

Dr Amber Phillips

Felia Allum *The Invisible Camorra: Neapolitan Crime Families Across Europe* (Cornell University Press, 2016). 267 pages

Over the last decade or so, it has become increasingly difficult to ignore the global reach of Italy's mafias. This is thanks in no small part to the runaway success of Roberto Saviano's novel *Gomorrah* (2008) and other cultural representations, but also to events such as the 2007 massacre of six members of the Calabrian 'ndrangheta in Duisburg, Germany, or the recent murder of Slovakian journalist Ján Kuciak, which drew international media attention. Nonetheless, for all this improved awareness, there remains a lack of consensus as to the extent, the scale, and the precise nature, of the mafias' activities outside of Italy. International authorities have arguably been slow to react, and only in late 2018 did Europol set up a specific operational network on Italian mafia activities abroad, having acknowledged the existence of an 'important information gap' in a report in 2013.

With this book, Felia Allum has taken on the complex and unenviable task of helping to fill this gap, presenting the reader with fascinating original research on the Camorra in Europe. A breed apart from the Sicilian Mafia and the Calabrian 'ndrangheta – both of which are sworn secret societies with some level of internal cohesion – the Camorra is an umbrella term for a fluid criminal ecosystem made up of fiercely territorial and fractious individual clans, originating in the region of Campania. As Allum explains, while the Camorra's origins and organisational structures set it apart from the other mafias, they still have plenty in common: all maintain relationships with politics, civil society, and the legitimate economy, for example, and many of their criminal activities and business interests are also comparable. *'The Invisible Camorra'* is concerned with the spread of these activities outside the clans' home territory: in short, what happens when *camorristi* move abroad?

The aims of the book are threefold: first, to examine the Camorra's activities in five European countries (the UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain); second, to explain the nature of the Camorra's mobility between Naples and Europe; and finally, to highlight the complex nature of this mobility, and the tendency of foreign authorities and media to misunderstand it. The author has employed a mixed methods approach, and engaged with an impressively broad and complex range of material, including court files, interviews with former *camorristi*, newspaper articles and statistics. Allum deserves much praise for the skill with which she weaves together this material to form an engaging and coherent narrative, particularly given the substantial difficulties inherent to such a project: Allum not only faced the challenge of gaining access to material in five different countries, but also had to grapple with the major information gaps in the existing material, exacerbated by the absence of specific antimafia legislation in the selected countries.

Despite these difficulties, the book successfully takes its readers on an engaging and fascinating tour across Europe, spanning 35 years of history. It is divided into six chapters, with the first focusing on the range of push and pull factors which have motivated *camorristi* to move abroad. Chapter Two shifts from the 'why' to the 'how',

exploring the 'functional mobility' of the camorra. The author here demonstrates the two-way link between local districts and new foreign territories, with clans and their associates moving money, resources and people in both directions. Allum finds that when *camorristi* move abroad, they 'seek not to govern or colonise a new territory but to do what makes sense in the context of their legal and illegal commercial plans' (p. 41). The territorial control which characterises mafia power at 'home' is replaced by a range of diverse economic activities abroad, as the following four chapters illustrate, by examining the camorra's 'functional mobility' in the five countries identified above. I found the UK chapter particularly striking: Allum describes the Camorra's presence in the UK as 'rational, somewhat commercial, and invisible' (p. 181), using case studies to expose worrying glimpses of the country's vulnerability to mafia activities.

A key finding of the book is that the nature of Camorra migration differs from the depictions offered in previous literature. The case study chapters reveal a highly complex picture, with Allum acknowledging that the camorra's presence abroad varies hugely between different clans and different host countries. However, in the final section she is able to draw a number of striking conclusions, most notably that 'the camorra does not migrate', but rather 'travels continuously from one operational base to another' (p. 212). For Allum, the key to understanding camorra mobility unequivocally lies in the territory of origin: old and new territories are connected by fundamental, reciprocal links. The territorial control which characterises camorra power in its home territory transforms when it moves abroad and the *camorristi* moderate their behaviour, deftly camouflaging themselves to blend in with the host society. She stresses their ability to manipulate the growing internationalisation of modern life, skilfully exploiting the globalised economy for their own ends.

Allum's research indicates that we would be wise not to underestimate the Camorra. Although the book is rooted in political sociology, its content has clear relevance for Italianists, historians, and criminologists alike, and the accessible writing style should help go some way to fulfil the author's goal to tackle the misunderstanding that surrounds Italy's third largest mafia. 'The Invisible Camorra' is a valuable contribution to the literature on criminal mobility, and to our understanding of Camorra clans in Campania and in Europe.