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by Andreas Ehrenreich
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CAST

Luigi Pistilli Detective John Norton

Dagmar Lassander Helen Sobiesky

Anton Diffring Ambassador Sobiesky

Valentina Cortese Mrs. Sobiesky

Werner Pochat Marc Sobiesky

Arthur O'Sullivan Inspector Lawrence

Dominique Boschero The Ambassador's Mistress

Renato Romano Mandel

Sergio Doria Walter

Ruth Durley Norton's Mother

CREW

Directed by **Riccardo Freda** (as **Willy Pareto**)

Screenplay by **Riccardo Freda** (as **Willy Pareto**), **Alessandro Continenza**
and **Günter Ebert** (as **Gunther Ebert**)

Based on the story 'A Room Without a Door' by **Ermanno Donati** (as **Richard Mann**)

Cinematography **Silvano Ippoliti**

Film Editor **Riccardo Freda** (as **Willy Pareto**)

Assistant Editors **Bruno Micheli**, **Gertrud Petermann**

Music by **Stelvio Cipriani**

Production Designer **Giuseppe Chevalier** (as **Giuseppe Chevalier Mifsud**)



THE PRODUCTION OF THE IGUANA WITH THE TONGUE OF FIRE

by Andreas Ehrenreich

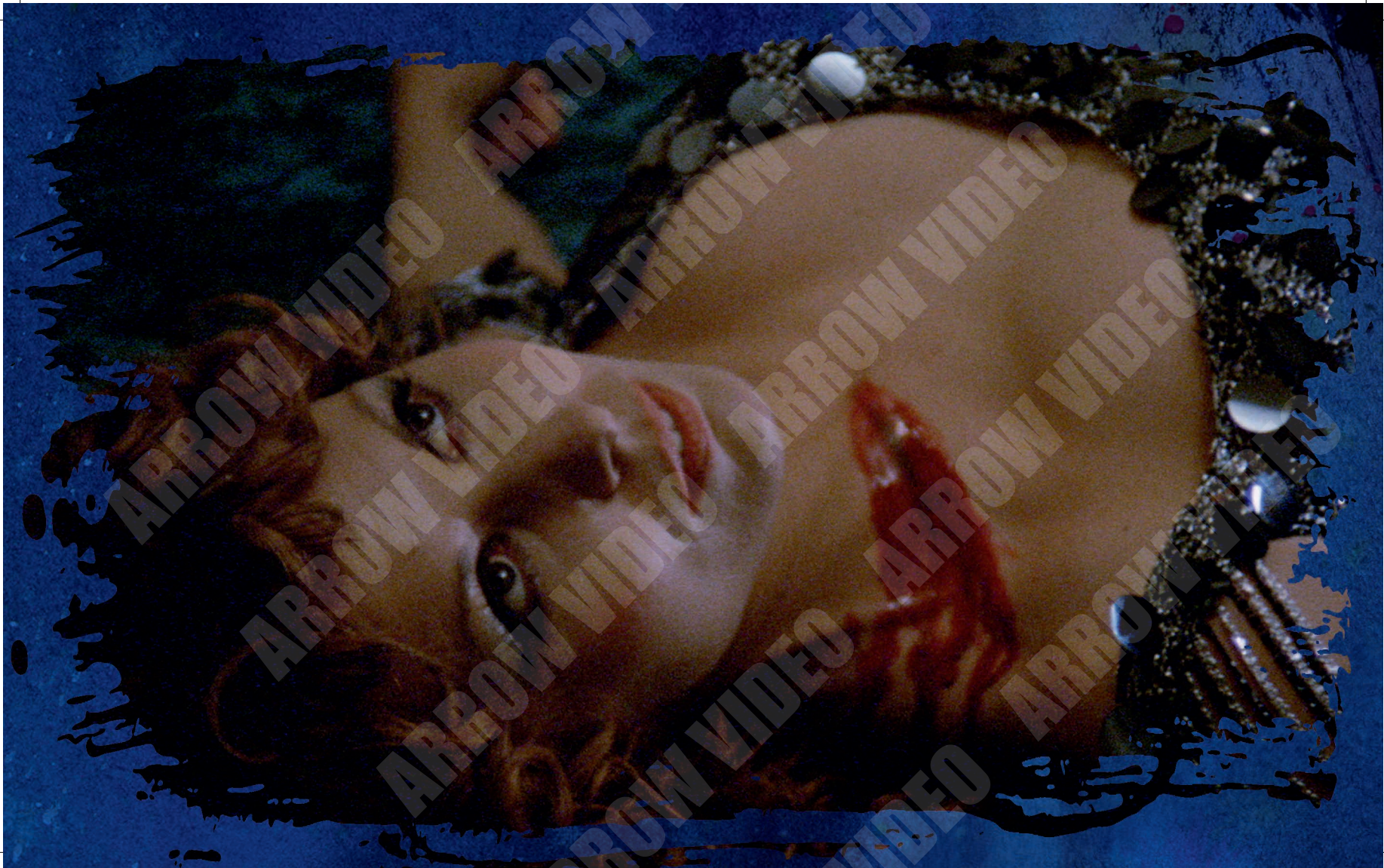
The 1970s are often considered the golden age of Italian cinema. The national cinema market was flooded with a range of highly diversified titles, and many of the films on offer were home-grown productions. The national film sector prospered like never before. Alongside outstanding arthouse films which received critical acclaim on an international level, Italian film culture offered a wide variety of middle- and low-brow fare with an emphasis on emotion, exploitation and excess. Popular genres of post-war cinema included the tearjerker, gothic horror and erotic comedy.¹ During the 1960s and 1970s the western and the giallo, with a series of horrific thrillers, had enormously successful film cycles that continue to captivate cinephiles to this day.²

The Giallo Genre

In form and content, Italian home-grown thrillers tend to be hard to define. Frequently, they exhibit a stylistic and narrative hybridity mixing characteristics of other genres that were in vogue at the time. Still, a number of features are commonly ascribed to the giallo. A film affiliated with this generic label is usually a murder mystery that deals with the atrocious doings of a razor-wielding serial killer wearing gloves, a mackintosh and a hat. An amateur sleuth, who often gets involved in the case by chance, traces the maniac and is luckier than the incompetent police. In terms of style, gialli are celebrated for their graphic violence, inventive camerawork and memorable soundtracks. Commonly, they are grasped as a cinematic instance of style over substance, with incoherent plots and storylines leading to nowhere. What constitutes the genre is always up to the individual spectator,

1 - For some exemplary studies of popular film cycles, see Louis Bayman, *The Operatic and the Everyday in Post-war Italian Film Melodrama*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Stefano Baschiera and Russ Hunter (eds.), *Italian Horror Cinema*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016); Alex Marlow-Mann and Xavier Mendik, 'Death, Desire and Dania: Satire, Sexuality and Erotic Mobility in 1970s and 1980s Italy' in *Cine-Excess 2*. (Web, 2016).

2 - On the western and the giallo, see Mikel J. Koven, *La dolce morte: Vernacular Cinema and the Italian Giallo Film*. (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2006); Austin Fisher, *Radical Frontiers in the Spaghetti Western: Politics, Violence and Popular Italian Cinema*. (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011); Xavier Mendik, *Bodies of Desire and Bodies in Distress: The Golden Age of Italian Cult Cinema 1970–1985*. (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015).



and hence, the traits listed here do not necessarily apply to every entry in the cycle. Still, the public discussion about Italian thrillers from the 1960s and 1970s is dominated by these recurring motifs.

Indeed, the discourse about the giallo depends heavily – and unwittingly so – upon a number of influential films by Mario Bava and Dario Argento. Bava's *The Girl Who Knew Too Much (La ragazza che sapeva troppo, 1963)* and *Blood and Black Lace (Sei donne per l'assassino, 1964)* are frequently understood as early and exemplary textual models for the cycle, while Argento's *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage (L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo, 1970)* and *Deep Red (Profondo rosso, 1975)* are considered the genre's points of culmination in terms of artistry and sophistication.³ In addition, the extraordinary commercial result of Argento's directorial debut in 1970, which grossed £1,229,940,000 in Italy, inspired many filmmakers to emulate what was considered the newcomer's formula for success.⁴ Even though many commentators do not avow this, gialli are often as measured by the paradigmatic works of these widely appreciated directors.⁵

The fact that *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* entailed a string of more or less original imitations had significant effects on the perception of the genre's economic history. Frequently, the emergence of the giallo boom is exclusively attributed to Argento's first film and its surprising financial achievement. While this definitely fuelled the production of gialli based on the promising template – for instance, there was a noticeable rise in animal names in Italian thriller titles at the beginning of the 1970s – the emphasis on the Argento movie has deflected many fans' and scholars' attention away from the considerable corpus of gialli before 1970. With the fall of Fascism in Italy, the ban of crime fiction in cinema and literature came to an end.⁶ From the post-war period onwards, suspenseful films were common in Italian film culture. There was a brief wave of low-budget Gothic horrors from the end of the 1950s until the early 1960s, and scary films in contemporary settings became popular in the mid-1960s.⁷

3 - A recently published monograph is dedicated entirely to the latter film. See Alexia Kanas, *Deep Red*. (London: Wallflower Press, 2017).

4 - Gianni Rondolino (ed.), *Catalogo Bolaffi del cinema italiano 1966/1975: tutti i film italiani degli ultimi 10 anni*. (Torino: Bolaffi, 1975) 111.

5 - See Maitland McDonagh, *Broken Mirrors, Broken Minds: The Dark Dreams of Dario Argento*, expanded ed., (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); L. Andrew Cooper, *Dario Argento*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Tim Lucas, *Mario Bava: All the Colors of the Dark*. (Cincinnati: Video Watchdog, 2017).

6 - Russ Hunter, 'Preferisco l'inferno: Early Italian Horror Cinema' in *Italian Horror Cinema*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016). 19-26; 18-19.

7 - See Roberto Curti, *Italian Gothic Horror Films, 1957–1969*. (Jefferson: McFarland, 2015). For a discussion of Italian vampire films that were part of the Gothic cycle, see Michael Guarneri, 'Re-working the Count Dracula Myth, Re-negotiating Class Identity: The Transnational Vampire Goes to Late-1950s Italy' in *Arts Communication & Pop Culture 2*. (Nitra: Constantine the Philosopher University, 2016). 47-59.

The box-office result of Michelangelo Antonioni's sexy arthouse thriller *Blow-Up* (1966), which received its Italian release in September 1967, sparked a wave of successful imitations. Inexpensive films like *The Sweet Body of Deborah (Il dolce corpo di Deborah, 1967)*, *One on Top of the Other (Una sull'altra, 1969)* and *Detective Belli (Un detective, 1969)* measured up to Antonioni's big-budget MGM production and, in some cases, outperformed its earnings. Besides, there were a great many thrillers made on extremely low budgets which also speculated on *Blow-Up's* popularity with domestic audiences and are almost forgotten today. *The Sex of Angels (Il sesso degli angeli, 1968)* and *Dirty Angels (Vergogna, schifosi!, 1969)* were such movies. Hence, in Italian film culture the giallo emerged as a popular genre in the wake of Antonioni's zeitgeisty murder mystery.⁸ The extraordinary economic achievements of *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* and *Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion (Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto, 1970)* did not initiate a cinematic trend but confirmed the domestic industry's confidence in the long-standing viability of erotic contemporary-set thrillers. The over-the-top earnings of gialli in 1970 encouraged even more producers and distributors to invest in home-grown suspense movies.

Planning *The Iguana with the Tongue of Fire*

One such effort was *The Iguana with the Tongue of Fire (L'iguana dalla lingua di fuoco)*, a project that emerged in 1971. As was common at the time, the producers decided to apply for public funding administered by the cinema division of the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment. Already since the 1920s, the Italian state offered subsidies as economic incentives for film productions recognised as national. The certificate of nationality could be obtained by using mostly Italian actors and technical personnel, shooting in studios and on location within the country and using indigenous film laboratories for developing and printing copies. The 1965 cinema law, which was valid in 1971, stipulated an automatic rebate of 13% of the gross revenue on the domestic cinema market for the producers. Moreover, there existed a screen quota favouring national films which, by means of financial support, encouraged exhibitors to schedule Italian films. In order to persuade the distribution sector to invest in home-grown product, the cinema law provided a dubbing voucher.⁹ For every national film financed by a distributor, the same company was allowed to import and dub three foreign movies. Therefore, the distributor would usually fund a low-budget project in order to offer potentially lucrative non-Italian titles to domestic exhibitors. Accordingly, for the distribution sector the investment in home-grown films was necessary

8 - Of course, film critics have usually understood this film as something more profound and philosophical, for instance, as a mediation about the crises in cinematic representation. But it is equally important to acknowledge *Blow-Up's* popular allure, which is based on the depiction of sex and murder, from the perspective of a mass audience.

9 - For the full text of the cinema law, see 'Legge 4 novembre 1965, n. 1213' in *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*. (12 Nov 1965). 5638–5656.



to access attractive foreign products. With these overlapping measures the Italian state intended to foster and control the domestic film industry.

On 18 March 1971, the companies Fono Roma and Oceania Produzioni Internazionali Cinematografiche announced their upcoming co-production *Iguana*.¹⁰ The Roman producers – Bruno Momigliano and Giulio Sbarigia for Fono, Manlio Rossi for Oceania – declared to share the budget of £350 million.¹¹ The six-week shooting was supposed to commence on 19 April of the same year and take place in Dublin, an unspecified place in Switzerland and, for interiors and special effects, at the studio ICET Milano.¹² Fono Roma was one of the few companies in the Italian film industry that could look back at a long history. Founded in 1931, the business specialised in film dubbing and related services but sometimes acted as a production company as well.¹³ With 79 movies that it either produced or co-produced, Fono represented one of the most prolific enterprises of the country.¹⁴ Their partner Oceania, however, only existed since 1960. Right before developing *Iguana*, the company increased its nominal capital from £500,000 to £30 million.¹⁵ Comparing this investment with Fono's capital stock emphasises that Oceania was the minor associate in this commercial partnership. Even though the assets of the former company were reduced from £550 million to £450 million in July 1970, Fono Roma was a far more powerful firm than Oceania.¹⁶

The cast list submitted included Ivan Rassimov as Norton, James Mason as the Ambassador and Maria Grazia Marescalchi as Irene. The remaining roles – Helen, Ann, the mother and Marc – were still to be defined.¹⁷ Rassimov, born Đerasimović, was the son of an Italian-Serbian couple from Trieste. After finishing his studies and his military service, he and his sister Rada moved to Rome to pursue an acting career. Initially receiving small parts, such as in Mario Bava's science-fiction-horror blend *Planet of the Vampires (Terrore nello spazio, 1965)*, Rassimov had his breakthrough as the leading man in two westerns in 1967. He mostly remained true to this peculiar genre, before delivering a memorable performance as the sadistic villain in Sergio Martino's giallo debut *The Strange Vice of Mrs. Wardh (Lo strano vizio della Signora Wardh, 1971)*. During the 1970s he frequently worked in the giallo genre and became a regular in Martino's subsequent thrillers. Before retiring from

his acting career in the late-1980s, Rassimov contributed to a wide range of films, mostly belonging to the exploitation sphere of Italian film culture.

Maria Grazia Marescalchi is the most anonymous actress from the initial stage of production. Between 1961 and 1982 she played minor roles in what were mostly Italian films for cinema and television. Her only well-known performance is probably Liliانا Cavani's biographic *Francis of Assisi (Francesco d'Assisi, 1966)*, a movie made for TV. A more surprising entry in the early cast list is James Mason, Huddersfield's famous export to world cinema. In his extensive career, which spanned more than 150 movies from the mid-1930s until the mid-1980s, he occasionally collaborated with Italian producers. During the 1970s most of these jobs were police thrillers such as *Kidnap Syndicate (La città sconvolta: caccia spietata ai rapitori, 1975)* or the small-town giallo *The Masters (Gente di rispetto, 1975)*. However, the production of *Iguana* proceeded without his involvement.

Besides the cast list, a crew list was sent to the ministry. While the synopsis stemmed from Ermanno Donati, who used the pseudonym Richard Mann, both Donati and Riccardo Freda were supposed to write the screenplay. The above-the-line talent specified in this list remained unchanged: director Riccardo Freda, director of photography Silvano Ippoliti, production manager Alfonso Donati and, eventually, composer Stelvio Cipriani. However, some key positions were subject to change. A document from 18 March 1971 mentions Enrico Sabatini as costume designer, who would go on to win an Academy Award for his work in *The Mission* (1986), and Aurelio Crugnola as art director, while the editor was still to be defined.¹⁸ Before specialising in opulent historical epics, Sabatini designed a number of gialli. He took care of the production design of *Four Flies on Grey Velvet (4 mosche di velluto grigio, 1971)* and created the costumes for *Cold Eyes of Fear (Gli occhi freddi della paura, 1971)* and *A Bay of Blood (Ecologia del delitto, 1971)*. Still in the same year, he worked as the production and costume designer of *The Designated Victim (La vittima designata, 1971)*. Crugnola often collaborated with Sabatini; however, by the 1970s he had embarked on an international career which culminated with him working as art director on *The English Patient* (1996).

The Treatment

The submission to the ministry from 18 March 1971 contains a synopsis entitled *L'iguana dalla lingua di fuoco*. The author is a certain Richard Mann, which the crew list identifies as the pseudonym of prolific filmmaker Ermanno Donati.¹⁹ With the companies Athena Cinematografica and Panda – Società per l'Industria Cinematografica, Donati and fellow

10 - Bruno Momigliano, Giulio Sbarigia and Manlio Rossi, 'Denuncia inizio lavorazione' in *Archivio Centrale dello Stato*, (Rome: 18 Mar 1971). Ministero del Turismo e dello Spettacolo, Direzione Generale dello Spettacolo, Divisione Cinema, CO 860.

11 - Op. cit. Momigliano, Sbarigia and Rossi, 'Piano finanziario'.

12 - Op. cit. Momigliano, Sbarigia and Rossi, 'Denuncia inizio lavorazione' and 'Piano di lavorazione'.

13 - Aldo Bernardini ed., *Cinema italiano 1930-1995: le imprese di produzione*, (Rome: ANICA, 2000), 188.

14 - Op. cit. Bernardini, XII, table 2.

15 - Op. cit. Bernardini, 309.

16 - Op. cit. Bernardini, 188.

17 - Op. cit. Momigliano, Sbarigia and Rossi, 'Elenco personale artistico'.

18 - Ibid.

19 - Ibid.

producer Luigi Carpentieri specialised in cheap genre films. The team had already collaborated with Riccardo Freda about 14 years earlier: they were responsible for the early giallo-horror hybrid *The Vampires (I vampiri, 1957)* and the London-set arthouse giallo *I Am What I Am (Col cuore in gola, 1967)*.²⁰ The treatment's text barely covers two pages and commences like this: "For some time, particularly ferocious murders have occurred in Rome. Before brutally cutting his victims' throats, the perpetrator disfigures their faces with vitriol to the point of sometimes rendering them impossible to identify."²¹ Hence, the basic idea about an atrocious series of killings existed from the earliest stage of the project's development and persisted until the final film. Also, the idea of the rogue cop conducting the investigation is already contained in the synopsis, even though the character of Norton is still without a name.

By locating the narrative "in the corrupt world of gays and drug addicts",²² the treatment operates with pejorative language that links criminality, homosexuality and drug use. This kind of deprecatory association was perfectly common in early-1970s Italy and can be found in many other films, no matter whether they belonged to the exploitation or arthouse sphere.²³ The synopsis proceeds to offer a line of shady suspects: "a famous surgeon, a corrupt and ruthless man, his daughter Elena, a beautiful hippy, and her cynical fiancé, an exemplary modern pimp of high standing".²⁴ Evidently, the occupation of Sobiesky was changed in the course of re-writing the screenplay, but it is clear that this character was conceptualised as a well-to-do person of significant social influence from the beginning. Elena, the early version of what would become Helen, is described as adhering to the counter culture, an attribute that was dropped at a later stage. The female character is the only one explicitly named in the treatment.

Moreover, the text attempts to explain the outlandish film title: It is so difficult to find the murderer because "he camouflages himself perfectly in the corrupt fauna of the capital [Rome] just like the strange animal from which the film take its inspiration, i.e. "the iguana that knows perfectly to hide between the leaves of tropical trees so one can pass without

20 - For a production history of the former film, see Michael Guameri, *The Gothic Bet: Riccardo Freda's I vampiri (1957) and the Birth of Italian Horror Cinema from an Industrial Perspective*. (London: Palgrave Communications, 2017). 29(3); 1-10.

21 - "A Roma, da qualche tempo, avvengono degli assassinii caratterizzati [sic] da una particolare ferocia. Il criminale infatti prima di sgozzare efferatamente le sue vittime ne deturpa il volto col vetriolo al punto da renderne talvolta impossibile l'identificazione." Richard Mann, *L'iguana dalla lingua di fuoco: soggetto cinematografico originale*. (Rome: Oceania Produzioni Internazionali Cinematografiche, s. p., 1971) All translations are the author's.

22 - Ibid. "nel corrotto mondo degli invertiti e dei drogati".

23 - For a more detailed argument about this topic, see Mauro Giori, *Homosexuality and Italian Cinema: From the Fall of Fascism to the Years of Lead*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

24 - Op. cit. Mann. "un famoso chirurgo, uomo corrotto e spregiudicato, sua figlia Elena, una bellissima hippy, e il suo fidanzato cinico esemplare di moderno magnaccio d'alto bordo".

realising it is there."²⁵ While it is unclear which source the author cites, it is remarkable that, even though the treatment is as rudimentary as can be, it goes to great lengths to elucidate the titular metaphor. Using an animal name in the title of a post-1970 thriller is no surprise, as many imitators attempted to cash in on Dario Argento's box-office wonder.²⁶

Ultimately, the brief plot description, which ends with the killer's attack on the investigator's mother, reveals Elena as the assassin. Instead of indicating a motive, the treatment explains her modus operandi. The surgeon's daughter, "in order to dismiss any suspicion, used to dress as a man".²⁷ In early 1971, such a finale was not exactly inventive, as female killers and gender ambivalence had been a common trait of the genre for years.²⁸ Of course, the first example that comes to mind is *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* and its murderous gallery owner. Still, there are many pre-Argento instances such as the early gialli by Mario Bava, *I Am What I Am* and *Detective Belli*. While the finished film version does not retain the plot twist as it had been conceived initially, the movie repeatedly shows the police's awareness of the possibility that the murderer could be a woman.

So how are we supposed to understand the development from this succinct description to the 96-minute film? The synopsis illustrates a trend appreciated by aficionados of the genre and lamented by its detractors. Instead of delivering a coherent plot, the text indulges in the primary attractions the film cycle has to offer: a spectacle of blood and violence. The method with which the killer usually proceeds to dispatch his victims is explicated in all its gory gruesomeness. Author Ermanno Donati evokes a milieu that is morally and sexually corrupted, in which everybody is suspicious and a potential culprit. Indeed, the word "corrotto" ("corrupted") is the adjective most frequently used in the treatment. Ultimately, the reasons that have made Elena commit a brutal series of murders are not mentioned. They simply do not matter. What counts in the logic of the filmmakers is the hauntingly graphic assassination of characters: the reader imagines the appalling burning of the face which melts into an indistinguishable blend of sore flesh and acid, the nasty noise of the blade slicing the throat, the air sucked in through the gaping wound, the warm blood pouring out of it, and the twitch of the struggling body which slowly dies. By emphasising bloodthirsty details, the treatment evokes carnal sensations and emotional reactions.

25 - Ibid. "questi [sic] si mimetizza perfettamente tra la fauna corrotta della capitale appunto come lo strano animale da cui prende spunto il film e cioè "l'iguana che sa mimetizzarsi alla perfezione tra le fronde degli alberi tropicali tanto che ci si può passare accanto senza accorgersi della sua presenza".

26 - In his autobiography Argento admits how much the boom of animal-titled gialli bothered him and even dedicated a chapter to it. See Dario Argento, *Paura*, ed. Marco Peano. (Torino: Einaudi, 2014). 124-132.

27 - Op. cit. Mann. "per meglio stornare da sè [sic] ogni sospetto usa travestirsi da uomo".

28 - Op. cit. Koven. 102-103.



In the final film the lack of a convincing motive is still present. Eventually, Donati's initial story pretty much contains the narrative basis for the film. Most of the ingredients were there from the beginning and left unchanged in the process of shaping the definitive version. The evolution of the final plot twist might seem like a more substantial modification at first glance. However, the actual movie retains the red herrings about a possibly female murderer and does not grant much narrative grounding to the revelation of the gay brother as the culprit instead of Elena/Helen. Hence, the discovery of the maniac's identity still represents only a slight variation of what has been laid out in the synopsis. The existence of only minor changes could indicate that the filmmakers did not have the time or will to develop the initial narrative carefully and undertake more substantial revisions. However, the continuity from story to film suggests a straightforward production process.

The Italian-German Co-Production

On 22 March 1971, Fono Roma and Oceania Produzioni Internazionali Cinematografiche enquired to the Ministry as to whether it was willing to permit the shooting in Dublin and its surroundings as well as in a yet to be defined place in Switzerland or "another Nordic country".²⁹ The screenplay made foreign location shooting absolutely necessary. This was a common request of production companies in order not to jeopardise the much-needed state subsidies for manufacturing a national film.

Evidently, the Italian business partners decided it might be wise to involve a further company in order to decrease the financial investment of each participating company. On 25 March, Fono and Oceania signed a co-production contract with the German Terra Filmkunst. The Berlin-based firm evolved from Terra Film, which had been founded in 1919 and became one of the most prolific production outlets during the National Socialist dictatorship. After being nationalised and incorporated in the Nazi-controlled Ufa-Film GmbH, Terra Filmkunst was re-privatised after World War Two and took up work towards the end of the 1960s. From the very beginning of this period, co-operating with Italian firms was an important element of Terra's business activities. The German company, which was associated with the powerful distributor Constantin, mainly invested in lowbrow genre fare like westerns, sex comedies and horror films. For example, it participated in several instalments of Franz Antel's *Sexy Susan* series which was successful in a couple of European markets.³⁰ In 1971, Terra was involved in the production of two gialli, *The Cat o' Nine Tails (Il gatto a nove code)* and *Iguana*.

29 - "altro paese nordico". Momigliano, Sbarigia and Rossi, 'Letter to the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment'.

30 - Tim Bergfelder, *International Adventures: German Popular Cinema and European Co-Productions in the 1960s* (New York: Berghahn, 2005), 226–227. For the director's own recollections of making the *Sexy Susan* movies, see Franz Antel, *Verdreht, verliebt, mein Leben*, ed. Peter Orhofer. (Munich: Amalthea, 2001), 175–179.

The contract between Fono, Oceania and Terra stipulated that the German share would be 30% of the production budget which amounted to £350 million in total. The six or seven-week shoot, parts of which were supposed to take place in Germany instead of Switzerland, was postponed to the week until early May 1971. Even though Terra was involved, the Italians were designated as executive producers.³¹ Yet, the collaboration did not only concern the financial but also the practical. As regulated in the German-Italian co-production agreement, the German partner had to send – and pay – a technician, an actor assuming a leading role and "two actors in a role of a certain relevance".³² In addition, the Germans were obliged to compensate for a possible location shooting in Germany. If the actual costs exceeded or were below the intended budget, they were to be apportioned according to the appointed investment share. However, the contract only envisaged a cost overrun of 30% of the estimate.

Once the Italians had finished the editing, they had to send all the necessary materials needed to assemble the German edition. This included a positive colour working copy as well as an internegative of the film and the trailer, the sound track including music and sound effects, the background for the title sequence, a series of film stills as well as a dialogue list. Terra committed itself to pay 30% of the production costs minus the expenditure for the shooting in Germany and the German personnel no later than 60 days after receiving the final film from their partners. Not only the production duties were well-regulated but also the distribution of profits. While the Italian group received the markets of Italy, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Libya and Malta, the German partner obtained its own territory (the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, and Austria). This provision also pertained to planes and ships attributed to the respective nations. For a commission of 15%, the Italians would handle sales to other countries. The revenue from foreign sales was to be divided according to the investment share of 70 and 30%.

Furthermore, the co-production contract took great care to manage advertising. The strategy was always to emphasise the Italian contribution within Italy ("an Italian-German co-production") and the German input in Germany and Austria ("a German-Italian co-production"). Internationally, the former word order had to be used. The contract also stipulated that all advertising efforts had to be communicated clearly between both partners. None of them could be held accountable for the non-compliance of these conditions caused by third parties. Still, every group was contractually allowed to take proceedings in order to defend its own interests. Finally, the agreement between Fono, Oceania and Terra envisaged that, in the case of conflicts about the interpretation of the contract, the companies would consult the competent authorities, i.e. the government bodies regulating

31 - Momigliano, Sbarigia, Rossi and Waldfried Barthel, '[Co-production contract]'. 25 Mar 1971, 1–2.

32 - Ibid. "Due attori in un ruolo di un certo rilievo".



film policy in Italy and Germany. If this did not suffice, they would submit themselves to an arbitration managed by the relevant trade organisations. If the worst came to the worst, the case could be brought to court. This course of action was determined in order to avoid expensive supranational lawsuits.

A day after signing the initial document, minor modifications were made. An amendment of the co-production contract dated 26 March 1971 specified the crew members to be contributed by the German partner: a contributor to the screenplay, an assistant director, a production supervisor and an assistant editor.³³ This should have smoothed the co-operation between the Italian and the German group. On 2 April, Fono and Oceania announced the involvement of Terra to the Italian Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment and applied for the project to be recognised as a co-production under the official Italian-German agreement.³⁴

On 13 April, Oceania concluded a contract with the Roman DEAR studios. Instead of shooting at ICET Milano as previously planned, the production company hired a sound stage and, adjacently, an office, six small rooms, a make-up room, a tailoring, a fund for props and a darkroom at DEAR's facility in via Nomentana 833 in Rome. Initially, the studio space was booked from 17-29 May. According to the document, Oceania's contact person was, surprisingly, Ermanno Donati, author of the story and producer in his own right. Hence, it seems that Donati had a more significant role in making Riccardo Freda's 1971 film than apparent from the preserved correspondence with the ministry. At least, he appeared as an intermediary between Oceania and DEAR when negotiating the leasing of studio space.³⁵

At the end of April, the Italian companies gave notice of the beginning of the shooting to the ministry once again. Attached were updated documents covering all details of the upcoming production. With the support of their German co-producer, the works were to commence on 3 May 1971.³⁶ The budget stipulated that Fono and Oceania would each pay £122,500,000, while Terra provided £105 million in order to finance the film's total costs of £350 million.³⁷ While Ermanno Donati aka Richard Mann was still credited as the author of the synopsis, he was replaced as a screenwriter. Now, Riccardo Freda and Alessandro Continenza were listed as the authors of the script.³⁸ Continenza was a highly efficient specialist for all types of lowbrow genre fare whose career spanned from the 1950s until the late 1980s. Although

not as dedicated to the genre as, say, giallo expert Ernesto Gastaldi, other thrillers penned by Continenza were *Murder by Music (Las trompetas del apocalipsis)*, 1969) and *The Crimes of the Black Cat (Sette scialli di seta gialla)*, 1972.

As the participation of the German co-producer required, a certain Günter Ebert was mentioned as a collaborator to the screenplay. It remains unclear whether Ebert, if he existed, really made a contribution. At least, he was not a prolific industry professional like Continenza, and most of his screenplay credits were somehow related to Terra's exploitation-film investments in Italy. The same is true for assistant director Leo Jahn and production supervisor Fritz Hammel whose employment for *Iguana* represented his only credit within a movie's production department. The appointment of Gertrud Petermann as an assistant editor, however, is more likely, as Terra needed to rework the Italian print into a German master copy by all means. The Italian group hired an assistant editor too, Bruno Micheli.³⁹ He and his sister Ornella worked on many Italian genre films and frequently collaborated with Lucio Fulci. In fact, Ornella Micheli was one of the few female editors in 1960s and 1970s Italy.⁴⁰ Right after their collaboration with Riccardo Freda, the Michelis went on to edit *Don't Torture a Duckling (Non si sevizia un paperino)*, 1972.⁴¹

Instead of Stelvio Cipriani, who was mentioned in the first crew list, the second one named Ennio Morricone, again with the rather unusual job title of "Musician".⁴² Yet, the soundtrack was ultimately commissioned to Cipriani, an equally prolific film composer who created many of the catchiest giallo tunes. Costume designer Enrico Sabatini and art director Aurelio Crugnola were substituted by Nadia Vitali and Giuseppe Chevalier Mifsud, two rather unremarkable production workers. At this stage, the position of the editor was still to be filled. Two appointments that were to be defined in the previous version of the crew list concerned the personnel with a diploma by the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, the national film school. The Italian state decided to support CSC graduates in the contested film industry and stipulated in the 1965 cinema law that every domestic movie had to hire at least two professionals trained at the school. Many producers conformed to this demand by hiring actors with CSC diplomas as extras and paying them the minimum wage. In the case of *Iguana*, Oceania employed camera assistant Ennio Marzocchini and production secretary Giuseppe Bruno Bossio for two weeks each in order to fulfil the requirement and receive the sought-after certificate of nationality.⁴³

33 - Momigliano, Sbarigia, Rossi and Barthel, 'Appendice al contratto di coproduzione data 25 marzo 1971'. 26 Mar 1971.

34 - Op. cit. [Letter], 2 Apr 1971.

35 - DEAR Centro Cinematografico e Televisivo, '[Contract]'. 13 Apr 1971. See also DEAR Centro Cinematografico e Televisivo, 'Dichiarazione', 11 June 1971.

36 - Momigliano and Rossi, 'Denuncia inizio lavorazione'. 29 April 1971.

37 - Op. cit. "Piano finanziario".

38 - Momigliano and Rossi, 'Elenco personale tecnico'. 29 April 1971.

39 - Ibid.

40 - See Dalia Missero, 'Titillating Cuts: Genealogies of Women Editors in Italian Cinema' in *Feminist Media Histories* 4(4), 57-82.

41 - See Federico Caddeo's 'From the Cutting Table' (2016), an interview with Bruno Micheli available in *Don't Torture a Duckling*. (Arrow Video: 2017).

42 - "musicista". Op. cit. 'Elenco personale tecnico'.

43 - Ibid.



At the end of April, the cast was nearly complete. Luigi Pistilli resumed the role of Norton, the rogue cop, and Dagmar Lassander would play Helen, the daughter of the Ambassador. Anton Diffring was cast for the latter role, while Valentina Cortese received the part of his wife Irene. The supporting actors were also confirmed: Werner Pochath as Marc, Helen's quirky brother; Renato Romano as Mandel, the driver; Dominique Boschero as Juanita, the Ambassador's mistress who ends up dead in the nightclub; Sergio Doria as Walter, and Arthur O'Sullivan as Inspector Lawrence. At this stage of production, Arthur O'Sullivan represented the only Irishman in a cast for a movie that, except for a few sequences, was set mainly in Ireland.⁴⁴ Norton's mother, Ann, the doctor, a friend of Marc's, Bernard and the first victim still had to be cast.⁴⁵ All in all, this was an impressive array of genre film favourites.

While Pistilli and Lassander were giallo regulars, Diffring was not frequently hired for Italian productions. Still, the latter's filmography exceeds 140 entries, and he never shied away from such titillating titles as *The Man Who Could Cheat Death* (1959) and *Mark of the Devil Part II (Hexen geschändet und zu Tode gequält)*, 1973).⁴⁶ Valentina Cortese was a similar case. After a contract with 20th Century Fox in the late-1940s, the actress embarked on an international career. Although, when in Italy, she worked with prestigious directors such as Michelangelo Antonioni, Federico Fellini and Franco Zeffirelli, Cortese also starred in many popular exploitation films. As the killer in Mario Bava's black-and-white thriller *The Girl Who Knew Too Much* and the mysterious daughter of the hotel owner in *The Possessed (La donna del lago)*, 1965), the actress already had experience with the giallo cycle prior to *Iguana*. Moreover, this was already her third collaboration with Riccardo Freda with whom she had made a two-part adaptation of Victor Hugo's classic novel *Les Misérables* in 1948. The fact that Cortese was nominated for an Academy Award shortly after her reunion with Freda for *Day for Night (La nuit américaine)*, 1973) demonstrated how easily she switched between the cinematic high- and low-brow.

The minor roles were well-cast too: the supporting actors Dominique Boschero, Werner Pochath und Renato Romano would all contribute to several gialli between the late 1960s and the mid-1970s. Romano, who later moved to Hollywood to become a producer and distributor, was especially active in the genre. Just between 1970 and 1974 he appeared in four additional gialli.

On 3 May 1971 the Frankfurt-based Federal Office of Industrial Economy informed the Italian authorities that it had received an application for a film to be submitted to the Italian-German co-production agreement. The film's German title was to be *Der Leguan*

44 - Ibid.

45 - Op. cit. 'Piano di lavorazione'.

46 - On the German witch films, see 'Mark of the Devil' in *Cine-Excess*. (E-journal. Special Edition. 26 Sep, 2017).

mit der Feuerzunge, and the total budget amounted to 2,065,000 Deutsche Mark. The responsible officer asserted to examine whether the project could be awarded the co-production benefits.⁴⁷

The Tripartite Co-Production

At the beginning of May 1971 a fundamental change occurred: Fono Roma did not want to finance the film anymore. In a second amendment of the co-production contract from 6 May 1971, Fono, Terra and Oceania agreed that the latter would be the only Italian participant involved.⁴⁸ At the beginning of the 1970s, Fono completely reorganised its business. The company produced its last film in 1970, and in 1973 the dubbing facility resumed work under the name Cooperativa dei Lavoratori Fono Roma. It is likely that its involvement in *Iguana* fell victim to this restructuring. Of course, the development disturbed the project's financial balance significantly. While Terra's share of £105 million remained the same, Oceania suddenly had to shoulder 70% of the total budget alone, i.e. £245 million. For a company with a nominal capital of £30 million, this represented an enormous economic risk.⁴⁹ On 13 May 1971, Oceania and Fono informed the ministry about the change, initially without presenting the loss of the potent partner as a problem.⁵⁰ Rather, the remaining Italian company wanted to guard against losing the lucrative co-production status.

A day earlier, on 12 May, the ministry had finished its internal review of Riccardo Freda and Alessandro Continenza's screenplay, which consisted of a summary of the project and its overall quality. The plot description only reveals a minor difference between the screenplay and the final film. In the treatment it is the Ambassador's daughter Helen, rather than the Ambassador, who explains the course of events to Inspector Norton. Her brother "Marc was afflicted with homosexual tendencies and evidently, his mind was ultimately overwhelmed by madness to the point of attempting to cast suspicion and even kill his own family members who he blamed for his suffering".⁵¹ Unfortunately, the screenplay seems to be lost. However, the ministerial review makes it even clearer than the dialogue itself that Marc's sexual orientation has somehow prompted him to commit the atrocious murders. But in the assessment, it is exactly the killer's motivation that is identified as insufficient: "The weak point of the work seems to be [...] the revelation of the culprit's

47 - Op. Cit. '[Letter to the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment]', 3 May 1971.

48 - Momigliano, Sbarigia, Rossi and Barthel, 'Appendice n° 2 al contratto di coproduzione data 25 marzo 1971', 6 May 1971.

49 - Op. cit. "Piano finanziario".

50 - Momigliano and Rossi, "[Letter to the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment]", 13 May 1971.

51 - "Marc era da tempo afflitto da tendenze omosessuali e che evidentemente negli ultimi tempi la sua mente era stata travolta dalla follia, al punto da tentare di coinvolgere nei sospetti e addirittura uccidere gli stessi suoi familiari, sui quali evidentemente faceva ricadere la colpa del suo male." Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, '[Review]', 12 May 1971. 1.



identity. In contrast to the rules of the game, it unveils not just an unsuspecting person but rather an enigmatic and colourless character who, until then, has completely remained in the shadow.⁵² In the light of the film's finale, this seems to be a legitimate criticism. Still, the ministry was firmly convinced of the script's attractive mix of spectacle and suspense and predicted it to be a secure box-office success.⁵³

A few days after the withdrawal of Fono Roma, Oceania informed the ministry that their partner Terra Filmkunst would make expenses in the counter value of approximately £30 million directly in Germany.⁵⁴ At least, the German co-producer's confidence in the economic viability of the project was unbowed. In the meantime, the shooting of *Iguana* was under way since early May. This meant that the film was already being made while it remained uncertain whether the budget would suffice. The remaining producers tried to find a solution for this highly precarious situation by bringing in a third partner. By the end of May, they succeeded in overcoming their financial difficulties. A third amendment of the co-production contract from 26 May 1971 stipulated that the Nanterre-based company Les Films Corona would incur 20% of the total budget from Oceania. Hence, the Italian firm still represented the majority co-producer with 50%, while the German share of 30% remained constant and the French helped out to finance the rest of the sum.⁵⁵ Except for the territories conceded to Les Films Corona, the contract stayed as it was.⁵⁶ As every co-producer had to actually send employees, the new firm participated in the crew in the form of an assistant director.⁵⁷

The company from Nanterre had invested in the giallo genre from early on. The French co-produced *I Am What I Am* and *Death Laid an Egg* (*La morte ha fatto l'uovo*, 1968) in the wake of *Blow Up*. While funding Riccardo Freda's thriller, they were co-producing *A Lizard in a Woman's Skin* (*Una lucertola con la pelle di donna*, 1971) at the same time. As Corona had frequently collaborated with Ermanno Donati and Luigi Carpentieri's company Panda, it might be possible that Donati was not only active as an intermediary when looking for a

sound stage, but also procured the much-needed financier. Anyway, for Oceania and Terra the involvement of a French partner represented a most welcome development.

On 7 June 1971 Oceania's executive Manlio Rossi asked the Italian ministry to permit his company to form a tripartite co-production out of *Iguana*.⁵⁸ In a second letter written on the same day, Rossi dwelled on the reasons for extending the project. Oceania "is subject to significant financial strain due to its current production activities (three films of global appeal under progress)".⁵⁹ He continued: "the film is neither finished nor dubbed yet".⁶⁰ The producer emphasised that the difficult situation had to do with Fono Roma's abrupt pull-out. Hence, the participation of Les Films Corona was inevitable.⁶¹ On the same day, Rossi applied for the provisional certificate of nationality.⁶² The authorities raised no objection, and the plan proceeded. As there were no demurs from the Italian side, the Federal Office of Industrial Economy, the competent department of the German government, approved of the Italian-German-French co-production too.⁶³

The Shooting and the Italian Release

When the Germans endorsed the new structure of the project, the actual shooting must have already been finished. The ultimate shooting schedule stipulated three weeks in Dublin and surroundings, one week in Germany or Switzerland and two weeks for interiors at the DEAR studios in Rome. The crew worked six days a week, from Monday till Saturday, and two days were reserved for travelling to Switzerland and Italy.⁶⁴ While most of the scene descriptions to be shot bore generic names like "apartment drive" or "interiors pub", two of them hinted at Phoenix Park and the suburb Dalkey in Dublin. Still, it is not sure if these sites were really used by the film crew.⁶⁵ In addition, it specified that Rome was also used for exteriors. Instead of going to Germany or Switzerland for the sequences set in snowy surroundings, Oceania's production team remained within Italy, filming the scenes in Cervinia, a mountain village in the Aosta Valley.⁶⁶

52 - "Il punto debole del lavoro sembra risiedere [...] nella rivelazione dell'identità del colpevole che, contrariamente alle regole del gioco, risulta essere non tanto il più insospettabile, quanto una figura enigmatica e sbiadita rimasta fin lì del tutto in ombra." Op. cit. Ministry Review, 1-2.

53 - Ibid.

54 - Rossi, 'Letter to the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment', 15 May 1971.

55 - Rossi, Barthel and Robert Dorfmann, 'Appendice n° 2 al contratto di coproduzione data 25/3/1971', 26 May 1971, 1-2.

56 - The company obtained the right to exploit the film commercially in France, the French overseas territories, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, the French-speaking countries in Africa, Madagascar, North and South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Belgium, the ex-Belgian Congo, Luxemburg and all ships and airplanes affiliated with France. Rossi, Barthel and Dorfmann, 'Appendice n° 2 al contratto di coproduzione data 25/3/1971', 4.

57 - Rossi, 'Elenco personale tecnico', 12 Jun 1971.

58 - Rossi, '[Letter to the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment 1]', 7 Jun 1971.

59 - Ibid. "è esposta ad un onere finanziario gravoso visto nel quadro della sua attività produttiva in corso (tre films di risonanza mondiale in lavorazione)".

60 - Ibid. "il film in parola non è ancora ultimato, nè [sic] doppiato".

61 - Ibid.

62 - Rossi, "Richiesta certificato nazionalità provvisoria", 7 Jun 1971.

63 - Unknown. '[Letter to the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment]', 5 and 7 Jul 1971.

64 - Op. cit. 'Piano di lavorazione'.

65 - "appartamento autista", "interno pub". Momigliano and Rossi, 'Piano di lavorazione', 29 Apr 1971.

66 - Rossi, "Rapporto riprese all'estero", 31 May 1974.

The bob sequence and the special effects were scheduled for the last two days of production.⁶⁷ Therefore, it could be assumed that the bad quality of the gore effects, which has been noted by many fans and critics, was simply caused by a lack of time. Then again, Dario Argento's well-budgeted *Deep Red* was released four years after Riccardo Freda's giallo and some of its splatter sequences, especially the decapitation scene at the end, were visibly bogus. This would indicate that effects now deemed as apparently artificial were considered realistic at the time and, hence, a cinematic convention.

The only anecdote about filming Freda's 1971 giallo comes from Dagmar Lassander. Before flying from Rome to Dublin, the production company enquired whether the actress could carry a parcel in her luggage. Lassander complied with the request. On a delayed stopover on a London airport, the police questioned her about her suitcase, as blood dripped from it. When opening the baggage, it turned out that the production company's parcel contained a stuffed cat and a bag of fake blood that had been damaged. The animal was to be used as a prop in the scene in which Norton's daughter Ann finds a dead cat in the fridge. According to Lassander, the bloody surprise became an unpleasant issue, as the import of any type of animal into the United Kingdom had to be declared before entering the country. Moreover, the police did not believe that she was not aware of the stuffed cat in her suitcase. As a consequence, they held her at the airport for hours. The incident quite upset the actress who blamed the producer for her discomfort.⁶⁸

Further testimonies regarding *Iguana* exist, but do not concern the shoot itself. Dominique Boschero, the French actress who plays Juanita, Ambassador Sobiesky's mistress, remembered that "they paid us with uncovered cheques. It wasn't only a low-budget film but also the cheques were fake."⁶⁹ The preserved correspondence between the production companies and the Italian ministry do not indicate such irregularities, so evidently, the authorities were not aware of the producers' attempt to defraud. Yet, it would be wrong to perceive shady business practices as unusual. Rather, in the 1960s and 1970s the effort to fleece collaborators was well-established in the Italian film industry, just as in any other national cinema sector.

Director Riccardo Freda expected to work with Roger Moore as the leading actor and was not satisfied with Luigi Pistilli, who would ultimately take the role.⁷⁰ Despite such feelings,

67 - Momigliano and Rossi, 'Piano di lavorazione', 29 Apr 1971.

68 - Lassander quoted in Stefano Iachetti, *La paura cammina con i tacchi alti: il giallo all'italiana raccontato dalle protagoniste e dai protagonisti del cinema degli anni Settanta*. (Piombino: Il Foglio, 2017), 78–79. The actress also tells an abbreviated version of the occurrence in 'Frightened Dagmar' (2015), an interview available in *The Black Cat* (Arrow Video: 2016).

69 - Boschero quoted in Iachetti, 2017, 26.

70 - Freda quoted in Curti, *Riccardo Freda: The Life and Works of a Born Filmmaker*. (Jefferson: McFarland, 2017), 252.

the filmmakers hurried into post-production with Freda himself as the editor immediately after shooting wrapped. The production only cost £285 million, staying significantly under budget.⁷¹ Even though Giulio Sbarigia, the executive of Fono Roma, had abandoned the project during pre-production, he bought the finished film for the major distributor Euro International Film. Sbarigia managed both the production and the distribution company.⁷² With the support of one of the most potent distributors in Italy, Freda's giallo was ready to conquer the domestic market.

At the end of August 1971, the movie was released in first-run cinemas in Bologna, Florence, Milan and Turin.⁷³ The beginning of the new season was highly competitive, as a range of other gialli vied for audience attention. In the first-run circuit, *Iguana* was pitted against *The Night Evelyn Came Out of the Grave* (*La notte che Evelyn uscì dalla tomba*, Emilio P. Miraglia, 1971), *The Case of the Scorpion's Tail* (*La coda dello scorpione*, Sergio Martino, 1971) and a lot of other exploitation fare. Freda's film managed to earn, depending on the source, £139,847,000, £164,643,000 or £169,405,000 at the domestic box office.⁷⁴ It is likely that the later publications cited contain higher figures, as the movie had still been circulating in third-run cinemas, thus generating more income. In any case, such earnings were not satisfactory for a £285-million film. Hence, the automatic rebate of every national production's gross revenue became even more important. But due to the imprudent approach of the producers, the pay-out of the state subsidy was in danger.

Bureaucratic Repercussions

On 22 July 1971, the Italian Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment prepared the concession of the certificate of nationality to Oceania. It checked with its counterparts in France and Germany whether the tripartite co-production would be recognised as a national film in each country.⁷⁵ If this was the case, Oceania, Terra and Les Films Corona would have each received subsidies from their respective states. At the beginning of August, Oceania, which had already received a temporary certificate, requested the definitive document from the

71 - Rossi, '[Letter to the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment]', 3 Jan 1974.

72 - Bernardini, 2000, 188.

73 - *Cinema d'oggi*, 30 August 1971, 13. First-run cinemas were luxurious inner-city theatres demanding high ticket prices and screening new releases exclusively, while second- and third-run venues were considerably cheaper and offered older films. For a study of giallo distribution, see 'Not Niche at All: The Distribution and Marketing of the Giallo Genre' in *Bianco & Nero*. (n. 587, 2017) 113–126.

74 - ANICAGIS, *Catalogo generale dei film italiani dal 1956 al 1973*. (Roma: Associazione Nazionale Industrie Cinematografiche ed Affini/Associazione Generale Italiana dello Spettacolo, 1973), 102; Rondolino, 1975, 122; AGIS, *Catalogo generale dei film italiani dal 1965 al 1978*, 5th ed. (Roma: Associazione Generale Italiana dello Spettacolo, 1975), 162.

75 - Evangelisti, '[Letter to the National Centre for Cinematography]'; '[Letter to the Federal Office of Industrial Economy]', 22 Jul 1971.

authorities in Rome.⁷⁶ However, on 22 October of the same year, the National Centre for Cinematography, the French film authority, informed its Italian colleagues about a significant decision regarding *Iguana*. The Centre denied the status as a domestic film because Les Films Corona had submitted the required documentation late. Moreover, the project did neither involve any French actors and nor fulfil the necessary share of French technicians.⁷⁷ This refusal set a chain reaction in motion. Subsequently, also the Germans and the Italians revoked the status as a national co-production as demanded by the interstate agreement between Italy, Germany and France.⁷⁸ This meant that Oceania and Terra would have lost urgently needed benefits they had already taken into account.

Of course, the co-production partners could not accept such an outcome. On 15 May 1972, they composed a document stating that Les Films Corona, whose administrator also signed the paper, withdrew from its participation. Hence, the only valid contract was the one between Oceania and Terra.⁷⁹ On October 1972, Oceania asked the Italian ministry whether it would take a step back and, since the French company was not participating anymore, whether it would be willing to recognise the Italian-German co-production as national.⁸⁰ Of course, the ministry could not help but comply with Oceania's request as Freda's film fulfilled all necessary requirements. By the end of 1972, the Italian authorities eventually recognised *Iguana* as national.⁸¹ In mid-1973 the Germans followed suit.⁸² Only on 18 July 1974, almost three years after the film's release on the domestic cinema market, the authorities conceded the definitive certificate of nationality and, with it, subsidies in the amount of 13% of the Italian gross revenue.

It is astonishing that the loss of the third co-production partner – once apparently essential – did not seem to be a problem in the end. When it became clear that the state subsidies would not be distributed as expected, Oceania and Terra were quick to dispose of their French partner. Also, Les Films Corona got involved when the shoot was already in an advanced stage, so one wonders what they were supposed to pay. If their contribution was only meant to settle the post-production expenses, it is evident that the Italian-German partnership was able to pay for all the incoming costs *and* stay considerably under budget even without the investment from France. The occurrences around the third production company suggest that its involvement was a means to gain more government subsidies. However, the ploy was executed rather unprofessionally.

76 - Rossi, "Richiesta certificato definitivo nazionalità italiana". 6 Aug 1971.

77 - Walter Borg, "[Letter to the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment]". 22 Oct 1971.

78 - Unknown, "[Letter to the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment]". 20 Jan 1972.

79 - Rossi, Barthel and Dorfmann, "[Agreement between Oceania, Terra and Les Films Corona]". 15 May 1972.

80 - Rossi, "[Letter to the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment]". 20 Oct 1972.

81 - Speranza, "[Letter to Oceania]". 18 December 1972.

82 - Unknown, "[Letter to the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment]". 16 Jul 1973.

To conclude, it is worthwhile to assess the profitability of the project for the Italian side. If we assume that Oceania earned £169,405,000 through the film's commercial exploitation in different cinema circuits, it received £22,022,650 as a tax rebate. In total, the production company would have made £191,427,650 with *Iguana*. When compared with the investment of £199.5 million, 70% of the actual costs of £285 million, a loss of about £8.5 million seems bitter but, ultimately, a sum that could have been balanced through foreign sales. Viewed optimistically, the production of Riccardo Freda's thriller represented a zero-sum game.

£ = lire

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EURO INTERNATIONAL FILMS presenta

L'IGUANA DALLA LINGUA DI FUOCO

con
LUIGI PISTILLI
DAGMAR LASSANDER
ANTON DIFFRING
WERNER POCHAT
DOMINIQUE BOSCHERO
RENATO ROMANO
SERGIO DORIA
ARTHUR O'SULLIVAN
e
VALENTINA CORTESE
di
WILLY PARETO



STELVIO CIPRIANI

EASTMANGOLOR

CONTEMPORARY REVIEW

A murderer, conveniently masked, wanders around Dublin armed with [a] razor and flasks of vitriol. From here on, this imitative thriller reels off the customary repertoire of gory images with close-ups of slashed throats, streams of blood and disfigured faces. The police grope around in the dark, especially as the killings are linked to an ambassador with diplomatic immunity. It's up to Inspector Norton, [isolated] from the police because of his unorthodox methods (as shown in flashback), and now secretly entrusted with the investigation on by his ex-superiors, to solve the dark mystery and catch the paranoiac criminal.

Although hampered with a threadbare plot, after a rather far-fetched beginning director Willy Pareto (Riccardo Freda, that is) manages to get to grips with the story by way of some rather shrewd narrative twists – compared with the improvisations which usually characterize this type of product. Silvano Ippoliti's colour photography makes use of effective grayish tones. More conventional, on the other hand, is the acting by Luigi Pistilli (the investigator), Dagmar Lassander (of *Andrée* [*Andrea - Wie ein Blatt auf nackter Haut*, 1968] fame, who doesn't spare us her bare chest here either), and the grim-looking Werner Pochat [sic]. Only Valentina Cortese puts some effort in a more whimsical and colourful characterization.

Leonardo Autera, 'Rassegna cinematografica', *Corriere della Sera*, 26 Aug 1971



ABOUT THE RESTORATION

The Iguana with the Tongue of Fire (L'iguana dalla lingua di fuoco) is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.85:1 with Italian and English mono audio. Scanning and restoration work was completed at L'Immagine Ritrovata, Bologna. The original 35mm camera negative was scanned in 2K resolution on a pin-registered Arriscan. Thousands of instances of dirt, debris, scratches, picture instability and other instances of film wear were repaired or removed through a combination of digital restoration tools and techniques.

The mono Italian and English language tracks were remastered from the optical sound negatives. The audio synch will appear slightly loose against the picture, due to the fact that the dialogue was recorded entirely in post-production, as per the production standards of the period.

The film was graded on Digital Vision's Nucoda Film Master at R3Store Studios, London.

All original materials used in this restoration were accessed from Movietime.

Restoration supervised by **James White, Arrow Films**

L'Immagine Ritrovata:

Simone Arminio, Gilles Barberis, Valeria Bigongiali, Julia Mettenleiter, Alessia Navantieri, Charlotte Oddo, Caterina Palpacelli, Davide Pozzi, Elena Tammaccaro, Giandomenico Zeppa

R3Store Studios:

Gerry Gedge, Jo Griffin, Andrew O'Hagan, Rich Watson, Jenny Collins

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by **James Blackford**
Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**
Technical Producer **James White**
QC **Nora Mehenni, Alan Simmons**
Production Assistant **Nick Mastrini**
Subtitling **The Engine House Media Services**
Blu-ray Mastering **Fidelity in Motion**
Artist **Graham Humphreys**
Design **Obviously Creative**

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Jon Casbard, Roberto Curti, Richard Dyer, Andreas Ehrenreich, Harvey Fenton, David Flint, Manlio Gomasasca, Howard Hughes, Matthew Jarman, Peter Jilmstad, Dagmar Lassander, Bruno Micheli, Marc Morris, Davide Pulici, Jon Robertson, Adrian J. Smith



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