⁰

Before the court in Milan, in May 1996, she said, "For me, that arrest was like salvation."⁵¹ Facciolla refers to another case that, though definitely less dramatic, nevertheless shows a similar motive for becoming a state witness:

We had another one who ended up becoming a state witness. The wife with three children of a subject who operated around Cosenza along the Tyrrhenian coast; he was a *capofamiglia* (family boss) from a certain area and his wife, who was tired of putting up with violent behavior also from her husband, turned to the *carabinieri* and began collaborating. Practically speaking, first she had her husband arrested, along with several other subjects who were hiding guns. From then on she gave evidence on a series of incidents; she completely rebuilt her life. She had been a teacher. . . . After a brief period when she did not work, now she has been teaching for some time; so there you are; sometimes there is also this kind of attitude. Here is a person with a fairly high level of education and, at a certain point, she just could not longer accept what her husband did. She had three children with this guy . . . just aiding and abetting, old-style aiding and abetting; the husband pulled a robbery; the *carabinieri* went looking for him at home and she said he hadn't left the house. That is typical. But acts committed first hand, absolutely not.⁵²

The presence of violence appears to be a constant in the mafia environment, a sort of glue for relationships, a fabric of daily life that is probably experienced as something obvious, but nevertheless can reach insupportable levels, especially when the violence is not directly instrumental for criminal activities but affects the most intimate personal relationships.

As another example, it is worth looking at the killing of a pair of lovers, *lupara bianca* (kidnapped and killed, the bodies never found), in Cosenza in 1982. Ines

Zangaro, mother of the common-law wife of boss Franco Pino (now a collaborator), and Mario Turco, her young lover, were killed and their bodies were destroyed because their passionate relationship was in conflict with the organization's so-called code of honor.⁵³ Consider another example: Rossella Casini, a university student from Florence and fiancé of Francesco Frisina, a university student in Florence, was killed, cut into pieces, and thrown into the sea in Palmi by what would have been her future in-laws. The Frisina family was involved in the Condello-Gallico feud; when Rossella, after her future father-in-law was killed and her boyfriend was wounded, convinced the latter to become a state witness; the family reacted. The boyfriend retracted his statement and gave his assent to sacrificing his girlfriend on the altar of family "honor."

These tales are sordid but not infrequent. In certain cases they facilitated the decision of someone to turn state witness as a radical choice to finally say no.

Ambiguous Emancipation

A rough outline of current trends would suggest that the relationship between men and women in the world of the 'Ndrangheta is changing, both in the area of criminal activity as well as, strictly speaking, relationships and family; and that these changes are in part attributable to changes in general society. That is, many aspects of "women's liberation," mostly regarding the public sphere, including education, work, and the participation of women in primarily the sphere of consumption, have had repercussions in the substantially closed world of the mafias. Facciolla talks about the changed relationship between spouses during periods when the man is a fugitive:

It also changes the fugitive's way of relating to his wife. Because the fugitive knows that when we are looking for him, the first thing we watch is his family. Sooner or later there will be some contact. We have also seen an overall change in the fugitive's way of relating to his woman and his own nuclear family. In the past you could tell there were more regular contacts; but now they are almost nonexistent; they limit themselves to extremely brief contacts by phone and that is all. What is more, in other cases, they arrange to meet in neutral zones, zones where they can avoid controls. But clearly this depends on the territory; so this type of behaviour has also changed and women are especially cautious in this, very different with respect to the past.⁵⁴

Just as women in mafia families today, either because they are skillfully manipulated by men from the clan or because they are willing protagonists, are involved first hand in communication strategies against the courts, against collaboration, and in favor of criminal interests; they are also occupied in the economic management of wealth and violent criminal activities such as extortion, loan sharking, and drugs and arms trafficking. Overall, it would seem that they skillfully take advantage of a certain socially perceived innate "feminine disorder" connected to the thousands of small tasks in their domestic activities and their "double presence," knowing that some things can easily be hidden in the nooks and crannies of daily life and

“women’s work”: messages, arms, money, doses of drugs, and more. In contrast, men seem more predictable, more easily controllable:

It is much easier to use interceptions to monitor a man who leaves home in the morning, uses his cell phone, gets in his car, and meets with other previous offenders: not with a woman. In other words, women, in most cases, have their meetings in jail and we rarely manage to discover anything in jail since all the prisoners know we watch them, especially those doing hard time. They do their time with video and mini-cameras in plain sight; so they know they are being recorded and we almost never manage to catch them. But then there is another aspect, a woman has her life, she goes out, she goes shopping, she goes to work, goes to pick up her children from school. If you are not lucky enough to catch one—as we have been able to do on some occasions—who is meeting some people, or the moment she raises the telephone to call someone and say, “You are making a mistake, you have to do this because we have already set this up, we said this, we ordered these things.” Well, there you go, without these lucky breaks, we are rarely able to prove anything. They are definitely involved one hundred percent in their husband’s activities; it is no longer just simple aiding and abetting. I want to make that clear.⁵⁵

The degree to which the comforts of conspicuous consumption, easy money, and the related increase in status condition these women’s complicity can also be seen, in a negative sense, in the difficulties they experience when they have to get along with much less under the state witness protection program:

I mean, as a criminal your profit is practically immeasurable and unlimited; if your children want a stereo, a television, a video recorder, there is no problem; you just do the robbery, do the extortion, and go get the money or even go straight to the guy who sells the stuff. This happens too; you need a motorbike, you go get a motorbike. So it is clear a collaborator starts to miss all this. It is a different way of life with no guarantees; if the criminal lifestyle involved ten million lire (five thousand euros) a month profit, as a collaborator nobody can guarantee you that because, clearly, the compensation is based on the number of people under protection; the state pays for the house, the collaborator pays for the living expenses. The wives resent this. Yes, there was this one guy who pestered me with requests, but the serious problem was not his because, when faced with the prospect of going off to prison for the rest of his life, because he was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life, he had every interest in having his cake and eating it too. One day he came into this office and, in a very picturesque manner, said to me, “Mister, my problem is my wife; either we have to separate or I’m going to kill her.” And I said, “Well, let’s do the first thing; it’s more. . . .” “You know why? My wife is probably right because one evening we threw a party with five million lire (2500 euros) worth of champagne; that is what we called our lifestyle.” It is clear that going back to living and trying to balance the family expenses on two million lire (1000 euros) a month is not easy, with clothes for the children, books to buy, groceries, lights, telephone, and heating bills.⁵⁶

Given this situation, with many elements of change that show the greater active involvement of women in exercising power inside the mafia, questions should be asked concerning their prospects for assuming any effective leadership in mafia organizations. On this point, I would like to quote Facciolla’s answer to my question regarding the possibility that a woman might not be inclined to return to a position of obedience the moment the male boss of the clan returns from prison:

I think this would happen only with great difficulty, at least unless we find a *cosca* that has started to be managed by a woman. But I think it would be difficult to find any trace of this anywhere in Italy, not just in our district. I feel the role of women still remains one of temporary rule in the absence of their imprisoned or fugitive husbands.⁵⁷

So, based on the material collected to date, which should be considered insufficient until it will be possible to speak directly to at least some female state witnesses, we could perhaps say that the hypothesis of *temporary delegation of power* to women in the mafia environment is closest to the real-world situation.

The ambiguous emancipation of mafia women can be considered the possible *affirmation of a feminine pseudo-subject*. To briefly give some theoretical support to this statement, I feel that although what happens in society in general (emancipation trends, parity, equality, rights) may have repercussions on the *mafioso* world, it should be emphasized that these repercussions do not foreshadow any analogous process merely delayed over time. In other words, Italian society is a democratic society; the Italian state is a democratic state; the constitution guarantees equal rights for men and women. Without denying the obvious imperfections in daily democratic reality, this assertion seems quite important particularly when referring to the mafia. Furthermore, asserting that we live in a democratic context does not suggest denying the powerful presence of male domination in many sectors and on different levels of social and civil coexistence. We are dealing with a historic dominance that has settled and structured itself on both the symbolic as well as the material plane and regards all of us, women and men. Bourdieu wrote recently,

I have always seen, in male domination, the way it is imposed and endured, the example par excellence of this paradoxical submission, and the effect of what I call symbolic violence, gentle violence, imperceptible, invisible, invisible to the victims themselves, exercised essentially through purely symbolic ways of communication and knowledge or, more precisely, mis-knowledge, of recognition and appreciation or, at least, of sentiment.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, living in a democratic context supplies the means, possibilities, and legitimization for combating male domination.

On the other hand, the mafia is an authoritarian organization, with totalitarian tendencies in its territorial hegemony, with claims of arbitrary and antidemocratic domination, and, finally, with unwritten laws, traditional behavior, and interpersonal relationships informed explicitly by powerful patriarchal family traditions. Perhaps the spheres of consumption and technological know-how are the areas that most represent sharing and contamination between the civil world and that separate mafia world. This hypothetical and preliminary statement has repercussions for any analysis of the role of women, especially any evaluation of the prospects for the development of that role in a mafia environment. The emancipation of women is a process, not an isolated fact, and above all simultaneously regards people and institutions, especially the public sphere and private sphere. In speaking of emancipation, of the conquest of individuality and confirmation of subjectivity, we should take into consideration both the individual side (in this case the woman who chooses to experiment with her own subjectivity also and most importantly by

saying “no”), as well as the institutional side (that is, a context that guarantees the safeguarding of human rights, whether they be of men or women). In addition, we should take into consideration both the working and public lives of these women, as well as their emotional, family, and private lives. These processes, both collective and individual, are fed by a constant tension, the one between what is and what could be. “What is” are the individual imperfect stories, the different female personalities, the private and family stories that may enter into conflict with the freedom guaranteed by law. In addition, “what is” are the individual abilities (or inabilities) to mediate between formally guaranteed civil rights and emotional and material reality; there may be levels of consciousnesses, as well as economic dependency, that lead to situations of subordination, dependence on other people that clearly contrast with the potential dimensions of freedom and equality guaranteed by law. In a democracy, “what is” (that is, personal and contextual imperfections) is in vital and dynamic tension with “what could be”: the promise of happiness and freedom that is the basis of the concept and processes of emancipation and is laid down in the law, in rights, and in duties.

Starting from such an assumption, it seems misleading to consider the growing criminal activity of mafia women as an index of emancipation *tout court*. Nevertheless, as I have attempted to argue, this in no way suggests underestimating or even denying the great changes in terms of relations between the sexes in the mafia environment.

One of the supporting elements for analyzing the relationship between male and female genders from a historical perspective is their respective location between the public and private. Without going into the general dynamics of this location in Italian society, I would merely like to advance the theory that one of the characteristics of mafia-style organized crime, that is, the private accumulation of public resources, can also be seen in the management of the social and symbolic capital women represent for the *mafiosi* in the framework of the logic of wealth and power. For example, one can see the private use of a public resource in the mafia’s development of new communication strategies that see their women “close up” (both “on screen” and metaphorically). In the social world shared by democratic societies, the expression of individual opinion via the mass media constitutes a part of the public welfare; it is linked profoundly with the history of the formation of democracies, tied to the development of a public sphere as an arena for expressing political ideas and creating consensus. The use of these channels to launch threats, communicate in code, and hurl curses does not enrich the public welfare but rather impoverishes it. I will not enter the debate regarding the limits of “freedom of opinion,” usually discussed with respect to parallel themes such as racism and anti-Semitism. I merely would like to emphasize how these discourses, disguised as “opinion” when they are in fact expressions of violent conditions and, in the end, are incitements to violence, bring us back to the subjects who are at the center of these communication strategies and their relationship with violence.

If the historical development of a female subject, despite the deep wounds that have accompanied the processes of emancipation, can be read as a process of liberation from patriarchal male violence (in intimate as well as public relationships),

then the social production of a female pseudo-subject (as in the case of the mafia, or Nazi/Fascist regimes, or of all domination based on patriarchal male chauvinism) should not be misinterpreted as a process of liberation. The process of producing a female pseudo-subject is accompanied by powerful violence toward women, frequently carried out by women themselves, on the symbolic plane as well as the plane of physical and sexual violence.

In conclusion, I would like to briefly give voice to a “mafia woman”: Santa Margherita Di Giovine, nicknamed Rita, now a state witness, interviewed by Ombretta Ingrassi. This woman’s story and words, the account of her experience, give support to my attempt to find concepts appropriate to grasping what happens in that world of male domination *par excellence* definitively represented by the mafia and ‘Ndrangheta. From Rita Di Giovine’s testimony, the portrait emerges of strong, active women, violent, and frequently cruel specifically toward other women⁵⁹:

You know what is funny about you? You all think women in the South [of Italy] are all like, “stockings, let me knit you some stockings.” Don’t fool yourselves; the women are in charge; the women wear the trousers; men count too but in the end who decides? The women. . . .

When something is risky, who do they send? Women. . . . My aunt, who usually wears a skirt, can kill a person with her bare hands. . . . Now, if she were to find me, she would kill me straight away; she tried to have my brother kill me; in other words, if she were to see me now, theoretically, she would shoot me down in the middle of the street; she’s got no problem with that. . . . My mother is a boss, just so you know, and the one in charge of everything, she commands everything and even commands her brothers, or did, because they are dead now, only three of them are left. . . . My mother was born a Serraino; my mother has Serraino blood in her veins; she lived with my uncles and aunts, with my grandfather, who was an old fox even then, then with her uncles and aunts, her cousins, I mean, she has got it right there in her blood; she grew up completely indoctrinated.

They [her brothers] had to be waited on. Emilio was in charge. . . . But men didn’t have any power, because in reality my mother had all the power. My mother made my brother feel like the boss; but she was the one who ran everything; he was the boss, on the outside, but in reality my mother had the power because if she decided a job shouldn’t be done, it wasn’t done. . . . The women are in charge, nothing you can do about it.”

These are women who do not love other women, women infatuated with their sons and closely tied to the men in the family:

My grandfather ran us off from the table, told us we did not have the same surname he did. The Serraino family was made up of grandsons; the grandsons from the sons were always seated in the first row while my brothers, sons of a daughter, were on the other side. [My brothers] were gods, I was a whore and they were kings. To please my brother, I had to sell everything, my dowry, my gold. Do everything for them.

If her son said, “I need a million lire,” his mother went looking for the million and looked hard enough she found it. I would tell her, “Mamma, I need a pair of shoes,” in spite of everything, she would tell me, “You can do without.” This is a mentality that gets passed down from generation to generation.

My mother was very jealous of my brother. . . . She would have been willing to do anything for her sons.

My mother told me I was not her daughter; my mother told me she found me under a plant.

You can have all the furs you want; I had ten, just so you know, not to brag; I had jewelry; I had cars; but I had no use for them because what I needed was a hug from my mother.

These were women who (perhaps) may actually have been in charge, but who were raped, violated, and brutalized. From Rita's words, a portrait emerges of relationships between people who, quite evidently, are held together by an intimate bond to a patriarchal model to which they substantially adhere, though they may detest many of the real male figures, whom they frequently considered weak and unreliable:

I grew up with my grandmother; protected despite the fact my grandfather dared put his hands on me, but, when I told her my grandmother reacted in the craziest way. I mean, she never let go of me; she took me away with her; I mean, how can I explain it to you; even in bed, she didn't sleep with her husband but slept with me; only instead of sleeping she stayed awake, to look after me, something my mother never did.

I told my mother [about having been raped by her father], as rightly I should have; then I told my brother. . . . Asshole, excuse my language, but I say things the way they come to me; he said us women were all whores from birth. And I told him I was only seven years old, I could not understand what that could mean in plain language; in the end, I was the one who felt guilty. . . . I wasn't able to defend my daughter either, but I wasn't there, because if I had been there, believe me nobody would have touched my daughter.

I saw my father beat my mother. . . . He always gave my mother bad beatings, even when she was nine months pregnant he hit her with a broom and broke two ribs.

I was a victim of violence from the age of seven until I was nineteen. . . . I was brutally raped every other day or so. . . . The places my father took me were always hidden. Now if you take me out into the woods, I'll die, I'll die right there; if you take me out to a deserted road, I'll die, especially at night; I am terrified. . . . But despite all this I did not become a state witness out of revenge.

The case of the Serraino-Di Giovine family may seem extreme. It represents a single case. Nevertheless, I think it gives several valuable indications for understanding the situation of women in a mafia context, especially regarding the complex dynamics between men and women, the range of action of both, and the role of violence in their relations. Rita Di Giovine's statements give us several portraits of women and help to outline their place in interpersonal relationships in the 'Ndrangheta environment that clearly illustrates several characteristics of what I mean by female subjectivity in violently patriarchal contexts. A female pseudo-subject is a subject that actively adheres to the male symbolic and material order and shows substantial irresponsibility not only toward other women, but first and foremost toward herself. The ambivalence toward male domination produces types of violent conduct that, against the background of substantial impotence (shown in the impossibility of being master of their own bodies and sexuality), are hurled mostly against the weakest, that is, against other women. The "astuteness of female impotence" is structured in the shadow of this relational and emotional

tangle along with the illusion of an emancipation within the interstitial gaps of the patriarchal order: in other words, under the guiding light of the men themselves (as clearly shown, for example, in the instrumental use of women in the framework of new mafia communication strategies).

Contrary to all this, Rita distanced herself from this condition she knows well; she distanced herself in her actions through her becoming a state witness; while with her words she also shows a powerful interior detachment earned through the pain and suffering:

Because a vendetta is no use; by now, I'm dead inside; I don't give a shit about sending them to jail; I did it because I felt like doing it myself; but they can't come and tell me the guilt is mine, that I am guilty for them. . . . I have nothing against women but, at least admit it, don't play the victim all the time. My daughter is right in saying you can't live off "victimism." Everybody has to take responsibility for themselves. It is pointless for you to do something first and then come tell me you're a victim. My mother had that nasty habit; she felt like a victim. Anyway, she does it to make you feel guilty.

Notes

1. Teresa Principato and Alessandra Dino, *Mafia donna, le vestali del sacro e dell'onore* (Palermo: Flaccovio, 1997).
2. Tamar Pitch, "Le differenze di genere," in *La criminalità in Italia*, eds. Marzio Barbagli and Umberto Gatto (Bologna: il Mulino, 2002), 178–179.
3. *Ibid.*, 174.
4. Pierre Bourdieu, *Il dominio maschile* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1998), 49–50.
5. Pitch, *op. cit.*, 180.
6. Marina Graziosi, "Infirmitas Sexus. La donna nell'immaginario penalistico," *Democrazia e Diritto* 2 (April–June 1993): 137.
7. See the cases cited in Girolamo Lo Verso and Gianluca Lo Coco, eds. *La psiche mafiosa. storie di casi clinici e collaboratori di giustizia* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2003).
8. Enzo Ciconte, *'Ndrangheta dall'Unità a oggi* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1992), 86. Also see Enzo Ciconte, "Mi riconobbe per ben due volte". *Storia dello stupro e di donne ribelli in Calabria (1814–1975)* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2001).
9. Gudrun Schwarz, *Una donna al suo fianco. Le signore delle SS* (Milan: il Saggiatore, 2000); Claudia Koonz, *Donne del Terzo Reich* (Florence: Giunti, 1996).
10. Jean Bethke Elstain, *Donne e guerra* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1991), 233–234.
11. Joanna Bourke, *Le seduzioni della guerra. Miti e storie di soldati in battaglia* (Rome: Carocci), 271.
12. *Ibid.*, 299.
13. EURISPES—Osservatorio permanente sui fenomeni criminali, *'Ndrangheta: dalla tradizione mafiosa alla nuova evoluzione criminale* (Rome, 1995), 60.
14. Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, 95.
15. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of Her Own*, cited in Joanna Bourke, *op. cit.*, 276.
16. Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul fenomeno della mafia e delle altre associazioni criminali similari [Italian parliamentary investigation commission on mafia phenomena and other similar criminal associations], *Relazione sullo stato della lotta alla criminalità organizzata in Calabria [Report on the state of the fight against organized crime in Calabria]*, XIII legislatura (Rome, 2000), 14.

17. "Many remember that girl with the head of brown hair, that eye-catching miniskirt and high heels. That young avenger with years of sadness, after the death of her father, condemned to a second life of loneliness after her man, Pasquale Galasso, decided to turn state's witness, involved in an impossible clandestine love affair, known to everyone, right up to the edge of madness." *il Quotidiano*, 7 April 2000.
18. Ciconte, *'Ndrangheta dall'Unità a oggi*, op. cit., 361.
19. Commissione parlamentare, op. cit., 101–102.
20. This genealogical reconstruction is based on research by Ombretta Ingrassi.
21. Interview with Salvatore Boemi, Reggio Calabria, 4 April 2002.
22. Commissione parlamentare, op. cit., 102.
23. Interview with Eugenio Facciolla, Catanzaro, 19 November 2001.
24. Interview with Boemi, op. cit.
25. Ibid.
26. Interview with Facciolla, op. cit.
27. *il Quotidiano*, 13 August 1995.
28. Interview with Facciolla, op. cit.
29. Ibid.
30. Antonio Zagari, *Ammazzare stanca. Autobiografia di uno 'ndranghetista pentito* (Cosenza: Edizioni Periferia, 1992), 12.
31. Pantaleone Sergi, *La "Santa" violenta* (Cosenza: Edizioni Periferia, 1991), 121–122.
32. Interview with Boemi, op. cit.
33. Ombretta Ingrassi, "La mafia e le donne: nuove ipotesi di ricerca," master's thesis, Università degli Studi di Milano, 1997–1998.
34. Interview with Boemi, op. cit.
35. Francesco Forgione and Paolo Mondani, *Oltre la cupola. Massoneria, mafia, politica* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1994), 102–103.
36. *il Quotidiano*, 27 September 1995 and 13 October 1995.
37. Principato and Dino, op. cit.
38. Interview with Facciolla, op. cit.
39. Interview with Boemi, op. cit.
40. Interview with Facciolla, op. cit.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. See "E' femmina però è bella". *Tre generazioni di donne al Sud* (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1991). Also see Renate Siebert, *Secrets of Life and Death. Women and the Mafia* (London: Verso, 1996). In a 1998 interview with Ombretta Ingrassi, Rita Di Giovine recounted similar behavior regarding her mother, Maria Serraino, drug dealer and actual clan boss: "My mother made my brother feel like the boss; she was the one who managed things, but from the outside he was the boss, but in reality my mother had all the power, because if she decided some job shouldn't get done, it didn't get done."
44. For the story of Giuseppa Condello, wife of Antonino Inerti, boss of Villa San Giovanni, see Clare Longrigg, *L'altra metà della mafia* (Milan: Ponte alle Grazie, 1997), 85–91.
45. Interview with Boemi, op. cit.
46. Longrigg, op. cit., 256–257.
47. See *Gazzetta del Sud*, 17 February 1994.
48. Interview with Boemi, op. cit.
49. Interview with Facciolla, op. cit.

50. Ombretta Ingrascì, op. cit.; for the story of Rita Di Giovine see also Longrigg, op. cit., 171–179. For a history of rape in Calabria see Enzo Ciconte, “*Mi riconobbe per ben due volte,*” op. cit.
51. Longrigg, op. cit., 179.
52. Interview with Facciolla, op. cit.
53. See *Gazzetta del Sud*, 16 May 1986 and 27 May 1997.
54. Interview with Facciolla, op. cit.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Bourdieu, op. cit., 7–8.
59. I will leave out any further information on this case in this chapter. I am only interested here in the collaborator’s testimony regarding her relationship with her mother, violence, and aspects of activity commonly considered proof of an “emancipation.” As for the rest, I refer to the research report by Ombretta Ingrascì and her unpublished master’s thesis, op. cit.

3

Women in the ‘Ndrangheta: The Serraino–Di Giovine Case

Ombretta Ingrassi

The case study analyzed here helps us to verify the hypothesis that, on one hand, although mafia women may participate in the forefront of several criminal activities, at times even filling leadership positions during periods of a power vacuum, on the other hand, they experience daily humiliation and violence within a system, male chauvinist by definition, like the so-called *onorata società* (the “honored society”).

Focusing on the roles and activities of women in the Serraino–Di Giovine family, an ‘Ndrangheta clan operating in Milan since the 1960s, this chapter will analyze the court documents of the trial involving clan members and the testimony kindly granted me by Rita Di Giovine, a state witness. Such sources will allow us to give mafia women a concrete image that is contrary to the one widespread in the media.

For the sake of brevity, yet at the risk of oversimplification, this chapter will not offer the reader any theoretical considerations. However, before dealing with the case, mention must be made of the fact that women in the ‘Ndrangheta have always had an important function and been actively involved in their menfolk’s affairs. According to Enzo Ciconte, author of an important history of the ‘Ndrangheta, documents from mafia trials at the beginning of the twentieth century show evidence of actual female membership through initiation rites. In 2000, the Milan Court of Assize sentenced for mafia association a woman who was called *sorella d’omertà* (“sister in *omertà*,” the code of silence) by the members of an ‘Ndrangheta clan, thereby showing that a term exists that defines the participation of certain women in the *onorata società*.

The high level of female inclusion in the ‘Ndrangheta is one of the characteristics that distinguish the Calabrian mafia from the Sicilian one. This difference stems from the diverse structures of the two criminal organizations. The ‘Ndrangheta has a horizontal structure, whose core is the blood family, whereas Cosa Nostra has a vertical structure based on the family of election. Given the fact that in the ‘Ndrangheta the mafia family coincides with the natural family, women are considered immediately functional not only within the domestic-family sphere, but also in the working-criminal one.

The Serraino–Di Giovine clan controlled the territory around Piazza Prealpi, a square located in the north of Milan, and was in the business of trafficking drugs

(including hashish, cocaine, heroin, and ecstasy) and arms. The latter were sent to Calabria, where their relatives were involved in a feud that lasted from 1986 to 1991, a war that pitted the Serraino, Imerti, and Condello families against the De Stefano clan.

In 1993, three police operations, called *Belgio* from the name of the clan's street and coordinated by Maurizio Romanelli, public prosecutor of the Milan *Direzione distrettuale antimafia* (a special sector of the Criminal Court dealing exclusively with mafia-related crimes), led to the arrest of almost all members of the clan. The investigations relied on wiretapped conversations, arrests, seizures of drugs, money, and documents, testimonies from *pentiti* (people who became state witnesses), international requests, and autonomous investigations by criminal offices from other regions. Among the numerous women involved in this court case, this study will consider those representing various typologies and different levels of involvement inside the mafia consortium.

Let us start with the boss of the criminal organization, Maria Serraino, who belonged to a longstanding mafia family from the Reggio Calabria area. In the 1960s, she immigrated with her husband, sons, and daughters to Milan, where she began her illegal career of smuggling cigarettes and receiving stolen goods. During the 1970s, her trade shifted from cigarettes to drugs and weapons, and involved the whole family. Her older sons, Antonio and Emilio, who dealt in stolen cars, helped to develop the drug trade from their contacts with foreign criminals, thereby transforming their small business into a huge international trade.

From the testimonies of various *pentiti*, including her daughter Rita, it emerges that Maria, along with her son Emilio, was the leader of the clan that exercised military control over the area around Piazza Prealpi. Members of the mafia association gave her various names, such as *Nonna eroina* ("Grandma Heroin"), *Mamma eroina* ("Mummy Heroin"), or simply *La Signora* ("The Lady"). This woman was the person who ensured the overall operation of the association by distributing merchandise to her other sons (i.e., other partners) and collecting money from middlemen.

One of the most interesting testimonies regarding the figure of *La Signora* came from Luigi Zolla, the husband of one of Maria's daughters, Natalina, who said that his mother-in-law had given him the job of managing Piazza Prealpi and that every evening he had to report back to her on the progress of activities in the Piazza. This woman ruled an actual fiefdom, one fully recognized as such by other criminal organizations that ran drug trafficking in neighbouring areas. Even drug suppliers dealt only and exclusively with her, unwilling to risk taking other customers out of fear of reprisals. In fact, Maria was also convicted of having ordered the murder of a drug dealer who worked for the family and was guilty of attempting to go into business on his own.

The other central operation was located in Spain and managed by Emilio Di Giovine, who organized drug trafficking from Morocco to England and from Colombia to Milan. The significance of her role as *capa* (lady boss) emerges from intercepted telephone conversations, especially those between her and her son Emilio when they discussed the progress of the drug trafficking, how sales

were going, money to be sent abroad, and the behaviour of other people in the family who, it was said, had to pay for what they got before they could have access to other supplies. One illuminating telephone call, from among the many intercepted calls that revealed Maria's leading role, involved her indicating her power in relation to her son Emilio:

I don't know what my son is fucking doing... because he told me that you have... you have to organize everything. Now, you are doing it... but don't fuck with me, if I cancel out Emilio, for me he is done for, because I am already pissed off... with my own fucking problems... you are taking care of your fucking business... I am the one, me, who has to come when you unload... I am the one who has to come and watch over my own fucking business.

This conversation shows Maria's position superior to that of her son Emilio; she allows herself to openly criticize his behaviour, recalling that without her he is "through."

In keeping with her role as boss of an association, Serraino's other important duties involved contacts with corrupt law enforcement officers and supplying the association with weapons. Maria was sentenced to *ergastolo* (life imprisonment) for mafia association and murder.

Another interesting figure for the purposes of this study is Livia De Martino, wife of Antonio Di Giovine as well as Maria Serraino's daughter-in-law. She also received a heavy jail term of twenty-four years. Two aspects make De Martino's story quite interesting. First, her defense is typical of mafia women; she declared herself unconnected to her husband's working life since she was just a simple housewife. Thereby she exploited the stereotype that has long hidden the active involvement of certain women inside organized crime. This defense technique becomes clear from the following quote, taken from the argument for sentencing the woman:

In virtue of her role as wife of Antonio Di Giovine, the accused has in substance stated her defense, maintaining that her relationship was one between family members and had nothing to do with drug trafficking; that hers had been a life spent caring for her children and working intensely at legal activities; thanks to these, she was able to purchase apartments and commercial businesses"

Second, her story is significant because, aside from taking part in the activities of the family (receiving shipments, split with her husband, of both cocaine and hashish from the family), Livia had her own business, managing a drug traffic independent from the clan. Furthermore, she managed a bar used as a meeting place for clan members where they trafficked and made important decisions. For example, the escape of Emilio Di Giovine from Fatebenefratelli Hospital was planned in this establishment.

Livia also maintained relationships with public officials in service to the organization and dealt above all with the financial activities of the association. She was the beneficiary of cheques from the family's Italian-American narcotrafficking, held a Swiss bank account, and owned real estate valued at hundreds of millions of lire, which included shopping centers, apartments, and other areas. Such evidence

clearly contrasts with the image of herself Livia De Martino attempted to present during the trial.

Another protagonist in the clan's criminal activities was the daughter of Emilio Di Giovine (and so granddaughter of Maria Serraino), Marisa Di Giovine, who had spent her childhood and adolescence in England with her English mother in an environment far outside the mafia culture. Despite this, when she reached legal age, she decided to move to Italy and participate in her father's illegal activities. Marisa held the position of "financial mediator" on behalf of her father, managing the proceeds from trafficking and participating in the most important decisions regarding investment of the money, especially in Swiss markets. Her role took on particular importance when her father was in prison, during which time she not only continued her activities connected to financial investments, but was also busy bringing messages from her father to members of the organization and defending her father's authority. Marisa denied the evidence in relation not only to herself but also to her father Emilio, in her opinion an unjustly persecuted, honest man. Because of her young age and assumed psychological subjection to her father, she received a lighter sentence (six years) than other clan members since she was only charged with mafia-type association and the individual episodes were ignored.

Finally, there are those women who can be defined as the final links in the chain of the criminal organization. They are women from the neighbourhood who carry out a marginal but extremely important role in terms of logistical organization. Indeed, they make their homes available for hiding drugs, they loan their telephones so as to help avoid interceptions, and they allow their homes to be used for meetings. According to Public Prosecutor Romanelli, these women were completely devoted to their neighbour Maria Serraino, and considered her a sort of benefactor. Thus the 'Ndrangheta is capable of penetrating the environment in a territory such as Milan even in terms of social consensus, which is a crucial aspect in the organization's ability to carry out mafia activities.

Last but not least, we look at the figure of Rita Di Giovine, oldest daughter of Maria Serraino, who decided become a state witness at the age of thirty-six after having been caught red-handed in Verona with a thousand doses of ecstasy that had been stolen from her home to pay a debt to her brother Antonio.

The reconstruction of her story is based above all on the testimony she kindly offered me in April 1998. Rita's words allowed me to explore not only the workings of the organization from the inside, but also the mentality of a mafia family and the extent to which these two aspects are closely linked. The example of Rita is a good illustration because on one hand, she was directly involved in the mafia consortium's illegal trafficking, with a quasi-leadership role in periods of a power vacuum, and on the other, she decided to turn over a new leaf by collaborating with the investigating bodies out of a sincere desire for change.

The account of her life story offers some insight into three themes that are difficult to analyze from the outside: the role of women in the 'Ndrangheta; the motivations that lead a woman into collaborating with the state; and finally the everyday life of someone who turns state's evidence. This chapter will not deal

with the aspects regarding female *pentimento* (“repentance,” or the process of turning state’s witness), on which a good part of our encounter was based, but rather will briefly illustrate what she told me in reference to the role of women inside the ‘Ndrangheta both in the north and the south of Italy.

Rita confirmed the active role of women within the mafia brotherhood both in Lombardy and Calabria, emphasizing the main characteristic of female power, that it is power not in appearance but in substance. Unlike men, women are less interested in external recognition of their power and more interested in exercising it. On this topic, it is interesting to observe how Rita described the power relationship between her mother, Maria, and brother, Emilio: “My mother made my brother feel like the boss; she was the one who ran things, though externally he was the boss, in reality my mother had all the power, because if she decided some job shouldn’t be done, then the job wasn’t done.”

According to Rita, women exercised hidden but substantial power in Calabria as well. In fact, she defined her aunt as a *generale in gonnella* (“general in a skirt”) and said of her, “She is capable of killing a person with her bare hands.” Rita attributes her mother with the qualities of a boss and makes Maria’s charismatic leadership abilities a question of blood lines, of belonging to a traditional mafia family. In fact, Rita frequently repeated, “She’s got it right there in her blood, in her veins.” According to Rita’s story, women carried out many activities for the two following reasons. During mafia wars, women are never touched, so in those emergency periods, women handle many activities because the men must stay hidden. She added an unusual detail regarding this; when men wanted to leave their hiding places, they frequently wore wigs so as to be confused for women and not be attacked by their enemies. Above all, women worked at procuring the weapons that arrived from the North and bringing them to their men in hiding. In Rita’s words, “My aunt and my cousins did everything. I did too when I was down in Calabria.”

The second reason Rita gave to explain the fact women frequently carried out many of the clan’s activities was that women were subject to fewer controls by the police. Thus, she confirmed a sort of “innate impunity” for women due to the fact that until a short while ago it was difficult for society, and therefore the investigative bodies, to consider women as criminals.

Another issue I discussed with Rita concerned the so-called traditional role of the mafia woman, who as a mother taught her children mafia (dis)values. To express this concept of education, Rita used the verb “*inculcare*” (“inculcate” or “instill”), which renders properly the act of rooting a set of values that later become normality and as such help the children to carry out criminal activities.

With regard to the education in “*omertà*” (the code of silence) in her family, she explains,

We were brought up with this stupid mentality; you never say “that guy stole something,” never go and say that; you have to keep quiet, big trouble if you say it, but I was never able to do that; it’s true that sometimes I saw my brother steal a thousand lire and told my mother right away, I got beaten a lot for that... “Why did you tell me? You have to shut up.”

In reference to teaching the *vendetta*, accepted and at times even encouraged by women, Rita recounted an episode featuring her Calabrian cousins:

When it happened this boy died who had grown up with me and my cousins, I cried for a week. But my cousins didn't. On the contrary, they just said, "Did they kill him? Alright, tomorrow those guys die." Three days later those other guys weren't around any more.

By emphasizing the active involvement of women in illegal trafficking, I do not mean that women have achieved female liberation within the 'Ndrangheta. Although women actually work a great deal, they are not free to choose, since the men of the family quash their individuality and independence. Therefore it is important to point out that the women who make up the portrait outlined for me by Rita are not only women in charge, women who instigate vendettas, and women who organize the activities of the mafia consortium, they are also women who undergo male psychological and physical violence on a daily basis. For instance, though these women handle a great deal of money, they have no economic independence. Rita had no bank account, while her brother Emilio had millions of lire available to spend on luxuries and the good life. More than this, what is most striking is the physical violence. As Rita told me, Maria Serraino suffered from her husband's violence, considered unimportant within this milieu: "I saw my father beat my mother; I can guarantee that . . . he always beat up my mother, even when she was nine months pregnant, he hit her with a broom and broke two ribs."

Rita was a victim of violence by her father and brothers. Her father raped her from the age of nine until she was nineteen, when she became pregnant. Rita allowed even this private aspect of her story to be known so as to increase the awareness of what women are frequently forced to undergo within groups such as mafia consortia ruled by male prejudice, with woman who are considered the property of the men.

To conclude, although the apparent and presumed equality achieved by women within the mafia syndicate may manifest itself in the dimension of work, it does not do so in the individual sphere. Therefore the process that has seen an ever-growing number of women involved in mafia activities is the result of a pseudo-emancipation rather than true liberation. The empirical cases described here help to show the two faces of the women's liberation process within the mafia system: one false, the other real. But we should not be taken in by that false, deceptive face; instead we must take off the mask to unveil its real, authentic face. The latter is represented by all those who make a life-changing choice by collaborating with the justice system. Rita's life story is exemplary in this sense, because she decided to collaborate with the courts mainly for her children, to break the chain that transmits mafia (dis)values, the expression of a male-dominated culture.

4

Women in the Sacra Corona Unita

Monica Massari and Cataldo Motta

Introduction

This chapter contains the results of the analysis of the most important judicial sources regarding the Sacra Corona Unita from the years 1991 to 2001. From a methodological point of view, judicial material dealing with the goals of this research was selected dealing with legal proceedings involving women implicated and sentenced for crimes of mafia-type association and, in some cases, other crimes directly connected to the organization's main sectors of interest, such as drug dealing and trafficking, extortion, cigarette smuggling, gambling, and so on. A reading of the official documents to identify the most important women who have operated inside the syndicate based on their different methods, roles, and functions uncovered several cases and helped to identify similarities and recurrences along with differences and peculiarities that, in various ways, have characterized the role of women in this criminal organization; this criminal group, although similar in many aspects to other traditional mafia associations (e.g., the 'Ndrangheta and Cosa Nostra), appears to be rather recent and, from the cultural point of view, deeply anchored in modernity.

After a brief introduction to the Sacra Corona Unita, which, despite having been defined for some time now as the "Fourth Mafia," seems generally unknown to the general public, nine cases will be analyzed concerning women who have performed specific roles and functions inside this Puglia-based group.

The Sacra Corona Unita: A Historic Profile*

The Sacra Corona Unita, a syndicate born in Puglia at the beginning of the 1980s, is an example of how the strategic and organizational aspects typical of traditional mafia associations are still valid reference points for emerging criminal societies deeply embedded in modernity.

Since the late 1950s, Puglia has been a more or less stable place of residence for several individuals foreign to the local context and closely linked, through various ties, to top-level mafia organizations. At the end of the 1950s, with the

closing of the free port of Tangier—one of the main illegal trafficking centers on the Mediterranean since the end of World War II—and simplified registrations and exemptions, the large multi-national tobacco companies transferred their storage depots to ports in Holland and Yugoslavia. Most cigarette smugglers therefore abandoned the “Tyrrhenian route” in favor of the so-called “Adriatic route,” with Puglia as the main unloading point for cases of cigarettes intended for the Italian market. The absence of indigenous associations made Puglia a natural place for border crossings by clans from the Camorra and several Sicilian *mafiosi* who had the opportunity to exploit a particularly lucrative market there, substantially free from any threatening local competition (Massari, 1998; Motta, 2001).

Over the next few years, several legal measures contributed notably to altering the composition of the criminal world in Puglia. The institution of *soggiorno obbligato* (court-ordered mandatory relocation for convicted mafiosi) in just the decade from 1961 to 1972 brought 212 individuals to Puglia from so-called *area a rischio* (“areas at risk,” or areas of traditional mafia activity) (Parliamentary Antimafia Commission, 1976). Furthermore, during the 1970s, prisons in the area became crowded with prisoners from Campania who belonged to the ranks of the Nuova Camorra Organizzata, the criminal organization created by Raffaele Cutolo (Ciconte, 1992; Sales, 1993). Many of these *Cutoliani* (followers of Cutolo) were transferred to Puglia precisely to avoid any possible expansion into the prisons of the ongoing clashes between the opposing factions of the Nuova Famiglia—led by Boss Michele Zaza, the Nuvoletta brothers, and Antonio Bardellino—and the Nuova Camorra Organizzata.

In addition, Puglia’s geographical features were of great interest for possible exploitation of its strategic potential: a particularly extensive coastal area, a territory conveniently linked to the main motor ways to Central-Northern Italy, and several mid-sized airports.

Obviously, the importance, extent, and permanence of these organizations revealed that some sort of communication and agreement existed with the local underworld that, though not organized in any stable, permanent form, still showed a knowledge of the places, people, and situations, in a word the “know-how,” necessary to establish successfully their business in an unknown territory.

The relationship between these various subjects—the “outsiders” and “natives”—continued for years in a climate of substantial harmony with no undue interference. In the end, relations with the local criminal element from Puglia were motivated by utilitarian objectives; the natives, in fact, were involved only during particularly difficult operations, and then contacts were established directly with single individuals or small groups active for some time in smuggling, an activity that, because of its nature, required a minimum of organization and, for strategic reasons, was concentrated mainly in the Brindisi area (Massari, 1998).

The first signs of change were seen when the presence of those from Campania became more substantial both inside and outside the prisons. The “Cutolian” project actually aimed at creating a vast, widespread organization across the whole area, capable of a broad recruitment process even outside his region. The *Camorristi* (members of the Camorra) immediately attempted to install themselves at the

highest levels of power inside the prison million harassing other prisoners (especially with requests for money) as well as offering membership in their organization, something that in Camorra jargon was called *legalizzazione* (“legalization”). Alongside the rather visible presence of the Camorra, the first, particularly discreet, contacts were seen with several ‘*ndrine* from the ‘Ndrangheta in the province of Reggio Calabria particularly around Rosarno and Sinopoli (Questura di Lecce, 1988). The ‘Ndrangheta had already played an important role in the criminal career of Cutolo, who, in his day, had been “baptized” by several Calabrian *capibastone* (local underbosses) (Cicone, 1992) and now turned growing attention to the ongoing dynamics in the nearby region. Favors had already been exchanged—in particular in the case of several kidnappings—between emerging personalities in the criminal milieu in Puglia and the main exponents of the ‘Ndrangheta from Reggio Calabria; business relationships had also been sealed by the ritual membership of several *Pugliesi* through so-called *battesimi di sangue* (“blood baptisms”) (Questura di Lecce, 1988). This web of bonds and links of various types—trust, business, ritual—would play a determining role when the Sacra Corona Unita emerged as an autonomous entity endowed with its own identity and respected in the criminal milieu.

In the meantime, the weight of the Camorra’s presence in the region became ever more pressing. Cutolo was determined to adopt a strategy of assimilation of the *Pugliesi*. Not only did he give free reign to his advance guard in prison to sound out the availability of the locals for membership in his clan, but he decided to intervene directly, promoting a series of meetings with the specific purpose of “legalizing” new bosses for Puglia: so-called *capi-zona a cielo scoperto* (loosely, “local outside bosses”). One interesting element that should be mentioned here is the presence, in at least one of these meetings, of a representative from the ‘Ndrangheta and one from Cosa Nostra, confirming the fact that the assimilation of criminal groups in Puglia—at least in this first phase—was progressing with the consent of older mafia associations. In fact, these meetings led to the creation, in 1981, of the Nuova Grande Camorra Pugliese, a formal organization particularly active in the area around Foggia, modeled after its sister organization in Campania, but with its own command hierarchy. This new association was meant to unite all the groups already active in the region and constitute an autonomous, parallel association with respect to the group in Campania, though still subject to it economically; the agreement called for the group from Puglia to give the Cutoliani around 40 or 50 percent of the proceeds from their illegal activities (Ministero dell’Interno, 1993). One can easily see how this regime of *subjection* might have created an increasingly tense climate in a very short time. Cutolo’s relentless defeats in Campania during the war between opposing Camorra families between 1982 and 1983 contributed to powerfully weakening the hegemony and prestige of the Nuova Camorra Organizzata that would, in no time, collapse completely. Precisely at this moment, the most authoritative representatives of crime in Puglia decided to act and openly show their dissatisfaction. With the help of the ‘Ndrangheta *capibastone*, they plotted a new course that would lead to the creation of a new entity, organized regionally and completely autonomous from the Camorra.

This group was created with the name *Sacra Corona Unita*, on the initiative of Giuseppe Rogoli, in Bari prison, 1 May 1983 (as written in the diary confiscated from the group's founder in prison), with the purpose of blocking attempted prison recruitment by members of the *Nuova Camorra Organizzata* and "defending" the territory of Puglia from its infiltration; it received its "legitimacy" from Rogoli's induction by the Calabresi Carmine Alvaro and Umberto Bellocco, members of the 'Ndrangheta, imprisoned with him in Porto Azzurro (Motta, 2001). In fact, as stated in the *Sacra Corona Unita*'s founding charter, discovered by investigators during a prison search, "the SCU was founded . . . with the help of honorable sponsors" (Raggruppamento Operativo Speciale dei Carabinieri, 1993); in other words, with the specific help of several representatives of organized crime in Calabria who, detained in prisons in Puglia, could watch over this new organization's formation from the beginning, recognize its legitimate status, and thus allow it to operate autonomously on the international criminal scene. The *Sacra Corona Unita*'s organizational structure, internal regulatory apparatus, and symbolic and ritual references were developed on precise indications from the 'Ndrangheta.

The deliberate, timely creation of this association for the first time offered the local underworld the chance to compete collectively in running illegal businesses and enjoy the enormous advantages derived from this. For those who decided to join and become part of the syndicate, membership was a major opportunity for social ascent and mobility within the criminal world. The creation of an alternative identity, in many ways unique and immediately recognizable, was done by deliberately appropriating a symbolic and ritual heritage that historically belonged to traditional mafia organizations in southern Italy that many felt had completely disappeared by then. Alongside the most advanced modernization processes, elements paradoxically emerged (or rather were appropriated and reworked) in Puglia from an organizational model related to secret criminal-type societies rooted in the second half of the nineteenth century. The strategic potential of this model was clearly visible ten years later when the Commissione Parlamentare Antimafia (Parliamentary Anti-mafia Commission) included criminal activity in Puglia among *traditional* forms of organized crime (Commissione Parlamentare Antimafia, 1994).

Women's Main Functions: Messengers and Money Collectors

We pause here to discuss a central element that has marked the evolution and alternating rise and fall of the Puglia syndicate from its beginnings: in prison. The *Sacra Corona Unita* was born as a criminal organization *per se*, given a unifying name, an internal regulatory code, and an overall hierarchical and organizational arrangement, all inside prison. Founding leader Giuseppe Rogoli was not only a prisoner at the time the organization was created, but also remained in prison for the entire period afterward, i.e. from the 1980s until the present. Over the course of the last fifteen years, the same fate befell the better part of the bosses and major elements of the group active in the various territories controlled by the

organization: Salento and the province of Brindisi, with some fringe groups active on the border with province of Taranto. So, prison not only made up the founding element of this new criminal group, but also the context within which, over time, the most important decisions, activities, and strategies were defined for its existence. Inevitably, prison was the main reference point for all those who continued to serve in the organization outside prison, managing the most important businesses and plotting the overall criminal strategy that guaranteed the Sacra Corona Unita's place alongside Cosa Nostra, the Camorra, and the 'Ndrangheta in the list of "traditional" criminal organizations from southern Italy.

Therefore, prison would also seem to be at the source of women's involvement in the affairs, business, and strategy of the Puglian criminal organization. In fact, their male relatives' (husbands, sons, and brothers) incarceration was the event that sparked the passage of women from a phase of acquiescence, passivity, and implicit support of their menfolk's activities to one characterized by their potential emergence from the limbo of so-called aiding and abetting to the acquisition of an active role and, with this, a certain visibility. According to the sources, most women drawn towards and inside the Sacra Corona Unita seem to act as messengers, connecting elements between an interior composed of jail, particularly the male world contained there, and an exterior represented by the criminal family, the clan, and the association in general.

The growing visibility of women inside the criminal group took shape as the direct effect of a contingent situation that, like imprisonment, was initially exceptional but, over the course of time, tended to become normalized and routine. Given their weekly meetings with relatives in prison, members regularly turned to women to deliver notes for these relatives and were later promptly informed of the results of conversations or decisions. Similar dynamics were seen during trials, in which women were almost always present in the audience, profiting from the chance to communicate with their men. In some cases, these women's homes became meeting places where matters of special interest were decided and referred later to the jailed family member.

In most cases, the role of messenger requires no special qualities other than discretion, dissemblance, and the ability to elude possible checks by security personnel. It is interesting to note that the role played by these women, although they were not proper members of the organization, they maintained a link between the two separate worlds of prison and the association that of continued communication precisely because of their activities.

However, the other function frequently performed by women in Puglia is quite different. Aside from having greater visibility, this role required special personal characteristics and represented a qualitative leap compared to the traditional role as a connection between prison and the outside. In fact, most of the women analyzed played the part of money collectors for the various activities of the organization or clan run by their male relatives (particularly drug dealing, cigarette smuggling, and extortion rackets). There is no doubt that this type of assignment brought a real change in prospects. In the first case (messenger), the function is more or less traditional and, in some cases, merely passive—that is, the woman's job stops

at memorizing and referring decisions or, simply, transporting so-called *sfoglie* (“paper scraps” or written notes). The second case (money collector) involves a different mechanism; the woman is expressly assigned the job of collecting sums of money; her role becomes explicit, so to speak, leading to recognition and legitimization of her position in the eyes of other members (though forced in some cases). She becomes a reference point for a fairly large number of people who actually manage the affairs of the organization. However, analysis of the sources suggests that this position is also related to a central condition: the absence of the man who is either in prison, a fugitive in hiding, or somehow prevented from managing his interests directly. The man’s absence is directly related and logically consequent to the woman’s temporary position.

Some Case Analyses

Several of the sources analyzed show how these two functions (messenger and money collector) were carried out by most of the women linked to mid- and high-level members of the Sacra Corona Unita. The indictment for the sentence against Ada Bevilacqua, born in Cosenza in 1939, mother of Cosimo Cirfeta from the Lecce group of the Sacra Corona Unita, states,

Who, connected by maternal ties to Cosimo Cirfeta, considered one of the bosses of the above mentioned association [the Sacra Corona Unita], allowed her home to be used for meetings of members, including fugitives, to inform imprisoned affiliates, among them her son, of criminal resolutions made by free members, and deliver “orders” from members in prison to the outside, taking advantage of meetings with her son, some of these related to the commission of several homicides . . . furthermore, receiving money from the association’s criminal activities, among them drug trafficking and illegal gambling, distributed according to directions received from her son.

A similar role was performed by Maria Rosaria Mingiano, born in Lizzanello (Lecce) in 1969, wife of Maurizio Cagnazzo, a leading member of the *famiglia leccese* (Lecce family) of the Sacra Corona Unita and presently a state witness. The sentence against her by the judge for preliminary investigations of the Court of Lecce, 20 September 1996, states that she had facilitated the activities of the Sacra Corona Unita

by acting as an intermediary between the prison and the outside and vice versa, bringing messages related to the activities and dynamics of the association and giving and receiving communications related to these during the first and second level court hearings of the trial against Maurizio Cagnazzo [her husband] and other affiliates . . . furthermore receiving money from the organization’s illegal activities, destined for Cagnazzo and other members of the same.

Some cases reveal that several of these women managed to win a certain respect in the organizational milieu, though available materials also suggest the level of this “consideration” could be traced back to their main role as the wife, daughter, or sister of important personalities inside the organization. This aspect emerges

in the case of Manuela Solazzo, born in 1970, wife of Cosimo Palma, member of the Brindisi family of the Sacra Corona Unita. Her husband is presently a state witness. She acted as a link between her husband in prison and other members who managed the group's various illegal activities. She was involved in collecting proceeds particularly from drug trafficking and cigarette smuggling. Various members held her in high regard; so much so, that they generally informed her of any plans they were making or asked her advice on certain matters so as to avoid breaking the rules of the association. The respect she enjoyed could again be traced to the fact that she represented and guaranteed a constant link with her husband, Cosimo Palma, recognized head of the group:

Keeping her up to date on planned illegal activities and asking her advice constituted a method both of keeping Palma informed about any and all developments in the life of the association, as well as reinforcing recognition of his continued supremacy within the group.

Women between Tradition and Modernity

Information from the collected court materials points toward the identification of a third female role inside the Sacra Corona Unita. Though less frequent, this role suggests several particularly interesting themes for analysis. These women are directly involved in the affairs of the family—the “blood” family as well as the criminal family. Not limited to collecting profits and distributing them based on received instructions, they manage them directly, ordering members to one activity rather than another, one use of available manpower rather than another, and strategies intended not only to increase the group's wealth, but also to strengthen the power base and internal consensus of the association. In addition to more-traditional roles, these women's duties include greater responsibility, directly linked both to illegal activities as well as the group's internal power mechanisms.

From this point of view, in some cases we seem to be witnessing the potential evolution of these women's functions; having begun their “careers” as simple messengers between a family member in prison and associates outside, later they gradually assumed more and more important assignments, moving from collecting illegal profits to coordinating and supervising the strategies of small groups, until reaching the point at which they are directly consulted in the event of conflicts between rival factions. A reading of court documents clearly shows how one of the constant preoccupations of these women is guaranteeing that the prestige and authority of their male relatives are never weakened, particularly during periods of more intense conflict.

A paradigm of this is Domenica Biondi (a.k.a. “Mimina”), born in 1952, wife of the recognized boss of the Sacra Corona Unita, Giuseppe Rogoli. The first trial in which she was involved was at the Court of Brindisi and ended in the first instance with a sentence on December 1987, reconsidered by the Court of Appeals in Lecce, March 1990. The sentence from the Court of Brindisi stated that, though seeing

very important elements . . . regarding the mafia character . . . of said association, these elements did not however appear to have that level of absolute certainty and maximum reliability required to conclude that the association with Rogoli at its head was a criminal association with the precise characteristics of a mafia-type association.

Subsequently, the judges in Brindisi sentenced Rogoli and Biondi for the crime of association as stated in Art. 416 c.p., the law regarding criminal association. This decision was later overturned by the sentence from the Appeals Court in Lecce issued on 26 March 1990, which instead recognized the mafia character of the Sacra Corona Unita and sentenced Rogoli and Biondi for the crime of mafia-type association.

Over time, the role of this woman inside the organization became more and more clearly defined; the courts confirmed this as well. According to the sentence from the Court of Assizes in Lecce on 23 May 1991,

Rogoli is therefore the guiding element of the entire structure, giving orders to all associates, either through his wife—“Mimina” from Mesagne, frequently mentioned in phone calls—or correspondence, thus maintaining continued contact and exchange of information and news.

Her main position was as a basic connecting element between her husband in prison and associates outside. Meetings between the two were chances for the leader of the Sacra Corona Unita to receive continuous updates of news from the organization and on the progress of group activities. Precisely because of her position as a link between the prison and the outside world, “Mimina” also became a reference point for members who needed to “bring news to the ‘old man’ [as members called Rogoli] and hear his decisions regarding the solutions to be adopted.” Analysis of the information delivered to her husband reveals that she “was not simply the unconscious vehicle through which information traveled, but someone who had assumed her ‘institutional’ position as an element of communication among the organization’s members.” The results of interceptions show that her function did not end with simply carrying news, but also extended to relaying information exactly and correctly through her perfect knowledge of those elements that would guarantee the communications reached their recipients “with no distortion caused by ignorance of the associated facts.” In one conversation intercepted by investigators, for example, one of the bosses from the Lecce family of the Sacra Corona Unita instructs another associate on how to transmit certain information to “Mimina” to be delivered to Rogoli, emphasizing that this entailed more than relating just the facts, but also clarifying them, stressing their seriousness, entering into detail, and revealing the background of the events so as to guarantee the message would reach the boss clearly.

In addition to playing “messenger,” Domenica Biondi also had the job of collecting the tax imposed by the Sacra Corona Unita on every case of smuggled cigarettes unloaded on the coast of Puglia, the so-called “*aggio*” or “*pensiero*” (literally a “commission” or “nice thought”). This tax, 10,000 lire (around 5 euros) for each case, was collected from the various smugglers operating along the coast of Brindisi and then delivered to her by Rogoli’s men.

Worried over insurgent conflicts within the various gangs inside the Sacra Corona Unita that could have weakened her husband's leadership, she did her utmost—according to statements from a state witness—to guarantee that Rogoli's place as leader of the entire organization was clearly evident to any enemy groups, asking one member loyal to her husband to be present at a mass trial in Brindisi accompanied by a dozen or so *ragazzi* (“boys”) so these challengers would realize her husband was not alone. This confirms Biondi's lasting active and specific role as a privileged contact for her husband, Pino Rogoli, in relationships with other members, as an essential reference point for members regarding matters of great importance and a recipient of payments imposed on smuggling activities, as well as her ability to stand in for her husband in major decisions of the organization and assume, at times autonomously, initiatives regarding the very life of the association.

The situation of Antonia Caliendo, born in Latiano (Brindisi) in 1956, wife of Salvatore Buccarella, boss of the Brindisi branch of the Sacra Corona Unita, seems similar to that of Domenica Biondi. She held a particularly active position inside the criminal group led by her husband, not limited to representing a link between the imprisoned Salvatore and his partners, but also participating directly in several of the organization's activities. Her active role emerges, for example, in collecting payments from smugglers on cases of cigarettes unloaded along the coast of Puglia. She was directly involved in managing this money, asking members for explanations and continuous updates on who had or had not paid. Always present at trials involving her husband, Antonia regularly acted as an intermediary in communicating messages regarding events of particular interest to the organization and informed other members of arrangements made by her husband.

When conflicts emerged between Salvatore Buccarella's group and a rival gang in late 1998, she intervened directly in the matter. Intent on safeguarding the interests of her husband and his group and keeping his charismatic leadership intact, she reprimanded the opposing parties on their hostile attitude toward her husband and bitterly reproached them for their missed payments to the association. In this case again, her involvement in the activities of her husband's criminal family “gradually grew over time, as connections became more difficult between Buccarella and the other members and conflicts progressively increased with other groups who tended to no longer recognize Buccarella's supremacy inside the organization.” From this point of view, many analogous elements exist with the role played by Domenica Biondi, since both these women seem to have acquired greater decisional autonomy specifically during periods of crisis for the organization and the decline of their husbands' influence within the association's inner workings.

On this point, another outstanding character emerges from the analysis of court documents: Maria Rosaria Buccarella, born 1955 in Brindisi, sister of Salvatore Buccarella, leader of the Brindisi family of the Sacra Corona Unita. The sentence against Maria Rosaria Buccarella and others states that she was part of the Sacra Corona Unita,

maintaining systematic contacts with Salvatore Buccarella, a prisoner and top-level representative of the organization . . . participating in the planning of criminal strategies and decisions regarding the group's projects, receiving instructions and orders from Salvatore Buccarella intended for members of the group directed by him, providing for delivery of the same as well as keeping Salvatore Buccarella constantly informed of the organization's affairs, providing for the collection of considerable sums of money from organization members (money destined for Salvatore Buccarella and other top representatives of the Sacra Corona Unita) originating from the organization's various criminal activities such as, among other things, cigarette smuggling, drug trafficking, and extortion rackets.

According to the sentence, the arrest of Salvatore Buccarella, the elimination of numerous affiliates who occupied important roles inside the Brindisi family, and the escape abroad or incarceration of others had "created a vacuum in the delicate organizational and managerial profile of the syndicate, a vacuum subsequently filled due specifically to activities carried out by Maria Rosaria Buccarella and Cosimo Nigro [her son]." Despite the fact that testimony from *pentiti* never indicated the existence of any formal membership of Maria Rosaria in the clan, "the many precise acquisitions from investigators give evidence, however, of a coherent, stable, and effective participation" in the activities of the criminal organization. Statements from several state witnesses asserted that she in fact collected sums of money from illegal activities, took steps to manage it and divide it with the other associates, and relayed orders, information, and instructions on behalf of her brother in prison. They particularly underlined

her complete control in managing activities on behalf of her brother and above all her effective and complete leadership in the criminal context as deduced from her perfect knowledge of all supporters and affiliates, their conduct, the criminal reasoning frequently aimed at punishing anyone who might *sgarrare* ("get out of line"), including their possible elimination.

Here role was recognized as one of preeminence within the organization:

The content of many interceptions and especially her requests to others regarding physically eliminating the relatives of *pentiti*, in addition to the collection and management of profits from illegal trafficking, are all circumstances that would define her as a leading personality in the clan and simultaneously lead to a highly negative judgment of her as a person.

Women's entry into business positions connected to management of the group's illegal activities and their progressive involvement in decision-making also seem to correspond to the emergence of some primitive characteristics of archaic-type behaviour models. This is the case with their incitement to *vendetta*, support for bloody practices aimed at resolving even unimportant conflicts or quarrels, extreme familiarity in handling weapons and instruments of destruction, and encouragement of violent forms of reprisals and deceit.

As in the previous cases, different shades are present here again, and the identification of several principal characteristics must be considered more in *ideal-typical* than absolute terms; in concrete cases, this frequently leads to a mix between profoundly different operative modalities and types. For example, there is the case of Ornella Tomasi, born in Squinzano (Lecce) in 1961, wife of Gianni Tornese,

member of the Sacra Corona Unita—a cross-reference between the various dominant groups of the Sacra Corona Unita in Lecce—presently a state witness. The sentence handed down against her by the judge for the preliminary investigation at the Court of Lecce, 27 September 1996, states that she had facilitated the activities of the Sacra Corona Unita

by supplying logistical support to members who systematically frequented her home, sustaining and helping them (before and after the commission of serious crimes, especially murders), and fugitives of the association, collaborating in hiding weapons, drugs, evidence, and traces of crimes, even personally taking care of eliminating them.

Another interesting case is that of Paola Altamura, born in Taranto in 1938, mother of the Appeso brothers, major representatives of the Taranto family of the same name. In the sentence against Massimo Appeso and seventy others pronounced by the Court of Assizes in Taranto, 12 July 1996, she was sentenced to sixteen years, nine months in prison for having been a part of the mafia association called the “Appeso clan,” organized for the purpose of drug dealing, racketeering, and crimes related to hiding drugs and weapons. The judicial materials examined show—as emphasized by the judges—“the figure of a determined, bloodthirsty woman, actively involved first hand in the world of crime.” This mother of sixteen children, almost all of them involved in criminal activities, participated in extortion rackets, decided on arms purchases—distributing them, if necessary, to members who needed them—and was involved in packaging and dealing drugs sold by the clan. Furthermore, the sentence also shows how the woman frequently fomented members’ hatred of a rival clan—guilty of attempting to evict the Appeso gang from their neighborhood of La Salinella in Taranto, where they exercised their rule—and directed one of her sons—the recognized boss of the family—to choose those she felt were most reliable for drug dealing, insisting on “the removal of those who showed themselves not suitable for carrying out this job.” Her role as “mediator” between top clan bosses and the membership base seems to have been confirmed by frequent contacts with partners who turned to her “to report on criminal activities and communicate with clan bosses Gino and Nicola Appeso.”

An especially interesting case because of the presence of a perfect mix between profoundly modern, business-oriented characteristics and behavior of a markedly archaic origin is that of Anna Addolorata De Matteis Cataldo, nicknamed “Anna Morte” (“Anna Death”), born in Parabita (Lecce) in 1962, wife of Luigi Giannelli, major representative of the family of the same name from the Sacra Corona Unita operating in the southern part of Salento. In the sentence against Leo Manco and others pronounced on 19 June 1998 by the Court of Assizes in Lecce, she, along with her husband, was sentenced to life imprisonment for having ordered the killing of a man (affiliated with the Giannelli clan)

with premeditation and for despicable motives connected to conflicts for supremacy in the criminal underworld and control of the territory for the management of illegal activities, with the purpose of facilitating the association to which they belonged and in particular affirming their monopolistic control of the illegal drug market.

The victim was led to an isolated area and killed with several shots from a Kalashnikov.

Subsequently, she was also sentenced to life imprisonment for having instigated the murder of Paola Rizzello; during this ambush, her two-year-old daughter Angelica happened to be with her mother and was also killed. The victim had been accused of having certain information regarding the responsibility of Luigi Giannelli—"Anna Death's" husband—for a murder and was also punished for having had a sentimental relationship with him in the past. The body of the woman was burned and thrown into a cistern near a country house. The child's tiny body was buried and discovered eight years after the crime. A particularly interesting profile emerges from statements of state witnesses. In addition to representing a link between her husband in prison and members operating in various illegal markets, she seems to have held a managerial role inside the organization, though again tied to the power wielded by her husband, recognized boss of the clan. In fact, she was the one who informed her husband of the *sgarri* ("screw-ups") by certain members who attempted to manage certain criminal activities, such as drug dealing, for example, on their own in areas controlled by the clan. She was the one who put certain associates to the test who were considered unreliable by the rest of the group because of their frequent drug use. On this point, several interesting messages were intercepted by investigators during the course of a meeting between her and her husband, incarcerated in Cuneo. With the intent of discrediting the statements of a state witness who was supplying valuable information on the involvement of her husband's group in numerous illegal activities and with the aim of creating respect for her husband—in the eyes of the judges—as someone completely uninvolved with these facts, "Anna Death" informed her husband of the defensive strategy she would put into play:

Listen, then if they know something and they ask me . . . You consider my husband a boss, right? You consider me the wife of a boss, so would a boss' wife, in your opinion, be stupid enough to trust some fucked-up junkie; do you really think?

Recently, she was sentenced again by the Court of Assizes in Lecce to another long jail term (twenty-two years) for participation in a mafia-type criminal association, organized drug trafficking, and complicity, as an accessory before the fact, in acts of extortion, in particular for having had an explosive device attached to a shopkeeper's door to force him to pay huge amounts of money and allow merchandise to be taken without being paid for. Precise information emerged from this sentence that confirms this woman's leadership position in managing the activities of the mafia clan marked by her husband's surname. "Anna Death" was involved in all the group's illegal affairs, maintained contacts and relationships with suppliers of heroin and cocaine who had direct relations exclusively with her, gave instructions to associates on methods to be used to collect money paid by racketeering victims and the destination of these proceeds along with money from drug trafficking, and gave orders regarding the amounts of money to be given to associates in prison and their family members as economic support to increase the internal "solidarity" of the association.

Two other women were convicted in this same sentence for crimes of participation in a mafia-type criminal association for the purpose of drug trafficking: Addolorata Carangelo, born in Taurisano in 1952, and Luciana Scarlino, born in Casarano in 1968, respectively wife and daughter of Giuseppe Scarlino (clan boss together with Luigi Giannelli), who shared the same leadership position as Anna Addolorata De Matteis Cataldo in the Giannelli–Scarlino group. The sources give further confirmation of the substitute role assumed by these women because of their husbands' imprisonment, as has been said, the event that sparked women's passage to an active phase of direct participation in the association's criminal activities—innovative with respect to the “traditional” phase—and their ability in managing those activities, indicated by autonomous decision-making and power of initiative that characterized their presence on the criminal scene in primary roles, which they performed well with no difficulties or hardships.

Closing Considerations

From the analysis of the nine cases selected, several comments can be made on the role of women inside the Sacra Corona Unita:

- The absence of the man—because he is in prison, a fugitive, or finds it impossible to circulate freely in his own territory—in most cases is the essential circumstance in establishing those conditions that make the emergence of clear functions possible and an active role by the woman inside the criminal universe of reference.
- Therefore, the woman's assumption of specific roles and functions inside the criminal group can be traced, in most cases, to a situation that, with the continuation of the man's absence, tends to take on characteristics of normalcy and become routine.
- Available data do not currently allow an evaluation of whether the woman's role tends later to become institutionalized with the passing of time; on this point, it would be interesting to see what happens when the man returns from prison and is therefore able to perform his duties.
- The analysis undertaken here indicates the presence of particular female roles (or perhaps more appropriately *functions* performed by women) inside the Sacra Corona Unita:
 1. The *messenger*, who is the link between prison and the outside world and is occupied with bringing messages to the imprisoned family member.
 2. The *money collector*, who collects the sums of money from the criminal group's various activities and redistributes it to various associates, depending on the circumstances.
 3. The *administrator*, who manages certain illegal activities or determined sectors of the criminal market.
 4. The *consigliera* (female “*consigliere*” or “councillor”), who is usually asked her opinion or point of view on issues connected, for example, to ongoing

conflicts with rival gangs, settling accounts within the same clan, distribution of power within a family, and so on.

- It should be kept in mind that these female roles assume an *ideal-typical* value because in reality we see a mixing of characteristics, roles, and functions.
- One aspect that created particular interest in the course of this analysis was the existence of a profound integration between characteristics, roles, and functions deeply anchored both in modernity and archaic, primitive-type behavioural models extolling the vendetta, the feud, and bloody violence. Coinciding precisely with the most advanced processes of modernization that gave birth to the Sacra Corona Unita we witness the emergence of the most archaic characteristics. From this point of view, tradition and modernity seem to coexist here perfectly.

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5

Symbolic Domination and Active Power: Female Roles in Criminal Organizations

Alessandra Dino

The Marginal and Exceptional Nature of Female Crime and Criminal Women

The theme of the power and symbolic domination exercised by women inside mafia organizations is rather difficult to tackle, given the scarcity of available sources and lack of existing literature on the subject. Among the many possible approaches for its study, we have chosen one that specifically examines the field of communication, asserting that the public image of women from the mafia underworld is constructed and modified precisely through the exchange of communication, both inside and outside the organization.

The field of communication represents a special aspect of this analysis. As we discussed in previous studies (Dino and Meli 1997; Dino 1996, 1998, 2000, 2001), and in contrast to frequently circulated and popularly widespread ideas regarding the silence and absence of communication typical of mafia organizations, one of the channels Cosa Nostra uses to exercise its power and acquire legitimacy (either through agreement or constraint) passes specifically through the dimension of symbols and communication. Therefore, if we agree with Watzlawick et al. (1967) that not communicating is generally impossible, then this is even more true regarding Cosa Nostra; without communication, this organization could not exercise its territorial rule or be recognized as an authority capable of displaying and wielding power over the areas under its dominion.

Although extremely interesting, we will omit any further discussion of this point here since it is not the object of this chapter. However, we would like to use an example to give some idea of the power contained in the process of communication inside mafia organizations, a process that uses words as well as acts through gestures, looks, and silence. Since we are dealing here with a secret organization, it might be held that Cosa Nostra ignores any consideration of communication, especially with the outside. Yet facts show exactly the opposite. It is precisely the need to maintain strict secrecy about its nature to guarantee certain communication processes are kept under tight control that each gesture, look, and signal is loaded with references; it is precisely the need to limit the use of words that

makes meaning especially dense in messages from inside the criminal association. Furthermore, the nature of the secret implies the aspect of confession/treachery not only as an intrinsic dialectic, but also as a constituent necessity; without this not only could the organization not achieve legitimacy and recognition, but it also simply would not exist from the outside.

On one hand, although members' names must be kept unknown, along with criminal methods and projects, at the same time clear awareness from the outside of the organization's existence is crucial for making its power known, signals recognized, and domination accepted. Communication is necessary to obtain this. So, in this sense, the word is not, in itself, an enemy of secret organizations, including mafia organizations. Furthermore, there are words and there are words (Maniscalco 1993).

In an article some years ago, Nando Dalla Chiesa (1988) challenged the assumption that "newspapers and the press in general would be among the strongest pillars in the democratic struggle against the mafia" since speaking about the mafia would, in and of itself, challenge and damage the criminal organization. He criticized the conviction that the word as such—any sort of word—would be an obstacle to mafia domination; he noted how, since Cosa Nostra is more than just a criminal structure, it would greatly need its own cultural control mechanism to link the different subjects involved in the exchange and act as a buffer toward public opinion.

Dalla Chiesa (1988, 35) insisted that believing otherwise would be ingenuous and unrealistic

since this would ignore the fact that, for the mafia, words (certain words) count exactly the same as silence (certain silences); and that this word needs autonomous centers of processing or re-processing, centers of radiation; although these centers and sites may or may not be (generally they are not) directly *mafioso*, they still fall under the mafia's control system. So sectors of the press may also belong to these sites and centers.

By broadening this discussion beyond the limits of simple mass media communication, we could say more generally that essential elements in the daily life of Cosa Nostra (communicating, appearing, showing, transmitting their message, conducting affairs, affirming their supremacy and respectability, educating their children, defining their role, increasing their sense of belonging) have always required the mafia organization to make use of languages, codes, and forms of communication, and refer back to a specific cultural perspective to which they belong and from which they draw the strength to assert their power.

A study by the *Istituto di Studi Politici Economici e Sociali* (ISPES; Institute for Social, Economic and Political Studies) in the early 1990s used an effective and rather evocative image to represent the organization of communication methods in a mafia context. Mafia communication was described through concentric circles, with a diameter—and target—inversely proportional to the complexity and sensitivity of the message.

This chart showed a large, primary segment, the "national target," lacking the analytical tools to interpret the message, able to understand the "form" but not the "substance." A secondary, more restricted segment, the "local target," included the population from the criminal organization's territory with the cultural and linguistic capabilities to comprehend

the message's "substantial meaning" but not the basic motivations that had produced it; a third segment finally included the criminal organization's "members," "supporters," and sympathizers who displayed all the abilities to thoroughly comprehend the message's formal aspect, substantial meaning, and basic motivations (ISPES 1992, 4).

If this is true, then we certainly should not refer to the mafia's lack of attention to communication. On the contrary, we should recognize the care, at times obsessive, the organization uses in controlling both incoming and outgoing information, employing different codes based on the message's intended target.

This communication process' central importance and strategic value in guaranteeing the organization's vitality and power are specifically of interest since women are frequently found managing communication not only during periods of emergency, when their role becomes indispensable, but also, and more importantly as part of daily routine.

Let us return to the more general theme of women's roles and power inside the mafia world. To put this reasoning in a broader, more articulated context, if we expand the discussion from mafia-type organizations to the criminal world in general, we immediately see that women have an absolutely marginal role here. Aside from notable fluctuations based on the type of crime (e.g., the percentage of women arrested for shoplifting in large department stores was 51% of the total arrested in the period between 1988 and 1991), we should start with one fact: 80% of all criminals are male. What explanation can be given for this phenomenon? Some sociological studies on female crime have revealed that the entire world of the criminal subject is a male world; those who commit crimes, fight crimes, and, somewhat less, judge crimes, along with those accused and convicted are predominantly male. On this point, Tamar Pitch (2002, 171) speaks appropriately of *maschilità* (maleness) with respect to gender and *mascolinità* (masculinity) with respect to the cultural models, values, and attitudes that structure this world and then transmits to the outside. Only around thirty years ago did the need arise to question the reasons for this *maschilità* and *mascolinità* in the criminal world and this situation's importance in the social construction of the criminal phenomenon. This issue (the almost "naturalness" of the absence of criminal behavior in women) has become the object of attention and study, and a problematic fact, only with studies inspired by the so-called "second wave" of the feminist movement.

Criminologists' continued lack of interest in female deviancy might perhaps be motivated by the problem's lack of political importance, considering the small number of female criminals, to the extent that it led to the belief that its study was completely unimportant as well. In the social construction of deviancy and the exclusion of the female component from this phenomenon, we should remember how the biological current (starting with Lombroso's studies on criminal women, followed by the studies of Thomas, Pollak, Cowie, and Slater that supported a genetic correlation—the chromosomal theory—between the "Y" chromosome and criminality, confirming the abnormality of criminal women's behavior) was for a long time—and still is, though less explicit—a prejudicial dead weight that blocked analysis of the problem with the proper detachment.

On closer look, rather than ask why so few women are criminals, we should be asking why so many men are. In other words, it is not that we are afraid of the prospect of considering deviant behaviour normal—we have specifically analyzed this apparent paradox on more than one occasion (Dino 1998, 2000, 2002)—but we are surprised that deviant behavior becomes “normal” only because it is assumed by the male population; that masculinity might then be the rule and the norm (Bourdieu 1998); and that, compared with this and only because of this, the fact that there are few women criminals becomes *abnormal* and therefore needs to be explained. To put it more simply, why should male criminals (who are still a tiny minority compared to the overall male population) not also be considered deviant by those who maintain that this is the most suitable explanation for the phenomenon of female criminality? Once again, the male world exercises its coercive power. In this case, we are dealing with a form of power more subtle than others because it is less perceptible and more interiorized through forms of social control: the power of the symbolic (Foucault 1970, 1977). Thus, even in defining deviance, this falls under normality if it is male but is considered anomalous if it is female, in the same way that the definitions and explanations of the female criminal are different, if not also the forms of punishment and judgment (Graziosi 1993, Principato and Dino 1997). According to Pitch (2002, 172),

The question of the relationship between the genders with respect to crime levels is joined here with the question of the generalizability of the theories identified with respect to men as well as women. If, in the long term, the low female participation in crime has been explained, when it has been explained, in bio-psychological terms—in other words, very differently than the simultaneous attempt made to explain criminality “in general” (i.e., male)—then this is due to its interpretation, by criminologists, as an exception: an exception with respect to the female conformist majority, and an exception with respect to criminality in general (male).

Beyond the evaluation of individual criminological theories of gender, which are beyond the scope of our study, the point I would like to emphasize regards precisely the judgment of exceptionality and abnormality attributed generally to deviant women. Because precisely by assuming this point of view—that crime committed by women is an exception—deviant women are required, almost as a complement, to have an “exceptional” nature, with all that term’s many different shades, shifting from the mythical dimension to the pathological.

General speaking, it is as if women were not allowed to be bad (Corso 1996). As a consequence, as in the case of the immigrant marked in the host country by a *double absence* (Sayad 1999, Dal Lago 1999), deviant acts committed by women are considered to be doubly guilty and therefore punishable with a double penalty. In other words, women are not recognized even in crime as subjects endowed with the same rights enjoyed by men (Faccioli 1990).

Studies by Frieda Adler and Rita Simon refuse the gender explanation of the female criminal (both in the types of crimes as well as gender-based motivations) and suggest that, with the exception of violent crimes, male and female criminals differ above all in quantity rather than quality. Furthermore, they show the

importance of social determinants (alienation, poverty, etc.), especially in certain crimes, and conclude by stating that, in any case, we are dealing with rational, or at least reasonable, types of behaviour, and deny that these might indicate the presence of anomalies or pathologies in those who commit them. Another hypothesis embraced by Adler—though lacking empirical confirmation, which frequently shows a contrary trend—suggests that the process of emancipation, assimilating the female model into the male, would automatically bring a rise in female criminality and thus an increase by women of aggressive and violent behavior (not as the result of any feminine “nature” but rather through a process of masculinization of the female model). Again from an emancipation perspective, Simon emphasizes the fact that with the entrance of women into the working world, the growth in the possibilities for earning and careers—legitimate as well as illegitimate—would bring an increase in crime among women.

Other areas of study have considered different facets of the problem, concentrating above all on individual and specific aspects. Among these are studies on the role of women as subjects-victims of a deviance at times dark and submerged; studies on the response to crime and management of criminality; and studies on penal judgment. There are hypotheses of “chivalrous prejudice” (Visher, Curran, Krohn, and the studies of Graziosi on the differences in judicial proceedings against women), “judicial paternalism,” and male chauvinism. It is significant that the severity of punishment given to women is greater when they are perceived as having placed women’s traditional role in dispute; in addition, women are affected more than men by the false application of paternalistic proceedings that fail to recognize their personal dignity. Again, radical and Marxist-type feminist theories highlight the profound social, economic, and cultural discrimination experienced by women; in extrapolating female behaviour from these with respect to crime (as perpetrators as well as victims), these theories propose deep cultural, social, economic, and judicial reforms as a tool for adequately dealing with the problem of female deviancy (Chapman, Griffin, Klein, Radosh, Daly, Danner, etc.) (Williams and McShane 1994).

Finally, another point for serious consideration is the different socialization process intended for women, the powerful primary social control—mainly consisting in persuasion to conformity—exercised over young girls, who are forbidden many more types of behaviour than are their male counterparts.

In this scenario, the reason can also be understood for assimilating female deviancy into pathology. In fact,

female socialization, in certain aspects, and the female stereotype, in others, guarantee that much female deviancy is expressed, interpreted, and repressed as psychological and psychiatric pathologies. Women are psychiatrized to a much greater extent than men, through pharmacological cures as well as recovery in clinics and hospitals. (Pitch 2002, 180)

Once again, the dignity of responsibility is not recognized for women; a crime can be admitted only if the woman who committed it is degraded from the role of a real person to someone insane (Goffman 1961).

So then the problem of female deviancy should be approached by placing it in a broader and more composite analytical point of view. The theories presented so far are limited precisely by the fact that they remain confined to the criminological perspective without further studying and extending the question, crossing it with scenarios and realms in which and with which women's roles are defined in our society.

Auto- and Hetero-Representations

Taking cues from these introductory considerations, I would like to analyze the role of women inside Cosa Nostra from a point of view from which not only penalty significant behaviour becomes important but—over and above all—so does the space assigned by others, and/or created autonomously, in the mafia world of these women. Assuming this point of view will also help us understand the weight—I return here to the importance of communication—carried by those processes of hetero-representation and auto-representation of women's roles in Cosa Nostra (and the behaviour derived from these as well as the responses to expected behaviour).

Thus, I return to the initial questions: Why do women have a marginal role in crime? What defines female marginalization? Several interesting studies on this theme (Minicucci 1987, 1989, 1996; Cornelisen 1977; Siebert 1996, 1999) have emphasized the fact that female marginalization is always defined in opposition to a system of male power. The latter is based on the control of public roles, which men are predominantly, if not exclusively, called on to interpret; women instead are reserved for the private sphere, the dimension of social history and daily routine.

Women are also marginal because—and I would like to emphasize this point—they are presented and represented in this way in the public sphere by those who hold the power of defining and representing them: husbands, fathers, politicians, journalists, policemen, and judges, all predominantly men. Precisely their general absence—and the difficulty of emerging—may explain the fact that, when the woman appears in crime news, she emerges as an almost mythical and more powerful figure even compared to her male colleagues. Beauty or youth particularly appears significant here. Wickedness and cruelty are emphasized. The legendary aura that surrounds her image serves to justify the attention taken away from the men; in this case, I would refer less to the *temporary delegation of power* and more to the *temporary delegation of image*.

Through exceptionality, the prejudice of silence and marginalization win out and another is immediately created: the prejudice of diversity, of not belonging to the normal female gender. This desired silence on the role of women creates another situation that, in turn, is the cause of the prejudice in which it is rooted. To state better this: women are frequently not seen precisely because it is difficult to give up center stage to them. Since exceptional behaviour is expected of them in crime (and why should it?), "normal" criminal activities are not recognized that would be prosecuted if committed by men (Principato and Dino 1997). Here is the absurd thing: marginal figures, in order to be considered normal, should have exceptional

characteristics (this is the cost of the normality of women); female normality—or rather, what could be considered normality—to actually become part of the norm, must present itself as . . . extraordinary. But we forget that in vertical and hierarchical structures such as mafia criminal organizations, only a few figures can be at the top, so it is normal that there would be even fewer women among them. Most are simple followers and supporters, characters who never shoot anyone, yet help the organization to exist by offering assistance and hiding fugitives, making themselves available for communication and transferring messages, collaborating in collecting protection money, or controlling and working on surveillance; in other words, all activities in which the female presence can be perfectly tolerated and may even become indispensable, not to mention those more specifically female roles such as instructing children. Therefore, to understand the complexity of the problem, we must deconstruct this complexity into its individual parts and study the phenomenon by identifying the typologies, subjects, and variables within it.

For example, if we wanted to use the variable tradition/innovation, we would have to understand how much of the old persists (or the new is taking shape) in the mafia organization structure as regards the role of women: whether this has been modified and/or increased over time. One fact is of particular interest: although one woman was charged in Italy under (anti-mafia) law 416bis in 1990, one again in 1991, ten in 1992, nine in 1993, and sixteen in 1994, in 1995, this number jumped to eighty-nine.

Furthermore, we need to ask whether we can study the female role inside Cosa Nostra while limiting our area of observation to the specific context of the mafia organization. In other words, an analysis of women's roles in Cosa Nostra—and the field of organized crime in general—must consider a critical observation of the transformations the female role has undergone in different societies overall. As regards the women of Cosa Nostra, review of a great quantity of documents, histories, and other texts has led to the conclusion that the female role can be studied through an analysis of the management of the communication apparatus; in the relationship—neither spontaneous nor unaware—between visibility and invisibility; in the relation between the public and private spheres (as mentioned earlier, a fertile area of exploration by gender studies); and in the sphere of subjectivity (the dimension in which the female difference is expressed).

So, let us begin with the dimension of visibility/invisibility seen as a communication's vehicle in itself. "*Esse est percipi.*" Following the suggestions of Salvatore Lupo (1993), I would like to use this statement by Irish philosopher George Berkeley to explain my reasoning. Being, the act of existing as known and represented existence, coincides with being perceived. This is even truer in the case of women and mafia organization. Inasmuch as they have always occupied a place inside the organization with, I believe, centrally important roles, the problem of their presence, their public existence, is raised only when their image emerges into the open, becoming visible and therefore bringing attention to itself. Only then, in seeing them on television or hearing them give statements or interviews in newspapers, or in discovering them as victims of violence or perpetrators of crimes, do we begin to recognize their presence and investigate their role.

For quite some time, women were thought to have no place in mafia crime. Faced with situations in which even grounds for punishment were recorded, the decision was not to activate penal law since, as women, they were considered incapable of acting responsibly and autonomously; judicial sentences testify to the paternalism mentioned earlier (Principato and Dino 1997). But the phenomenon has not been straightforward. For example, several women involved in mafia affairs were judged not punishable in a trial in 1983, even though a quite different conclusion was reached as early as 1904. Then, in 1999, a sentence from the Court of Cassation regarding women from the Calabrian *'ndrina* of the Mammoliti family recognized the possibility women could also be considered full participants in the mafia organization, though having no formal membership.

A social phenomenon acquires visibility and significance if it is perceived as such; it constitutes a problem (or crime) if it becomes catalogued within these paradigms. This fluctuating attention—also closely tied to a general underestimation of the female role—is definitely perceived in a “clear and distinct” form by criminal organizations that exploit women to perform certain criminal operations with no great risk, precisely because women are considered less suspicious than men.

As Eugenio Facciolla reports (Siebert 2002), a new trend has been recorded in mafia organizations:

Mafiosi tend not to involve their sons and therefore exploit women's situations much more. . . . The first motivation is legal since, clearly, there are laws that give much more protection to women, especially if they are mothers of small children. So it is much more difficult for a woman to be arrested than a man. Then, even in cases of possible conviction, sentencing, and imprisonment, women enjoy certain legal benefits that are just not there for men. . . . There is a legal system, or at any rate a penal system . . . that is completely different from the one for men. So this is why they prefer to use women. Another circumstance is that, for example, in prison it has been noticed that certain prisoners give their wives notes to carry news and give orders. Women are rarely searched, but men can be searched the moment they get out. . . . It takes female personnel to search a woman. . . . They are very good at this, because they live the prison life, they experience it and know it better than we officers of the law; so they know all the flaws; they know all the possible loopholes.

We can state then that women have always held an important place in mafia criminal organizations; so the simple tradition/innovation model alone does not work. The forms change but the central position of the role exists; the representations change but not the substance.

Subjects, Types, and Variables

Once again, we must not stop at easy simplifications but remain open to the plurality of facets and singularity of events. In reference to mafia women, it seems simplistic to speak of the “evolution” of their roles as a process of liberation; we are not dealing

with an evolutionary trend, but a complex social transformation in a direction that is not so simple to define unambiguously.

Having said this, we should still attempt to bring some order to the different and ambivalent functions of these subjects, and attempt to find a way to make subtle distinctions and construct aggregations around situations, circumstances, and recurring aspects without betraying the subjectivity and specificity of each story. So it might be useful here to identify variables, typologies, and roles that—through processes of deconstruction and subsequent reconstruction—would help give the phenomenon back the complexity with which it deserves to be considered. A first step in this direction might be to outline the main roles attributed to women within the orbit of the mafia. In this case, I refer to the “normal” roles performed by women, normal in the sense that they are not the types of behaviour punishable under the law, which I will intentionally set aside for moment.

Among the many possible female activities, the main functions performed by mafia women are as follows:

- Women strengthen ties between mafia families through specific matrimonial strategies.
- The female role is central in educational and socializing processes.
- The important relationship with the sacred, religion, and the Church is prevalently left to female management.
- The role of women is strategic in communication processes.
- Women are also the vehicles for maintaining a respectable image of the organization. (Especially among the *mafia bourgeoisie*, the wives of “men of honor” play an irreplaceable role in maintaining social relationships with politicians or professionals.)
- Women generally contribute to giving the organization a normal face and, in virtue of this presumed normality, help to foster general approval of the organization.
- They are the most trusted figures (aside from any other representation given them), and are employed in moments of real emergency and for tasks requiring great responsibility (from collecting payments to managing the clan).
- They also become symbolic instruments and victims in “*vendette transversale*” (cross-vendettas against the next of kin).
- They are useful in counteracting control by the police and judicial authorities.

Operating within a macro-environment, some variables we can use to deconstruct complexity and aggregate singularities, considering these aspects as two sides of the same coin, are as follows:

- Types of crimes involving women.
- Socioeconomic, personal, and professional characteristics (age, occupation, education, social class, etc.).
- Geographic location, the area of birth and/or residence (e.g., western or eastern Sicily).
- Roles performed.

- Level of autonomy of male power and the type of legitimization of their conduct (power/authority relationship).
- Existence or not of family ties to other mafia families.
- Relationship between the public dimension and the private sphere.

The combinations of different variables may give rise to some interesting configurations. The use of this grid furthermore can give an idea of the complex outline of the phenomena. Continuing with this classification, we could further study and deconstruct some of the areas indicated, for example, by cross-referencing family relationships with the conduct and age of the women; we could then hypothesize—among the many possible aggregations—different typologies of subjects to which to attribute different denominations.

One initial typology identified is *wives according to the traditional stereotype*; these are women who act and behave as they are “expected to” inside and outside the organization. These are mainly women over fifty years old, originally from mafia families or powerfully integrated into them; among the women who could be included in this typology are Antonietta Bagarella, Saveria Benedetta Palazzolo, Carmela Grazia Minniti, Antonina Brusca, and Rosaria Castellana.

A second typology includes *women who are an active part of organization personnel*; these are women for whom legal proceedings are either ongoing or have concluded; among them are Maria Filippa Messina, Giovanna Santoro, Maria Stella Madonia, Giuseppina Vitale, Nunzia Graviano, and many others.

Another group includes fairly *autonomous and independent women*, able to express their own initiative, either supported or opposed by their own family members, if necessary even going against the interests of the mafia organization; among these are Margherita Petralia, Carla Cottone, Margherita Gangemi, and Piera Aiello.

If we consider the age variable, we see similar conduct in the group of *women between thirty and forty years old*, frequently *themselves from mafia families*. Their activities seem to fluctuate somewhat; reconsiderations and conflicts are frequent; sometimes they disown their husbands, then decide to join them in collaborating; at times they criticize the mafia syndicate, but then cannot easily integrate into the outside world; among these are the cases of Rosalia Basile, Concetta Ferrante, Giusy Spadaro, Angela Marino, and Rosanna Cristiano.

Then there are the *companions/lovers*, who at times exercise much greater influence than the legitimate wives (e.g., Rita Simoncini and Elisabetta Scalici).

Finally, we cannot forget the long list of *women victims* killed by the mafia: Francesca Citarda, the mother, aunt, and sister of Francesco Marino Mannoia, Carmela Grazia Minniti, Rosalia Pipitone, Luisa Gritti, Pina Lucchese, Santa Puglisi, and many more.

We may also find cases that are, so to speak, emblematic, such as the one that emerged following the arrest of Vito Vitale, whose effectiveness during his period as a fugitive was aided by a veritable constellation of women with various high-level roles. Giuseppina Vitale—his sister, now a state witness—Rosa Morace, Girolama Barretta, Jessica Scott, and Maria Rita Santamaria all revolved around him.

We can see how we have been moving further away from the judicial sphere and closer to daily life and subjectivity; in other words, we have established that only the smallest part of the activities carried out by women inside the mafia organization—therefore in support of the organization—are covered and punishable by law. One of the areas to be investigated is the emergence of the role of young women, frequently wives or sisters, who are more aware and more integrally employed inside the organization, as more than just simple substitutes with an exclusively temporary delegation of power. In some cases these women continue to be consulted even though men are available who are inside and organically part of the mafia context. This phenomenon should be analyzed not only in relation to women's liberation, but also within a broader concept of the evolution of society and the criminal organization.

Presence Is Power

Now I turn to our ongoing attempt to reconstruct the change over time of the female role in the mafia world, a role played out especially in terms of visibility/invisibility linked to the public/private dimension of the management of power. Over time the visibility of mafia women has clearly changed, as can be shown by our ongoing systematic analysis of twenty years of press reports from several national and regional newspapers, developed as a specific research project on the image of mafia women. An initial reading of the data suggests that the presence of women in newspapers is distributed over time, particularly during the last few years, in a manner that seems at the very least useful to the needs of the mafia organization. News regarding women always appears related to waves of arrests and accusations, and their role appears to be decisive, explicit, and conscious.

One thing is certain: the female role is powerful, integrated, and organized, closely connected to the typology and characteristics of the organization in which she operates.

As opposed to other international contexts, such as Brazil, where women from lower social classes are involved (Frossard, 2002), these roles are not relegated simply to crimes connected with drug dealing or trafficking, but are distributed across various types of criminal activities.

The framework I established in an earlier work (Dino 2000) can be used here to explain the enduring silence about the activities of mafia women; in that essay, I discussed the concept of double exclusion, with women considered as foreign figures in the Cosa Nostra world. As women, they are foreigners in virtue of their different gender, even more exiled because they are women from southern Italy, and finally doubly foreign because they are mafia women in the South, even more excluded by a society formally only of men, in which male chauvinism is the ruling force. Incidentally, what is striking from the many statements by male state witnesses is their agreement in diminishing the female role at all costs; in comparing what men said about women with what women said about themselves, a clear difference emerges between auto- and hetero-representation of the female role in mafia organizations.

As women, they are also foreign presences in virtue of the roles attributed to them, their socialization. Only by starting from this point of view—one I also mentioned earlier when speaking of complexity—can we utilize the metaphor of the foreigner, with reference to Goffman, as the framework within which to read the female presence in the world of Cosa Nostra and attempt any further generalizations. Sayad's concept (1999) relative to the foreigner is also the case with mafia women; their presence, their diversity, the *double vision* they seem to possess (Wolf 1993, 1996), their ability for reasoning in line with the logic of *tertium datur*, exposes them to a double exclusion (if not triple, considering the variable of territorial marginality); furthermore, female segregation is configured to the standards of a linguistic and social exclusion and an exclusion from word and presence (one should recall that for Cosa Nostra *presence is power*).

The female presence is excluded inside Cosa Nostra, and women are even formally denied the chance to be bad, but this exclusion is evident and functional to the denied (and ambiguous) centrality of their internal role. In addition, as mentioned before, in terms of deviancy women are not considered equal to men; inside Cosa Nostra, theirs is almost an *a priori* deviancy; that is, a woman's "deviancy" is constituted by the very fact that she is *present* in a society that excludes her; who knows then whether—reversing the terms of the question—for women being as deviant as men might not signify, instead of liberation, the loss of their autonomy and subjectivity.

Women, memory, foreigners, daily life, horizons of different significance and communicative dimension (Dino 2000), expressivity, sentiment: after all, as noted earlier, female specificity (also in crime) is recognized and seems to be valued and exploited in some contexts. Even the attempt to downplay women's roles at all costs when family ties exist with mafia men or families, insisting that their conduct is motivated by emotions rather than by autonomous choices, seems to collapse since one specific characteristic of Cosa Nostra, and even more so of the 'Ndrangheta and Camorra, is the centrality of the family and heredity as a form of recruitment for the organization.

Returning to linguistic exclusion and the exclusion of presence, one can also say that the temporary-proxy model is nothing more than a form of compromise that allows men to accept giving up center stage to women, convinced that they, the men, were the ones who directed the choice; the mention of temporary proxies never comes from women, but always from men who pretend that everything is under their control, men who will never recognize an autonomous and non-delegated role for women. As emerges from the chapters in this book on other countries, women are recognized only as substitute figures, figures that act on orders from and in place of their men; their authority is recognized only if they act like men: that is, they are bad. Acting in place of men and like men seems to help the women to forget their elemental guilt, their original sin: being a woman. Their power is recognized but not their authority: their source of legitimization remains outside themselves, at least in the public spotlight.

So then the perspective of liberation should be reversed and we should ask who should be considered liberated: women or men (from their own stereotypes and

prejudices into a reality that has changed without them realizing it)? And what does liberation mean? And again—considering the concept of identity and the dialectic of recognition—what does it mean for these women to be recognized? As in the case of the foreigner—a person with supposedly no history and no memory—it means essentially renouncing one’s diversity, adapting oneself to the image built by others, wearing clothes one does not like so as not to have to go naked, risking being seen as mad (Dino 2000).

The female body also plays its part in this scenario, entering fully into the symbolic and communicative exchange. A body (i.e., an unsearched body) is frequently used to send messages, signs of a vicarious presence: a body exchanged in marriage strategies; a body raped to show power and supremacy; a body killed in a “*vendette transversali*,” or a body used for transporting illegal goods (drug couriers). Like the body, beauty and feminine charm can become direct instruments and manifestations of deviancy in which they cover and hide—deceiving and concealing—criminal activities.

As mentioned earlier, women are useful because they are “clean.” If it is true that, in the recent past, Cosa Nostra decided to use women to chastise its “lost sheep” or strike at state witnesses, thus reaffirming the purity and validity of the organization’s principals during the so-called *emergenza pentiti* (the emergency caused by a wave of *mafiosi* turning state witness), perhaps even now mafia organizations might be able to turn to women for another purpose: to rehabilitate the organizations by showing their “normal,” clean face.

We should ask who is manipulating whom. Women definitely have less recognized power, but the question is anything but settled; we must distinguish the spheres, domain, and different dimensions of the process of presumed or real manipulation.

The change of point of view modifies the background situations and changes the roles of the social actors and reciprocal positions. So we end up finding ourselves with roles reversed in certain areas.

Places of memory are entrusted to the female. The management of cyclical time—as opposed to planned, linear time—is also their field of expertise. The social history that describes and constructs experiences and subjectivity, the same history that escapes official sources focused exclusively on legitimizing only the vision of the world held dear by the powerful, relegating all the rest to oblivion, is a history made by women; nothing occurs about these women in documents, and *falsely true or truly false news*—as Bourdieu states (1996)—establishes them for us in the present and hands them down to us from the past. However, mafia women became significantly discussed only when women scholars investigated the problem. Until then, precisely because they were not perceived, mafia women seemed not to exist: the power of the word that brings to life narrated events is such that, in the words of Thomas, “if men define events as real then these become such in their effects.”

Silence is the best weapon for destroying the possibility of existence for the other. And the history of women is filled with silences. We confront their existence only when they emerge, accidentally or violently, onto the plane of visibility. But the fact they are present today proves their existence in the past, although in the absence of

an explicit visibility. Daily life—frequently disdained by “scientific” sources—is more than just the realm where women generally act (Siebert 1999, Jedlowski 2000), but it also a particularly interesting place for exploring the behaviour and activity of the mafia world (Siebert 1996). From here, we can use ethnography, the study of social practices, to follow the other’s gaze (a woman’s gaze?) into a world that shows itself with defined parts, albeit some of them shadowed (Dal Lago and De Biasi 2002).

Female diversity, clearly emerging in the sphere of daily life, creates fear for Cosa Nostra, creates fear in the world of men because it contaminates; as is always the case with “minorities,” it follows that whoever holds the power also assimilates, integrates, and levels out differences. Female exclusion from visibility coincides with the exclusion from public space. Women are always defined in relation to something else: through negation or proximity. The feminine becomes the absent, the lacking, the missing. It is the others who define their characteristics, either by accepting or refusing them. The others are those who establish whether or not and, if so, how they are deviant. Thus, setting the confines and domains of the concept of normality has a central importance, both for those called on to judge crime as well as those who live inside Cosa Nostra. In this realm, the process of gender socialization acquires a strategic function: one that is also a socialization of words, normality, rules, and deviance.

Another stereotype to be confronted regards presumed female unreliability; this is also an *alibi ad escludendum* that, at the same time, conceals the admission of diversity and fear of that otherness, considering that women are entrusted with the delicate task of educating children and are precisely those called on for help in cases of extreme danger for the organization; at this point, the suspicion arises this may be fear of the female presence rather than misgivings over the fact that women may not show themselves suitable for the assigned task. Therefore, a perspective that presents women only in the role of victims of male power seems to risk supporting the male chauvinist stereotype; if they are victims, they are also individual subjects, and a label cannot be uncritically applied to a category, just as the statement is unconvincing that women are only temporary substitutes for their men, delegated temporary power for a limited period. Rather than a portrayal of their role, could this not be the portrayal the male world concedes them and conveys to the outside? The formula of the proxy—temporary by definition—may perhaps serve to cover the effective mutation in the role, the concrete importance of these women that must be hidden at all costs behind the power conceded by proxy and, therefore, that can be taken away at any moment. (Once again, this is power without authority.)

Lacking proper recognition of a role—however performed—frequently creates situations of unrest and distress (Principato and Dino 1997); we see this with cases of women facing a reality they neither desired nor chose; a reality in which they must somehow “stay,” but one they do not accept, yet still requiring respect for their daily lives. In this sense, the figure of Felicia Bartolotta Impastato, who chose to live her double life of belonging and diversity to the fullest, was representative, as well as tragic and painful (Dino 2001).

Again within the realm of image and symbolic domination, another facet that may offer important points for consideration is the portrayal of mafia women by the mass media, something we are investigating further—as mentioned earlier—through ongoing research and analysis of press cuttings on the theme from several national and local newspapers over the last twenty years. Returning to a topic of study that, in the context of theories on the effects of mass communication, examines social representations processed and transmitted through the mass media, we are seeking, first and foremost on a descriptive level, to reconstruct the type of prevailing representation of mafia women diffused by the press. The acquisition of these data will help us to understand how much weight newspapers exercise in influencing the process of constructing the representation of mafia women in so-called public opinion, and, on the other hand, what influence should be attributed to the representation conveyed from inside the mafia context not only towards public opinion and the press, but the legal system as well (Fiandaca 1997); study and acquaint ourselves with who the mafia woman is or, better yet, how she is described by newspapers; understand where she lives and what family relationships tie her to the *uomini d'onore*; and discover whether she is young or old, when and why she was covered by the press, and what type of articles are dedicated to her.

Another facet of study in this research analysis, which is extremely interesting as regards aspects related to newspaper communication strategies as well as the communication strategies of mafia organizations, concerns analyzing the distribution of frequency over time. Is constant attention paid to the phenomenon or are there alternating phases? What determines this fluctuating interest? And what relationship exists between the organization's strategy (along the axis of visibility/sinking out of sight) and what emerges on the printed page (i.e., the direct/indirect control and/or conscious use by mafias of information mouthpieces)? Is there a correlation between the general strategic lines of the organization and the type of communication through women towards the outside by the same phenomenon? For example, are the statements by women an exception tied to the specific phase of the so-called *emergenza pentiti*? Newspapers have proved a useful source of information from a research perspective that refuses to segregate the study of mafia women into the mere judicial realm, and starts from the consideration that the mafia, in our case Cosa Nostra, is not just a criminal organization. As much as they can at times be approximate and inexact, and therefore should always be verified, news items spread through daily newspapers help us describe the phenomenon, localize it in space, define it over time, and classify it into types and categories. They help us to understand the images of mafia women: those created by opinion makers, distributed by the media, and corroborated or refuted from inside the organization. All this is fundamental in constructing a broader social representation of the female role inside the mafia organization.

We also find valuable indications regarding the reasons, circumstances, and motives that drive journalists to write about women they must logically consider “newsmakers.” This is also useful in understanding our society, our prejudices, and ourselves. For example, we wondered what the significance and influence might be of stereotypes of mafia women constructed over time in their representations

in newspapers, as well as the possible role of the printed word and television in constructing these stereotypes.

Naturally, these sorts of problems can neither be synthesized here in a few superficial comments nor exhausted in a single study. The results that emerge, especially from the fact-finding aspect, at the conclusion of our research will be used to further study the problem related to content, reflections, and reciprocal influences.

Though it almost goes without saying, I would also like to point out how television and cinema play an important role in constructing the social representation of mafia women, one that appears profoundly different from journalistic images. In a previous essay (Dino 2001), I briefly compared the film *I cento passi* (The Hundred Steps) by Marco Tullio Giordana and the two-episode television documentary by Giuseppe Ferrara, *Le donne di mafia* (Mafia Women). Though differences appeared immediately in the films' narrative styles, settings, and screenplays, both dealt with the mafia and had women from the mafia world as central characters. Except for these common features, the two works were otherwise completely different. Though I will not attempt a more precise analysis here, which would require a more thorough study, I merely call attention to the portrayal that emerges, the framework into which the problem is inserted and analyzed. *I cento passi* chose to film everyday life, normality: the normality (though paradoxical) of a family living within a mafia context, a normality made of contrasting shades of light and shadow, a normality made of closeness and proximity. Recording this normality corresponds to abandoning stereotypes and opening up a dimension of complexity. The use of irony, the deconstruction of what is taken for granted, and the absence of the fear of contamination all assured Giordana's film would be successful, set in motion processes of identification, bring reflection on the gray areas used by the mafia to exercise its domination and build its consensus, expose the proximity of the problem and personal involvement, and constitute a call to action.

On the other hand, the image transmitted by the documentary *Le donne di mafia* was a stereotypical caricature, far removed from both the mafia and women. The extremity of the situation was, paradoxically, experienced as less dangerous since it was so distant; identification was more difficult. An attitude of delegation, removing responsibility, and detachment were all easier. Mafia reality, and thus the reality of mafia women, resembled nothing we could have known in everyday life; it was not ours; it did not belong to us. In the best of cases—exactly because it dealt with simple criminals, victims, or women thirsty for power—intervention was delegated to others: law enforcement, the courts, psychologists, or social services. Ferrara's film almost seemed to produce a phenomenon of catharsis through the superficial evocation of powerful emotional tension, a fear that involved us only for a moment (even a distant fear always basically remains a fear, especially if it shows, as in this case, areas of unpredictability) and became our fear, only to later leave us free from any responsibility or effort since the reality portrayed was not ours.

I am convinced that the *normal* image of Cosa Nostra damages the organization much more than bloody and exaggeratedly cruel images that, precisely because they are at the limits of caricature, provoke no identification and alienate the

spectator who ends up considering the phenomenon implausible, unreal, limited, and therefore distant. In addition, it makes us see *mafiosi* as different beings, immediately identifiable and isolatable precisely because they are different, while we know how far removed this is from our reality. The point I want to emphasize is precisely the paradoxical normality of Cosa Nostra. Mafia women are much closer and more similar to us than we would like to admit.

An Attempt at a Cursory Outline

In conclusion, to return to the comments used to open the discussion and give the analysis a more schematic form, I would like to propose three separate stages, three successive phases within which to synthesize the evolution of the image and public presence and visibility of mafia women from the period after World War II until the present day.

There was the long, initial period of invisibility regarding the public dimension; this period continued with few interruptions until the early 1980s. In the second half of the twentieth century (i.e., the early 1980s), mafia women came to be mentioned especially when they were involved directly in judicial matters, either as victims, perpetrators, or supporters.

This process of emergence and phase of visibility continued gradually until the second phase in the mid-1990s, when a new development was recorded: the first-person presence of mafia women on the public scene with the appearance of explicit statements released to information agencies during the period characterized by the so-called *emergenza pentiti*.

Finally, the third phase, from around 1996–1997 to the present, has shown a new situation marked by a form of invisibility different from the previous one: no longer women who speak to newspapers, but women whose affairs end up in newspapers because they are fully involved in the organization; these are prevalently young women, wives, sisters, or companions of *mafiosi*, who have given their full support to the organization's strategies.

Today, the fact that everything is one again submerged and buried has created new difficulties for further investigation and discussion of these women's situations in particular and in Cosa Nostra in general. A new female role has surfaced, however, from this submergence: a professional, with special skills that make her more involved in the organization, yet—at the same time—*traditionally* rooted in family ties (either by blood or marriage), corresponding to that successful mix of tradition and innovation that distinguishes Cosa Nostra.

I do not know whether these could be presented as future research hypotheses, but certainly the transformation and development of female roles inside the mafia organization can also have significance for the future organization of the internal hierarchy and progress of relationships between criminal organizations; they could also be significant in the intermingling between localism and globalization that the internationalization of criminal organizations—and beyond these all the processes of globalization in general—inevitably bring with them.

It is thus important to studying these phenomena without branding them beforehand as residual or archaic, remembering that one of the successful strategies always followed by Cosa Nostra is precisely that of “normalization,” of gradual assimilation (on the inside) of territories of normality and by expansion (on the outside) of the regulations of criminal business that, assisted by complacent politicians and a distracted mass media, may become a goal for a new normality.

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6

Women in Mafia Organizations

Franco Di Maria and Girolamo Lo Verso

As an initial view from a clinical psychological perspective, the first section of this chapter presents a general synthesis that is the result of many years of ongoing empirical research. The next section develops this perspective by presenting several theoretical elaborations on the theme of women in Cosa Nostra. The final section comments on the contents of the present research.

The Mafia Psyche

Clinical psychological research in the field of mafia psychology began in the 1990s. However, some psychosocial and psychodynamic (see the theories in *Sentire mafioso* by Di Maria et al., 1989, and *Pensare mafioso* by Fiore) and sociological (Siebert) research had already begun in the 1980s, along with other general contributions from various disciplines.

Real clinical work began with an analysis of psychiatric reports from the first mafia member to turn state witness in modern times, Leonardo Vitale. He was declared insane, and indeed was in certain aspects, but what he said about Cosa Nostra was true ten years before Buscetta. Research was characterized by the possibility of working with empirical material. What followed were, in fact deeper studies into the psychological problems and stories of *mafiosi* from lawyers and magistrates working with state witnesses, academic theses written on areas showing a high mafia concentration, psychological analyses of court depositions, studies of mentality, and so on.

A great change came when a number of psychotherapists (psychiatrists, group analysts, etc.) began holding meetings and discussions in one of our private practices. These psychotherapists had begun following the children of mafia families who were having difficulties as a consequence of crises in the organization and the family system, including collaboration, arrests, and the strong government reaction following the 1992 massacres. In this way we were able to collect firsthand clinical data on mafia psychology: the fantasies, inner experiences, and family representations of mafia family members. For the first time, data were coming from inside the mafia world and could be observed by professionals in psychoanalysis.

The most common psychopathologies found in these youngsters were forms of identity-related disturbances that led to depression, drug addiction, personality disturbances, and so on. Their mothers brought these young people to mental health services; fathers (on the run, in prison, etc.) never intervened.

The most recent phase of research consisted of in-depth clinical interviews with state witness in government-sponsored witness protection programs, resulting in subsequent analysis, at times methodological, of recorded material. Research using cross-interviews with fathers and sons of mafia families is in progress.

A Brief Summary of Current Research Results

Cosa Nostra is an old (at least two centuries, since traces are found as far back as the nineteenth century), well-established organization, capable of constant change. Although its deep territorial and cultural roots began in western Sicily (in the former Val di Mazara), the organization has effectively influenced all of Italy for many years now. Without losing these *radici* (“roots,” an expression often used by state witnesses), the organization has expanded (e.g., into the United States), globalized, and developed a relationship with the illegal global economy.

In an earlier period, this organization was invisible though in plain sight; a state witness stated that they used to kill people calmly, with no hurry and their faces uncovered. The organization is hierarchic and centralized. Its rules are strict, and those who enter into contact with the organization must keep them in mind. For example, it is not possible to receive a “favor,” no matter how apparently “innocent,” from the organization and then break ties with it (politicians and lawyers, e.g., have dramatically encountered this ambiguity or misunderstanding.)

Money and power have always been its objectives. The rest is just literature, mythology (often created by the mafia itself), and fictional cinema. Everything in this realm has always been functionally related to this, including its internal ethical-behavioural codes, the psychic structure of its members, and organizational dynamics. Its specificity lies in its having functionally linked the individual and the family psyche, the training of *mafiosi*, emotional and marital ties, and intrapsychic and linguistic roots to a military and corporate organization with political connections and criminal objectives. In fact, Cosa Nostra has always interacted with the other power centers: most important, economic and political powers, as the news media has frequently reported, though today the trend is not to discuss this.

Cosa Nostra spreads its roots deep into its territory, over which it tends to have complete control (e.g., protection payments are imposed to affirm its role as tax collector), and the family structure, in both the broad and narrow sense of the term. One of the things the research reveals is the central place of the family, both the external family, interpersonal dynamics, and the internal family, the psychic family field that all members share in its historicity, which is inside each individual and structures his or her identity. In fact, perhaps even more than in the aristocracy, the *mafioso* is born into a family that is fundamental to his world (e.g., uncles are of

fundamental importance); he identifies himself with it and above all is conceived by the family as a future *mafioso*, if male, or wife of a *mafioso*, if female. A mafia man usually marries a woman from a mafia family. He then enters and takes part in “Cosa Nostra,” obsessively conceived by its members as the “family.”

As a “family,” Cosa Nostra is psychically interwoven with the biological and affective family; if ever faced with the choice between family members and the organization (as has tragically happened in many cases of state witnesses), the *mafioso* (as well as female members of mafia families) will often choose Cosa Nostra. There is a terrifying video showing a *mafioso* from the Catania area (*incognito*) recording his confessions intending to turn state witness. He is restless and aggressive; he speaks in a strong Sicilian dialect; and in the background one can see his mother crying. One then sees his brother enter through the door and shoot him. The video camera records it all. The terrible thing is that his mother knew what was about to happen and never said a word.

A future *mafioso* undergoes strict training. As a child, he is observed by Cosa Nostra, and if he shows he can be trusted (e.g., if he has a strong personality, never lets other children order him around, never shows signs of deviance—e.g., drugs, homosexuality, deep religiosity, etc.—never associates with “bad company”—most importantly, relatives of the *shirri*, as police are insultingly called in Sicily because of its colonized history), he is then allowed into Cosa Nostra. He is asked to spend time with some influential *mafioso*, hang around the criminal scene, beat up someone, kill an animal, and finally to participate as support in a murder. In the past, if all went well, he was initiated via the *punciuta* ritual (this seems not to happen any longer for security reasons): His finger was pricked, and blood was allowed to drip onto a sacred image, which was then set on fire. Holding the burning image in his hand, he would then declare something like, “May I burn like this image if I betray Cosa Nostra.” His life as a killer and career in the pyramidal organization would begin at this point.

He is not allowed mistakes, such as failing in a murder, being afraid, keeping the company of people who are *chiacchierate* (“chatterboxes”), disturbing women from mafia families, engaging in activities without permission from the hierarchy, having political or business relationships different from those ordered, marrying a woman who cannot be trusted, or showing any kind of weakness.

In contrast to what was previously believed, mafia women have always known almost everything about their men, though they may officially know nothing and say nothing. Only recently have some mafia women personally assumed social power (they have always done this in the Neapolitan Camorra). Their power is all inside the family sphere; as Fiore wrote, “Men have ‘honor’ (without which they are lost and in danger inside Cosa Nostra), whereas women are ‘honor’.” On the rare occurrence that a woman behaves immorally (e.g., with other men), male family members have to punish her with death (cf. the fundamentalist code) or otherwise they would themselves be considered untrustworthy (a potentially fatal condition). But women are not just victims. They live as if they were all-powerful; they are queens to whom everyone must pay homage and respect (a seventeen-year-old girl once told a psychotherapist, “I could have gone around naked and

nobody would have dared look at me”); they are very rich and have total power over their children’s education. They guarantee the emotional balance of the entire family, men included. Mafia women are also quite religious. In Sicily, some priests have colluded with Cosa Nostra, while others have been murdered by it (the organization has been excommunicated). On the other hand, except for rare cases, the men practice religion for appearances’ sake as a representation of power. In the past, during religious processions, they had their places reserved in the front rows alongside the authorities (Scarpinato, 2000; Giordano, 2000).

Another interesting fact recently emerging from clinical research regards sex. Unlike what we have been led to think from myths regarding virility, the *mafioso* seems uninterested in sex. (There have been cases in which an erotic-emotional relationship with a lover has driven a *mafioso* to recover his subjectivity, break with Cosa Nostra, and become a state witness.) Sexuality in this world is generally limited to fleeting sexual relations with wives and the company of “women of loose morals” as an external show of virility. The *mafioso* must respect his wife (who is fundamentally sexually repressed), which means that he must have no other public relationships. The Sicilian proverb “*cumannari è meglio di fuffiri*” (“commanding is better than fucking”) is literally interpreted in this world (and perhaps in others). This means that the power over life and death held by Cosa Nostra is more important than erotic-affective relationships. (A *capo-mandamento* [local underboss] from Cosa Nostra once told a future state witness: “You see, I am like God. I can decide if a man will see the sun tomorrow morning.”) The classic concept of “sublimation” seems limited in this case. It raises the question of whether for some people power (in this case total power) has historically been “pathologically” (from an analytical rather than a social and institutional viewpoint) more important and psychically foundational than Eros and relationships.

In the past, psychotherapy with sons and daughters from mafia families has not been done in private psychotherapeutic practice. Reflecting on the present research, we realized that the mafia has actually been present in our therapeutic work over the last twenty-five years. But it has been present in dreams, intimidations suffered by the families of someone else, distant family stories, and the presence of mafia culture. “Mafia” mothers whose children had problems would otherwise turn to the mental health services.

Between 1995 and 2001, dozens of cases were followed by research groups or under supervision. Reports on this research, as in the cited texts, would be too long to present here. Suffice it to say that: (1) it has always regarded work with individuals; as in all totalitarian regimes, Cosa Nostra’s culture of *omertà* and secrecy (and probably secret crimes) would never allow for group therapy (though most of the therapists were group analysts; and (2) the construction of a psychotherapeutic setting is very complex due both to pathology and possible family opposition (strangely enough, expressed only by grandmothers) as well as perhaps the experiences of the frequently young therapists.

We also faced a difficult clinical-theoretical problem from other vantage points. How is it possible to work and manage the therapeutic relationship (with analytic transparency) with such real, un-interpretable elements as, for example, the fear

of acquiring knowledge of murders or hearing expressions such as, “If I went away, my father could have me killed,” or, “If he knew about this, you would be in danger,” which correspond to reality? Or with the therapist’s (imaginary) fear that Cosa Nostra might feel menaced by the psychotherapy and the reaction of a health services hospital attendant showing reverence and anxiety on the patient’s arrival? How many experiences of this kind could cause a crisis in well-tested theories and settings in this field?

Paranoia is the *mafioso*’s everyday psychopathology (this is also true for fundamentalism, Stalinism, totalitarian institutions, etc.). The *mafioso* is permanently suspicious of everything and everyone; he is afraid of conspiracies against him (even by other *mafiosi*); he has difficulty accepting the facts of reality; defamation in this world is equivalent not just to psycho-social, but also to physical, death. There is, however, a reason for this: “It is true that in this world death is always just around the corner.” Interviewing state witnesses has been an extraordinary experience, one that began in an anonymous site where we carried out our project, in the presence of many police officers who were also competent from a psychological standpoint. The people facing us were “tragic,” depressed characters, living in absolute loneliness and solitude: people who had broken the roots of a powerful identity and who, at a certain point, inspired pity in us, though we were aware of the fact they were cruel, brutal killers. Much of the present discussion is based on what was learnt during these sessions. We wish only to add some particular clinical data. For example, these people would commit murder regularly with no resulting sense of guilt, psychological conflict, difficulty in sleeping or dreaming, or psychic problems of any kind. Like special army corps, and perhaps even more so since they had been educated to do this from birth, they were practically mechanical death machines. Today, they are men who feel destroyed and disappointed by the frequent abandonment of family members and friends and by the poor results achieved (after years of intense action) by the government in its battle against the mafia (though the effective opposition of magistrates and police forces continues), at being attacked (together with magistrates) by powerful politicians and the media, and by the return of “*pax mafiosa*” (the Sicilian folklore expert G. Basile once wrote amusingly that when someone says there is no mafia, it means it’s everywhere).

We mentioned group-analysis research. We are not referring here to therapeutic but to family groups, and in particular, to methods of understanding the internal world and psychopathology, so-called “subjectual group analysis” (Lo Verso, 1994).

Group analysis has normally drawn on traditional psychoanalytical models tied to the mother-child relationship when speaking of the inner world, perhaps pointing out the importance of the social, but without placing the two things into a clear clinical-theoretical relationship. Micro-relationships have been considered very important within groups but not for the birth and development of psychic life and psychopathology. This is due to the insufficient attention placed on the “family” question, which is the passage necessary to linking the internal and external worlds.

We believe that, rather than representing an inconsistency as Dalal (2002) asserts, today it should be considered an inadequacy. In fact, all group, family, ethno-psychoanalytic, and neuropsychological research points to the importance of relational factors for the development of psychic life and onset of psychopathology. Lo Verso (1991,1995) has already written on the concept of “transpersonal,” that is, on the super-personal psychic factors deposited within the internal world (biological, ethno-anthropological, trans-generational, institutional, and socio-communicative). The internal world, even the unconscious one, is constructed beginning with neurocognitive development, as well as through imitation and identification of the child and through the “con-ceiving” made of him or her over time, at the conscious and unconscious level, by the world into which he or she is born (Napolitani, 1987), first and foremost the family (Pontalti, 1998). The concept of an anthropologically influenced psychic family field is essential in grasping the central place of relational factors in psychic life. This meshes with biological factors and the development of subjectivity, but limits observation (resulting perhaps from the closing of the analysis room and individual relationship with no contact between psychoanalyst and patient, which has represented our disciplines’ founding experience and main field of observation) when considering people separated from their own history (not just psychic) that instead is linked from the start to other histories at its origin. “To us, group analysis also means considering man inside the relational context in which he is born and has developed.” No one comes from nowhere. The internal world develops through relationships with people. This refers not only to the mafia; all of us have had some kind of family world. In the mafia world, and generally in all fundamentalist worlds, the family is “full.” It basically does not allow the individual any room for thought, subjectivity, autonomy, or individuality. Without such a model we would not have been able to examine a phenomenon like the mafia psyche, which can only be analyzed in the deep-rooted connection between culture, family, individual, and criminal organization. Why is there no mafia psychology in Scotland? Why have previous individualistic-type research studies produced so few results? Does the existence of psychic universals linked to our biological structure and the environmental context exclude the presence of the psychic history of man? And does this history develop in isolation within a communal, culturally distinctive, familial world? Based on our research, we can begin to discuss a complex model capable of integrating these points.

Should we not consider the fact that the child is predisposed from fetal life to interaction with and sensorial reception of the external world (Robertson, 1999)? Or that fathers, mothers, grandparents, uncles and aunts, and brothers and sisters (Brunori, 1996) are also people with a psychological world of their own, through which a relational intention on the newborn is accomplished?

Of course, discussing the *mafioso* as if he were an isolated monad would be scientifically ridiculous: the mafia identity is inside him, constructing his psychic framework. The *mafioso* is who he is because, as he actually defines himself, he is part of a tree that is the fruit of a root; this root is represented by the nuclear and extended family, the community in which he is raised, and his mafia culture,

the mafia organization with its active and deliberate construction of the future *mafioso*.

Women and the Mafia

A Theoretical Framework

Drawing on the previous section and in a wider socio-cultural prospective, we now offer an outline of the Cosa Nostra's structure, expressed through various aspects of its identity: its anthropological family structure, control of the territory, psychic identity, and political and institutional ties (Arlacchi, 1983). It has been frequently stated the key element in the mafia psyche is so-called amoral familism.

Sociological research has in fact shown how the centrality of family culture has limited cultural development and the expression of individual freedom, with the advantage to the family of its having become stronger. According to the psychological-clinical analysis previously suggested, such a situation would result in a lack of a civil sensibility, placing individual power over social power; the ego becomes a copy of the family system in which it is embedded. Such a situation has led us to identify a "psychopathological" disturbance involving the individual and his environment, a "weakness" of the ego resulting in subjection to mafia power in order to obtain protection and reach a status that will allow him to find a place in society.

As in all types of religious and ideological fundamentalism, this "mafia feeling" makes use of a closed system of thought that tolerates no diversity and cannot accept confrontation. It determines the possibility of giving meaning to things; it makes use of symbols, of religious and social rites as interpsychic hooks; it paradoxically makes use of the sense of community to its own advantage. Furthermore, it uses the dynamics of the symbolization of ethno-anthropological events related to the world of myths. The codes of anthropological transmission connecting subjective and collective phenomena are deeply rooted in this. This explains the formation of a hypertrophic ego, bringing to the forefront the omnipotent family "We" sentiment; the key figure here is the mother, who, from a psychological point of view, has the power of life and death over her children. In mafia thought, insecurity itself is a feeling directed toward family cohesion, occupying and saturating the family matrix. Such saturation guarantees continued insecurity, resulting in a stabilization of the need for protection of the kind guaranteed by the "family" (as members of the organization call Cosa Nostra).

The Role of Women and the "Mafia Feeling"

Women have apparently always occupied a place backstage in the Cosa Nostra organization, even though women have always been in the myths and everyday lives of mafia men. The alienation of women seems to be the key element for the cohesion of the group. By definition, the mafia is a secret society that excludes women

from public roles, though at certain times they may become useful tools. Women become goods for exchange; as in the old aristocracy, the offer of virginal blood, when a woman marries a man from another family, consolidates new alliances and seal ties through blood relations. Relationships with women are one-way; women are to be exploited, dominated, and kept in the dark about the secrets on which the organization rests. Mafia ideology is conservative, imbued with the many facets typical of such a world. As has already been said, women have a great responsibility for keeping their reputation, which serves the purpose of maintaining family name and honor; wives must be respected, though in many cases this happens only from a social point of view. The role of women is instrumental since they procreate children; but as for the rest, they must stay away from their menfolk's private business. For a *mafioso*, confiding in a woman would mean betraying the "honorable society"; such a belief is strengthened by a strong homophobic characteristic in mafia ideology that relegates women to a secondary role. Maternity not only permits women to be honored, but also to begin to participate in men's affairs the moment they give birth to a male child. Women maintain an ambivalent position in the mafia world between noninvolvement and complicity; even though they are aware of their positions as subordinates, they know their presence is absolutely necessary for the organization's operation. Therefore, if mafia identity is seen as masculine identity brought to exaggeration, then within the organization there is a complete and total repudiation of the aspects and features belonging to the female world: honor, sensitivity, or falling in love, which threaten to challenge closed thought and open the possibility of critical thinking. But how can women move within the organization if men have destined them to subjugation? In time, women have succeeded in achieving a central role, an "underground centrality," that allows them an active position in mafia organizational strategies (they have in fact achieved a greater right to communicate). These changes have allowed us to investigate the mechanisms and female dynamics of the organization, and to see women as figures who not only are faithful to their men, but also preserve and transmit contrasting values: on the hand, pseudo-religious values aimed at strengthening sacredness and family union, and on the other, values related to the transmission of mafia codes. As Di Maria (1997) puts it, "women represent the founding core of the organization's psychological structure."

The Configuration of the Feminine in Cosa Nostra

Mothers are raised to "divine" importance; they are uncontaminated, devoid of sexuality; this is why Sicilians often depict women as subjugated victims living in the shadows. Relations are limited to the family sphere; women are always alone because they are marginalized from their environment. Their children are like "unborn babies" that come into the world without having their umbilical cord cut, prisoners of a motherly code that allows no alternatives; mothers direct everything done; everything is "in the name of the mother" and for the mother. The motherly code ensures protection, whereas the fatherly code arouses fear because power is in the hands of fathers, who control, punish, and accept no conflict (Barone and

Lo Verso, 2003); when communication with the father turns out to be impossible, the child runs into the mother's arms for reassurance. The world of "mafia feeling" is a world of rules and symbols; the mafia is (was?) the "Great Mother" who protects; *mafiosi* hold the power of death and destruction; the home is the reign of the family, and the mother the ruler of this reign. Women are to be passive, absorbing their men's tensions in order to keep the family together.

The figure of women seems to be ambivalent; though they are socially subjugated by the power of "men," they represent power within the family organization through the function of matriarchy in deciding their children's future. The woman-mother can push her sons into committing any violent action (e.g., revenge) in order to perpetuate the ancient family culture and her daughters' futures as women-mothers capable of ensuring family integrity. Mafia women seem to hide behind an apparent subjugation to men's wishes in order to dominate the territory; in our opinion, the ambivalent fantasy of a matriarchy characterizing southern Italian society masks the nature of male protection over the female world and may offer a rationalization, a pseudo-rational explanation, of the distrust men have of their women and their diversity.

Some Analytic Themes

Gender identity is the starting point in the acknowledgment of belonging to the mafia culture, a culture devoid of feelings though overwhelmed by emotions; for this reason, being part of Cosa Nostra is indeed the identity card of the masculine.

In outlining the figure of mafia women, the analytic model focuses on the ties among individual, family, and collective psychology; therefore, one must turn to the historical matrix. In fact, as we have said, the mafia family substitutes itself for the family of origin, organizing the mental universe of the subject and directing the complexity of the unconscious relations with the world of external relations (Di Maria and Lavanco, 1995). Therefore, the social has a determining role in the psychic life of the individual; in fact, the *self* gains value when considered within the vast sphere of "group" relations. Attention is centered on the relationship between internal and external worlds; in fact, the psychic universe of the individual reveals itself through its projections in the social, thus resulting in a vicious circle in which social alterations generate changes in intrapsychic functioning (Di Maria, 1994). The mind is not only located inside our body, but is also connected to the network of relations that have contributed to its founding and development, in the unconscious presence of the individual, through the construction of interpersonal networks (which each of us self-represents within ourselves). The ego is always entangled with the sense of "We-ness," with the "Other." The mafia culture of the ego incorporates a family "We-ness" that represents the psychic identity of the individual; the family secret is at the basis of such a psyche, controlling the integrity of the system (Lo Verso, 1998).

Analytic research on the mafia psyche has stressed the primary role of women, who, considered as objects-institutions (Fiore, 1997), embody mafia family values and codes. From the analytic perspective, the transmission of values, culture, and

relational, symbolic, and affective models is the prerogative of mothers; this serves to strengthen the central role of women within the sphere of the mafia organization. The values founding such a modality of thought can only widen the deep gap between masculine power and female dynamics. One must keep in mind the standard roles assigned to men and women by Sicilian culture, as well as other cultures; men are assigned power and dominion, women are assigned the role of the “great mother,” in terms of Jungian theory.

In light of what has been said so far, the interpretative models have allowed an analysis of the ties that emerge in this context. The interpersonal relations established within the mafia world seem to be characterized by a symbiotic mother–child connection that generates either relationships of attachment or the onset of depressive symptoms. Such situations are determined by the dogmatism of mafia thought, which subjugates all other forms of expression in exchange for protection and the integrity of the system. In the mafia world, being a woman means being the bearer of a system of values to be conserved intact, maintaining the sacredness of the family; therefore, even if women are often cut off from the organization, the organization cannot do without them. Women are the guardians of maternal codes; they often have a predominant role in directing men’s choices and have over time achieved roles of great importance. The “Great Goddess” is the omnipotent mother who represents destiny for the small and needy child; she dispenses every form of life and death.

Women growing up in the Cosa Nostra are controlled from a very young age; they are modeled and educated in view of a future when they will be married to a “man of honor.” One must not forget that women hold a position that is decisive and functional to the expansion of their men’s power. The *mafioso* is a “rebel” seen from outside the group because he denies the authority on which the laws of official society are based; but he is a “conservative” seen from inside his group because he must protect the secret on which the group life is founded; he must preserve the phantasm of the mother from outside attacks (Siebert, 1994).

The Affective Dimension of the Mafia: The Psychosocial Vertex

Over time the female universe of Cosa Nostra has assumed a wider perspective, allowing the observation of the many changes taking place within this sphere. The process of female subjectivization affects the *mafiosi’s* wives, companions, daughters, and sisters. The clear-cut division of the women’s role is evident; on one hand, there are women who feel they are not merely “*matri di famigghia*” (mothers of a family) and prompt their men to move away from this world of extreme cruelty; on the other, we find another type of woman who, in light of her attachment to mafia culture, is the keeper of the power of death, assuring her a position of respect and consideration, to the point of causing her to repudiate her man if he becomes *pentito* (state witness).

In the first case, mafia women find themselves, against their will, in a condition of subordination and constraint, becoming the silent accomplices of Cosa Nostra;

the mentality of the “men of honor” still considers women sources of trouble; the more emancipated they are, the more dangerous. The reason for this is very simple: such a closed mentality will never accept diversity and will therefore remain firm and stick to codes of closed and static thought (Principato and Dino, 1997). The female body plays a central role in the strategy of territorial power and is a sort of “*ius copulandi*,” as Magistrate Ignazio De Francisci suggested, representing the sealing of an agreement subjugating women to the male master, even though, from a psychodynamic point of view, men’s psychic balance and security are guaranteed by women (Siebert, 1994). The image of a dark female figure, a subjugated victim in the “honored society,” has been substituted with that of a woman accomplice, keeper of secrets never to be revealed. In light of what has emerged from trials, women, though accomplices in the organization’s activities, have been judged capable of understanding; despite the seriousness of the crimes committed, many of them have been acquitted of charges or, in worst cases, given light sentences for the foregoing reason.

The outstanding importance of women as mothers, wives, companions, sisters, and daughters can be found in the predominant role they play within the mafia universe. Women hold a position of power inside the organization; their identification reflects the mafia organization within which they are assigned a status, an equilibrium not to be undermined. The “man of honor” who decides to turn state witness deprives the women in his family of this status, earning them the scorn of others.

In conclusion, the investigations conducted based on current research have purely empirical significance; the aim is to analyze the mafia phenomena from a psychodynamic point of view, describing it not exclusively as a criminal system, but above all from the “anthropo-psychical” aspect. From a psychodynamic viewpoint, women have a primary role, especially considering the fact they guarantee the psychic equilibrium and security of men, perhaps because mothers are those who first give meaning to the psychic life of individuals. The complex dynamics of social relations analyzes the process that leads to transferring models of thought from the external to the internal world, creating personal identity and subjectivity. The process of individuality implies a disengagement and abandonment of the family “group” matrix. The relational paradigm therefore allows the identification of psychopathology as an expression of a disorder affecting the individual, the family, and the environment.

Psychical phenomena have the characteristic of undergoing continuous processes of change. The reason is that within a sphere continuously evolving from order to disorder, it is impossible to conceive any activity of static thought. The cognitive act involves an ongoing structuring and restructuring of emotions and cognitions by those producing them, both of the theoretical system of reference and the object of study. This “mafia feeling” is a continuous dynamic occurrence because it is involved in the transformation processes concerning the mafia organization and the men who have enabled its formation. Giovanni Falcone remarked that “The mafia is composed of human beings with needs, desires, and forms of behaviour that evolve over time” (Falcone and Padovani, 1991).

As we have often stressed, the “family” dimension cannot be ignored, since it is a fundamental element in investigating the mafia psyche. In fact, like the individual, the family has its own identity, its own multipersonal psychic history; it is a psychological and relational field shared by the various people involved in “co-building” it; moreover, it is influenced by a culture that sanctions what is good and evil, just and unjust. In the mafia world, the (psychic) internal family, the family of origin, and the mafia family all coincide, resulting in a fundamentalist-type psychic totalization, sustained by the strict affective foundation of individuality.

One feature of the mafia psyche lies in the family secret that consequently leads to a “shared” *omertà*. One essential feature of this family thought is the explosive reaction of family members to turning state witness of one of the family members, the interest of women in maintaining family honor, and, moreover, according to Fiore, the gender difference within Cosa Nostra. The considerations expressed here may contribute to future investigations into the phenomenon of the “mafia feeling,” especially if one considers the joint effort of psychodynamic research with that from other fields to uncover the hitherto invisible. As mothers, women are raised to “divine” power, sacred, and untouchable, and yet, as in the case of Gaspare Sugamieli’s wife, they also can be subjected to all kinds of abuse, cannot rebel, and can be constrained to the role of slave because they have no say in the matter. Behind this figure of woman-victim there seems to be a woman who has the power of undisputed domination within her territory.

Considerations for Future Investigation

If the psychological-clinical and psychosocial framework of Cosa Nostra and the role of women inside this organization are becoming increasingly clear, how do we interpret the data on women in criminal organizations within other anthropo-psychic and social situations? We can only refer them to Cosa Nostra because this is the situation we know. As regards Cosa Nostra, and within the overall approach on which we have based our work, we can conclude, drawing on what Ingrascì has written in her report to our working group on women state witnesses, that women “are often . . . considered a secondary subject, whereas their contribution in outlining the female world within the mafia ‘feeling’ and activities could turn out to be more significant than those offered by men.” As regards other situations, we offer some comments for future investigation and systematization. It is clear that the role of women in holding and containing the masculine is valid the world over. One could perhaps say that inside criminal organizations this takes on a stress-relieving nature that helps to facilitate criminal activity.

1. The Sacra Corona Unita, Camorra, and ‘Ndrangheta all seem relatively different from Cosa Nostra from a female point of view. Whereas the ‘Ndrangheta is based on a horizontal structure and family blood ties, Cosa Nostra is based on a vertical hierarchical structure and affiliation (though on an ethno-familial base). In the Camorra, women are often visible, brash, public figures. They are generally subjugated in everyday life, but they may assume roles of command and use men’s language. In these spheres, the role of women in determining (or impeding)

psychological fractures and collaboration is often fundamental. We were surprised to learn that, in order to escape the police, members of Italian organized crime have disguised themselves as women. Could that ever happen in Sicily, or would the fear of questioned sexual identity prevent it? And have other things, such as physical or sexual violence against women within the family, occurred in Sicily?

2. The Italo-American mafia seems to be more legible through its visible criminal history and the cinema (something that has only recently begun to happen in Italy). Women in Italy have started to “Americanize,” that is, they have become sexually, economically, and often openly visible, no longer marginal. The evolution of the selection process for membership is also important. In the beginning members had to be Italians, but business pragmatism has prevailed. With respect to the current discussion, it would be very interesting to investigate the role of immigration and immigrants.

3. The role of women from a social point of view seems to be more open and publicly visible. They often command and personally intervene. They are less subjugated; this also holds true for other Italian as well as international situations. This contributes to a lower degree of fundamentalism than in the other organizations, often making them simpler examples of criminal organizations.

4. The family role is therefore less totalizing, closed, and enticing. This leads to consequences in terms of identity, with the ego overlapping to a less extent onto “We-ness.” We must point out that we know little about the Chinese situation, which, some have suggested, shows many similarities to the Sicilian one. That is, an “aristocratic” selection of members; a broad, strong family base; the building of an identity coinciding totally with cultural and family values, becoming a “secure base” for the individual and the organization; a structure that is centralized and decentralized at the same time; a correspondence of interests and identity of the family and the organization and subjugation of the first to the second; and so on.

5. The sharing of the “moral” values of the family and organization seems to be something in common, but this is more relevant inside Cosa Nostra, where sons see their fathers as excellent fathers, full of values. Inside the international organizations, this seems to be less important, unstressed, and not exhibited.

6. Obviously, the role of women is primarily connected to sexuality; but women in other countries may be seen as female but not necessarily as sacred and motherly as are Cosa Nostra wives. The category of honor, of which the female body is the keeper, seems to be more accentuated in Mediterranean culture. (But what occurs in Muslim and Oriental cultures?)

7. On the whole, the results of international research do not permit extrapolation of psychological-clinical elements, for example, those pertaining to relationships with fathers and mothers, identity, sexuality, initiation, myths, and so on. What seems to prevail, at least in Western countries, is the “gangsteristic” aspect (perhaps global) of which women are fully part. We do not know whether the framework presented here might be useful to some extent in investigating the various international situations. We hope to discuss this topic in the future, research permitting, following contacts with women from these areas.

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7

Women and Other Mafia-Type Criminal Organizations

Ernesto Savona and Gioacchino Natoli

Introduction

This report reviews our hypotheses on the roles and functions of women in criminal organizations. The conclusion makes up the preface to subsequent further study.

Considering the lack of data on female roles in the different criminal organizations, the exploratory hypothesis formulated here aims at combining several structural characteristics of female criminality with the evolution of the criminal organizations. Finally, an analytical model is suggested for interpreting existing scenarios and, if the hypothesis is verified, predicting future scenarios on the development of criminal organizations and how much this development may be connected to women in leadership roles.

What Is Suggested by Research Materials on Mafia-Type Organizations?

As in any exploratory investigation, one question leads to another. One initial observation is that the literature on women and mafias deals with female roles, when these exist, in relation to male roles (mothers, wives, daughters, and lovers). This same literature deals less with describing female roles inside the mafia organization (leadership roles, working roles, etc.). In the end, this literature suggests the prevailing interpretive hypothesis that women play supporting roles in the mafia organization when men fill leadership roles. These supporting roles tend to be transformed when the male boss is in jail or dead with no immediate successor. This interpretation is favored because it agrees with the cultural pattern of the division of gender roles (male chauvinism) that seems to be the prevailing cultural model of mafia criminal organizations. These observations lead to the following question: Does the dichotomy of roles between women with operational and support roles and men with leadership roles correspond to real situations or constitute a stereotype fed by the absence of information, considering the information is guided by the stereotype? More simply, can we look at the role of women with respect to other variables related to the typology, structure, and affairs of the criminal

organizations without letting ourselves be absorbed into the convention that female roles correspond to working/support functions and male roles correspond to managerial and leadership functions? That fact that women assume managerial/leadership roles in men's absence directly confirms that the role of women in mafia organizations reflects the division of gender roles. Though partially true, there is room for further consideration.

A second question regards the relationship between women's mobility from worker to leadership roles and the structure of the criminal organization in which these roles are performed and/or the structure of the markets in which these criminal organizations operate. Schematically, we ask whether women shift from working to leadership roles as we move from simple to complex organizations and how much this might also owe to the organization operating in markets requiring more complex skills and tools.

A third question regards the relationship between the mobility of women's roles and the rigidity/flexibility of the criminal organization to which they belong. Schematically, we ask whether women's roles will tend more and more to shift from working/support functions to managerial/leadership positions based on the criminal organizations' level of hierarchical rigidity or organizational flexibility. The criminological literature helps us to understand how working/support roles are more frequent in hierarchical organizations and managerial/leadership roles are more frequent in a more flexible ones such as youth gangs or smaller associations. The first model determines the business; the second, flexible model is determined by the business. In conclusion, a reading of the cases and other material leads to the following, obviously temporary, conclusions.

Independent from female roles, the functions performed can be easily categorized into the conceptual pair working/support functions and managerial/leadership functions. Each of these two functions is determined by endogenous variables, such as gender variables, that are strengthened by variables from the cultural context, among them the relevant ethnic group, and/or exogenous variables such as the simplicity/complexity of the criminal organization and the markets in which it operates. No significant information exists that can confirm whether there is a relation between the mobility of executive command functions and increasing variables related to culture through processes of modernization or greater complexity of the criminal organization.

An Exploratory Hypothesis: The Combination of Gendered Crime and Organizational Complexity

Data on female crime confirm that, independent from other variables, women contribute to the overall number of crimes in notably lower percentages than do men. More precise data (Reiss and Roth, 1993) confirm that women's contribution to crimes tends to diminish with an increase in the violence required to commit them (see Figure 7.1). Data collected from prisoners confirm this conclusion, and this situation is found in all countries with greater or lesser variations. It seems clear from

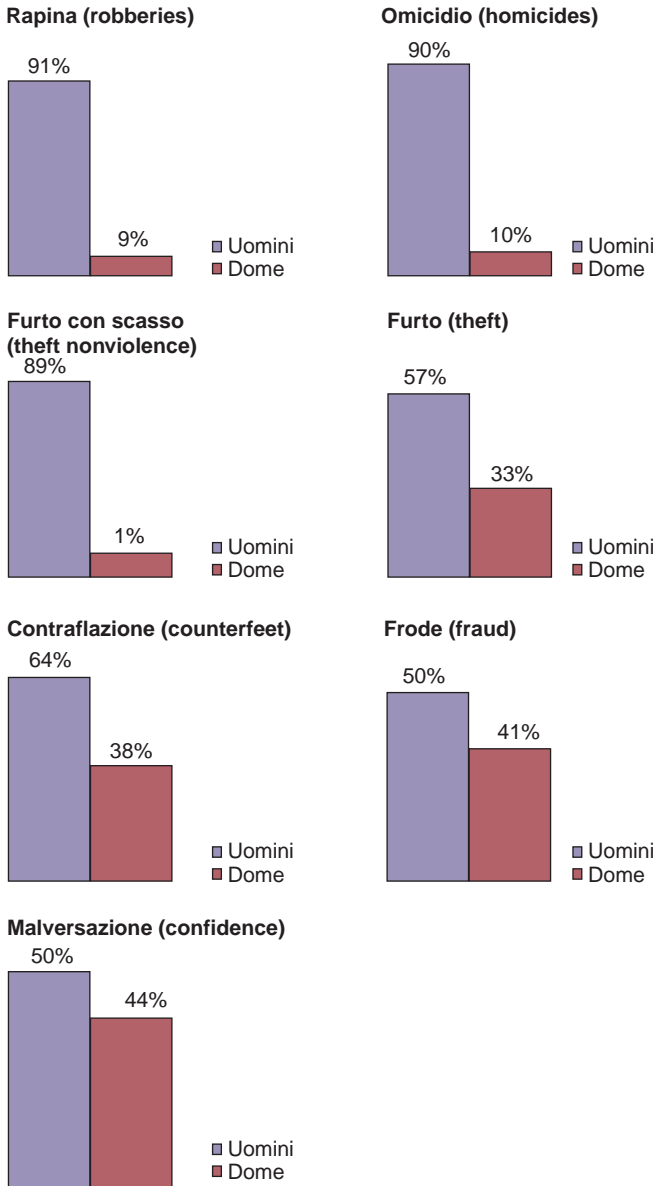


FIGURE 7.1. Women arrested as a percentage of total arrests for selected types of crimes (U.S. data). Source: Reiss, A., and J. A. Roth, eds. *Understanding and Preventing Violence*, National Academy Press, Washington DC, 1993, p. 3

this that a significant relationship exists between women's propensity to participate in a crime and the amount of violence needed for its commission. Women's participation is lowest for crimes, such as robbery (9%), that require a certain amount of violence. This increases slightly for other violent crimes and murder. In these cases, the existence of emotional components (crimes of passion) helps to overcome the rational refusal of the violence required for participating in other crimes.

Women's contribution tends to increase in property crimes and economic crimes such as fraud, confidence schemes, and counterfeiting, where no violence is required. The data confirm the theories of gendered crime. Research into the presence of women in positions of authority seems to confirm the hypothesis that women have a greater probability of assuming management and command roles in small, flexible organizations, such as youth gangs. Whether there is any direct participation in violent acts remains uncertain.

These two observations could lead to the hypothesis that the less violence required for participation in a criminal organization and the more flexible the organization, the greater women's contribution may be in positions of authority.

Further extrapolation of these conclusions could lead to stating that there is a relationship between women's roles and processes of modernization in organized crime in the sense that, the greater the shift toward forms of economic crime where less violence is required, the greater will be the contribution of women in management/command roles, until they achieve an "equal" share with men.

Suggestions for Further Research

The hypothesis discussed in this report could aid in developing research into the relationship between female roles and criminal organizations. Possible phases might include the following:

- Categorizing existing criminal organizations, including youth gangs (apart from Italian gangs), based on the level of organizational flexibility, for which comparable indicators should be sought.
- Configuring male and female roles and related functions for each criminal organization.
- Looking for the existence of a significant relationship between the variables of violence and flexibility of the criminal organization and female participation in leadership roles.

The exploratory hypothesis formulated in this report suggests that the less violence required and greater the flexibility of the criminal organization, the greater is women's participation in management and leadership roles.

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8

Female Visibility in the Mafia World: Press Review 1980 to 2001

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The Research: Hypotheses and Instruments

One way to analyze the recent evolution of the female role in organized crime is to review the press coverage of that theme during the period from 1980 to 2001. The choice of this period—closely linked to the more general orientation of this research and constrained by the need to demarcate the area for finding and collecting material—was guided by the consideration that investigations and observations have shown this period to be one of the most interesting for the study of the phenomenon, since it is precisely during this time that the participation of women in mafia-type criminal activities seems to have become more visible and frequent.

A series of arguments justified the need for examining the presence of female figures in local and national newspapers and the value we felt would come from this line of investigation. First (and one of the main purposes of this press review), daily newspapers and periodicals constitute a valuable source for information and data about a realm (the world of mafia women) that is difficult to comprehend from the outside. Initial research studies on mafia women only began to appear between the end of the 1980s and the mid-1990s and were frequently conducted, almost “against the stream,” by female scholars interested in further study of this area.

If obtaining data on the male mafia world is complicated by this association’s secret nature, especially regarding internal analysis, it is even more difficult to determine the role of women, who would be expected to be excluded *a priori* from any sort of participation precisely because of the male-dominated character of Italian mafia organizations.

We will not dwell on this argument for now. The first part of this research report explores the nature and characteristics of the female role along with its centrality, an aspect frequently ignored and concealed precisely in order to benefit the organization’s illegal activities. We emphasize the difficulty of collecting accurate, detailed information on women in the mafia world. Aside from judicial sources, which frequently focus on male figures directly involved in criminal activities, few other areas exist for researchers studying this topic.

Furthermore, when dealing with women involved first hand in criminal activities (from simple aiding and abetting to more significant and directly responsible roles), these judicial sources (valuable, though usually indirect) report only on that small fraction of the female mafia world directly related to the organization's illegal activities, considered only in their relationship to crime. Limiting ourselves to judicial sources would therefore make it extremely difficult to outline the overall role played by women in the mafia world with regard to daily life as well as and apart from their direct and personal involvement in the organization's illegal activities.

As pointed out in the first part of this study, women in the mafia world are frequently not highly visible from their choice as well as from the needs of the organization. An underestimation of their role has allowed their appearance on the public stage only under special circumstances. Direct contact with them is also extremely difficult. They rarely decide to talk or allow themselves to be interviewed for study purposes; instead, they more frequently speak with the news media when they feel it might be useful for safeguarding and defending themselves, their family, and their safety. Therefore, aside from other sources used in other research projects on this theme, mainly centered around the analysis and study of specific cases or the collection of indicators and general statistical data on the problem, news reports provide a valuable source for an investigation aimed at broadly portraying the female mafia world.

The difficulty in collecting information on the daily life of mafia women has led us to undertake a systematic examination of newspapers, including news items collected from the press and articles that directly or indirectly concern women from the mafia world, and investigate their opinions, habits, and reactions to the situations involving them.

In addition, a systematic examination of certain newspapers over a twenty-two-year period can help to define the potential importance and significance of reports on mafia women in the agenda of the selected newspapers; consequently, by observing possible increases or decreases in media attention to the subject, we can formulate hypotheses and verify whether a connection exists between the fluctuations in these flows and the specific editorial needs of the newspaper, the organization's strategies, moments of decline or special interest of the readership, needs connected to the event's "newsworthiness," and so forth.

Another aspect that calls for further study is the portrayal of mafia women by the daily press. One hypothesis that could form the basis for a potential subsequent phase of this press review is that a correlation exists between mafia women's visibility in the press (and the form of this visibility: direct/indirect, aware/unaware, attempted/experienced, via statements or judicial notices) and their role inside the organization. This issue awaits full examination, and the research presented here is only intended to furnish some simple basic information. From a research perspective that refuses to separate the study of mafia women into solely the legal realm as if the mafia was just a criminal organization rather than also a social phenomenon of major scientific interest, journalistic sources also become particularly useful in collecting information, especially if they can be verified. They help to describe the phenomenon by localizing it in space, defining it over time, and

classifying it by type and category. In another aspect of this research project, they also help us to understand the prevailing images of mafia women transmitted by the media, corroborated or denied by mafia organizations, considered by opinion makers, and shared or rejected by the public. All this is fundamental in the broad social reconstruction of the female role inside mafia organizations.

The analysis of newspapers gives us valuable indications as to the reasons, circumstances, and motives that drive journalists (who must consider this topic newsworthy) to report on women. We asked what importance and influence these stereotypes of mafia women may have had as they were built up over time in their representation by newspapers (and, in turn, what role the print and television media may have had in constructing these stereotypes). Of course, no such problem can be analyzed merely through a press review; but recognition of the phenomenon in newspapers seems to be required. We first describe the phases and instruments designed for our investigation into the female mafia world, instruments that will help us to more clearly identify the hypotheses and results expected from the research.

The selected newspapers are both national and Sicilian in scope. We used two local daily newspapers, the *Giornale di Sicilia* and the Palermo edition of *La Repubblica*, beginning from its first publication in October 1997. National news about mafia women was collected by examining the national edition of *La Repubblica*.² The newspapers (two or three, when including the local edition of *La Repubblica*) were analyzed from the period between 1980 and 2001, and all articles were collected regarding women who operate, with different titles and roles, inside the world of mafia-type organized crime. From a comparison of local and national dimensions, aside from looking for indications about different criteria for the importance of news according to the two agendas, we also expected useful descriptive and cognitive elements regarding this world. Consultation of the national newspaper helps us to avoid focusing on criminal phenomena localized to Sicily and also supplies information on the prevailing image of mafia women transmitted nationally; local newspapers give valuable information related to women, in part on a more micro level, again providing valuable suggestions regarding the agendas of local daily newspapers.

Considering the huge number of editions (around 8,000) that needed to be consulted for each newspaper over the course of twenty-two years, the choice of local newspapers was oriented toward the criterion of maximum representation, in part out of considerations related to time and workload. For Sicily, we selected the *Giornale di Sicilia* since it is the most widely read and distributed newspaper on the island. In line with specific research aims, and in order to correctly extrapolate the information we felt most valuable on mafia women, we constructed a specific data matrix built of thirty different elements we felt useful for examination since they provided the most important information for the study.

We were first of all interested in understanding who these women were in the mafia world, or better yet, how they were described in the newspapers: where they lived, their family relationships with men who were formally members of the mafia clan, whether they were mainly younger or older women, why the newspapers were

dealing with them, what types of articles were written about them, and so on. The analysis of frequency of articles over time is another interesting area for further study regarding the communication strategies of the newspapers as well as the mafia organizations themselves. Is attention to the phenomenon constant or are there alternating phases? When there are peaks in attention—as we have noted—do these regard particularly important cases? What determines this attention? Is it the relationship between the strategy of the mafia organization along the axis of visibility/invisibility and what emerges in the print media? In other words, what direct/indirect control and/or conscious use does the mafia make of the instruments of information?

Based on our data, we can ask whether any correlation exists between the organization's general strategy and the type of communication it uses to transmit this through women to the outside. For example, are the direct statements by women an exception specifically tied to the so-called *emergenza pentiti* (the emergency created after a wave of *mafiosi* turned state witnesses) following the arrests in the period after the massacres of the 1990s? These are some of the questions we asked in starting this research project, conscious of the fact that answers cannot be given for each of these, but also convinced that communications strategy is one of the key variables not only in understanding the mafia organization (and the role of women), but also for allowing the organization to resist, endure, and evolve over time.

In light of these premises, let us look more closely at the dimensions selected for our data matrix. The single article was used as the unit of study for compiling the matrix; all the articles regarding mafia women were identified and all journalistic resources were collected that related to the individual female subjects. From this unit of analysis, which was more useful in the first phase of the study, we subsequently proposed forms of multiple aggregations including those most interesting from the point of view of further qualitative study using single “cases” of women, with the names of the women emerging during the course of the investigation considered as a point of departure for extrapolation.

Following this arrangement, our matrix identifies the individual articles and assigns each of them a classification code; the following columns identify the date, type of newspaper, and so on.

We then move on to variables more closely regarding the women: first, the name of the woman cited in the article (an indication used for subsequent aggregation by subject), the relevant criminal organization (Cosa Nostra, 'Ndrangheta, Camorra, Sacra Corona Unita, Stidda, or others), and her native city. Several columns that follow are used to identify the possible existence and type of family relationship between the subject and men in the criminal organization directly cited in the text of the article. From this aspect, different dimensions have been distinguished according to the different possible levels of kinship: mother, wife or common-law wife, daughter, sister, lover, general relative, and unrelated. This aspect is significant since the mechanisms of solidarity and recruitment for mafia-type criminal organizations are founded precisely on the system of family relationships. Furthermore, knowing whether the female subjects we have identified, that is, those

visible in the news, are mothers, wives, or sisters and whether these roles are modified over time also becomes important for any subsequent use in other research contexts and in combination with other data collected through different sources or originating from different sectors of investigation.

Data are also extremely useful regarding the age of the women cited in the articles. This also helps us to understand whether, and if so, how the role of female figures is transformed within the criminal organization. If court news more and more frequently features young women who play a central role in mafia affairs, then it might be interesting to observe how the newspapers treat this, and investigate its potential causes.

The column of the matrix describing the role played by women inside the organization is also important. In order to classify this variable, we distinguished, with some difficulty, six different modalities: *no role* (women with no particular role shown or point of view or position toward the event mentioned in the article); *rate witnesses* (women who decided to tell the public prosecutor what they know about mafia crime); *hard-liners* (women who aligned themselves with decisions in favor of the organization even at the cost of going against their dearest friends and relatives); *militants* (women suspected or investigated by investigative bodies, with charges filed against them for having personal responsibility); *chooses the family, following the organization* (women who, in difficult situations such as arrests or turning state witnesses, allied themselves with their family members without denouncing the organization); and finally, *chooses the family, disassociating themselves from the organization* (women who, with great effort, chose to follow their family members in circumstances when this choice implies harm to the criminal organization). One further division referred to the variable of whether the woman cited belonged to a mafia family. In this case, we were interested in knowing whether the woman's family of origin had mafia traditions, and whether the woman found herself involved in mafia affairs by chance or after marriage or engagement to a *uomo d'onore*.

In the final columns of the matrix, we shift from an analysis of the characteristics and roles of the women cited to the type of article in which they are mentioned. We examined and classified the contents of selected articles, distinguishing *reconstruction of a scenario* from those articles in which women were *cited by third parties*. We use two different modalities of analysis related to the articles classified as *news items*: *news items referring to women* (in which women are protagonists) and *news items referring to men* (in which women are cited for different reasons). In their turn, each of these two modalities related to the news articles uses six different categories to describe the type of news item mentioned: *reported or arrested*; *a killing*; *a wounding or disappearance*; *update on courtroom trials*; *women's statements*; *natural death*; and *other*.

It is important to understand the criteria of an event's "newsworthiness" regarding mafia women in order to determine the newspapers' preferred method of dealing with such events and to reconstruct the capability of mafia women (for example, through statements or interviews granted to newspapers) in managing first-hand communications with the outside, appearing in plain view, and letting

their own thoughts be known outside their restricted group. Here again, it is of interest to understand the internal and external, subjective or structural reasons for such communications.

Finally, the matrix closes with a column dedicated to the location where the cited item occurred and another that shows different aggregations of the items over time (four months, six months, one year, etc.). Unrelated to the quantitative and synthetic orientation of the data collection criteria of the matrix (though useful on the descriptive level), the last column outlines a brief sketch of the women cited as seen in the press articles.

After the survey was completed and based on a mass of very significant data, the first analyses were carried out on a descriptive and exploratory level according to strict criteria. As illustrated below with the support of data, figures, and tables, we proceeded with analyses characterized by individual variables (e.g., distribution over time and frequency of the articles), double distributions (e.g., frequency and individual newspaper), and triple and quadruple distributions, also performed on single subgroups (e.g., type of role played by women from Cosa Nostra by period, individual newspaper, etc.). It was useful to be able to analyze these data according to different aggregations. Therefore, in this initial phase, we selected several aspects considered a priority for an initial understanding of the issue, proposing subsequent further study of what we felt was a gold mine of information, which, as stated earlier, is much more valuable in a situation in which the subject is practically unknown and such a press survey had never been done. Despite the descriptive and cognitive tone of this survey, the data will help in the construction of more detailed hypotheses along more specific lines for further study that, in addition to describing the situations, can also furnish indications helpful in explaining the reasons for them.

Thus, to mention one example in the field of theories on the effects of mass communication—the study of the social representations processed and transmitted via the mass media—data from this research, above all on the descriptive level, could be used to reconstruct the type of emerging representation of mafia women in newspapers; we could pursue this study with specific investigations into content, beginning, as one of many hypotheses, with titles and subheadings and reoccurring words to further study the content of media coverage, attempting to understand how much the press has influenced the common representation of mafia women and, conversely, how much the representation coming from inside such organizations has influenced the press and public prosecutors. We hope to study such topics in the future.

Official Data on Female Crime

Before going into detailed analysis of the research results, some general comments might be useful on several quantitative aspects of the official statistics on female crime prepared by the Italian National Statistics Institute (ISTAT).

Our survey aimed at obtaining information on the female mafia world. Although official data on this theme was somewhat partial and difficult to collect (and so we considered turning to a search for information via a press review), we nevertheless thought it interesting to begin with an analysis of the data published by ISTAT in its *Annual of Judicial Statistics*. Until 1992, the *ISTAT Annual* reported both penal and civil statistics in one publication. Beginning in 1992, ISTAT began publishing two distinct reports: one for penal crimes and one for illegal activities in the civil area, although their methodology of recording data underwent no significant modifications. Statistics regarding penal trials, which relate to laws regarding activities covered by penal judicial bodies, are released by the penal *Cancellerie* (clerks of court) and *Segreteria* (secretaries) and by the *Casellario giudiziale centrale* (criminal records office). These data show the movement and nature of orders issued by judicial authorities. The *Questure* (local police headquarters), *Comandi dei carabinieri* (*carabinieri* headquarters), and the *Guardia di finanza* (fiscal police) release data related to crime statistics that examine the facts constituting violations of penal law and the persons responsible for these violations. These data regard crimes for which the judicial authorities have begun penal action. For statistical purposes, the latter means actions started: in the case of crimes by known authors, when a formal indictment is issued of persons undergoing preliminary investigations under Article 405 *c.p.p.*, or, in the case of crimes by unknown authors, the crime is entered in the *registro ignoti* ("register of unknown persons").³

In order to define basic useful characteristics for our research, we were interested in information inherent to the types of crimes committed by women; unfortunately, most of this was supplied in aggregate form (regarding Italy or large geographical segments) and so did not allow detailed analysis. The only disaggregated data published relate to women reported to the police by type of crime and by province.

As regards information more closely related to our research, we took into consideration, at the level of regional aggregation, data regarding the total number of persons reported to the police, and in particular women against whom the judicial authorities had begun penal proceedings, calculated in relation to the total number of crimes; the number of crimes against the state, other social institutions, and the public order; and, in particular, in relation to those for criminal association and mafia-type association, the center of our research. We analyzed data regarding Italy and those regions with a greater traditional presence of mafia-type associations and on which considerations of articles in the first part of this report are concentrated: Sicily, Calabria, Campania, and Puglia, where the deep-rooted bases of the mafia organizations are found, respectively, Cosa Nostra, 'Ndrangheta, Camorra, and Sacra Corona Unita.

We report data on the number of persons (in particular women) reported to the police for the crimes listed above in the years between 1990 and 2000 (latest available data). We also report the percentage of the number of women out of the total number of crimes in order to evaluate the impact of female crime in certain years and different areas of the country; these percentages allow comparisons to be made that are not possible from the absolute data. As for crimes of mafia-type criminal association, data for the years between 1993 and 2000, unavailable for

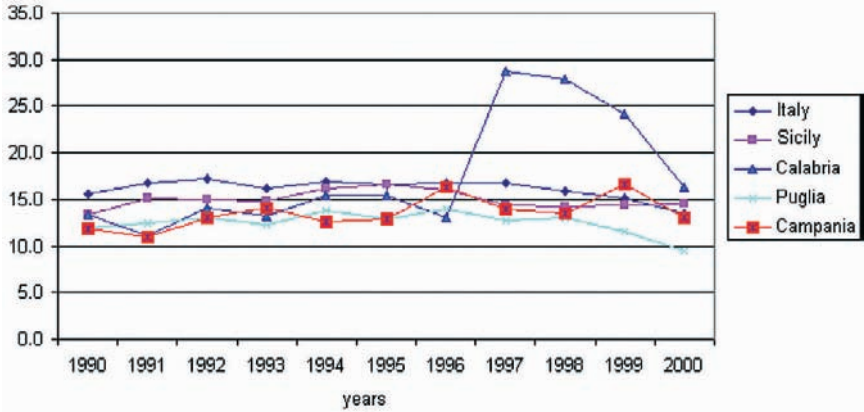


FIGURE 8.1. Women reported to the authorities for all types of crimes as a percentage of total reported.

the previous period, are given in disaggregated form. Several figures and tables were constructed that compare by time period the percentage of women relative to the total criminal activity in the various areas in Italy.

An analysis of Table 8.1 and Figure 8.1, referring to all types of crimes, shows that the trend over time for individual regions and Italy in general is rather uniform; national data run between 16% and 17%, with higher values for the regions taken into consideration; percentages tended to decline over the more recent years, reaching 13.5% in 2000. For Calabria alone, we observe higher percentages during the years 1997, 1998, and 1999 (respectively 28.8%, 27.8%, and 24.1%), in a countertrend with respect to the general result; In fact, based on types of crimes not analyzed here, we note that these values depend on a high number of crimes “against the economy and public trust” committed by women over those years.

Analyzing the data regarding “crimes against the state, other social institutions, and the public order” (Table 8.2), we observe the percentage of women out of the total is stationary over time especially for Italy and, although to a lesser extent, Sicily; a greater variability is seen for Calabria (from 8.7% to 16.4%), Campania (from 11.7% to 18.6%), and Puglia (between 11.8% and 19.3%, referred to 1994, the highest value in this table). If we focus on “crimes against the state, other social institutions, and the public order: criminal association,” the data in Table 8.3 and Figure 8.2 indicate a fairly variable trend in the relationship over time for the four regions considered, although the trend is more constant for the national data (if values from the last two years are excluded). Sicily shows a fluctuation between 4.3% in 1994 (when 18.2% was seen for Italy) and 16% in 2000; Campania shows a variation between 5.8% in 1995 and 18.8% in 1999; These differences are small compared to the other two regions; in fact, in Calabria we see a peak of 43% for 1997 (against the trend with respect to the time series from the region and the data from the same year for the other regions), and a considerable difference for 1994

TABLE 8.1. Persons reported to the police: all types of crime.

Year	Italy			Sicily			Calabria			Campania			Puglia		
	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%
1990	53,959	347,998	15.5	4,149	31,115	13.3	1,456	10,852	13.4	2,101	17,774	11.8	2,742	22,720	12.1
1991	84,895	506,170	16.8	5,870	38,767	15.1	1,336	12,030	11.1	3,397	30,925	11.0	4,292	34,365	12.5
1992	96,290	560,126	17.2	6,401	42,621	15.0	1,874	13,324	13.2	5,077	39,087	13.0	4,318	32,923	13.1
1993	88,793	550,267	16.1	5,692	38,497	14.8	1,769	13,433	14.1	6,192	44,176	14.0	4,737	38,347	12.4
1994	101,937	601,296	17.0	7,990	49,267	16.2	2,702	17,451	15.5	5,043	39,900	12.6	6,302	45,513	13.8
1995	93,572	565,316	16.6	8,614	51,727	16.7	2,691	17,527	15.4	3,933	30,318	13.0	5,847	45,400	12.9
1996	91,758	546,471	16.8	6,910	43,062	16.0	2,462	18,890	13.0	5,271	32,434	16.3	6,191	44,590	13.9
1997	93,103	556,841	16.7	5,281	36,187	14.3	5,725	19,855	28.8	5,987	43,171	13.9	5,461	42,600	12.8
1998	83,163	523,751	15.9	5,755	40,489	14.2	6,467	23,256	27.8	6,512	48,005	13.6	5,749	44,017	13.1
1999	79,151	524,459	15.1	6,155	42,819	14.4	4,648	19,249	24.1	7,450	44,966	16.6	4,479	38,755	11.6
2000	45,865	339,109	13.5	5,674	39,023	14.5	2,243	13,809	16.2	5,068	38,783	13.1	2,575	27,094	9.5

Source: ISTAT, *Annual of Penal Judicial Statistics*.

TABLE 8.2. Persons reported to the police for crimes against the state, other institutions, and the public order.

Year	Italy			Sicily			Calabria			Campania			Puglia		
	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%
1990	2,754	19,740	13.9	315	2,183	14.4	149	1,060	14.1	204	1,749	11.7	224	1,661	13.5
1991	4,611	31,693	14.5	580	3,839	15.1	178	1,711	10.4	411	3,502	11.7	609	3,519	17.3
1992	5,757	40,102	14.4	651	4,708	13.8	228	1,897	12.0	734	5,258	14.0	464	3,403	13.6
1993	6,649	48,273	13.8	742	5,355	13.9	264	2,017	13.1	1,021	7,571	13.5	514	4,374	11.8
1994	8,623	59,116	14.6	914	6,867	13.3	309	3,544	8.7	824	6,376	12.9	1,348	6,980	19.3
1995	7,982	56,469	14.1	1,054	7,872	13.4	348	2,661	13.1	650	4,815	13.5	790	5,764	13.7
1996	8,021	52,783	15.2	1,028	6,327	16.2	381	2,655	14.4	564	3,783	14.9	885	5,172	17.1
1997	8,302	55,353	15.0	864	5,607	15.4	390	2,380	16.4	1,054	5,881	17.9	591	4,589	12.9
1998	7,358	53,356	13.8	796	5,698	14.0	394	2,955	13.3	1,071	6,925	15.5	624	5,039	12.4
1999	7,773	52,540	14.8	892	6,247	14.3	312	2,790	11.2	1,492	8,028	18.6	674	4,636	14.5
2000	5,194	34,686	15.0	874	5,308	16.5	303	2,062	14.7	808	4,630	17.5	314	2,540	12.4

Source: ISTAT, *Annual of Penal Judicial Statistics*.

TABLE 8.3. Persons reported for crimes against the state, other institutions, and the public order: criminal association.

Year	Italy			Sicily			Calabria			Campania			Puglia		
	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%
1993	361	2,931	12.3	52	371	14.0	23	122	18.9	72	565	12.7	36	456	7.9
1994	1,024	5,621	18.2	29	675	4.3	22	391	5.6	43	401	10.7	661	2,129	31.0
1995	498	3,591	13.9	46	441	10.4	50	343	14.6	13	224	5.8	102	710	14.4
1996	486	3,677	13.2	57	448	12.7	23	203	11.3	69	699	9.9	151	710	21.3
1997	603	4,105	14.7	28	535	5.2	101	235	43.0	54	444	12.2	111	1,046	10.6
1998	357	2,264	15.8	28	267	10.5	22	216	10.2	84	648	13.0	32	372	8.6
1999	543	2,962	18.3	30	297	10.1	13	225	5.8	102	544	18.8	217	589	36.8
2000	154	1,299	11.9	24	150	16.0	11	79	13.9	36	383	9.4	15	217	6.9

Source: ISTAT, *Annual of Penal Judiciary Statistics*.

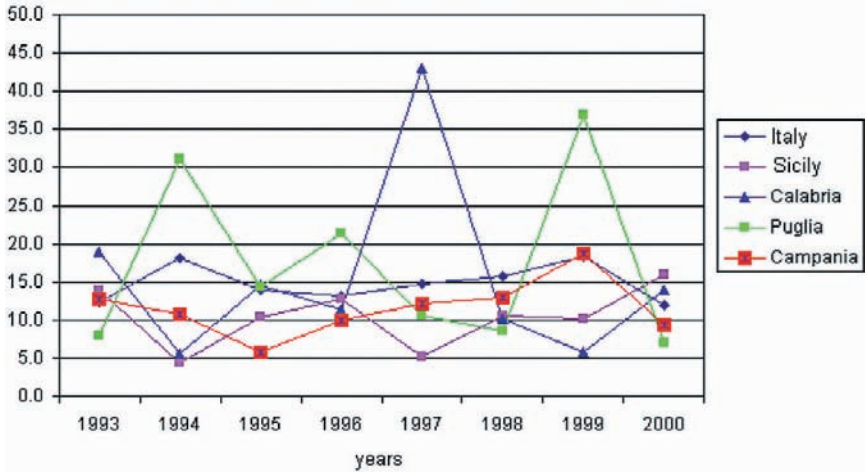


FIGURE 8.2. Women reported for criminal association as a percentage of total reported.

(just as for Sicily) and 1999 compared to national data (maximum values for Italy and minimum for Calabria). The situation in Puglia is different, where very high values are recorded, especially in 1994 and 1999, with a greater variability within the time series, with rather sudden increases in percentage from one year to the next, a phenomenon worthy of further study.

From the analysis of data relative to “crimes against the state, other social institutions, and the public order: mafia-type association,” the data that most interest our research are reported in Table 8.4. The small general presence of women reported for these types of crimes should be emphasized. Particularly in Puglia, there are only two years when police reports can be found of women accused of mafia-type criminal association (1995 and 1999), with the value 50% in 1994 the result of one woman of the two people reported. It is difficult to track a uniform trend for these data for Calabria as well, with 25% (one woman out of four reported) in 1993. In Campania, a greater (though still small) number of women were reported in 1993 and 1995, 6.6% and 11.9%, respectively. On the other hand, Sicily shows a more regular pattern. In fact, women can be found reported every year for mafia association, although it should be said the relationship of the number of women out of the total reported assumes some significance in only one year (1996), reaching 10%.

Although we are dealing with fairly small numbers, the analysis of national data brings out an especially interesting element: with the exception of 1993 and 2000, the total numbers of women reported for mafia-type criminal association belong exclusively to the four regions considered in our study. This means that outside Sicily, Campania, Calabria, and Puglia, during the 1994 to 1999 period, no women were reported for “crimes against the state, other social institutions, and the public order: mafia-type association.”

TABLE 8.4. Persons reported for crimes against the state, other institutions, and the public order: mafia-type association.

Year	Italy			Sicily			Calabria			Campania			Puglia		
	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%	Women	Total	%
1993	9	223	4.0	1	67	1.5	1	4	25.0	5	76	6.6	0	23	0
1994	16	230	7.0	7	225	3.1	9	920	1.0	0	25	0.0	0	59	0.0
1995	8	266	3.0	2	89	2.2	0	83	0.0	5	42	11.9	1	2	50.0
1996	6	180	3.3	6	61	9.8	0	21	0.0	0	57	0.0	0	26	0.0
1997	18	440	4.1	2	101	2.0	15	253	5.9	1	78	1.3	0	0	0.0
1998	7	300	2.3	3	76	3.9	3	79	3.8	1	127	0.8	0	13	0.0
1999	9	329	2.7	3	95	3.2	1	25	4.0	3	179	1.7	2	13	15.4
2000	16	270	5.9	3	90	3.3	0	27	0.0	0	38	0.0	0	4	0.0

Source: ISTAT, *Annual of Penal Judiciary Statistics*.

Data on female participation in mafia crime, though highly significant especially as regards its location, seem to contrast with data available from other sources (e.g., trial proceedings, the press, etc.), which give the phenomenon a much broader dimension. Are the data furnished by ISTAT underestimates? Before further consideration, the survey methods and definitions used by ISTAT in preparing the *Annual* need to be clarified. Crime statistics have as their object all reports of criminal acts presented to judicial authorities by all national police bodies, from the *Carabinieri* to the *Guardia di finanza*. The data regard the crimes and their authors with reference to the moment of communication by law enforcement to the judicial authorities. The crimes mentioned are those included in the penal code and other laws; violations are excluded, in addition to crimes reported to the above-mentioned authorities by other public officials and private citizens. Therefore, subjects would be definitely excluded from these statistics for whom penal proceedings were begun on behalf of the public prosecutor or those who, though convicted at the end of the proceedings, for example, for crimes “against the state, other social institutions, and the public order: mafia-type association,” were initially reported for different crimes. On this point, ISTAT emphasizes that these regulations and the different time of survey do not permit comparing data on crime with those related to statistics on criminality.

Analysis of the Results from the Press Review

We now analyze the results from our press review. As previously mentioned, material was collected from around 16,000 editions of the newspapers *Giornale di Sicilia* and *La Repubblica* (for the latter, both the national edition and the local Palermo edition). The time period covered is between 1 January 1980 and 31 December 2001, with the exception of the local *La Repubblica*, which began publication in October 1997. As shown in Table 8.5, the number of articles in the time period examined that mentioned women in relation to organized crime were as follows: 1,611 in the *Giornale di Sicilia*; 678 for the national edition of *La Repubblica*; and 49 for the Palermo edition of *La Repubblica*. Thus, the Sicilian newspaper, *Giornale di Sicilia*, clearly gave greatest prominence to the presence of women in events connected to mafia affairs.

Table 8.5 shows that the data on the local *La Repubblica* could not be compared with those from the other newspapers: not the *Giornale di Sicilia*, because of the

TABLE 8.5. Distribution of articles published by newspaper.

Newspaper	Number of articles	Percent
<i>Giornale di Sicilia</i>	1611	68.9
<i>La Repubblica</i> (national)	678	29.0
<i>La Repubblica</i> (local)	49	2.1
Total	2338	100.0

TABLE 8.6. Distribution of articles published by criminal organization of reference.

Criminal organization	Number of articles	Percent
Cosa Nostra	1,641	72.4
Camorra	470	20.7
'Ndrangheta	110	4.9
Sacra Corona Unita	11	0.5
Stidda	24	1.1
Other	10	0.4
Total	2,266	100.0
Missing	23	
Total	2,289	

scarcity of useful articles (including in terms of percentage, and not the national *La Repubblica*, in part because of the different aims of the two editions of this newspaper. For this reason, beginning with Table 8.6, comparisons will only be made between the *Giornale di Sicilia* and the national *La Repubblica* in order to show the potential variation in attention given to the subject by the two newspapers, which differ both in editorial strategy and readership.

It is interesting to observe the changes in the number of articles that mention mafia women during the period under consideration; Figure 8.3 shows the trend

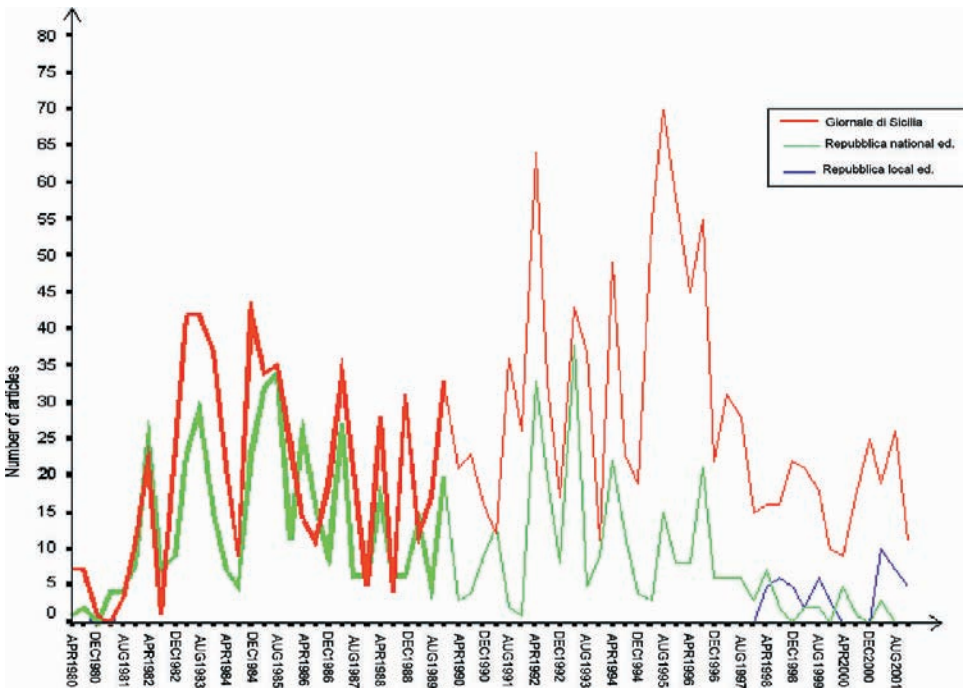


FIGURE 8.3. Articles published by four-month period and daily newspaper (1980–2001).

over time for the number of articles published per four-month period for the three newspapers. A fairly irregular change over time is seen, with peaks and drops that, except in some specific periods, are similar for the *Giornale di Sicilia* and the national edition of *La Repubblica*. Naturally, the newspaper that dedicates the most number of articles to women from the mafia is the *Giornale di Sicilia*, probably because it is a regional newspaper in a region where mafia crime is powerfully rooted.

There are, however, points of dissimilarity: the first and second four-month periods in 1986, the third four-month period in 1991, and the first four-month period in 1997. These periods show a trend inversion; wherever there is a peak for one newspaper, there is a drop in articles in the other. This fact, interesting in itself, should be analyzed more deeply in subsequent research, particularly in the cases of women referred to by the articles during the periods when the greatest discrepancies are recorded. Instead, here we observe what emerges from the classification of the articles based on the variables we have indicated and previously described. Table 6 reports the distribution of articles by criminal organization of reference; we see that a great majority of the items regard Cosa Nostra (72.4%); which could be due to the greater number of articles examined in the *Giornale di Sicilia*, a newspaper particularly attentive to the affairs of the Sicilian mafia organization. In fact, Figure 8.4, which compares data from the two newspapers, seems to confirm

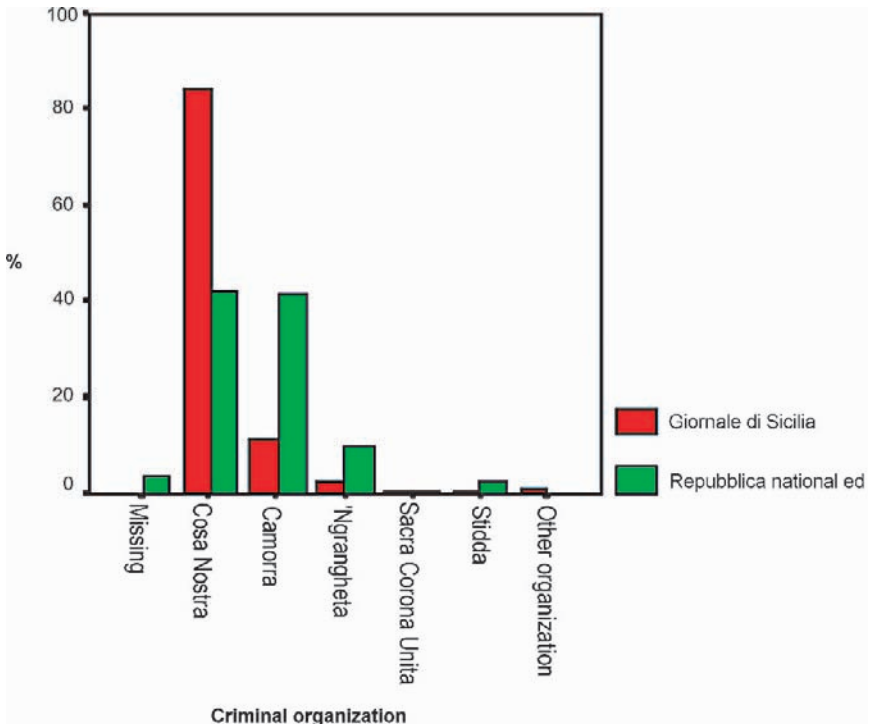


FIGURE 8.4. Articles published by newspaper and criminal organization of reference.

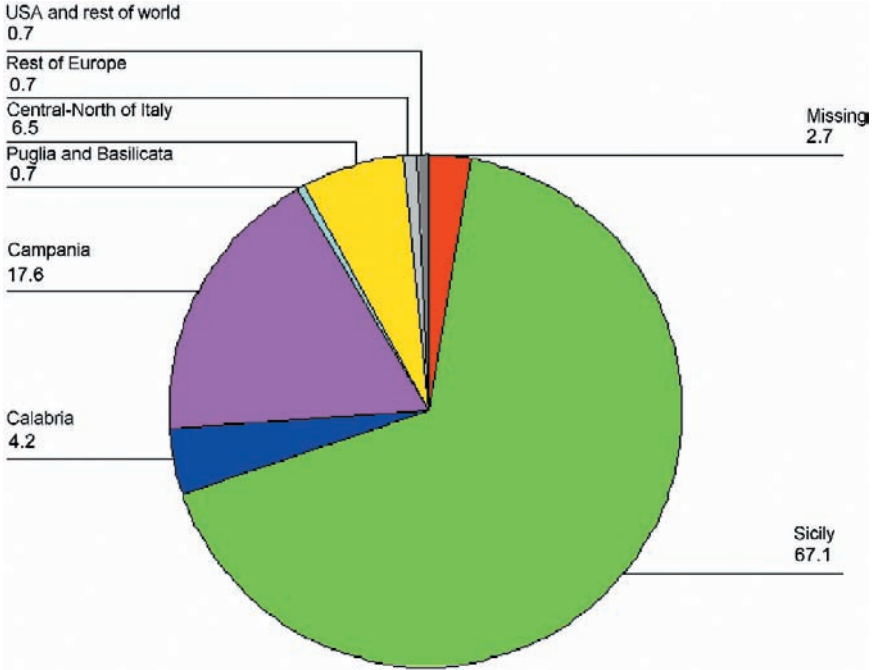


FIGURE 8.5. Articles by area of origin of the women cited.

this interpretation, especially where the number reaches similar values of articles published in *La Repubblica* that regard Camorra and Cosa Nostra.

The local Sicilian newspaper gives greater attention to Cosa Nostra (84.3% of the articles), almost totally ignoring the other criminal organizations, while the national edition of *La Repubblica* shows a greater number of articles on the other organizations, above all the Camorra and ‘Ndrangheta. There are some missing data due to the fact that identification of the criminal organization was not always indicated in the article. Other difficulties in gathering data will be observed throughout this analysis.

To confirm our hypothesis that interest in a certain type of criminal organization depends on the newspaper, we calculated the Cramer association index for this, which was equal to 0.427. This value confirms the presence of an association of medium intensity.⁴ Consistent with what was seen earlier, the women cited come almost totally from Sicily and Campania, as shown in Figure 8.5.

As observed in Figure 8.6, the facts cited in the articles mostly relate to Sicily and Campania. Nevertheless, a significant percentage relate to regions in the central north of Italy, probably indicating an expansion of the activity of mafia-type organizations into those territories.

We felt it of interest to classify the articles by area of origin of the women cited and area of occurrence of the cited events to see whether there is any connection

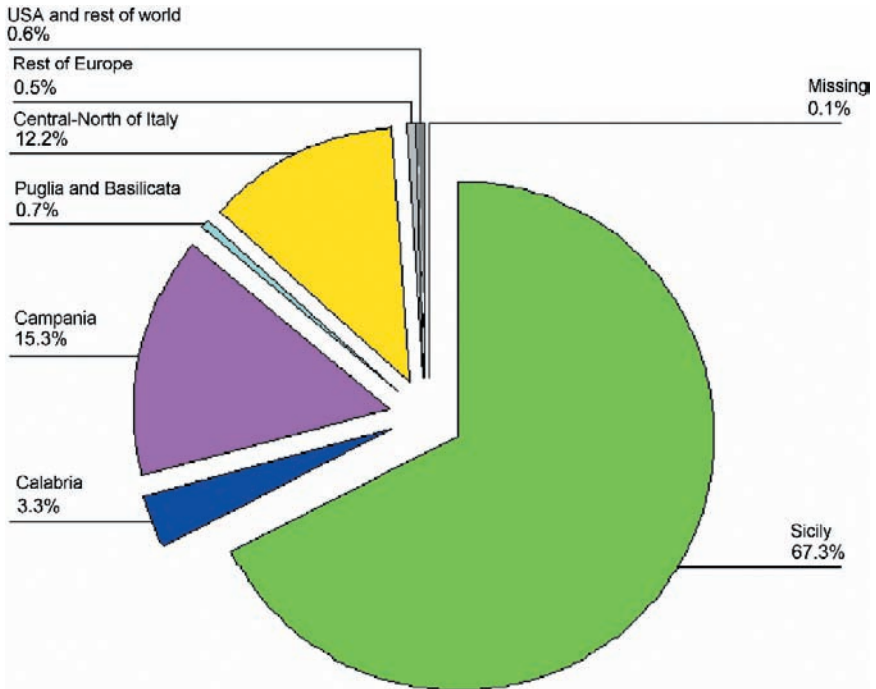


FIGURE 8.6. Articles by geographical area of occurrence of the cited facts.

between the two variables. Data in Table 8.7 on the joint distribution of the two variables show the presence of a strong relationship between the women's original areas and those where the events cited occurred; the association index also confirms this interpretation ($V = 0.81$). This seems to confirm the hypothesis that mafia-type criminal organizations are strongly rooted territorially in their members' areas of origin. We note that the number of articles classified is lower with respect to the total articles selected because of missing cases due to the impossibility of classifying all the articles within the established categories.

In order to outline the profile of women connected to mafia-type organizations, we examined two other variables: the age of the women and their position with respect to the men belonging to the criminal organizations cited in the articles. Table 8.8 reports the distribution of the number of articles based on the women's relationships with the men. It becomes fairly evident we are dealing here mostly with wives and sisters of men inside mafia organizations. The general total exceeds the overall number of the articles because each woman may simultaneously hold different positions in terms of family relationships with men from the criminal organizations (for example, wife, mother, and sister).

In terms of the age of the women cited (see Table 8.9), there is a high number of young or very young women; it should be stressed that the women's age is only rarely mentioned in articles, particularly in case of arrests. Therefore, this

TABLE 8.7. Distribution of articles by geographical area of origin of women and occurrence of cited events.

Area of origin	Number of cited events for given area of occurrence							Total
	Sicily	Calabria	Campania	Puglia and Basilicata	Central-North of Italy	Rest of Europe	United States, South America, rest of world	
Sicily	1,489	1			42	3	1	1,536
Calabria	2	71			23			96
Campania	20	2	333	1	46			402
Puglia and Basilicata				14	1			15
Central-North of Italy	14	1	12		121			148
Rest of Europe	3			4	8		15	
United States, South America, and rest of world	2		1				12	15
Total	1,530	75	346	15	237	11	13	2,227

TABLE 8.8. Distribution of articles by the position of women with respect to the men in the mafia organization cited in the article.

Women's position	Number of articles	Percent
Mother	256	9.1
Wife	914	32.5
Common-law wife	221	7.8
Lover	121	4.3
Daughter	234	8.3
Sister	459	16.3
Other blood relationship	207	7.4
Relationship other than blood	404	14.3
Total	2816	100.0

aspect of the survey was frequently done using bibliographical and documentary sources, trial proceedings, and other sources. The difficulty in establishing with any certainty the age of the women cited in the articles led us to categorize three rather broad classes; however, this did not completely eliminate the problem. This explains the presence of 464 missing data. We also analyzed the distribution of articles by age and newspaper, but no substantial differences arose in this case.

We felt we could obtain particularly important information by analyzing the type of role played by the women in the criminal organization. In the interpretation of the results (see Figure 8.7), we first point out that in 10% of the cases such information is missing. Nevertheless, a predominance clearly emerges of articles related to women with a "militant" role in the organization, a fact that indicates greater attention to the affairs of mafia women when their role fits the standard of active participation in criminal activities; this happens in the *Giornale di Sicilia* as well as *La Repubblica*. Some differences are noted for "no role," for which there is a higher percentage of articles in *La Repubblica*, and "chooses the family, following the organization," which appears more frequently in articles from the *Giornale di Sicilia*.

We asked whether the role of women in the criminal organization, as emerges from a reading of the newspaper articles, shows a constant trend or variations over time. The data for the period considered are shown in Figure 8.8.

As shown in the preceding figure, the predominance of "militant" women reached its highest point during the years 1983, 1985, and 1992. This rather irregular trend seems to follow the occurrence of specific events during the period under

TABLE 8.9. Distribution of articles by age of the women cited.

Age (years)	Number of articles	Percent
Below 35	819	44.9
Between 35 and 50	626	34.3
Above 50	380	20.8
Total	1,825	100.0
Missing	464	

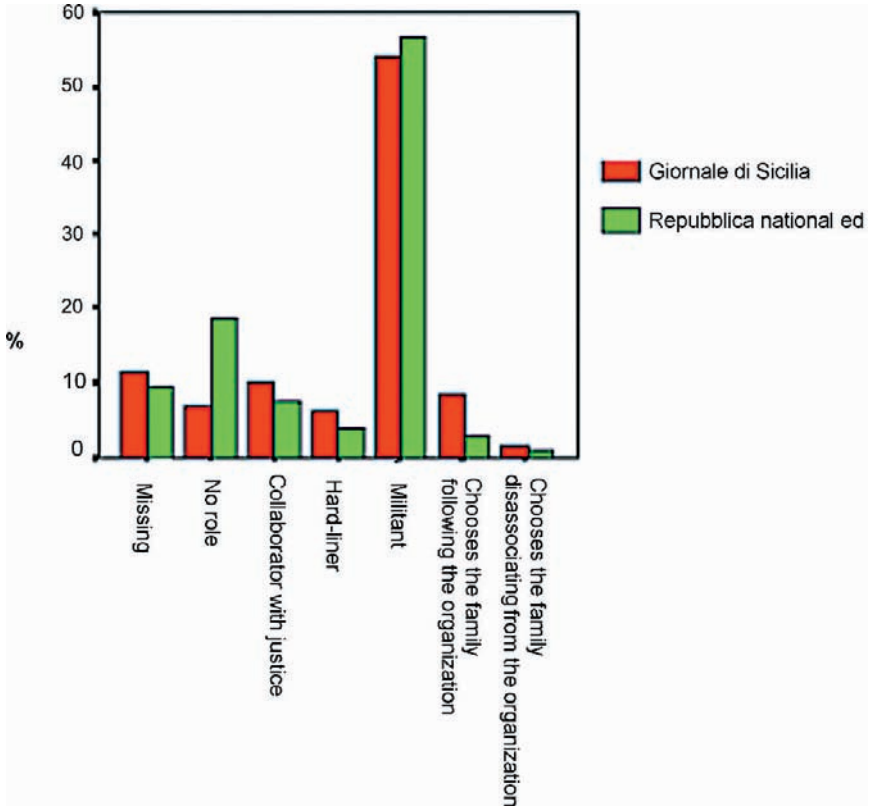


FIGURE 8.7. Articles by role of the women cited and the newspaper.

examination. In particular, as regards 1983, the investigations of drug trafficking managed by Cosa Nostra in connection with families from the Neapolitan Camorra and Cosa Nostra families established in the United States were brought to an end; and numerous women were involved in these investigations with different titles and roles. These results were the natural development of the large inquest that would lead to the so-called *Processo Spatola* (Spatola trial). The year 1985 was the year subsequent to the first revelations of Tommaso Buscetta and Salvatore Contorno; after this, investigations of Cosa Nostra led to significant results, in part thanks to the first use of techniques investigating assets and banks, as well as in the analysis of the mafia family context. The “militant” role emerged of women in managing assets and illegal activities. Elsewhere, in Campania the clash for territorial dominance intensified between two factions, the *Nuova Camorra Organizzata* and *Nuova Famiglia*; women came to light here as fully willing subjects, frequently deployed in defense of their kin and integral to the dynamics of the criminal syndicate. Finally, 1992 was the year in which women, especially those from Cosa Nostra, came out into the open. They emerged on one hand as state

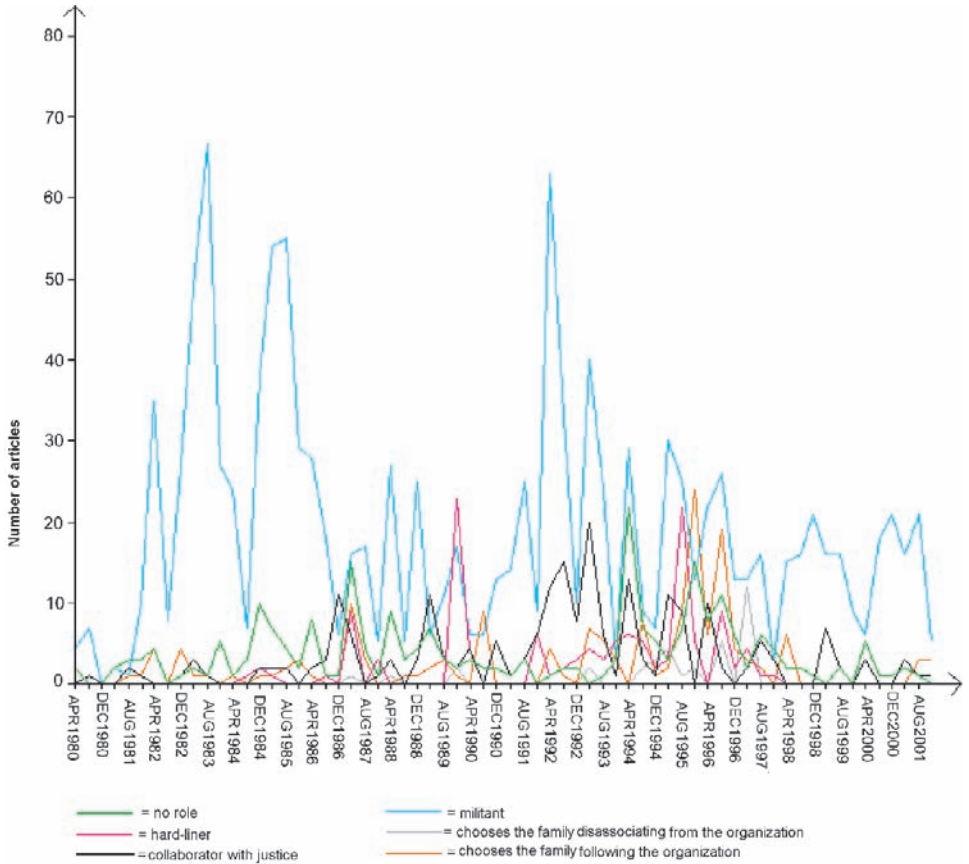


FIGURE 8.8. Articles by the role of the women cited during the period from 1980 to 2001; data from four-month periods.

witnesses or relatives of state witnesses, and on the other as willing subjects called on to perform an active role both on the outside, in managing processes of communication, as well as inside, where they exercised roles as representatives (and in some cases deputies) following the arrest or fugitive status of their male relatives.

We also felt it of interest to determine whether the information on the role of women in mafia organizations was related to the period the articles were published. For this purpose, we separated the articles dealing with women belonging to Cosa Nostra from those that mentioned women from other criminal organizations. In fact, though all classifications in this field are difficult and subject to criticism, and even though the evolutionary phases of the different national mafia organizations are not comparable, identification can be made, mainly with reference to the Sicilian mafia, of five different periods corresponding to five different phases of the organization: 1980 to 1983, the crucial period of the second mafia war;

TABLE 8.10. Distribution of articles about Cosa Nostra by the period of publication.

Time period	Number of articles	Percent
1980–1983	167	10.2
1984–1989	448	27.3
1990–1992	246	15.0
1993–1996	514	31.3
1997–2001	266	16.2
Total	1,641	100.0

1984 to 1989, the years of the first investigations of the Anti-mafia group and the “maxi-trial”; 1990 to 1992, the period after the first sentences of the “maxi-trial,” when Cosa Nostra attempted to reorganize; 1993 to 1996, the years after the massacres, characterized by arrests and state witnesses; 1997 to 2001, the years after the setbacks experienced in the preceding phase, when Cosa Nostra looked for new stability and forms of activity. All the other articles that make no specific reference to the Sicilian mafia have been subdivided into four five-year periods. The distribution of the articles regarding Cosa Nostra in the time period considered is reported in Table 8.10.

Based on the periods chosen, articles on Cosa Nostra were also classified by the role of the woman cited and the newspaper, as shown in Table 8.11. To begin with, we note the absence of women who *choose the family, disassociating themselves from the organization* and a strong percentage of women with a *militant* role in the period between 1980 and 1983 for both newspapers; this percentage declines noticeably in the following three periods. Only in the last period (1997 to 2001) do we find 77% of the women cited in the *Giornale di Sicilia* as *militant* in contrast to 5.3% in *La Repubblica*.

The distribution of articles by female role, though fairly similar for the two newspapers in the first period, becomes very different in the other periods. In the years following 1983, the percentages of *state witnesses* increased until 1992; subsequently, an increase is seen in women who *choose the family, following the organization*, especially in articles from the *Giornale di Sicilia*; instead, *La Repubblica* leaves out the *militant* role in favor of *absence of role*, a modality present in a high percentage. The association indices reported in Table 8.12 also show a growing diversification by the two newspapers with respect to the interpretation of the role of women.

Analysis of the data on the other criminal organizations, reported in Table 8.13, shows the absence of articles that mention women who *choose the family, disassociating themselves from the organization* and the near absence of articles on women who *choose the family, following the organization* (only 7.9% cited in the *Giornale di Sicilia* in the first period). Most of the articles refer to *militant* women; this occurs in all periods examined for the *Giornale di Sicilia* (from 1996 to 2001 this reaches 91.3%) and for the first three periods in the case of *La Repubblica*,

TABLE 8.12. Association indices between role of the women and newspaper by time period.

Time period	Cramer's V
1980–1983	0.068
1984–1989	0.223
1990–1992	0.244
1993–1996	0.415
1997–2001	0.578

which shows a strong decline in favor of *no role*, as we noted in the case of articles referring to Cosa Nostra.

Women who change different positions within the world of criminal organizations seem to come, for the most part, from families with a mafia tradition (Table 8.14). Nevertheless, the high amount of missing data suggests caution in interpreting the percentages.

One particularly important piece of information relates to the classification of article contents by newspaper (Table 8.15). Note that there are no substantial differences between the two newspapers. In particular, in most cases, the articles cite *news items referring to women*, followed by *background articles*. In contrast to the *Giornale di Sicilia*, *La Repubblica* published a higher number of articles that report a *news item referring to a man* (16.8% versus 6.8%).

The same type of analysis was performed for articles regarding only Cosa Nostra, based on different reference periods (see Table 8.16). The subdivision by period becomes interesting because the percentages based on time related to the different modalities are no longer similar for the two newspapers. Although the percentage of articles in the *Giornale di Sicilia* that report *news items referring to women* is fairly similar over the five periods, the percentage referred to in *La Repubblica* shifts from 81.5% in the period during the mafia wars to 28.7% in the period after the massacres and 47.4% in the final period, in which, among other things, again in the same newspaper, 42% of *news items referred to men*, as opposed to 1.6% for the *Giornale di Sicilia*. Concerning *background articles*, a fairly stationary percentage is seen in the Sicilian newspaper, while the percentage increases for the national newspaper, with the exclusion of the period between 1997 and 2001 (between 1980 and 1983 no *background articles* were noted).

Regarding the content of the articles on other mafia organizations (Table 8.17), the trend is rather variable: the *background articles*, present in the first period at around 19%, decrease noticeably in the second and become 45.7% in the third. *News items referring to women* are always most present, while *news items referring to men* (in which women are mentioned) appear above all in *La Repubblica*; in the latter period, there are none present in the *Giornale di Sicilia*. Few articles deal with the mention of women by third parties.

To more deeply analyze the *news item* variable, we identified six different modalities: *report or arrest; killing, wounding, or disappearance; updating of*

TABLE 8.14. Distribution of articles by the family of origin of the women cited (with or without mafia tradition).

Mafia tradition	Number of articles	Percent
Yes	844	73.8
No	299	26.2
Total	1,143	100.0
Missing	1,146	
Total	2,289	

trial proceedings; women’s statements; natural death; and other. The distribution of the articles pertaining to the news items reported in Table 8.18 shows a large majority of *reports and arrests* or *updates of trial proceedings*.

If we analyze the distribution of *news items* for the two different newspapers as regards Cosa Nostra in the five periods considered (Table 8.19), we note a substantial difference; the *Giornale di Sicilia* shows the highest percentages related to *reports and arrests*, which are fairly stable over time; accounts of *killings, woundings, or disappearances* decrease noticeably after 1992; and *women’s statements* increase gradually until 1996. This fact should be studied further also in relation to the hypotheses presented in the first part of the study of a possible correlation between visibility on the public scene of women in the mafia world and the internal events and strategies of the organization. This dynamic is less evident in *La Repubblica*, where instead we note a drastic reduction in articles on *reports and arrests* after 1989 in favor of the other categories, especially that of *women’s statements*; in the final period, no article is recorded on *updates of trial proceedings*, while 29.4% deal with *news items* that are not easily identifiable and are classified under the heading *other*. As regards the articles on other criminal organizations (Table 8.20), news items regarding *killings, woundings, or disappearances* are very frequent from 1986 to 1990 for both newspapers, with higher percentages in *La Repubblica* from 1996 to 2001. We also note a constant drop in articles related to *updates of trial proceedings*, while there are few *women’s statements* (with the exception of the last period in *La Repubblica*). Greater attention will be given to this interesting fact in the future.

TABLE 8.15. Distribution of articles by content and newspaper (percentages).

Type of article	<i>Giornale di Sicilia</i>	<i>La Repubblica</i> (national edition)	Total
Background article	28.7	24.2	27.4
Third-party citation	4.5	0.1	3.3
News item referring to women	60.0	58.9	59.6
News item referring to men	6.8	16.8	9.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

TABLE 8.18. Distribution of articles by type of news item.

Type of news item	Number of articles	Percent
Report or arrest	598	37.5
Killing, wounding, or disappearance	247	15.5
Update of trial proceedings	499	31.3
Woman's statement	140	8.8
Natural death	6	0.4
Other	104	6.5
Total	1,594	100.0
Missing	695	
Total	2,289	

Table 8.21 reports, by newspaper, the provinces where the news items occurred in the articles considered, showing only those with a total percentage greater than 1.5%. As can be seen, most of the articles regard events that occurred in Sicily (six Sicilian provinces together have 76.2% of the articles in the *Giornale di Sicilia*), while the articles published in *La Repubblica* also relate to events in Naples and other cities with noteworthy percentages, showing that the national newspaper gives greater importance to news regarding the Camorra and other criminal organizations and is not limited to Cosa Nostra.

Table 8.22 reports the number of women cited by their original geographical area. The two distributions show some diversity, consistent with the type of newspaper; the *Giornale di Sicilia* gives more news on Sicilian women (74.4%), while articles in *La Repubblica* also give importance to women from Campania and Calabria. Only a small percentage of women were cited from other areas.

The bulk of the information given thus far, together with the even greater information from data to be processed and cross-referenced and variables to be correlated, presents an extremely interesting picture for further consideration.

In this chapter, we have kept mainly on the descriptive plane, and analyzed only a part of the variables examined in the study. The time limits for this phase of the study, the difficulty in collecting and systematically examining the materials, and the short amount of time between the conclusion of data collection and preparation of the report did not allow us to proceed too far beyond the analytical control of the collected data as a preliminary to any subsequent treatment. Despite all this, many very interesting points for consideration and aspects for further study have already emerged in this first phase; important details have been added to our knowledge of the role of women in the mafia world that indicate paths for further study and hypotheses with the help of other types of data and sources. Subsequent phases of this work will therefore aim at further study and interpretation of our data both in their correlation with studies on the same phenomenon in other environments and with other methodologies. A crucial point of the analysis will be reference to individual women as the beginning of further study. Meanwhile, we feel we have accomplished something useful by beginning a systematic exploration—though

TABLE 8.21. Distribution of articles by province where the cited facts occurred.

Province where the news item occurred	<i>Giornale di Sicilia</i>	<i>La Repubblica</i>	Totals
Agrigento	3.0	0.9	2.4
Caltanissetta	7.7	1.6	5.9
Catania	13.2	5.9	11.0
Genoa	1.2	2.2	1.5
Messina	2.0	0.6	1.6
Milan	1.6	1.9	1.7
Naples	9.2	27.7	14.7
Palermo	44.5	28.8	39.8
Reggio Calabria	1.4	5.8	2.7
Rome	2.4	13.4	5.6
Trapani	5.8	2.8	4.9

Note: Provinces are excluded with total percentages less than 1.5%.

TABLE 8.22. Distribution of women cited in the articles by geographical area and newspaper (percentages).

Geographical area	<i>Giornale di Sicilia</i>	<i>La Repubblica</i> (national edition)
Sicily	74.4	45.9
Calabria	3.5	13.7
Campania	10.4	30.6
Puglia and Basilicata	0.9	1.4
Central North	8.4	7.7
Rest of Europe	1.0	0.0
United States, South America, and rest of world	1.3	0.8
Total	100.0	100.0

limited to journalistic sources—of a world that is for the most part unknown and difficult to explore.

Notes

1. This study is the result of a joint collaboration by authors and has been prepared in the form published here by A. Dino (first section) and A. M. Milito and A. Oliveri (second and third sections).
2. The work group that carried out the examination, collection, and classification of press materials was made up of Laura Cavallo, Raffaella Milia, Maria Romana, Soccorsa Romana, and Viviana Truzzi.
3. ISTAT, *Annuario delle Statistiche Giudiziarie Penali*, Introduction.
4. Cramer's index measures the association between two variables and may assume values between 0 (absence of association) and 1 (maximum association).

II

An International Comparison

9

Women in Organized Crime in Albania

Fitore Paluca Belay

This chapter considers the evolution of Albanian legislation as it relates to women accused of crimes, emphasizing the changes following the political transformation that occurred with the fall of Communism; it presents a broad view of crimes that involve Albanian women and the main characteristics of women convicted of various crimes between 1991 and 2001.

In reading this study the difficulty of gathering statistical data needs to be kept in mind. Collection of data previous to 1991 was impossible, while statistics from the subsequent period are related only to certain types of crime. Despite repeated attempts to acquire data regarding women incarcerated in Albanian jails, obtaining complete statistical data was impossible. Furthermore, obtaining the data that are available depends on one's access to political figures and willingness to pay for this access. There are no precise data regarding inmates at the central offices of the Albanian Department of Prisons previous to 1997. In addition, the prison administration was demolished, and a large part of the documentation was lost in that year.

Unfortunately, therefore, the data presented here are only approximate and may not reflect the real situation of crimes committed by women. The only precise data are for the city of Tirana for the years between 1997 and 2001.

The Evolution of Albanian Legislation

During the totalitarian period, Albanian legislation was among the most backward in the Eastern Bloc countries. The single-party political system approved by the 1976 Constitution and the penal code of 1977 (in particular the section on Crimes against the State) led to the isolation of the Albanian people from the rest of the world.

This system declined with the fall of Communism, which led to political, social, and judicial transformations. The latter was seen in the changes brought by the new penal code of 1995, which included laws on the essential rights and freedoms of the individual. Among the many differences from the old code were the following: the age of legal punishment was raised from fourteen to sixteen; war crimes were

shifted to the military code; and many crimes considered as being against the state were eliminated, with greater subsequent attention to individual freedoms of expression. Furthermore, today, in contrast to the past, the accused has the right to legal representation.

Crimes Committed by Women

In Albania, the incidence of women in crime is minimal. Compared to data regarding the Communist period, with regard to crimes that women commit, homicide remains high, and the number of women has increased in crimes such as theft, kidnapping, counterfeiting official documents, and crimes against “public morals.” Furthermore, it is interesting to note the presence of women in new types of crimes such as drug trafficking and kidnapping children for sale or exploitation.

The opening of Albania to the world not only led to a greater circulation of people, but it also unleashed a boom in the illegal traffic of human beings. This brought the need for greater attention to moral crimes. While the code of 1977 contained only one provision regarding prostitution, the new law provided for three categories of these crimes: those who incite commission of the crime, intermediaries, and those who receive payment.

The exploitation of prostitution consists in deceiving women with talk and promises so as to encourage and lead them into prostitution, acting as a connection between the woman and the customer, and collecting payments from the woman or other people. This crime is committed with the direct aim of profit. There are many cases of women and men belonging to gangs or traffickers who force women into prostitution and demand part or most of their earnings.

The new law includes more severe penalties when the exploitation of prostitution occurs under aggravating conditions (Law no. 8279, 19 January 1998). Many cases are found of women and men who have committed this crime by exploiting minors, using deceit, force, or violence to compel the person to practice prostitution abroad, involving people from their family or with relationships of friendship or employment, or profiting from physical or mental disabilities. The law also covers the commission of this crime by a criminal organization against a person who is forced to practice prostitution outside the Albanian Republic.

The new penal code also includes the crime of maintaining a place for prostitution through financing or rent of places intended for the exploitation of prostitution. Frequently, the individuals sentenced for this crime are pimps, who thus have been charged with two crimes.

In addition, the new code has important changes in the section on “acts against children, marriage and the family,” demonstrating a sensibility in conformance with international conventions in this area. In fact, the old code did not include various issues such as employment of minors, improper appropriation of children, commerce in children, and so on.

In reference to penal actions against property, women are frequently involved in the theft of real property of great economic value. In the case of theft with the use

of violence, the woman is usually an accomplice, collaborator, or instigator, but never the perpetrator. Women are involved in theft with abuse of power, a special type of crime included in the new penal code. Women are also somewhat present in crimes of fraud for profit, also included in the new code, and are involved in many cases of swindling, fraud, and counterfeiting, at times in the special role of director or manager of public or private companies. Falsification/counterfeiting, that is, partial or complete change of documents with false information for the purpose of profit or any other type of advantage, is a frequent phenomenon in female criminal activity in Albania.¹

Female involvement in criminal activity has only rarely included the commission of other crimes such as smuggling, kidnapping, armed robbery, illegal cultivation, and so on.

Characteristics of Women Involved in Criminal Activities (1991–2001)

Most women convicted and previously convicted between 1991 and 2001 have a secondary-school diploma; 50% of the women have been previously arrested; 86% are married; 82% come from rural villages; most of them fall into the age group between 25 and 40; and around 50% come from especially destitute Albanian families. Of the total number of women convicted, 61% were guilty of homicide, 0.68% of fraud (six cases), and 0.55% of prostitution (five cases). Percentages regarding other penal crimes are minimal. Around 90% of those convicted and formerly convicted of homicide come from Albanian villages, particularly those located in the northern part of the country; those who commit crimes of fraud and theft come from urban areas; and almost 100% of prostitution is represented by women from southern Albania. (See Tables 9.1 to 9.10.)

TABLE 9.1. Women convicted from 1991 to 2001 based on level of education.

No.	Year	Number of convictions	Education				
			Illiterate	Fourth grade	Eighth grade	Diploma	University
1	1991	5	—	—	3	2	—
2	1992	1	—	—	—	1	—
3	1993	10	1	3	4	2	—
4	1994	4	1	—	2	1	—
5	1995	10	—	—	8	2	—
6	1996	8	—	—	7	1	—
7	1997	—	—	—	—	—	—
8	1998	9	1	3	3	2	—
9	1999	6	—	2	3	—	1
10	2000	9	—	2	5	1	1
11	2001	2	2	—	—	—	—
	Total	64	5	10	35	12	2

TABLE 9.2. Women convicted from 1991 to 2001 based on marital status and place of residence.

No.	Year	Number of convictions	Marital status and place of residence			
			Married	Single	Country	City
1	1991	5	5	—	3	2
2	1992	1	1	—	1	—
3	1993	10	6	4	7	3
4	1994	4	3	1	2	2
5	1995	10	10	—	4	6
6	1996	8	7	1	3	5
7	1997	—	—	—	—	—
8	1998	9	8	1	7	2
9	1999	6	5	1	4	2
10	2000	9	8	1	7	2
11	2001	2	2	—	2	—
12	Total	64	55	9	40	24

TABLE 9.3. Women convicted from 1998 to 2001 based on geographical area.

No.	Year	Number of convictions	District													
			Korça	Mat	Elbasan	Tirana	Kruja	Lezhe	Fier	Durres	Kurbin	Bulqize	Kukes	Librazhd	Diber	Shkodra
1	1998	9	1	3	1	1	2	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
2	1999	6	1	—	—	—	—	2	1	1	—	2	—	—	—	—
3	2000	9	1	—	1	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	1
4	2001	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Total		26	3	2	2	2	4	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	—

TABLE 9.4. Women in custody awaiting trial based on place of residence and marital status.

No.	Year	Number of women	Marital status		Residence	
			Married	Single	Country	City
1	1999	1	—	1	1	—
2	2000	7	6	1	5	2
3	2001	19	13	6	15	4
Total		27	19	8	21	6

TABLE 9.5. Women in custody based on age and education

No.	Year	Number in custody	Age (years)			Education				
			14–25	25–40	40+	Illiterate	Fourth grade	Eighth grade	High school	University
1	1999	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
2	2000	7	1	6	—	—	1	3	3	—
3	2001	19	4	11	4	2	4	7	5	1
Total		27	6	17	4	2	5	11	8	1

TABLE 9.6. Women in custody based on crime committed.

No.	Year	Number in custody	Crime									
			Homicide	Attempted homicide	Robbery Robbery	Robbery with assault	Human trafficking	Prostitution	Fraud	Aiding and abetting	Drug trafficking	Incitement to prostitution
1	1999	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	2000	7	2	—	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	1
3	2001	19	7	1	—	2	1	5	1	1	1	—
4	Total	27	10	1	2	4	1	5	1	1	1	1

TABLE 9.7. Women convicted based on crime committed.

No.	Year	Number convicted	Crime						
			Homicide	Attempted homicide	Incitement to prostitution	Theft with assault	Theft	Fraud	Crimes not reported
1	1991	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	1992	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	1993	10	5	1	—	2	—	—	2
4	1994	4	2	1	—	—	1	—	—
5	1995	10	7	—	1	—	—	1	1
6	1996	8	5	—	2	—	—	—	1
7	1997	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
8	1998	9	7	—	—	—	—	2	—
9	1999	6	6	—	—	—	—	—	—
10	2000	9	7	—	—	—	—	1	1
11	2001	2	1	—	—	—	—	1	—
	Total	64	46	2	3	2	1	5	5

TABLE 9.8. Women in custody based on city of residence

No.	Year	Number in custody	City of residence												
			Saranda	Fier	Berat	Durres	Kruja	Pogradec	Tirana	Mat	Kurbin	Lezhe	Shkodra	Mirdita	Kukes
1	1999	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	2000	7	—	—	—	4	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
3	2001	19	—	3	1	3	—	1	3	1	1	1	2	2	1
	Total	27	1	3	1	7	1	1	3	1	1	1	2	3	1

In light of the these characteristics, without entering into an analysis of the causes and factors that determine criminal behavior in general, it seems clear that certain conditions in Albanian society can explain the involvement of women in criminal activities. Naturally, psychological factors can be added to this, personal factors that require different individual therapies furnished by specialized institutes.

The social, political, and economic transitions of Albanian society, along with poverty and unemployment, have particularly aggravated the situation for Albanian women and influenced criminal behaviour. During the 1990s, government political and judicial institutions were fragile and almost completely absent. This legal

TABLE 9.9. Foreign citizens convicted from 1999 to 2001.

No.	Year	Number in custody	Citizenship		
			Moldova	Romania	Ukraine
1	1999	8	6	2	—
2	2000	30	20	10	—
3	2001	2	1	—	1
	Total	40	27	12	1

Note: Before this period, no foreign citizen had ever been convicted in Albania. From 1999 to 2001, 40 foreign women were convicted, all for the crime of prostitution. Under Albanian law, sentences in these cases varied from ten days to one year. Two foreign women are currently serving sentences in Albanian prisons.

This list refers only to foreign citizens, and the numbers are not included in statistics regarding convictions of women with Albanian citizenship.

TABLE 9.10. Women convicted from 1991 to 2001.

No.	Year	Sentenced at beginning of year	Sentenced during year	Acquitted	Age of those convicted (years)		
					14–25	25–40	40+
1	1991	34	5	16	4	1	—
2	1992	23	1	—	—	1	—
3	1993	24	10	7	4	5	1
4	1994	27	4	—	1	3	—
5	1995	31	10	20	3	5	2
6	1996	21	8	9	3	3	2
7	1997	—	—	—	—	—	—
8	1998	28	9	—	2	6	1
9	1999	37	6	5	1	4	1
10	2000	38	9	4	1	6	2
11	2001	43	2	—	—	1	1
12	Total	64	61	19	35	10	—

Note: In 1997, prisoners and ex-prisoners left isolation when prisons had to be demolished. In the first six months of 1997 and thereafter, some prisoners and ex-prisoners were unable to avail themselves of this amnesty and were forced to serve the rest of their sentences. This clarifies the data relative to the twenty-eight women in Albanian prisons in 1998.

vacuum was filled by lawlessness and anarchy. The code of traditional law—the *Kanun*—reacquired value in Albanian society. According to this code, women were defined as animals, good only for work, “human beasts of burden.”

These traditional principles are widespread in the northern part of the country and rural areas. In general, relationships in Albanian families between men and women and between parents and children are patriarchal. The man has the role of father-boss at home. Strengthened by his position, he physically and psychologically violates the rights of his wife. This treatment has frequently led women in that environment to react to the point of killing their rapists.²

The opening of Albania to the developed world has led some people to move legally and even more illegally to the West (particularly Italy) in search of new opportunities. Faced with this opening, the Albanian people have found themselves unprepared but fascinated, simultaneously confused and curious; they have shown the courage and desire to learn about the new world, but lack the economic possibilities to do so. Trained to survive under a dictatorial system, Albanians were not able to gradually adapt to consumerist needs. The desire to quickly accumulate the money to satisfy what they had dreamt of all their lives was so predominant that it help to stimulate the idea that the use of any means to become rich was legitimate. This framework may explain the practice of prostitution,³ fraud (in two cases, women in Albania founded companies with pyramid structures), and theft, going so far as trafficking in children.

Finally, it is important to consider that over the last fifteen years the Albanian population has undergone great social traumas such as the absence of a cultural heritage, defects in the educational system, and the long period when religion was banned in the country.

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Notes

1. One case of falsifying documents (Article 191) was that of Jorida Bergasi, who testified: "In 1993, I met Femi Cici, the man I lived with, and in 1994 we left the country for Italy. In 1996, our son, Efrem Cici, was born and registered at the registry office in Milan. After this period, differences in opinion began and our marriage entered a crisis. My husband systematically violated my rights. For this reason, I made various reports to the Italian police. Fehmi always apologized but then would start again and continue. In the end, I was pregnant and left my home with the other child and found refuge with an

- Italian family. This was to protect myself against the assaults, but I was most interested in saving my child who was traumatized by the violence and torture he'd seen inflicted on his mother. After I ran away from home, Fehmi Cici threatened me again and I reported him to the Milan police. On 27 March 2001, Fehmi, during a meeting, took my child and never gave him back. This caused me great pain and since I was very worried I asked about him and discovered that Fehmi Cici had managed to take the child to his family in Albania. After this news, I quickly returned to Albania and made a report to the Court to begin an investigation of my child's kidnapping by his father; for this reason I, along with a friend, changed my child's surname and registered him with my surname, assuming full responsibility. Your Honor, you must understand that till now I have not been able to see my son and this is like torture for me. I am certain this situation will also have caused damage to my son, an innocent who has nothing to do with all this. I understand my method of acting and the action of changing the information at the registry office was wrong and illegal, but you must understand I could not control my actions because the violence against my person as a woman and a mother was continuous, while even though Fehmi Cici illegally took away my son and registered him with his family, oddly enough nothing has happened to him. Only now do I understand I must win the right to be legal guardian of the child without falsifying the document from the registry office. So, because of my action and in the present position in which I find myself for this illegal action committed toward the registry office, I understand why you would not want to help me. But please help me, because you must understand I didn't want to do anything against society; I only wanted to have my son back, an orphan with a living mother. I would also like to add that Fehmi is a bastard. He was already married and never told me and the same thing happened that happened with my son. I believe that in my case the court will make a well-considered decision." At the end of the trial, the court declared the defendant guilty of the crime of presenting false documentation to the registry office.
2. Data related to prisoners convicted of homicide, furnished by social worker K.L at the Tirana penitentiary:
 1. Albana Hatia, 17 years old, born and residing in the village of Babrru, district of Tirana, eight years of education, unemployed, single, sentenced in 1990 in a first-level court to fifteen years in prison for the murder of her father (a homicide qualified as "revenge homicide" under Article 84/a of the 1977 Penal Code). Following continuous sexual assault by her father, the girl killed him with an axe and then burned the body.
 2. Lumturi Hoxha, 25 years old, born and residing in the village of Muhurr, district of Dibra, eight years of elementary school, married with two children, farm worker, no previous penal record, sentenced in 1994 by the court in Dibra to 25 years in prison for the murder of her husband and oldest son through the use of explosives. In the judgment of this homicide, the fact was taken into consideration that her parents married the girl against her will to a man 20 years her senior, a man she not only did not love but hated. After several years of marriage, she began an intimate relationship with her sister's husband. Having suspected that her husband had discovered this relationship, one evening she placed explosives under the bed, causing the death of her husband and son.
 3. Dorina Kotorri, 17 years old, elementary school, born and residing in the city of Gramsh, arrested in August 1998 for the murder of her mother. According to the judge's statement, the defendant had been systematically raped by her uncle; to save herself from this told she her mother, who threatened to throw her out of

the house and made her feel guilty; the girl reacted by killing her mother with a knife.

Other cases with data furnished by social worker A.F.:

1. Majlinda Dema, 32 years old, born and residing in the outlying area of the city of Durres, no previous criminal record, married with seven children, sentenced by the court of Durres in 1995 to twenty years in prison for complicity in kidnapping for profit. The accused collaborated in kidnapping the older children for sale abroad; they had already sold their youngest child for the sum of US\$450.
 2. Mariola Musa, 24 years old, eight years of education, born and residing in the city of Patos, no previous criminal record, single, sentenced to ten years in prison for the murder of her son at birth. After the normal birth of her child, and after her own health had improved, the accused threw the newborn into the street causing his immediate death. This homicide was committed under the psychological pressure of public opinion that considered the birth of a child out of wedlock shameful.
 3. Sofije Lleshi, around 35 years old, born and residing in the village of Burrel, elementary school education, no previous criminal record, married with three children, sentenced by the court of Tirana on 22 January 1999 to a term of six years in prison for the murder of her husband in justifiable self-defense, Law 83 of the Penal Code. The husband continually abused her and the children. He frequently stayed away from home in the evenings, and when it was cold, tied Sofie to the bed in the room. One day in 1997 he returned home in his customary state of drunkenness, took his Kalashnikov, fired a shot into the ceiling, and forced his wife to eat her own feces. The woman managed to escape and shot and killed him with a revolver. In this situation and with this evidence, the court decided that the homicide was committed within an extreme context of legitimate self-defense.
3. The lawyer S.K. described the case of Fatmira Vangjel Hysa, accused of the crime of prostitution (Article 113). The District Court of Tirana, for reasons of public order, ordered her incarceration and subsequently confirmed her detention. According to the defense, the court should have considered important factors regarding the accused such as her young age (born in 1983), her illiteracy, the precarious condition of her mother's health, and the absence of a penal record. The Appeals Court of Tirana, after having examined the case, accepted the request, and changed her prison term to house arrest.

Another interesting case involves a woman, Deshira Veleđi, convicted of inciting a minor (Article 129). According to her statements in court prepared with the defense attorney: "In November 2000, my young daughter Anjeza Gjoni brought home for me some *lekes* (Albanian currency) and *drachmas* (former Greek currency). Thinking she was telling me the truth at that time, I immediately asked her how she got or where she found this money. She answered she had found the money in an old car. I'm especially sorry for having trusted her, because I want to tell the truth. I am not a thief and neither are my children. The temptation was great and I took that money believing the version my daughter told me. Naturally, this mistake was followed by an even greater mistake because I don't know how much I'll pay for what I have done to my daughter. But I have the strength and courage to fight this and because of this ask to be helped and have the chance to help my daughter and myself. Mister President, I ask for mercy for my guilt, keeping in mind the conditions of my family that I hope will help in my defense. In the second place, I am divorced, I care for two small children, a 13-year-old daughter and 16-year-old son; my husband has gone to Germany and I have had no more news

from him; in addition, he never fulfilled his obligations toward his children. This is the first time I have been involved in a penal trial. I have no home and live in a temporary shack where cold and heat enter unobstructed. Understanding my life and the life of my children, my question is, what will happen to my children if I have to go to prison given that they need to be cared for and loved by their mother and need to eat, to be educated to become good, honest people in their lives.” The court of first instance after having examined the evidence, declared the defendant guilty and sentenced her to three months in prison, equal to time served under house arrest.

10

Women in Organized Crime in Argentina

Adriana Rossi

Introduction

This research has had to confront the invisibility not only of women and their links to organized crime, but also to organized crime as such. No specific studies exist on organized crime in Argentina that reliably show its existence or define its characteristics. The theoretical category of organized crime is at the center of a debate between jurists and criminologists, and its validity and applicability are controversial.

This situation has made room for wide-ranging interpretations of the concept of organized crime. There are those who think that any crime committed by more than one person can be defined as organized crime, those who state that organized crime is nothing if not an illegal association, and others who deny the existence of any form of organized crime in Argentina; in addition, noted jurists argue the legitimacy of the concept itself and show the difficulty of its application.¹ Still others have undertaken specific studies to produce a theoretical model that gives a precise conceptual identification of organized crime while at the same time safeguarding those rights and freedoms its application could place at risk.²

This research has had to take these difficulties and limits into account, becoming an exploratory study of criminal phenomena that somehow could be connected to so-called organized crime, taking into consideration not only the type of crimes committed, but also the characteristics of the organization committing them and its relationship to power. In this way, we have been able to identify criminal organizations that fall under the definition of mafias and other forms of organized crime that, thanks to the close ties that connect them with the spheres of power, penetrate deeply into the fabric of society and economy of the country.

Regarding the study of women and their inclusion in organized crime as active as well as passive, though still participating, subjects, there is almost a total vacuum. There are no studies in this field, and discussion has only recently begun on the role of women not just as victims of criminal activities and violence, but also as carrying out or abetting such activities. However, these few studies also lack a gender perspective.

Faced with this absence, we were forced to turn to the most recent statistical data on female crime. We attempted to produce a review of women connected to criminal organizations and analyze their behaviour and, where possible, self-perception. The results are still only suggestive, requiring further study as well as the development of conceptual tools and specific methodologies. This is only the beginning of a new and unexplored line of investigation in Argentina.

The Invisibility of the Visible: Criminal Organizations in Argentina

The Mafia in Argentina

From the *Mano Nero* to the Mafia: Historical Background

Although the time period in this research covers two decades—from 1980 to 2000—it is of great interest to analyze the attempt to transplant the Italian mafia in its more than modest—though still dangerous—Argentine version during the first three decades of the twentieth century. This attempt did not survive. The mafia disappeared; only a small business remained in the hands of Sicilian emigrants who were united in a sort of fraternity regulated by codes of honor, which was active until the early 1970s. Its power was strong especially in the city of Rosario, which became its most important center of operations.³ Nonetheless, the organization as such has disappeared. The heirs of those emigrants are today honest citizens with professions far from the world of crime.

Formation and Manifestation

The first crime of presumed mafia origin was committed in 1885⁴ in the city of Buenos Aires. From that moment on, there was a series of crimes attributed to a criminal organization called the *Mano Nera* (“The Black Hand”). Its origins were urban. The theater of its early criminal activities was the La Boca neighborhood near the port in Buenos Aires, an area where early settlements of Italian immigrants had been concentrated.

According to specialists on that period, the initial purpose of the organization consisted in helping their countrymen who found themselves facing serious difficulties integrating into a completely foreign society and culture, one quite different from that of their origins. In any case, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the *Mano Nera* was not entirely a mutual aid society. Its members, of Sicilian origin, engaged in extortion and protection rackets. They committed crimes out of vendettas, frequently in response to the rejection of the organization and its rules on the part of the victim or the violation of the law of silence, the law of *omertà*. People who seemed reluctant to kowtow to the *Mano Nera* received letters written by semi-literates filled with threats and recurring symbols such as a black hand, a red cross, or the profile of the devil.

From La Boca, the Mano Nera spread into other neighborhoods of the capital, establishing direct control over the main fruit and vegetable markets. The decisive action of the police impeded its further development and forced its members to search for other areas to carry out and expand their activities. The Mano Nero shifted toward the interior of Argentina, to Córdoba province and especially the province of Santa Fe.

Development

The transfer to other territories and the expansion of its activities caused changes in the organization. Though control of the markets⁵ continued to be its main interest, the mafia became involved in other types of activity such as kidnapping and extortion. Victims were frequently other Italians, mostly from Piedmont, who lived in rural areas and were employed in agriculture.

These activities required a form of division of labor that, in reality, ended up dividing the organization into sectors. Whereas in rural areas, kidnappings were carried out by so-called *campieri* (farmers, country people), in the city, groups of *ricottari* (blackmailers, extortionists) refined their operations and collected ransoms. Furthermore, there were agreements and ties between the two sectors that gave them common objectives and unified strategies, though they still retained some independence. Its method of operations led an analyst at the time (Pinazo 1918) to formulate the hypothesis that the organization—already called a mafia by the press—was in reality a company that, though not regularly organized as the collective imagination represented it, operated collectively with converging objectives and agreed-on effects. Without existing visibly, the society existed as if it were a “legal person” whose members shared “a certain way of perceiving things more than a structured organization” (ibid.) Whatever its real configuration, the *modus operandi* of the organization meant that the two provinces saw a significant increase in crime between 1912 and 1922, facilitated by the silence of those who were attacked, the inefficiency of the poorly equipped rural police, and the general corruption between rural commissioners and local authorities who accumulated their fortunes by guaranteeing impunity to the organization.

Rosario, the “Argentine Chicago”

Santa Fe was the more affected of the two provinces; in particular, the city of Rosario was transformed into the mafia’s center of operations. This port city on the shores of the Paraná River, an important center of cereal production with a large influx of European immigrants from various points of origin, was quickly transformed into a center for smuggling and all sorts of illegal businesses. Groups composed of members who shared the same citizenship were involved in these businesses; the Spanish controlled gambling, and Turks and Arabs specialized in drug trafficking. None of these groups ever became an actual “organization” except the feared “Zwi Migdal,” which was made up of Polish Jews who exercised control over the white slave traffic from Europe to Latin America through Buenos Aires and Rosario.

The presence of these organizations and criminal groups and their violent methods, which included conflicts and settling scores, turned Rosario into the so-called Argentine Chicago.⁶ What is more, all these groups were quickly transformed into branches of the mafia, to which they were forced to pay a percentage of their proceeds. This is the most evident indication of the mafia's ability to exercise pressure and influence over other organizations, and shows the level of power it achieved in the criminal world of the city. Despite its power, its very traditional mentality and methods of action led it to resist change until an innovator appeared, Juan Galiffi, also called "Chicho Grande"; born in Sicily, Galiffi immigrated to Argentina when he was seventeen years old and moved to Rosario after having committed various crimes in other cities.

Chicho Grande and Chicho Chico: The Twilight of the Mafia

The appearance of Chicho Grande coincided with a profound crisis that appeared in the mafia in 1928. That year, a political event placed the power of the organization in jeopardy. Bosses who had close ties with the organization that guaranteed them a monopoly over the market—the heart of the mafia's interests—were removed from their positions of power. So the mafia searched for a figure who commanded a broad consensus and could reorganize it. An assembly of the main bosses from Santa Fe province decided to assign Juan Galiffi command of the organization. He coordinated racketeering, loan sharking, fixed horse racing, and counterfeiting. A new period was inaugurated for the mafia, a period of success, marked by modernization and the powerful personality of Galiffi, who did business not only in Rosario, but even in Buenos Aires, where he frequented the highest social classes; although they treated him with disdain, they were more than happy to take his money in exchange for favors.

The fact Galiffi began to accumulate power did not please many members of the organization; some of these attempted to profit from the appearance of a rising star called "Chicho Chico" to compete with and attempt to eliminate Chicho Grande. Chicho Chico claimed his name was Ali Ben Amar de Sharpe and that he was of French origin, with an Algerian father and Egyptian mother. In reality, his name was Francisco Marrone, or Morrone, and his accent was noticeably Italian. De Sharpe was well integrated in the white slave trade; nevertheless, his charming personality allowed him access to high society; he even managed to marry a representative of the Rosario upper class. De Sharpe was not long in introducing gangster methods into the organization, specializing in kidnapping influential people.⁷

From the beginning, Chicho Grande saw the arrival of Chicho Chico as a danger to his power and the organization in general. War was declared, a war fed above all by the failure of the kidnapping of Ariel Ayerza, son of a powerful landowner. Chicho Grande went into action and had his rival eliminated, but by then it was too late. Shocked by the kidnapping and the subsequent death of the victim, the upper classes promoted a crusade against the mafia; this was tinged with racist sentiments that were echoed in the press and in particular led extremist right-wing elements to request stricter immigration laws.

Faced with this attack, Chicho Grande escaped and returned to Italy; the mafia accused him of the crime.

Later, banditry was carried out in the name of the mafia by criminals who passed themselves off as members of the organization, forcing the mafia—by then divided and fragmented—to intervene and “take them out.”

The deaths of Ayerza and De Sharpe and the self-exile of Chicho Grande marked the downfall and eventual disappearance of the mafia as an organization that, in the dreams of Chicho Chico, would have been large enough to conquer power in Argentina. Only one hope remained for the old bosses, faithful followers of Chicho Grande. This hope had a woman’s face.

Agata Galiffi, the Heiress

With a remarkable personality and green eyes that merited her nickname “*Gatta*” (“Cat”), Agata was the daughter of Chicho Grande, who introduced her to the world of the mafia and power. Born in 1916, at twenty-one she was already considered dangerous and showed a promising criminal career, which was uncommon for a woman, especially at the time. After her father took refuge in Italy, Agata, who had participated in the murder of Chicho Chico, which had been committed in Galiffi’s house, began to coordinate the counterfeiting of national and foreign currency and control a network of international spies for counterfeiting stocks. Her crimes extended into various parts of Argentina: Rosario, Buenos Aires, and the province of Tucumàn. In Tucumàn, in particular, Agata’s gang began to build a tunnel almost 100 meters long that led to the provincial bank, where she intended to exchange counterfeit banknotes with the banknotes stored in the Treasury. The attempt failed, and Agata was arrested on 23 May 1939. She was sentenced to nine years in jail; in the absence of a women’s prison, she was relegated to a 1- by 2-meter cell in a psychiatric hospital. With Agata’s arrest, the mafia definitively left the scene.

On regaining her freedom, Galiffi’s daughter left the world of crime, anonymously dedicated herself to agricultural activities that allowed her to support herself, and lived off her memories. Nevertheless, Agata had become legendary.⁸ Numerous articles refer to her activities when she was labeled the “Mafia Flower.” In these accounts, she is described as a cold, unscrupulous, cruel, and pitiless woman who never shed a tear and subjugated men with a look, manipulating them to the point that they were willing to commit any crime for her. This image remained in the popular fantasy of the inhabitants of Rosario, who still, almost proudly, keep her memory alive today.

The “lady boss of all bosses” was recognized as the indisputable boss of the mafia, a mafia at that point with international connections. In a predominantly male world, journalists from the period commented on the powerful personality of a woman who liked “seeing herself respected by thieves, killers and kidnappers. She enjoyed seeing men kneel at her feet and showing them she had the most courage” (Goris 1999, 15). Nevertheless, in the only interview she gave, Agata offered a very different image of herself; the figure emerges of a young girl who

revered her father and embarked on her criminal career thanks to the influence of her first husband, a lawyer who had defended Juan Galiffi on several occasions, who abandoned and betrayed her once he was released from prison, where he found himself because of his participation in numerous crimes in which Agata was also incriminated. According to Agata, she had committed crimes out of love for her husband (Zinni 1992, 156–163), claiming that she was woman who was a victim because of weakness and naivety.

Reflecting on the figure of Agata Galiffi, we immediately see the wealth of clichés surrounding her person. On one hand, an angelic woman emerges, the victim of perverse men, and on the other a “tiger lady,” perverse herself, who perverted those who liked to be around her: rulers, politicians, or anarchists who so populated the news of the era with bloody deeds that journalists, either intentionally or involuntarily, confused them with mafia crimes.

Whatever her true personality may have been, Agata remains part of a myth,⁹ absorbed into a mafia that also transformed the city of Rosario into a myth; this myth saw its heyday during the 1930s, an infamous decade that was inaugurated with the first successful military *coup d'état* in Argentine history. The decade was filled with dramatic events; misery, poverty, unemployment, popular resistance, anarchist attacks, and political swindles were provided the ideal setting for criminal organizations to prosper.

Relationships with Power

Perhaps nothing, or at least nothing important, remains of the mafia phenomenon from that era. Nevertheless, that “sinister transplant” (Palacios 1918), as it was called, exhibited several specific characteristics worthy of interest in analyzing current phenomena connected to what could be seen as an Argentine version of organized crime. Two factors that recur throughout the twentieth century in Argentina can be found among the elements that favored the development of organizations such as the mafia and the “Zwi Migdal”: the corruption of sectors called on to combat this type of crime and the profound relationships of these criminal organizations with power.

The mechanisms were much simpler during the earlier period. Although the mafia organizations had few truly outstanding personalities among their members, they still managed to weave relationships and establish ties with local authorities, politicians, judges, and the police, contacts that guaranteed impunity and protection either in exchange for substantial payments or based on reciprocal favors. The relationship with politicians and their machines was established right from the election process. During periods of political rallies, the mafia guaranteed the formation of neighborhood committees for political parties—which one did not matter—and guaranteed the vote with all the methods at their disposal; when considered necessary, journalists were assassinated, opposition newspaper headquarters and polling places were burned, and frauds were perpetrated. In exchange,

they were guaranteed control of the markets and prices, monopolies, and official silence and cover, if not actual complicity, for all illegal activities.

Ayerza's death broke this alliance and signaled the end of the mafia; nevertheless this did not mark the end of the practice of establishing connections between important criminal organizations and the seats of power; these connections have gradually created fertile ground for the flowering of criminal networks, the most important of which seem to be born from the womb itself of power.

Power and Criminality in Argentina

Different forms of power have brought on rather anomalous situations of coexistence. In an attempt to classify types of crime, three cases can serve to represent the ambiguous management of power in this context. The first is inherited from an older period in Argentine history; the other two derive from the more recent past, the final years of the government of María Estela (Isabelita) Martínez de Perón, widow of General Juan Domingo Perón, followed immediately by the military dictatorship that governed Argentina from 1976 to 1983.

Internal Feuds

Argentina is a federal republic with marked regional imbalances. Over the course of its history, the area around Buenos Aires and the provinces of the “humid pampas”¹⁰ have been gradually established as economic engines and transformed into centers of agricultural development and livestock breeding, with high levels of industrialization reached in the period after World War II. The other provinces, especially those in the northwest, have remained backward and outside the large centers of commercial exchange. Around 1930, this imbalance became very pronounced and was increasing because of grave international and internal crises. Faced with this, regulatory mechanisms were sought that would compensate for this situation; their opposing effects have marked Argentine federalism until the present day. Although the independence of the provinces was maintained with their governments and local parliaments, they became more and more dependent on the central government because of these same regulatory mechanisms known as “joint ownership.” Joint ownership consisted in assigning each province financial portions based on national taxation; in this way, less-wealthy provinces were transformed into zones subsidized by more-developed sectors and provinces, which were concentrated in the region of the humid pampas (Rubins and Cao 2000, 8–9).

The system of joint ownership lowered the levels of internal conflict within the provinces, but shifted the conflicts to relationships with the central government for the assignment of shares of income. Instead of being transformed into an incentive for local production, already inadequate because of various factors—especially those related to market characteristics—the system has been transformed, particularly over the last two decades, into a mechanism that gradually filled various

cracks caused by the central government's application of the neoliberal model at any price. The consequences have been inefficiency as a characteristic of the political *modus operandi*, favoring parasitical oligarchies and creating a space for semi-feudal power, represented by local bosses far removed from any modern concept of the state, and incarnated by the central state. Thus the management of the state has become patronage-based. In fact the system has been functional on two levels: it has allowed powerful families to install themselves in local power and maintain it for years, and the central government has been able to use joint ownership funds to guarantee itself the support necessary for political management. In this way provincial governments negotiate their alignment with the executive power in its disputes with the national congress, which guarantees a degree of management on a local level and helps to mitigate the level of conflict.

There being no direct link between what each community is willing to finance and what the state offers in public services and goods, expenditures are assigned according to the interests of the local government at the time. The social and economic weakness of some provinces impedes their capacity for decision-making and protection of their population, particularly when the local state apparatus occupies a predominant place on the economic level.¹¹ The management of the state is transformed into a personal management that guarantees the permanence of powerful dynasties that use the state for personal aims, favoring relatives and allies. In the period between 1983¹² and 1999, despite the little-appreciated image of the local governors and local crises, these dynasties maintained their own power unchanged. "For every ten times a party has put a government into play, it has kept seven standing. . . . The longer power is conserved, the more the networks of favors and patronage, that sustain unbeatable machines from the electoral point of view, are perfected and strengthened" (Rubins and Cao 2000, 8). This position of power allows the direct intervention and control of the apparatus of justice and law enforcement, to the detriment of security and civil rights. In addition, it encourages the dissemination of corruption from top to bottom and provides access to illegal profiteering, controlled only to the extent needed to obtain privileges, profit, or at the least a job in the state apparatus, at times swelling the lines of *ñoquis*.¹³

Thus, year after year, governing groups remain in power: the Saadis in Catamarca, the Rodríguez Sáas in San Luis, the Romero Feris's in Corrientes, the Romeros in Salta, and the Menems and their relatives by marriage, the Yomas, in La Rioja. All these gradually constructed a network of personal interests through the private use of the state, not only interests that involved fraud, votes in exchange for favors, and bribes, but also incursions into illegality and criminality through participation in or protection of smuggling and drug trafficking. In the case of Menem, former governor of La Rioja and former president of the nation, arms trafficking was also alleged. Furthermore, these entanglements are not only based on personal initiative. Illegal businesses were in fact started up through the use of dirty money and recourse to threats; these businesses go beyond provincial and national activities, and enter international and transnational networks through which so-called organized crime operates.

The Criminal Matrix of the State

This tendency to consider the state as something personal—a tendency that takes on special characteristics especially in certain provinces—has continued to grow throughout the history of Argentina and has led to the establishment of a state criminal matrix that has acted through internal and international modifications of the ruling financial-economic model.

This matrix began its gestation under the military dictatorship that, with the 1976 *coup d'état*, overthrew the government of Isabelita Perón and her great ally Welfare Minister José Lopez Rega, alias “El Brujo” (the Wizard), head of the Argentine Anti-communist Alliance (the “Triple A”).¹⁴ The military dictatorship imposed a new economic model founded on the alliance with financial sectors, modifying the economic structure of the country based on industrialization and opening space for national reorganization.¹⁵ *Ad hoc* mechanisms were set up that favored the depletion of state finances, a static debt, and the flight of capital. This created an ideal scenario for generating a concentration of wealth in the hands of national and foreign financial groups. This process was imposed via ruthless state repression through the organization of a military and police apparatus, appropriately trained and subjugated to powerful ideological influence, the result of the doctrine of “hemispheric security” that foresaw the struggle against a transnational enemy—Communism—that, according to this same ideology, had penetrated Argentine society.¹⁶ This apparatus included paramilitary and “parapolice” corps organized into work groups with the objective of kidnapping citizens and stealing their property.

During that period, the mechanisms of corruption became stronger through which the state managed to co-exist with special-interest groups, participating in some ways, through kickbacks, in large deals. The repressive apparatus created a mentality and *modus operandi* that did not disappear with the return to democracy. The impunity guaranteed by the “Full Stop” and “Due Obedience” laws¹⁷ kept criminal structures intact, especially within the police apparatus, and promoted the corruption of financial groups and the political class. These phenomena continued to increase with the arrival in power of Carlos Saúl Menem, twice Argentine president, from 1989 to 1999, a period known as the “*menemista*” decade and considered a monument to corruption.

Corruption in Power

During this period, the web of illegal activities was reinforced thanks to the fraudulent privatizations of most state businesses,¹⁸ most of these acquired by foreign groups; illegal and criminal affairs began to weave themselves into these, tied to the international traffic of drugs and arms. However, neither of these activities was new to the *menemista* decade; they had first been launched under López Rega around 1974 to 1976 and again under the military dictatorship. The links between the *de facto* military governments of Cono Sur led to a transnational union of repression framed by the *Plano Condor* (“Operation Condor”) with the participation

of the Bolivian government and groups from the “Black International” who had settled in Bolivia under the command of Klaus Barbie. These links facilitated arms trafficking across borders, especially between Paraguay and Argentina, and between Bolivia and Argentina, interweaving with the drug trafficking conducted by organizations of narcotraffickers who were active in Bolivia and the closest allies of that country’s dictators (Rossi 1998, 74).

With the return to democracy, these forms of trafficking intensified, especially drug trafficking connected to the Colombian cartels—first the one in Medellín, subsequently the one in Cali—and presently with Colombian, Bolivian, and Peruvian organizations. Since 1993, the United States has reported changes in narcotrafficking routes across the continent, changes that have modified the map of transit. Once almost insignificant, Argentina has acquired greater importance in drug transit, consumption, and money laundering.

Combined with this is the arms traffic to countries at war that have been placed under embargo—such as Croatia—or involved in conflicts such as the one between Ecuador and Peru in 1995; this traffic has occurred due to the difficulties in applying the Protocol of Rio de Janeiro, which is binding for both the countries and for which Argentina is one of the guarantors. Because of these activities on the part of the executive powers, a series of mechanisms was put in place, some of which are to the detriment of democracy itself. The justice system was reformed, subjugating judicial power to the executive; a “parallel customs office” was instituted that facilitated unprecedented tax evasion, encouraged all types of smuggling, and safeguarded arms and drug trafficking.¹⁹ The central bank, in fact, no longer controlled other banks—especially off-shore banks that, being the property of Argentines closely linked to friends of the president, his ministers, or political party colleagues, appeared in the Bahamas or the Cayman Islands connected to respectable New York banks such as Citibank (Camara de Diputados de la Nacion 2001). No investigations were made of phantom companies headquartered in Uruguay—the leading country in laundering dirty money with the strictest banking secrecy in the world—and the opening was allowed, with no controls, of numbered accounts in Switzerland.²⁰ No investigations were made even into movements in certain exchange houses that offered clients the opportunities for tax evasion, beginning with the traffic of gold that would seem, according to recent investigations, closely tied to operations for laundering money originating from drug trafficking.

The development of these sorts of trafficking was made possible by ties with international networks. Aside from the Colombian cartels, organizations for receiving shipments of cocaine exist in Germany, Holland, and South Africa. In these trafficking operations, names with a certain international importance appear, such as Victoria Eugenia Henao Vallejo, widow of Pablo Escobar Gaviria, head of the Medellín cartel killed by the police in 1993. She entered the country under another name, with permission from government authorities who knew her real identity, and over the years has laundered illegal money inherited from her husband. The name also appears of Alberto Carrillo Fuentes, the “Lord of the Skies,” from the Juárez, Mexico, cartel, who before he died managed to establish relationships in Argentina that allowed operations for laundering money from illegal sources run

by his organization. Other figures include Manuel Noriega, ex-dictator of Panama; Lino Oviedo, the Paraguayan general involved in the coup and accused of being boss of his country's marijuana cartel; and Monzer Al Kassar. The latter, a friend of the president's relatives by marriage, the Yomas, is suspected in Argentina of activities connected to laundering money from narcotrafficking and arms smuggling, as well as the attempt against the Jewish-Argentine mutual aid society, the AMIA, that caused the deaths in 1994 of more than eighty people.²¹ Al Kassar is said to be the connecting element for the arms triangle connecting Europe, Argentina, and areas of conflict, from the Balkans to Cyprus and Sri Lanka.

Still others include Menem, in his position as president, and Alberto Kohan,²² secretary to the president, friend and partner of Gaith Pharaon, owner of BCCI, the bank that traffickers and armed groups in command of intelligence services utilized for hidden activities. Thanks to Kohan, Pharaon opened a branch office in Buenos Aires and did other business with him.

Those now deceased range from VIPs among the elite down to civil servants and witnesses. Many committed suicide surrounded by a halo of suspicion; one was Alfredo Yabràn, alleged to be the head of the Argentine mafia but probably just a simple figurehead.²³ There were many "accidents"; the most famous of these involved Carlos Menem Jr., the president's son, and was wrapped in mystery; his mother reported the circumstances of his death and always stated it was murder, claiming that her son had become an inconvenience since he "knew too much." He was in fact aware of the dirty businesses involving guns and drugs within the presidential milieu and the stories behind certain homicides, such as that of photojournalist José Luis Cabezas, who was probably eliminated because he had uncovered business that would seem to be connected to major drug shipments, although he may have been the innocent victim of a settling of accounts between groups in the mafia, or at least so it seemed. The names also appear of Menem and Vice-President Duhalde,²⁴ once friends but later bitter enemies.

Illegal Associations or Mafia State?

This intermingling of power with illegal ties and interests resembles an illegal association⁵; regarding this, a member of the Chamber of Deputies Investigations Committee on Money Laundering spoke of a "mafia state." There is certainly no lack of elements to justify this statement, even though there may not be all those necessary to confirm it completely. A connection with power exists; in fact, it is actually the power itself that is committing crimes. There are precise codes of conduct; some of these were seen in the rituals that were followed in performing executions that seemed to be messages directed at certain individuals in particular.²⁶ Though apparently everything seemed to confine itself within a very restricted segment of Argentine society, a share of the money illegally gained went to running the electoral machine and maintaining power, just as happened in the internal "feuds" through political "point men."²⁷

It might be thought that with a change in political leadership, these associations would live outside official power and therefore not be linked to the state. However,

no studies on this topic confirm to this hypothesis. Given the characteristics of power in Argentina and the characteristics of the political class, it is extremely difficult to imagine that once such a political change has been made, the structure installed by the previous governing politicians would be taken apart and cease to exist. If this is verified, we would not be dealing with a mafia state, but rather with an illegal association that had utilized the state for its own ends.

No studies have clarified the internal workings of these associations that would permit us to consider them a nucleus of criminal organizations similar to mafia-type organized crime. On the other hand, the nature of the repressive machine that has survived the dictatorship leaves no room for doubt on this point.²⁸

The Repressive Machine

The current provincial police follow an internal structure and military logic imposed by Ramon Camps during the era of the dictatorship. The organization has covered up its repressive ends and is involved in all sorts of illegal activity, creating a mentality and criminal *modus operandi* that have survived despite the restructuring it has undergone over the last few years (Dutil and Ragendorfer 1997).

The “Full Stop” and “Due Obedience” laws have impeded the removal and renovation of police structures. Police functionaries today are operatives from the period when the police force was tainted with all types of crime: kidnappings, torture, robberies, and the institutionalized theft of the property of those kidnapped. The rigid hierarchical structure permitted dividing up the “benefits” earned from crimes, utilizing a scheme applied by one of the most sinister characters from that period, head of the army Carlos Suarez Mason; today, this situation benefits not only the police but also politicians. A “treasury” exists inside the provincial police. All proceeds are deposited there from protection rackets; prostitution; extortion from merchants and nightclubs to block antidrug operations or permit alcohol sales to minors; housing for passing customers; money from illegal gambling; false insurance claims to collect the value of goods or repairs for cars that never existed; in addition to proceeds from more profitable businesses such as home burglaries, protection, or direct participation in “asphalt piracy,”²⁹ general smuggling, light arms smuggling, drug dealing including marijuana, cocaine, and *extasy*,³⁰ and car theft.

Groups are formed inside the various police divisions. The money collected is distributed with respect to hierarchy; nevertheless, those benefiting are not just the police, who use this to supplement their trifling salaries, but also informers, unscrupulous journalists who cover police news, neighborhood political “point men,” and, based on statements from qualified informers, the governing body itself, where civil servants profit and redistribute part of that money into popular and populist projects that guarantee votes.

Nowadays, the “treasury” is in crisis, at least in some provinces such as Santa Fe, and discontent is spreading throughout the police. Until a few years again, the takings were calculated based on a percentage of the profits obtained from the “protected.” Currently, the quota is fixed; this places in difficulty the structure

used for collections, since the crisis at times prevents the “protected” from being able to pay the imposed price. This means that commissioners who previously received substantial sums of money—illegal profits were the order of the day—have had to deposit their profits in the “treasury” to reach the amount established for higher authorities (*La Capital* 2001, April 1, 15, 18). The structure that allows the foregoing list of crimes remains intact, independent of the men who alternate within it. The institutional logic prevails. Men in uniform who rebel or blow the whistle become victims of threats and attempts on their lives by their colleagues, who have also been reported in many provinces as being “fast on the trigger,” provoking suspects, inflicting torture, and, ideologically speaking, having sympathies toward an extreme Nazi-style *carapintada* (“painted face”) right wing. No one would hazard pitting themselves against the police. Among those who come from the affected areas, some stay quiet out of fear, most out of fear and convenience. As far as the courts go, public prosecutors and judges frequently make agreements that are convenient for them; and politicians compromise because they know that if they do not, aside from a drop in their income, they could find themselves going against the police, which could block their political career. In speaking about the *bonaerense* police (the police from Buenos Aires province), a certain commissioner said,

That *bonaerense* is a viper’s nest, impossible to govern. Those who trained with Camps do not know any other life. And if you tackle them head on, they’ll ruin everything. We should not forget they can also bring crime up to intolerable levels. The military by now has no motive for any sort of *coup d’état* in this society, but the police will present more than a challenge to the politicians [politicians who frequently stay quiet, concede, and profit]. (Dutil and Ragendorfer 1997, 11).

Immigration and Criminal Organizations

Other criminal groups of foreign origin operate at the edge of power, although they are linked with functionaries of the state machine. These are specifically Chinese and Eastern European groups, particularly Ukrainians, who seem to have revived the structures of the old mafia from the 1930s, although in conditions and a society that have little to do with the situation in those years.

Chinese criminal organizations identified as mafias made their appearance around thirty years ago. They became visible around fifteen years ago because of crimes they allegedly committed, almost none of which were solved by the police because of cultural difficulties and the absolute silence of the victims and Chinese community in general. Chinese groups in Argentina, who, police and media sources claim, are heirs of the Triads, have maintained the same structure that operates in their homeland. They are governed by a boss—who remains in the position for ten years, after which he changes country—and a “committee of counselors” composed of five to ten members. Lieutenants exist below this committee. Each of these controls bands of killers and neighborhood thugs. Their main businesses are the traffic of immigrants and “protection” for merchants. In the first case, they bring citizens into the country using false permits. On entering Argentina, these immigrants are hidden in buildings that at times function as commercial

activities but, in reality, are nothing more than simple fronts. Subsequently, they are sent to the United States with Argentine passports and passed off as citizens of Argentina. Argentine passports are highly coveted because Argentines have no need for a visa to enter North America. Clearly, this network involves employees and functionaries from embassies and consulates in China and functionaries from the immigration offices of the Argentine federal police and registry office. In the second case, the gangs ask for money from merchants in exchange for protection. If they do not respond to the request, they face the possibility of bombs being placed in their place of business or even execution. There have also been cases disguised as settling of accounts. In this way, the organizations show their capacity for violent intervention and power. The purpose is intimidation.

These gangs keep themselves within the limits of the Chinese community and have not expanded their range of activity toward other sectors of the population or other areas of criminality.

As far as the Ukrainian gangs are concerned, little or nothing is known except that immigration from that country has shown a strong increase since the end of the 1990s. The federal police³¹ suspect the presence of a mafia with Ukrainian citizens as members. For now, crimes of fraud and extortion alleged of these groups do not specify what type of population they harm. The existence has not been ascertained of a criminal organization with members of this nationality. Everything remains simple suspicion.

Conclusions

This scenario exhibits strong theoretical challenges. Although it is true that in the case of the police—with its codes of conduct, its structure, its defense mechanisms, its relationships with power, and its deep roots in certain sectors of society—we can refer to actual organized crime, in the case of political power greater difficulties arise in deciding whether we are in the presence of organized crime or simply a group of illegal associations. There is no agreement because no systematic study exists in this context; support for such a study is necessary despite the fact that carrying one out could prove to be quite dangerous.

At any rate, these forms of criminal structure are truly dangerous for society as a whole since democratic institutions are progressively emptied of their content and functions and no longer respond to the interests of a defenseless population. In addition, the embedding of criminal interests in places of power raises issues of democratic validity and governability as it leads to a guaranteed impunity that encourages crime and creates a loss of trust by citizens toward a structure that tends to result in social fragmentation or authoritarian-type outcomes.

The Invisibility of the Invisible: Women and Crime

Female Criminality

“When a woman commits a crime and does it with a man, we focus our attention on the man because we think he was the instigator.” These words are from a famous

public prosecutor who worked on cases such as “Yomagate,” in which the main defendant was a woman, Amira Yoma, sister-in-law to President Carlos Menem. “Perhaps,” he added, “this is due to a patriarchal vision that keeps us from seeing women in a role we consider purely male.” A federal judge said ironically, “I am not aware of any studies on criminal women in Argentina. Crime is a man’s affair. We leave you the role of victim.”

The concept of female criminality in Argentina is connected to crimes such as infanticide, abortion, and cases of homicide in which, as has been emphasized,³² the woman—because of a history of suffering violence—has almost always turned from victim to executioner. In addition are crimes connected to the family environment and to the role of housewife, crimes or misdemeanors such as petty thefts in stores or writing bad cheques, and the crime *par excellence* linked to being a woman, prostitution (*La Maga*, 26 March 1997). Nevertheless, there have been profound transformations: changes in society, changes in the economy, changes in the role of women in general, and changes in women’s method of disobedience³³ and committing crime. Women have left the home, at times achieving a level of training and education superior to that of men³⁴ (*Correia*, December 1999, 7–10). Female participation in the economically active population is around 40% in Buenos Aires, but jobs performed by women have undergone further changes that began to appear towards the mid-1990s when the present crisis began to make itself clearly felt. From that period on, there has been an increase in layoffs, a retreat with respect to previously acquired rights, an increase in factory closings, and a dizzying drop in production; the unemployment index, traditionally at 2.4%, reached 16% in 1998, 14.6% in 1999, and jumped to over 20% toward the end of 2001.

This has led to violence, insecurity, robberies, fraud, and an increase in the prison population, not just male but also female. From 1984, when only 100 women were incarcerated, their number has increased more than six times; this increase has been concentrated above all in the last four years under consideration. As Figure 10.1 shows, the number of women incarcerated doubled in that period.

With the increase in women incarcerated, new types of crimes have appeared (see Figure 10.2). Robberies and drug trafficking under drug law 23737 are on the increase; crimes of fraud and swindling have started to appear. Crimes and misdemeanors committed in the family/home arena have spread into the public

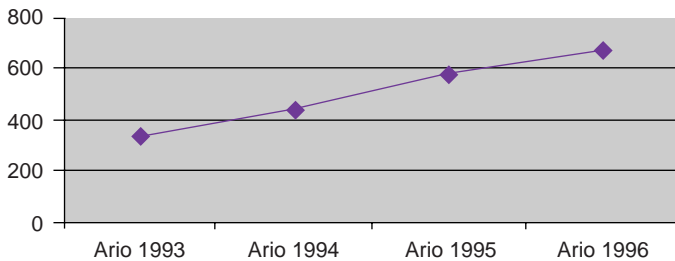


FIGURE 10.1. Women in prison.

Source: Justice Ministry, Republic of Argentina, 1997.

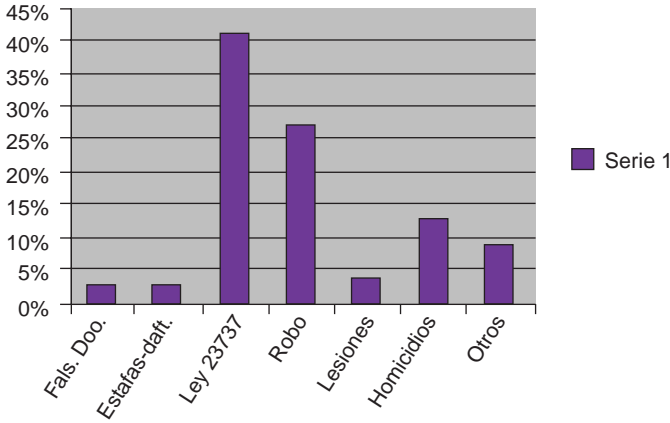


FIGURE 10.2. Types of crimes committed.
 Source: Justice Ministry, Republic of Argentina, 1997.

sphere, casting doubt on the belief that women are incapable of committing crimes.

Despite this, within the judicial system and the security forces, among judges and the police, the traditional concept continues to exist of women as weak, accomplices, easily swayed, ignorant, and unaware of the gravity of the crimes for which they are accused, a vision that does not always correspond to the facts.

Among women who break the law—both those in prison as well as those out of prison—are there those who, in one way or another, are involved in organized crime or at least in those structures we have just described? If so, in what way are they tied to those organizations? We believe that such women do exist and fulfill either passive or active roles. Among these are some who have become visible, others who have kept themselves invisible, and others still who have shown up in prison statistics. We are dealing either with powerful women or women who occupy the lower levels of the social strata; the intermediate levels seem to be occupied only by men.

Women Who Exercise Power Directly

Most of these women belong to the legislative apparatus.³⁵ They experience politics firsthand and are closely tied to power and use it for their own ends. They occupy or have occupied other positions, such as places of responsibility in the government, or represent financial groups that have obtained benefits thanks to those economic measures—frequently applied fraudulently—that have favored the few and impoverished the many and have endorsed the pillage and plunder of the state. They participate in politics and have reached the positions that they occupy thanks to their will, their awareness of the intrigues of power, and their origins in families who have forever occupied the Argentine political scene. They may

also be descendants of the extremely well to do, from the merchant or landowning upper class, who belong to that restricted group of no more than twenty families and social groups who are the masters of this country.

The former appeared during the Menem period. They were ministers or visible heads of important bodies, the most well known and hated. They busied themselves with bankrupting the state, placing their friends and protected and trusted followers in places of responsibility or transforming them into figureheads of fortunes they did not yet possess at the moment they achieved their respective positions, or instead became figureheads themselves. Unresponsive toward criticism, confident of their power and the impunity that power guaranteed them, they were accused of illegal appropriations, of receiving kickbacks, of not having fulfilled their duties as civil servants, of having allowed the pillaging of the structures for which they were responsible.

They made use of power following male models that made them no different than any other corrupt civil servants. They did not participate in large illegal businesses such as drugs or arms, but they profited from the existing state of corruption to reach their goals. They occupied first- or second-level positions. They controlled fortunes; they had foreign bank accounts. Some of them, when prosecuted by the law, relied on the justice system that “*menemismo*” had remade in its likeness and image.

Public opinion crushed them, the press attacked them, but their condition as women never seemed to annoy their critics. It was as if they had lost their female identity and entered a world more and more denigrated by Argentines: the world of politicians, the world of the corrupt, of those who robbed and continued to rob, of those who entered into pacts with financial powers and never stopped to consider or govern the nation’s citizens. Matilde Menendez and Claudia Bello, top-level civil servants, and Minister Maria Julia Alsogaray were the best-known and best-publicized examples. María Julia Alsogaray, daughter of one of the most conservative politicians in the country, was transformed into a female symbol of corruption.

Were these women integral parts of a criminal organization? Should we consider them as such? The answer is not easy because of the error of considering corruption per se as a crime attributable to organized crime. In some way, the answer to this question depends on the answer to another question: Does a mafia state exist in Argentina? If it exists, these women took advantage of its structures, and the business deals they accomplished by using them became part of a criminal management of power. They were women who—in most cases—made no appeal to “feminine weapons” to gain access to power. They knew power and understood how to cultivate relationships, and power in turn used them to maintain its affairs, buying “*omertà*” in exchange for freedom of action and impunity.

Women Who Exercise Power Indirectly

These are the “women of someone”: wives, sisters, cousins, in-laws, wives of friends, friends, and lovers. They follow their men, protect them, cover for them,

associate with them. They occupy positions thanks to their loyalty or pull the strings backstage. They form “women’s circles” for governors, such as Rodriguez Saa in San Luis, suspected of illegal activities, or those suspected of narcotrafficking, such as Romero in Salta and Saadi in Catamarca; or even men like Menem, who went from governor to president. Every now and again they rebel, some for personal motives, other because their situation becomes unsustainable; they are afraid of the justice system, fearing that power will abandon them. They are not nationally known figures but are known on a local or provincial level. They are as untouchable as those who protect them. We come to know their stories when they are involved in some scandal, as possibly with women from a family, the Yomas, allied with Menem in politics and business and tied to him by blood relationships.

Two Special Cases: The Yoma Sisters

Alleged to be involved in arms trafficking, in the final days of December 2001, Menem’s trial was subsequently dismissed by the Supreme Court on his orders. He had already been involved, in 1991, in a large-scale scandal and in 1996 had to face the death of this son. Two women stand out from among the actors in these events, Amira (Amalia Beatriz) Yoma and Zulema Yoma.

Like the Menems, Amira and Zulema belong to a family of Syrian origin, a family residing in the Rioja province whose members have been the protagonists in major illegal businesses: money laundering, money trafficking, and arms trafficking. Owners of a tannery in constant difficulty, many times salvaged by banks thanks to presidential pressure, they were collaborators with the president during his governorship and even his presidency. One of the family members is a senator.

Amira was involved in laundering money from narcotrafficking; Zulema distinguished herself in activities directed at the search for justice in the death of her son, Carlos Menem, Jr., who according to her was the victim not of an accident but a murder.

Amira

Amira was accused in 1990 of belonging to a gang involved in money laundering. At the time she held the position of appointments secretary to the president, her brother-in-law. The group was completed by her Syrian ex-husband, Ibrahim Al Ibrahim, by other civil servants and executives nominated by the president, and by Cubans and Panamanians in Miami who were involved in drug trafficking. The latter worked with the Medellin Cartel and trafficked drugs between Colombia, the United States, and Spain via Panama. To launder the profits, they had assembled another group, keeping it on the edges of the illegal trafficking. The group profited from contacts it had established with certain civil servants in the Menemist government. One of these turned to Amira Yoma to help to withdraw money from the United States and transport it to Buenos Aires and from there send it hidden inside motor cars to Uruguay, an established safe haven at that time because of a reliable financial system for money laundering.

Because of her position, Amira Yoma had a diplomatic passport and frequently traveled in the company of her ex-husband. Amira and Ibrahim accepted the offer to become part of the trafficking network and committed themselves to this activity. In this way, they brought dirty money into Argentina hidden in diplomatic pouches no one checked. Discovered and accused by an accomplice, Amira obtained the dismissal of her case for lack of evidence thanks to a network of internal and external protection. Ibrahim Al Ibrahim was sentenced but managed to escape and avoid prison.

“Reliable” judges who served in federal courts through the efforts of Carlos Saul Menem, judges and prosecutors who were promoted because they did not stand in the way, and the closed eyes of North American agencies that were interested in not causing problems for a staunch Latin American ally such as Menem and not involving him in an international scandal, all managed to guarantee sufficient evidence could not be assembled against Amira.

In reality, she was just a simple cog in a machine that was much larger than it might seem. The network to which she belonged also contained people such as Amira’s close friend Monzer Al Kassar, for whom Amira managed to procure Argentine citizenship, guaranteed by the president, in record time. The network in which she moved was dedicated to money laundering and drug trafficking on a much greater scale than that established by the Cubans and Panamanians. In addition, she was also involved in trafficking arms to Syria. She managed to establish these relationships in part thanks to the Syrian origins of the Yoma family and the Menem family. Amira had maintained very close ties with that country. She had lived there for fifteen years and was an activist in the Ba’th party. She established a business and sentimental relationship with Monzer Al Kassar, and her marriage to Ibrahim Al Ibrahim became suspect. After their divorce, they continued to maintain close, though not sentimental, ties.

Al Kassar had already had contacts with Argentina during the period of the Falklands War, and, with Amira’s support, managed to establish fruitful relationships with those in power, a circumstance that allowed him to build a base of support to carry on his arms trafficking with Chile as well, where he was involved with Yalal Batchich, a partner of the son of General Augusto Pinochet.

Thanks to Amira, Ibrahim Al Ibrahim managed to obtain a diplomatic passport given only to Argentine authorities and started up an operation in the customs office, though not without raising some suspicion. Despite the fact that he had no knowledge of the Spanish language, Ibrahim was nominated councilor and head of the National Customs Administration through a process underwritten by Vice-President Eduardo Duhalde. Ibrahim’s was a key position. He was the one who decided what shipments, baggage, and persons should not be checked at customs. Therefore, his presence seems to have facilitated the passage through those channels of considerable shipments of drugs and especially arms to the Middle East in general and Syria in particular, where the Yoma family and Carlos Menem maintained a great friendship with Hafez Al Assad, president of that country at the time. A fact worthy of attention is that Ibrahim Al Ibrahim was also an official in Syrian intelligence.

The family adopted a strategy that consisted in passing Amira off as a victim. She always stated that she knew nothing of what the suitcases contained. However, it would seem rather difficult for a woman who was only a civil servant and did not have a personal fortune to be able to make considerable purchases in cash³⁶ without having any substantial income from another activity.

Nevertheless, the scene was set up perfectly. When interviewed by the best and most serious journalists in Argentina, she managed to appear to be the poor victim of a plot in which prosecutors played the role of the bad guys intent on persecuting her. Amira, and her love affair with Al Kassar, whether real or invented, had been transformed on the covers of the magazines. Her case raised a great deal of excitement, given her position, her family ties, and above all her relationship with power, a power that, despite everything, escaped from this affair intact, in part thanks to Menem's public relations ability, which managed to transform the government's image into something closer to the glitter associated with film stars.

The "sweet Amira" who appeared in the mass media seemed in fact to not have been so sweet. Prosecutors who knew her spoke of an arrogant woman, confident of the power she had behind her. Despite the fact that she was an insignificant link in a long chain, she was allegedly the head of the group involved in transporting money. It was she who managed the president's agenda, and she who could decide how and where he should travel. Nevertheless, the exploitation of the image of the female "victim," innocent, ingenuous, entrapped by men, was successful and favored the acceptance by public opinion of one-sided judicial verdicts.

After the scandal and after having taken care of her problem with the courts, Amira moved away from the halls of power and went to live in Marbella, where she started up a restaurant and maintained her friendly relationship with Al Kassar. Nothing is known of her current ties to the family or the president. Despite this, she remains the symbol of a woman who established strong ties with power that she used at times with such stubbornness as to almost bring failure to the strategies that it had armed her with to save herself. The support she received, according to some, was not completely disinterested. We are not dealing with saving a member of the president's acquired family. We are dealing with saving his appointments secretary. In addition, a refusal to take her side could have unleashed a vendetta from her sister, Zulema, the president's ex-wife, who knew the dark side of her husband's affairs backward and forward and who could become a serious threat, a threat that almost managed to become real on another occasion.

Zulema

Divorced when her husband was president, Zulema saw her dream fade of becoming a second Evita Perón. Her story is marked by power and rebellion against power. The main motive was the death of her son, Carlos Menem, Jr., a.k.a. "Carlito." Officially his death was attributed to an accident caused by the young man himself due to his imprudent piloting of a helicopter. But his mother never believed this version of the facts, not even for one moment; instead, she believed witnesses and the testimony of those who said the helicopter had been shot down. Many

mysteries surround this incident, including the number of passengers on board—two bodies were found, and the disappearance of a third body was mentioned; the disappearance of a briefcase that should have contained 30,000 dollars; the obscure death of eyewitnesses to the accident, one of whom was killed by a car, others who were assaulted by presumed thieves who killed them without stealing anything; and Carlito's fears, which he had confided in his mother, relating to the delicate information he was privy to regarding the drugs and arms businesses in his father's circle. These circumstances would seem to somehow support Zulema's version. Only toward the end did President Menem agree with his wife that the death of his son was probably not the result of an accident; he never used his power to establish the truth, however, as he had done on other occasions less serious than this one. He contented himself with the theory of the accident and never again separated himself from his daughter, Zulemita, who, practically speaking, became the first lady.³⁷

Zulema never gave in; she even reached the point of denouncing her ex-husband for having hidden information on the case, and she continued to repeat, to anyone who would listen, that her son had been killed by influential men in the presidential milieu. The courts were not favorable. Carlos Menem, Jr. was declared the victim of an accident. The threats of naming names and businesses were never realized. Zulema remained trapped between the need to see justice done, to find those guilty of the attack, and the impossibility of speaking clearly and making known to the courts the tangled web of the business of drugs, arms, and killings. She was trapped by threats and the fear of losing her daughter, but also for having participated in some patronage or having perhaps been a figurehead for her husband in some barely legal business. The recent discovery of an account in Switzerland in her and Zulemita's name would seem to explain her difficulty in continuing to speak of this issue and to keep up the threats, which would have risked exposing herself, as much as she might have wished to clear up the facts and establish the truth.

It is also probable that the truth that might emerge could also stain the image of her son, who loved nightlife and the races and frequented a circle of friends connected with consuming and dealing drugs among the rich and famous in Buenos Aires. Possibly his involvement in some drug or arms sales might emerge.

Whatever the motivations, Zulema seemed to remain a prisoner between two different needs and priorities, power and her maternal instinct, that had nothing to do with traditional family values since, as part of a logic of corruption and illegality, it became totally functional to that power.

If power marks the lives of the women who exercise it or are part of it, other women have relationships with criminal organizations whose own survival is put into play: we will now speak of the "others."

Others

This is the largest category of women. They enter prison for a crime that has become the greatest cause of arrest for women: violation of drug laws. Most find themselves in prison for commercial use of drugs, others for dealing. These are

the distributors and “*mulas*” (mules).³⁸ They belong to networks whose extent and importance they do not know, but are the basis of the illegal drug business. In these networks—in a little-explored arrangement—politicians, policemen, and national or mixed gangs join together; politicians facilitate money laundering, close their eyes, or participate in the traffic by helping shipments enter by land or air, especially in the border provinces,³⁹ or instead interfere with and impede observed delivery operations⁴⁰; sectors of the police watch over, consent to, or manage small sales, and gangs do the dirty work of transport and sales.

Women are mainly included in this last trafficking sector. Hired to sell “*ravioli*”⁴¹ through a front, in most cases a small neighborhood shop that sells sweets, cigarettes, drinks, and products of daily consumption, they are also used to keep “the package” for a day at their house or travel around the country or across borders. They only know their contacts, those who supply them with the “*merca*,”⁴² the one who pays the ticket and entrusts them with the shipment or suitcase or the one who receives it. They know no one else since networks of narcotraffickers have a concentrated structure; the illegal identity cards, once discovered, can be easily substituted and do not put the structure itself in danger.

Statistics regarding this are very clear. Drugs are the element that defines the growth in female crime. According to official statistics, which report only the approximate number of women in prison, between January and December 1998, 50.94% of women in prison had been accused of drug dealing, as opposed to 36.50% of men. Between January and September 1999, the percentage of women incarcerated for drug dealing was 38.57%, while the percentage of men imprisoned for the same crime was 23.79% (SEDRONAR 1999, 2000). Out of the total (men and women) in prison for drug dealing, in 1998 women made up 21%, while during the period between January and September 1999, it was 19.65% (*ibid.*). They come from all social levels. Prisoners with a high level of education—higher secondary education or a degree—were in prison only for drug-related crimes. There were no thieves or murderers among them. These women’s stories are as varied as their cultural and behavioural codes. Essentially, two categories exist: women who entered the business to satisfy their survival needs and women who instead found a source of greater guarantees in this activity and the possibility of achieving or maintaining a higher lifestyle. The age of these women is between thirty and over sixty years old. Some women deal because they are drug addicts; most of these are in prison for theft. They steal to continue using and are the youngest women. The dealers know what they are doing, the *mulas* as well, despite the fact many continue to deny it. Others, those who earn a hundred dollars (a fortune for them) to keep packages at their homes for a day, do not know and do not want to know anything about it. They hold; they get paid. This is the only important thing.

Most of these women consider what they do a job and themselves as workers. Those who have been thrown out of the labor market because of the economic crisis tell how their circumnavigations to find a job ended up in a series of failures and frustrations. Distraught over not being able to support themselves and not having been able to maintain their families, involved in the economic crisis that characterizes Argentina today⁴³—children without a job, husbands without a job, ex-husbands who have never had anything to do with them—they accept

the proposals of people in the illegal drug business. They may be friends or acquaintances; some occasionally, like traveling salesmen, go door to door. First they establish informal ties, have a friendly chat about how everything is so tiring, and listen to the person's difficult situation. "They are very prepared people," confessed Monica⁴⁴. "They open a door for you; they give you a solution," a solution that neither the state nor society can give them:

I was marginalized because I am sick, because I am old, because at forty-three a person is already old and nobody will give you a job. They fired me because I was no longer able to do the job as before and because there is mobility in employment; they told me I had to go. I proposed the idea of transferring me to another department until I recovered, recovered my strength after the surgery, but they didn't want that. Nobody wants a person who has been operated on for cancer.

"I am an outcast. I have worked since I was fifteen years old, my whole life. I lost my job. I am an outcast. I am an outcast," Cynthia stated repeatedly.

Women who speak in this way belong to the lower middle class and find themselves in a phase of pauperization, unable to meet their commitments. Instead, the stories of those who have always lived at the edges of society or who have been excluded from it speak of shared responsibilities or single-parent families. In many cases, drug sales in poor neighborhoods, the so-called *villages of misery*, is a family affair that allows the family group to support itself. Here there are two types of situations. There is the case in which the woman assumes, in court, the responsibility for criminal activity; she does this to protect her man or—as happens in most cases—to protect her son, who sells so he can use. In other cases, it is not the woman who is put in prison, despite the fact she is the one who runs the business, but the men who go to prison because the woman is considered the fundamental pillar of the family group, in a sort of matriarchy that exists among the poorest groups.

Then there are the others, female heads of households with no job and many children,⁴⁵ at times with companions just as marginalized as they are and with a loss of their manifest role. This classic patriarchal scheme transforms them into outcasts not only on the economic level, but also on the level of their social and psychological identity. Everyone knows their occupations have a harmful effect on people. The choices and evaluations they must make are worth close analysis. Many of these women, for example, refuse to sell to minors. They are aware of the devastation caused by drugs, and so they say that those should receive greater punishment who sell directly to the public rather than those who are employed in its transport. Clearly, this happens when they turn to this activity out of a question of survival. This mentality is fairly widespread among the women. Those who are discovered with packages, in fact, ask the judges first, "Why am I here if I only transport them?" or "I don't hurt anybody."

Nevertheless, these evaluations contradict another consideration, one that depends on a clear application of the law of the marketplace, where demand stimulates the supply. "I deal and that is my job, the customer's consumption is the customer's own business. He knows what to do with his life. I only offer him a product. If there were no consumers, I wouldn't deal."

As regards the large narcotraffickers, these women are not even close to being considerate towards them. "They should put them in prison," they say, for example; they are aware, however, that only the "little fish" are put in prison, those who get the crumbs, although those crumbs may be what is necessary to resolve the problems of life and survival.

The Relationship between Women and the Police

Except for female drug dealers, who, especially in poor neighborhoods, maintain a close relationship with the police because of the protection they receive, there are other women whose stories constitute a separate chapter. They are police or belong to gangs in contact with the police. Although policewomen admit their shame over crimes committed by their male colleagues, we do not know the level of female involvement in those crimes. Considering the ruling male chauvinist mentality, it is possible there also exists a form of marginalization, but perhaps this marginalization is not great.

As regards the female members of gangs, the only women in contact with the police are the leaders; such women, however, are almost nonexistent. They are very young, and are parts of gangs of thieves composed exclusively of women or in which male gang members are only minors. These gangs are not in any sort of relationship with organized crime, with the notable exception of one gang led by a woman, the gang of Margarita di Tulio, alias "Pepita la Pistolera." While managing a night spot in which prostitution was practiced and drugs sold, Pepita found herself in contact with the police and maintained a very stormy relationship with them. The police had tried to frame her for the murder of José Luis Cabezas, which had in fact involved members of the police force. She fiercely defended herself and her people, the so-called *Pepitos*. She had a long police record, with charges of fraud, drug dealing, armed robbery, and homicide. She is famous for her decisive character and cold-blooded nature. One well-known episode sent her to prison for several years: the killing of two brothers who went to her house to exact payment for a debt. She waited for them in her bedroom, pulled the pistol out from under the sheets, and killed them. She was a unique and exceptional figure, in the same way Agata Galiffi was unique. Nevertheless, the two women represent two different worlds, far apart in time and circumstances, as different as their lifestyles and cultures. Perhaps the only thing that they had in common was an uncommon personality that allowed them to exercise strong decisional power that would put them beyond any moral judgment society might be capable of applying. Just as the figure of Agata was transformed into a legend, the case of Margarita and her exploits created support and sympathy in public opinion during the investigation of the Cabezas case.

Conclusions

The inclusion of women in crime, and any contacts and relationships they maintain with organized crime in Argentina, generally follow two paths. They are recruited

either through membership in criminal networks, as women connected through various types of relationships to men in the organizations, or because they have shown that they possess an affinity with the interests of the organization, or as a matter of survival. In the first cases, it is clear that what these women share is the vision itself of power, a power that in Argentina allows the institutionalization of illegality and its deep entrenchment in political organisms for interests foreign to those it should represent. Not all these interests are illegal or criminal; nevertheless the reigning corruption accompanied by impunity ensures that other interests, such as legal capital, businesses, and financial groups, exploit this situation. The free competition that regulates the market, according to neoliberal economists, should leave room for fraudulent mechanisms for obtaining advantageous contracts and bids. There is no lack of examples, beginning with the privatization of flagship airlines, telephone services, and so on. Everything would seem to indicate that mechanisms one would only expect to find in areas ruled by illegality are also used by legal companies that, although they may lament this situation and the costs brought by corruption, benefit by it. Legal and illegal situations are woven into a single web in which power is transformed into the central linchpin, receptor, and co-participant. The question this poses is whether the border between the illegal and the legal may disappear, resulting in a limitless and uncontrolled capitalism that is open to crime and illegality. Following this logic, power means the power to dominate, in which personal interests prevail, intermingling and forming networks of complicity. No room exists for a different logic within these mechanisms, and although not all top civil servants may participate in this, they either tolerate it or tolerate their colleagues who do.

The women who insert themselves into this web are chosen by the representatives of that power precisely because of the affinity they have with them in managing public functions. This means that they adhere to this logic in which power is not the exercise of an authority—authority meant as the mix of knowledge, experience, and dedication—but a dominance, a dominance that, to be able to perpetuate itself, adopts measures that drain the original functions of state bodies, thus opening up room for a new form of authoritarianism marked by corruption and illegality.

There is an abyss between these women and the other women involved with criminal activity. While one group utilizes the state, the others feel abandoned by the state. The state, having for years retreated from the field of social intervention, has prepared the terrain for a “migration toward illegality.” Whereas earlier in Argentina, migration occurred from the poorest areas in the country toward poles of development, nowadays, although this migration continues to exist, there has been a shift from stable or legal areas of work toward informal areas of work and from informal areas of work to illegal or illicit work.

Women, who have constantly assumed more active roles spurred on not only by a raised awareness, but more so by economic need, see themselves pushed toward these areas. Here—where the protection of the state does not exist and there are no subsidies, except for a few “work projects” distributed based on party interests, with monthly earnings that cannot cover even the smallest necessities and furthermore are not constant over time—criminal organizations appear that fill the vacuum the

state and society cannot and do not want to fill. These are the organizations that give jobs; they are the ones that recruit women, who perform their duties with precision because they assume responsibility for the family, something men no longer do.

They are also the most exposed from the point of view of moral conflict. They take on onerous duties, marginalize themselves, take risks, and form protective shells, defenses that allow them to operate in the illegal sector and justify themselves through a mix of old patriarchal structures in which women place themselves below their family and their partner, as well as in new social structures that see women more and more included, through study and work, in the active social network.

Certainly, among those dedicated to narcotrafficking, there are women who act out of greed to maintain their status; perhaps they symbolize that break in the system of values in which what is held in common, what is shared, no longer exists. Only individual expediencies and loopholes exist to resolve problems; what might happen to others is not important: it is how much these women—both those who act out of necessity as well as out of greed—feel, know, and suffer even in their own flesh.

There are also women who go it alone in life, used by traffickers at times as bait. If they disappear, no one will ask about them, much less investigate. In most cases, these are *mulas*, reported by narcotraffickers themselves so that official attention is concentrated on them and shipments of greater value go unobserved. Many female dealers found in prison feel they have been used, but all of them are aware that they exist in the margins of the social system. None of them were under the illusion—despite promises—that they would be helped in case the police discovered them. They live in a society in which the number of “disposable” subjects is constantly increasing and know that these are occupational hazards. They are a product of society, perhaps victims of a patriarchal and male chauvinist vision. Their submission is a submission to “behavioural models” in which the new is mixed with the old, with relationships of power, values, “disvalues” or the absence of values, which Argentine society must confront and through which it sees itself as in a mirror.

Notes

1. Eugenio Zaffarano is the leader of this school of thought in Argentina, with followers in other Latin American countries as well.
2. David Baigún from the University of Buenos Aires has done studies of this type.
3. This comes from the testimony of a well-known and influential lawyer, former director of the Argentine Communist Party, who lived in a Sicilian immigrant neighborhood in Rosario during that period.
4. Historians make no reference to the type of crime committed, only that it showed the characteristics of a mafia crime.
5. In Córdoba, the organization was involved in controlling the meat market, while in Santa Fe province, especially the city of Rosario, it exercised control over the fruit and

- vegetable market. It fixed prices, assigned sales points, extorted money from sellers, and collected sales commissions.
6. It should be stated that the origin of this name is not connected to the underworld. In reality, it arose when workers in Rosario mobilized in honor of the “Chicago martyrs,” the activist workers who were brutalized for having led worker protests in that city. Subsequently, the nickname took on other connotations connected to the high concentration and violent methods of criminal gangs.
 7. The change in Chicho Chico’s activities was because of a trial—began in 1930, concluded in 1931—against the “Zwi Migdal,” followed by a decree closing houses of prostitution in Santa Fe province.
 8. The only book dedicated to narrating her story is a novel that attempts to reconstruct her personality and life, but is not very convincing.
 9. The names of other women who participated in mafia activities have been lost in the news, named only in passing because of the secondary role they played in crimes. The others, wives, lovers, fiancées, and friends, have all drifted into oblivion. We will never know their importance, their participation in decisions, or their presumed ignorance of the situation. Time, and the ruling patriarchal vision, will cover them with the cloak of invisibility and relegate them to oblivion as well.
 10. The provinces of the so-called humid pampas are Santa Fe, central and southern Còrdoba, Buenos Aires, and northern La Pampa.
 11. In many areas, the provincial state has become the most important economic actor; for example, in the province of Corrientes, 50% of all workers are state workers and its expenditures represents 30% of the provincial budget.
 12. The year democracy returned after a military dictatorship that governed from 1976—the year of the *coup d’état*—until 1983, when it was replaced by the democratically elected government of Raúl Alfonsín from the Radical Civic Union.
 13. From the Italian *gnocchi*; in a tradition originating somewhere in Italy and made popular in Argentina, “*ñoquis*” were eaten the twenty-ninth of each month, the day when, in an earlier era, salaries were paid. So a *ñoquis* is a “worker” who shows up only on the twenty-ninth of the month to receive his pay without ever having done any work, since his impunity is guaranteed by powerful “friends” who procured that job for him, which is almost always well paid. With this system, the entire state apparatus has grown and still grows in tune with the elections, exaggeratedly increases expenditures, and becomes more inefficient every time.
 14. The “Triple A” was a paramilitary group that carried out the first political assassinations and kidnappings in the final two years of the Isabelita Perón government. Its strategies and methods were adopted by the military dictatorship as part of a plan for state terrorism that led to the disappearance of 30,000 people.
 15. This was the name imposed by the dictatorship, and the name “Process” remained in the language of the Argentine people to refer to that period of dictatorship.
 16. This doctrine was inspired by the United States and applied to the entire continent, where dictatorial governments came to be installed with leaders who had largely been trained in the regrettably famous School of the Americas.
 17. The “Due Obedience Law” exempted subordinates of the police and military from charges of crimes against humanity on the grounds that they could not have refused to carry out orders from their superiors. The “Full Stop” law allowed limiting the trials of those in top military positions, that is, the generals who led the governing military junta, so that the officers and lower officers were not required to be present before the courts. These two laws, approved by congress during the presidency of Raúl Alfonsín,

- were followed by the pardon of the military junta by order of President Menem. Those responsible for the repression were given their freedom.
18. The process of privatization was riddled with irregularities and million-dollar kickbacks that involved ministers, secretaries, undersecretaries, and councilors. In virtue of this, Argentina came to occupy one of the top places in the list of the most corrupt countries until 1999. Its image has subsequently improved, though it continues to occupy an important spot in this sad list.
 19. For years, shipments from Colombia were left uncontrolled through the installation of channels: green, yellow, and red. Shipments with “sensitive” material passed specifically through the green channels.
 20. Only recently, after the requests of several federal judges tracing the routes of profits from arms trafficking or other businesses, have bank accounts been discovered, for example, in the name of Menem, his ex-wife, Zulema Yoma, and their daughter, Zulemita, who possess large sums that are impossible to justify through legal activities.
 21. No one ever managed to uncover those responsible. Both national and foreign leads were dismissed, just as those of the 1992 attempt on the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires. Iranian sources are suspected, in collusion with police from Buenos Aires province and sectors of the military right represented by the *carapintadas* (“painted faces”) of Colonel Seineldin, imprisoned because of the 1991 military revolt.
 22. These are not the only names by far. The list is long and contains first- and second-level government functionaries involved in all types of illegal activities.
 23. Rumor had it he was a front for Al Kassar. He shot himself with a rifle that disfigured his face. The family refused any fingerprint testing to confirm the dead man’s identity.
 24. Vice-President Duhalde, subsequently governor of Buenos Aires province, senator, and president of the nation, was said to have been involved in narcotrafficking, along with his political staff, headed by his former heir apparent Alberto Pierri, congressman from the Peronist Justice Party and nominated president of the national house of representatives.
 25. The Supreme Court, loyal to Menem, had just dismissed the existence of an illegal association related to arms trafficking; furthermore, it set a dangerous judicial precedent with the statement that a head of state and his ministers could not be accused of this type of crime. The accused during this trial were Carlos Saül Menem, his brother-in-law Emir Yoma, head of the joint command of the army Martín Balza, and former Defense Minister Erman Gonzalez. The case was dismissed and all were released from prison for lack of evidence.
 26. This was the case with the Cabezas murder. This photographer from *Noticias* magazine was found with his hands tied behind his back, executed with two shots in the back of the head and his body burned. The governor of Buenos Aires province, where the crime was committed, wanted to know the symbolism of this type of execution in the language of the Italian Mafia. In another killing, camouflaged as a suicide, a newspaper clipping about the trial in which he was to testify was found inside the mouth of the hanged man.
 27. These “point men” were people connected with some political party who either lived in the neighborhoods or maintained special ties to people in the neighborhoods, that is, who obtained social and economic help from the party for the needy, thus creating networks of patronage that guaranteed electoral results.
 28. In interviews with judges, magistrates, lawyers, and politicians, the answer to the question of whether something exists that could be identified as organized crime was unanimous: the police.

29. Theft of trucks filled with freight, followed by the dismantling of the vehicles and sale of the goods in smuggling networks.
30. In the case of the police in Buenos Aires province and the anti-narcotics division of the federal police, a drug cartel has been reported that supports itself by confiscating large shipments. The quantity of drugs reported as confiscated is significantly lower than what is found. Furthermore, reports in some cases state that at the moment the shipments are burned, sacks of cocaine are replaced with sacks of boric acid. What is left goes straight into distribution.
31. Reliable sources from the federal police and lawyers.
32. Interviews with agents and guards from the women's penitentiaries in Ezeiza, Buenos Aires province, and Rosario, Santa Fe province.
33. These changes began occurring in the mid-1970s when some women went beyond "good manners" and showed their disobedience in the political sphere. The utmost institutional violence was unleashed against these active opponents to the military regime because of their having resisted and having gone beyond the limits marked by home and family.
34. The level of elementary education is equal for men and women, at above 90%. Of women enrolled in high school, 82% to graduate, while the percentage for men is 79%. On the university level, 52% of women graduate as opposed to 48% of men. Despite all this, qualified female professionals earn 65% of the salary for men and semiquified women earn 81%. Of men with a university education, 15% occupy managerial positions, while among women this is only 5%.
35. Argentina has the highest rate of female members of parliament in Latin America. Women occupy 30% of the seats in the legislature.
36. During one of her trips as a functionary, she bought 20,000 dollars worth of pearls and paid in cash before the astonished eyes of the jeweler.
37. In reality, it seemed Menem feared for his daughter's life. The supposition is that Menem may have known that his son was killed and began to fear also for the life of Zulemita.
38. The people called *mulas* ("mules") transport limited quantities of drugs, varying between a half kilo and five or six kilos, in suitcases and at times inside their bodies.
39. In Jujuy province, a group of famous politicians was called "the Colombians," a clear reference to presumed ties they maintained with certain drug-trafficking organizations in that country.
40. Reference here is made to an event that occurred in 1997 when a shipment of two tons of cocaine destined for Germany was seized.
41. These are doses of cocaine cut for consumption.
42. Drugs, particularly cocaine.
43. Currently, out of a population of around 37 million people, more than 14 million are below the poverty level.
44. Interviews held with prisoners at the Ezeiza penitentiary, Buenos Aires province. Their names have been changed to protect their identities.
45. Six of ten prisoners for drug-related crimes have an average of four children.

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11

Women in Organized Crime in Brazil

Denise Frossard

Introduction

Brazil is a federative republic with 26 states, a federal district, and 5,560 municipalities, 200 to 300 of which can be considered large. The geographic area of Brazil is 8,514,215.34 km², making it the fifth-largest country in the world. States and municipalities enjoy a high level of autonomy, not as much as in the United States, but greater than what is common in Europe.

The 2000 census placed the Brazilian population at 169,544,443 (4 million more than in 1991): 86,120,890 women and 83,423,553 men; 17.6 million people were illiterate, especially in the northeast of the country. The number of women with higher education is not only growing, but has surpassed that of men; in 1998, for example, there were 184,352 women versus 116,409 men with higher education.¹

The population is predominately urban, with 137,696,970 urban inhabitants as opposed to 31,847,473 rural inhabitants.

In the area of public safety,² data are not only scarce but also unreliable. In fact, many state governments tend to distribute only part of their data, fearful of it being divulged. This makes it impossible adequately to plan public state policies or to carefully examine the level of efficiency of the P.A.

The latest prison census (1995) suffers from the same defects, and, moreover, according to the National Justice Secretariat of the Justice Ministry, they are not correct. For this reason, a federal system is being developed for computerized data collection from the states. In addition, resistance has been noted to making the already computerized data more transparent, particularly in the areas of security and penal justice, two of the most vulnerable institutions left from the last military dictatorship (1964 to 1985), since they were the ones most used to legitimize the criminal acts of those who held power at the time.

Methodology

The construction of this type of information system in Brazil has only recently begun within the Justice Ministry, more particularly the National Council for

Women's Rights. This system is aimed above all at social indicators that most relate to the lives of women and are the most suitable for helping formulate policies and public actions, including such aspects as demographics, work, education, violence against women, health, and reproductive rights.

In reference to criminality, more specifically female criminality, the body assigned to collect and validate this information—DEPEN on the national level, part of the Justice Ministry—has not been able to collect reliable and necessary data from the states to be processed in order to establish public policy in this area. In the latest census from 1995, discrepancies were identified on the part of the states in preparing this information. On the constitutional level, questions related to policies in the area of public safety (including the penal census) as well as comparisons of criminality are the competency of the states and the federal district. State governments only recently realized the need to monitor the question of criminality when common crime reached intolerable levels, mainly in the cities of Rio de Janeiro (population 14.3 million) and Sao Paulo (population 36.9 million).

In terms of organized crime (not totally disassociated from common crime), political actions concerning legal mechanisms for tackling it date to the first sentence in the city of Rio de Janeiro (21 May 1993) that recognized the existence of mafia-type organized crime nationwide, in other words, the existence of a criminal association that:

- is complex and hierarchical;
- has economic ends and a stable nature in its illegal transactions;
- extends across the national territory;
- follows an entrepreneurial-type program;
- manages a large volume of resources;
- demonstrably maintains close relationships with national political powers;
- utilizes corruption and violent methods to maintain its hegemonic power;
- acts with the objective of absorbing the constitutional state into the criminal state.

This organization possesses an armed wing that not only carries out the judgments of the *cupola* (the individuals at the center of power), but also enforces its an unwritten "code of honor." The organization is characterized by internal and widespread intimidation, along with unbreakable hierarchal bonds and a sense of *omertà* among its members. Over the last forty years they have become known as the "Bankers of the animal game," an allusion to one of their activities, the illegal lottery called *jogo dos bichos*. The *cupola* is made up of the oldest and most powerful members, as well as the most violent, who have reached these positions through the use of force.

Other powers vested in the *cupola* are as follows:

- The task of dividing the national territory into areas of jurisdiction for each "Banker."
- The extraction of numbers for the *jogo dos bichos*, which is done through an "auxiliary" called a *Paratodos*.

- The establishment of “laws.”
- The issuing of judgments over conflicts regarding the organization.
- The execution not only of decisions from its judges, but also the policies of the organization.
- Serving as representatives of the organization. During the period of military dictatorship in Brazil—from 1964 to 1985—the *cupola* was present through the intermediary of a spokesperson, as seen in the trial in which some Bankers were convicted in 1993.

Indeed, when they are not able to obtain free publicity from the mass media, they reaffirm their unity and market themselves through the use of suitable spokespersons. One of the members of the *cupola*, Jose Petros (a.k.a. “Zinho”), stated, when interrogated during the trial, that the year before he had used the pseudonym Luciano Carlos Pereira, and that after the fall of the military regime he had gone back to his real name, publishing articles in major national periodicals.

An analysis of proceedings relating to the conviction of the “Bankers” in 1993³—more than 15,000 pages in more than fifty volumes—as well as from other criminal proceedings against them over the last forty years, shows that, in almost all the trials, the result was invariably the same: either a decision that declared the crime could not be punished because of statutory limitations or acquittal for lack of evidence. The first objective of the 1993 trial was to verify whether a mafia-type criminal organization existed, which was not very difficult, given that only one organization in Brazil falls within the legal definition of that crime: the “*jogo do bicho* mafia,” whose presence has been proven in at least five states.

Although groups of drug traffickers also exist in Brazil, they have been erroneously defined as criminal associations; in reality these groups are only “managers” for a “stock company” with as-yet-unidentified “stockholders” and major “investors.” They are not those who live in the *favelas* and achieve notoriety as if they were the bosses of the criminal organization that supplies the country with drugs. Furthermore, these “managers” have been shown to have no ties with political powers. The highest connection proven with any level of power has only been with certain members of the police force corrupted by them.

Once the requirements for individuals to be considered members in the mafia-type *jogo dos bichos* have been understood, we can proceed to consider the existence and potential role of women in this organization. For this purpose, records were used from judicial proceedings in addition to the evaluations by independent organizations of the official sources of available data. Another source consisted of research into the archives of the national mass media, more specifically major national daily newspapers,⁴ which have been compared with records obtained from judicial proceedings.

Analysis of all this information indicates that women have had neither a predominant role nor a significant presence in this organization. They have been, however, and continue to be, perceived as greater in numbers in one of the *cupola*’s activities, namely the illegal lottery, which requires a large amount of manual labor. In this regard they have been active in the streets of large Brazilian cities.

Some of the information in this chapter was the object of my activities as the judge who pronounced the sentence against the *cupola*. Sufficient time has passed since that date (1993) that I believe I can begin to release information that has previously not been public.

Historical Precedents of Organized Crime in Brazil

As far back as March 1987, in the police investigation that, for the first time,⁵ involved the phenomenon of mafia-type organized crime, Public Prosecutor Rafael Cesario said,

All the present high *cupola* of the “*jogo do bicho*” became great Bankers⁶ after having killed or ordered killings, kidnapped, instigated war with other “Bankers,” or corrupted the authorities. Aside from committing illegal acts and crimes, the “Bankers” offend all of us, all of society. They impose themselves as presidents of the samba schools, and presidents or managers of football clubs; they patronize elections for state and federal representatives; they even present their own candidates. They have become “Bankers” only because they have killed, kidnapped, and corrupted. The “Bankers” have conquered the areas they control with these crimes on their shoulders. If “Raul Capitaio,” “Castor,” “Anisio,” “Capitao Guimaraes,” “Luizinho,” “Miro,” “Maninho,” “Paulinho Andrade”⁷ and many others are now considered honest businessmen, and their criminal past “forgotten,” nothing will prevent my continuing the inquiries of these investigations.

This bitter outburst occurred when the governor of Rio de Janeiro State at the time, Wellington Moreira Franco, expressed the idea of giving permission for the *jogo dos bichos* to be available in stores as well as licensing locations for the illegal activity, respecting the area of domination of each Banker, which had been acquired after a bloody internal dispute between the various groups for hegemony during the 1960s and 1970s. The survivors imposed a new order on the others in which the center of power remained concentrated in the hands of those who had been in charge during the prior two decades, the *cupola*.⁸

In 1886 (during the period of Imperial Brazil), in the neighborhood of Vila Isabel in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Baron Drummond created the city’s first zoological garden, which was inaugurated on September 5 of that year. In 1888, with the objective of attracting more visitors, the Baron ordered the admission tickets to be numbered, each number corresponding to an animal. At the end of each day, a ticket draw was held and the owner of the winning number was given a prize. This gave birth to the idea of creating the *jogo dos bichos*, the “Animal Game.”

In the first half of the twentieth century, this type of gambling began operating on the streets of the city of Rio, where every “*bicheiro*”⁹ not only recorded the details of play, but was also responsible for paying the winners. The success of this “business” centered on the trust bettors had in the *bicheiro*. The investment of capital on the part of the *bicheiro* was little more than a chair, several notebooks for making notes, a pencil, and a rubber stamp with his name and his symbolic mark.

No larger organization was necessary. But the success and continuously growing profits of the project led to the emergence of a new social class—the *bicheiros*—easily identifiable not only by their flamboyant and well-cut clothes (usually from top-quality linen), but also by their innumerable gold rings, bracelets, and necklaces. They started attracting forms of competition and, with this, violence. The most attentive *bicheiros* saw the need of staking out their own territory, defending it if need be to the ultimate consequences. The first hegemonic dispute led the authorities, on 3 October 1941, to issue law no. 3688 (law on penal violations, still in effect) that raised the *jogo dos bichos* to the category of a penal crime, punishable under Article 58 with a prison sentence of one to four months and a fine.

The law did not succeed in getting this game off the streets, however, since the police had been transformed from a repressive body into an ally thanks to corruption at all levels; this situation continues today.

On the other hand, the *bicheiros* saw the need for a minimum of organization with rules for coexistence; the most powerful of them asserted themselves and created a new figure: the Bankers. These individuals did not take notes for games on the street, but instead became guarantors of prize the money by the game's organizers. Because of this, the label of *bicheiro* came to be attributed to a sort of manual laborer paid by the Bankers for issuing receipts for bets on the street.

During the last century, Brazil was shaken by a series of *golpes*, a succession of dictatorships. With the *golpe* that installed a military dictatorship from 1964 to 1985, public security for the States came to be directed by an army general imposed by the governors. The preoccupation of these military-secretaries was so-called subversive, generally left-wing, armed movements. They left the Bankers alone, and so a new and bloody dispute began for domination during the decade between 1960 and 1970, sparked by the murder of an old and venerated Banker.

At the end of the 1960s, another homicide of another old Banker¹⁰ caught the attention of the public in Rio de Janeiro because the victim, creator of the phrase, “what is written is good” (meaning a guarantee of payment for the prize-winning ticket), had informed the media days before that he had become aware of a fraud in the operation of the *jogo dos bichos* a short time earlier and that he did not agree with this since he felt an “ethical code” and “respect for traditions” had to be maintained, and if the gambling public found out that the game was not run properly, the system would collapse.

The repercussions of this accusation by one so close to the game—he had been operating it since 1937—provoked unprecedented shock and was bad for the *cupola*. The commotion over this murder was so great that the general secretary for public security for Rio de Janeiro State decided to create a high-level commission to re-examine all the investigations regarding unsolved homicides. This commission was composed of four *delegados* from the police as well as the participation of a *promotor* from the justice system. In almost two years of investigations, they produced nineteen volumes with the depositions of more than 900 persons. For

the first time in Brazil, a computer service, Datamec, was used to estimate the amount of business produced by the *jogo dos bichos*. There were no doubts about the honesty of the members of this commission: despite this, they were “sold out” by the “high *cupola* of the police” that had been extorting the Bankers. They alleged that the money collected as a payment was intended for the commission; in this way no incriminating evidence was produced against the Bankers. Because of this, the general secretary for public security considered it appropriate to dissolve the commission. The body of work produced by this commission—nineteen volumes—disappeared into the archives of the now extinct National Information Service during the dictatorship, and even now no one knows what happened in that investigation.

The homicides subsequent to the power conflict between the Bankers ceased at the beginning of the 1980s after the murder of an ex-policeman linked to the *cupola*.¹¹ After having spent forty years in prison for various crimes, he had decided to become a Banker and tried to buy several *pontos* (betting points) for the *jogo dos bichos* from another old Banker in the city of Niteroi (Rio de Janeiro State). He even offered a significant price. This was forbidden by the *cupola*, however; two of its members (a former captain in the Brazilian army at the time of the military dictatorship and “Turcao,” former head and one of the founders of the *cupola*) dominated the *jogo dos bichos* in the rest of the city of Niteroi and wanted to have no rivals; the *cupola* ordered the deal null. The ex-policeman did not agree, and threatened to take the *pontos* collection by force. He was killed with six shots from an automatic rifle by another policeman, who had become friendly with the *cupola*, in a street in the Rio de Janeiro city center, in broad daylight, while he was on his way to a meeting of the *cupola*.

From this moment on, the *cupola* began to exercise broad powers over the other Bankers, estimated to be around fifty in Rio de Janeiro State alone, across the entire nation. They divided up territory, not just in Rio de Janeiro, but also nationally, among the Bankers for the organization of the *jogo dos bichos*; they judged conflicts in this sector; they dictated policies for opening new “shops”; they oversaw the selection of the numbers that would be valid across the entire country; and they announced the results. At this point, their attention had already been drawn to market for a new and profitable product: cocaine (the largest exporter of which was a nearby country, Colombia).

Mafia-Type Organized Crime in Brazil

The period between 1981 and 1991 was indeed a decade of triumph and large profits for the Bankers from the *cupola*, but in the end they were charged by the public prosecutor in Rio de Janeiro with criminal association for the purpose of trafficking in controlled substances.¹²

The lifestyle they adopted was marked by extreme opulence, incompatible with the usual profits from the activities of the *jogo dos bichos*. Each member of the *cupola* went on to preside over a samba school, sponsoring their presentations at

their own expense. They became owners of major football teams and players in the various States. During Carnival festivities, their stands in the stadium where the samba schools from Rio de Janeiro paraded were attended by guests and nationally important figures, such as politicians, governors, prefects, a former President of the Republic (later deposed in a political trial for his involvement in a system of corruption),¹³ ministers, *desembargadores*, judges, *promotores* of justice, artists, and journalists, not to mention the police (considered employees by the Bankers; the police served them as private security agents, despite the fact that they continued their functions in the area of public security and were paid from the public coffers).

The Bankers always appeared to be confident in their total impunity; they had never been convicted, not even for breaking the law against the *jogo dos bichos*, despite the innumerable police investigations into this illegal practice, in addition to the innumerable unsolved homicides in which the victims were linked in some way to the *cupola*.

Alongside their illegal activities, they developed other, apparently legal businesses, from real estate to the breeding of racehorses, as well as supporting artistic performances and owning restaurants. The head of the *cupola*¹⁴ even became the owner of a metals business that supplied tools to the Brazilian armed forces, without any tendered bids. They also provided aid to poor communities, realizing that organized crime can be helped to flourish when it masks its activities with a sort of social mission.¹⁵

Thus, an impressive hegemonic structure of parallel power was formed during the 1980s under the leadership of the *cupola*, leading society into a moral darkness in which illegal activities were officially ignored or even defended.

These organizations were based on a hierarchal business plan and relied on violence. They performed lucrative illegal transactions, had a “code of loyalty” that kept anyone from leaving under the threat of death, managed significant resources, established close and extensive links with public powers, practiced widespread corruption of public officials, and even boasted a transnational character, since the Bankers had managed to establish negotiations with a former U.S. vice-president¹⁶ related to the organization of illegal gambling in Brazil.

Although the laundering of profits and income from the illegal lottery was known, money laundering was not considered a crime in Brazil until 1998, and so was not punishable during the trial of 1993.¹⁷

One of the things that emerged from the trial in which the Bankers were convicted was the existence of a “code of silence.” Not once, in the more than fifty files from the trial, can any statement be found from the members of the *cupola* that might admit to the existence of the organization.

The trial showed that their activities were divided between two distinct branches: an operational apparatus carried out regular illegal activities, and an economic apparatus managed the resources from these illegal activities. Succession occurred through inheritance from a retired Banker after a consensus had been reached in the *cupola* on a successor.

During the 1980s, these matters came to occupy the general public prosecutor for Rio de Janeiro, a young and combative *promotor* (district attorney) who had decided that the best way to conduct an investigation into the existence of a mafia-type criminal organization in Rio de Janeiro—and ultimately in Brazil—would be to prove the involvement of the police in the *jogo dos bichos*. He found support in a study of the problem by the Council on Criminal Operations of the Public Prosecutor's Office. In addition to carrying out a survey that showed each Banker's area of activity, the council concluded that the organization had moved on to other forms of crime such as smuggling, drug trafficking, and car theft. It concluded that innumerable homicides (more than 100 were counted during the trial) were rooted in the *jogo dos bichos* since the preferred method of resolving conflicts was by physically eliminating the competition or even a candidate for the competition.

In 1985, the prosecutor general ordered the secretary of the civil police at the time to open an investigation to ascertain the involvement of police in the *jogo dos bichos* and illegal casinos owned by the Bankers, as well as the operation of betting points for the *jogo dos bichos* and illegal casinos and the connection between the crimes of homicide and the operation of the illegal game. The *Promotor* Rafael Cesario was assigned to follow this investigation. A conflict broke out in the state apparatus since the secretary of state for the civil police, Arnaldo de Poli Campana, instead of following the order of the prosecutor general, preferred to pass on his own directives to the prosecutor. These were in line with the police directive adopted by the state governor, Leonel Brizola, and stated that the attack on the crime of *jogo dos bichos* should be shifted to a "lower level of priority." The prosecutor general vehemently repudiated this position, however, arguing that it was foreign to "any policy of the executive power that would suggest expanding the suppression of penal crime." This confrontation cost the prosecutor general his position; the secretary of the civil police convinced (probably without much effort) Governor Brizola to dismiss him.

Cesario continued his activities, however, and listed fifty-three names of Bankers and policemen killed because of their links with the *jogo dos bichos*. When the investigative phase relating to the police was closed, the investigation returned to the public prosecutor for a judge to either file charges or archive them. After the charges were filed, the penal action began that would culminate either in acquittal or conviction, subject to appeal. The following year, the successor to Governor Brizola suggested allowing the Bankers to open betting points for their illegal activity in the areas they had established, which provoked the departure of *Promotor* Cesario from the investigations. The investigations were shelved during the Moreira Franco government, and showed practically no progress until 1991. With the new government, Antonio Carlos Biscaia was given the position of prosecutor general; he promoted the investigations, also filing charges for association with the purpose of trafficking controlled substances. The (female) magistrate detailed the excerpts containing evidence of crimes concerning international drug trafficking that would become the object of the investigation by the federal public prosecutor.

Prosecution of the fourteen defendants was restricted to the crime of criminal association as described under Article 288 of the penal code because evidence was insufficient for the charge of association for the purpose of trafficking controlled substances, specifically in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Despite other activity that emerged during the trial, such as money laundering and tax evasion, the defendants could not be charged with the latter because of the absence of any express legal provision at the time of the activity. As noted earlier again, money laundering only became a crime in Brazil in 1998.

After the guilty verdict, prison sentences were handed down for all the defendants. Though imprisoned, they continued to manage their “businesses” via cell phones supplied to them by the state police, both civil and military.¹⁸ The sentence was finally upheld after a significant legal battle.

On 27 March 1994, while I was in my office in the Forum of the city of Rio de Janeiro, I was told that a gentleman in the waiting room wanted to speak with me about a charge he wanted to make. I received him. He was the treasurer-accountant for the head of a criminal organization, the Banker Castor de Andrade, who was then free under a writ of *habeas corpus* and because of his precarious health. The accuser had chosen to seek help from the judicial authorities because he feared for his life and family for refusing to falsely admit that it was he, and not Castor’s son-in-law,¹⁹ who had, in November 1993, tried to corrupt the director of the department of the interior police, Mario Covas, a man well known for his moral integrity. He asked for guarantees for his own life and that of his family and, in exchange, would reveal the addresses of all the organization’s still unknown “bunkers” and where the books and lists were kept concerning the organization’s financial operations between 1993 and 1997 (including lists of those corrupted and information stored on computers at the locations).

In Brazil, judges cannot carry out investigations since this function would compete with the judicial police. So information must be—as it was—transferred to the judicial police. Nevertheless, I decided to give this information to the public prosecutor because of the almost total collusion of the police with organized crime. This would guarantee the life of the treasurer-accountant and his family; they were immediately transferred out of the country, and their identities remain secret. At that time there was no witness protection program, which has been established only recently. With the assurance that this information would not be used by federal, civil, or military police—since almost all of them had been compromised by the criminal organization—in any potential search and seizure operation of documents of the “bunkers,” the case was consigned, with all its details, to the prosecutor general, Antonio Carlos Biscia. The latter—armed with a warrant for search and seizure, and accompanied by four *promotores* (assistant district attorneys), sixteen agents from the reserve service of the military police, and ten policemen from the Special Operations Battalion (all chosen as trustworthy by the prosecutor general)—searched on 30 March of that year five “bunkers” and seized seventeen account books and a 116 computer risks.

From the material analyzed, an extensive list came to light in which bribes paid to the authorities were meticulously annotated, ranging from the former President

of the Republic, deposed in 1992, to judges, *promotores*, federal and state congressmen, councilmen, and, naturally, policemen. Notations were also found referring to millions of U.S. dollars transferred abroad, mainly in the city of Cali, Colombia, evidence of the *cupola's* ties to international drug trafficking. Among the *Delegacias* (government offices) indicated in the lists of corrupt payments, the one receiving the largest sum during the month of January 1994 was, not surprisingly, the Drug *Delegacia*: 250,000 U.S. dollars. The total sum—monthly and constant—of payments (read corruption) that emerged from this accounting was on the order of 1 million U.S. dollars.

All this is still partially in the decision phase because of the number of trials; the first to be judged were in reference to police corruption. Of eighty officials tried, forty have already been found guilty. These include my personal security chief at the time, a high-level official.

The amount paid monthly as bribes—1 million dollars—was intended not only to hush up the crime of operating the *jogo dos bichos*, since what was earned with this illegal activity would not be sufficient to maintain even a lavish samba school or football club. In addition, the untraceable “drug traffickers” arrested across Brazil are almost all residents of the *favelas* (black and uneducated) and would not have been able, and are not able now, to maintain international contacts to establish illegal drug trafficking. Only the Bankers or the *cupola* could carry out this activity, people who are articulate, perfectly organized, and well educated. It is clear that since drug trafficking is a sort of public stock company, the position of “stockholder” is infinitely less dangerous, one who buys highly profitable “shares” in one of the world’s most profitable “businesses.”

Today, at least four members of the *cupola* are dead. The maximum penalty handed down was six years, and that was lowered. It could be said that the intrinsic wisdom of power has organized a real gerontocracy. Those who survive seem to continue to manage the businesses—and clearly continued to manage things even when they were in prison—and it seems that they were not investigated for this. Equally, it should be remembered that criminal association is a permanent crime, and its persistence should be considered a situation of *flagrante delicto*. The same people, therefore, have returned to positions of authority in the Carnival of Rio de Janeiro, given that they are no longer targets of public attention, the authorities, or the police. When news reports came out that the prefect of Rio de Janeiro had publicly approached the current head of the *Carioca* Carnival,²⁰ it provoked a negative reaction in the mass media²², expressing a popular sentiment that was awakened with the conviction of the *cupola*, in a response as great as their much publicized impunity. The second generation of organized crime—grandchildren and relatives of members of the *cupola*—who went on to develop the “business” both out of inheritance as well as succession, recently began a war for domination that is ongoing, despite new legal tools introduced by the Brazilian legislature for combating organized crime, such as laws on:

- organized crime (law 9.034/95);
- money laundering (law 9.613/98);

- administrative dishonesty (law 8.249/92);
- the greater flexibility of banking seals (LC 105/2001);
- the suspension of the telephone seal (law 9.296/86);
- white-collar crime (law 7.492/86);
- violent crime (law 8.072/99)
- a convention on the fight against the corruption of foreign public officials (law 3.678/2000).

However, it should be pointed out that trial legislation has remained the same since 1941 when the penal procedures code was enacted.

By law, once a penal infraction has been alleged, it falls to the judicial police to initiate a criminal investigation and begin collecting evidence regarding guilt and materials from the supposed crime. Once the police have concluded the investigative phase, the investigation shifts to the public prosecutor, who either issues charges or archives them. Once the charges have been issued, penal action begins that may culminate in either acquittal or conviction, subject to appeal in the courts. The archaic and corrupt structure of the police (called the judicial police, but still subject to the power of the executive branch) holds the public prosecutor hostage since he or she receives the investigations if and/or however the police authorities want them, many times forcing a dismissal for lack of sufficient evidence to file charges. The gap between the police (who collect evidence) and the public prosecutor (who moves to act based on the evidence) is, in large part, one of the obstacles to obtaining guilty verdicts. When dealing with activities involving organized crime, investigation is almost impossible.

The Role of Women in Crime in Brazil

In 1995, the Brazilian prison population was around 144,484 prisoners (men and women); in 1997 this number grew to 170,602 (a 15.1% increase in only two years); in 1999, it was on the order of 194,074 (an increase of 10.3% over the previous two years); in April 2001, it rose to 223,220 (an increase of 13.1%). Thus, the Brazilian prison population increased by 35.3% between 1995 and the end of April 2001.²¹ Out of a total of 223,220 prisoners (sentenced or of nondefinitive status as of April 2001), 95.6% were male and only 4.4% female.

States with the highest concentration of prisoners were Sao Paulo, with 42.2%, or 94,737 prisoners; and Rio de Janeiro, with 9.3%, or 20,726 prisoners. The prison population already sentenced in the entire country (as of December 2000) was 111,166 prisoners: 96.0% (106,719) of these were men and 4% (4,447) were women. Among the latter, 60% had broken drug laws against use or trafficking.²² Among the men, the proportion falls to 15% of prisoners; thus, illegal drug trafficking is a female prerogative.

Reliable data were sought for the penal typologies relevant to women, even as a sample, but were obtained only from some states (in reference to 2000), for

TABLE 11.1.

State	Total prisoners	Number of men	Number of women	Percentage men	Percentage women
Sao Paulo	92,460	90,902	1,558	98.31	1.68
Rio de Janeiro	23,171	22,230	851	95.93	3.67
Pernambuco	8,171	8,387	318	96.34	4.61
Santa Catarina	5,219	4,978	241	95.38	4.61

reasons already mentioned in the notes on methodology; it should also be noted that statistical analysis at the research level is very recent in Brazil.

Taking as a basis data from the year 2000 from the states of Sao Paulo (southeast region),²³ Rio de Janeiro (southeast region),²⁴ Pernambuco (northeast region),²⁵ and Santa Catarina (southern region),²⁶ which represent more than half the Brazilian prison population, the general outline is shown in Table 11.1. Tables 11.2 to 11.5 show the highest incidences of participation in penal crimes in each of the states.^{27, 28}

TABLE 11.2. Sao Paulo state (southeast region)

Type of Crime	Total prisoners	Percentage
Robbery	552	35.42
Drug trafficking	452	29.01
Theft	198	12.70
Homicide	101	6.48
Larceny	93	5.96
Fraud	49	3.14
Drug trafficking	17	1.09
Sex crimes	17	1.09
Weapon's possession	7	0.45
Total	1,558	

TABLE 11.3. Rio di Janeiro state (southeast region)

Type of crime	Number of prisoners	Percentage
Drug trafficking	332	39.01
Theft	167	19.62
Robbery	166	19.50
Drug dealing	50	5.87
Fraud	47	5.52
Homicide	44	5.17
<i>Jogo do bicho</i>	21	2.46
Kidnapping	12	1.41
Bodily harm	12	1.41
Criminal association	10	1.17
Total	851	

TABLE 11.4. Pernambuco state (northeast region)

Type of crime	Number of prisoners	Percentage
Drug trafficking	73	54.40
Homicide	63	19.81
Robbery	44	13.83
Others	38	11.94
Total	318	

TABLE 11.5. Santa Catarina state (southern region)

Type of crime	Number of prisoners	Percentage
Drug trafficking	173	71.78
Theft	31	12.86
Homicide	23	9.54
Robbery	5	2.07
Larceny	3	1.24
Bodily harm	3	1.24
Fraud	3	1.24
Total	241	

The statistics show that drug trafficking in Brazil is a female occupation (also see Alba 2001a, b); women occupy important roles in this activity: in retail markets, street sales in large cities, and transporting drugs, at times internationally. This chapter will not examine the cause and/or precedents of this, except to the extent that it relates to its specific aims.

Women and Mafia-Type Organized Crime in Brazil

Numerous investigations (see the Bibliography), including that leading to the conviction of the *cupola*, as well as the examination of the archives of the largest newspapers in Brazil in the 1980s, show that the Bankers' criminal organization has been composed almost exclusively of men. Until 1993, no one from the *cupola* had ever been arrested and convicted; only a few simple associates had been, and then only for a few days, since they were always released when the accusation was linked to the petty crime of *jogo dos bichos* (one reason for this was that much important information about its operations was still unknown). Following the trial that saw the conviction and sentencing of the *cupola*, the organization's operations could be seen more clearly, along with some of its so-called "laws."

One "law" refers to a pension for all widows. The organization guarantees that the widow of a dead *bicheiro* or Banker will never be left in material hardship. Another "law" refers to succession, which is heredity and according to models the country's civil laws, legitimizing, in strict order, descendents, ancestors, and collateral relatives to the third degree.

Given the nonexistence of female members of the *cupola* and/or Bankers, we consider the heirs of *bicheiros* and Bankers (the latter both members and non-members of the *cupola*). The heirs of Banker Jose Baptista da Costa, or “China da Saude,” were Luiz Carlos and Arlete “China da Saude”; he had been a Banker but not a member of the *cupola*, though he received the same respect because of his very old *jogo dos bichos* business. He was killed in August 1981. This crime remains unsolved (like the other 100 homicides involving the *cupola*) despite the fact that suspicion fell on the former policeman and “aspiring Banker” Mariel Mariscotte de Mattos, who expected to buy part of China’s “territory” and was killed months later in another episode that has also remained unsolved. Despite this, Luiz Carlos and Arlete did not immediately take over their father’s *jogo dos bichos* “shop” because after his death the territory became fairly fragmented by “invasions” that had produced at least thirty deaths. In the end, by decision of the *cupola*, Luiz Carlos acquired only part of the “territory.” Another part was divided among small Bankers, who were required by the *cupola* to pay a percentage, as rent, to China da Saude’s widow.

Arlete was dissatisfied, claiming that she should receive half the monthly proceeds of the “shop.” She decided to use violence to resolve the question. She contacted three policemen—all of them later killed in crimes that have also remained unsolved—known for the violent dealings in the criminal underworld.²⁹ The investigation opened to ascertain the cause of the death of Mariel Mariscotte de Mattos revealed that Arlete and her three bodyguards had “invaded” the location of the *apuração do jogo dos bichos* run by Luiz Carlos in the “Gloria” neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro. They found only a manager, who told her to call her brother. When Luiz Carlos arrived, Arlete told him what she wanted. Luiz Carlos did not agree and, in a threatening tone, said he would resolve the question “his own way,” something that, in this context, had the air of a death threat.

That same day, Luiz Carlos and Arlete were called to appear before the powerful current (in 1981) “boss” of the *cupola*, Antonio Petrus Kalil, nicknamed “Turcao” (one of the fourteen later convicted for mafia-type criminal association) in a club in the Botafogo neighborhood³⁰ of Rio de Janeiro. Because of the more than 100 deaths linked to the Bankers during the 1960s and 1970s, the *cupola* perceived the necessity of cultivating a less violent image. At this meeting were gathered other Bankers in a sort of council of elders. “Turcao” decided that Luiz Carlos should pay a major monthly sum of money³¹ to Arlete due to the rights of inheritance from their father.

Arlete also referred to her friendly relationship with another *cupola* heir, “Marquinhos,” son of the powerful “Raul Capitaio,” the greatest of *cupola* members, convicted in 1993 when he was over 84 years old. According to Arlete, it was “Marquinhos” who suggested Sebastiao and Francisco Santoro and “Chuca” as “bodyguards.” After the agreement mediated by “Turcao,” Arlete disappeared and could not be found even to testify in court when the trial was being prepared against the *cupola* in 1993. Her brother, Luiz Carlos, continued to manage his father’s “shops” and was elected city councilman in Rio de Janeiro during the

1990s. However, he was prevented from taking office because of a series of legal measures by the public prosecutor and was later killed.

Another indication of female presence in the organization can be found in the dynasty of “Raul Capitaio,” already mentioned; he died of natural causes two years after his 1993 sentencing. He had two heirs: a son, Marcos Correia de Mello, and a daughter, Suely Correia de Mello. Marcos was murdered in Rio de Janeiro over a “territory” dispute for the *jogo dos bichos*. According to an interview given to a major national newspaper, Suely, a lawyer, had the ambition of becoming a public *Promotora*³² but was tried and found guilty of murder, a crime not connected to the family “shops.” She was one of the richest Bankers and owned a real estate company created solely to manage the innumerable properties she had acquired during her lifetime.

Another Banker belonging to the *cupola*, Jose Carezzo Escafura, a.k.a. “Piruiinha,” had been involved with various women and had at least twelve children he legally recognized. All the women worked for him, as did the children, the latter in apparently legal businesses (e.g., a samba night club called “Sambola” located on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, where his daughters alternated working the till and the bar).

The *cupola* member Jose Petros, a.k.a. “Zinho,” who had been a representative of the *cupola* and who, during the military dictatorship, used the name Luciano Carlos Pereira, had an heir named Maria Cristina Petros. She was a lawyer who, according to an interview,³³ was preparing to enter a competition for a career as a public defender or judge.³⁴ It seems she never entered any public career, although she also never, in any way, entered the criminal organization of her father, who was convicted in 1993.

When “Boss” Castor de Andrade died of natural causes in 1997, he had four children; two were infants, and two were old enough to succeed him. A son, “Paulinho” Andrade, was already part of the *cupola* and was killed in 1999. A daughter married an ambitious young man, an aspiring Boss, who had already been arrested several times and been accused of murder, and who recently had been involved with a nephew of Castor de Andrade in an ongoing dispute over territory.

The Bankers’ wives deserve a separate chapter. When the fourteen members were arrested,³⁵ there is no record that their wives succeeded their husbands or companions, among other reasons because the *cupola*, though under arrest, never stopped managing the “businesses.” On these occasions, only the address of the “bunker” had been changed and moved to their prison cells via cell phones.

The mass media claimed that “Turcao’s” wife, a teacher in the city of Niteroi, had assumed command of the “businesses” in the name of the *cupola*, something that was conveniently and vehemently denied.

Another woman, the latest girlfriend of Castor de Andrade, decided to turn him in following problems that arose from their separation; she not only made public the details of their intimate life, but also his illegal activities and indicated that he was involved in drug trafficking.

As can be seen, here again the rule seems to be that women are not the main actors in violent crime, with their role primarily that of associate.

The Role of Women in New Types of Organized Crime

Although women have an associate role in the only strictly mafia-style criminal organization in Brazil, the same could not be said of another criminal organization, one created exclusively for defrauding the social security agency (INSS), the body charged with the payment of pensions and other benefits to the insured. Investigations begun in 1989 uncovered a vast network of highly educated women—in large part lawyers or top federal officials—who had formed a criminal organization that clearly boasted an operational and economic apparatus in collusion with political and economic authorities and was also characterized by an apparent “code of silence” and forms of violence.

The discovery of this organization came from the realization that there had been an increase in the wealth, with no apparent cause, of some judges, especially in Rio de Janeiro State. This provoked an investigation by the disciplinary body of the judiciary that uncovered the tip of an iceberg, the existence of one of the most sophisticated organizations created for the practice of fraud in Brazil, popularly known as the “social security mafia.”

Nationally, the organization was—and continues to be—almost exclusively run by women. Various other organizations exist independent of this one, all of them interconnected with its economic apparatus, as in the “laundering” of resources and profits from illegal activities; together they form in a sense one single organization, as a sort of holding company. Its agents infiltrated INSS agencies across Brazil and convinced some insured parties to begin actions to revise their benefits, bringing them to offices of lawyers who managed the scheme. These lawyers brought the cases before judges who were part of the conspiracy. (At least four judges were arrested, convicted, and lost their positions after proof of their participation in the fraud.) The judges forwarded the files to the judicial accountant, who calculated inflated amounts that were forwarded to INSS attorneys (also in collusion), who validated them and returned the documents to the judges. Finally, the judges ordered the payments be made directly to the lawyers, who were armed with power of attorney to receive money on behalf of their clients.

This scheme profited from the fact that, in most cases, it involved simple people with little education. These beneficiaries received a minimum amount, having been told that it was all that could be obtained for them. On the death of the beneficiary, the proceeds continued to be the total amount and someone in on the scheme was chosen to receive the monthly benefits in the name of the dead person. This scam may have diverted something like 250 million U.S. dollars, which was laundered in Brazil³⁶ and elsewhere in, for example, the real estate market and even gold ingots (more than 500 kg in gold ingots were seized).

Lawyer Jorgina Maria de Freitas Fernandes was part of this scheme and boss of an independent organization. Arrested and convicted, she escaped to the United States, Mexico, and Costa Rica, from where she was finally extradited to Brazil.

A similar scheme, the so-called Escocia scheme, was headed by a man, the lawyer Ilsson Escocia da Veiga, but his partner was his companion (also a lawyer) Claudia Caetano Bouças. Both were arrested and sentenced.

Other schemes were setup by Lucia de Fatima Pisani (head of the Pisani scheme) and Terezinha de Jesus Freitas de Carvalho (head of the Terezinha de Jesus scheme). The latter managed a “company” with one of her accomplices, and was arrested and convicted.³⁷

All these women have been arrested and sentenced; part of the profits and resources that they accumulated have been recovered.

Another scheme, a sort of general model for such organizations, began with top public officials operating inside the National Social Security Institute (INSS); this was known as the “Jacineia scheme.”³⁸ This organization controlled an agency (or place) in the INSS, along with all the information that was sent from there via computer. Every month, the INSS central system submitted a report through that agency of the pensions that had been suspended because they had not been collected from banking agencies by beneficiaries for more than two months, something that usually happened either because the beneficiaries were dead or incapacitated for some reason. There was to be an investigation into the reason. Jacineia, in possession of this report, designed a plan that consisted in selecting these pensions, preparing a false power of attorney and providing an agent with it, and reactivating the pension by manipulating the INSS system.

Thus this scheme created false documents; employed an agent for each pension, who went to the bank to carry out the withdrawal; created a new address for the beneficiary (who usually was dead); and used countless intermediaries such as people specializing in falsifying documents. This scheme ended up managing a list of pensions for more than 600 people, amounting to a fraud of more than 250,000 U.S. dollars a month.

Jacineia preferred to work with women in the most important positions of her organization (at least two women were top officials in the INSS). All were arrested and convicted and lost their public employment.

Another scheme was the “Camel” scheme; the boss, a male lawyer, placed women in major positions. He created a “phantom” person and gave it all the documentation necessary. He presented the documentation to the INSS system, specifically the agency where the boss maintained a corrupt relationship with INSS officials. The INSS, through colluding officials, issued the benefit (pension or insurance), and sent correspondence to the home of the insured and the authorization to the banking agency to make the payment. People involved in this scheme assumed the identity of the “phantom” and every month received the amount deposited, which was then handed over to the organization. It has been calculated this scheme administrated a list of no less than 100 beneficiaries, representing more than 400,000 U.S. dollars a month.

These “schemes” were discovered only because of an investigation during the 1980s of judges who had increases in wealth with no legitimate cause. The disciplinary body of the courts began investigations in states where the problem had been identified. The most important (and first) was carried out in Rio de Janeiro. It was my duty to preside over the investigation regarding the judge who colluded with the fraud scheme of Terezinha de Jesus because I was part of the court administration in Rio de Janeiro State as an assistant judge in the general *Corregedoria* of justice.

An understanding of how these schemes operated (and better still, the recovery of proceeds and resources they diverted by) took place because the INSS, seeing the extent, depth, and permanence of the problem, brought together an effective team that in addition to the investigation, contributed to the development of control policies and oversaw the astronomical turnover of this specific agency. This team³⁹ worked in perfect harmony and collaboration with the *Promotores* in the federal area as well as the federal *Delegados* and were known as the “Untouchables,” an allusion to the incorruptible federal agents who arrested Al Capone in 1930s Chicago.

Conclusions

Two distinct criminal organizations have been presented here, operating widely across the entire national territory. Both feature the characteristics of organized crime, including:

- Economic ends.
- Regular illegal transactions.
- Business planning.
- Management of large volumes of resources.
- Relationships with political and economic authorities.
- The use of corruption as a means of reaching its illegal “business” goals.
- A transnational character.

These organizations are respectively known by the popular names of the “*jogo do bicho mafia*” and the “social security mafia.” Table 11.6 shows a schematic internal organization map of them, dividing their activities between an operational apparatus and an economic apparatus.

Violence, usually considered indispensable for the identification of mafia-type criminal organizations, is found only in the first of these. Unfortunately, there

TABLE 11.6. Structure of organized crime activity

Operational apparatus	Economic apparatus
Active when crime is committed	Collects and manages “benefits” and manages acquired “assets”

has been no continuation of investigations into the *jogo dos bichos* organization or monitoring of its activities to that point towards the drug business. This was foreseen in the final sentencing of the *cupola*, when I had to acquit them because of insufficient evidence. Regarding the specific crime mentioned above, it was stated and expressed as follows:

As results from the files, sufficient elements do not exist to constitute a guilty verdict for the crime of criminal association for the practice of domestic traffic of controlled substances. From what has been collected, it cannot be affirmed with the necessary precision that this crime, regarding internal traffic within the borders of this state till the present date, has effectively occurred. This is because the criminal trial has to do with undesirable specificities for those who believe the ideal of justice must not be hostage to obsolete procedural norms, consisting in the circumstances that any action on this jurisdictional matter should take on a preliminary instructional phase towards a police apparatus that, for various motives, presents unsatisfactory, when not useless, results because of well-known deficiencies. In this trial in particular, the case included the request from the *Parquet* of the recognition of its own corruption, that spread into the police apparatus, fed by a parallel power structure, created and guided by the group that now figures individually in the dock. This situation has reached insupportable limits; consider the average morals of the man in society who feels assaulted by this, aside from the merits of the repudiation by any citizen of institutionalized corruption in public administrative bodies, even more in what should be known as the legitimate strong arm of justice and public safety, last bastion for uncovering and combating criminal events. It should be opportunely remembered, this latter sentiment brought the fall of a President of the Republic and initiated in Italy—cradle and school of organized and hierarchized crime whose model, till today, has been exported, accepted and copied in various countries and, unfortunately, also here—a never-before-seen process of institutional transparency in the search for a return to dignity and morality, the only conditions possible for giving authority to the administration, and consecrating in concrete acts, duly safeguarded by the police and judicial orders, the ideal of justice, the unavoidable essence of social equilibrium. In other words: if there had not been the initiative of the public prosecutor to issue charges in the case in question, despite the significant proof collected on this crime till now, without a doubt there would be no hope of developing this penal action, perhaps subsequent to a careful investigation. The criminal inertia is deplorable, to say the least, supported in the pretended clean-up of the police of this crime in particular, where special interest has been altogether eloquent.⁴⁰

Notes

1. *Source*: Ministry of Education and Culture, MEC/National Institute for Educational Study and Research, INEP; Seade Foundation.
2. Issues relative to this area, under Article 144 of the federal Constitution, are the competency of the states of the federation.
3. Criminal Proceeding No. 28104 from the Fourteenth Criminal *Vara* (section) of the District of Rio de Janeiro, vol. 4, p. 1088.
4. *O Globo, Jornal do Brasil, Estado de Sao Paulo, and Folha de Sao Paulo*.
5. The public prosecutor in Rio de Janeiro State requested two police investigations in September 1985; the first had the scope of ascertaining the illegal activities of the *jogo dos bichos* and the second the purpose of uncovering criminals connected with the

illegal game. These occurred just after the return of the country to democratic normalcy following the twenty-one year period of military dictatorship which ended in 1984, under pressure from reports in the mass media of police involvement in corruption and the war for power among the Bankers.

6. "Banker" here refers to a boss who controls a set geographical area of the illegal game and pays the winners. Rio de Janeiro State and Brazil are divided into regions among the fourteen Bankers sentenced in Rio de Janeiro on 21 May 1993, which also included some Bankers from Sao Paulo, who managed the activity (and continue to manage it for themselves or their successors).
7. Surnames of some of the Bankers who were convicted and sentenced.
8. Fourteen members of the *cupola* were arrested and sentenced 21 May 1993, the first time in Brazil the existence of a mafia-type organized association had been recognized. These members included the following:
 - Castor Gonçalves de Andrade Silva, nicknamed "Castor," who died of natural causes in 1997 and was the father of Paulinho Andrade. He was the head of the *cupola* at the time of the arrests. He managed a metal-working business that over the years had produced war materiel for the Brazilian armed forces and fire hydrants. He owned a fishing business in Porto Seguro, Bahia, that he later sold after being the target of accusations that the business was used as a cover for drug trafficking. In Rio, aside from being the owner of the Bangu Atletico football club, he managed the game in the western area of the city and owned gasoline stations and a used car agency.
 - Aniz Abraao David, nicknamed "Inizio." He began by managing the *jogo dos bichos* in Nilopolis, in Rio de Janeiro State, expanding his business across the entire *baixada fluminense* in the south of Rio State. He was the president of the Beija Flor samba school in Nilopolis; owned shares in various motels and casinos outside Rio State; and produced theatrical plays and films because, among other reasons, one of his sons was an actor.
 - Ailton Guimaraes Jorge, nicknamed "Capitao Guimaraes," former army captain, accused of having tortured prisoners during the military dictatorship. He began managing the *jogo dos bichos* after his trial, as army captain, for the crime of smuggling. His gaming points were scattered between Niteroi and the lake region in Rio de Janeiro State as well as in Espirito Santo State.
 - Raul Correa de Mello, nicknamed "Raul Capitano," who died of natural causes in 1995. He ran the game in the center of Rio de Janeiro and Governor's Island. One of his largest investments was in real estate. He was a partner in a real estate agency created to administer his wealth. He also owned a local newspaper, *O Povo*; however, after the murder of his son "Marquinho," he chose to close down the newspaper. He collected luxury cars and drove his Rolls Royce on the streets of Rio. He was the father of Suely Correia de Mello, a lawyer who was later involved as an accessory in a homicide.
 - Carlos Teixeira Martins, nicknamed "Carlinhos Maracana." He was a Portuguese citizen who ran the *jogo dos bichos* in part of the northern area of Rio and was owner of the junior team of the Bangu Atletico Club. He had a chain of supermarkets, two performance venues on the outskirts of Rio and a nearby city, and was the president of the Portela samba school. His other activities included producing pornographic films.
 - Waldemir Garcia, nicknamed "Miro," father of "Maninho." He controlled the game in the southern part of Rio de Janeiro and part of Tijuca, neighborhoods in the

northern area of Rio de Janeiro. He owned casinos in Paraguay and was honorary president of the Academicos do Sanguêiro samba school. His son, “Maninho,” is its current president.

- Antonio Petros Kalil, nicknamed “Turcao,” brother of “Zinho,” married to Terezinha, who was indicated as having taken over the administration of *cupola* businesses after the arrests in 1993. He ran the game partially in Niteroi, in Rio de Janeiro State, in northern Minas Gerais State, and in the city of Salvador de Bahia. He also owned a casino in Paraguay.
 - Jose Petros, nicknamed “Zinho,” brother of “Turcao.” Representative of the *cupola*, he owned gaming spots in the Rio de Janeiro city center.
 - Jose Carezzo Escafura, nicknamed “Piruiha,” managed areas in the north of Rio de Janeiro that he shared with “Carlinhos Maracana.” He owned night clubs, produced films, invested in race horses in Rio de Janeiro and Campos, Rio State.
 - Haroldo Rodrigues Nunes, nicknamed “Haroldo Saens Pena,” controlled the game in part in the Tijuca neighborhood and became rich investing in real estate. It seems he is presently “retired.”
 - Luiz Pacheco Drummond, nicknamed “Luizinho Drummond,” controlled the game in the Leopoldina area of Rio de Janeiro and was president of the Imperatriz Leopoldinense samba school. He owned an (illegal) casino and night clubs in Fortaleza, in Ceará State. He also owned part of an (illegal) casino in Manaus, Amazonas. He was director of the Botafogo Football Club.
 - Elim Pinheiro (died of natural causes in 2001) ran games in the Jacarepagua and Barra da Tijuca neighborhoods, both in the western area of Rio de Janeiro. He invested in buying football players, including players who worked abroad. He owned various parcels of real estate, yachts, and islands in Rio de Janeiro state.
 - Waldemir Paes Garcia, nicknamed “Maninho,” son of “Miro,” one of the most violent, accused of various homicides.
 - Paulo Roberto de Andrade Silva, nicknamed “Paulinho Andrade,” son of “Castor.” He was assassinated in 1999.
9. This term indicates all those involved in the crime of *jogo dos bichos*.
 10. Euclides Panar, nicknamed “*China cabeça branca*.” The investigation into his as-yet-unsolved murder was IP no. 615/76 of the *Delegacia* of homicides in Rio de Janeiro; parts of this can be found in the files of trial no. 28.104 of the Criminal *Vara* (Vol. 21, fls. 5.828 to 5.955), in which the fourteen members of the *cupola* were sentenced for the crime of operating a criminal enterprise, Article 288 of the penal code.
 11. Mariel Mariscotte de Mattos, killed 8 October 1981, had been reported as the perpetrator of the homicide of another policeman, equally involved with the *cupola*, Francisco de Queiroz Ribeiro, nicknamed “Chiquinho.” The trial for the murder of “Chiquinho” was held in the Tribunale del Giuri under no. 9.822/81, a portion of which is found in the file of trial no. 28.104 of the Fourteenth Criminal *Vara* (Vol. 20, fls. 5.349 to fl. 5.648, and Vol. 21, from fls. 5.649 to 5.825).
 12. Criminal association, according to Article 188 of the penal code (law 2.848/40), is defined as “Association by more than three people, in a criminal association, for the purpose of committing crimes: penalty—imprisonment for from 1 (one) to 3 (three) years. The penalty is doubled if the group is armed.”
 13. Fernando Collor de Mello, elected in 1989, inaugurated in 1990, impeached in 1992.
 14. Castor Gonçalves de Andrade e Silva, nicknamed “Castor,” died in 1997 of natural causes.

15. See Hans Magnus Enzensberg, *Politica e Gangsterismo*. Rome: Savelli, 1979.
16. Spiro Agnew, Vice President under Richard Nixon, forced to resign because of corruption.
17. The activity known as “money laundering” became a crime in Brazil only with the passage of law 9.613/98.
18. The Federative Union of Brazil has two police forces under the administration of the executive branch: the civil police (or judicial police), with the function of investigating criminal activities, and the military police, with the function of public safety. However, in effect, the civil police also carry out actions related to public order and both are still considered highly corrupt.
19. Fernando Ignacio, son-in-law and successor of “Castor” after the assassination of his son, “Paulinho Andrade.”
20. *Carioca* is the name given to a citizen born in Rio di Janeiro. But it can also indicate someone who likes the lifestyle of a citizen of Rio de Janeiro, centered around joy, music, and dance.
21. *Source*: National Penitentiary Department (DEPEN), Justice Ministry.
22. *Source*: Justice Ministry.
23. *Source*: Secretary for the Penitentiary Administration of Sao Paulo State.
24. *Source*: Penal Enforcement *Vara* of Rio de Janeiro State (VEP).
25. *Source*: State Justice Secretary of Pernambuco State.
26. *Source*: State Secretary for Justice and Citizenship of Santa Catarina State.
27. Data base from 2000.
28. The categories of crime are described as follows:
 - Robbery—Article 157 of the penal code (law 2.848/40):
“Removing property of others, for one’s self or others, through grave threats or violence to the person, having suffered, via some means, and been reduced to the impossibility of resistance: penalty, fine and from four to ten years incarceration.”
 - Drug trafficking—Article 12 of law 6.368/76—laws regarding controlled substances:
“Importing or exporting, delivering, shipping, producing, fabricating, acquiring, selling, displaying for sale or offering, as well as supplying for free, holding in deposit, transporting, carrying on one’s person, prescribing, administering or consigning, in any form, for the consumption of controlled substances that determine physical or psychological dependence, without authorization or in opposition to legal or regulatory decisions: penalty—three to fifteen years incarceration, and payment of a fine within 50 to 360 days.”
 - Fraud—Article 171 of the penal code (law 2.848/40):
“Obtaining, for one’s self or others, illegal advantage, to the detriment of others, inducing or maintaining someone in deception, through a pretense, through fraudulent means: penalty—one to five years incarceration, and a fine.”
 - Theft—Article 155 of the penal code (law 2.848/40):
“Removing, for one’s self or others, something of another: penalty—incarceration from one to four years, and a fine.”
 - Simple homicide—Article 121 of the penal code (law 2,848/40):
“Killing someone: penalty—incarceration from six to twenty years.”
 - Larceny—Article 157, paragraph 3, of the penal code (law 2.848/40):
“Removing property of others, for one’s self or others, through grave threats or violence to the person, having suffered, via some means, and been reduced to the impossibility of resistance: penalty—from four to ten years incarceration and a fine.”

- Drug dealing—Article 16 of law 6.368/76—laws on controlled substances: “Acquiring, keeping or carrying on one’s person for personal use controlled substances that determine physical or psychological dependency, without authorization or in opposition to legal or regulatory decisions: penalty—incarceration from six months to two years, and payment of a fine within twenty to fifty days.”
 - Kidnapping—Article 159 of the penal code (law 2.848/40): “Kidnapping of persons for the purpose of obtaining, for one’s self or others, some advantage, as the condition or price of a ransom: penalty—incarceration of from eight (8) to fifteen (15) years. (Version of law no. 8.072, of 25.07.1990, DOU 26.07.1990).”
 - Bodily harm—Article 129 of the penal code (law 2.848/40): “Offending the bodily integrity or health of another: penalty—detention for from three (3) months to one (1) year.”
29. Brothers Sebastiao and Francisco Santoro, as well as Edson Martins Lopes, a.k.a. “Chuca.”
 30. The venue was the Guanabara sailing club, located along the beach of Botafogo, in Rio de Janeiro, where “Turcao” ran a special (illegal) card game and from where, it seemed, he gave orders, since his powerful motorboat was also anchored there.
 31. The imposing sum of 500,000 cruzeiros (the currency at the time) a month, as seen in Vol. 1, fl. 110, , trial no. 28.104 of the Fourteenth Criminal *Vara* in Rio de Janeiro.
 32. Interview given to the newspaper *O Globo*, 2.2.86, in fl. 24.
 33. Interview given to the newspaper *O Globo*, date 2.2.86.
 34. In Brazil, entrance into the career of public defender, public prosecutor, or magistrate occurs via a competition of exams and credentials.
 35. The *cupola* was placed in custody a week before the sentence was pronounced on its members.
 36. Recall that money laundering became a crime in Brazil only in 1998.
 37. Pedro Diniz Pereira. He lost his position by virtue of his conviction and sentence.
 38. Jacineia de Oliveira, head of this organization.
 39. Directed, within the INSS, by Dr. Jailton Cancio, career public functionary.
 40. Trial in the jurisdiction of the Fourteenth Criminal *Vara*, no. 28.104.

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12

Women in Organized Crime in Japan

Ryu Otomo

Introduction

Before embarking on the central theme of this chapter, it seems necessary to dismantle a stereotype, widespread in the West, that sees Japanese women as submissive, in situations of inferiority with respect to men, and relegated to a domestic role. History actually shows that Japanese women have participated actively in all the last century's social movements, in the battle for rights, in socialist or anarchist movements, and in environmental struggles; for example, women were active at the beginnings of the 1918 rice revolt, one of the most important prewar social movements. Even today, traces of the matriarchal system can be seen in some isolated areas of the country. On the other hand, the image of the "lady gangster," spread by some Japanese films, in no way reflects reality. The notion of organized crime in Japan has special connotations. The Japanese underworld has a long history but is radically different from the Sicilian Mafia, above all because of the fact that criminal organizations, as such, are not necessarily outlawed. The gangs that make up organized crime present themselves as mutual aid societies and solidarity associations with well-established commercial activities (offices, signs, etc.) unless the prefectorial council for public safety has designated them "violent organizations" (as was the case with twenty-five gangs in February 2000) in conformity with the 1992 anti-gang law. At first, these gangs engaged in illegal activities such as illegal gambling, the sex trade, and drug dealing (principally ephedrine hydrochloride, or methamphetamine), but they also constituted an extralegal regulatory element in the criminal world. During the "speculative bubble" of the 1990s, the great crime "syndicates" entered even further into the legal economy, in which they had been traditionally present in sectors such as bars, variety theaters, and construction.

The police catalogue organized crime under the generic term "*soshiki bōryokudan*" (literally "gangs that exercise brutal organized violence").¹ This term appeared in the 1920s and was used more recently in the 1950s with the codification of the sense of "recourse to violence." The gangs are classified into two categories: organized gangs, which are structured along the lines of quasi-family relationships among the members, and unorganized gangs, which conduct one

specific type of activity (blackmail of companies, loan-sharking, etc.) (*Tokushu chino bōryaku shudan*, literally “violent groups who practice intelligent crime”).

In 1999, the police surveyed 83,100 gangsters who either formally belonged to a gang or belonged to one peripherally. The most important organization is the *Yamaguchi-gumi*. Headquartered in Kobe, it has branches across practically the entire nation and numbers around 17,500 members. The other two crime “syndicates” are the *Sumiyoshi-kai* (5,100 members) and the *Inagawa-kai* (6,200 members), both in the Tokyo area. Gang organization consists of concentric circles that rotate around a boss. Each crime syndicate is composed of different independent gangs with only one at the top, but without constituting in any way a sort of “*cupola*” as in the case of the Mafia. The *Yamaguchi-gumi* includes 112 gangs whose bosses are linked by fictitious family relationships (“brother,” “father–son”) in a system of vassalage; the current boss of the *Yamaguchi-gumi* has a “brotherhood” relationship with the principal directors of the organization. In the gang universe, a nebula exists of affiliated members or “quasi-members” who work for the organization without belonging formally to a gang.

How do women enter into the world of Japanese organized crime, with its essentially male subculture based on force, loyalty, and honor? According to the police, the number of women who formally belong to a gang is extremely limited. Out of 83,100 members of the underworld surveyed by the police in 1999, only a few dozen women were members. A lack of statistical data means that the police are unable to know the exact number of women accused of gang membership, though they maintain that that number is also very limited.²

If we concentrate on the number of arrests, the role of women in organized crime seems marginal. In reality, as we will see, it is more important to consider the extent to which they carry out the role of accomplice (hiding weapons and drugs) of their spouse or lover or serve as an “interim figure” when their companion, if a gang boss, is imprisoned or killed.

Female Criminality in Japan

Generally, the crime level in Japan is relatively low compared to other industrialized countries. Although a detailed comparative study is not easy to conduct, it can be said that in Japan the frequency of crimes such as homicide, theft, and so on is lower than in the United States, England, Germany, or France (see Tables 12.1 and 12.2), although the last few years have seen an increase in penal code infractions

TABLE 12.1. International comparison of crime levels

	United States	England	Germany	France	Japan
1997	4,930	8,543	8,031	5,972	1,506
1998	4,616	9,745	7,869	6,072	1,608

TABLE 12.2. International comparison of homicide levels

	United States	England	Germany	France	Japan
1996	7.4	2.6	4.3	4.1	1.0
1997	6.8	2.7	4.0	3.6	1.0
1998	6.3	2.7	3.5	3.7	1.2

(excluding infractions of the highway code) (see Table 12.3). The following points should be stressed regarding female violations of the penal code:

1. The percentage of women out of the total number of persons arrested has followed a rising trend, from 12.5% in 1970 to 18.9% in 1980 and 20.5% in 1990 (see Table 12.4a). The number of women convicted in 1999 rose to 4.9% of the total of those newly convicted (see Table 12.4b).
2. The rate of the number of women arrested who are older than 14 years of age and are suspected of violating the penal code with respect to a population of 100,000 has also risen in the last decade (see Table 12.5).
3. Women are convicted principally of theft and assault and battery, followed by arson. The percentage for homicide is also relatively high (Table 12.6) (reaching 100% in the case of infanticide).
4. Women under 20 years old represent almost half of the total number of women arrested (Table 12.7). Extortion (79.9%), assault and battery (74.5%), and breaking and entering (57.3%) constitute their principal crimes.
5. The number of women handed over to the justice system for these charges nevertheless is on the decrease. On the other hand, there is an increase in cases of infractions of laws regarding the use of stimulants or toxic substances. Finally, the number of infractions of laws concerning prostitution and public morals is high for women (see Table 12.8).
6. In Japan, no studies exist on the connection between these general trends in female criminality and organized crime. It could be presumed, however, that a good number of women arrested for violation of certain particular laws (e.g., regarding prostitution) are either directly or indirectly tied to the underworld. On the other hand, the increase in the last few years in criminality among young people under 20 years of age could be due to the influence of criminal gangs in this sector of the young female population.

TABLE 12.3. Penal code infractions in Japan per 100,000 inhabitants older than 14 years of age

1996	1,959
1997	1,996
1998	2,127
1999	2,292

TABLE 12.4A Number of women arrested for penal code infractions

	Number of crimes (% of arrests)	Number of arrests (% of women)
1996	1,812,119 (40.6)	295,584 (20.5)
1997	1,899,564 (40.0)	313,573 (22.4)
1998	2,033,546 (38.0)	324,263 (22.4)
1999	2,165,626 (33.8)	315,355 (20.6)

Source: National Police Agency.

TABLE 12.4B Women among new convicts

1995	21,838	4.6%
1996	22,433	4.8%
1997	22,667	5.1%
1998	23,101	5.2%
1999	24,496	4.9%

Source: Annual Report of Sentencing Statistics (Gyôkei Tôdei Nenpo).

TABLE 12.5. Level of female criminality per 100,000 people older than 14 years of age

1995	107.0
1996	109.7
1997	126.5
1998	129.9
1999	115.4

Source: National Police Agency.

TABLE 12.6. Nature of crimes committed by women (%)

	1999 100 (72,723)	2000 100 (64,922)
Total		
Homicide	0.3	0.3
Breaking and entering	0.2	0.3
Assault and battery	2.5	2.5
Collective violence	0.4	0.4
Blackmail	1.2	1.1
Theft	77.2	74.6
Fraud	1.5	1.6
Usurpation	14.0	16.4
Arson	0.2	0.2

TABLE 12.7. Female criminality based on age (%)

	Age <20 years	20 years	30 years	40 years	50 years	+60 years
1990	57.2	10.1	7.9	10.1	8.0	6.7
1991	54.0	11	8.7	710	8.8	17.6
1992	50.0	13.1	8.2	11.6	8.8	8.4
1993	46.7	14.3	8.3	12.0	9.3	9.5
1994	45.1	15.1	8.1	11.9	9.7	10.1
1995	45.4	14.9	8.4	11.4	9.6	10.3
1996	48.1	13.9	7.6	10.4	9.1	1.0
1997	54.7	12.4	6.5	8.7	7.8	9.9
1998	55.2	12.6	6.4	7.9	8.0	9.9
1999	48.8	13.4	6.9	8.6	9.9	12.4

Source: National Police Agency.

TABLE 12.8. Number of cases deferred to the public prosecutor in 1999 and suspected cases of infraction of special laws (prostitution, drugs, etc.)

Subject of the law	Total (percent)	Percentage of women ^a
All	11,660 (100)	16.6 (+9.0)
Electoral fraud	1,094 (9.4)	23.9 (+258.7)
Drugs	56 (0.5)	23.9 (+1.8)
Cannabis	139 (1.2)	12.4 (-11.5)
Stimulants	3,509 (30.1)	19.2 (+7.4)
Toxic substances	1,991 (17.1)	26.0 (+1.1)
Prostitution	588 (5.0)	44.2 (+0.7)
Public morals	763 (6.5)	29.5 (-3.9)
Child welfare	205 (1.8)	26.9 (+5.1)
Immigration control	1,905 (16.3)	29.1 (+5.4)
Other	1,410 (12.1)	5.2 (-9.6)

^a Values in parentheses give changes with respect to the previous year.

Source: National Police Agency.

“Gang” Women

In the absence of statistical data, the police are unable to know the exact number of women accused of belonging to an organized gang; nevertheless they maintain that this number is very limited. If we consider only the number of arrests, the role of women in organized crime would seem to be irrelevant. However, another statistical approach should not be ignored. Between 1 January and 31 October 1999, out of 302 cases (4.7% of the total) of people connected to a gang who were convicted and sentenced to a period of parole that brought with it the prohibition of any contact with the criminal element, there were only twenty women (i.e., 6.6%). None of these was formally a gang member. They were, however, either the wives or companions of gang members or quasi-members.³

The role of women becomes more important than it appears, especially to the extent, as we have said, that they act as accomplices (hiding weapons and drugs)

for their spouses or lovers or serve as an “interim” figure when their companion is imprisoned or dies. Their influence depends both on their character as well as their companion’s position within the gang. They also perform the role of providing for the financial needs of the man. Though there are no systematic studies regarding this, a study by the national police agency indicated that 28% of criminal gang members recognize being financially dependent on their companion or wife for a sum of around ten million yen a year. According to another study from 1999, 27% of 2,825 convicted criminals who were sentenced to prison had experienced financial problems and 45.3% were married. According to the same study, 11.2% said that they had participated in a gang in the hope of having more success with women.⁴

In the past, certain women performed top-level roles in organized crime; there have been women gang bosses. Up until just after World War II, there were gangster women who held autonomous positions in the underworld that were not subordinate to men. Their disappearance is due to the transformation of the gang environment, particularly tied to the progressive disappearance of the distinction between the two large categories that formed the underworld at one time: professional gamblers and traveling salesmen. Professional gamblers, who proliferated at the end of the Edo era despite prohibition by the authorities, were the “noble” element of the Japanese criminal world and contributed to structuring criminal society. One contested theory states that the name *yakuza* originally signified a losing combination at gambling. According to another theory, the word comes from *mihari yakusa*, the name given to lookouts for illegal games. At any rate, gamblers transferred many of their rituals to the underworld (such as cutting off the little finger as a sign of contrition, the traditional expression of apology by a subordinate to a superior as well as a proof of love in the world of prostitutes). In addition, the tradition of tattoos developed specifically among professional gamblers. Women found a place in this world; for example, professional female gamblers existed during the Edo period (from the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century).⁵ Some literary works recall female gang bosses called *onna kyōkaku* (“knightly women”) who controlled dockworkers at the end of the nineteenth century in the north of the island of Kyushu.

Immediately after World War II, one of the best-known female gang bosses was Yoshiko Matsuda, who, after her husband was killed in a fight, took the reins of a very powerful gang (*Kanto Matsuda-gumi*) that numbered in the hundreds of members and alone controlled two thousand gangsters. Yoshiko Matsuda led street fights in the Shinbashi neighborhood of Tokyo (following in the footsteps of the great Chicago tradition during prohibition) with rival Taiwanese gangs for control of the black market. She died in 1956, probably from an overdose.

A female professional gambler, Tsune Hoshino (died in 1986 at the age of 54), led a gang of around forty men in Komatsugawa on the outskirts of Tokyo. This gang (*Omasu*) was active in the market of “parallel” betting on outboard racing and in the world of traveling salesmen. Tsune Hoshino succeeded as head of this gang in 1959.

Another woman, Nami Odagiri (born in 1953), was the boss of the *Ryugakai* gang in Osaka (around thirty members), which was a dependent of the largest

Japanese crime syndicate, the *Yamaguchi-gumi*. After having been a singer, she spent eight years in prison. She organized her gang on her release.

Still another woman, Hirota, led a group from the extreme political right (*Yukonsha*) that, as happens frequently in Japan, was in reality a group of criminals who used patriotism as a pretext to carry out blackmailing activities. Her gang gravitated around the gang of one of the great bosses of the *Yamaguchi-gumi*, Hideo Shiragami. Hirota was a large operator in illegal gambling in the Osaka region, and her illegal casinos were frequented by the gang of Hatani Moriyuki, one of the bosses of the *Yamaguchi-gumi*. Hideo Shiragami, who had met her in one of her casinos, was impressed by her audacity and decided to take her into his gang.

These women were clearly integrated into the structure of a crime “syndicate” and more than once engaged in the ritual of the exchange of cups of *sakè* that sealed their ties of vassalage. Today, these rituals are no longer used. And there are no longer female gang leaders.

Women exercise no less substantial influence within the gangs, however, an influence proportional to the power of their husbands or lovers. In traditional gang structure, the woman of the boss also becomes part of the system of close family relations; she is the “great sister” (*anego*). In this environment, the word “*nesan*” (sister) is preferred. As in every male-dominated society, the world of the *yakuza* also possesses strong matriarchal components: the mother or spouse who glorifies the men’s “successes.”

The *anego* is not restrained from rebuking gang members. So, the journalist and contemporary writer Manabu Miyazaki, son of an underworld gang leader in Kyoto, remembers that his mother, a small woman of around 1.4 meters in height and born in the slums of Osaka the daughter of a mafioso, railed openly against her husband’s subordinates when they had done something stupid: “seated cross-legged, these men with their ogre faces listened with their heads bowed and never offered a word,” he writes.⁶ The day he and his older brother were arrested, he recounts, his mother’s face remained impassive:

Before being arrested, I went to see my mother. She told me simply, “Do not worry about what will happen later. Do not be confused and do not say anything.” She was a mother but when she spoke she was above all the wife of a mafioso. I discovered later that after our departure, she cried in front of the altar of our ancestors where the memory of my father was honored. They were only the tears of a mother.⁷

According to Manabu Miyasaki, women are forbidden to become involved in gang business; this is one of the principals of the underworld. The popular press tends frequently to exaggerate the influence of women in gangs. Yukio Yamanouchi, former legal council for the *Yamaguchi-gumi*, cites the case of the third boss of this crime syndicate, Kazuo Taoka: “He was a very suspicious man who gave the impression of searching incessantly for those among his subordinates who might betray him. It was his wife, Fumiko, who smoothed out the edges and acted as an intermediary to avoid conflicts,” he reports.⁸ Taoka died of a heart attack in 1983; his successor was Masahisa Takenaka. The popular press introduced him as having been chosen by Fumiko. His appointment still provoked in internal

battle in the heart of the *Yamaguchi-gumi*, and he was killed. Since April 1989, the new head of the *Yamaguchi-gumi* has forbidden his wife to interfere in the gang's affairs. "When women intervene, the results are more bad than good. This is the conclusion I draw from experience," he stated in an interview with a journalist who is an expert on the underworld, Atsushi Mizoguchi.⁹ Watanabe makes reference to his experience in the gang of which he was a member and became boss on the death of his predecessor, Yamaken-gumi. The boss's wife was "particularly tough and harassed us incessantly to the point that some members cut off their little fingers and others left the gang. In reality, she trained us on behalf of the boss," relates a member of this gang.¹⁰

Nowadays, women mostly perform an indirect role. A typical case is that of a fifty-year-old woman in the city of Osaka, the second largest in Japan. Though not a member of any gang, she is involved in the criminal underworld. Her previous husband, killed in a battle between gangs, was a *yakuza*, and her present husband is in the upper levels of a very powerful Osaka gang. This woman manages five illegal gaming houses (video games that allow a person to play poker using tokens that can be exchanged for money) in a poor neighborhood. Officially, her brothers and their families manage these game rooms through a figurehead who is paid compensation. One of these gaming houses is located in a cheap diner. At the entrance, customers are obliged to sit at a long counter. At the extreme left of the counter, a small door leads to a room where there are a dozen or so video poker games. The proprietress comes only rarely. In case the police should arrive, it is not her brother who risks arrest, but the figurehead.

There are a considerable number of similar illegal gambling houses in the neighborhood and all of them are connected, either directly or indirectly, to the *Yamaguchi-gumi* gang. Since her husband is in the upper levels of a gang affiliated with the *Yamaguchi-gumi*, the woman of whom we are speaking can confidently manage her business: "Part of the profits are intended for the income of this organization," explains a member of her gang.

In this case, it is clear that this woman is able to manage her operations thanks only to her husband's influence. In the neighborhood, she is considered the "boss's woman." This shows how in general women do not directly establish a gang but can be linked to one through their personal relationships with male gang members.

According to a source connected to the Kyoto underworld, which is rife with a large number of small gangs, women fill roles inside an organization only if their father or husband goes missing and when there is no delegated successor. According to Manabu Miyazaki,¹¹

The *yakuza* world is a world of men. So it is very rare that relationships of vassalage are created under the form of close blood relationships with women. Women are nevertheless integrated into the structure of the gang in case of her husband's death and the absence of a successor. This would be the case if the dead boss was particularly charismatic. The woman may then carry out the role of "regent" in an interregnum.

Cases of women who substitute for their husbands because of their husbands' inability to exercise this role and who take the reins of a gang nevertheless remain fairly rare, as we have seen.

At the beginning of the 1980s, two women temporarily led small gangs in the large periphery of Tokyo. This is especially the case of Chizue Anzai, who recounts in her autobiography,

I managed bookmaking for parallel bets on the races and the income from the slot machines under the control of Sentaro [her husband] After having begun trafficking in methamphetamines, I earned a lot of money but spent everything on gambling After Sentaro had himself admitted to a hospital to avoid being disturbed, I was busy managing the business following the directions he dictated to me. I rented an insignificant building behind the station and changed it by transforming the first floor into a bar and the second into an illegal gambling hall. I put in four roulette wheels. All my employees came from normal society, not from the underworld; there were former bar waitresses, bartenders and transvestites with the job of keeping the customers happy. In a few weeks, it was a great success. I had bet on one or two years before the police discovered the place in an inspection.¹²

Speaking of her relationships with members of her husband's gang, she writes, "For them, I was *Anesan* (the big sister) and my orders were those of Sentaro."¹³

In another autobiography, Emiko Hamano relates, "I wanted to go all the way with my situation as a *yakuza* woman and launched headlong into earning from loan-sharking." Hamano wore a sort of uniform ("a special attack uniform" she writes) made up of a jacket and pants of blue and green checks that was the sign of recognition of her criminal gang, an assertion of membership that was a means of intimidation. In doing this, she did nothing more than follow the example of her male counterparts; far from seeking to pass unobserved, the *yakuza* assert their criminal membership with ostentatious clothes and behavior for the purpose of immediately imposing a relationship of force and intimidating their contacts. Underworld organizations in Japan are characterized by this public display of membership, and a good part of their income depends on the potential threat they represent, something that radically differentiates them from Cosa Nostra or Camorra, for example.

The words of these two women nevertheless clarify the place and role of women in a gang. Along with the profitable illegal activities that can be run by women, such as bookmaking, loan-sharking, traffic in amphetamines, and illegal gambling, there are also legal activities such as managing restaurants or bars. As we have seen, *de facto* illegal activities make up only part of a *yakuza* gang's earnings. In fact, the line between legal and illegal activities is not always clear in Japan, and racketeering is one of the big activities of the Japanese underworld. Emiko Hamano is clear on this point:

Gangsters force merchants to subscribe to a certain service provided by them. Aside from the sale of stimulants, I also collected "fees" from shops: 20,000 yen for the consignment of a bunch of flowers per week, 100,000 yen for New Year's decorations, 10,000 yen to disinfect the bathrooms, etc. Most of them accepted my requests.¹⁴

The owners of the small businesses preferred most of the time to give in to these rackets since they felt themselves silently threatened by the gang that ruled the neighborhood if they refused to pay. It was only in 1992 that the new anti-gang law attempted to deal with this silent racket.

From which social class do these gangland women come? According to lawyer Yukio Yamanouchi, former legal consultant to the *Yamaguchi-gumi* gang, they come mostly from the underworld

Every time I asked the *yakuza* how their relationships started with their wives or companions, most of the time they would answer they had met them for the first time in a bar where they worked as a waitress, a discotheque, or a house of prostitution. Most of the women who associated with the *yakuza* came from a poor environment or were victims of social discrimination.

Emiko Hamano recalls,

Most of the companions of the *yakuza* were women of *Gökudo* [a term that labels the *yakuza* in the Osaka region], and earned their living as prostitute masseuses or strippers to support their lovers. When their men went up a level in the gang, and they had themselves called *Anesan* [big sister], they began to earn money in the rackets or loan-sharking. That is the life of a *yakuza* woman.¹⁵

Whether connected to a gang or not, underworld women have the same social origins as the men. According to an investigation by the Institute of Police, members of crime syndicates come from families that are broken, large, or disadvantaged. They have never gone beyond required education (65%) and have had an “escape” experience. More than 20% were members of a criminal gang during adolescence. Most entered the world of the *bōryukodan* at around twenty-five years old.¹⁶ Social or racial discrimination (e.g., Korean origin for example) also plays a well-recognized role.

Perspectives

The relationships between women and the underworld have evolved in relation to the underworld’s transformation because of the institution of anti-gang laws in 1992 and subsequently three additional laws, in particular, laws regarding the crimes of criminal association and money-laundering. The number of gang members, as well as quasi-members, has diminished, expanding the gray area between legitimate and outlaw society. Alongside this, criminal gangs have attempted to diversify their sources of income beyond traditional sectors (amphetamine trafficking, blackmail, illegal gambling, and parallel betting) and into hiding behind legal organizations (extreme right-wing political parties, real estate agencies, etc.). Their activities have also become more sophisticated: stock transactions, public works, illegal credit income through threats of violence, and various racketeering schemes more hidden to the police; this trend is on the increase.¹⁷ In this new organized crime configuration, quasi-members (as well as members) perform a more important role compared to the past. In some cases, the wives of gangsters have taken the reins of “cover businesses.” This happened in September 1999 when the wife of a *Yamaguchi-gumi* member became general director of a construction company.

In addition, the international activities of the underworld have been greatly expanded. The Japanese underworld has for a long time trafficked arms, drugs, or women who come from Southeast Asia or Latin America. More recently Japanese gangsters have, for example, forced Russian women to become prostitutes in Japan. Today, the Japanese underworld has become stronger in the following international activities:

1. Collaboration with foreign organizations (from Hong Kong, China, and Russia), frequently in terms of individual relationships and, more rarely, in collaboration with the organizations themselves.¹⁹
2. The illegal transfer of funds, particularly to the United States.²⁰
3. Use of quasi-members who reside or manage activities abroad as collaborators.

In addition, foreign gangs (such as the 14K from Hong Kong, as well as gangs from mainland China who manage illegal immigration in particular, Russians from Sakhalin, etc.), penetrate into Japan and either ally themselves or enter into conflict with local gangs.

The internationalization of underworld activities also implies the internationalization of the women who collaborate in these activities. Women from China, Southeast Asia, Colombia, Russia, and Romania already work in Tokyo as barmaids or prostitutes. One can imagine other women, Japanese and not, acting as intermediaries in organizing this trafficking. Therefore, the role performed by women in the Japanese underworld could be expected to develop in the ever more elusive sphere of illegal activities.

Despite increased police control over the underworld, it seems difficult to imagine that existing crime syndicates would transform themselves into clandestine organizations as in the case of the Sicilian Mafia. The *yakuza* draw part of their profits from extortion they exercise by making the most of their membership as an instrument of threats. Present gangs tend to be divided into three levels: a hard core composed entirely of gang members, a nebula of quasi-members who manage cover businesses, and finally outside satellites composed of members who act either on behalf of the gang or on their own. The scaling down of the organizations can lead to internal conflicts (e.g., the killing of the “number two,” actually the real brains, of the *Yamaguchi-gumi*, Masaru Takumi, in the summer of 1997). Large Japanese crime syndicates are not integrated organizations, but rather types of federated gang. Loyalty is to the boss inside each gang of the syndicate but not outside that gang; in other words, members owe their loyalty first and foremost to their immediate boss.

The transformation of the structure of the Japanese underworld leads us to believe that fewer women will be working directly as gang members. Instead, the number of women involved in the management of prostitution or drug trafficking seems set to increase because the cover activities of the gang imply the creation and growth of businesses in the market of vice-related activities, restaurants, variety shows, and so on. Economic development increases the participation of women in these markets. The underworld seems also to have entered more into the adolescent world, especially among young adolescents, through the sale of stimulants; for six

years, the number of arrests of young girls has been constantly growing, as have cases of recidivism (24% began using amphetamines after contact with a gangster). The underworld has also penetrated the gangs of “motorcycle thugs” (*bôsôzoku*); 205 gangs out of 1,132, with a total of 23,700 members, are under their control, among them a large number of girls.

Besides economic developments (e.g., recession and globalization) and anti-gang measures that bring transformations in the underworld, other factors in Japan are affecting the relationship of women with the gangster underworld. The ongoing socioeconomic evolution offers women greater possibilities and compensates for the inequality between the sexes. The entry of a woman into the criminal world is still frequently a reaction against discrimination. According to Manabu Miyazaki,

Men enter the world of organized crime for personal interests or because of a series of circumstances. For women, this happens even more as a reaction to a society that tends to hold them in contempt or marginalize them. This is why when they take a big step, they are frequently more determined than men.²¹

Notes

1. According to police, *Soshiki Bôryokudan* indicates “an underworld organization that commits violent and illegal activities in a collective or permanent way” (White Paper on Crime 2000, 397). Nevertheless, this definition remains fairly vague. In reality, according to the most recent conclusions, these associations are motivated by profit making in the area between legality and illegality. Though they conduct illegal activities (car theft, clandestine immigration, gambling, prostitution, and drug-trafficking), they also have legal cover activities. Since the 1980s, some of these gangs have begun to enter the sphere of “violence against businesses” through extreme right-wing organizations.
2. Interviews with Yasuyuki Inaba, chief commissar in the first section of the organized crime division (December 2000).
3. White Paper on Crime 2000, 431–436.
4. *Ibid.*, 418–419.
5. Hiroyoshi Iwai, *Byôri shudan no Kôzô* [Structure of Pathological Groups]. Seishin Shobo, 1986, 37–38.
6. *Toppamono* (Le Marginal), Nanpushôbô, 24.
7. Interviews.
8. Interviews.
9. *Gendai Yakuza no urachishiki* [Hidden Knowledge of the Contemporary Yakuza]. Tokyo: Takarajimasha, 2000, 178.
10. *Idem*, 170.
11. Interview.
12. Chizue Anzai, *Watakushiwa yubi wo tsumeta onna* [I, The Woman of the Chopped Little Finger]. Tokyo: NESCO, 1988, 128.
13. *Ibid.*, 145.
14. Emiko Hamano *Onna Gokudô ni good-bye* [Good-byes of an Underworld Woman]. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1989.
15. Interviews.
16. Emiko Hamano, *op. cit.*, 91.
17. White Paper on Crime 2000, 435–439.

18. Police white paper 2000, 70.
19. Police white paper 2000, 70.
20. Jun-ichi Uchida, "Keisatugaku Ronjyu," *Journal of Police Science*, Vol. 50, No. 5 (1997): 44–49.
21. The White House, *International Crime Threat Assessment*. Washington, D.C., 2000.

13

Women in Organized Crime in Germany

Eva Maria Kallinger

German legislation has adopted the following definition of organized crime:

The perpetration of crimes that have as their purpose the search for profit or power and that, singularly or as a group, are particularly significant and are carried out by more than two people who collaborate for an indeterminate period.

In addition, the law specifies several resources used by criminal groups to achieve their objectives:

1. Use of professional or commercial structures;
2. Recourse to force or other means of intimidation.
3. Exercise of influence over the areas of politics, mass media, public administration, the justice system, or the economy;

This specification is necessary to appropriately contextualize the organized crime phenomenon in Germany. Whereas in Italy we are faced with criminal associations powerfully rooted in the social and cultural fabric, in Germany we see the presence of variously organized criminal gangs. Traditional Italian mafias—Cosa Nostra, ‘Ndrangheta, Camorra, and Sacra Corona Unita—widely use the resources described in the foregoing list, whereas criminal groups active in Germany seem weakly rooted in the culture and exercise just as weak an influence over institutions. According to the 1999 *Lagebericht Organisierte Kriminalität Bundesrepublik Deutschland*—the report on organized crime prepared by the federal police (Bundeskriminalamt)—out of 816 investigations and trials against organized crime conducted in 1999, only 88 cases showed attempts to influence politics, mass media, public administration, the justice system, or the economy through extortion, threats, or establishing relationships of dependence or corruption.

We must begin from this situation to explain why women have not played a significant role in the criminal groups active in Germany. Whereas in Sicily, Campania, Calabria, and Puglia women take on growing roles within the group when the male criminal business is in difficulty, this does not happen in Germany. Here, recalling the work of Principato and Dino on the role of women in the mafia, there is no need for women’s role to change from “vestal virgin” to regent of a family empire because real clan structures do not exist in Germany. In some

ways, the “liberation” of women in organized crime follows traditional economic business models (which are also undergoing a process of change); when a business is family run, it is easier for a woman to take the reins when there is no brother able to do it or when the brother or brothers opt for other professions.

The definition of organized crime adopted in Germany is similar to that of *enterprise crime*, criminal enterprises that lack the longevity of Italian mafia clans and aim to maximize profits through the use of business and commercial structures. Instead, Germany has become a particularly attractive country for mafia groups from other countries (e.g. Latin America, Vietnam, Russia, and China) including Italy.

“Legal structures make the ideal basis for organized crime,” said the president of the Landeskriminalamt (LKA) in Bavaria in 1996. In addition to legal investment structures that are ideal for money laundering there are criminal structures created for profit. These cartels may be made up only of German citizens or foreign citizens. According to data supplied by the Bundeskriminalamt in 1999, 77% of criminal groups are composed of foreign nationals. Immigrants who encounter growing difficulties in entering the legal labor market become a pool for recruiting criminal workers. In other cases, there are real “businesses,” like the Turkish mafia that engages in international drug trafficking through contacts with production areas. Most of the members are male, however, and conditions do not exist for the ascent of women to any significant roles.

Some studies of organized crime in Germany have emphasized the fact that women almost always perform marginal roles. There are women who follow orders given by men in criminal groups, who are employed in drug trafficking, and who manage brothels or keep girls forced into prostitution under control. According to the results of interviews by investigators and researchers, the role of women in criminal groups is, above all, that of victim. According to Letizia Paoli of the Max Planck Institut für Kriminologie in Freiburg,

I have never seen any cases in my studies where I found a woman directing one of these criminal enterprises. Women who find themselves in important roles seem, to me anyway, to be the sisters, daughters, or wives of someone.

In an interview with Gaspare Mutolo some years ago, a state witness recounted that any boy who was not the son of a mafia boss had to show he possessed a special ferocity to stand out in the environment, earning himself a reputation as an unscrupulous killer. Women do not possess the potential for such marked physical violence and, for this reason, frequently perform other types of roles. Furthermore, women are considered unreliable because they are more easily influenced by a man, a lover, a husband, or even a son. When positions of power inside family-based criminal groups (as in groups composed of Turks, Kosovars, or Italians) become vacant, it is extremely difficult for a woman to enter them, even if only for a limited time.

According to 1999 report from the Bundeskriminalamt, the highest percentage of women investigated in Germany is for crimes connected to shoplifting (39.6%). The percentage of women investigated for fraud is 26.4%, and the percentages

for serious crimes of violence and homicide are fairly low: premeditated murder, 12.5%; first-degree murder, 13.7%; robbery, 9.3%; bodily harm, 12.5%; aggravated robbery, 8.5%; and drug crimes, 12.2%. The percentage is also very low for crimes that could be mostly classified in the professional or organized crime sector, for example, aiding and abetting, receiving stolen goods, and money laundering, 16.6%; criminal assembly, and corruption, 11.9%; crimes regarding firearms, 4.8%; importation of drugs in large quantities 11.5%; membership in an association for the purpose of producing and trafficking illegal drugs, 11.8%; and economic crimes, 17.9%.

The same report also analyzed the structures of criminal groups based on nationality: 41.6% of those investigated were German citizens. The largest non-German group was made up of Turkish citizens, with 9.9% of all those investigated. Following these are Italians, 5.9%; Poles, 3.4%; Romanians, 3.1%; Nigerians, 1.9%, Vietnamese, 1.9%, and Russians, 1.5%. Regarding this, the previously cited researcher from the Max Planck Institut emphasized,

In Germany, women in organized crime is not a topic either of research or specific literature or the mass media. First of all, women have no roles as protagonists. This theme carries no sociological weight in Germany. Furthermore, research on single individuals is concentrated on the various ethnic groups. There, however, we see that women in family-run organized crime find positions. Let us take for example so-called "Operation Mozart" that focused on drug trafficking by a Turkish clan that imported drugs into Munich and distributed them to various other cities in Germany. A family was at the heart of this trafficking organization. The father worked in Istanbul, Turkey, and handled supplying the drugs. A brother and sister operated in Munich, supervising redistribution of the drugs. They brought money back into Turkey through money laundering activities conducted by a tourism agency. The sister, a fairly young girl, supervised the various criminal activities. But this was, in fact, all within the family realm: an example of a woman who had a certain power of management, a power that came from blood ties.

There are women active in jobs more suited to their gender, such as women who work in criminal clubs for prostitution, especially with enslaved women. The women here are frequently former prostitutes. In the case of Nigerians the so-called "Maman" holds a power over young prostitutes. Prostitutes frequently are also found in the drug business.

A report edited by Letizia Paoli describes a case regarding a young woman named Agnes who was a small-time drug dealer. She did not use drugs and did not belong to a clan, and chose to do this to earn enough capital to set up a business:

Agnes worked in a snack kiosk and sold twenty grams of cocaine a week, given to her by her employer. Agnes did not consume drugs, did not have the aspect of a dealer and voluntarily started dealing drugs. To start up her "cocaine business," she had her mother and sister loan her money and today has an extra monthly income that runs around 7,700–8,700 euros. Subtracting for expenses, around 5,000 euros, she is left with a profit of around 3,000 euros a month.

In this case, we are dealing with autonomous criminal activity and, in a sense, a rational, enterprising energy. Without any relationship to the local underworld,

Agnes took on the project of selling drugs to set earn the money necessary to sooner or later start up her own business.

Now we arrive at a crime in which women show a very high incidence: money laundering. One study on money laundering from 1993 to 1997 showed that women made up 35.7% of convictions for money laundering. According to the author of the study, Michael Kilchling, "Frequently women sentenced for money laundering come from families or from the family circle of those responsible for the crime." Here again it is the family tie that "liberates" women in crime. The assignment by men of tasks with great responsibility—such as those tied to money laundering—to women linked by parental or emotional bonds (wives, fiancées, sisters, mothers, etc.) can be explained by the need to maintain relations of trust. The social control exercised by men—fathers, brothers, or even sons—is particularly strong. If we consider that the women who are complicit in money laundering crimes are frequently the fiancées, mothers, wives, or relatives of men who are themselves implicated in crimes (e.g., drug trafficking) before the money laundering, Kilchling says we could almost speak of a sort of "reinforced punishment for complicity." Out of seventy cases of laundering studied by Kilchling, judicial bodies established that only a small percentage were related to an organized crime group: "Mostly, they dealt with individuals. Most of these (63.1%) were guilty of the crime only one single time."

Tomas Fabel writes of investments of dirty money in houses, apartments, and hotels:

Purchases are regularly made through mediators or front men who most of the time are part of the circle of relatives or acquaintances of the organizer or the group of so-called free lance professionals (lawyers, notaries, and accountants). They are not infrequently wives, friends or others trusted by the owner of the real estate. But other investments in valuable objects, such as expensive jewelry, antiques or art objects, are not unusual.

Frequently, the owner of the object involved in the money laundering is a trusted woman. Kilchling goes on to report that women are frequently discovered and investigated for money laundering while carrying a plastic bag of money to the bank. Small money launderers are those most often caught and sentenced. The big ones never go in person with cash to a bank in the city where they operate.

Marion Bögel (1994) analyzed the structures of mafia groups from the economic point of view, comparing them with systems from the legal economy:

The development of personnel is involved with the strengthening of the operation. . . . But the great difference between legal and criminal structures consists in the fact that the possibility does not exist of having respect for the duties through a judge. Every member represents a risk. It is not even possible to go before a judge if a member enriches himself or moves to the competition. Because of this, one strategy must be to recruit only well-selected members and pay them well. . . . Certainly the possibility of intimidation exists . . . but another possibility is that of enlisting members with criteria other than economic, with absolute solidarity. Family and ethnic ties.

If we agree that the social control of women in a primitive society is greater than that of men, we can also deduce that women play the role of victim rather

than leader within the criminal environment. An analysis of newspaper articles on female murderers over three years by the *Kriminologisches Journal* found that the stereotype of strong men and weak women exists in German society. The theme of “violence against women,” for example, thematizes and reproduces models of the female against which women today normally rebel: a reproduction of the female as weakness and impotence. We find this model independent of the type of mass media—left- or right-wing newspapers, women’s magazines, or boulevard newspapers. In 80% of the cases, the researchers found this interpretation.

Liberation as the evolution of female criminality? As regards organized crime, I doubt that such liberation is dawning in Germany. It seems to me rather that it is the total submission of women that leads them into crime, to substitute for men, to obey to the last an extremely patriarchal criminal logic. In research on this topic, Dieter Hermann poses the question: Does liberation lead to greater criminal opportunity for women? Or rather should we consider women as less criminal than men, and if so, why? His answer is that empirical research shows that women prefer idealistic values, while men prefer materialistic values.

According to research by the Max Planck Institut in Freiberg carried out on fifty investigations of organized crime in Germany, the role of women is statistically insignificant; it has little importance both as regards the percentage of women involved as well as their roles. In three cases, women had a role of some importance. Twice this involved white slavery and prostitution—one case in Lithuania and another in Romania. The third case involved drug trafficking with Turkey. But in general women in organized crime are victims or, according to the author of the study, Jörg Kinzig, women who attempt to convince their husband or companion to leave the criminal organization, go to the police to report family crimes, help in investigations, and as witnesses for the prosecution make major contributions in the search for the truth. These are women who, when they are arrested, are willing to talk, as in the case of a young Turkish woman caught while carrying 200,000 marks (around 100,000 euros) to a credit institution in a plastic bag and whose testimony helped in the arrest of the Turkish clan, implicated in drug trafficking, for which she worked.

The horrendous data on women brutally victimized by mafia clans can be found in the book by Bernd Geogrt Thamm and Konrad Freiberg. In the chapter “Menschenhandel” (literally “Traffic of Men,” but in this context mostly meaning traffic of women), they write,

Out of the nearly 200,000 who work here [in Germany], a quarter come from Eastern Europe. Underage girls are particularly in demand. In the border areas of the Czech Republic, there is a boom in sex tourism. In addition, around 300,000 Germans journey to sex tourism destinations, especially Asia, Kenya and Brazil.

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14

Women in Organized Crime in Russia

Yakov Gilinsky

The unprecedented crime wave in Russia in recent few years has struck all of society. As an effect of conditions in Russia today, female crime, including that by adolescents, has increased in levels of both activity and cruelty. Female criminal behavior has negatively influenced society and the family, undermining moral principles and adding to an atmosphere of depravity, corruption, and permissiveness.

Asocial behavior by women has a negative and destructive influence on the next generation. The number of adolescent women implicated in criminal activities is on the increase; frequently, they are dependent on alcohol and drugs and participate in prostitution, and are even involved in crimes against important public figures. Preventive activities against crimes committed by women are ineffective, and special preventive measures already in place are rarely put to use.

Social Position and Female Crime in Russia

Before the time of Peter the Great, Russian women had no independence: "A woman was a faceless slave, completely dependent on her man-master" (Shabanova 1911, Vol. 1, 713). Obviously, Russian history has seen examples of women who played an important role, but these are rare exceptions that were not always due to their personalities or abilities. One of the most brilliant examples of an eminent woman in Russian history is Princess Olga, who from 945 to 957 governed the state, helped in the spread of Christianity, led and participated in wars, and was seen as a wise woman by the people. She was an exception, however; the Russian state has had only five women rulers in its history. In fact, most women were considered men's property and were relegated to carrying out the tasks set for them, generally involving running the home and raising children; they had no other recognized rights. In Russia, the principle held that "the world is the man's home; the home is the woman's world."

The influence of Byzantine culture, brought to Russia with Christianity, intensified the subordinate position of women instead of improving it. Women came to be considered sinful and dirty, to be avoided so as not to lead men into sin, and rigidly

controlled so as not to allow any exercise of freedom or will. The Byzantine point of view, reinforced by the Muslim views brought to Russia during the period of the Mongols, led to women being treated as simply physical objects. They were fed and groomed to maintain the beauty of their bodies and the physical pleasure they could give, and were expected to give birth to sons since daughters had little value; in fact, the number of daughters had to be kept sufficient only to guarantee future generations. It was considered a sign of great misfortune and terrible punishment if a woman could not bear children because she was sterile. In peasant as well as educated families, the birth of a daughter was considered a tragedy and divine punishment, especially if no sons had been born. If she bore no son, frequently the wife "fell into her husband's disfavor and was considered an outcast," no longer useful or necessary (Mikhnevich 1896, 78).

Drastic changes began to occur in the position of women in Russia in 1718 when Peter I introduced assemblies and called on women to participate in public and social life. It would have been impossible to change the situation through legal statutes, however, given that most women were illiterate and only a small minority belonging to the aristocracy was educated. With the exception of Catherine II and her dearest friend Duchess E. Dashkova, there were no well-educated women before the end of the eighteenth century, and no organized feminist movements existed until the mid-nineteenth century. Around 1860, women began to emerge onto the scene and play a part in social and public life. During this period, recognizing their absolute lack of power along with the low value given female labor, the efforts of Russian women were concentrated on changing these conditions and defending their human rights.

Thus a woman's political movement was born in Russia that led to the first cases of female political criminals such as Sophia Perovskaya (who participated in the assassination of Emperor Alexander II and was the first woman in Russian history to be sentenced to death for a political crime), Vera Figner, A. Armfeld, and many others who worked in well-coordinated organizations. To view this phenomenon from our current perspective, we could say that it was one of the first examples of organized crime in which women played an important role, at times even becoming leaders.

One of the greatest periods regarding the involvement of women in public activities can be found in the female-led governments of the eighteenth century, although the general position of women was not much improved during this period. Only during the nineteenth century did European women reach better positions (in France, Great Britain, etc.). Consequently, it is understandable how the participation of women in criminal activities (including their participation in organized crime groups and terrorist and political groups) was very rare. Not only were women not very educated, they were also not very involved in the public and social life of the state. Women had no identity of their own; their behavior was severely controlled and constrained by the social structure of Russian society. The problem of female criminality emerges only toward the end of the nineteenth century, which is when the earliest scientific research began on this subject (Shashkov 1898, Tarnovskaya 1891, 1902, Zeland 1889).

There are two schools of thought in Russian criminology on the reasons for the lack of involvement of women in criminal activity. One early theory is represented by the works of jurist M. N. Gernet (1974), who stated that “the life of a woman is less exuberant and less varied with respect to that of a man, not only in the past but also the present.” Women are chained to the domestic hearth, and participate less in the battle for existence, “many work opportunities are not offered them and are unreachable.” Therefore, women engage in crime in order to reach the level of life of men, to improve the condition of their lives.

The second theory is based on the idea of sexual dimorphism, that is, the biological distinction between male and female. The woman assures the preservation of future generations through reproduction, selection, and adaptation. The man “manages” change and evolutionary transformation through seeking by trial and error. Therefore, men have an instinct toward exploration and are greater risk takers. Thus crime, like drug addiction and gambling, is an activity more inherent in men than women. In other words, according to this theory, women are biologically less disposed to committing crimes; they are “more normal,” more harmonious in their activities, and evidently these are considered their natural qualities.

Of course, women also commit crimes, but it has long been held that the ratio of male to female crime is approximately six or seven to one. One of the most important areas of female crime is their participation in the activities of organized criminal groups. Before proceeding with the analysis of this problem, we consider some statistical data on female criminality as seen from different perspectives. First it should be noted more or less regular statistical data on criminal activity in general and female criminal activity in particular began to be available only in 1871. This is due, for example, to changes in international borders, criminal legislation, and various penal laws and the subsequent variations in statistics relative to this question, along with the change in factors that govern the reporting of statistics on crime.

The data reported in Tables 14.1 and 14.2 give a general idea of female crime in Russia over the last two centuries. From Table 14.1 we can note a consistent percentage of female criminality, 10% to 12%, with variations that run from 9.3% in 1907 to 14.2% in 1897.

Information on female crime in the early years of the Soviet Union is fragmentary and incomplete; during the Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev periods all data were secret or falsified. The most precise statistics date from 1987 and are shown in Table 14.2. We clearly see a decrease in the total percentage of women from 1987 (21.3%) to 1993 (11.2%) with subsequent increases in 1996 (15.9%) and 2000 (16.3%). The contributions of women to various types of crime can be summarized as follows: for 1990 and 1996, respectively, women represented 9.9% and 13.4% of cases of willful homicides (including attempts); 7.2% and 13.1% of bodily harm; 45% and 9% of hooliganism; 4% and 6% of robberies; 6% and 8% of lootings; 9% and 13% of thefts; 38% and 47% of misappropriation of state property; 25% and 34% of taking and receiving bribes; 7% and 12% of crimes involving traffic of narcotics and illicit medications.

TABLE 14.1. Women convicted during the Russian Empire (1874–1912).

Year	Total convictions of women (%)	Year	Total convictions of women (%)
1874	10.8	1894	13.2
1875	10.6	1895	13.8
1876	10.4	1896	13.7
1877	10.5	1897	14.2
1878	10.9	1898	13.8
1879	10.7	1899	13.9
1880	10.9	1900	13.9
1881	10.4	1901	13.4
1882	10.8	1902	13.5
1883	10.5	1903	13.0
1884	10.6	1904	11.8
1885	10.8	1905	11.6
1886	10.7	1906	9.9
1887	11.6	1907	9.3
1888	11.7	1908	10.4
1889	11.9	1909	10.8
1891	12.2	1911	10.1
1892	12.4	1912	11.8
1893	13.0		

General Overview of Russian Women in Organized Criminal Activity

Women perform different roles in organized crime based on whether they are simple participants or leaders. Various groups of women involved in criminal activities can be distinguished. We refer here to three groups: mothers; wives, companions, or lovers; and personal assistants (accounts, economists, etc.).

Mothers

The image of the mother traditionally plays an important symbolic role in Russia for members of criminal organizations (gangs from the 1920s, “thieves-in-law” from the mid-1930s till today, and new bandits or “athletes” at the end of the 1980s). During their criminal career, members of the criminal community maintain the image of the mother as a symbol of a normal, tranquil life. It is not surprising that the slogan, “Remember the Mother of Your Birth” is one of the most widespread

TABLE 14.2. Percentages of men and women convicted 1987–2000.

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Men (%)	78.7	83.3	85.6	86.3	87.2	88.6	88.8	87.0	85.1	84.1	86.4	85.3	84.8	83.7
Women (%)	21.3	16.7	14.4	13.7	12.8	11.4	11.2	13.0	14.9	15.9	13.6	14.7	15.2	16.3

tattoos among professional criminals and members of criminal organizations. This image of the criminal's mother is present in many criminal folk songs; for example, "a wife can always find another man but a mother never another son." In addition, there is no lack of cases in which the mother of a son involved in criminal groups has collaborated in carrying out her son's activities, even helping him to escape justice. Sometimes the mother is considered a sort of consultant, both as regards his private life as well as in the selection of suitable female subjects to bring into the son's sphere of influence.

Wives and Mistresses

According to the rules of the association of "thieves-in-law," for example, the bosses of criminal groups till the end of the 1980s could not have an official wife (i.e., registered in the state records office) because such a record could be interpreted as a form of cooperation with the state. But this did not mean the "thieves-in-law" could not have a long-term relationship with a "wife" even outside official records. The rules governing "thieves-in-law" subsequently changed, and at present a "thief-in-law" representing a criminal organization can be officially married and recognized as such by state authorities. For example, one of the most respected representatives of criminal authority in Saint Petersburg, Yuri Alexeev, a.k.a. "Gorbaty" or "The Hunchback," was married and had a large family. He stated, "I loved women but at the same time I was unlucky with them. My whole life I have never met the woman of my dreams: gentle, beautiful, a lover of art. Besides, I have had too many encounters with beautiful women" (Dixelius and Konstantinov 1995, 211). In the final years of his life, he lived with a woman jokingly called "Paratrooper Girl" by her friends: she was so devoted to her "hunchback" that once, after the police had arrested him, she threw herself from a parachute tower with no safety cord. She was lucky and only broke a leg.

Wives and mistresses are frequently their husbands' assistants in criminal activities. Like mothers, they are capable of keeping the justice system far from their husbands and friends. The role of mistress and unofficial wife in hiding fugitives has been very effective because the police, and later the militia, have had difficulties in reaching the places in which they live.

Frequently, wives act as "confidants" (even giving news and information on victims for a price) and, in the role of mothers, participate in selling property stolen by members of the family group. In criminal organizations such as gangs, wives frequently accompany their husbands in criminal enterprises, performing the role of cook and nurse for all the members of the criminal organization.

As in the Italian mafia, members of the modern criminal world in Russia consider themselves as belonging to a highly honored and respected family, even taking vacations together. A photograph reproduced by A. Konstantinov (1996) shows well-known bosses from "Tambovtsi," one of the most widespread and dangerous criminal groups in St. Petersburg, in church with candles during the christening of a newborn child (Figure 14.1). The family fills a very important role and is respected by all organized crime groups or communities.



FIGURE 14.1. Source: Konstantinov, A. *Criminal Petersburg*, 1996.

Other Female Companions

The customary lifestyle for members of criminal groups (especially “soldiers” and “underbosses”) includes diversions characterized by large amounts of alcohol and multiple sexual relationships. There are women who voluntarily participate in these activities, and their number has been increasing, with prostitution in the hands of organized criminal groups. This sort of pastime is so common that frequently photographs reach the press or the courts; see Figure 14.2 (Konstantinov 1996).

Members of criminal groups attempt to maintain the same lifestyle even in prison. By corrupting prison guards, they can drink and eat well, and even enjoy



FIGURE 14.2. Source: Konstantinov, A. *Criminal Petersburg*, 1996.

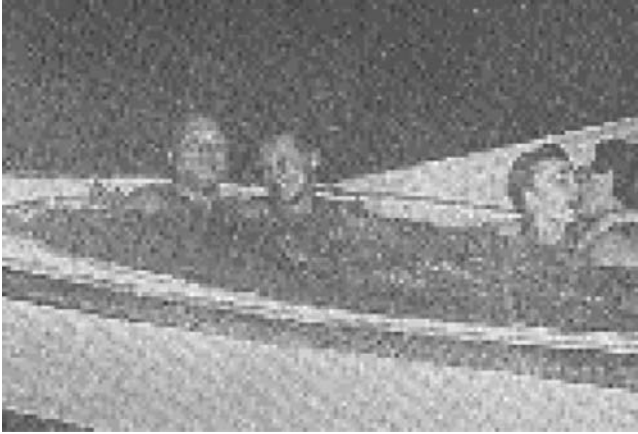


FIGURE 14.3. *Source:* Podlesskikh, G., and A. Tereshonok. *Thieves-in-Law: A Leap toward Power*. 1994.

female companionship (in contrast to the majority of other Russian prisoners). See Figure 14.3 (Podlesskikh and Tereshonok 1994).

One famous affair and media sensation occurred in the city of St. Petersburg and later became the subject of a documentary film. This was the jailhouse love story between Serguei Maduyev (a.k.a. “Tchervonets” or “Gold Coin”), who was responsible for many crimes and was sentenced to death, and an investigator from the public prosecutor’s office, a woman named Natalia Vorontsova who worked on one of the last crimes committed by Maduyev. She organized his unsuccessful attempt to escape from prison and gave him her pistol. Subsequently, she was sentenced to house arrest.

Women as Members and Organizers of Criminal Organizations

Women rarely have equal status inside criminal organizations, and their participation is extremely limited. Criminal organizations specialized in drug trafficking frequently make use of women, and they participate in activities such as the transport, trafficking, and sale of drugs. In 2001, a woman was arrested for transporting narcotics from Ukraine to Russia. In modern criminal organizations women frequently have the position of assistant, accountant, financial expert, and so on.

On rare occasions women have been in charge of criminal organizations. During the 1920s, a notorious woman companion of the famous gangster Lyonka Panteleev organized and managed a criminal group; her nickname was “Sonka Zolotaya Ruchka” (“Sonka The Golden Hand”). For a time she was considered the queen of Russian crime. Arrested several times, she frequently managed to escape, at times together with a prison guard.

Sofia Ivanovna Bluevstein, born Sheindla-Sura Leibovna Solomoniak in 1859 (or perhaps 1879) in Povożki in the Warsaw district., was considered by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to be one of the “Warsaw bourgeoisie.” She was an extremely attractive woman and an elegant dresser, with high-society manners. She traveled throughout Europe and was introduced to barons, countesses, and viscountesses. Her image was the principal reason for her criminal success with jewelers, bankers, and other representatives of the European aristocracy. When Sonka was finally arrested and deported to Sakhalin in 1895, the Russian author Anton Chekhov visited the celebrated female criminal, finding her “truly a woman who could make your head spin.” She often escaped after her crimes, for example, from Smolensk, where she had been arrested after the robbery of several jewelers. Once she corrupted a jailer who had fallen in love with her and the two escaped together. She was the first woman in the history of crime in Russia to create a well-coordinated criminal group, which she ran for decades. Sonka’s case is not unique in high-level female crime.

Kalina Michailovna Nikiforova was active at the end of the twentieth century. She was considered the “godmother” of the capital of the criminal underworld, Moscow. She participated in the sale of stolen goods and property, and was the mistress of one of the most famous bosses in the Russian criminal underworld, Vyatcheslav Ivankov (a.k.a. “Yaponchik” or “Little Japanese,” who was eventually arrested in the United States and sentenced to prison in New York) and had a rare business ability. In Moscow criminal circles, she represented everything, knew everyone, and participated in activities from fraud and burglaries to the corruption of public officials at all levels. She even had the idea of hijacking airplanes. She also had a plan for exporting large quantities of gold, antiques, and other valuables, but the idea was never successful because of her sudden death in January 1998. Groups of people worked in her employ, and her fertile criminal mind gave birth to innumerable crimes. “Kalya” (her underworld nickname) managed things very carefully, never leaving tracks or any overwhelming evidence. Authorities in the criminal justice system described her as a woman with surprising qualities and great abilities in business management. She had influential friends, and was also quite prepared on matters of criminal and trial law. At the beginning of her criminal career, she acted directly; later she dedicated herself exclusively to managing and organizing criminal activities, with ties even to foreign countries. She was in prison only once, which shows the inability of justice and law enforcement bodies to connect her to criminal activities.

Women like Sonka “The Golden Hand” and Kalya Nikiforova have become more and more rare. There are only isolated cases of women who have created criminal groups on their own. As a general rule, women have filled second-level roles. The activities of criminal organizations are very diversified, from simple theft to large-scale fraud and complex crimes. In addition, one of the most lucrative activities in the crime industry, prostitution, is also organized by the mafia.

Currently, women are utilized in a broad range of criminal activities. The mafia uses women in counterespionage and reconnaissance activities, placing them in governmental bodies, business structures, rival criminal groups, and so on. In some

cases, female mercenaries are “loaned out” to someone involved in criminal activities, as lovers or even wives. More frequently they serve as bait for victims. Not all women fall into these categories. Some can also be found among mafia “soldiers.” For certain tasks, bosses of criminal organizations require special personnel. No typical sample exists in this area. In some cases, women manage the control of the chosen personnel.

Criminal organizations have subdivisions that work with women, which can be divided into three tasks: the selection and observation of the personnel; management, and direct recruitment; and management of the organization, control, and punishment for betrayal, fraud, or other transgressions.

A significant number of women participate in the fraudulent activities of criminal groups, and the role of these women has been increasing. According to Konstantinov (2001, 55), “There are certain criminal activities that only women can perform”; fraud requires certain qualities that are highly present in women such as acting ability, vitality, imagination, knowledge of human psychology, and so on.

The majority of female swindlers run confidence games. The best example is V. Solovieva and her crew, who organized the sale of automobiles at low cost. Top officials, bureaucrats, government authorities, and even ministers were involved in this scam. The total damage of this financial pyramid was in the millions of dollars. Women have also taken control of another type of fraud, counterfeiting currency. The psychological reason for this is that women are more credible. Women also work in the area of real estate, in which examples of large criminal groups are found under their management, many of these are made up of dozens of people. Frequently, women play the role of bait or a *shill*. Female criminals also participate in the sale of adulterated products such as alcohol, honey, butter, and so on. Groups of gypsies are also found among such swindlers.

Problems in Women’s Prisons in Russia

The illustrious Norwegian criminologist Nils Christie (2000, 26) stated that “in terms of the number of convicts, Russia is in first place among other European countries to the extent that the situation in this country deserves the most immediate attention.” Although the number of female convicts is lower than that of male prisoners, with only 5% of the around 60,000 total in the prison population, this number of 60,000 is much higher than the sum of the entire French and Polish prison populations. The main problem in the Russian penitentiary system is that it was constructed during the Soviet period when principles of punishment did not take into account the psychological and physiological peculiarities of women. In fact, they were not planned for. There is no consideration for hygiene and no psychologists who could intervene in cases of sexual or other violence even on the part of criminal judicial bodies. The courts frequently fail to take into account the personality and needs of a female prisoner, whether she has small children, and so on. Among the greatest negative effects is recidivism. After a period of imprisonment of three to four years (the average detention period for women),

even women who have made a good recovery from their degraded circumstances lose their social relationships and normal social context, and return to society psychologically damaged. They have difficulty in finding a place in society and again become involved in criminal activities, with the consequence of a new conviction. Of the many problems with Russian prisons, the greatest is that the system of punishment is not suitable and cannot help to solve problems whose solutions must be sought in an analysis of the social fabric.

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15

Women in Organized Crime in the United States

Clare Longrigg

A woman described in the press in the 1940s as “the most successful woman in America” was not a Hollywood star or a novelist: she was a “gangster’s moll.” Virginia Hill, mistress and accomplice of gangster Benjamin “Bugsy” Siegel, was, even by today’s standards, a celebrity. The difference between her and other gangsters’ mistresses was that she was not merely decorative, she actually worked for U.S. crime bosses Meyer Lansky and Lucky Luciano and, later, for Siegel. Hill’s “success” says much about the American attitude toward organized crime. Popular mythology celebrates the outlaws who escaped from poverty and made fabulous amounts of money by beating the system. Even though Virginia Hill’s life ended in suicide, the American public saw only glamour in a beautiful woman living a life of crime.

The story of organized crime in the United States is part of the history of America as a whole: it is the story of immigrant communities staking their claim to the new territories, getting rich and establishing themselves, then moving into legitimate business, leaving criminal enterprise to the next wave of immigrants. In the 1800s, the criminal gangs operating in America were principally Irish; as the Irish got established and moved into better neighborhoods, their place was taken by the Jews and then the Italians. When these groups had made enough money, their place in street crime was taken by African Americans and Hispanics, by Russians, Chinese, and Eastern Europeans.

The history of the American mafia would have remained merely the story of successive immigrant gangs, were it not for one ill-conceived law. What gave criminal gangs serious wealth and status and put the organizations on a permanent footing was Prohibition. By 1919, the street gangs that had previously served as armed enforcers for politicians seeking votes were losing their stranglehold on society. However, when the sale of alcohol was prohibited across the country in 1920, it opened up new opportunities for illegal organizations overnight. When Prohibition came into effect, illegal stills and speakeasies sprang up all over America, controlled by vicious organized crime families and facilitated by the payment of bribes to police and politicians. Criminal gangs consolidated in the major cities and their leaders became rich; top Jewish and Italian gangsters united to form powerful mobs. In New York, Sicilian and Jewish gangsters made around \$12 million

a year from illegal alcohol. This new business required a lot of manpower, creating a wealthy criminal subculture, and led to vicious and costly turf wars. The wealth to be had by the bosses was immense. In Chicago, Al Capone made in the region of \$60 million from bootlegging. In 1933 Prohibition was lifted. By this time the gangs were established and had close ties with corrupt politicians and police chiefs. When the Depression hit America, the children of the ghettos who had made money under Prohibition had nowhere to go: instead of entering the mainstream, they continued in crime. During World War II and the postwar years, Jewish and Italian immigrants poured into America, supplying the illegal organizations with manpower.

Such a large number of organized criminal gangs have operated in the United States, many of them referred to as “mafia,” that it is impracticable to look at all of them here. I have elected to study the role of women in the Italian-American organized crime environment and to some extent the Jewish one, since there are many similarities. The Italian-American mafia retains a cohesion in its social roots that merits examination, and it still exerts a hold on the national (and international) imagination.

The role of women in the Italian-American mafia, often referred to as *La Cosa Nostra*, or LCN (although the nomenclature is disputed), can be compared to those of Italian mafia women; and there are interesting parallels, not least the reluctance of law enforcers and public opinion to acknowledge the existence of active female criminals within the organization, in spite of evidence to the contrary. The FBI holds no national figures on women arrested or convicted for organized crime. A 1998 profile of women offenders gives a breakdown of crimes committed by women across the United States but does not include organized crime as a classification.

The focus on Italian-American organized crime has been a source of contention in the United States, with many Italian-Americans protesting that they are being subjected to negative stereotyping. They have a point: experts have demonstrated that organized crime was flourishing in America before the Italians began to arrive in any numbers. Joe Valachi, the first mafioso to turn state’s evidence, denied that it was Italian immigrants who first introduced organized crime to the United States:

When the first wave of Italian immigrants arrived, they found a flourishing underworld primarily in the hands of the Irish and the Jews . . . What a very small number of these Italian newcomers did bring was a traditional clannishness, contempt for lawful authority and a talent for organization.¹

Italian-Americans wanting to celebrate their culture and heritage find themselves mired in the image of gangsterism celebrated by Coppola’s *The Godfather* series of films and countless other films, including *Casino* and *Goodfellas*. Their situation is further complicated by known criminals mounting protests claiming that their civil rights are being infringed by constant police investigations into Italian-American individuals. Rudolph Giuliani, former mayor of New York, recalled,

An Italian-American civil rights movement was shrewdly exploited by leading lights of the New York Mafia. Joe Colombo, the head of the Colombo family, was one of the

organizers. . . . An awful lot of decent, innocent people were taken in by all that, and politicians were intimidated by it.²

These protests continue today—although they no longer have a criminal association; in 2001 one group, the American Italian Defense Association (AIDA), attempted unsuccessfully to sue the makers of the television series *Sopranos* for negative stereotyping of Italian-Americans. At the same time, Edvige Giunta at the University of Jersey City formed an Italian-American women's association to celebrate their positive contribution to U.S. culture.

It is true that "Italian-American" is often equated with organized crime. One recent report on 30 years of RICO—the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, brought in to combat organized crime—makes casual mention of "organized crime—people whose names ended in vowels."³

Maria Laurino, whose grandparents emigrated to New Jersey from Avellino in southern Italy, has written about the experience of Italian-American women. Her book is in part an attempt to redress the balance after she and so many others found themselves stereotyped as members of criminal families. Laurino, who spent some time working as a political reporter and later a speech-writer, observed two prominent New York politicians responding very differently to their Italian-American culture: Rudolph Giuliani celebrated his second mayoral inauguration with a showing of *The Godfather*. Mayor Giuliani, the scourge of organized crime in New York City, announced cheerfully that this was his all-time favorite film. By contrast, former New York State governor Mario Cuomo is highly sensitive to the negative cultural symbolism in the film: "This is the guy who kills people, murders them, plucks their eyes out, drugs them, and he's treated as a great guy, the whole community loves him. What are you saying with this movie?"⁴

Peter Maas, biographer of Gambino family underboss Sammy Gravano, explains how *The Godfather* replaced the Western in "fulfilling America's mythic needs":

What better mirrored fierce free enterprise with everyone's (shiver) life on the line, the resourcefulness of a nation ever on the move, constantly plunging into innovative and profitable technologies (say, casino gambling)? What was the difference between someone out to control private garbage collection with the judicious use of baseball bats on kneecaps and a cabal of ostensibly upright, churchgoing savings and loans officials bilking taxpayers out of billions of dollars? . . . The fictional Godfather was myth-making at its most compelling.⁵

As Maas goes on to show (and as Henry Hill and other mafiosi who have talked frankly about Cosa Nostra concur), real life contained no equivalent to the world of *The Godfather*. But John Gotti, the charismatic, well-dressed gangster with a love of TV cameras and a one-liner always at the ready, emerged as the "new, real-life gangster," a new popular hero. "Gotti hailed from a generation that inherited its traditions from the culture of the American dream, a dream which worshipped fame, notoriety and wealth," writes Tim Shawcross, documenting the New York mafia wars of the 1980s. "The Sicilian traditions of quiet power and authority exercised with stealth and ruthlessness were alien to the mafiosi of Gotti's generation."⁶

With John Gotti, who pretended to champion the underclass, giving lavish firework displays in Ozone Park (like other mafia bosses who stage tea parties for

orphans and invite press photographers) America created a new anti-hero, a figure dear to popular culture. A record with the chorus, "Free John Gotti, the King of New York" was released by a band called the Fun Lovin' Criminals; women were drawn to the gangster image as they had always been to the attractive outlaw in cowboy movies. As Shawcross wrote, "The modern mafioso is one of [America's] heroes along with pioneers, cowboys, movie stars and astronauts"; the public views the mafia with "fascination, awe and admiration tinged with a sense of disapproval."⁷

"There is an immigrant story here," says Maria Laurino. "Americans are preoccupied with being outsiders. The undertaker Amerigo Bonasera begs Don Corleone: 'I want the justice the government can't deliver.'" Laurino also points out that the title sequence of the hit TV series *The Sopranos* shows mafia boss Tony Soprano driving away from New York City, where presumably his forebears had lived in poverty, and finally pulling up his sweep of a driveway outside a luxurious suburban mansion. He has, in more ways than one, arrived. The massive international success of *The Sopranos* is due to the successful updating of the mafia image: the boss in therapy has finally replaced Marlon Brando's untouchable Don in popular culture. The other way in which the mafia story has been updated by *The Sopranos* is the portrayal of women. David Chase, creator and writer of the series, acknowledges the emerging role of women in organized crime: in one episode Tony Soprano, the boss, goes to southern Italy to discuss a deal with his counterpart. Much to his surprise and consternation, the Italian boss turns out to be a woman.

Since *The Sopranos* is considered, even by crime investigators, to reflect the reality of organized crime in the United States today, it is worth noting that women are by no means marginal to the series. Actress Drea de Matteo is in no doubt as to the importance of the women characters. In an interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine she said,

The women rule on the show—they can't do anything to us. Carmela [the boss's wife] running Tony's whole Mafia career, Livia [the boss's mother] was running it for Junior, Adriana runs it somewhat for Christopher, Meadow [the boss's daughter] has Tony by the balls. So all the women are super-important to the story.

The role of women in the Italian-American mafia has a great deal to do with the ambivalent image of women in this culture: the Madonna-Whore dichotomy, to use a well-worn cliché. Arlyne Brickman, an American Jew who spent her life with Italian-American mafiosi, explains how the powerful family structure imposed by Sicilian culture forces the male to seek illicit pleasures elsewhere: "She served as a lover and confidante, a mistress cum geisha, whose tough-minded company provided relief from the demands of a hoodlum's often staunchly traditional home life."⁸ This staunchly traditional home life seems partly responsible for keeping many immigrants in their Italian enclaves, where they worked for relatives or ancient connections. The fierce pride of a tight immigrant community is demonstrated in the emphasis on racial purity within Cosa Nostra. Many accounts describe tension between criminals of Sicilian descent and others. At the same time, FBI agent Joe Pistone, who went undercover and infiltrated the mafia for six years, reported that the Americanization of Cosa Nostra was leading to its

eventual demise, since the hard-line loyalty of Sicilians to the crime family has been replaced, in his view, by the ethos of the “me generation.” American Brenda Colletti, whose husband, Philip, a small-time hoodlum in the Philadelphia mafia, is of Sicilian descent, expressed a deep-seated mistrust of Sicilians:

They were a little bit separate. The real Sicilians are more . . . they carry the old mafia rules a little bit more seriously than the Americans, they usually practice the *omertà*, the silence . . . but they’re more treacherous. I don’t know what it is but there’s more of a bond there. Philip’s parents are Sicilian, which is why the boss liked him. He had his background checked out. They make sure you’re not mixed breed, no Irish in you. . . . You’ve got to be Italian. They won’t tell their secrets. They take their secrets to the grave. It’s a different world.⁹

One New England mafioso who became a collaborator, Vincent Teresa, echoes this awe of Sicilian ruthlessness. He describes the old-style mafiosi who were brought over to the United States to “bring back respect and honor in the honored society”:

These Sicilian mafiosi will put their head in a bucket of acid for you if they’re told to, not because they’re hungry but because they’re disciplined. They’ve been brought up from birth over there to show respect and honor, and that’s what these punks over here don’t have.¹⁰

Colletti’s information that no non-Italian could be made a member of La Cosa Nostra is corroborated by Sammy Gravano’s account, as told to U.S. journalist Peter Maas:

Carmine Persico, soon to be the Colombo family boss, was ensconced in a mid-town Manhattan hotel suite. A coterie that made up his inner circle was present . . . [including] the man perhaps closest of all to him, his constant companion, Hugh “Apples” McIntosh, who could never be a made member because his father wasn’t Italian.¹¹

Later in the book, Gravano, having shed any illusions he had about the Cosa Nostra’s rules and codes of honor, describes the Italian connection as a purely pragmatic and increasingly random element:

It came from Italy, Sicily, staying tight with your own. Years and years ago, you had to be Italian on both sides. Then it became that you only had to be that on your father’s side. Not your mother’s. Because they say you are what your father is, you carry his name. Like John Gotti’s wife is part Russian Jew. So his son, John Junior, got made, right? He’s part Italian and part Russian Jew.¹²

In any immigrant community, perhaps particularly the Italian-American, the mother plays a vital role: she is the link with the old world, she represents cohesion and continuity, often through the food she cooks and the language used within the home. The women, who initially mixed little with their new compatriots, were defined by their background. The gangster-turned-collaborator Henry Hill expressed the conflict at the heart of the Italian-American community in his mother’s reaction when, as a young man, he was taken up by local mobsters who worked out of a taxi stand in Brooklyn:

Carmela Hill was pleased—almost ecstatic, really—when she found that the Varios, the family who owned the cabstand, came from the same part of Sicily where she had been born. Carmela Costa had been brought to the United States as a small child, and she had married the tall, handsome, black-haired young Irish lad she had met in the neighborhood at the age of seventeen, but she never lost her ties to the country of her birth. She always maintained a Sicilian kitchen, for instance, making her own pasta and introducing her young husband to anchovy sauce and calamari after throwing out his catsup bottle. . . . And like many members of immigrant groups, she felt that people with ties to her old country somehow had ties with her. The idea of her son's getting his first job with *paesani* was the answer to Carmela's prayers. It wasn't too long, however, before Henry's parents began to change their minds.¹³

In the emigration process, the father of the family tended to leave first for the new country, and then, once he had established himself, send for the wife and children. Writer Norman Lewis describes in his book *The Honoured Society* how emigration from Sicily began reluctantly in the 1940s but became a "pathological abandonment of the land," a process in which many women were left behind to bring up the children—Messina at one point was 85% women.

Maria Laurino grew up in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, a place where many Italian immigrants settled, and which has remained a stronghold of traditional Italian families:

There is a distinct track that people follow, from their home town in southern Italy, they all come to the same area in the US. You'll find a small town in the US where everyone is from the same small town in Italy. There is a great sense of everyone wanting to stay in the community. Bensonhurst is a deeply engrained community. Parents don't like their children to go too far, if they go to college.¹⁴

Links with Italy remained strong: Sammy Gravano described a weekly lottery game popular with immigrants in the 1920s, with the winning number drawn in the "old country."

Laurino offers an explanation for the relatively small number of women apparently involved in organized crime in America. "There is a tiny minority of Italians involved in organized crime. It probably takes place within very traditional families, within those areas where women don't go out to work." Thus, while many women in southern Italy have been pressed into work—both legal and illegal—out of necessity, the New Jersey Cosa Nostra operates in a social milieu in which women are excluded from the world of work, banished to the shopping mall and the beauty parlor. A source in the U.S. Department of Justice who did not wish to be named concurred with this point:

The general impression is that organized crime is based among the traditional Italian families; women are not involved because of the traditional background. Both Jewish and Italian crime families deliberately keep women out. It follows the way Italian, and in particular Sicilian, society is organized: to my knowledge, women are deliberately kept out.

It is interesting that, even within the U.S. judiciary, the perception of southern Italian society has not kept pace with change. It would also seem that, as in many

immigrant societies, the Italians emigrating to America clung to the old ways long after their counterparts in the so-called “old country” had modernized.

Laurino critically examines American sociologist Edward Banfield’s 1958 book *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* and its portrayal of southern Italian peasants as lacking any sense of community, a trait Banfield described as “amoral familism.” This notion was picked up by Americans Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan in their 1963 book on Italian-Americans, *Beyond the Melting Pot*:

The contemporary American ethic values self-advancement, whereas the Italian variant still values family advancement. Thus, even in the case of Italian gangsters or racketeers, there is a surprising degree of family stability and concern with children, brothers, sisters, and other relatives.

As Laurino points out, this perspective portrays gangsterism as a trait deep in the heart of the Italian-American community, with its very basis in the family unit, inseparable from Italian ethnicity. “For generations,” Laurino comments, “Italian-Americans have had to combat negative images about ‘family’ which at worst is a euphemism for the mafia, but amoral familism may be the more dangerous stereotype because it touches every member of the ethnic group.”¹⁵ It is interesting that Laurino remembers with nostalgia her mother’s words: “Trust only the family” and “Blood is thicker than water.” She rejects Banfield’s interpretation, preferring to think of her parents’ teaching as “moral familism.”

Mario Puzo said that the character of Don Corleone was based not on some fearsome underworld figure, but on his own mother. This gives us quite a different insight into the sexual politics of Italian immigrant families. It was Puzo’s mother’s sense of justice, her central and solid position at the heart of the family, that stayed with him. In his early work *Fortunate Pilgrim*, he claims he set out to make a name for himself as an artist to cleanse himself of the immigrant experience. “It was written to show my rejection of my Italian heritage and my callow disdain of those illiterate peasants from which I sprang,” he wrote in the house magazine of publisher Random House. In the same article, he acknowledged that his mother was the true hero of *The Godfather*:

Whenever the Godfather opened his mouth, in my own mind I heard the voice of my mother. I heard her wisdom, her ruthlessness, and her unconquerable love for her family and for life itself, qualities not valued in women at the time. The Don’s courage and loyalty came from her; his humanity came from her.

The boss’s mother in *The Sopranos* is a formidable character: calculating, manipulative, selfish, and bullying. Although her son Tony tries to deny it, she occupies the position of a sort of dowager boss. Only her dead husband’s brother, Uncle Junior, pays her the respect she feels she deserves. He comes to her for advice about two young breakaways who have disobeyed protocol. Of the first she says, “Christopher is like a son to Tony, and to me. You must not touch him.” Of the second, Christopher’s friend and crew member Brendan, she delivers her judgment, saying only, “I don’t know him.” Junior is grateful, and Brendan’s fate is sealed. The order is given to kill him, and he is assassinated soon afterward. According to

Laurino, “David Chase [creator of the series] is trying to turn the stereotype of the Italian mother on its head.” Chase has said that Livia Soprano is based on his own mother. The Italian mother remains a quasi-mythical figure who looms larger than life in the New World, overshadowing the Martha Stewart-type domestic goddess who rules modern America and persuades millions of women that their happiness depends on the attractive arrangement of flowers and serviettes at the dinner table.

The earliest known form of Italian organized crime in America were the Black Hand extortion rings, which preyed on other, more recent Italian immigrants. Their victims would receive a letter demanding money under threat of the murder or mutilation of their children, signed with a crudely drawn black hand. A New York police squad led by Joseph Petrosino was assigned to deal with the problem, but in 1909, Petrosino was murdered on an information-gathering trip to Sicily.

Organized racketeering became a national force with Prohibition, which put the Italian criminal gangs on a new footing. According to Joe Valachi, “The entire underworld, then monopolized by the Irish, Jews and to a lesser extent, Poles, cashed in on the Prohibition bonanza. But for Italian racketeers, especially, it was a chance at last to move into the big time.”¹⁶ The leader of Italian organized crime to emerge by the end of the 1920s was Giuseppe “Joe the Boss” Masseria, a ruthless killer who had fled a murder charge in Sicily in 1903. The Italians were riven with ancient rivalries, which Masseria encouraged; gangsters tended to remain grouped according to the Italian town or village from which their families came.

Masseria’s leadership was challenged by a Sicilian from Castellamare del Golfo, Salvatore Maranzano, and the two locked horns in what became known as the Castellammarese wars, during which up to 100 mafiosi were killed. The younger generation of mafiosi, notably Lucky Luciano and his associates Joe Adonis and Frank Costello, Vito Genovese, William Moretti, and Albert Anastasia, schemed to remove the old guard. They murdered Masseria in 1931, whereupon Maranzano claimed overall leadership of the U.S. mafia. Luciano contested the necessity for a boss of bosses, preferring a commission structure with no overall leader, and Maranzano was assassinated. Having removed the old guard, Luciano made an alliance with the Jewish gangster Meyer Lansky, whom he had known for years, and the two of them formed a national crime syndicate that allied Jewish and Italian mob interests across the United States. The armed wing of this syndicate was called Murder, Incorporated, and was a ruthless enforcer for the criminal organization.

After the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, the syndicate moved into drug trafficking, gambling and loan-sharking, prostitution and labor racketeering. The Italian crime factions organized themselves into a hierarchical structure, with “made” members and an initiation ceremony described by writer Norman Lewis as “identical” to the Italian version. The links between Italian and American organized crime were intensified by the comings and goings of convicted criminals exiled from America to the old country, where they continued to run their rackets.

In 1936, Luciano was convicted for running prostitution rackets and sentenced to 30 to 50 years. During the war, naval intelligence sought his influence to enlist the assistance of dockworkers along the New York ports. He also allegedly advised the U.S. Navy on landing sites in Sicily and helped them win over Sicilian boss

Don Calogero Vizzini to the Allied advance. For his service to the Allied war effort he was paroled, and on his release in 1946, he was deported to Italy. His influence on mob affairs continued from exile, where he continued to receive an income from mafia profits, notably from the mafia's courier Virginia Hill.

The mafia's stranglehold on the unions was key to their control of New York. The first mafioso to take a major stake in the unions was Albert Anastasia, one of the early Cosa Nostra figures who helped lay the foundations of organized crime in the United States. After Anastasia was murdered, he was succeeded by Carlo Gambino, who lived in a mansion house on Staten Island known as "The White House" and ran what Rudy Giuliani has described as the "second government in the United States."

By the 1980s the Genovese family controlled the Manhattan-New Jersey docks and the Gambinos had Brooklyn. The docks were processing more than \$40 billion worth of freight. Construction, garbage, and garment unions were all in the pockets of Cosa Nostra. Any that resisted was taken over by a mafia-backed management. By gaining control of legitimate businesses, the organization possessed the means of laundering its illegitimate earnings. By the mid-1980s the President's Commission on Organized Crime estimated that \$65.7 billion was being illegally extracted from the U.S. economy.

The Senate Special Committee to Investigate Crime in Interstate Commerce, known as the Kefauver Committee, took place in 1950 to 1951. It was the first major investigation of organized crime, and it seized the national imagination as it was televised, week after week. The hearings went from city to city, and witnesses including crime figures and corrupt politicians, public servants, policemen, and governors were interrogated before a panel headed by Estes Kefauver. The hearings exposed corruption in public office and extensive links between politics, industry, and organized crime across the United States, and Kefauver became a national hero. One result was the successful prosecution of racketeer Joe Adonis, who was deported. Virginia Hill testified before the committee, in an appearance that made her a national celebrity and made her name in mafia folklore.

Probably the most significant development in the story of Cosa Nostra was the drug trade, which raised incomes to the extent that the organization had to infiltrate white-collar businesses to launder their narcodollars. Italian-Americans Lucky Luciano and Joe Bonanno were involved in the traffic of refined heroin from Sicily to the United States at an early stage. At a meeting at the Hotel des Palmes in Palermo in 1957, it was agreed that the Sicilian mafia should be allowed to dominate the heroin trade between Sicily and New York. The so-called Pizza Connection involved hundreds of kilos of heroin moving across the world via pizza parlors in Brooklyn and Manhattan owned by the Sicilian-born Napoli brothers and Sicilian exile Tommaso Buscetta. The drugs trade was controlled from Sicilian enclaves in Brooklyn—the mid-1960s was a time of major immigration, and mafia historian Claire Sterling described these Sicilian ghettos populated by mafia associates brought in wholesale from the old country to man the drugs trade: "The dialect spoken there, the fragrant scent of cannoli issuing from pastry shops, the family bonds and rituals, the intricate code of behavior, had been transported

intact to this sanctuary four thousand miles from home.” These ultraconservative neighborhoods were frozen in time at the date of the family’s removal from Italy.¹⁷

To increase their profit margins, Sicilians built their own refineries, and at one point heroin was being produced in Sicily at the rate of between 50 and 80 kilos a week. Millions of dollars were being laundered through Wall Street brokers and Swiss banks. Mafiosi began buying massive ranches and mansions. The usual practice was to register them in their wives’ names, although how far the women were aware of this is still being contended in courtrooms across the United States. By the mid 1980s, the Sicilian mafia was importing between three and five tons of heroin to the United States every year. The Pizza Connection employed hundreds of Sicilian immigrants, based at various pizza parlors and in other menial jobs, as couriers and dealers.

Thus far, the mafia in the United States had operated almost with impunity. The main reason for this was that the director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, steadfastly refused to take any action against organized crime. In this climate of denial, Attorney General John Mitchell forbade use of the word “mafia” in the Justice Department. Hoover died in 1972, making it possible for law enforcement to make some headway against organized crime thereafter.

In 1970 the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act had given federal prosecutors the powers to pursue anyone belonging to a criminal organization. The Act provided for long prison terms if the government could prove a connection between the suspect and a criminal enterprise or commission (in some ways this is similar to the “*Associazione mafioso*” as defined in the Rognoni-La Torre Law of 1982). Shawcross defined it as “a law which enabled prosecutors to charge an enterprise and those associated with it on the grounds of its being a criminal organization whose purpose it is to extort, murder, steal and conspire in all manner of activities.”¹⁸ Until RICO came into force, prosecutors had been obliged to pursue mafia members for isolated and sometimes insignificant crimes, resulting in small sentences, if any. However, because of its complexity, and in some cases prosecutors’ lack of faith in the statute, RICO was not actually used until well into the 1980s. Like Rognoni-La Torre, its principal advantage was that it enabled investigators to seize the assets of suspected mafiosi. Property and bank accounts could be traced back to known criminals via wives, sisters, and mothers-in-law.

In 1984, the Pizza Connection was raided and many key figures arrested. In 1985, federal forces moved to arrest heads of the five mafia families of New York, the culmination of a massive campaign using surveillance cameras and wiretaps by FBI agents. This was the fruit of Rudolph Giuliani’s work as District Attorney. The Commission of the American Mafia was charged as a “Criminal Enterprise,” and in 1986 a series of convictions put the heads of New York’s crime families away for 30 to 40 years. This freed up younger family members to take some control over the running of criminal enterprise and gave way to a new, more pragmatic generation of mafiosi, who are much more likely to employ women when necessary.

The changing climate gave rise to another major development: the phenomenon of the American collaborators, or informers, was born. During the Reagan administration, a crackdown on drug trafficking meant much longer sentences for anyone

found guilty. Rather than 15-year sentences, reduced to 5 in many cases, drug traffickers were looking at life in prison. According to Shawcross, “Almost overnight the number of mafiosi willing to cut a deal and become informers or Government witnesses doubled.”¹⁹ These witnesses and informers included some women, some of whom were prepared to talk to negotiate reduced sentences for their men. The introduction of an effective witness protection program also encouraged women to take the stand in exchange for the safety of themselves and, often, their children. In the process, they revealed detailed knowledge of their husbands’ or lovers’ business, confounding popular belief that women are automatically excluded from the mafia:

The notion that women should be excluded or somehow ignorant of mafia operations in mafia-controlled neighborhoods is as illogical when applied to the United States as it is in Italy: since the mafia operates by maintaining close controls over all activities in the neighborhood with the support or consensus (usually obtained by terror) of local people, it would be impossible for anyone to be ignorant of its existence. This point was made by undercover agent Joe Pistone: “The neighborhood where the wiseguys regularly hang out is always aware of their presence and their positions in the mafia. Whether from fear or respect, the neighbors protect the wiseguys from police surveillance.”²⁰

Although I have been told in the last year by two separate members of the U.S. judiciary that women never get involved in mafia business, the last two years have seen a number of women arrested in connection with organized crime. It is possible that we find ourselves in a situation much like that in southern Italy of the early 1990s, with an increasing number of women indicted for mafia crime while the majority of the judiciary and popular opinion lags behind, persisting in believing women incapable of, and unwilling to, play a knowing part in mafia activities.

Perhaps the most noteworthy of the women indicted for mafia crime in the last two years is Debra Gravano, wife of the notorious Gambino family underboss. Sammy Gravano, known as “the Bull,” was an enforcer for the Gambino family under Paul Castellano, before John Gotti murdered Castellano and took over. Gravano was in construction: he had building union bosses on his payroll. According to his account, Gravano served the new boss for a time but then rebelled and turned state’s evidence. His testimony sent Gotti to prison for life. Gravano met Debra Scibetta in 1970 when she was 17. With regard to his first meeting her, he said, “I’m used to seeing a certain kind of woman [at the club] and she’s not that kind of woman. She seems so fresh, so innocent.” She invited him for Sunday lunch:

I saw her in the kitchen. She had an apron on, she looked like a little housemother, cooking away, cooking and tasting the sauce and the sausage and the macaroni. She was so different from the sluts that I’m dealing with every other minute at the club. Then and there I realized that she was for me.²¹

This reference to the new love of his life as a “little house-mother” is probably a conscious attempt by Gravano to paint himself as a good guy deep down; it’s also typical of the mafiosi who marry the wholesome home-maker and keep a racier, more glamorous mistress on the side. At least Debra was aware of what

she was getting into from the start: her father made inquiries about Gravano and learned about his criminal career but failed to put her off marrying him. In the early years of their marriage, Gravano's financial status was extremely uncertain: he invested in a series of bars, clubs, and other mafia enterprises that were liable to collapse overnight, leaving the couple dependent on the charity of relatives. Debra organized legal construction work for Sammy with her brothers, but he despised the sort of wages to be earned in civil society. At least once she asked him, "Don't you ever want to start a family and become legitimate?"²² However, she probably never expected him to change, as she did not wait for him to "become legitimate" before starting a family.

The domestic detail of a mafia couple is instructive. Gravano described his financial obligations when they moved into a new house on Staten Island in very much the same as any suburban professional who had overstretched himself: "How was I going to handle the rent, plus there was unfinished interior work, no furniture, no landscaping, nothing."²³ His solution, however, was not at all like that of the average suburban householder. Gravano carried out a raid on a drug dealer, beat him, tied him up, and robbed him of \$200,000. "I told Deb, 'We're in good shape. I'm giving you a little money. Put it on the side, so you can pay the rent. . . . I'm going to do some construction on the house and we'll buy some furniture and things.'" One assumes Debra was sufficiently relieved to have rent money not to care where it came from.

On another occasion Gravano ordered a hit, which was widely publicized in the neighborhood. Although there was no evidence to link him to the crime, Debra was obviously aware that her husband was behind it:

He saw how nervous Debra was. She knew that the Plaza Suite [the club where the murder happened] and the building were [Sammy's]. She knew that negotiations were going on to sell the property and that the would-be buyer had been killed. But that was all she knew. Sammy told her that he wanted her and the children back in Staten Island for the time being. . . . She did not ask any questions.²⁴

Throughout their marriage, Debra assisted her husband in keeping his financial dealings off the record. Their house in Staten Island was in her name, as was the horse farm they owned. And the car. And a two-storey building in New Jersey, the headquarters for his construction consulting company—of which she and the couple's children owned 75%. This is common practice among crime families: bank accounts, businesses, and buildings are registered in the names of wives, daughters, mothers-in-law—anyone who will agree to be a signatory, leaving the mafia member with no registered assets at all. This is the equivalent of an insurance policy ensuring that if and when a court attempts to freeze or confiscate an indicted mafioso's assets, he has none.

When Gravano decided to turn state's evidence, his biographer reports that his wife and daughter were shocked and angry. His daughter felt betrayed that her father should join forces with the law: "the enemy." Both, according to his account, refused to go with him into the witness protection program. The summary of the book states, "His wife has divorced him. She sold their home, which was in her

name, the Stillwell office building and other property she owned, and moved away from New York City with their children.”²⁵

As recorded in Peter Maas’s biography of Gravano, Debra’s role looks, on the surface, like that of the stereotypical mafia wife with whom we are familiar: she knows but never tells, she spends but never asks. And yet the latest episode in their story reveals a different reality. After Sammy Gravano left New York, he moved to Arizona, where he lived under a new identity—but only for a few months. According to a report in the *Arizona Republic* newspaper on 25 February 2000, Gravano left the witness protection program to see his family and promote his book: “In Arizona, Gravano started Creative Pools, also did business as Marathon Development. Police suspect it was a front. His family moved to the Valley to be closer, his wife opening a Scottsdale restaurant.” Rather than being sold off by his wife, Gravano’s construction companies were being run by his brother-in-law. Gravano, meanwhile, was discovered to be running a drug ring, which dealt principally in ecstasy. In February 2000 he was arrested, with his wife, son, daughter, and his daughter’s fiancé. All were charged with playing a role in the drug business: Debra’s restaurant was being used to launder drug money. Karen, then 27, was distributing drugs for her father, and Gerard, 23, Gravano’s son, was also distributing marijuana. The family as a whole is a long way from going “legitimate”: Karen’s fiancé has a criminal record and has served time for attempted murder.

Gravano and his son pleaded guilty in May 2001; in September, Debra and her daughter Karen were sentenced to five years’ probation for their part in the family’s ecstasy ring. This postscript puts Debra Gravano’s role in a new light. If she started as a wholesome “house-mother,” she is now a convicted criminal. She and her children, far from abandoning her husband when he went into the witness protection program, moved across the United States with him and went into business together.

An ongoing court case concerns a series of jewelry thefts in the Chicago area, allegedly masterminded by a former chief police detective, William Hanhardt. One of the key witnesses is Karen DeStefano, former wife of a prominent member of the “Outfit,” as the Chicago branch of the mafia is called. Sam DeStefano is the nephew of a notorious mafia torturer who went by the name of “Mad Sam” DeStefano and son of Mario DeStefano, also a made member of the Outfit. According to organized crime reporter John Kass writing in the *Chicago Tribune* on 16 October 2001,

A few years ago, Sam DeStefano told Karen that he’d fallen in love with a younger woman. He gave her a few days to gather her things and leave their home. While she was gathering, the FBI knocked at the door. Sam not only forgot his manners. He also forgot that she knew about the stolen jewels. She hid them in a safe-deposit box in a bank. “He kept asking me for the jewels, and I kept stalling, because we were going through a divorce,” Karen said. “He’d get into the house, looking for the key. But I had it taped to the bottom of the garbage can. He never liked taking out the garbage.”

Like much reporting of mafia business in the U.S. papers, this account is deliberately comical in its reduction of values: the mobster cheated on his wife, so he

deserves any vengeance she can mete out in the form of information against him. He was also reluctant to help around the house, so she could easily hide incriminating evidence from him. The trial will reveal how much she knew about the jewelry ring, but, according to Kass, she knew about the corrupt police detective, about her husband's crew in the Outfit, and where they met to discuss business. Karen DeStefano is currently in the witness protection program.

In another report, Kass wrote that Sam DeStefano wooed his wife with jewelry: he sent her to a jewelry store and told her to choose anything she wanted. She allegedly told the journalist that DeStefano gave her stolen jewelry and then asked for it back. She insisted it was a gift and refused to hand it over, demonstrating a sharper eye for an opportunity to make money than many gangsters. "Sam said it was a gift," wrote Kass in his *Chicago Tribune* column on 25 October 2001, "that he never wanted it and that his former wife knew the jewels came from a score." In the by-now-familiar comedy treatment of mafia press coverage, Kass dramatized the relationship between first and second mob wives like something out of a soap opera. The first was a green-eyed blonde who chain-smoked cigarettes and drank coffee without touching her veal; the second was a fitness enthusiast who encouraged her husband to exercise and lose weight. It is noteworthy that the American press can speculate or even assume that an accused party is guilty in advance of the trial. This gives crime reporters even greater license to characterize their subjects as comedy gangsters and their molls.

In another case a waiting trial, Camille Serpico, wife of a Genovese associate, is charged with money laundering. Serpico, 57, was arrested with 17 others, including her husband Ernest Varacalli, in May 2001, charged with running a car theft and insurance fraud ring from a number of breakers' yards in New York State. A statement from the New York State Insurance Department issued on 17 May 2001 announced the arrests, adding, "The defendants were initially charged with falsifying business records and will be charged with additional counts which include insurance fraud and grand larceny." Auto insurance fraud is apparently a major earner for the Genovese crime family, bringing in an estimated \$2.5 million a year. Varacalli's yard was in Brooklyn. The prosecution alleges that stolen cars were brought in and stripped for parts; owners brought in cars that were "written off" or had been reported stolen for insurance purposes. The body shops also sold stolen and recycled air bags.

Camille Serpico is portrayed in the weekly *Gang Land* column (now a Web site) of *New York Daily News* reporter Jerry Capeci, author of several books on the mafia, as a beauty who collected mafia husbands and was not terribly bright. In an article posted on 20 September 2001, jovially entitled "The Merry Widow," Capeci wrote,

In 1970, Camille Colucci was the focal point of an historic Mafia love story in which she married a Colombo mob associate after Salvatore (Sammy Bull) Gravano killed her husband—the first of his 19 murder victims. Gravano remembers Camille as "drop-dead gorgeous" with jet black hair and "great legs." She buried another husband, divorced two more, and married her fifth hubby, Genovese associate Ernest (Junior) Varacalli, 58. According to

court papers, Camille, 57, has five aliases, occasionally answered phones at the chop shop [i.e., breaker's yard] but her "primary responsibility was to launder and secrete the criminal proceeds" of more than \$1 million from August 2000 to last May 11. At that time, sources said, police seized a will and other documents that indicate that Camille fleeced her second deceased husband's estate and cheated his children of their rightful inheritance. The alleged theft occurred too long ago to be prosecuted, sources said.

The tone of this report is typical: even though the charge against Camille Serpico is the serious offence of money laundering, her status is reduced to "gorgeous," money-grabbing wicked stepmother. The report goes on to give the contents of a wiretap in which Camille admits to her husband that she kept an appointment at the hair dressers while carrying a significant quantity of cash that she was due to deposit at the bank. Another recorded conversation shows her confused about how much money is supposed to go into which bank account. She seems to show little awareness of the need for caution, accidentally giving details over the telephone—something Cosa Nostra personnel never do. Yet another bug placed at the breaker's yard revealed a similar lack of common sense: "The chop shop investigation caught Varacalli joking with Camille and her sister Rose last February about a bankruptcy case involving one of Varacalli's companies. During a court proceeding, Camille walked in with a mink jacket and jewelry. 'I'm going to jail here,' he recalled thinking, as he and Rose laughed aloud" (Gang Land, 20 September 2001). Elsewhere, Capeci portrays Camille Serpico as the unknowing prize in a gangland murder. Tommy Spero had her first husband killed, then became her second. She was allegedly unaware of her second husband's involvement in the crime.

So far, Camille seems to have demonstrated the stereotypical traits of a mafia wife: focusing on her appearance, taking care to look showy, and following instructions without understanding the transactions in which she is involved. As her arrest shows, however, she was considered sufficiently aware of the money-laundering process to be indicted as a member, not just as a tool, of the insurance fraud ring.

Over the last few years, Assistant U.S. Attorney Ruth Nordenbrook has conducted a thorough examination of the tax affairs of New York Bonanno clan member Anthony Graziano and his son-in-law John Zancocchio. She has found that Anthony Graziano kept all his bank accounts in his wife Veronica's name, whereas his other assets were divided among various female family members, leaving him with no assets to his name. His daughters all grew up "in the life" and have continued with a career of crime: Jennifer rebelled against her father and moved in with a black drug dealer; she was arrested last year for dealing marijuana; Renee married Hector Pagan, an associate of Graziano's crew for the Bonanno family (he is Hispanic, so cannot become a made member) and is currently in prison for drug trafficking; Lana, married to mobster John "Porky" Zancocchio, has been charged with bank fraud and mortgage fraud. John Zancocchio reputedly heads a \$280 million bookmaking ring. Lana has repeatedly given false statements to the IRS, although in 1990 tax evasion and mail fraud charges against her were dropped after her husband and father both pleaded guilty. The prosecution was convinced

that Lana and her mother-in-law had been instructed to plead guilty on tax evasion charges in order to exculpate her husband. However, an ongoing tax investigation of Anthony Graziano and a number of members of his family found that they were holding his assets for him and failing to declare them for tax purposes. In September 2001 Assistant District Attorney Nordenbrook had Lana Zancocchio arrested on charges of conspiracy to defraud the United States and attempting to evade taxes.

Both Lana Zancocchio and her husband, from whom she is now separated, pleaded guilty to charges of tax fraud and evasion. Lana pleaded guilty to charges that usually carry 10 to 16 months with at least 5 months in custody. She is appealing to spend her sentence at home in New Jersey, in a luxurious home she used to share with her husband. According to reporter Jerry Capecci, it was the expense incurred on doing up their house that got them into trouble with the tax authorities: he paid cash for the house and the many home improvements. Her lawyer, Jeffrey Rabin, said, "Her children don't deserve to lose two parents to prison and . . . the government recognizes this." However, the government wishes to demonstrate to the wives of mafia members that tax fraud will not go unpunished. The hearing is still pending at the time of writing.

Nordenbrook does not believe that housewives in wealthy New Jersey suburbs, or anywhere else that Italian-American criminal families congregate, are ignorant of their husbands' activities. The wealthy suburban Italian-American housewife who spends her husband's money and never questions where it comes from is an enduring stereotype embodied in Carmela Soprano, one of the best-loved characters in the top-rated TV series. She is portrayed as a straight person, deeply attached to her Catholic faith and trying to do the right thing by her family—she does her duty to her ghastly mother-in-law, prepares all the traditional Italian dishes, and keeps a spotless house and a full fridge. But although as the boss' wife she plays a traditional role, she is also never portrayed as a victim. She spends the money her husband brings in without ever questioning where it comes from, but she knows: when the police are making sweeping arrests of organized crime figures, she helps her husband take the guns and banknotes from their hiding places all over the house without a word of surprise or complaint. Only once does she acknowledge the dishonesty at the heart of her situation, when she suffers a religious crisis. But it is typical of the complex treatment of organized crime characters in this television series that Carmela's religious crisis is muddled up with her sexual attraction for the priest.

As well as traditional dishes and dialect, women seem to be responsible for keeping the old religion alive in the new world. Maria Laurino describes her grandmother's generation importing their particular brand of icon-worshipping southern Italian Catholicism to the United States and acting as spiritual ballast for the whole family:

The men played with faith, letting the women, the madonnas, be the standard-bearers of devotion, but never abandoned their religion. Men could be scoundrels like Saint Aloysius and of course be forgiven for their sins—as long as the women did the praying for them.²⁶

Many of those involved in organized crime did it for survival, to clamber out of the ghetto and get rich, but they also wanted to become respectable. Susan Berman, whose father, Davie Berman, was the Jewish gambling boss and a senior member of Meyer Lansky's national crime syndicate, wrote,

My father's story is a very American story, and I am the most American product of all. I have been privileged to go to America's finest prep schools and colleges and to work in my field to the fullest extent of my talent. I don't feel that I am part of a disenfranchised subculture but rather a part of the mainstream, and that is what my father would have wanted for me.²⁷

At her father's funeral, Susan Berman was approached by one of his former associates, who told her that he was "a good man who acted out of the most basic desire, to see his family continue and survive."²⁸

Although most bosses have claimed they wanted their sons to go straight, the U.S. mafia families differ from their Italian counterparts in being made up chiefly of relatives: "These individuals that become members of the Mafia, they are not people that start out later in life to become Mafia members," FBI agent Joe Pistone reported:

They are individuals that have grown up in the neighborhood, have been associated with crime as youngsters and associated with Mafia members as youngsters. As a general rule, there is some type of family bond, real family, not Mafia family, a father, an uncle, a cousin, so all during their formative growing up years, their upbringing, as an example, it may never occur to them that it is wrong to pay off a policeman, say, it is not wrong to gamble, it is not wrong to steal . . . and all through these years they basically do not leave their neighborhoods, so they do not see in the outside world that there are other rules other than what is confined within that neighborhood.²⁹

Pistone demonstrates the importance of the close-knit immigrant neighborhoods in the successive generations of mafiosi in America:

They all love their children. But most of them I dealt with, their children were all involved in the Mafia . . . They (the children) were all well aware of what their fathers were doing and they were all thieves in their own right. So I did not find anyone that I dealt with that tried to steer their sons away from a life of crime.

In the United States, association with La Cosa Nostra has acquired a taint that no amount of money can erase. Mafia members like Angelo Bruno, the gentlemanly don of South Philadelphia, have tended to use their accumulated wealth and power to send their children to college and make a better future for their families outside the mob. One of John Gotti's men, a Gambino family member known as Foxy, tried to protect his sister from ending up with a gangster. He told his associate Tommy De Simone, "Listen, we're in this life together, but don't you ever think that you are going to take my sister out. I don't want her involved with anybody like us."³⁰

Nicky Scarfo, the notoriously violent boss of Philadelphia, brought in his sons to inherit his mantle; however, he had one son who was not cut out for a criminal career. Scarfo bullied and belittled him until the boy killed himself at the age of 20. John Gotti made his son, John Jr., a member of the mafia and allegedly

appointed him his successor when he went to jail, although many say the boy was intellectually unequal to the task.

Victoria Gotti, wife of John, former head of the Gambino family, has remained largely unknown to organized crime investigators, who by contrast were tailing her husband and recording his every word. Although she has claimed ignorance of her husband's illegal business—she told police “I don't know what he does. All I know is, he provides”³¹—one reported incident indicates that she inhabits a milieu in which violent retribution is favored over the decisions of the judicial system. The couple's adored 12-year-old son Frank was playing in the street one day in 1980 when he was knocked over by a car. The driver, a neighbor, John Favara, had failed to see the boy darting out on a minibike behind him, ran him over, and dragged him several yards along the road. By the time he realized that something was wrong, the child was dead. The courts ruled that it was an accident. Over the following weeks, Favara received hate mail; threatening phone messages were left by a woman.³² Someone sprayed the word “murderer” on his car.³³ One day, a woman, possibly Victoria Gotti, attacked him with a baseball bat. Favara decided it was time to move away, but as he was making preparations to leave Howard Beach, he disappeared. Later, two mob informers revealed what had happened to Favara. He had been kidnapped and driven to a warehouse, where he was attacked and killed with a chainsaw. The killing, according to a former associate of Gotti, was ordered by the mafia boss's wife, the dead boy's mother. “She actually ordered this man to be killed. . . . His wife said, ‘I want this man dead,’ and it was carried out.”³⁴

John Gotti's daughter Victoria, by contrast, leads a public life. She published a book on her heart condition and a series of mystery novels, which, although they do not deal with organized crime, are set in a criminal underworld of sorts. She has given interviews to publicize the novels, and the tabloid press follow every twist and turn of her private life and faithfully document her frequent hospital visits. “Victoria Gotti is one of the great tabloid broads of all time,” commented the 7 February 2000 issue of *Mediaweek*:

The woman wears dark glasses to bail out her husband, Carmine (lovingly described in the *New York Daily News* as “that barrel-chested junkyard owner”), presumably to avoid being recognized. Meanwhile, she's also in a mink coat, miniskirt, prodigious gold jewelry and blond hair about three feet high. Also, putting up her latest book advance for bail money was a magnificent touch and much appreciated by all the local tabloid editors. Actually, it's Victoria G who should have played Tony's returning sister in *The Sopranos* this season.

As far as media commentators are concerned, there is nothing guileless about the way Victoria Gotti behaves. In 1985 she married Carmine Agnello, a member of her father's crew. He has been convicted of extortion, arson, and tax fraud and faces life in jail; they divorced acrimoniously, and she refuses to take the couple's three children to visit their father in prison. The papers speculated that this was “part of an elaborate scheme to shield the ill-gotten gains from the feds” (*New York*

Daily News, 1 February 2001). However, in another story reported with relish by the media, the FBI's wiretaps, which were recording the family's criminal dealings over an extended period of time, also picked up evidence that Agnello was having an affair with a bookkeeper in his employment, Debra DeCarlo. Among thousands of hours of police tape, Agnello and DeCarlo are overheard discussing his business. According to a report in the *New York Post*, DeCarlo is heard advising her lover on his business deals and "scolding him for being soft on debtors."³⁵ This is a role previously unheard of for women in American mafia circles, and was dismissed by journalists and prosecutors as improbable. (Although there are witnesses such as Brenda Colletti, who freely admits she gave her husband advice, being the brighter of the two.) In January 2002, Debra DeCarlo was sentenced to five years' probation for tax fraud. In February 2001, she and Agnello had pleaded guilty to tax fraud of more than \$158,000.

Throughout the very public exposure of every arrest and conviction of various family members, Victoria Gotti has never acknowledged her family's involvement in organized crime. In interviews she talks fulsomely about her father, but not in terms that the public would recognize. While he is serving life without parole for racketeering and conspiracy to murder, she emphasizes the family's hard-working ethos. An interview with *Entertainment Weekly* (7 March 1997) reveals a carefully put-together public image:

"I've worked very, very hard to get what I have," says Gotti, 33, in her living room, which is studded with gold-tipped Corinthian columns and has a massive carved jaguar crouched by the fireplace. "Nothing was handed to me." Despite her French manicure, blond hair and form-fitting black Azzedine Alaïa suit ("Yes, I cook in these clothes"), her manner is down-to-earth. She says she and her four siblings had a "perfectly normal" upbringing, with Dad home for dinner every night. "There were never any silver spoons," she says. "My father didn't believe in spoiling us." Gotti herself held jobs all through college at St John's University and had a curfew until the day she left home at 21 to marry Carmine Agnello, 36, who owns an auto-scrap company. She believes her father drew so much media attention not for any criminal activity but because he was a consummate gentleman and a snappy dresser. As for the mountains of wiretaps compiled by the FBI: "When you live under a microscope for 15 years," she says, "Mother Teresa would have a hard time."

Victoria Gotti currently writes a column for the *New York Post*, a popular newspaper. In language that has resonances in the statements given to the press by Toto Riina's daughter, she talks of the values she learned from her father:

"My father would not tolerate me not working—not doing anything with my life," Lizzie Grubman said yesterday.

"Do you understand?"

Me? Of course. Although I was raised with the notion that women belonged in the kitchen with a slew of kids tied to their apron strings. In traditional Italian culture, it is expected and anticipated that the prodigal son will work to achieve greatness and covet financial freedom. I remember all too well coming home after graduation and telling my parents I wanted to open my own clothing-design firm.

They were flustered, even perplexed.

“What does she have to prove?” said my father—the man who after my sixth-grade graduation gathered all the evidence of my academic achievements and proudly announced it in the neighborhood.

But I wasn’t expected to have a successful career.

Back to Lizzie.

We kicked around the pros of having traditional patriarchs. Of how our fathers laid the foundation for us early on—rules and regulations and never forget about building character.³⁶

The story of a girl who forges a career of her own, even though her parents don’t expect it of her—they probably have a far more traditional wife-and-mother role in mind—is intended to strike a chord in the heart of many Italian-American young women. She is, cleverly, both claiming a career independent of her father’s business and furthering her career by exploiting her father’s reputation.

In other columns, Gotti takes the moral high ground on the subjects of child-rearing, promiscuity, parental responsibility and so on:

Forget the kids, it’s the parents who need to be spanked. . . . The thought that parents would encourage sexual promiscuity amazes me. . . . Perhaps these parents are not aware of the staggering statistics on teen pregnancy or Aids. These parents need severe therapy.³⁷

Considering the notoriety of her family and the widespread, detailed public knowledge of her father’s criminal activities, Victoria Gotti could have avoided controversy—and a degree of ridicule—by eschewing the role of moral preacher. It has been suggested that the only reason for using her column in this way, to set herself up as a back-to-basics moral hardliner and pillar of the community, is as a public relations exercise on behalf of her family. Her father, ex-husband, and brother are all in prison, leaving her on the outside writing these rather desperate bulletins re-creating the Gottis as a force for good in the public imagination. (In the most recent bid to improve their public relations, after the attack on the World Trade Center in September 2001, Carmine Agnello offered the city use of his steel girder-crushing machine.)

Not all of the *New York Post*’s readership is happy to read her musings on her upbringing or to stomach her high moral tone. Here is a letter that appeared on the *Medianews* Web site in response to her first column:

The Sunday *New York Post* ran Victoria Gotti’s weekly column on how she and her good pal (Victoria has a lot of “pals,” and she tends to overpraise them all) Lizzie Grubman [daughter of a prominent lawyer] were having a heart-to-heart talk. The two women were discussing their fathers’ vaunted belief systems. In her breathless little essay Ms Gotti writes of “how our fathers laid the foundation for us early on—rules and regulations and never forget about building character.” Excuse me? John Gotti taught her rules and regulations? The man broke almost every federal felony law ever written. After all that, he had enough time to teach her character? Like how to watch some poor, hard-working schmuck build a business up only to have it taken from him by a bunch of two-bit thugs who couldn’t do a day’s work?

I wonder just when these lessons were taught? When she was a little girl and her old man was doing prison time? Maybe on visitor's day John was able to teach his values to his daughter through the Plexiglas window.

Listen, Ms. Gotti, your father was an illiterate psycho who ripped off untold numbers of citizens in New York—and had quite a few killed. He is a bad man who will never be allowed to walk this earth free. Your father deserves to die in jail, and if that's painful, well, take it up with God. And if you think I'm in the minority on this, why don't you speak to some of the families who lost fathers, brothers and husbands because of your family's organization? Or the cops who witnessed firsthand the evil that the Gotti name brought to New York?

Your idiot brother is in the joint for his little scams, and your estranged hubby is finally under indictment for all his illegal gains. Your whole life has been funded by the theft of the people of this city. Yet you proudly write about it liked you earned it. The only reason you have book contracts and a column is because of people's fascination with the Mafia.

Victoria Gotti is the closest thing New York has to a pedigree mafia princess, and the press certainly creates a good deal of entertainment out of her, but she treats her role with the utmost seriousness, refusing to disclose details of family life even with friends. In a style again reminiscent of the Riina family, she claims that her family is being persecuted by the law and the media. At the same time, she tends to play on her readers' expectations, with constant references to violence, crime, and murder:

On the eve of publication [of her first novel, *The Senator's Daughter*] I came down with a case of cold feet. It was so bad I considered pulling back the book. It wasn't the workload or the pressure. No, it was the publicity that scared me to death. The TV interviews and magazine and newspaper stories. I confided in my agent, Frank Weimann, "It will be like walking into a hail of bullets." The press had their own agenda. This was the chance to finally catch a glimpse of the myth, the man, the enigma. My father.³⁸

Victoria Gotti plays disingenuously on the image of violent death, turning herself into the victim. It is a brazen, tasteless gambit, since her father has been convicted of murder, while any metaphorical hail of bullets fired by the press would leave her alive and well to write another day. Besides this claim of victimhood, she describes herself as a bookish child, always to be found in the library:

I was painfully shy and introverted—the intellectual kid the other classmates deemed “the geek” or “teacher's pet.” I excelled in my studies, earned academic awards and crammed 13 years of schooling into 11. Yet off the court I was a social misfit. My world revolved around books. My playground was the Brooklyn public library. My friends were Scarlet [sic] O'Hara, Laura Ingalls and Huckleberry Finn.

This image, though charming, is hard to square with the consummate self-publicist that she has become, with her extravagantly glamorous appearance and sumptuous tastes.

Another pedigree mafia daughter, by contrast, describes herself as a Mafia Princess: Antoinette Giancana, daughter of 1940s Chicago boss Sam Giancana, gave this title to her autobiography. Although she too claims she never knew about her father's business while growing up, she indicates more knowledge than that:

she describes the door being shut while her father held top-level mob meetings at home (*The Godfather* film picks up this reference when the door shuts in Diane Keaton's face). She was told that her father was going to "college" when he went to jail, even though he was in his mid-40s. Since "college" was standard mafia code for prison, the young Antoinette may or may not have known where her father was really going—at any rate her book does not let on. She was very much the spoilt mafia princess, by her own admission: she went to expensive girls' boarding schools, where she mixed with the daughters of wealthy industrialists, and had more plastic surgery than perhaps was good for her because, although she was no beauty, she wanted to be a model.

Although she protests that the family did not know of her father's criminal activities, she does recall that her father groomed her to marry an influential lawyer. The young man was still in the early days of his career, but already Giancana had singled him out as someone who would in future be useful to the Chicago mob. Antoinette refused to marry him, however, in a courageous move that alienated her from her father's affections for years. However, her father got his way: her sister consented to marry the prospective mafia lawyer instead. Although she denies ever knowing about her father's business, Antoinette Giancana, now in her 70s, continues to live on her mafia connections: when approached for an interview she said she wanted \$1,500 an hour.

Historically, women in the United States have played marginal roles in organized crime circles, and their principal role has been, for the most part, sexual. In the majority of cases I have encountered, wives and daughters are schooled to deny all knowledge of the mafia. Outside the immediate family, the reality is very different. Some, including Arlyne Brickman and Georgia Durante, have described their lives in the underworld as a series of disastrous relationships, bouncing from one violent criminal to the next. The stereotypical "gangster's moll" is described in the biography of Arlyne Brickman:

The job description was vague. A mob girl had to be good-looking, since a lot of their time was spent serving as a "showpiece" on a gangster's arm. She had to be trustworthy, since she was often called upon to run errands and deliver messages. This was particularly important during an era when federal investigators were aggressively developing expertise at wiretaps and the phones were becoming unsafe. She served as a lover and confidante, a mistress cum geisha, whose tough-minded company provided relief from the demands of a hoodlum's often staunchly traditional home life. In exchange for these services, she received gifts, status and . . . respect.³⁹

Virginia Hill became famous in the 1940s as a "gangster's moll." Described as a beauty and a "flamboyant red-head," Hill was hailed as a celebrity by the press. "During her heyday, Virginia refined and elevated that status of a gangster's moll to that of national celebrity."⁴⁰ Hers was in many ways the archetypal American rags to riches story: she was born in poverty in Alabama, and ran away to Chicago at the age of 17. She added to her own myth by claiming that she had never possessed a pair of shoes until she got a waitressing job in Chicago. She became a dancer

and started to move in underworld circles; she went to live in New York, where she met crime syndicate leader Joe Adonis, who became her lover.

When Meyer Lansky and Al Capone joined forces to create a national organization, they needed a reliable method of getting messages to one another across the United States. Law enforcement officials were beginning to use wiretaps extensively, and known criminals were banned from associating with one another. The racketeers needed a courier who would not arouse suspicion. Who better than a bosomy redhead who was presumed to be some mobster's brainless girlfriend? There were, after all, dozens who fit that description, and law enforcement considered them harmless. In this innocuous guise, Virginia shuttled unmolested between Chicago and New York City:

But Virginia, it turned out, was neither brainless nor harmless. As one contemporary commentator explained, she was "more than just another set of curves. She had a good memory, a considerable flair for hold-in-the-corner diplomacy . . . close-lipped about essentials and able to chatter freely and apparently foolishly about inconsequential." Even the government eventually concluded that she was a "central clearing-house" for intelligence on organized crime. As such, Virginia enjoyed an independent power base within the Syndicate.⁴¹

Exploiting the police's prejudices about women's incapacity to play any useful part in organized crime, Hill took messages across the country, between New York and Chicago, Las Vegas and Los Angeles. It was in Los Angeles that she met and moved in with Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, Lansky's partner in the emerging national crime syndicate. Siegel had moved to Los Angeles to run the syndicate's West Coast operations. He was surrounded by many Hollywood figures who apparently thought it was very exciting to be linked to a real gangster. Virginia Hill added glamour to Siegel's mob credentials, and together they attracted high society, even film stars, who came to their parties and were eager to be seen with them. This was—and remains to this day—an essential part of the mafia's public relations. When Siegel opened a hotel and casino in Las Vegas (which was, at that point, a mere staging post in the desert), he drew on his Hollywood connections and his mistress' charms to attract maximum attention.

In addition to hosting parties and charming café society, Hill worked for Siegel as a courier, moving money across the United States, and even to Europe. Hill moved freely; since mafia "molls" were not expected to undertake anything requiring brain power, she was largely unsuspected by law enforcement.

Siegel got into trouble with his organized crime friends and associates. Either he was skimming money from the mafia's gambling interests and Hill was helping him by depositing the money in Swiss bank accounts or she was stealing from the casino, and he, as her lover, was held responsible. As befits a national "celebrity," gossip and rumor circulated widely about the couple. He was losing money on his casino in Las Vegas and alienating his creditors. Hill was devoted to Siegel, but she deserted him when his status with the mob was fatally compromised by his failed business deals and spiraling debts. She was in Paris when he was executed by the mob in her Los Angeles apartment in 1947. Proof that she had knowledge

of Siegel's financial dealings materialized when Meyer Lansky visited her in Paris and persuaded her to return the money Siegel had stolen.

Virginia Hill's list of lovers earned her a degree of coarse and dismissive coverage:

In 1951 in executive session before the Kefauver Committee Virginia Hill was asked by that self-proclaimed moralist of the panel, Senator Charles W. Tobey of New Hampshire: "Young lady, what makes you the favorite of the underworld?" "Senator," a sanitized version of her reply went, "I'm the best goddamned lay in the world." That nearly told it all about Virginia Hill, a trusted bedmate of many of the syndicate's top gangsters and a bagwoman for the mob.⁴²

It was customary for gangsters to conduct business meetings at their mistresses' apartments to avoid detection, but Hill was also trusted to launder money and transport illegal earnings across continents. Furthermore, her testimony before the Kefauver Committee was as controlled and tight-lipped as that of any accomplished mafioso when she described Siegel as "a perfect gentleman" (she also attracted attention by punching a female journalist outside the hearings). Her performance attracted as much popular sympathetic admiration as Ninetta Bagarella's impassioned speech to magistrates in Palermo in the 1970s in which she declared her love for fugitive mafia killer Toto Riina.

In Hill's later life she lived in Europe, where, it is believed, she continued to oversee the Swiss bank accounts of several American mafiosi and to move funds for Lucky Luciano, who lived in exile in Italy. After a series of highly publicized suicide attempts—thought to have been attempts to extort money from Siegel's killers (she allegedly had a safety deposit box containing a list of suspects, to be opened in the event of her death)—she finally killed herself.

Arlyne Brickman was a self-confessed student of Virginia Hill's career and style. The daughter of a well-connected Jewish racketeer from the Lower East Side of New York, she too had a series of mafioso lovers, but she also played a role of her own: she delivered messages and later ran a bookmaking operation. Her upbringing was remarkably similar to that of many young Italian women: she grew up in the Lower East Side, home to many poor immigrants from Eastern Europe:

For many young men from this teeming quarter, the pursuit of the American dream took the form of bookmaking, bootlegging and black-marketeering. The East Side, therefore, became a sanctuary for hoodlums and, ultimately, the birthplace of the mob—both Italian and Jewish.⁴³

Following the example of Virginia Hill but also of her own grandmother, whose funeral parlor was a kind of "speakeasy" and hangout for gangsters, Brickman was ambitious to carve out a role for herself in mafia circles. Her attempts to infiltrate the mob began with a vast number of sexual partners from what her biographer calls "her own tribal circle": Lower East Side Jewish low-life. Hardened by her experience of the men around her, specifically by being raped and beaten by mobster acquaintances, she assumes a masculine mentality, becoming ambitious for money, status, and, subsequently, revenge. She was a bookmaker and later a

drug dealer. Her ambitions to prosper within the mafia environment and to make money led her to deal drugs; ironically her daughter became a heroin addict.

Later, she became an informant against the mafia: for over a decade she wore wires for New York and New Jersey police as well as the FBI. She was unusual in that, rather than exploit her existing connections, she operated as a sort of freelance undercover agent, carrying a wire to meetings. She testified in a number of trials. Her surveillance of the Colombo Family led to the 1986 conviction of one of Carmine Persico's top lieutenants.

Journalist Teresa Carpenter's account of Brickman's life sheds light on the role of women in the U.S. mafia—not just Brickman's, but also those of other women whose existence revolves around their love of professional criminals. All the women who take an active part in the business seem to be the mistresses of married men rather than their wives: their illegitimate status somehow qualifies them for a part in the criminal life. Brickman mentions a young woman who, by force of her business ability, was much more than a “moll”: Madeline Calvaruso, mistress of Vincent Manzo, a loan shark for the Colombo family. Here is one of the many examples of women who attach themselves to (married) gangsters for love and are perfectly happy to put on a show as “arm candy,” but who also find a role in organized crime through a combination of natural abilities and ambition:

Madeline's chief assets were a shapely pair of legs, which she showed off to best advantage in heels and short shorts, and a good head for business. Wherever Vinnie went, Madeline usually followed a few deferential steps behind. When it came time to close a deal, she stepped in to work out the details. She managed all this without injuring Vinnie's pride because she loved him and was ambitious for him.⁴⁴

Arlyne Brickman also ran her own rackets, inventing scams, including keeping fraudulent “numbers” books. While she was living with low-level racketeer Tommy Luca, Brickman was periodically forced to come up with money-making schemes to pay off his many creditors. She came up with the idea of a fake numbers book in which she and her associates were the only clients betting. The numbers game and various other forms of betting feature in many women's accounts of their activities within the mafia: it is an area in which women of intelligence seem to be allowed to work. It is not an insignificant area: as FBI agent Joe Pistone testified, gambling of one sort or another is the lifeblood of the mafia:

Gambling is probably the most important source of income for the mafia. It is the blood that pumps through the veins of the system 365 days a year. It keeps the organization alive when other, more lucrative scores or crimes fail. Although narcotics trafficking may be a major moneymaker for various members of the mob, not every member of the family may be involved in it. On the other hand, every mafia member was involved in gambling and used the profits from it to sustain his other activities. It is the most important source of income for the mob, not only because of its size but, more importantly, because of its steady, uninterrupted flow.⁴⁵

Pistone concluded, “Until our society realizes that each small, innocent bet on the numbers or horse races supports the organized crime subculture, we are never

going to fully eradicate the mafia.” Disguised as a wealthy client, Arlyne met with loan sharks to secure loans of tens of thousands of dollars for Luca. These meetings frequently involved sexual favors—something that, while utterly demeaning, she rationalized as more of her “conquests.” Sexual favors seem to have played a major part in Brickman’s dealings with the mob. The ambience of organized crime at the time seems to have reduced women to sexual objects and men as purveyors of violence on demand. It is not an environment in which equality of the sexes is likely to flourish.

Brickman’s story illustrates the place women occupied at that time in organized crime:

Tommy needed her for sex. He needed her to run errands. He needed her to earn. She, in turn, needed him for both excitement and security. The bottom line was that a mob girl must be attached to a man. And Luca—while no Joe Colombo or Tony Mirra—was connected.⁴⁶

When Luca went to prison, Brickman hustled to pay the “vig” on his loans. She helped him to get work release from prison and raised the money to pay his creditors weekly; she later worked as his courier, taking money from his business partner to pay off the loan sharks.

Her dependence on Luca’s criminal connections is demonstrated by the fact that, when he mistreated her, leaving her massively in debt, she turned informant. She revealed her dependence on authority—either criminal or police. It did not matter which: she needed to feel that she was a player bucking the system. To assert herself, she played off one against the other, but she could not function without them. Her biographer described her state of mind:

Her secret knowledge gave her power over Tommy. What’s more, there was a team of federal agents somewhere out there in the night hanging on her every word. For the first time in her life she felt like a success. Little Arlyne was the center of attention. Little Arlyne was one of the boys.⁴⁸

This need to exert power, however minor, in a life otherwise utterly disenfranchised is echoed in the accounts of several other women who became involved with mafia figures. It accounts for the liberal use of sexual favors, which on the surface appears to give an attractive woman power over the men lusting after her. It also accounts for the fact that many women who have been attached to men connected to the mafia also have had affairs with federal agents. The notion of “success” involves attracting attention, which is also true of young men with the ambition to climb through the ranks of organized crime.

Like Virginia Hill, Georgia Durante saw the local mafia as her ticket out of boredom and poverty. In Rochester, New York, Durante started running errands for local mafioso Sammy Gingello and John Gotti’s associate Salvatore Reale. These errands involved taking packages into New York City, and she claims that she once delivered a letter directly to the powerful New York boss Carlo Gambino. She was also instructed to keep an eye on local comings and goings and to keep Gingello informed—a traditional female role in organized crime: when men’s movements are restricted or attract more attention, it is often easier for women to

pick up information. Durante's principal role was as a driver: she started driving for mafia associates who collected extortion money from premises including building sites. Sometimes these shakedowns involved violence, and she became expert at getting away fast from the scene of the crime. (This role set her up for her later career as a stunt driver in Hollywood.)

Durante's mafia career was in some ways similar to a man's: she was attracted to local mafia figures by their money and the strange fascination that violence exerts; she saw her way out of a dreary existence by associating with them. As they got to know her, they began to give her more-demanding tasks. She always accepted these commissions, feeling they gave her status and enjoying the trust that was invested in her by mobsters:

Not many women were allowed in this world, and it gave me a sort of sick fascination to be trusted at this level. In some strange way I felt connected to fear, but the thought never crossed my mind that I may be in any kind of danger. I was too engrossed in the intrigue.⁴⁹

The Rochester mafia used Durante to run errands for them and drive their getaway cars, knowing that, as a woman, she would be beyond suspicion, and the police would not pay her any particular attention. Eager to please, she raised no questions about the criminal nature of her actions or her friends. She described the thrill of being close to a man who so obviously exerted power and instilled fear—what passed for “respect”—in those around him, without questioning what he did to deserve that fear. Of course, she subsequently discovered that it is through violence alone that such a man commands respect.

Durante acknowledged the ambiguous fascination of mafia muscle when she described how she sought the protection of some of the most violent men in the neighborhood: “Seated at a table with six of the most notorious gangsters in the Rochester Syndicate, I was uncomfortable, but couldn't have been safer. Something sinister was brewing.”⁵⁰

Her book is typical of the confessional style of mafia autobiography that sells very well in the United States. It relies heavily on stereotypical notions of organized crime and professions of horror tinged with guilt at being drawn to criminal men. By most accounts, women are attracted to the men who commit crimes rather than the criminal life itself or what they might gain by it. Thus they present themselves as romantic heroines who risk all for love of a dangerous man. Unfortunately, “dangerous” men tend to be violent, not just in their professional duties, but also at home, and Durante's is not the only book that dwells for many pages on the cycle of wife-battering that apparently goes with the territory.

Durante also discovered that links with organized crime cannot easily be abandoned. Some time after she married and moved to a new state, she received a call from a former husband telling her he needed her to launder money for him. She was also traced by agents from the IRS and FBI, who expected her to give them information on major organized crime figures including John Gotti. Her account does not give details about how she laundered money for the mafia, however, so it is difficult to judge the significance of her role or her understanding of the crimes she committed. She takes a moral tone about corruption in politics and the

authorities, and yet reveals she was present at power-broking meetings in which the mafia dictated the outcome of elections, including the appointment of the chief of police. Her book gives the impression that she knew more than she is prepared to divulge, even in a “confessional” autobiography, and in this she proves herself a true member of the criminal fraternity.

Most women’s lives with mobsters have been singularly unglamorous and unhappy. Susan Berman records how her mother suffered a series of nervous breakdowns as a result of being married to a gangster:

The violence of my father’s life began to destroy her. He told her nothing, but she perceived enough to know that her husband and child were not safe. She knew we were living on the enchanted edge of a dark reality. She was not allowed to make friends freely, her movements were guarded. The two or three wives of my father’s partners that she had known from before were as isolated in their homes as she was in hers. She had no interest in gambling or drinking, frequent escapes for mob wives.⁵¹

Susan Berman’s mother was of a nervous disposition; she could not handle the constant sense of danger, and she worried herself sick at her husband’s continual unexplained absences. “My mother had no support systems, no security, no assurance that tomorrow would come for any of us. Many of the other wives were made of harsher stuff.”⁵² Berman’s wife was removed to a safe distance from Las Vegas, where he had his operations, and their daughter was sent to a series of expensive boarding schools for young ladies (Chicago boss Sam Giancana’s daughter Antoinette had a similar upbringing).

Susan Berman records that her father’s parents arrived in the United States from Odessa with nothing. Her father was determined to climb out of their miserable poverty in any way possible, and once he started sending money home from his work as a debt collector—if anyone failed to pay, Davie was sent to beat them up—they asked no questions about where this money had come from or how it had been earned. “His mother asked no questions, just accepted what he gave her.”⁵³

The immigrant experience, for the Irish, Jews, and Italians, as well as all those who arrived later on American shores, was of poverty and hardship. Many who grew up in America’s ghettos resolved by fair means or foul to escape, and any mother who had watched her children go hungry was not going to refuse money. The same protective impulse is shown by the criminals’ offspring: Susan Berman’s quest to discover and record faithfully her father’s life story is dogged by the fear that she will be confronted with unpleasant facts about him—even though she knows he was involved in illegal bootlegging, violent debt collection, gambling, and kidnapping:

All along the treacherous journey the thing I feared most was that I would find out something that would make me love my father less, that would tamper with the idealized, romanticized view I had of him as a child.⁵⁴

This desire of women to protect the image of the honorable outlaw, even to themselves, is a familiar one. It creates a double standard of thinking and a refusal

to acknowledge what they know is true, which is usually not confronted until they find themselves on the witness stand.

What follows are studies of three women's experience in mafia circles, told through their own words. All have been government witnesses, and therefore have been forced to acknowledge and analyze their behavior to some degree. For this reason, I think they contribute a valuable insight into women's role in organized crime.

Dorothy Fiorenza was a qualified lawyer in her late 20s when she had a relationship with a New York mafioso in his 60s, Andrew Russo. The following year, she split up with him and became romantically involved with one of his junior associates, Lawrence Fiorenza, who was in prison at the time. The pair then got married and turned state's evidence. Fiorenza was a key prosecution witness in the January 1999 trial of Andrew Russo and Dennis Hickey for jury tampering.

Dorothy was comparatively well educated: she had a college degree, a law degree and some credits toward a master's. She had practiced in a firm dealing with "entertainment law," but according to Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel Dorsky, who prosecuted the case against Russo, she was not a particularly skilled lawyer. After college, she went to beauty school and worked in various barbershops and hair-dressing salons. It was while working in a barbershop that she first became acquainted with a number of underworld figures, although she subsequently met Andrew Russo at a party given by a friend of her family. She already knew Russo by reputation because her parents knew his family; she knew of his prison record and that he was a prominent member of the Colombo mafia, and at this party she could see the respect he commanded. She chatted with Russo and was subsequently told by a family friend that he had been very struck with her. She was also told that this was a great honor, given his position in the criminal underworld.

At the time, she was 28 and he was 61, and when they first started dating, she called him "Uncle Andrew." He later referred to the two of them affectionately as "the gangster and the lawyer." He was married, but, like almost all mafia figures, he had a number of girlfriends—in fact, Dorothy claims that this was the reason they split up around six or seven months later: he insisted on seeing a number of other women besides her. Dorothy was also married at the time she met Russo, but she claims that her marriage was foundering. She took her role of messenger seriously and was eager to help, apparently trying to impress the organization with her legal background. During the trial, under questioning, she said,

I was hoping that I would learn something. I wasn't a criminal defense attorney. He [Joseph Russo, known as Jojo] was looking for a paralegal. He said we need a girl to come up here to get us papers and stuff so why don't we use her?⁵⁵

It is clear that Dorothy Fiorenza wanted to belong to this milieu.

There was no doubt in her mind at the outset of this relationship that Russo was under some pressure from law enforcement; he was keeping a low profile, spending a lot of time at co-defendant and fellow Colombo crime family member Dennis Hickey's farm in New Jersey, where they had a number of security systems to avoid detection. Before long, Russo asked her to visit his son in prison since he,

Russo, was on parole and didn't want to seek permission for such a visit. Dorothy used her legal credentials to get visiting rights and regularly visited Jojo Russo in prison, taking messages to and from his father and from Jojo's mistress, Teresa Castranova. She also met with other Colombo family figures in jail and carried messages between them.

She explained under cross-examination that she took notes during her prison visits, while none of the mafia figures ever wrote anything down. She claimed she never asked the meaning of what she was being told to pass on (the messages included code names) but merely repeated the questions and answers verbatim. She was aware that her position was precarious:

A friend of Jojo Russo's warned me, he said you're going to get in the middle, they're going to tell you to tell somebody something and if they don't like the message they'll blame it on you, they will say you got it wrong. So I was nervous to get something wrong, like for somebody to say I messed something up, so I wanted to make sure I got it right.⁵⁶

Dorothy also got into some confusion about what to do with all the notes and paperwork she was accumulating, anxious not to do the wrong thing, and displaying a distinct lack of street sense. She was paid a small amount for her work, which gradually increased to include almost all dealings of an official nature: paying rents, paying mortgages, acquiring properties, and so on. She admits that she was hoping to go into business with the family, opening a bar or a restaurant: she apparently saw the Colombo family connection as a way of getting ahead in life.

Shortly after getting involved with Russo, Dorothy met Teresa Castranova, who was hiding at another of Hickey's properties, avoiding a subpoena. Andrew Russo and Dennis Hickey's 1999 jury tampering charge relates to a 1994 trial in which Russo's son Jojo was convicted on racketeering charges. Castranova, who was Jojo's mistress, had attended every day of the trial. After the jury delivered a guilty verdict, she identified one of the jurors as a former schoolfriend, and a mafia associate was dispatched to visit the juror—and presumably make some kind of threat. Castranova then spent about a year avoiding a subpoena relating to the visit. The women spent a great deal of time together over the following months, talking on the telephone most days, seeing each other at least once a week, and exchanging confidences about their mafia lovers. Teresa was very isolated and expressed anxiety about not being able to visit Jojo in prison—she even tried out various disguises, including a blonde wig, but then realized she did not have any fake ID. Russo and Hickey expressed concern for the amount of pressure Teresa was under for the sake of the family: “Andrew said she is a tough cookie, being out there by herself and helping them, and Dennis said he felt sorry for her.”⁵⁷

Teresa really did seem to be a “tough cookie”: she refused to consult a lawyer and stated categorically that she would never obey the subpoena. Meanwhile both women seemed to be responding to the needs of their mafia menfolk, with no control over their own situations. Even Teresa's friendship with Dorothy seemed to become mired in complications: Dorothy took messages from Teresa to her lover Jojo in prison, then Teresa became jealous and accused Dorothy of flirting with her man. She also caused trouble between Dorothy and Andrew (she told

Dorothy that she should date other men, then told Andrew that Dorothy was dating an FBI agent). Dorothy, knowing the sort of people she was mixing with, said she was “shocked and scared” when Andrew accused her. The whole emotional tangle got worse: Teresa told Dorothy, “Andrew and Jojo were going to try to get us to fight, make us jealous of each other. She said they will try to turn us against each other.”⁵⁸

It emerges from Dorothy Fiorenza’s testimony that the mafia’s divide-and-conquer ethos extends beyond male associates to their families and girlfriends. There is no trust between them, even though they depend on each other for so many things and rely on each others’ silence and complicity. This mistrustful, treacherous trait—besides giving the lie to the notion of the mafia’s “codes of honor”—has emerged time and time again as the prime cause behind both men and women turning state’s evidence.

Over the course of the year that Dorothy spent with these people, the relationships became increasingly complex and difficult. At the same time, she was drawn further and further into their lives. (By this time she was also guilty of obstruction of justice by helping Teresa evade the subpoena, a felony that carries a possible 10-year sentence.) Other women who have had relationships with mafiosi have noted that the mistress is confided in and involved far more than the wife. Presumably this is to maintain the fiction that the wife knows nothing of her husband’s business, while he desperately needs someone to confide in when the stress gets too much. Dorothy Fiorenza seems a classic case of this syndrome. While she took care not to ask questions, Russo seems to have been unafraid to confide in her. One evening while she was out with friends, Russo called her to tell her he was going to be made boss. “I was kind of surprised that he said that . . . because he had said to never talk on the phone.”⁵⁹

If Dorothy’s attraction to Andrew Russo is hard to understand given the age difference and his married status, among other things, then her falling for Lawrence Fiorenza is even stranger. He was in prison for murder and conspiracy to murder, and as an associate of the Colombo crime family, the list of murders he had taken part in was long. In addition he had AIDS, cirrhosis of the liver, and hepatitis from drug addiction. His life expectancy was five years. Yet Dorothy put herself in an extremely dangerous position by leaving the more powerful Russo for his junior associate. Her attraction to Larry Fiorenza caused immediate problems with the Russo family. Jojo refused them “permission” to meet in prison during visiting hours. He tried to exert control over her on the grounds that she had been doing legal work for the family. She then sought advice from the Colombo family lawyer, who told her she was in danger of causing “another war.” The family friend who first introduced her to Russo also gave her a warning:

I says, you know, I helped your family, I didn’t ask for anything, you know, I tried to help them and I don’t think it’s fair and so [he] said, well, you could do a million nice things for my family, you do one wrong thing, that’s it.⁶⁰

Another family lawyer told her, “It’s a rank thing, it is an ego thing. And you broke a rule.”

Not only did Dorothy and Larry Fiorenza defy mob ranking, but what the Russos were most afraid of is that, should they decide to marry, Dorothy and Larry would turn state's evidence in order to secure his release. They did get indeed married at the prison, in April 1996. Afterward Andrew Russo gave Dorothy a thinly veiled warning not to collaborate; he also stopped telling her any family business, ignoring her questions and making it clear that he no longer trusted her. At one point, referring to another family member who collaborated, he made a more explicit threat: "He told me if he ever found him he would nail his balls to the wall, pour kerosene around his body and light a match."⁶¹

In spite of these threats, Dorothy prepared an appeal on behalf of Larry Fiorenza (prosecutor Daniel Dorsky later admitted being singularly unimpressed by her legal work). Things were brought to a head by the fact that Jojo Russo won a retrial but Larry Fiorenza did not. Clearly Dorothy felt in danger from the Russo family. Ironically, this pushed her and Larry toward collaboration—the thing that the Russo family most feared:

We realized we were in danger and the trust was going to have to start with somebody. There was nowhere else to go. It was clear Jojo was going to get out of prison and Larry wasn't and we would never be able to get away from them.⁶²

When he began his collaboration, Larry Fiorenza informed FBI agents that Dorothy had been involved in covering up Teresa Castranova's avoidance of the subpoena. Perhaps because he was schooled in mafia ways, he thus ensured that she was no mere spectator and that she was forced to collaborate with him. By contrast, Dorothy behaved in a way typical of women who associate with known criminals: although he had multiple convictions for murder, she convinced herself that in every case, he was acting under duress and unwillingly, and that even in some cases he tried to dissuade the crew from carrying out their orders. It is interesting from a psychological point of view that, having been attracted to the criminal milieu and having fallen in love with a known mafioso and tattoo-covered drug addict serving a life sentence for murder, she felt compelled to reject the idea that he was guilty.

From the point of view of Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel Dorsky, there is no doubt that, whatever Dorothy's emotional motivations, she was an invaluable witness. "Her testimony was critical. Without her there was no case. She provided the critical evidence against both Russo and Hickey."⁶³ Although Dorsky believes that there is no role for women in the U.S. Cosa Nostra, he does not approach his female witness with any diffidence, and—in spite of the general perception of mafia women as people of below-average intelligence and above-average materialism—he had no qualms about putting her on the stand:

I was not surprised that a woman would have knowledge of such things. Gender didn't play into it. As with any co-operating witness there is a credibility problem, so you look for corroboration. She had plenty of corroboration. We had no doubt that she was telling us the truth: she had videos, letters, plenty of stuff that corroborated the FBI's evidence.

Dorsky does not believe there was any criminal intent in Dorothy Fiorenza's work for the Colombo family. "She was a law-abiding citizen who got caught up with the wrong people. She was a mistress infatuated with a powerful mobster who wanted to help him and got more and more involved." Besides exonerating Fiorenza, Dorsky does not expect Teresa Castranova, who had aided and abetted an attempt at jury tampering, to be brought to trial: "Teresa Castranova was the girlfriend of a powerful mobster who did her best to help him."

Although Dorsky says there is no problem with credibility for a female witness, an extraordinary incident took place at the close of Dorothy Fiorenza's testimony that humiliated and undermined her. She had just recounted the terrible threat of violence that Russo made to her and, with Russo sitting yards away, she broke down in tears. The judge barked, "Stop that whining, it's irritating." Observers in the courtroom were scandalized by the judge's behavior toward a valuable witness who had jeopardized her safety and was reliving moments of real fear.

Dorothy Fiorenza's story was reported in the tabloid *New York Daily News*, in particular by its organized crime correspondent Jerry Capeci. The romantic tale of a lawyer caught up with a millionaire boss who then deserts him for a junior associate caught the paper's eye, while it was broadly ignored by the rest of the press. Not surprisingly for anyone who has followed coverage of mafia women in the Italian (or British, or any other) press, reporters feel obliged to glamorize the characters they are describing, whatever the reality before them. Dorothy Fiorenza is described in the *New York Daily News* as "willowy" (i.e., tall and slim), "raven-haired" (a description originally used of princesses in fairy tales), and "leggy" (more often used of actresses and models, in any case rather inappropriate for a lawyer).

The prosecutor was quoted as saying, "This trial is going to begin to sound like a soap opera."⁶⁴ With this comment he preempted the public's and the press's attitude to the mob, which tends to make fun of organized crime figures and reduce them to gangster-movie clichés. This, Dorsky explained, has the effect of reducing the perceived threat from Cosa Nostra, with extremely dangerous consequences.⁶⁵ As though to demonstrate his point, the *Daily News* report of Russo and Hickey's convictions for jury tampering contained this breathless sentence: "In a dramatic turn, Fiorenza said she dyed her long blond hair dark as a safety measure after deciding to testify against Russo."⁶⁶ On a day when two senior members of the Colombo family were found guilty of a federal crime, the "dramatic turn" is said to be the color of the principal witness's hair.

Crime reporter Jerry Capeci added a coda to Fiorenza's story that belittled her contribution to the mafia prosecution and ridiculed her person. Fiorenza, after testifying in the Russo case, went into the witness protection program, but being a fairly ambitious type, she wanted to be able to continue practicing law. Under the headline, "Mob Moll: I Want My Shingle Back," Capeci wrote in his Gang Land column,

Two years ago, Dorothy Fiorenza, a willowy, raven-haired lawyer, dropped a Gang Land bombshell and testified how she lost her heart to former Colombo boss Andrew Russo.

Now she claims she lost her mind as well.

Fiorenza, who entered the federal witness protection program after her testimony helped send former lover Russo to the slammer for five years, is trying to overturn her conviction and regain her license to practice law.

The reason? She was slightly nuts when she pleaded guilty to witness tampering.

The column recounts how she fell for Larry Fiorenza because she felt sorry for him: “He was like a lost soul. I felt maybe I could help him.” However, after taking the major step of collaborating with investigators and going into the witness program, the couple separated. Her lawyer is now contending that she suffers from bipolar disorder and a series of other mental illnesses including obsessive compulsive disorder, which he claims would have invalidated her guilty plea. He also mentions “mood disorder,” which caused her to engage in “hypersexual activity” in her late teens. She subsequently developed an obsession with celebrity, which is said to account for her attraction to the mafia figures she encountered and her eagerness to get close to them. Although in presenting her plea her lawyer and psychiatrist claim that all her problems are behind her, the appeal—offering, as it does, various “women’s problems” as the cause of her actions—effectively demolishes her as an important witness in the fight against organized crime.

Although a great deal less tacky than most other Web sites covering the mafia, *Capeci’s Gang Land* still describes women in hackneyed clichés, dwelling on their looks and their romantic or sexual relationships with gangsters. He has dedicated a page to women titled “The women who love them” in which he describes women as “part of the gangland landscape” and acknowledges that there is little “serious talk” about women playing key roles in the American mafia. While itemizing women’s involvement with the mob, *Capeci* refers to “merry widows,” “leggy lovelies” and even the “torrid affairs” women have with gangsters.

Press coverage of the mafia in the United States is characterized by a degree of mockery. Mafiosi are always cited by their nicknames in quote marks, which often sound ridiculous—e.g., Vinnie “The Chin” Gigante, Joe “Bananas” Bonanno, and so on. Although this has the effect of reducing significant criminals to clownish figures, the use of nicknames also has a more serious side. As the FBI agent Joe Pistone testified after successfully infiltrating the New York mafia for six years, the nicknames are used as an effective disguise:

There were people I worked with closely for 6 years who never told me their last names, only their nicknames. If you did inquire, you were viewed with great suspicion, since it could only mean you were a cop or an informant.⁶⁷

In general, press coverage shows women in a very dim light, with much emphasis on their looks and often salacious excitement at the fact that they might be armed and even use a gun. One woman who received a great deal of positive press coverage on the basis of her wit and good looks, specifically her resemblance to American singer Bonnie Raitt, but chiefly her enthusiasm for a life of crime, was Brenda Colletti. Colletti, who moved to Philadelphia from a small town in rural Massachusetts in her 20s and worked as a stripper, made the front pages of the

Philadelphia Inquirer for several days during her court appearances as a witness in the Stanfa trial of 1995 to 1996.

Colletti experienced the mafia as though she were playing a bit part in a film. Her husband, Philip, was a small-time hit man on the fringes of the South Philadelphia mob. It seems she was not only more ambitious, but also more intelligent than he was, and according to her account, she pushed him to achieve notoriety within the organization while trying to make a mark herself. (She mentions her first husband disparagingly: “He wasn’t in the mob, he was just a dork. He was in the navy.”) She is the only woman I have come across connected to organized crime who freely admitted that she found it exciting and was anxious to get more involved in the local mafia’s activities.

She worked as a go-go dancer in a Philadelphia brothel owned by a family of six brothers with mob connections, and since she was good with figures, they let Brenda help count the takings:

In that kind of world, for a woman to be allowed to do anything was a big deal. I think that’s when I first started getting my thrills being around people that I knew were connected. That’s when I thought “I want to climb higher and higher—I want to be in the mob,” because women aren’t in the mob.

After she married Philip Colletti, he started working for mobster Raymond Esposito, one of Sicilian capo John Stanfa’s soldiers:

Raymond used to drop by or we would go to his house. I didn’t like him at first—he had watched too many *Godfather* movies. He is one of those guys who does all that stuff—kisses on both cheeks and all that. I didn’t do that for nobody, except for the Old Man, John Stanfa. That was different because he was the boss. You had to treat him with respect.

The Collettis’ kitchen table became the meeting place for a small group of aspiring mobsters. Philip bought Brenda a gun and took her to practice shooting at a Philadelphia gun club. A pipe bomb was assembled in the kitchen containing four pounds of explosive and kept in the house. Brenda later told the court that she consented to the bomb being kept hidden in their bedroom closet as long as her husband assured her it could not be detonated accidentally.⁶⁸ There were guns hidden about the house, out of reach of their son Paulie, then four years old, as well as a machine gun with silencer. The basement was used as a firing range. “We were just bad people.” She continued, “Everyone would be round at our house, talking about hunting and plotting murders.” They enjoyed the fragile companionship, knowing that, if the order was given, they would be hunting each other. Like most members of organized crime syndicates in the United States, they learned how to behave, what to say, what to do, from mafia movies. “There’s a saying,” Brenda recalls, “it’s from a *Godfather* movie but everyone always said it—‘Keep your friends close but your enemies closer.’”

She described an encounter with the capo—a Brando-type figure in her imagination—although her admiration of him as the boss is tempered by her prejudice against what she considers Sicilian macho behavior:

He didn't say anything to me because I was a wife. A woman. Women are low class... they're like... they're the next thing to your pet dog. Go make me some macaronis, woman. They're real dagos. You don't talk to your wife about stuff, women aren't ever supposed to get involved. Ever. Which is why I'm different, I think. When we were all out together it was like "Hey, how'ya doin'?" and then all the men went out to talk. And the women got to stay behind—and they were bimbos! They were only interested in talking about their beauty salons, talking about their nails... you should have seen the make-up. I just didn't fit in... Afterwards I used to ask my husband "What did you talk about?" I told him I'd love to get involved. He'd say "You can't, you're a girl." I said "I'd love to, it'd be a thrill." I really wanted it. I've just never been a regular girl. Never interested in getting my hair all fancy, never interested in clothes. I always usually hung out with guys.

Brenda described another mafia wife who was as unconventional as she, another woman who defied the stereotype of the Italian-American wife who loves to take care of her family. The woman was an alcoholic who refused to cook or to clean the house. Recognizing another rebel, Brenda warmed to this woman alone among the manicured and coiffured wives. Another live-in girlfriend she described as a junkie who managed to get clean but abused her daughter verbally. These are low-life types; violence, drink, and drugs feature heavily in their lives.

Brenda had no doubt that the wives of mafiosi are all complicit in the criminal life:

They all pretend. I think all the wives do know. They get up there on the witness stand and say "I didn't know my husband did this or that..." It's nonsense, they all know. But as far as doing something to help the mob, like even sitting down and having a conversation with the boss of Philadelphia, women don't get that honor.

The word "honor" spoken by an American doesn't have the same resonance it might to Italian ears, but she used the word advisedly, meaning privilege, acceptance in that exclusive milieu. Brenda is an unusual woman: she's intelligent, but her tenth-grade education and her poor and not very happy upbringing with adopted parents in a small rural town did not equip her with the sophistication to see through the images of the mafia she had seen in films. Raised on cowboy and mafia films, Brenda had no sense of who the good guys are:

Philip really wanted to get made [a member of La Cosa Nostra]. And I wanted it for him. There's just that power trip, you get a lot of respect... it's really hard to explain but it's no different from someone from the DEA going under cover. They go out on a job and they know that someone could shoot them at any second. It really is that thrill—just from a different side. As far as that thrill goes... when a cop, or a Fed, is breaking down that door going after somebody, it's a rush.

During one of the most violent mafia turf wars in recent American history, in South Philadelphia during the early 1990s, Brenda and Philip took many safety precautions—they never traveled in the same car, always searched for bombs under the car, and always checked to see whether they were being followed. Instead of making life unpleasant, however, she remembered it as being exciting:

It was scary, but it's still a thrill. I don't know why. You know you could get shot, but you think—I think we all watched too many Clint Eastwood movies—you think to yourself, “Yeah, I'm going to draw my gun first and I'll kill ten guys and it'll be one against ten and I'll win. . . . It's kill or be killed.”

This is all very macho talk. Brenda's low point came not when she was most in danger, but later, when she was alone and friendless, when all this posturing counted for nothing. That was when she felt the need to talk to journalists like myself. In my interviews with Brenda, she often expressed exasperation at her husband's and his associates' stupidity and lack of practical sense. In her ambition to become more involved with mafia activity, she promoted herself to an equal member of the crew. She fully included herself when talking about her husband's criminal activities: “It's not like we're going out and shooting innocent people,” and again, “These people are doing illegal things and they can't go to the cops for protection so they come to us.”

When Philip was given the order to kill the capo John Stanfa's main rival, Michael Ciancaglini, Brenda was not only aware that this was going on, she was glad for the opportunity of advancement the task offered her husband. On 5 August 1993, Philip and his associate “John John” Veasey shot Ciancaglini dead in a South Philadelphia street and left his associate, Joey Merlino, wounded. Brenda was at home when she got a call from her husband telling her to “clean the house” and drive over to his parent's house as fast as she could. She did as she was told, hid all the firearms in the woodpile at the end of the garden, and drove across town. When she got there, she helped her husband to dispose of the getaway car. Veasey set fire to the car with gasoline and burned his hand badly. They couldn't take him to hospital in case someone linked his injury to the burning car, so Brenda administered ice packs in Philips' parents' back yard.

Two days later, after the trio had rehearsed their alibis, Brenda reported the car stolen, and the police took her in for questioning. She clearly felt responsible for these two men, who she admitted are not very bright and don't often “think straight.” As far as she was concerned, she was the only one likely to keep the story straight under police questioning. “It was a thrill. They had a good cop and a bad cop, just like on TV. All the psychology head trip. I loved every second,” she recalled. After four hours of grilling they released her without charge:

When I came out I saw Philip. He was nervous in case I had told them something. I just told him “Nah, I handled it.”

After that, people talked to me totally different. They didn't treat me like just a wife any more. It was like, “Damn! she's cool!” you know: “She's all right for a girl.” People trusted me more. It was so weird, I felt like I had a sex change or something. When we went out to dinner, I was introduced to people. There was like . . . these big union reps, they're powerful people. And I'm getting introduced to them, and all the other wives are just stuck at the table talking about their fingernails. I'm meeting all these connected people. It was really cool.

After the murder, life changed for the Colletti family. The old Italian men in the restaurants and clubhouses of South Philly would stuff ten, twenty, hundred dollar

bills in their little boy's fist. They never paid for a meal in a restaurant. "We only went to gangster places—gangster-owned. Every place we went there was someone that was connected. We would never go anywhere normal." The sense of exclusivity, of getting one better than the average man or woman in the street, gave Brenda a thrill. But it's a comic-book thrill, straight out of made-for-TV movies. She had no moral handle on what they were doing or what she was complicit in.

The crew was ordered to eliminate Ciancaglioni's second-in-command, and it was at this point, she claimed, that Brenda was nominated as killer. One of her husband's associates suggested she should seduce Merlino and, when he was distracted, poison his drink. A syringe of cyanide was procured and concealed in a block of wood out on the back patio. The plan sounded like something out of a third-rate gangster film, but it fired Brenda's ambition:

If I had got him, as far as the family would have seen it, I'd be like . . . hey—I'd be an untouchable woman. Then I'd have said now you've gotta hire me, I'd be one of those contract killers.

If Brenda imagined herself as emancipated by the act of murder, her husband's reaction was more traditional, and he ruled out her involvement. She was still needed as an alibi, however. Shortly afterward, Philip was arrested for possession of firearms. Raymond Esposito summoned Brenda Colletti and asked her if she would tell police the gun was hers. She had no criminal record, and as a woman, was unlikely to get more than a caution. She agreed to do it, and was presented to the capo:

John Stanfa's son had been shot in the face, so we went to find him at the hospital. He called me aside and we went to a corner in the hallway and we were just talking about it and I told him what I was considering doing, and he just thought it was the greatest, and he patted me on the cheek and told me I was a smart girl. I left the hospital, I was just on cloud nine. That's the first time I ever got to have a meeting with the Old Man. And that was it for me. Cause I've never known a woman that was able to have a private meeting with the boss.

Brenda's moment of triumph didn't last. Philip's bail was paid by Stanfa, but he didn't get made a member of Cosa Nostra. In recent years, the U.S. Cosa Nostra has moved toward a meritocracy: new members are selected on the strength of their ability to bring in money and their willingness to kill. Philip Colletti, son of Sicilian immigrants, was anxious to establish his identity by being accepted as part of the organized crime family, but he was not made a member. He grew fearful. He and Brenda each slept with a gun under the mattress on their side of the bed. One striking thing about her is her apparent lack of anxiety on behalf of her young son, just four years old when they were using the basement of the house to practice shooting:

I was a little nervous about the guns. Our son Paulie was four by then. He knew what a gun was. They were always around, everybody always had guns around the house. We basically tried to keep them out of his reach, we had shelves on top of the cabinets, or they were in the basement where we had a lock on top of the door . . . The only time they were within his

reach was when we went to bed. We kept them under the mattress, so all you had to do was reach under and grab it. It's at night when they come for you so we figured we'd be ready.

Over the winter of 1993, FBI agents encouraged the couple to collaborate. The agents were persistent, recognizing in Philip Colletti the kind of opportunistic criminal who would not stand on principle. Second- and third-generation Italians in the U.S. mafia have started using their money and influence to send their children to college and set them up in legitimate business, forcing La Cosa Nostra to recruit new members outside the traditional families. There are many young men like Philip Colletti who are fascinated by La Cosa Nostra and study how to become a part of the organization, but they are not prepared to sit in jail for years in the service of a criminal tradition, an ideal of honor, that has no real significance for them.

After the murder of Michael Ciancaglini, Philip was arrested three times; each time he was released after a week. With a number of charges from possessing firearms to murder hanging over them, in February 1994 Brenda and her husband agreed to turn state's evidence. They had discussed the move at great length and tested each others' loyalty: "He wanted to know that I would still love him if he became a rat, because a lot of wives leave their husbands." Philip went to jail, and Brenda, the streetwise mafia moll, went into the witness protection program. Both were called to testify in the trial of John Stanfa's Philadelphia crime syndicate in 1995. Brenda had been given an alias for her safety and was living in a small town in Arkansas. But the city girl in her trouser suits and high-heeled shoes, the tomboy who wanted to be a mafia killer, decided that country life was not for her. When I met Brenda Colletti in spring 1996, she had lost everything. Now aged 30, she was homeless and living in fear for her life, while her son was living with her in-laws in Florida. She had left the witness protection program, but as she was still useful as a witness, the FBI had continued to offer her accommodation. However, after she was charged with shoplifting, she was locked out of the FBI apartment. Her handlers, who had found her difficult to deal with, washed their hands of her. At this point, living out of her car, she was full of self-pity, but not remorse. She was also concerned about her son's welfare and safety:

I don't have the money to go and see him. I don't want him around with the trial coming up [in which she was testifying], for his own safety. He's safe where he is. I don't want him near me, I don't want him to get shot."

The testimony of Brenda Colletti and her husband helped to convict John Stanfa and 16 members of the South Philadelphia mafia in November 1995. But again, uniquely among the women I have interviewed connected to organized crime, she claimed she had no interest in dismantling the local mafia: she freely admitted that her motive was to get Philip out of prison:

Everybody in South Philly knows about the mob and everybody knows who everybody is. And it's accepted. It's what makes it South Philly. If there was no mob, no gangsters in South Philly, it would be just another slum. In all honesty, I don't believe there's anything wrong with the mob. The only thing that makes it bad is that people get killed.

This attitude made Brenda an unusually willing subject for the media: she has been interviewed by journalist George Anastasia of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, who also followed the Stanfa trial. Coverage of the trial was occasionally mocking, describing the Philadelphia mob as “Dumbfellas” and exaggerating their failings and blunders. Brenda Colletti was described as a “Mafia moll” presiding over a domestic mafia scene: “Somewhere between the coffee and the scrambled eggs, the talk would turn to murder.”⁶⁹

“In three hours’ testimony in US District Court, the auburn-haired former go-go dancer came across as a Mafia moll with an attitude,”⁷⁰ wrote Anastasia, managing to include details of her appearance, her former salacious occupation, and her strong character. Elsewhere, she was described as “clear and concise as her husband was muddled,” again emphasizing her dominance in the relationship. In one important statement, Brenda refuted the usual protests of mafia wives, that they ask no questions and know nothing of their husbands’ occupation. “They’re either liars or stupid. Some things you can’t miss. When your husband and his friends go out all hours of the day and night packing guns, what do you think is going on?” Brenda also told journalists that her husband had a clear notion of honor, that he was unwilling to turn state’s evidence: “He believed in that honor-and-loyalty thing.”

Throughout the trial, evidence emerged of tensions between the Sicilian faction and the Italian-American mafiosi:

In conversations picked up by electronic listening devices, Stanfa complained repeatedly about the younger faction’s lack of honor and respect, referring to them in Sicilian as “cuckolds” and complaining that the “little Americans. . . can’t even shine our shoes.”

“In our neck of the woods,” he said in one conversation, “we say, first comes honor and respect. Without these requisites you’re not a man.”⁷¹

Brenda observed that her husband adhered to these precepts, even though to an outsider his behavior comes across as posturing. She, on the other hand, was caught up in the excitement of crime and was much more concerned with breaking through the cultural barriers to her involvement.

During the trial, “John John” Veasey, Philip Colletti’s associate, broke off from his description of his use of a power drill to torture a man who had threatened him and of his tattoo of a gun and two bullets, symbolizing two murders he had committed, to make a great show of paying respect to his mother: “‘Everybody’s got a good side and a bad side,’ he said. Veasey brought both to court. When he referred to his late mother, he paused and made the sign of the cross.”⁷² The reporter, George Anastasia, noted dryly that Veasey was deliberately displaying a “good side” with reference to his mother. In the same report, Anastasia also noted the contrast between Veasey’s claim to be a protector of children and his violence against women: “Veasey said he refused to murder a Stanfa rival’s young son because he had children of his own. But he admitted that he had been arrested several times for assaulting his common-law wife.”

In common with other women in her position, Brenda’s emotional life was often in turmoil. Violence featured in both her marriages: she described her first husband

as using her “like a punchbag.” Philip was her second husband, and although when I interviewed her she said they were very close, they have since split up. Again, in common with other women who have been involved with gangsters, she was said to be having a relationship with a member of the police. She described her attraction to Philip: “There was always that side of him that was always really mysterious, because he’s a hard case. You can look in his eyes and see there’s that danger there.” Brenda knew from the start of their relationship that Philip had a minor connection to the local mafia, and she was not deterred. In fact she romanticized his character:

He always did things for people, even though there was that hard edge to him. If someone broke down he would always be the first to stop and help; we would help the old ladies shovel snow. . . . Philip did plumbing jobs for people and never asked for money. But there was always that little glint of danger in his eye. I guess some women like bad boys, you know.

Philip’s “bad” side was expressed in violence toward his wife, and later, when he was in prison and she had a brief affair, he left a phone message for the other man, threatening to kill him and Brenda (to spare Brenda no humiliation, this tape was played in court during the Stanfa trial). In Brenda’s mind, along with the mafia movies and the Clint Eastwood films, there was the wholesome American suburban ideal:

We had two lives. We had that mafia excitement. Then we had that other life that was so American and normal it was sickening. We had the barbeque, we had the dog in the back yard, we had a fence, the kid running around. . . . he worked and I worked, we would take a trip on Saturday, go to the zoo, we worked in the garden, I used to mow, he used to whack the weeds.

This image has more to do with Brenda’s childhood unhappiness, between foster homes and absent parents, than with anything else. It’s unlikely that it corresponds to her and Philip’s life in suburban Pennsylvania.

Brenda Colletti, in her ambition to be a mobster, described herself as a tomboy who had never seen the inside of a beauty parlor. Her acute thrill at being involved in covering up mafia crimes was largely to do with crossing the line between female and male worlds, from the life of the call girl to that of the hit man. As far as Brenda’s husband was concerned, however, he committed the crimes and she took the blame; that was the division of labor in the Colletti household.

Some historians have described the mafia as a highly structured, quasi-military organization in which there could be no room for women.⁷³ As the organization’s business has widened, however, it has collected a flotsam of workers, lookouts, and go-betweens, people who will hide guns or drugs or men on the run. Far from being a security risk, a woman like Brenda Colletti, who could pass as an ordinary suburban mother, is indispensable for providing alibis and transport and for hiding weapons. During her cross-examination as a state witness in the trial of John Stanfa and seven associates, Brenda Colletti talked freely about her willingness to cover up for her man and his associates: “If the point you’re trying to make is, did I cover

for him? Yes, and I did. I mean . . . I was covering for Philip, I was covering for John-John . . . I was covering for everyone . . . in this job.”⁷⁴

Another woman who was used by mafia criminals to cover their crimes was April DiCaprio, also from South Philadelphia, who married a mafioso, apparently out of fear. With none of Brenda’s bravado, April recounted threats and the fear of violence against herself, her parents, and her two children. Her connection with the South Philadelphia mafia began with the end of her first marriage:

A casino had opened up and me and four other girls went out to this place in South Street. It was June 15, 1982. This guy kept sending drinks over all night, and us girls we were just hanging out, we didn’t want to bother with the guys. I was just separated from my husband, I was having fun with the girls. At the end of the night I went over and thanked him for buying the drinks and everything. He got my phone number—I wouldn’t give it to him, but he found it—and he kept on calling my parents’ house until I had to talk to him. So we went out. . . . We went down the shore to the casino, for dinner, that was it. I was just separated, I had babies, I wasn’t looking for a boyfriend. That was the last thing I wanted.

But Ron “Cuddles” DiCaprio was not to be dissuaded, and April couldn’t resist the attention. She had been through college and taken an accounting course, and her admirer swept her from her upstanding Catholic family into the mob haunts of the Philadelphia criminal environment:

We started going out, down the shore, we would go out with a bunch of his friends, to the casino. One time we were asked to leave the casino—I was so embarrassed. We were undesirables. Because I came from such a proper background, it was so different. I thought he was a bookie, a bartender, no big deal. He taught me how to do the game [the numbers racket, an illegal mafia-run betting system] so I became a bookie. I thoroughly enjoyed it. Those accounting skills, I put them to good use! I kept great books! It was fun. I really enjoyed that part of it.

April had no respect for the mafia men she came across. She certainly didn’t rate their intelligence very highly:

They know what they’re getting into before they get into it. But they’re so dumb they don’t see it. And it’s true, they all say the same thing. It’ll never happen to me. But it does. Because who are they killing? They’re killing their best friends. And who kills you? Your best friend, understand? They were the most disorganized group of guys I ever saw. I always told them, you guys need a secretary to organize things. For grown men, they didn’t have an act, at all. They used their own cars for a getaway. . . . I don’t think any of them ever had a high school education. I don’t think they got past grade school. They were street smart. They spent more time conniving and doing schemes. . . . they could’ve probably have gone to college if they had put their energy into the right channels. I think Ron was attracted to me because I was everything he wasn’t. Came from a good family, had a good education, raised as a proper Italian Catholic girl.

April remembers life among the Philadelphia gangsters: social life revolved around the mob; every gathering was an excuse for the men to get together:

A lot of the guys had girlfriends. . . . There were two sets of friends: the husbands with the girlfriends, and the husbands with the wives. I saw both. The wives knew their husbands

all had girlfriends, but I don't think they cared. They got the money to spend and their one night out a week. They didn't care what the guys did the rest of the time. The girlfriends had the best part. They're the ones wined and dined and given presents and taken care of a lot, they don't have to wash their clothes or pick up after them or make their beds. The wives did. Weddings were a wife thing. They were mostly all men, and they were always like, a Sunday after the football game, or a Friday night before the football game started, those were the nights of the weddings. They were real big affairs. At one wedding, I happened to walk into the back room, and I walked into the middle of the initiation ceremony. They were making a man a member. They burn a piece of paper, a tissue in his hand, and they draw blood, they do the whole spiel. There they were in a circle and I could see like a fire in the middle. I made a real fast exit.

April's recollection of walking in on an initiation ceremony during a wedding has a ring of filmic fantasy about it. She would certainly have known the details of what goes on in these ceremonies. Being a gangster's girlfriend was hard work: she had to shine in order to boost his reputation:

We were always dressed up. Always. Every day. It was like a job. It was fun at the start, but you kind of get tired of it. He would take me to the store and I would try everything on and he would buy it for me.

At weddings the competition between the wives to outshine each other was fierce. But April did not find the women hostile. "At that level, I knew them as people, not as murderers and killers: they were nice guys, and the girls were fun."

Seven months later, DiCaprio and his associate, Joe Rico, were ambitious to commit a murder so they could become made members. April, still living at her parents' house, was drawn in for logistical support, probably because she was smarter than the other two and because she had a remarkable ability to stay calm and unshocked:

Joe Rico had given me a shoe box and a map. Of course, being a female, I'm shaking it, weighing it . . . and then I realized, this is a gun in this box. I didn't open it, it was tied, or taped. But I could tell. I looked at the map, and it didn't mean anything to me. So I put it away, and then one night, it was the third week of January, the guys were talking, and everyone's saying Joe's got a problem. Ron took a phone call at my house, then him and Joe went out. When they came back, they asked me for the box and the map. Now I know what's in the box. They asked me for a pair of gloves. And they had changed their clothes: they had old clothes on, which I had never seen. They were usually dressed in good clothes. So they took the box, said they were going to take care of a problem. I thought take care of it meant going out and scaring the guy.

Later that night, Ron returned, excited after having committed a murder:

He gave me this bag of money and said, "Count the money and make sure there's no blood on it," so I counted the money and there was like seven thousand dollars, and he says, "OK go hide it in the back of the basement." Then he tells me to wash the clothes, so I put them in the machine.

April was given a vivid account of the murder. She was spared no detail of how the victim was shot but not killed; then he was stabbed and, still not dead, tied up and

left in the trunk of his car to die. She claims this was the first time she knew that Ron DiCaprio was a mafia killer. “Being a bookie, I was working for them—that was one of their operations. But I had no idea he was a murderer. . . . I had no idea. Until that night. No idea.”

The morning after the murder, Ron turned up on April’s doorstep and presented her with a small jeweler’s box. It was an engagement ring:

He said “When are we going to get married?” And I said “But I’m still married. I have to get a divorce first.” The guy was in a real hurry to get married. But I didn’t want to marry him. A lot of things had gone on between all this. I had broken up with him and tried to get away from him. He said that if I didn’t go back out with him I’d never see my father again, he threatened to kill the kids. He went to my friends and told them to stay away from me. . . . The reason he was so keen for the wedding to happen as soon as possible was because a wife at that time could not testify against her husband.

April had no choice but to go along with this planned marriage. She was clearly terrorized by Ron, who had already impressed on her that she would not be allowed to leave him without serious repercussions for her family. She was soon drawn even further into the criminal circle when Ron was ordered to kill his best friend Pat Spirito:

When Ron got the order that this was gonna happen, we were told to be closer with him, so he wouldn’t suspect anything. That’s the way they do it. And so we had to start hanging out with him, it went on for about three weeks. I was trying hard to figure a way out. The whole time I was looking at this guy and thinking You’re gonna be dead. I had told my friend, who worked at the bar we went to, that it was going to happen. I asked her what to do. She said, “Don’t tell anybody.” I thought that between the two of us we could come up with something.

April had no way of preventing this murder. If she had told the intended victim, her betrayal would have been revealed:

I would’ve ended up dead, and they would have killed him anyway. I would’ve been making an accusation. I felt bad. It was really bad. I tried to justify it to myself, saying he’s killed people, he knows what he was getting into . . . but it was still bad.

Ron seemed to need to unburden himself to April, who was subsequently trapped by possessing all this information. “I just kept quiet and listened. What, you going to ask questions? Not me. You’d get a beating. They were really weird that way. The less you said the more they told you.” April was aware of how dangerous this information was, but since Ron was determined to confide in her, there was nothing she could do. It seems to have built a bond of trust/threat between them. The next time Ron was ordered to commit a murder, he again told her every detail of the crime. Afterward, they went to a bar in New Jersey where they greeted enough people to constitute an alibi. Then they went out for dinner; April remembers Ron talked about the murder throughout the evening.

DiCaprio did not disguise his haste to get April, who was then 22, to the altar. By this stage April’s will seems to have deserted her. She had no way of getting out of the wedding. The reception was the kind of lavish affair that lights up the

Philadelphia mafia's weekend. The guests, mostly men, were all invited by Ron. All April had to do was show up in a white gown chosen and bought by her husband:

There were 350 guests. The only pictures we had were the ones the FBI took outside. No cameras allowed. It was like a scene out of the movie, you know. A couple of guys would come in and whole tables would stand up. I'm standing there with my nextdoor neighbor. And he's saying to me "Jesus Christ, April, do you know who they are?" and I said, "Yeah." He says: "What have you done?" . . . My parents didn't know what was going on. I never let them know. He had this hold on me, he knew I would never let anything happen to them. That's how he controlled me. At this time you've got to understand the mob ruled the city. They ruled.

On their wedding night, they went out for dinner. That night, April DiCaprio got food poisoning so badly that she had to stay at her parents' house for several weeks to recover. She acknowledges that it might have been a coincidence, but she believes that her husband, having made sure that she could not testify against him, was trying to poison her, to silence her for good. Again she tried to get away from him:

He wouldn't give me a divorce. He kept coming around threatening me. He caught me where I was working, tore the office apart. He followed me. So I went to the police, tried to get a bond so he couldn't follow me. Then the FBI found out about that real fast, and sent an agent round saying "Is there anything I can do?" They wanted me to give them information about DiCaprio. I said "No thank you." . . . It was pretty violent, he grabbed me on the street, used to beat me real bad, grab me when I was with the kids, I used to tell the kids Go home. He'd come to my house . . . come to where I was working, tell the people to leave the restaurant. I'm telling you it was like a movie. Joe Rico came in one night with a leather coat over his shoulders, two guys behind him, said, "Everybody out, now." Joe was telling me that I had to go back to Cuddles. That's what they called him. . . . They would call. . . . I'd be leaving for work, and they would pick me up right outside my house. I'd get in the car, they would lock the car doors, and drive me around for hours.

DiCaprio realized that the FBI was plotting to turn his wife into a state witness, and allegedly tried to kill her. He hired a hit man. The FBI found out about the plot and told April what had happened. They continued to try to persuade her to become a witness. Eventually she agreed to testify against DiCaprio. "It wasn't something I wanted to do. It was something I had to do. They had 22 murders by this time between them. It was ridiculous. 22 guys were dead. And it just wasn't stopping." After she agreed to testify she refused to enter the witness protection plan. She was abused in the street, sworn at and spat at. Most of her former friends from the criminal underworld deserted her. "These were connected people I had known all my life." She felt trapped on all sides because she knew too much: "I should never have known what I knew. Two men want to talk about a crime, they're not supposed to tell anybody else. It's their fault." She was targeted by the mafia on one side and the FBI on the other. Although she was in considerable danger, instead of entering the witness protection program, she attempted to play the mob at their own game. "I never went home the same way twice. I knew all the tricks,

Because Ron had told me. I learned their way of doing things, so I knew what they were looking out for. I was trained.”

Eventually, after many arguments with the FBI and many threats to herself, April agreed to go into the witness protection program. She put this period of suspended animation, waiting for trials to come up at which she was to testify, to good use, continuing her education and consulting a priest, trying to make sense of it all. The tough city girl from Pennsylvania made friends in Houston, Texas. She thought the local girls were sweet. They thought that she was in a motorcycle gang. She eventually testified against DiCaprio in court:

I testified against DiCaprio first. I asked my family not to be there because I'd be so worried about them and how they were feeling that I wouldn't be able to concentrate on what I was doing. And I went to the courtroom and there was his mum and his mother's friends, and I was thinking Scum, how could you do that? How could you do this in front of your mother? . . . The first day you go in there is real uncomfortable, because you know that eventually you're going to have to lock eyes, you're going to have to have contact. So you're a little bit afraid, and then you know, it's nothing to do with me. Why should I be afraid? He's the one that did the murders, not me. I'm the one who's telling the truth. I looked directly at him. Testified right at him. He did it for a little while then he backed down because what I was saying was so clear, I was going right at him. I wasn't talking to anybody else but him.

After her relationship with Ron DiCaprio ended so damagingly, like many women who have been involved with mobsters, April ended up dating a law enforcement agent. When the protection they receive from their mafia men turns against them, as it so often does, they apparently seek another kind of protector. April met Jerry Waltomate when she was flown from Texas to New Jersey to testify, and he was her bodyguard. She was extremely nervous about getting up in court and unable to eat. In the evening, she had a few drinks and ended up drunk and incapable at the end of the day. He took care of her. April and Jerry got married and now live in a neat and tidy suburban house. “I left the program to be with Jerry. That's why I left. It's so different being with Jerry,” she said, “Jerry's so straight-laced . . . you can't get any straighter. Ron was really jealous. Jerry's very protective. He's very very very protective. We go for dinners with the other FBI couples. I just don't fit in.”

Although women who have emerged from mafia environments to give evidence throw themselves on the mercy of the state, they do not seem to find their place in civil society again. At the same time, they are rarely seen as a menace. Once they separated from their criminal men, the objects of their desire, the American judiciary seems to be convinced that women can be relied on to go straight.

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57. *Ibid.*, 760.
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59. *Ibid.*, 761, lines 9–16.
60. *Ibid.*, 799, lines 17–23.
61. *Ibid.*, 1107, lines 1–2.
62. *Ibid.*, 946, lines 3–15.
63. Interview with Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel Dorsky, 11 October 2001.
64. *New York Daily News*, 13 January 1999.
65. Interview with Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel Dorsky, 5 May 2001.
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70. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 24 October 1995.
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III Conclusion

16

The Reasoning behind this Research; an Evaluation of the Results

Teresa Principato

The core of this research project is the identification of the role of women inside mafia-type criminal organizations rooted in countries that have imported and maintained the Cosa Nostra organizational model or at any rate are characterized by similar associative structures: Japan, China, Croatia and the former Yugoslavia, Spain, Albania, Turkey, Germany, Brazil, Colombia, Spain, Russia, and the United States (some of these results are not reported in this book). As Fiandaca indicates in the Introduction, the need for this study originated from recent experiences in Italy that raised the awareness of the “feminine” role as an essential aspect for understanding the socio-criminal phenomenon of organized crime and therefore shifting the strategies for combating it. In fact, after decades of underestimation and dismissal, the importance of women’s roles in mafia-type organizations in Italy, Cosa Nostra in particular, has recently been reconsidered beyond the stereotypes that have always hidden its significance. The initial studies had a socio-anthropological character and were written in a journalistic or psychoanalytic style.

At the end of the 1990s, another type of approach, this time conducted by individuals in the criminal justice field, brought to light the effects of that underestimation in this field: in particular, two decades of impunity for mafia women due to the acceptance by Italian prosecutors of the sociological indicators promoted by the organization itself, which presented an image of women as being totally devoid of identity and self-determination, dominated by *uomo d’onore* (“man of honor”), and serving as an unaware instrument of the ends pursued by the organization.

This sociological or traditional set of beliefs distorted the evaluation of women’s illegal conduct; they were considered passive and merely instrumental to the organization, an attitude that led to serious omissions from the investigative and law enforcement point of view; in a word, this was a gift to the organization, which had intentionally contributed to actively creating and maintaining these false, stereotypical representations.

Recent analysis, supported by historical data such as sentences, ongoing trials, interceptions, information collected through the arrest of fugitives, and so on, clearly shows the falsity of those stereotypes, with the consequent confirmation of women’s central place in the mafia context, along with their decisional autonomy and, therefore, complete imputability as recognition of their identity as persons.

Mafia women have begun moving in a direction that sees them frequently, in the absence of the *uomini d'onore*, as protagonists and autonomous organizers of the organization's illegal businesses, as well as participants in management as decision-makers, beyond any complicit and conscious support that had previously characterized their position.

On the other hand, the instrumental function of women with respect to the organization's interests has been further substantiated by the fact that, during periods of difficulty for the organization due to the explosion of the *pentitismo* phenomenon (the trend for large numbers of mafiosi to turn state witnesses or *pentiti*), women have been the main actors in the organization's communications strategy; in this "submerged" period for Cosa Nostra, women have returned to the realm of invisibility, adhering to the needs of the organization. Study, research, and the possibility of effectively redefining the substance of women's roles have clearly also affected the judicial evaluation of their conduct.

We need only look at one most significant sentences issued before 1997, the sentence handed out by the *Tribunale dei Minorenni* (Juvenile Court) in Lecce on 18 April 1996. In convicting two juveniles belonging to the Sacra Corona Unita also for the crime of mafia-type association, this sentence expanded on the "problem of configuring the crime of mafia association when charged to women," and stated that although the sociological thesis of the incompatibility between women and the mafia may be valid in reference to Cosa Nostra, it is not in reference to the Sacra Corona Unita. On this point, the sentence observed that

Cosa Nostra tends not to admit women to its own inner circles, not so much because of archaic male chauvinistic concepts . . . but because it assigns them a precise role, irrelevant for the penal code (as well as law enforcement), but still crucial: the role of caretaker and communicator of the cultural codes at the basis of the organization, such as: the division of others into categories of friend-enemy; a certain sense of honor; the duty toward the *vendetta*, *omertà*, etc.

This statement summarizes the many charges against mafia women over the last two decades, which have seen numerous convictions and sentences of women for mafia-type association issued by Sicilian tribunals; one of the most recent, in the documents of this research project, was that of the Palermo Tribunal, 14 June 2001, in regard to Giuseppa Vitale, a thirty-year-old woman who was particularly distinguished by her remarkable resourcefulness and autonomy; sentenced for crimes of armed mafia association in complicity with her brothers, Vito and Leonardo, the court attributed to Vitale a decisively different role from the one that mafia women had performed in the past; she took part in the decisions her brother made in prison, personally contacted leading mafia personalities, such as Leoluca Bagarella, and was even accused by state witnesses, including Brusca; something like this had never been seen involving a woman.

Just as significant, even during this period of the "submergence" of Cosa Nostra, when women have returned to the usual condition of "invisibility" imposed by the organization, they have nevertheless continued to exercise a meaningful criminal role; this should help clear away any skepticism regarding their real and

continuous inclusion in Cosa Nostra even apart from periods of disruption within the organization, such as the due to the proliferation of state witness; one of the most recent examples of these roles involved the order for preventive custody issued 4 December 2002 by the investigating magistrate of the tribunal of Palermo for forty-four defendants from the Brancaccio mafia territory, the Pagliarelli mafia territory, the Carini family, the Polizzi Generosa family, and the Villagrazia family from Palermo, as well as the Bagheria family, for crimes of mafia association, numerous cases of extortion, some with bodily harm to businessmen and merchants, possession of considerable quantities of cocaine for the purpose of sale, and the trafficking of drugs, arms, and more.

Those affected by this restrictive provision, all of notable criminal influence, included two women: Giuseppa Maria Patricia Greco, wife of Giuseppe Guttadauro, undisputed boss of the Brancaccio family, was investigated for the crime of aggravated mafia-type association; Angela Morvillo, wife of the state witness Fedele Battaglia, was investigated for the crime of aggravated aiding and abetting for mafia purposes. Indisputable evidence was identified regarding the participation of Giuseppa Greco and her son Francesco in illegal activities in the territory managed by their blood relative; the numerous activities specifically indicated in the body of the order essentially involved “fixing” businesses, resolving issues involving mafia affiliates outside prison, and intervening with associates; all these were aimed at maintaining their relative’s role as territorial boss and were intended to help perpetuate the running of this important Cosa Nostra group, the responsibility of Guttadauro even during this detention. Morvillo, on the other hand, was charged with attempting to convince her husband, Fedele Battaglia, to renege on his promise to turn state witness, a goal effectively achieved, and for having informed her father-in-law, Giuseppe Battaglia, and other figures in the Brancaccio mafia organization of the state witness process through Salvatore Giordano. Though she had earlier joined her husband in a protected location, she had never severed her ties with other associates. She abandoned this location and told the attorney general’s office that her husband was crazy, even of inciting their children against their father, until the latter retracted all previous statements, arguing he had made them while incapacitated. During this period, she continued to receive money from the Brancaccio family.

Once again, through the events in the afore-mentioned trial, women have been confirmed as being among the most reactionary protectors of mafia “disvalues” and always useful in furthering the organization’s interests. One can only express regret over the fact that, perhaps because of the late arrival of research after years of tacit acceptance of—and implicit complicity in—“things just as they are,” judicial adaptation to reality has finally arrived. That reality is the rapidly growing role of mafia women (naturally with some of the expected exceptions) as faithful custodians and links in the chain of transmission of mafia disvalues, as well as, when needed for the organization, efficient and unscrupulous organizer of the “family’s” interests. This growth is also due to the impunity guaranteed mafia women for too many years simply for belonging to the female gender. At least until the 1990s, there were various reasons for the total complete underestimation

of female criminality. Principal among these are the following:

- The quantitative unimportance of female criminality, in part due to the existence of a significant number of undiscovered and/or unreported crimes that do not appear in the statistics.
- The fact that, in most cases, judges considered women's roles in criminal episodes as victims or at the most accomplices, based on the theoretical hypotheses and interpretive preconceptions that prejudiced the understanding and analysis of data.

We created a study and research group aimed also at a deeper examination and delineation of the role of women in criminal contexts generically defined in Italy as "extranational criminality"; some of these, however, such as the Albanian, Russian, Colombian, and Croatian arenas, are profoundly rooted in the Italian situation or are following clear courses of infiltration, leading to dangerous criminal alliances and greatly exacerbating the national security situation. In December 2000, the research project became reality in an agreement for a two-year program between the city administration of Palermo and the University of Palermo and was presented at the U.N. Conference in December of that year. Qualified researchers were identified for each of the countries who, through their activities or studies, had dealt with or had written on these themes. A working group characterized by multidisciplinary experience was assembled in Palermo: magistrates, sociologists, criminologists, historians, psychologists, university teachers, journalists, and priests; this composition reflects the complexity of the mafia phenomenon, one that must be analyzed through diverse scientific and methodological approaches.

This research deals with a twenty-year period and has expanded over the course of our meetings because of the need for greater knowledge of other criminal entities that are firmly established in Italy in addition to Cosa Nostra: the 'Ndrangheta, Camorra, and Sacra Corona Unita. Our study has thus been expanded to give the same theoretical attention to these organizations as well.

We felt it essential to aim for a deeper understanding of the associative structures rooted in those countries involved, irrespective of the different legal definitions attributed by the respective legal systems on the conduct of subjects who operate in those different territorial contexts. This was also to see whether an analogous definition of mafia-type organized crime exists in the different national contexts. The term "mafia," although it actually refers to a criminal association peculiar to Sicily, can be used to define a much more complex model of criminality than that of "simple" criminality; the term also identifies a genre that covers many different criminal forms: from Cosa Nostra to the 'Ndrangheta, the Camorra, the Japanese *Yakuza*, the Russian mafia, the Colombian cartels, and so on. In fact, mafia organizations are structured into hierarchal cells (clans) and protected by secrecy; they claim the control of a territory; they have cultural roots, rules, and specific "values" they use as reference points; they pursue profits through monopolistic positions in illegal markets as well as operations in legal markets, especially to cover their activities and launder money; and they achieve their position through recourse to violence as a specific though nonexclusive means.

Mafias therefore can be effectively typified as systems with specific authorities, regimes, and structures; each of these systems interacts with its environment, which consists in turn of other subsystems: political, judicial, economic, social, and so on; this interaction is necessary precisely because of the lack of autonomy in the systems themselves, which have no impermeable borders.

We posed our collaborators in this research the basic query of the definition and meaning attributed in each of the national contexts to mafia-type organized crime, taking care to understand in particular the historical roots or events that led to their formation and development; internal hierarchies; the separation between groups responsible for strategy and those who carry out orders; systems of recruitment; the division of roles among members; the networks of connivance and complicity they exploit, including those in the political, economic, and social spheres; the extent of the intimidation they exercise as well as the code of silence they impose or at any rate achieve because of this; their numerical strength; the types of illegal activities in which each organization has invested and still invests; their visibility/invisibility from the outside; the consensus or disapproval experienced by the organization itself in the territory; the perception by civil society of danger from the phenomenon; its diffusion and pervasiveness; the social classes involved in the phenomenon; their relationship with religious institutions; and so on. All this should be approached from a perspective that explores the role played by women inside the organization.

In this regard, the research was aimed at determining whether there has been any increase in the female presence in organized crime in the given countries, particularly over the last twenty years; what factors may have favored or hindered its emergence (economic, cultural, political, or social factors, judicial emergencies, etc.); in cases of an increase in associative crimes committed by women, whether this is an indicator of “emancipation” or further “subordination” to male power; what may be or may have been the effective influence of the female contribution in the survival of mafia-type criminal organizations; the magnitude of women’s involvement in crimes committed by these organizations; the attitude of the institutions toward female criminality; and the judicial response in relation to that with respect to men. In any system that aspires to model itself on a culture of legality, these issues must be faced, in part to avoid serious breaches in activities of resistance and opposition activities.

Furthermore, this research has been formulated to clear away the countless received opinions that have developed over time: on the hand, the traditional image of women as naturally and biologically far removed from violent acts and impulses, which has fed a gender prejudice that sees women as always innocent; on the other hand, the just as traditional image of women as always being guilty because they are the hidden instigators of the crimes committed by men. We need to observe and analyze the participation of women in mafia-type organized crime starting from an assumption of female individuality that contrasts with most widespread social representations and focuses more clearly on relationships, actions, and responsibilities. Our foreign collaborators were specifically asked to give precedence to the emergence of the female point of view and supply information in their reports

on the following points:

- Numerical size and importance over the defined time span of the participation of women in mafia-type associative crimes in the respective countries.
- Types of crimes of which women have been accused.
- Roles—including those that cannot immediately be portrayed as crimes—performed by women inside mafia-type criminal organizations.
- Information on the characteristics of the criminal associations present in the area, analyzed with possible definitions of their peculiarities.
- Basic descriptions of the political, social, and economic background of the country under discussion, with particular attention to the consequences of these factors in the definition of social roles (and professions) attributed to women both historically and, above all, during the period under study.
- Reference to the way in which the judicial system has handled and evaluated female participation in mafia-type organized crime, with emphasis on possible developments or changes in the situation.
- Reference to social institutions and educational agencies that have distinguished themselves in dealing with the phenomenon and the positions they have taken (the roles performed by churches, schools, and mass media are of particular interest).
- Cultural models (behaviour, communications codes, knowledge, and values) typical of the local mafias (e.g., significance of membership ceremonies, importance given to symbols, presence of specific communication codes, etc.).
- The mafia phenomenon's stage of development in the country under consideration (emergence, maximum expansion, or decline) and areas and sectors in which criminal activity is practiced.
- Weight and significance of the family institution in the local society and the criminal organization, as well as descriptions of the different family typologies (roles of women within the family and definition of the importance and value attributed to their activity).
- Areas for further study: male/female relationships; relationships and roles within the family institution (parents/children, father/mother); social representations and experiences connected to sexuality; the horizon of the symbolic; self-perception based on notions of guilt and normality/deviancy; import of the religious factor.

Based on the data collected, it is necessary to classify cases (though with respect for each one's specificity) beginning with the identification of several significant variables. For example, are the following significant, and if so, how? Age (generational variable), family of origin (membership or not by birth in mafia families), territorial area (within the same region or between different regions), and family relationships (with leading male mafia figures, etc.). It should be added that this research is organized on different levels in terms of the sources used we considered the most significant to be the following:

- Statistical data on female criminality and female crime inside mafia-type organizations.
- Existing bibliographical material on the theme: books, articles, research reports, papers, video materials, CD-ROMs, and so on.
- Analytical press reviews of events connected to the research theme in principal national (and/or regional) newspapers published between 1980 and 2001.
- Review of television broadcasts related to events that show women involved in organized crime (e.g., news broadcasts, interviews, trial depositions, etc.);
- Collection of life histories.
- Interviews and direct testimonies from women involved in organized crime.
- Interviews and testimonies from experts.
- Legislation on organized crime in the different countries studied.
- Collection of judicial material (interrogations, orders for preventive detention, interceptions, etc.).

The Palermo research group has prepared the collected data and written reports, subject to further input and study. We came to appreciate the complexity of this project as the work progressed; reports have only been received from researchers in Japan, Argentina, Albania, Germany, Brazil, Russia, and the United States (all presented in this book). Reports are missing from China, Croatia and the former Yugoslavia, Spain, Turkey, and Colombia, in part because of the difficulty of the research, particularly the collection of data and interviews. The press review has yet to be completed, nor has the research into televised documentation and the compilation of statistical data. Nevertheless, the work already done and the reports received raise particularly interesting issues, including significant structural analogies with Cosa Nostra of mafia-type organizations in various nations, as well as some very quite interesting data on the types of female crime, which in some aspects are very similar to those uncovered in the Italian context, whereas in others they are very different.

Having established these premises and acknowledged the incomplete nature of the research so far, I now discuss the most interesting aspects of the national reports from the dual perspective of structural analogies with Cosa Nostra and typologies of female criminality, maintaining the Italian reference paradigm and making it clear that the interpretive hypotheses formulated comes from my specific professional experience as a magistrate.

Japan

The Japanese report, by *Le Monde* journalist Ryu Otomo, shows notable analogies with the Italian organized crime situation and describes the inclusion of women in the criminal fabric of that country with features similar to those that characterize Cosa Nostra.

Like Cosa Nostra, *yakuza* organizations during the 1990s attempted to expand their sources of profits beyond traditional sectors (amphetamine trafficking,

racketeering, illegal gambling, and parallel betting) and began to penetrate the legal economy; their activities have become more sophisticated and include stock market transactions, public works, illegal credit deposits through threats of violence, and so on. The line between legal and illegal activities has become less and less clear.

The world of Japanese organized crime, like Cosa Nostra, is also characterized by an essentially male subculture, based on force, loyalty, and honor. As in any male-based society, however, the world of the *yakuza* also possesses a strong matriarchal component: the mother or spouse (*anego*) who glorifies the men's "success," as will be explained later.

The criminal world was significantly transformed when anti-gang laws and laws regarding criminal association and money laundering went into force in 1992. The number of members, as well as quasi-members, affiliated with gangs has diminished, expanding the grey area between legal and outlaw society. An extension of international underworld activities has also been seen. Though the analogies are significant, the differences are also profound between the *yakuza* and Cosa Nostra; above all, in contrast to those in Italy, Japanese criminal organizations, called "crime syndicates," are not necessarily outlawed, but may present themselves as mutual aid or support organizations, at least if they have not been declared "violent" by the prefectorial council in conformance with the anti-gang laws of 1992. That characteristic, along with the conspicuous show of membership in the organization that will be mentioned shortly, is symptomatic of a self-perception that is not only not negative, but also has some claim to social acceptance.

Gangs are organized in concentric circles that revolve around a boss. Every crime syndicate is composed of different independent gangs with only one at the top, without in any way constituting any sort of *cupola*, as in the mafia. These gangs tend to fall into three levels. Gang leaders connected by close family ties, that is, by "vassalage" ("brother," "father-son"), constitute the hard core of membership and power. In orbit around the gang, a nebula of affiliate members or "quasi-members" works for the organization, managing cover businesses, without belonging formally to a gang. Finally, there are "satellites" composed of members left outside who act as agents either on their own or on behalf of the gang. In contrast to Cosa Nostra, these large Japanese crime syndicates are not integrated organizations but are federations of gangs. Loyalty is the glue among the members of the gangs that make up the syndicate, but this is not obligatory beyond each individual gang: in other words, its members are above all loyal to their immediate boss.

Another difference between the Japanese criminal organizations and Cosa Nostra, which is an essentially secret organization, is that the former are not clandestine; on the contrary, the *yakuza* proclaim their membership with flamboyant clothes and behaviour in order to establish an immediate relationship with others of their ilk and to intimidate outsiders. Rather than transforming themselves into a clandestine organization like Cosa Nostra, their public claim to membership is itself a means of intimidation.

In terms of the social position of women in Japan, the image of Japanese women widespread throughout the West as submissive and relegated to a domestic role

is misleading. In reality, even today, traces of the matriarchal system are seen in some isolated areas of the country. The level of women's emancipation is shown by their active and significant presence in all the social movements of the past century related to the battle for rights. Statistics show an increase in the percentage of women arrested and sentenced since the end of World War II, especially for drugs and prostitution; the most common crimes are theft, assault and battery, bodily harm, and homicide.

It is interesting to note how women enter the underworld of Japanese organized crime with its essentially male subculture based, as stated earlier, on force, loyalty, and honor. According to the police, an extremely limited number of women formally belong to any gang, to the extent that the phenomenon is considered marginal. Among the 83,100 members of the underworld surveyed by the police in 1999, only a few dozen were women. In addition, between 1 January and 31 October 1999, of 302 cases of gang-related arrests, only 20 were of women connected to the criminal underworld; it should be emphasized, however, that these were wives or companions of a member or quasi-member of the gang. None of the women were formally gang members; this is an inversion of trends with respect to the past, when the underworld was made up primarily of professional gamblers and traveling salesmen; women found a place in that world and frequently assumed the position of gang leader.

The analogy with Cosa Nostra is much more evident when we consider the role of women when they act as their husbands' or lovers' accomplices on an "interim" basis in case of their companion's detention or death; in these cases, women become integrated into the gang structure and exercise real power, in proportion to the power of the husband or companion, with whose approval she runs the criminal activity. The woman is the "big sister" (*anego*) and an affiliated member or "quasi-member" who exercises her influence over gang members. This may constitute another key to understanding the role of women in the Italian criminal situation, one that though not always evident, guarantees the affective balance of the family as well as the transmission of mafia identity and "values."

In a survey conducted by the Japanese national police agency, 11.2% of criminal gang members said they decided to join a gang in the hope of having greater success with women (*White Paper on Criminality* 2000, 431–436), which reveals the strong attraction the *yakuza* exercise over Japanese women. Similarly, love for the men of Cosa Nostra is a constant finding in many women from different social classes. To mention the most recent cases in the news, during his period as a fugitive Vito Vitale cultivated four amorous relationships simultaneously, one of them with a teacher; Mariano Tullio Troia, after a long period as a fugitive, was found in bed with the wife of the man in whose house he was a guest; and Pino Guastella was arrested at night while he was with a fourteen-year-old girl whose parents considered it an honor for her to be sleeping with the fugitive mafia boss.

Another highly interesting element supplied by in this report concerns the current prospects for the evolution of the relationship between women and criminality following the transformations resulting from the 1992 anti-gang laws and later those regarding crimes of criminal association and money laundering. In fact, the

reconfiguration of organized crime in response to the new laws has led to a further exploitation of the role of quasi-members; these include women employed in cover activities such as restaurant businesses, variety shows, and so on. Economic development expands the involvement of women in these markets, which they will come to manage with greater autonomy; because of this, there will be fewer women who work directly as gang members.

According to the “emancipationist” thesis, the socioeconomic changes underway in Japan offer greater possibilities to women and compensate for the inequality between the sexes. Thus, the wives of gangsters have been taking the reins of cover businesses, as in September 1999 when the wife of a member of the Yamaguchi-gumi became the general manager of a construction company.

In conclusion, in Japan the growing entry of women into the world of crime constitutes an instrument of emancipation and a reaction against discrimination. According to references cited by Otomo, this thesis is also supported by Manabu Miyazaki, a journalist and contemporary writer, son of a Kyoto underworld boss and first-person witness to the prestige accorded his mother from gang members as wife of the boss. “The men enter the world of organized crime because of personal interests or a series of circumstances. For women, this happens mostly as a reaction to a society that tends to disdain or marginalize them. This is why when they make great strides, these are frequently more determined by men.”

Argentina

An extremely interesting cross section of criminality in Argentina emerges from the report by Adriana Rossi of the University of Santa Fe. Through an impeccable historical analysis, she describes the special structure of Argentine criminality, which has been closely linked to power and exploited by the latter to maintain and perpetuate its dynasties. This process follows two essential phases:

- First, the breakdown of any form of control (law enforcement, judicial, and information structures); the constant element that has helped to establish mafia power in every period is the corruption of those sectors called on to combat it (local authorities, politicians, judges, and the police, who guarantee impunity and protection in exchange for substantial bribes or reciprocal favors);
- Furthermore, the constant tendency to consider the state as something that exists for personal gain, which has led to deep ties between the state apparatus and criminal organizations dedicated to arms and drug trafficking and money laundering, to the extent that there seems to be no difference between the two; Rossi even speaks of the “criminal matrix of the state,” a diagnosis shared by a congressional investigatory commission on money laundering, which spoke of a “mafia state.”

This criminal matrix of the state began under the military dictatorship that overturned the Isabelita Perón government in the 1976 *coup d'état*. Rossi carefully analyzes the sociopolitical and criminal-economic events that led Argentina to

become a state where corruption is in power. This process was strengthened through the illegal concentration of economic power, the manoeuvrings of the political class and its general corruption, the fierce repression of a powerful governmental police and military machine, the strong ties between the state and criminal bodies from other countries, profits from drug and arms trafficking deposited in state coffers, money laundering, the *ad hoc* creation of financial companies, the lack of banking controls, the facilitation of tax evasion and smuggling, and other factors described in that chapter.

It is of interest that even today in Argentina the theoretical category of organized crime has not yet been defined but is at the center of a debate between jurists and criminologists, with its validity and applicability being seriously controversial. The difficulties met by Rossi in her analysis derive from this problem, given the invisibility of not only women and their ties to organized crime, but of organized crime itself. This research should therefore be considered an exploratory study; the method chosen for identifying the theoretical category of organized crime refers to the typology of crimes committed, the characteristics of the organization that commits them, and its relationships with power. These criteria have helped to identify some organizations that fall under the category of mafias and others that, because of their ties with power, have penetrated the fabric of society itself and the economy of the country.

There is almost a total vacuum regarding the study of women and their inclusion in organized crime as active as well as passive, though complicit, subjects. There are no studies, and it is only recently that women have stopped being seen only as victims of criminal activities and violence, but also as those who occupy operational roles.

There are extremely interesting elements in the Argentine report that show a remarkable difference with respect to the Italian criminal situation but could also reflect its future development. These are exemplary of some of the interpretive parameters anticipated in the first part of this report, such as the close connection between the types of crimes committed by women and their original socio-environmental context, their educational level, their active inclusion in society, and the influence of emancipation processes. Of interest, the educational level of women in Argentina is greater than that of men.

There has been a continuous qualitative growth of female criminality. The first female crime figure appeared in the first three decades of the twentieth century, when an attempt was underway to transplant the mafia (the so-called *Mano Nera*) to Argentina; “Born to the trade” and closely tied to the mafia underworld, the *capa di tutti i capi* (“lady boss of bosses”) Agata Galiffi participated in killing her father’s rival and, after her father’s escape from Argentina, took control of counterfeiting operations of national and foreign currencies, as well as a network of international espionage for counterfeiting stocks. Galiffi was arrested and sentenced to nine years in jail.

Significant changes in the role of women in general, as well as their ways of committing crimes, began arriving towards the mid-1970s. Some women overcame forms of social control and showed their disobedience in the political sphere,

actively opposing the military regime. Great violence was used against them for their dual disobedience, not only to the political institutions, but also to those of family and home.

The number of female prisoners increased from 200 in 1993 to 800 in 1996. Their most frequently recorded types of crimes were those linked to the family such as infanticide, abortion, and homicide; as seen in the interviews with prison officials and jailers from the penitentiary in Ezeiza, Buenos Aires province, and Rosario, Santa Fe province; these crimes were almost always the result of a history of violence suffered by women, who changed from victim to executioner. Subsequently, however, crimes and misdemeanors expanded from the family and the home into the public sphere, contradicting the belief that women were not capable of committing crimes. The list of crimes also included theft, drug trafficking, fraud, and confidence scams, as well as that crime *par excellence* connected to being female, prostitution.

Rossi presents an interesting distinction between “women in power” and “the others.” The first group uses the same manoeuvres as men in order to become a part of, and maintain power within the great criminal organization that is the state. In most cases they belong to, support structures. In fact, Argentina has the highest rate of female legislators in Latin America; women hold 30% of the legislative seats. Rossi presents the stories of three of the best-known examples of women in power in Argentina. They are political women, closely linked to power, who use it for their own ends. Either they occupy, or have occupied, posts of responsibility in the government or they represent financial groups that have obtained benefits thanks to those frequently fraudulent economic measures that made a few rich and the many poor. Often they came from families that have always occupied the Argentine political scene or from the wealthy upper class of landowners or businessmen who belong to the group of around twenty families who run the country.

The first of these women, as well as the most well-known and despised, appeared during the period of rule of President Carlos Saúl Menem during the 1990s. They were ministers or heads of important institutions whose interest was in pillaging the state, placing their friends and loyal followers in positions of responsibility or transforming them into figureheads of fortunes they did not yet have but expected to acquire. Immune from criticism, secure in their power and the impunity this power guaranteed them, they were accused of embezzlement, receiving bribes, not fulfilling their duties as civil servants, and allowing the looting of structures for which they were responsible. They wielded power in the same ways men did. Although they did not participate in the larger illegal businesses such as drugs or arms, they profited from the existing state of corruption to amass great fortunes. Some of them, when prosecuted by the courts, correspondent in the form of justice that “Menemism” had remade in its own image.

According to Rossi, whether we consider these women as members of organized crime depends on whether we consider the Argentine state as a mafia state. If it is, then these women are at least marginally part of a structured, criminal organization—the Argentine government. These are also the “women of. . .” that is, the wives, sisters, cousins, and lovers of the men they follow and protect.

The “others” involved in organized crime are the women employed in drug trafficking. They are involved in illegal networks of which they know neither the extent nor the significance, but they are the basis of the illegal drug business. Politicians, police, and national or mixed gangs participate along with politicians of greater or lesser importance who facilitate money laundering, close an eye or participate in the traffic, and facilitate the entrance of shipments by land or air. These women are involved in the sectors of transport and commercialization of drugs, but they know only the contacts that supply them with the merchandise. They belong to all social classes. Prisoners with a high level of education, having finished high school or university, are in prison only for drug crimes. There are no thieves or murderers among them, and they are all aware of the social disvalue of their conduct.

In spite of the foregoing, the role of criminal women in Argentina is completely underestimated both by the judicial system and the police, who hold stubbornly to the traditional concept of woman as weak, at most an accomplice, easily incited, ignorant, and unaware of the gravity of the crimes of which she is accused. This belief was confirmed in an interview with a famous Argentine prosecutor, who was in charge of a case in which the principal defendant was a woman, Amira Yoma, sister-in-law of President Carlos Menem:

When a woman commits a crime and does it with a man, we focus our attention on the man because we feel he was the instigator . . . this is due to a patriarchal vision that keeps us from seeing women in a role we consider purely male.

One federal judge stated ironically, “I am not aware of any studies on criminal women in Argentina. Crime is a man’s affair. We leave you the role of victim.”

Albania

The report on Albania by Fitore Belay, a female police captain in Tirana, is handicapped by the impossibility of collecting useful data due to the efforts on the part of governing bodies to conceal the traces of a terrible past. Her report clearly shows a country devastated by the traumas of a lawless dictatorship that erased any traces of cultural and hereditary identity, a country where today the only constant fact is the frenetic search for rights that have always been violated and ignored, now identified with achieving wealth at any cost. Belay describes a widespread illegal system that goes so far as to commit even the most heinous crimes:

Raised to survive under a dictatorial system, they superficially adapted to consumer needs. The desire to accumulate money quickly to satisfy what they have dreamt of their entire lives was truly irresistible, so much so as to stimulate in women the idea that the exploitation of any means to make money was legitimate. This image explains the practice of prostitution, fraud (in two cases, women in Albania have founded companies structured on pyramid schemes), theft, and even trafficking in children. [Quote from Belay’s original report]

Rather than attempt to address the nature of criminal associations rooted in Albania, Belay limits herself to further analysis of the changes introduced by the new penal code in effect since 1995, which sanctioned essential personal rights and freedoms and gave particular safeguards to human life and health, now considered fundamental human rights; this marked a great shift from the previous Communist legislative climate.

The current Albanian criminal situation involves infiltration into other countries such as Italy and a boom in the trafficking in human beings; new and clearer penal provisions have been introduced to check these crimes. Among the crimes more adequately addressed is prostitution, including the commission of this crime by a criminal organization. The most notable of these legal provisions have to do with the exploitation of minors and the use of false pretences, force, or violence to compel persons to engage in prostitution abroad. Arms and drug trafficking as well as smuggling and the child slave trade are specifically and heavily punished.

Belay states that female criminality is minimal, although this conclusion suffers from the absence of any serious statistical proof. From the point of view of types of crimes, however, those committed by women are especially serious: first among them is homicide, then theft, kidnapping, falsification of official documents, crimes against public morals, and prostitution. In addition, criminal activities have developed that involve mostly female subjects, particularly drug trafficking and kidnapping of children as part of a vendetta or for exploitation. In such a difficult social context, with very uncertain prospects for the future, what emerges from Belay's report is that the condition of women in Albanian society is extremely backward, integrated as they are into a patriarchal society that recognizes no rights for them and considers them like "beasts of burden." They are the weak link in a fragile chain; poverty, unemployment, and uncertainty have induced them to exploit their bodies for survival in an extremely difficult situation. Symptomatic of this are the terrible cases Belay describes that outline the frightening conditions under which women are forced to live and the constant abuse they are forced to undergo.

This report is particularly interesting because it helps to establish connections among social model, literacy level, socioeconomic context, and types of crimes involving women; the more elementary, then the more retrograde the parameters. In fact, these appear pivotal in the exploitation by women of women (prostitution) or their children (traffic in minors), crimes that have greatly increased over the last few years. Considering the nonexistence of women as persons, it seems unthinkable that they would be entrusted with roles of great responsibility or placed in key positions in an organization, or that interim roles might be entrusted to them in the case of the death or imprisonment of their husbands. It also appears extremely significant that over the last few years homicides have increased, motivated above all by the need to defend oneself from the nuclear family, the arena of horrible abuse of women. Another interesting fact is that, in contrast to situations elsewhere, women are not given favorable treatment during judicial investigation or during incarceration.

Brazil

The author of the report on Brazil, Denise Frossard, is a former prosecutor and has been involved in all of the largest trials against organized crime in that country. In part because of her specific expertise, what she informs us about the criminal structure in Brazil is particularly reliable and holds great interest because of the outstanding analogies it offers (almost identical, in some aspects) between the judicial status of mafia association crime in that country and Italy.

On 21 May 1993, the first sentence was pronounced by the Brazilian courts recognizing the existence of mafia-type organized crime on a national level, that is,

a complex criminal association with a hierarchy, economic ends, and the continuance practice of its illegal transactions across the national territory, one that follows a business-type outline, manages a significant volume of resources, maintains proven close ties with national political powers, and utilizes the practices of corruption and violent means to maintain its hegemonic power, since it is a national criminal organization that acts with the objective of absorbing the Constitutional State into the Criminal State.

Like Cosa Nostra, the Brazilian mafia also has an armed branch that not only executes the “judgments” of the *cupola*, power center of the organization, but also guarantees their established policy, where the residue is still found of an unwritten “code of honor.” This organization is characterized by intimidation, both internal and external, by unbreakable hierarchical bonds and group silence. Over the last forty years, associated members have been known as “Animal Game Bankers,” an allusion to one of their activities, the illegal numbers game called *jogo dos bichos* (“The Animal Game”), which has completely legal origins that go back to 1886, when a zoological garden was created in Rio de Janeiro with numbered entry tickets that were drawn in a lottery. The game was raised to the category of a penal crime in 1941. The center of power—the *cupola*—is made up only of a few “Bankers,” the oldest and wealthiest as well as the most violent.

The *cupola* is made up of representatives of the organization and is responsible for dividing up the national territory into areas for each Banker to exploit the *jogo dos bichos*. These choices are rationally made through the establishment of “laws,” the “judgment” of conflicts that regard the organization, the “execution” of the resulting decisions from “judges” over these conflicts, and the management of organization policies. Through intimidation and violence, the Bankers have managed to “capture” at least five states in the Brazilian federation from the government. By exploiting the same network as the Animal Game, a new and profitable product from nearby Colombia was exploited: cocaine. The Bankers are presidents of samba schools and presidents or managers of football clubs; they sponsor elections for state and federal representatives and run their own candidates. During carnival celebrations, their stands along the route where the samba schools parade are attended by guests who include national political and institutional figures as well as the police; the Bankers consider the police employees, who revolve around them like private security guards despite the fact that the police

continue to exercise their functions in the area of public safety and are paid out of the public coffers. The Bankers conduct their illegal activities precisely through the involvement of the police.

To demonstrate this deadly organization's level of social acceptance, consider that during the military dictatorship in Brazil—from 1964 to 1985—the *cupola* was present in the social context through the figure of the spokesman, as shown by the proceedings conducted against its members in 1993; whenever it did not obtain free publicity in the mass media, it reaffirmed its unity of thought and action through the practice of providing social assistance. Alongside their illegal activities, the Bankers have also invested in legal activities such as real estate agencies, racehorse breeding, artistic performances, and restaurants; the boss of the *cupola* was even the owner of a metal-working company. An ironclad code of silence and *omertà* is in force among the members; no turning state witness have ever been recorded.

According to Frossard, the condition of women in Brazil is not inferior overall to that of men; in particular, there has been an increase in the number of women as heads of families, from 18% in 1991 to 25% in 1999, which implies a greater female autonomy and more participation in the labor market; furthermore, the educational level of women has also surpassed that of men. Nevertheless, female participation in the realm of public power is practically nonexistent.

As concerns female criminality, it is symptomatic of the underestimation by judges of the illegal conduct attributable to women that although the Brazilian prison population increased by 35.28% from 1995 to 2001, only 4.35% of those incarcerated were women. This is not the case in relation to crimes regarding drugs, however, which suggests that the illegal drug traffic is largely female. In fact, women are significantly present in the retail sale and transport of drugs.

After analyzing judicial proceedings, reports of independent bodies, and national mass media archives, Frossard concludes that women have not had a predominant or significant role in the leadership of the *jogo dos bichos* mafia. Since its beginnings, the organization of the Bankers has been composed almost exclusively of men, and consequently the *cupola* is exclusively male. Women have been and continue to be perceived, however, as numerically predominant in the large amount of manual labor—a merely operational activity—needed in the streets of the large cities to carry out this illegal (though never suppressed by law enforcement) numbers game.

The celebrated 1993 trial of members of the organization that concluded with the sentencing of the *cupola* led to a better understanding of the operations of the organization and several “laws” that regulated it. The first of these laws referred to the pension due to all widows, guaranteed by the “organization,” that never left the widow of a dead *bicheiro*, or Banker, in material hardship. The other “law” refers to succession, which, in conformance with the country's civil law, is passed down to the legitimate heirs, identified, in order, as descendents, ascendants, and collaterals up to the third grade. Investigation of the heirs of the *bicheiros*, whether or not members of the *cupola*, shows that illegal power may also be inherited by daughters.

In this regard, Frossard refers to various cases, including that of Arlete, daughter of Banker “China Da Saude,” who, after his murder, together with her brother inherited her father’s *bicho* business and was later convicted. Another case is that of the dynasty of “Raul Capitaó,” the greatest of the Bankers and member of the *cupola*, whose business was inherited by his daughter, Suely Correia de Mello, a lawyer, subsequently convicted of homicide.

In contrast to what happens in Cosa Nostra, the wives of the *bicheiros* are never included, even *ad interim*, in the organization. In fact, when fourteen members of the *cupola* were arrested, it was found that their women had never assumed any role of “regency”; on the other hand, no form of regency was necessary because the members of the *cupola*, though imprisoned, continued to manage their businesses from jail by using cell phones.

Although the presence of women is subordinate in the only strictly mafia-type criminal organization in Brazil, the same cannot be said about another criminal organization, the so-called “social security mafia,” which has been exclusively organized for the purpose of defrauding the social security system, the INSS, the body in charge of the payment of pensions and benefits. An extensive network of highly educated women was uncovered over the course of investigations that began in 1989; they were mostly lawyers and top federal civil servants who formed a criminal organization that covered the entire nation, boasting an operational machine in collusion with political and economic power. This national organization was, and continues to be, almost exclusively managed by women. Various independent organizations exist that link up with one another in terms of their economic apparatus to guarantee the laundering of proceeds from resources originating from illegal activities, forming one large organization, a sort of holding company.

The methods of managing and organizing these schemes are varied and sophisticated. These scams have earned hundreds of millions of dollars, resources that end up being laundered in the Brazilian financial system or abroad or through the real estate market or other investments. Over the course of the investigation, for example, more than 500 kilograms of gold ingots were seized.

Conclusions

The extremely interesting, albeit still incomplete, analyses undertaken by this study demonstrate a wealth of ideas even if they cannot yet lead to definite conclusions. Nevertheless, the empirical analysis of the data can help to focus on the role of women in the criminal contexts investigated and clarify several common parameters:

- The “hidden” or untabulated number of criminal women due to reasons that vary depending on the context.

- The close connections among the types of crimes committed by women and their socioenvironmental context, types of relationships, educational level, and role in society.
- The influence of liberation or emancipative processes in the assumption by women of typologically significant criminal roles.
- The connection of feminine criminal power with, or rather its derivation from, the power of the men of the family; the closer this relationship is, the more significant this transfer appears: to the state, this seems more likely to be a temporary delegation of power than an arrangement of power itself. The most common expression of this power is the so-called “substitution” of the woman in the criminal structure in the case of the man’s death, detention, or fugitive status. This warrants further consideration.

It is also significant that Palermo become the engine of this reorientation of thinking on the complexity of the mafia phenomenon.

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