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# An Anthropological Television Myth



Reviewed by: **Michael Pattison**

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Dedicated simply and mysteriously "to your people's history", *An Anthropological Television Myth* assembles and arranges footage from the vaults of a Sicilian TV station. A cumulatively stunning snapshot of Catania on the island's east coast during the mid-Nineties, this commentary-free archive documentary makes it clear that ground-level, front-line reportage can indeed provide its own narration, thank you very much.

Unrest is rife in these fragments, which are edited together to resemble someone suffering from a serious attention deficit channel-hopping a TV saturated by digital mediocrity – though the material here is gripping throughout. Various "scenes" play out, with neither exposition nor resolution, but their violent juxtaposition suggests some kind of method to the madness. Has montage been this aggressive and politicised in recent years? It's difficult to recall a comparator.

Opening with a sustained, silent take of a funeral procession attended by thousands, *Myth* (re)captures the Catania working classes' struggle against police and state corruption to an infectious degree. During a protest on the streets of Biancavilla, one banner reads, "A house is our right!" Asked for their thoughts on the upcoming elections, residents react fiercely. One, a 57-year-old ex-pat, reveals he was economically forced to live in Germany to work as a Volkswagen employee many years previously; another is aggrieved by visits from Special Branch (to whom he refers as "the super-Mafia") for his participations in and contributions to meetings, demonstrations, protests and petitions; "What elections?" responds still another interviewee, "They're a bunch of thieves and assassins." Tellingly, we cut immediately to police gun training videos and the punchy rhythms thereof.

Through political struggle itself comes organisation, class-consciousness and self-transformation, and matching the agitation captured herein, *Myth* is fittingly anarchic in its refusal to be categorised or to settle into some discernible rhythm. Like any revolutionary cause, the film's progress is likewise staggered and scattered, defined by leaps and bounds as well as setbacks, and the spontaneity at work is as thrilling as that hypnotic sequence in a strobe-lit discotheque to the tune of McFadden and Whithead's *Ain't No Stopping Us Now*.

But themes do emerge here, such as the implications of displacement and dwelling, both outcomes of prolonged governmental corruption and the top-down policies of land appropriation. One senses a deep outrage in response to the murder of a working man by the police; questioned regarding this incident, one local legitimately links crime and criminalisation to material conditions such as poverty and socioeconomic ruin. Later in the film, women heatedly voice their righteous anger at authority. Such is the extent of their scorn in response to years of betrayal and hurt, one of them is cheered upon crying for the head of anyone who disagrees with their cause. And of course, it's difficult to disagree.

*Reviewed on: 21 Apr 2013*

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Collage of fragments culled from an independent Sicilian TV station's output in the mid-90s.

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**Director:** Maria Helene Bertino, Dario Castelli, Alessandro Gagliardo

**Year:** 2012

**Runtime:** 54 minutes

**Country:** Italy

**Festivals:**

**Bradford 2013**

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