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Redirecting Neorealism:

Italian Auteur-Actress Collaborations of the 1950s and 1960s

A dissertation presented

by

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to

The Department of Romance Languages and Literatures

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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in the subject of

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Redirecting Neorealism: Italian Auteur-Actress Collaborations of the 1950s and 1960s

Abstract

The aftermath of Italy's cinematic movement neorealism left several directors searching for a new cinematic practice and a new directorial identity. Many of the most artistically intrepid directors of the era turned to women as a means of professional and personal reinvention. This study analyzes the collaborations of Vittorio De Sica, Roberto Rossellini, Federico Fellini, and Michelangelo Antonioni with the actresses Sophia Loren, Ingrid Bergman, Giulietta Masina, and Monica Vitti, respectively.

The political disillusionment with post-war reconstruction and the desire to transcend the strictures of neorealist practice manifested as an impulse to turn towards more personal and lyrical cinematic narratives. By placing women at center stage, these directors found a conduit through which to explore the vision of the other. The post-neorealist films of these artists reveal the extent to which they abandoned neorealism's chorality, its focus on the collective and the common man, in favor of the single, marginalized, uncommon woman.

Using Deleuze's concept of deterritorialization, this dissertation addresses the way in which the collaborations of these couples, often defined by the directors' attempts to harness the woman's perspective, resulted in the creation of a third space, an open space of interpretation. The woman's vision presents a fruitful indeterminacy. An analysis of the films reveals how these women irreversibly changed the face of the directors' cinema. The study concludes with an

examination of Lina Wertmüller and Giancarlo Giannini's collaboration as an example of a "reverse" case that took place in the following decade (the 1970s).

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I. Introduction

Every critic focusing on a specific period in cinematic history is faced with the tricky proposition of historical and aesthetic demarcation. In Italian film, the monolithic term "neorealism," often used as an ambiguous catch-all, complicates this attempt at periodization. The 1950s and s'60s saw dramatic shifts in Italian cinema, a movement away from the categorical strictures of neorealism established by critics in the post-war era. And yet, in art, a turning is often a returning. While the auteurs of this era expanded the definition of their "neorealisms," venturing into new aesthetic realms, they also drew upon bygone eras. One such return, the focus of my study, is the reemergence of the female figure at the center of the frame. The four directors on whom I will focus—Vittorio De Sica, Roberto Rossellini, Federico Fellini, and Michelangelo Antonioni—all reinvented their cinema around women in the post-neorealist period. Their actresses—Sophia Loren, Ingrid Bergman, Giulietta Masina, and Monica Vitti, respectively—allowed a renegotiation with the directors' engagement with neorealism and all that it had come to contain.

The formation of these four directors can be traced, to varying degrees, to the crucible of neorealist practice.[1] The films I will examine demonstrate a reaction against or manipulation of this aesthetic and ideological base. Much of this reaction coincided with a general feeling of disillusion in the post-war reconstruction. The build-up to the *miracolo economico* redirected the collective desire for political and cultural reforms toward more purely economic concerns. The

[1] Here, as throughout this introduction, it is difficult to generalize about the trajectory of these directors. De Sica, for example, started his acting career in the late twenties and filmed the neorealist classic *Ladri di biciclette* in 1948, two years before Fellini or Antonioni made their first feature films (*Luci del varietà* and *Cronaca di un amore*, respectively). Yet even Deleuze insists that, along with Visconti, "Antonioni and Fellini are definitely part of neo-realism, despite all their differences." Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Robert Galeta and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 2005) 4.

result, on the part of intellectuals, was "a bitter feeling of helplessness and disenchantment, even of shame and remorse for a missed opportunity, with parties competing at polished forms of fraudulent patronage instead of busying themselves with negotiations framed by an idea of curbed inequalities and public good."[2] Naturally this failure debased the tenets by which neorealism was originally defined, that is, "as a social realist expression of populist politics," as Giuliana Minghelli reminds us—a definition that preceded a "formal appreciation of its innovation as an art cinema."[3] The political character of neorealism called for reconstruction, for the redemption of the ruins left by fascism: according to Noa Steimatsky, "In a landscape of ruins, neorealism *was* reconstruction."[4]

The clearest voices of *post*-neorealist reconstruction ("re"-reconstruction?) did not hesitate to offer a cultural critique of Italy's *miracolo economico* as well as an aesthetic critique of neorealism itself. The most resounding of these voices can be found in Rossellini, Fellini and Antonioni. Peter Bondanella affirms that "All three played an important role in scripting or directing neorealist works, but all felt continued critical association with the implicit goals or techniques of neorealism to be increasingly confining."[5] In their artistic transition from neorealism, however, they did not make a clean break, but rather raised "the specter of neorealism in an effort to lend aesthetic force" to questions about the economic miracle and its extension of postwar politics, as Karl Schoonover explains.[6] Though many film critics recognize

[2] Luca Barattoni, *Italian Post-Neorealist Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012) 12.

[3] Giuliana Minghelli, *Landscape and Memory in Post-Fascist Italian Film: Cinema, Year Zero* (New York: Routledge, 2013) 2.

[4] Noa Steimatsky, *Italian Locations: Reinhabiting the Past in Postwar Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) 45.

[5] Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 1990) 103.

[6] Karl Schoonover, *Brutal Vision: The Neorealist Body in Postwar Italian Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012) 187.

the complexity of this transitional period, few identify the crucial role that women played in it. My goal in this study is to elucidate the use of female focalizers as a passage from neorealist practice to a new directorial stylistics.

First, a note about periodization—upon which I've briefly touched—and the films that I've chosen to analyze. Each director finds a unique journey with his leading lady, and the forms they take are various indeed. Yet trends and reactionary movements emerge. The Italy of the fifties, as noted by Paul Ginsborg, saw the political and cultural entrenchment of the Christian Democrats through a base of Catholicism, Americanism, and anti-Communism.[7] Though Italy was not yet in a period of "unchecked industrial boom,"[8] the early efforts of economic reorganization were gathering force. In film, as Angelo Restivo notes, "the decades of the fifties can be seen as a period of aesthetic retrenchment—with neorealism either diminished to a kind of populist celebration of local color, or adopted as a method for cinematic experimentation."[9] Indeed, the early fifties saw the first use of neorealist stylistics as a jumping-board for more lyrical projects. Already, in 1950, Rossellini had struck out on his metaphysical journey with Bergman in *Stromboli*,[10] while two years later, De Sica was still adhering to the neorealist spirit with *Umberto D* (the same year as Rossellini's second Bergman collaboration, *Europa 51*). 1954 found Rossellini, Fellini, and De Sica all contributing to the post-neorealist corpus; but while

[7] Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988* (London: Penguin Books, 1990) 182.

[8] Ginsborg 186.

[9] Angelo Restivo, *The Cinema of Economic Miracles: Visuality and Modernization in the Italian Art Film* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002) 36.

[10] 1950 was also the year of Antonioni's *Cronaca di un amore*, wherein, according to Minghelli, "[N]eorealism folds on to itself and explicitly inhabits those historical shadows from which it emerged and that still darken Italy's artistic and political consciousness." Minghelli 130.

Viaggio in Italia and *La strada*[11] continued to travel the road toward innovative individual stylistics, De Sica, on the path of "populist celebration of local color," was wandering dangerously close to *neorealismo rosa* with *L'oro di Napoli*. Nine years later, at the height of the *miracolo economico*, De Sica would (re)commit fully to the *commedia all'italiana* in *Ieri, oggi, domani* (1963). The films on the tail end of my study, the mid-sixties, are primarily those of Antonioni—whose projects with Vitti started rather late in his career, considering that, at his age at the completion of *L'avventura* (he was 48 years-old when the film was released), Rossellini made *Viaggio in Italia* (and was therefore approaching the end of his collaboration with Bergman).[12] The mid-sixties saw new experiments in cinematography and color, most dramatically in *Deserto rosso* (1964) and *Giulietta degli spiriti* (1965). Antonioni and Fellini, then, more than their elders, were immersed in the decadent culture of the economic miracle and, along with Pasolini, became the representative *auteurs* of the sixties. Gian Piero Brunetta observes that "Fellini and Antonioni unhinged the coordinates and conditions that delimited creative space and the construction of the signified and the signifiers of the postwar period. They sought to construct works that were no longer measurable by the meter of the theory and poetics of neorealism and realism."[13] One could also argue that their break with neorealist practice was ultimately more permissible to Italian critics than that of Rossellini or De Sica, given the degree of separation between the younger artists and the so-called neorealist classics.[14]

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[11] Not incidentally, both films about Italian voyages.

[12] Alain Bergala points out that, though Antonioni was only six years younger than Rossellini and had even collaborated on the screenplay of *Un pilota ritorna* (1942) he seems to have "waited for his moment" to make truly modern film, after the first wave of neorealism, and therefore he was more in sync with the French *nouvelle vague*. Alain Bergala, "In ordine di apparizione sullo schermo: Rossellini, Antonioni, Godard," *Lo sguardo di Michelangelo Antonioni e le arti*, ed. Dominique Païni (Ferrara: Ferrara arte, 2013) 229.

[13] Gian Piero Brunetta, *Storia del cinema italiano*, vol. 4 (Roma: Editori riuniti, 1993) 153.

[14] One mustn't forget, however, the grief Fellini caught in the fifties with the new poetics of *La strada*, primarily from Marxist critics like Guido Aristarco.

This attempt at periodization should reveal, rather than a unified movement away from neorealist practice, a unique and dynamic set of approaches throughout this era. Much like the concept of "neorealism" itself, the use of female actresses as a means of cinematic reinvention takes on myriad forms, definitions, and timetables. Just as the term "neorealism" is a "fruitfully open, polysemic term, symptomatic of the transitional historical moment," according to Steimatsky,[15] the reemergence of the actress as central figure finds multiple manifestations and meanings—and, based on Steimatsky's scheme, finds its definition as a transition from a transition (neorealism).

This era, in addition to witnessing the defeat of intellectual idealism about post-war reconstruction, brought with it new questions about women's roles in and outside of the home. Though many of the roles traditionally assigned to women—mother, housewife—remained unchanged, and the shift toward house-based living translated into greater confinement to the home and resulting restriction of public involvement,[16] the industrialization of the boom era brought with it the promise of liberation from conventional values, even if this liberation could only ever hope to be incomplete. In the films I analyze, the female characters are increasingly agents of the troubling of traditional institutions, culminating in Antonioni's Vitti characters. They become, by and large, emblems of the rejection of conventional images of "womanhood" (with the notable exception of Loren). Moreover, the figure of the woman herself is a means of exploring notions of "modernity," as we will see in the discussion of Eleonora Duse (below). In many of these films, the directors attempt to harness the shifting subjectivity of their actresses,

[15] Steimatsky xxviii.

[16] Ginsborg 244.

woman as becoming, as a creature constantly in flux. Perhaps it is not too much to say that these female figures become a symbol of possibility in an age of disenchantment.

The danger of speaking about a group of actresses and the unique qualities they offer their directors could very easily lead to generalizing and/or essentializing, and I hope that the individual treatments of my director-actress duos avert this potential pitfall. In fact, much of what makes these women distinctive is the directors' own estimation of their qualities, and what makes the directors unique is an exploration of the otherwise inaccessible perspective that women bring to the table. Whether considering women more "sensitive" filters of reality, as in the case of Antonioni,[17] or viewing the cinema space itself a type of womb, and women the "dream image" projected by men, as Fellini does,[18] these directors see woman as a conduit to a more personal, poetic view of the world. As Bergala says of Rossellini and Antonioni, "La rottura con il loro passato cinematografico doveva essere mutata dalla comparsa di una nuova attrice, di un corpo nuovo, di una nuova gestualità, di un nuovo rapporto con la recitazione e con la macchina da presa."[19] In other words, the entrance of Bergman and Vitti allowed a complete rethinking of their directorial stylistics. Moreover, and again, primarily in the case of Bergman, Masina, and Vitti, from their performances emerged dramatic shifts in the spectator's viewing modes. Not unlike the street urchins of the neorealist era, the female focalizers of these post-neorealist films play the part of marginalized witness: Deleuze claims that "the child is affected by a certain motor helplessness, but one which makes him all the more capable of seeing and

[17] Michelangelo Antonioni, *Fare un film è per me vivere: scritti sul cinema* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1994) 170.

[18] Gideon Bachmann,"And His Ship Sails On: Federico Fellini Interviewed," in *Federico Fellini: Interviews*, ed. Bert Cardullo (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006): 125.

[19] Bergala 230.

hearing."[20] Even more than the neorealist children-witnesses, the female focalizers allow access to a modern vision of the world gazing out from a "sick," liminal body.

As explained at the opening of this chapter, the director's placement of a woman at center-stage is hardly unprecedented in cinematic history; even the appropriation of female vision by a male artist in service of aesthetic renovation is a recurring motif. The most dramatic instance of this interaction comes in the *fin de siècle* relationship of Gabriele D'Annunzio and Eleonora Duse. As Lucia Re explains, D'Annunzio cast Duse not only as his muse, but also as the "emblema essenziale della forza innovativa della propria arte."[21] The collaboration of the playwright and actress in many ways prefigures the relationships of the directors and actresses in my study. Just like Bergman, Masina, Vitti, and Loren, Duse remained faithful to an image of herself that was "sapientemente costruita, di cui ogni interpretazione era una seducente variazione."[22] We shall see that it is the strength of the actress's type, or star image, that the director either consciously exploits or battles across the arc of their projects—this consistency of image (and in some cases its problematization) is the essential reason for which the director repeatedly uses an actress. It is through recurrent use that the director comes to feel "ownership" of the actress, even a sense that he is in some way responsible for her creation; in the case of D'Annunzio and Duse, the artist even longed to "possess" the dynamic body of the actress. Often, the appropriation of the female perspective implies her corporal humiliation; according to Re, Duse's entire collaboration with D'Annunzio "si svolge all'insegna sadica della divisione,

[20] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Robert Galeta and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 2005) 3.

[21] Lucia Re, "D'Annunzio, Duse, Wilde, Bernhardt: il rapporto autore/attrice fra decadentismo e modernità," *MLN* 117.1 (2002): 119.

[22] Re 121.

della menomazione o della purificazione (cioè eliminazione o esorcizzazione del corpo)."[23] We shall see this "sadism" play out particularly with Bergman and Masina. Lastly, and most importantly for this analysis, Duse becomes for D'Annunzio the incarnation of modernity in all its instability: "La famosa modernità della Duse corrisponde alla sua capacità di esibire al pubblico la natura che si ritiene profondamente nevrotica, 'isterica,' e comunque psichicamente malata, della donna 'moderna,' e, in definitiva, della modernità stessa."[24] Her neurosis, the tenuousness of her subjectivity, becomes Duse's most modern characteristic—she inhabits "un'identità simulata, nomadica e labirintica, decisamente moderna."[25] It is this same state of constant, elusive becoming that continues to draw the male artist to the female conduit in the 20th century.

The developments and complications of the modern era naturally create more levels on which to examine this already complex relationship. History intrudes onto art. The question, in the case of the post-neorealist film, is how the woman was seen vis-à-vis (recent) history. Was woman a-historical, or deeply historical? Was she a means of fleeing history, memorializing it, rewriting it, burying it? Again, these questions largely depend on the individual nature of the relationship and treatment of the actress. We can say with certainty, however, that the portrayal of these women is a far cry from the poignant martyrdom of Pina in *Roma città aperta*. There is a decisive move away from bold, ideologically inflected cinematic statements toward subtle, ambiguous personal reflections. Reconstruction becomes introspection; action becomes contemplation. If these directors, at the height of the neorealist period, had attempted the reformation of the post-war national character in their films, in the subsequent era, their

[23] Re 148.

[24] Re 133.

[25] Re 152.

actresses, acting as filters, allowed them to examine what they had constructed, or what they had failed to construct. The trajectory, then, is from History to story, from chorality to the diminished, single voice, from collective to limited vision. This "minor" perspective implies that there is no truth in absolute values. Great events, dramatic violence, abject poverty are all eclipsed by quiet anxiety, introspective alienation, and bourgeois crises of subjectivity.

Is the figure of the woman therefore in some way a means of mourning the past, and/or mourning the passing of neorealism? Certainly, in neorealism itself, the woman's body is inscribed with wartime scars; as we shall see, in the immediate post-war, even the pregnant body can be a symbol of loss. The female body, source of life and pain, "*materia*," easily becomes a site of memorialization. Much like the landscape, it alternately hides and exposes traumas. Minghelli, speaking of Visconti and the creators of *Ossessione*, asserts that they "found in the landscape both the inscription of their present historical imprisonment and the promise of stories yet to be written."[26] In post-neorealist film, female focalizers represent a similar possibility. But these women also came to be seen as the agents of neorealism's betrayal. Ora Gelley explains that Rossellini's refocusing on a female star—a Hollywood star, no less!—was perceived as a rupture with the "pure, uncorrupted national identity" in his neorealist films that had showcased "common man and his links to regional landscape."[27] This reminds us, then, that woman is also and always radically other, an object. And while Bergman's star power works to eclipse the image of recent history so essential to neorealist myth-making, there is more than one way to be "a-historical." Bergman, Vitti, and Masina (to a lesser extent) often embody post-war historical amnesia while Loren's body, her very sexuality, is used to "overwrite" historical considerations.

[26] Minghelli 19.

[27] Ora Gelley, *Stardom and the Aesthetics of Neorealism: Ingrid Bergman in Rossellini's Italy* (London: Routledge, 2011) 9.

In both cases, these women sanction the examination of a-historicity and its implications, allowing the directors to comment on the increasing historical blindness of the fifties and sixties. On the other hand, this exploration does not necessarily carry strictly negative connotations. As mentioned, the figure of the woman, with her alternative vision and marginalized voice, permits access to an alternate storyline, an escape from the merciless inertia of linear, fatal macrohistory. Rossellini and Fellini, in their condemnation of what Bondanella calls the era's "poverty of spirituality,"[28] use their leading ladies as mediums for self-revelatory spiritual encounters.

Discussing Antonioni's protagonists, Deleuze identifies a "modern brain and a tired, worn-out, neurotic body."[29] Though the critic was referring to the co-existence in a single person of the nostalgic, exhausted body and the modern, cinematic brain (to maintain his terminology), I believe that this is instead an apt metaphor for the post-neorealist director and the female protagonist. While the director's body (of work) is still tied to an effete, worn out system of ideology and formal practices, the active, enigmatic mind of the female focalizer promises a space of reinvention. The tension between the "body-director" and "brain-actress" includes the distance always present between the two—the productive distance between contemplation and action, self and other.

This metaphor can also be taken as an illustration of Deleuze's concept of deterritorialization, which operates even at the most basic level of these collaborations. The gap that exists between the "body-director" and the "brain-actress," between her perspective and his attempt to harness it, becomes a deterritorialized third space, open to new modes of vision. In its

[28] Bondanella 141.

[29] Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 204.

most broad application, deterritorialization can be "physical, mental or spiritual,"[30] and "to deterritorialize is to free up the fixed relations that contain a body all the while exposing it to new organizations."[31] This concept operates on multiple planes in my study: in terms of the reevaluation of history, in terms of neorealist practices and directorial aesthetics, in terms of spectatorial (re)positioning and response, and in terms of the actress's performance, subjectivity, and focalization, just to name some of the primary examples. Next, it permits an examination of the unintended effects of the re-centering of the actress, since it is difficult to locate intent and since many of the directors' choices carry unforeseen (and perhaps unwanted) consequences. Deterritorialization also connects directly to the concept of landscape, an increasingly central presence in these films—a presence, indeed, that begins to have profound implications for the focalizer's subjectivity. In its Lacanian origins, deterritorialization "shatters the subject,"[32] and it is with this definition in mind that I analyze the shifting relation between director, camera, body, and landscape.

On a related note, it should also be mentioned that in Deleuze's political conception of becoming (which he casts as "becoming-woman" or "becoming-minoritian"), one is deterritorialized.[33] The condition of "minoritarian," unlike "minority," "is seen as potential (*puissance*), creative and in becoming."[34] "Becoming-woman," moreover, necessitates "an active

[30] Adrian Parr, "Deterritorialisation/Reterritorialisation," *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005) 66.

[31] Parr 67.

[32] Parr 69.

[33] "It is perhaps the special situation of women in relation to the man-standard that accounts for the fact that becomings, being minoritarian, always must pass through a becoming-woman. It is important not to confuse 'minoritarian,' as a becoming or process, with a "minority", as an aggregate or a state. […] One reterritorializes, or allows oneself to be reterritorialized, on a minority as a state, but in a becoming, one is deterritorialized." (291)

[34] Verena Conley, "Minoritarian," *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005) 165.

micropolitics," which is "the opposite of macropolitics, and even of History […]."[35] The application of deterritorialization to the director's exploration of female subjectivity, to a scheme which posits women as a marginalized voice, an unstable identity—in short, a becoming outside the bounds of History—is therefore entirely appropriate. As we have seen, the switch to a female focalizer deterritorializes the place of History, replacing the "choral" and the collective. These post-neorealist films deterritorialize even the manipulation of the body as affective spectacle; as Schoonover says, the "second generation of postwar Italian films reproaches neorealism's use of the bodily image as a form of compassion-triggering testimony."[36]

What, then, are the common threads that I will trace in my analysis, using the lens of deterritorialization? Already mentioned is the alterity of the female protagonist, her marginalization, whether geographical, cultural, or spiritual. Similarly, I will address the depiction of the actress as both beautiful and strange.[37] Though these women are still susceptible to filmic objectification, their portrayal problematizes the viewer's conventional relationship to the female protagonist. Bergman's Hollywood divismo is complicated and humiliated through Rossellini's punishing lens, and Masina and Vitti play the role of outside focalizer within their own culture. Loren is the only instance of the "prototypical" (southern) Italian woman, joyously made spectacle. The sexuality of these women, however, continues to be rigorously contained; whether this is a consequence of persistent cinematic convention or romantic involvement with their directors,[38] or some other combination of factors, remains to be discussed. In any case, the means are various: with Loren, her sexuality is at the service of male scopophilia; Bergman and

[35] Gilles Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) 292.

[36] Schoonover 186.

[37] Two notable exceptions: Masina (not conventionally "beautiful") and Loren (by no means "strange").

[38] Again, De Sica is the obvious exception with regard to this possibility.

Masina, on the other hand, are physically desexualized; Vitti, though she is the sole protagonist in my study allowed to demonstrate sexual desire, has her sexuality complicated by cinematographic fragmentation and the restless writhing of her body during love scenes, conveying, in part, the failure of her attempt at human connection. Which brings us to another theme shared among these directors: the essential impossibility of communication. Rossellini and Antonioni are known as the auteurs of "incommunicability," I believe, primarily because of their female protagonists. These same characters, along with those of Fellini, are the focalizers whose unstable perspective becomes a means of directorial expression: though they fail to communicate meaningfully with the people in their own worlds, in their role as surrogates they succeed in communicating the directors' artistic vision to the viewer.

This overview helps to convey that, though the actress is indeed "re-centered" in these post-neorealist films, she is often simultaneously *de-centered*, diminished. In exacting this corporeal and psychic diminution, the directors exalt instead the setting, the landscape that surrounds their characters. As ever, this tension between actress and landscape takes various forms; Bergala points out, for example, that Antonioni's landscape, unlike Rossellini's, is never "transformative," but is instead a reflection of the characters translated into images.[39] The elevation of the landscape is perhaps a natural extension of the documentary-influenced cinematography of neorealism.[40] And indeed, another of the commonalities in this examination is the traces of neorealist practice that persist into films made well into the sixties. Nearly all of the films, for example, are set in the present, focusing on the immediate cultural context.[41]

[39] Bergala 232.

[40] We shall see this to be the case especially in Rossellini and Antonioni.

[41] Minghelli points out how neorealism is "a cinema of mourning and atonement, a cinema of *the present haunted by the past*, not that of the war, civil war, or post-war ruins, but the long *ventennio* (twenty years) of Fascism."

Furthermore, the neorealist mania for "authentic" (e.g. unplanned) moments, loose or non-existent shooting scripts, and obsessive attention to the correlation between a character's conception and his/her physical appearance continue to inform directorial methods.

1 Relentless direction: Loren and De Sica, Rossellini and Bergman

By now, given the repeated qualifications, it should be obvious that De Sica's post-neorealist films with Loren stand as an exception in my study. The uniqueness of his case derives partly from the "schizophrenia" of his career: his ongoing status as both actor and director, the appearance of neorealism as a relative aberration in his comedic vocation, his commitment to popular film and the gradual fall from critical grace. He is the only director in my analysis to have participated as a judge in the famed beauty pageants of the fifties—the site of discovery for the majority of the *maggiorate fisiche*—therefore his conventional use of Loren as a popular star, as erotic image, is hardly shocking. The "nostalgic" treatment of the diva's body serves to highlight the modernity of Bergman, Vitti, and Masina.

Minghelli 3. Post-neorealist cinema's present, at an additional remove from fascism, naturally takes a different shape.

2 Reflecting gazes: Antonioni and Vitti

The remaining directors included in my examination propose an "uncommon woman" as a response to neorealism's "common man." Quite in a class of their own, Rossellini, Antonioni, and Fellini towered like "maladjusted giants" over film production in the fifties, according to Mira Liehm.[42] In fact, she claims the gap between the industry of the time and the "art films" of select directors "deepened to such a degree that the quantitative difference became a qualitative one, affecting the overall structural balance." Rossellini, Antonioni and Fellini were among the directors who produced stand-out films.[43] Unlike De Sica, these men, at least for a time, carried on romantic relationships with their leading ladies. It would be remiss to ignore the personal implications of these affairs, especially in the case of Fellini and Masina, whose long and multifaceted marriage, their aging together, directly impacted the filmic shifts in focalization. In every case, there is a sense of cinematographic intimacy, even intrusion, which derives from the act of "filming with love." In fact, the end of the relationship, for Antonioni and Rossellini, was concomitant with the exhaustion of the female focalizer, and saw the end of the professional collaboration. The dissolution of the Rossellini-Bergman partnership even signaled the end of the

[42] Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance: Film in Italy from 1942 to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) 40. Liehm also includes Visconti in this select grouping.

[43] Liehm 151.

director's career in narrative film. For Antonioni, *Deserto rosso* (1964) became the last Italian film he would make for nearly fifteen years. One could even argue that Fellini's cinema, after his collaborations with Masina fizzle out, enters a mannerist period that no longer requires her destabilizing gaze. The very entrance of these actresses into the directors' lives—most strikingly with Rossellini/Bergman and Antonioni/Vitti[44]—coincided with a critical need for cinematic reinvention, and the effects of their departure confirms the women's career- and life-changing power.

3 The public face of the Fellini-Masina collaboration

Could it be incidental, then, that these directors, often singled out as the exceptional voices of their era, all turned to women, the radical other, as means of cinematic reinvention? All three were fearless in the face of criticism concerning their supposed abdication of neorealist principles. All three embarked on a project that would transform neorealism's ruins; as Steimatsky argues of Rossellini, his lesson of the postwar landscape "may be understood in the

[44] These dramatic entrances are analyzed in Bergala, "In ordine di apparizione" (which discusses both Rossellini/Bergman and Antonioni/Vitti) and in Slavoj Žižek's "Rossellini: Woman As Symptom Of Man," *October* 54 (1990).

light of the reconstruction of modernism itself—out of *its* ruins."[45] The failure of neorealism's political idealism, or rather the resounding and oppressive success of its aesthetic codification, called for a radical break with its strictures. What more effective perspectival shift than to that of the woman, whose vision, ancillary to the neorealist project, permitted an unfettered reflection on the movement itself? What more appropriate medium for the interrogation of subjectivity than one whose subjectivity is forever in flux?

[45] Steimatsky 47.

II. De Sica, Loren, and the (A)historical Female Body

From the street urchin to the starlet: the redirecting of Vittorio De Sica's lens in the late 1950s and 60s presents a dramatic shift for the spectator. Exit children's drawn faces, sullied by civic neglect, enter the exaggerated curves of Sophia Loren. The return to commercial film after an exemplary stint as a neorealist auteur was just one of many adaptations in the artistic life of the director. Loren's experience with commercial film, however, comprises both her origins and the bulk of her prodigious career.

De Sica and Loren collaborated on thirteen films, eight of which he directed. Her characters range from an independent war refugee (*La ciociara*) to an abandoned army wife (*I girasoli*), but the bulk of the personas, at the height of their collaboration, embody the buxom, smart-mouthed Southern Italian with whom spectators have come to associate Loren. The success of this pairing quickly became formulaic: De Sica found his money-making muse, Loren found her star image. How did these two cinematic icons come to be so intimately intertwined? What defined their long and commercially successful collaboration?

My contention is that in the De Sica-Loren dynamic, the female body is subject to visual regimes that recall the representations sanctioned by Italian film in the 1930s, dominated by fascist ideology. If the female body in neorealist representations can be said to be deterritorialized from its fascistically sanctioned functions of wife and mother—which I hope to show—it follows that, in stark contrast to his neorealist contributions, De Sica's *commedie all'italiana* allowed the eroticized body an exemption from the realities of neorealism, freed it from ethical and historical constraints, and ultimately brought it back in line with many of the fascist ideals surrounding the Italian woman's "proper" function in society. De Sica's disengagement with serious film went hand in hand with the political retrenchment of the fifties

(the successes of the Democrazia Cristiana, the rise of consumerism centered on the burgeoning *miracolo italiano* and thus the general distraction from unresolved post-war political issues). In this redefined space of the late fifties and sixties, this detour away from the suffering female body and towards that of the fetishized, iconic body, both director and star perfected their personal signatures. This included not only the reorientation of De Sica's directorial stylistics, but also the methodical process of Loren's construction as the most visible and persistent female star in modern Italian film. Loren's physical attributes, more than those of any other actress in my study, defined her type while simultaneously having a direct impact on cinematic style. The apparent freedom from signification—what allowed Loren to become famous for her body above all—inevitably ends as a reactionary cultural move; De Sica's "comedic" treatment of the body ends in its subjugation.

"La questione De Sica"

Before delving into the relationship between De Sica and Loren that would, to a great extent, define the course of their respective careers, it is important to understand the context from which the director came. De Sica's pre-Loren career presents an incongruous corpus. Having starred in dozens of comedies from the 1930s onward and having already lived a second life as an emblematic neorealist director, De Sica's filmography is as long and varied as any figure in Italian film. After what critics saw as the unremarkable third phase of his career, that of directing commercial film, many struggled to come to terms with what De Sica's "true" cinematic identity was. The question arises as to why it is useful to trace a continuity across De Sica's films. Critics may feel a natural desire to discern a narrative thread, a unified set of aesthetics, and the De Sica apologists may follow the perhaps more emotional impulse to redeem the director's commercial,

sometimes frivolous, films through their subjection to an overarching directorial ethic. For the purposes of my study, however, I would like to investigate whether there exists a De Sican stylistics that elucidates his treatment of the female body. In this chapter I will study the modes in which the pregnant protagonist is filmed across three films: in De Sica's neorealist classic, *Umberto D.*, in his comedic contribution, *Ieri, oggi, domani* (in the "Adelina di Napoli") episode, and finally, in Ettore Scola's historical drama *Una giornata particolare*, which, through Loren and Marcello Mastroianni (a couple made famous in De Sica's films), takes on "domestic" fascism in 1938 Italy. By investigating the figure of the pregnant woman/mother in these works, I will show how De Sica's comedy, in the guise of a film about a "strong" wife and mother, allowed a return of the many of the values that fascist ideologues embraced.

The reasons De Sica himself gives for his turn to commercial film in the sixties, unsatisfying as they may be, do to some extent explain his directorial transformation. First, as Bert Cardullo reports, De Sica made no secret of his chronic gambling addiction and the financial straits into which it delivered him:

> It seemed that De Sica would accept virtually any acting job that was thrown at him, and he was abjectly frank as to why. For by the middle of the 1950s he was absolutely desperate for money; quite apart from the debts of his commercially failed films, together with his heavy personal or familial liabilities, he had long since turned into a hopelessly compulsive gambler.[1]

This remained the case well into his directorial career, and it was generally recognized that De Sica was less than discriminating when it came to choosing his films, as long as they promised a financial gain. In *L'oro di Napoli*, the director/actor even goes so far as to play the

[1] Bert Cardullo, *Vittorio De Sica: Actor, Director, Auteur* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009) 50.

metacinematic "Conte Prospero," the ironically named aristocrat pathologically and comically addicted to gambling. Later, though, in his collaborations on less critically esteemed films, the problem became harder to wink at. De Sica himself admits to having made mistakes "for money," claiming that "The lack of sufficient money to make the films I want makes me dependent on others."[2] Even Mastroianni, long-time collaborator and favorite of the director, admitted to the artistic paucity—even the thinness of plot—of many of their collaborations, but also confessed that the money-making potential of the films ultimately eclipsed loftier considerations.[3] Some critics still attempt to salvage these films, however, claiming that their commercial nature doesn't reflexively make them inferior in quality, just "different."[4]

On the other hand, De Sica's turn to comedy in the sixties, his full promotion of his starlet-comedienne Sophia Loren, is also a *re*turn, as Howard Curle and Stephen Snyder point out: "It is well to keep in mind De Sica's roots in comedy when evaluating his middle-period Sophia Loren films, which represent, in fact, not such much a departure as a return to comedic roots."[5] This is a useful entry point into the actor-cum-director's dealings with Loren. The return to earlier genres is supported not just on the level of De Sica's career, but as a general trend in post-neorealist film, as Mira Liehm notes: "During the fifties, all the genres of the thirties gradually reemerged and became standardized, eventually resulting in a boom of mass culture.

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[2] Vittorio De Sica, "An interview with Charles Thomas Samuels," *Vittorio De Sica: Contermporary Perspectives*, eds. Howard Curle and Stephen Snyder (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 45.

[3] "'Ho fatto tanti film senza storia,' disse Mastroainni, 'e alcuni di questi anche con Vittorio De Sica. Lo sapevamo entrambi quando una sceneggiatura aveva poco senso, ci capivamo con uno sguardo. Ma con quello stesso sguardo sapevamo che lo avremmo fatto comunque, avevamo tutti e due i nosti debiti da pagare.'" Maria Pia Fusco, "De Sica—Loren—Mastroianni," Ieri, oggi, domani *di Vittorio De Sica: testimonianze, sceneggiatura, interventi*, eds. Gualtieri De Santi and Manuel De Sica (Rome: Associazione Amici di Vittorio De Sica, 2002) 78.

[4] See Giancarlo Governi, "Un maestro chiaro e sincero," *Lettere dal set*, by Vittorio De Sica, eds. Emi De Sica and Giancarlo Governi, (Milano: SugarCo, 1987) 42.

[5] Howard Curle and Stephen Snyder, "Introduction," *Vittorio De Sica: Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. Howard Curle and Stephen Snyder (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 9.

The Neapolitan style was popular, with its songs, low-budget productions, and traditional formulas."[6] As we will see, the setting of Naples was especially suited to De Sica's directorial style, especially in terms of the comedic talents of Loren. His ease with the traditional culture, its unapologetic openness, its largely provincial values, is perhaps most visually apparent in "Adelina of Naples," which will provide our counterpoint to the radical alienation, conscientious interiority and quiet gestures presented in *Umberto D.*

Representations of the Female Body: Fascist Film to De Sica's Comedy

While many De Sica apologists see his foray into the busty world of commercial film as a break with neorealism, there are some critics who trace a genealogy of bodies from neorealism to that which followed (in *neorealismo rosa* and later comedies), such as Giovanna Grignaffini.[7] As we shall see in the scenes I will consider from De Sica's neorealist period and his later commercial period, the contention that the kernel of *neorealismo rosa*'s objectified body was contained in neorealist film is not born out in the visual representations of these bodies.

Examining the professional origins of the *maggiorate fisiche*, one cannot deny the superficiality of the criteria by which they were selected and the one-dimensionality of their successive promotion. The rise in popularity of beauty contests in the fifties was a testament to the superficiality of directors' selection process, both in terms of determining the new Italian ideal of beauty as well as mining for cinematic treasure. The beauty contest abandoned the artistic pretext of a performing arts venue like the theater and instead presented a kind of live

[6] Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance: Film in Italy from 1942 to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) 140.

[7] For Grignaffini's explanation, see "Female identity and Italian cinema of the 1950s," *Off Screen: Women and film in Italy*, eds. Giuliana Bruno and Maria Nadotti (London: Routledge, 1988) 111-123.

catalog from which directors could choose the most beautiful—or the most "Italian," or the most buxom—body, a blank slate upon which to write their directorial desires.

Of course, the artistic trajectory in the fifties of former neorealist directors is in no way linear or unified, even within a single example, as we see in the case of De Sica. Though he was eventually known for staking directorial claim on this landscape of the female body, De Sica once derided the acting skills of the *maggiorate fisiche*, carping that "Italian beauties are 'all curves,' Lollobrigida, Mangano, Pampanini: their artistic talent really cannot compete with their physical attributes. It is sad to say it, but the Italian film industry tends today above all to make a show of legs and eye-cathcing, opulent, enormous breasts."[8] This statement ends up to some degree as a self-indictment, of course, as De Sica builds his post-neorealist directorial identity on the back of this very class of actress.

Certainly, De Sica recognized the commercial potential that a *maggiorata fisica* like Loren represented. Or rather, he came to recognize acutely the *type* of role to which Loren would bring her most profitable assets. But why was it that the body—her body—found such an ideal match in this specific genre (*commedia all'italiana*), with his specific style?

Returning to the concept of deterritorialization, I argue that where the neorealist body was freed from the representations of fascistically legitimized gender roles and thereby rendered a destabilizing force, in the *commedia all'italiana* the sexually outsized female body is stripped of its more troubling signification, simplified, and given over to the demands of male desire. Loren's onscreen personas may be insolent, sarcastic, or even (comically) criminal—they may even steal every scene—but by the end of the story, they are safely contained within traditional—even reactionary—gender norms. Loren's buxomness, the visual pleasure she

[8] Anon., "Lo scandalo delle curve," *Cinema Nuovo*, 1 March 1953, reproduced in *Il mito dell'attore*, ed. G. Aristarco (Bari: Dedalo, 1983) 261-2, qtd. in Stephen Gundle, *Bellissima* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2007) 154.

affords to the viewer, is a guarantee of her generosity, authenticity and good faith. She is as obvious, open and unabashed as the buoyant Neapolitan passersby in "Adelina di Napoli." As we will see in this episode of *Ieri, oggi, e domani*, the reproductive function of the female body is reduced to little more than a mere plot device in De Sica's comedy.

Before proceeding to an analysis of the body of Loren and its use in De Sica's comedies, it is worth examining how visual regimes of the maternal body were constructed leading up to this time period. In De Sica's neorealist films he was working against the fascist inheritance of representations of "proper" gender roles and their performance according to fascist norms. Most fascist-period films presented women who were passive objects to be admired. Marcia Landy notes that in these screen portrayals women were "to be looked at and to be acted upon. Even within the very form and style of the film, women's position can be seen as one of containment. She is held in her place by law and custom and by cultural forms as well."[9] Though the films themselves were not political in content—though they are clearly billed as "entertainment"—women are still slave to the virtues of "family loyalty, self-sacrifice, domestic responsibility, class loyalty, devotion to children, and industriousness."[10] In fact, the majority of the fascist-era films in which De Sica himself starred can be squarely placed in this category of seemingly harmless "entertainment." The last scene of Mario Camerini's *Gli uomini, che mascalzoni!* (1932) provides a telling example. De Sica's character, a poor but clever chauffeur, is finally able to win over the sweet, bland Mariuccia, with whom he has shared a series of misadventures. He clasps her in his arms in the back of her father's cab, laughingly telling her how stupid she's been, insisting that she should give up her job at the perfume shop, saying, "Sempre in casa . . . a

[9] Marcia Landy, *Fascism in Film: The Italian Commercial Cinema, 1931-1943* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986), 74.

[10] Landy 78.

prepararci il risotto!" Though they both fall into laughter [figure 4], Mariuccia's father, covertly driving the cab, nods vigorously in approval. Though De Sica's character is a million miles away from Mussolinian masculinity, he still legitimizes the fascist ideology of female containment. Stephen Gundle analyzes De Sica, the actor, in the context of fascist-era stardom, concluding, "[T]he personal trajectory of De Sica was inseparable from Fascism even if he embodied the softer underside of the culture of the period rather than its overtly militaristic official dimension. That he should have struggled to free himself of this role was proof that even the lightest of entertainment, ultimately, served the purposes of the regime."[11] One might theorize, then, that De Sica's neorealist films in part served as contrition for his contributions to the fascist cinematic machine.

4 De Sica, cinema star, tells the girl how it will be

In films like *Gli uomini, che mascalzoni!*, fascist ideology is made digestible through the filter of cinematic spectacle. The films of the era "elevate the women as producers of children, as supporters and sustainers of the community and of the political collectivity."[12] In Mussolini's Italy, women's bodies were made servant sites to country and father/husband: this submission to male authority and reproductive function guaranteed the health of the body politic. When "bad"

[11] Stephen Gundle, *Mussolini's Dream Factory: Film Stardom in Fascist Italy* (New York: Berghahn, 2013) 162.

[12] Landy 97.

women made their way onscreen, women who lived outside the normalized progression of dutiful daughter→wife→mother, it was necessary to isolate them from society, to recuperate them by means of return to the family.[13] Pregnancy was duty and even honor for the good fascist wife, as we will later see in *Una giornata particolare*.

The beginnings of protest against these representations were a legacy on which neorealism would build. I have in mind two films that could in many ways be considered the proto-neorealist forerunners of this evolution of the representation of the pregnant body: Alessandro Blasetti's *Quattro passi fra le nuvole* (1942) and Luchino Visconti's *Ossessione* (1943). Both films feature a female protagonist that is, at some point, expecting and in distress. The protagonists of *Quattro passi* and *Ossessione* stand outside of the fascist cinematic dualism of dutiful wife (or daughter)/wayward, fallen woman: theirs is a sort of "dream space" in which they escape or stand apart from the dominant fascist structures. In *Quattro passi*, a young woman abandoned by her lover must confront both her unwanted pregnancy and the repudiation of her country-dwelling father, to whom she is returning. She prevails upon a stranger en route from the city to her rural home and is able to convince him to play the part of her husband. Ultimately the ruse fails, but the kind stranger appeals to the father's sense of compassion. The film has many fascist trappings, and perhaps because of this and the incredibility of the situation, the fallen state of the girl escapes denunciation by the censors.

Ossessione, on the other hand, was pulled from theaters after its debut for its extremely destabilizing view of "love" and family. When Giovanna and Gino, the hapless lovers in the film, conspire to kill Giovanna's husband, they reveal a doomed view of fascism's rigidly constructed view of the patriarchal family unit. Giovanna's poisoned bourgeois aspirations and

[13] Landy 116.

her destructive, destabilizing body stand in contrast to her pregnancy late in the film and its promise of new life.[14] Like Maria in *Quattro passi*, hers is an "illegitimate" pregnancy both in terms of paternity and according to the overarching fascist ideology. The couples' self-immolating and competing desires ultimately end in Giovanna's death. The escapism achieved in *Quattro passi* is denied.[15] While Maria is in many senses painted with the brush of exceptionality in the film's extra-fascist fantasy, Giovanna is subject to the full effect of her decision to operate outside the strictures of duty and country. Blasetti's fanciful evasion is acceptable to the regime; Visconti's squalid fatalism is not.

Neorealist representations take these "illegitimate" pregnancies outside the realm of fantasy or the fugitive condition and linger on their full historical significance. These pregnant bodies are inescapably present, testaments to the communal hardships of war, occupation, and post-war strife. In many ways pregnancy itself becomes a sign of the trauma on the body politic.[16] Often the pregnancies end in abortion. The most famous of these is likely that of Pina in *Roma città aperta*.[17] Below I discuss *Umberto D.*'s Maria, her inability to come to terms with her precarious state, and the irresolution with which the film leaves the viewer. These doomed pregnancies, firmly rooted in the historical context, are the fruit of the evils sewn into the body

[14] Jonathan Mullins discusses Giovanna's "competing possbilities" of escape from traditional structures through sexual desire and "freedom" and pregnancy as attempt to recuperate stability of corrupted family structure. Jonathan Mullins, "Desiring desire in Visconti's *Ossessione*," *Journal of Romance Studies* 12.2 (2012): 52.

[15] Giuliana Minghelli analyzes the escape/return structure of *Ossessione* in terms of its use of landscape, and submits that the only "escape" for the couple is temporal—from history itself in this period of a longed-for sense of "historical belonging." Giuliana Minghelli, "Haunted Frames: History and Landscape in Luchino Visconti's Ossessione." *Italica* 85.2/3 (2008): 192.

[16] Though Morante's *La storia* was written well after the neorealist period, one thinks especially of the portrayal of Ida's rape and resulting pregnancy, and later the extent to which Useppe is a sign of this trauma.

[17] Millicent Marcus discusses Pina's death as the "scena madre" of Italian neorealism in her article "Pina's Pregnancy, Traumatic Realism, and the After-Life of Open City," *Italica* 85.4 (2008): 426-438.

politic by fascism (in Pina's case) or a full recognition of harsh post-war realities (for the isolated Maria).

Umberto D., set nearly a decade after the war's end, still adheres to the neorealist ethic of mimetic visual and temporal representation. As such, De Sica films Maria as a simple, sometimes foolish, servant girl who expresses her interior despair primarily through quotidian gestures. Maria's pregnancy, which finds her uncertain of the paternity of her child and on the brink of being released from her humble occupation, all but guarantees impending disaster. Maria and Adelina's relation to their pregnancies, and the way in which they are filmed—expressing extreme interiority vs. extreme exteriority, respectively—present the most striking contrast between the two women. Gilles Deleuze, in a famous passage from *The Movement Image*, describes what makes the filming of Maria's quotidian actions so striking:

> De Sica constructs the famous sequence quoted as an example by Bazin: the young maid going into the kitchen in the morning, making a series of mechanical, weary gestures, cleaning a bit, driving the ants away from a water fountain, picking up a coffee grinder, stretching out her foot to close the door with her toe. And her eyes meet her pregnant woman's belly, and it is as though all the misery in the world were going to be born.[18]

5 The young maid in her element

[18] Gilles Deleuze, "Beyond the Movement-Image," *Vittorio De Sica: Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. Howard Curle and Stephen Snyder (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 82.

Maria's expressive interiority and longing is manifest throughout the sequence that Deleuze here addresses: through a series of static camera shots which show in succession Maria's kitchen chores, we are allowed a glimpse into her intimate morning rituals. It is through the very banality of her gestures, interrupted by moments of unwitting self-reflection, that we see what can be accomplished with cinematographic understatement. After Maria is awakened by Umberto's phone call to the paramedics, she rises from her small cot to start her morning routine. Maria is framed in medium close-up as she lights a burner [figure 5], wipes away sleep, and walks to the window. The camera cuts away to a cat ambling across the Roman rooftops, and a reverse shot reveals Maria's placid, sweet face considering the autonomous roamer. After filling the moka pot, she stands at the stove. She looks down at her stomach, touches it, moves her hand to her heart, and stares absently ahead of her. As she sits down with the coffee grinder, we can barely see the traces of tears, which she wipes away before answering the buzzing front door [figure 6]. Behind these small gestures lies the world of worry that Maria should rightfully be feeling, the alienation that she is just beginning to taste.

6 Rising from bed, Maria quietly covers her face. Later, she wipes away her barely discernible tears

This "externalizing" of interiority—the revelation of a troubled psyche through subtle visual representation—should not, however, be considered in isolation. Throughout *Umberto D.*

Maria is shown to be in many ways a typical young woman with all the attending contradictory attitudes. Though she is uniformly kind to Umberto, and despite her precarious position, she is prone to gossip, always ready to spy on the wayward houseguests and trying to convince Umberto to join in her voyeurism. At every bugle call that sounds, Maria comes to the window to watch for her two lovers, the soldiers who are the possible fathers of her unborn child. This girlish compulsion only falls away after the possible father has completely denied responsibility. Additionally, we know from Umberto's attempt to tutor her that she is uneducated. His warning to her that "Tutti approffitano degli ignoranti" is a belated one given her ignorance about her child's paternity. Though she is always modestly dressed, Maria's plain clothes and appearance are cast aside for a pretty dress and sleek coiffure when she visits Umberto in the hospital—an outing which also finds the possible father to her baby in tow [figure 7]. This is a woman old enough to find herself pregnant, but also still a girl on the cusp of emotional maturity—she is consistently shown to be ingenuous when it comes to facing her predicament. Revealing her secret to Umberto as he sits in the kitchen, she very simply says, "Lo sai che sono incinta?" When he expresses surprise at the directness of the revelation, she retorts, "Eh . . . come lo tenga a di'?" Not only does Maria not know who the father is, she also has no plan for her future after her secret is discovered by her unsympathetic petit bourgeois boss, nor any family or friends to whom she can turn. The film itself does not sentimentalize her plight, however: even her disappointing confrontation of the possible father is narratively and visually overshadowed by Umberto's loss of his dog Flicke—the pensioner berates her for losing track of the dog even as she stands wiping away her tears, abandoned by the careless soldier. De Sica thus presents a realistic, complex portrait of a poor, ignorant, unmarried girl whose pregnancy is left as a looming question by the end of the film. De Sica deterritorializes the triumphant fascist pregnant

body, freeing it from the sanctioned confines of marriage and family, rendering the source of fascist public pride a painful secret in the young maid, alienated and vulnerable.

7 Moments of immaturity: Maria calling Umberto to the window to see her beaux and, later, "dolled up" for her visit to the hospital

N*eorealismo rosa* goes a long way towards erasing this neorealist female body as indexical sign of history and instead foregrounding the body as sex symbol.[19] Even when the protagonist is plopped into a "neorealist" setting, the "pin-up" treatment of the woman persists. Liehm notes:

> Pink neorealism was unthinkable without the glamour of its main protagonists and the so-called 'pink-vamp' as the leading lady. Dressed in sexy rags, with carefully unkempt hair and made up to look like a true poor peasant girl, the pink vamp was the Italian version of the American pin-up. The images of Gina Lollobrigida and Sophia Loren were created as a national reaction to the stardom of Rita Hayworth and Ava Gardner.[20]

Such bodies permitted directors like De Sica full reign to treat the body as projection of male fantasy. In so doing they allowed fascistic views of the female body to creep in, all in the guise of a "neorealist" portrayal. What else is the *maggiorata fisica* but the female body subservient to

[19] One of the earliest, most influential examples of the contamination of neorealist practice by eroticism can be found in Giuseppe De Santis's *Riso amaro* (1949), featuring the sexually provocative Silvana Mangano.

[20] Liehm 142.

the desiring male gaze? Naturally the *commedia all'italiana* of the sixties followed this thread to its fulfillment: the physical body operates in a vacuum of history, unmoored from its historical context except in the most populist, frivolous modes. As we shall see in the "Adelina" episode of *Ieri, oggi, domani*, the protagonist's pregnancy is primarily a plot device, and the reduction of her body's role to that of baby-maker obliterates any trace of the personal or historical female reality. I've touched on the fact that De Sica may have experimented with neorealism as a break from his personal association with fascist cinema; the cultural conditions of the fifties allowed a comfortable transition to directing in the comedic genre that continued his evasion of the past. As Giuliana Minghelli explains,

> The limits of the documentarist vision of neorealism, the shriveling of its original impetus to expose reality to view, while succumbing in the main to the changing historical conditions of 1950s Italy, with its rampant industrialization, promise of 'benessere,' and desire to distance itself from the humble conditions immediately following the war, may also have stemmed from an unwillingness to encounter oneself in the past *as other*.[21]

I believe that we can locate the means of this shift to a-historicity in the use of the *maggiorata fisica*, and specifically trace De Sica's directorial about-face to the entrance of Loren's "a-historical" body. This body is liberated from history or consequence in De Sica's films, recast in terms of male desire, and relegated to its primarily reproductive function.

Sophia Loren: Multiple Bodies

Despite its growing power as totem, the eroticized female body is by no means an easily interpreted entity in Italian film of the fifties and sixties. Loren's body existed in at least two dimensions in her heyday as a *maggiorata fisica*. Though often considered by critics a

[21] Giuliana Minghelli, *Landscape and Memory in Post-Fascist Italian Film: Cinema Year Zero* (New York: Routledge, 2013) 201.

contradictory screen presence—transgressive and "unruly"[22] force or simply the embodiment of male visual desire?—her body off-screen was carefully guarded and tended by her producer and lover Carlo Ponti. The disconnect between the sensuous, almost tactile presence of Loren as screen starlet and the sacredness of her off-screen celebrity status is striking for those unfamiliar with the actress's career. As John Ellis describes the general mystique of the female star, she "is at once ordinary and extraordinary, available for desire and unattainable."[23] This delicate balance between intimacy and distance was an essential part of the *maggiorata fisica*'s appeal.

Besides the actress herself, Ponti was the primary cultivator of Loren's star image. De Sica's relation to Loren as her director was often encroached on by the high-handed producer. In his description of the filming of *La ciociara*, De Sica reveals that Ponti insisted on reviewing the film rushes each day to protect Loren's image as diva.[24] In later films, Ponti's interference was so extreme that he even insisted on changing aspects of the characters and plot to cast his wife in a more flattering light. In an interview, De Sica reveals that, regarding the 1970 film *I girasoli*, Ponti insisted that De Sica change the ending, since "Never can Sophia Loren be abandoned by any man."[25] He admits that Ponti essentially ruined the film, and though De Sica also takes the blame, "the fault is wholly Ponti's." Of course, to use Loren, De Sica had to stomach Ponti.[26] Or,

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[22] For more on Loren's body as an "unruly," destabilizing presence, see Jacqueline Reich, *Beyond the Latin Lover: Marcello Mastroianni, Masculinity, and Italian Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2004) 108 ff.

[23] John Ellis, *Visible Fictions* (London: Routledge, 1992) 91.

[24] *Lettere dal set* 56 ff.

[25] De Sica, "An interview with Charles Thomas Samuels," 46.

[26] Liehm traces these cinematic failures not only to Ponti, but also to Loren's weakness as an actress: "This uneven result [of *Il viaggio*, 1974] bears witness to De Sica's vacillations between a more profound artistic commitment and the imperatives of the film business. Since his first film produced by Carlo Ponti in 1954, De Sica had centered much of his creative force on the personality of Ponti's wife, Sophia Loren. *The Voyage*, whose greatest weakness is Loren's poor performance, proves the futility of his efforts to make Loren into a true actress. The films involving De Sica, Ponti, and Loren bring to mind De Sica's words from the early forties: 'I do not like the person who gave me wealth. I am his slave. But I am considering a revolt. I was betrayed by the easy clowning and a ready smile. Calmly, implacably, and definitely, and I will now betray them.'" Liehm 289.

rather, to get funding for films, De Sica had to go through Ponti and use Loren. His practice seems to have been to bend to most of the demands, even to the detriment of the film.

On the other hand, De Sica never hesitated to claim credit for his female lead's moments of triumph. Both in his letters and in interviews he made it clear that he was master of the female star's performative achievements. When asked in 1972 whether Loren had contributed any gestures to a particularly successful scene in *Matrimonio all'italiana*, De Sica declares, "I directed it all."[27] De Sica was the undisputed puppet master, as Cardullo notes: "As a director, he guided his professional cast and amateur actors of all ages in exactly the same way: he acted everything out according to his wishes, down to the smallest inflection, then expected his human subjects to imitate him precisely."[28] This manipulation of the body—in a sense, the inhabiting of the distinctly female body by the male director—adds a layer of complexity to the reputedly feminine gestures and expressions associated with Loren. Not only does the male director have to "dress in drag" to accomplish this feat, the actress must abdicate her sole claim to her performance of gender. One only has to remember Loren's sensuous and playful walk in *L'Oro di Napoli*, and imagine De Sica's initial portrayal of it—to understand the extent to which both director and actress were displaced in their gender performances.[29] As we shall see in the next chapter of my study, this meticulous coaching stands in stark contrast to the spontaneous, unguided reaction sought by Rossellini in his direction of Ingrid Bergman. While the eroticized body is freed from its "real-world" associations in De Sica's comedies, the actress's body is simultaneously ventriloquized by the director. And, in a final twist, the director finds his artistic

[27] De Sica, "An interview with Charles Thomas Samuels," 45.

[28] Bert Cardullo, "Actor-Become-Auteur: The Neorealist Films of Vittorio De Sica," *The Massachusetts Review* 41.2 (2000): 175.

[29] For clip of this buoyant march down the Neapolitan street, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSzzIecxGMQ.

body and spirit subjected to the will of husband and producer. One begins to see the multiple, interwoven layers on which subjection, surrogacy, and subalternity are operating. And it is perhaps worthwhile to consider the analogous power schemes in play during fascism between Patria/Mussolini, soldier/husband, servant/wife. As the lowermost element on the hierarchal scale and the visible "product" of the cinematic apparatus/regime, the actress—or wife—is the receptacle for the ideological imperatives of her male "superiors." The female body is inhabited by and subjected to multiple levels of male desire.

One of De Sica's main accomplishments in terms of Loren's formation as an actress is her trajectory from Hollywood starlet to iconic "woman of the people." Such a transformation was essential to the authenticity of her comedic roles and the exhibition of her body as "accessible" and open (in the fantasy of the male viewer). This construction was framed as De Sica's (re)introduction of Loren to her "natural state," that of the *donna popolana*, from which her Hollywood experience had alienated her. And indeed, De Sica seems to affirm in his first-hand accounts of the filming of *La ciociara* (1960) that he feels compelled to strip away the Hollywood trappings (both in terms of appearance and performance):

> I primi piani di Sofia invece sono efficaci, tranne qualcuno dove le esperienze hollywoodiane hanno preso il sopravvento e dove non c'è nulla da fare perché ormai sono talmente penetrate in profondità che ci vorrà ancora una settimana prima che io le debelli, ma Sofia è molto intelligente ed è molto brava e, *quello che più conta*, ha piena fiducia in me per cui spero che riesca a vincere questa grossa battaglia. Lo merita perché ha veramente autentiche doti di grande attrice.[30]

[30] *Lettere dal set* 59. Emphasis mine.

Again, De Sica foregrounds Sophia's artistic struggle in terms of his own role as guide and reformer.[31] One cannot help but wonder exactly which "autentiche doti" he had in mind when praising the actress, but his directorial appreciation of the expressive possibilities of the body are likely in the mix, along with her obedience to his requests, from which she never seems to deviate. De Sica even admits that Loren's "attenzione e fedeltà rimangono le cose più soddisfacenti di questo film."[32]

In addition to the essential role he played in solidifying Loren's star image, De Sica may get the overwhelming credit for having cultivated the Loren-Mastroianni duo, which itself became a key component of Loren's iconicity. And yet it was Blasetti who first paired the future icons, in fact incorporating De Sica himself into the comedic trio in *Peccato che sia una canaglia*. But, just to add another level of complexity to the question of influences and star- and director-formation, De Sica's own *L'oro di Napoli*, which starred Loren in one of its episodes, was released in the same week as Blasetti's film. It is in this historical moment, 1954, between neorealism and the dawn of *neorealismo rosa*, then, that we see one of the important nexuses between De Sica, actor, and De Sica, director.[33]

Likely aided by the efforts of De Sica and Ponti, Loren was one of a handful of *maggiorate fisiche* who broke the mold when it came to star-formation. Stephen Gundle notes that the general rule of cinema of the fifties was that "stars unveil their souls while the lesser

[31] At one point during filming, De Sica even expresses disappointment with a close-up in which he had made Loren imitate a facial expression of his own, which turned out to be wrong for the scene. This reaffirms the degree to which he felt he controlled the actress's every on-screen move and gesture. 70.

[32] *Lettere dal set* 90.

[33] It should be noted that, even throughout his neorealist period, De Sica, "actor" continued to take on roles in frivolous comedies. Perhaps, just as in his directing career of the late fifties and sixties, the allure of a quick buck was irresistible.

figures of starlets must unveil their bodies."[34] This "rule," postulated by Edgar Morin in *Les Stars*, applied to many of the *maggiorate fisiche*, who claimed their starlet status solely through the exposure of their bodies. The origin of this class of actress—the beauty contest—assured that whatever "talent" these women initially possessed was largely superficial; De Sica's claim that the heft of the breasts outweighed that of their skill as performers is evident from their ephemerality as leading ladies. In effect, these "minor" *maggiorate* could only hope to become glorified starlets. The standouts among this group of actresses, however, proved a curious exception: "With the sort of figure-hugging dresses and low-cut tops that Lollobrigida and Loren wore, they made their physical shapes, and in particular their busts, a key signifier of their stardom, thus violating an established norm." Were these women simply more talented, or more easily made into icons? Richard Dyer explains in his study on star image that "talent" is often an undefinable characteristic in stars, and their particular talent lies in their ability to inhabit an image: "Even if one simply meant talent as skill, one would have to ask, skill at what? Not 'acting' in the classic sense, as innumerable examples show. Skill then at being a certain person or image. This may be right, but then the key question is, why does that sort of person become a star? A question once again of culture and ideology."[35] I would argue that what permitted the "starlet," in select cases, to reach star status—as in the case of Loren—was the absolute privileging of the physical, in keeping with the generic context in which these bodies were used (that is, *neorealismo rosa* and the *commedia all'italiana*) and the ripeness of the historical moment.

[34] Stephen Gundle, *Bellissima: Feminine Beauty and the Idea of Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) 158.

[35] Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: BFI Publishing, 1998) 17.

For De Sica, Loren's talents as an actress were often limited to her physical "doti" and her ability to take direction. The massive divide between the estimation of a male actor's craft and the meager skill set of a starlet becomes clear. For example, though in his account of filming *La ciociara* the director does intermittently praise Loren's work,[36] and though his compliments become increasingly warm, they always emphasize above all his admiration for her fidelity to his direction: "È un'attrice che, *guidata e ben diretta*, può dare meravigliosi risultati. [. . .] l'interpretazione di Sofia sarà una delle più belle che un'attrice possa augurarsi." [37] As already cited, he later says Loren's attention and loyalty remain the most satisfying aspect of the film[38] and calls her "Cara Sofia, così apprensiva, così attenta e così diligente. Un amore."[39] Within this very evident appreciation for her pliability and obedience, [40] we begin to see how De Sica would flatter himself that he formed Loren as an actress. What's more, the gendered language he uses betrays his approach to her strictly as a woman to be guided, *materia* to be shaped, not to be confused with a respected actor like Marcello Mastroianni.[41] Pauline Small points out that Loren's often co-star was seen as a class apart, both as a professionally trained actor and a man:

> From inception, Mastroianni's is a career, first as a theatre actor, and then combining the popular and the arthouse, that was certain to be allotted a higher

[36] One must admit, though, that his comments from early in the film often damn with faint praise: "Tolta qualche inesperienza di Sofia, il lavoro è proseguito con un certo valore interpretativo." *Lettere dal set* 54.

[37] Emphasis mine. *Lettere dal set* 57.

[38] *Lettere dal set* 90.

[39] *Lettere dal set* 91.

[40] This attitude of directors towards their actors is not unique, even within my study. Antonioni also expresses a preference for the acting styles of Monica Vitti and Vanessa Redgrave since they unfailingly "followed" him without questioning his motives. Michelangelo Antonioni, *The Architecture of Vision: Writings and Interviews on Cinema* (New York: Marsilio Publishers, 1996) 164.

[41] By way of contrast, De Sica also states his appreciation for Marcello Mastroianni's cooperation in *Ieri, oggi, domani*, but unlike with his "cara Sofia," he goes on to say that the commercial film is a waste of Mastroianni's talents: "Mastroianni è molto bravo e segue fedelmente i miei suggerimenti. Che peccato che tutto questo sia al servizio di bei film, di sicuro successo, ma di impostazione assolutamente commerciale." *Lettere dal set* 118.

> critical status. The reputation of Loren (and other shapely stars like Lollobrigida, Pampanini and Allasio) is forever marked by the fact that they came untrained to the profession. They are regularly termed as having been 'discovered,' 'launched' and 'promoted', suggesting they were passive figures in a process that made them into stars.[42]

The *maggiorata fisica*'s body, then, though often the central spectacle of the film, is in many ways passive, making both actress and director a slave to its visual dominance.

Loren was also to amass in a short period a group of films through which this "spectacular" body was imprinted and defined; she developed a definitive star discourse in her films with De Sica. Beginning in Blasetti's *Peccato che sia una canaglia* in 1954, Loren is presented as the saucy minx who despite everything becomes the heroine of the film. She plays the liar and thief to Marcello Mastroianni's honest but libidinous cabbie, using her sexuality and verbal cunning to confound the male protagonist. By the end of the episode, however, after a few good slaps to her face by said cabbie and a long kiss, she's on the path to reform. In *L'Oro di Napoli* of the same year, in her first role under De Sica's direction, Loren's distance from the neorealist image of woman—as well as De Sica's distance from neorealism itself—is furthered: Loren portrays the folksy temptress whom we can't help but root for. At the episode's beginning, she is pictured secretly kissing a man we discover is not her husband, then furtively stalking the Neapolitan streets, acting as if she's just left mass so that she can justify her absence to her *pizzaiolo* husband. Far from consigning her to the realm of heartless harlots, the romantic interlude merely provides the plot device which will resolve the comedic piece's mystery (the disappearance of her emerald ring) and allow her to continue her assignation undetected. Additionally, Loren's sensuous, languorous movements—blouse falling off her shoulders,

[42] Pauline Small, *Sophia Loren: Moulding the Star* (Bristol: Intellect, 2009): 104.

plunging her hands into the pizza dough [figure 8]—are a demonstration of her southern warmth and unreserve. There is no castigation awaiting this lusty, good-hearted tart.

8 Young Sophia, bosomy *pizzaiola*

Loren's body, by the sixties, takes on such strong associations, becomes to such an extent commodified, that it demands specific use, especially in the films of De Sica. Her body is in many ways like currency itself: it stands for financial success, or its potential; it is a symbol of power and desire in itself, though its role is primarily symbolic—it has no agency; and the more it is passed around, the more fixed its form, use, and recognition becomes. While Loren's body in De Sica's comedies is freed from the weight of history, the genre, with its own rigors, also invariably restricts her body to its one most obvious role, that of the sexual.

Even the press materials and advertising for Loren's films belie the preeminence of her sexual appeal, regardless of how this highly visual aspect relates to (or contradicts) the content and tone of the film itself. Such is certainly the case for the posters of the era advertising *Ieri, oggi, domani* and *Matrimonio all'italiana*, nearly all of which feature Loren in classic cheesecake pose, donning the "iconic" lingerie that appears, however briefly, in each film [figure 9]. The relative lightness of these films could perhaps excuse this type of packaging, however unsophisticated it may appear to the modern viewer. What is more perplexing is the cover of the

2002 DVD version of *Two Women* (from the "Cinema Sirens" collection) that reveals a Loren clad only in a swimsuit and fishnet stockings. Anyone familiar with the story of *La ciociara* will recognize that this is not even a still from the film. Instead, modern marketers continue to exploit the image of Loren as "siren," even where the image is a mismatch with the cinematic product. Now, these extra-filmic aspects of Loren's star discourse cannot be directly traced back to De Sica, nor any single director, but it is this network of images, elevated to the level of icons, that these directors helped to build, perpetuate, and were finally trapped within.

9 The many "faces" cast onto one image: her body

Adelina's "Parto Indolore"

It is hard to reconcile this "star-making" De Sica with the director who put the likes of *Ladri di biciclette*'s Antonio on screen. The difference between the representations of his pregnant female characters is particularly revelatory of the shift in visual codes between the two periods. On one hand, we have seen the servant girl Maria in *Umberto D.*: reserved, modest, painfully youthful. On the other, Adelina from *Ieri, oggi, domani*, whose boisterous banter and bobbing belly command every inch of screen space. Maria's uncertainty over the paternity of her child is one of the most powerful symbols of the extreme precariousness of her sex and class in

that period (presumably the same period in which “Adelina” is set). Not only must she face the possibility of supporting an unwanted child alone, she must do so with the knowledge that she will likely be deprived of her humble occupation once her pregnancy is discovered. This is in stark contrast to the treatment that Adelina receives as an apparently similarly impoverished black-market vendor who somehow manages a happy ending, despite being saddled with a jobless husband and seven young mouths to feed. The essential difference between these two women—besides the change in genre—lies in the baggage that Loren brings to the role, mainly in the shape of her body. While Maria is slight, wide-eyed, ingenuous, and covered-up, Loren plays her (usual) coiffed and dolled-up diva in disguise. Her exceptional status—an exception from reality itself—comes not only in the form of her physical attributes, but also the frivolity conferred by the genre.

Loren’s characters in *Ieri, oggi, domani* live in a land far away from Maria’s post-war Rome. And yet, like Maria, each one is trapped in her own way through the implications of her sexuality. With the tri-partite structure of the film, De Sica plays with three different portrayals of his leading lady. He presents us with three seemingly “liberated” women who invariably make use of their feminine attributes to further their own goals; these are the characters the audience had come to expect their Sophia to play. This presentation, however, is deceptive: While each of these roles entails, to some extent, a spin on the star image of Loren herself—the no-nonsense southern Italian mother, the glamorously rich wife, and the bombshell—each also, conversely, ends as a victim of the constraints of a patriarchal society, the ultimate agent of which is none other than the director himself. Within the guise of “modernity” and women’s progress, De Sica serves up the same traditional archetypes. I will focus on the most neorealist-flavored of these

three episodes, “Adelina of Naples,” in order to show the distance De Sica travelled in his female representations in the decade that had passed since his directing *Umberto D*.

Before addressing the visual representation of Adelina’s pregnancies, I would like to consider the question of setting and how it relates to the representations of the female body. The “Adelina of Naples” episode brings us back to the city that is so closely associated with both De Sica and Loren. As the camera pans over the historical center and the rooftops of the compact tenements, the viewer is briefly reminded of the urban settings of De Sica’s neorealist films [figure 10]. As we will see, even the set-up has a neorealist flavor—a poor family whose mother risks incarceration—but soon enough we see the tell-tale signs of the comedic genre: the Technicolor hues, the swelling, buoyant orchestral soundtrack, and finally, the familiar comedic pairing of Mastroianni and Loren. There are critics who take De Sica to task for “rewriting” a comedy on a setting that has all the superficial vestiges of his earlier neorealist works. [43] I would argue that De Sica’s comedic revisiting of his familiar neorealist subjects and settings is not a “rewriting” of his neorealist message, but rather a companion project. Just as the sexualized female body is in these films released from its real-world significance, so De Sica’s switch to the mode of comedy allows a disassociation with “De Sica, neorealist director.”

10 The familiar neorealist setting that introduces the episode

[43] Stephen Snyder, “Hiding in the Light,” *Vittorio De Sica: Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. Howard Curle and Stephen Snyder (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 235.

These bodies were the key to De Sica's generic transformation and the visual signifiers that alert the viewer to the shift from neorealism to *neorealismo rosa*. Where occupied Rome was written onto the body of Pina (History inscribed onto the body) and Maria's radically marginalized state encoded onto her every gesture (personal history inscribed onto the body), Naples in "Adelina" functions primarily as the a-historical (verging on pagan) site of exaltation for Loren's fertile body. This move away from bodies as historically inflected towards bodies as representative of the warm, ample bosom of Italian folksiness is one of the trademarks of *neorealismo rosa.* Within this shift, the importance of place is still maintained. Gundle pinpoints the source of the continued connection between body and landscape, stating that "The Italian bosom [of Loren, Magnani, and Lollobrigida] was not just an ornament but the primary signifier of female power in a culture that was still organised on the basis of conventional gender divisions. It was therefore identified not just with femininity but also with place."[44] The female body's connection to setting is certainly manifest in *Ieri, oggi, domani,* wherein even the chapter titles associate the protagonist with her place of origin. And, as we will see, these "powerful" women act primarily as a guarantee of traditional gender norms. In a tongue-in-cheek summation of the settings in *Ieri, oggi, domani* and their relation to the comedies in which De Sica had once acted, Price declares that "Here again, deep in the spaghetti belt, an earth goddess reigns."[45]

Adelina, the "earth goddess" of the Forcella neighborhood of Naples, could not be more different than the young and vulnerable Maria. Based on the outline of the episode, however, one might think she holds an even more tenuous position in society than the hapless Maria. As a black market cigarette peddler and the only working member of the household, Adelina assumes

[44] Gundle, *Bellissima* 156.

[45] James Price, "The Case of De Sica," *Vittorio De Sica: Contermporary Perspectives*, eds. Howard Curle and Stephen Snyder (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 222.

a doubly taxing role of child-bearer and breadwinner. Her unreliable and illegal occupation pushes her to the precarious margins of society. Adelina has, in fact, been cited for this activity, and now risks jail time. Her husband, a comically ineffectual—and eventually impotent—head of household, attempts to hoodwink the authorities by hiding the furniture that would act as payment for Adelina's fine. Because the furniture belongs to Adelina, she will be the one to suffer the consequences for this transparent ruse. The saving grace for the couple, and the premise upon which the entire story is built, is the discovery that a pregnant or nursing woman cannot be arrested. The idea naturally forms in Adelina's mind that she can avoid prison through continual pregnancy.

From the first scenes, in which Adelina's husband Carmine protests that she cannot go to jail, being a "mamma di figli," we understand that Adelina is defined and made exceptional by her role as mother. De Sica's camera spends much of this episode following Adelina proudly parading her pregnant body around the streets of Naples, as she flaunts all the joy of her exemption [figure 11]. Where Maria is restricted, covered up, nearly invisible in her inescapable status as young, unmarried servant girl, Loren's saucy, curvaceous *contrabbandiera* is given free rein to rejoice in the very physicality of her condition [figure 12].

11 Adelina in her extreme exteriority, hailed by admirers

12 The visual contrast between Maria and Adelina's "prisons": Maria's mysterious interiority vs. Adelina's superficial, public eroticism (on display even during her temporary prison stay)

The setting of Naples here is key, above and beyond its neorealist echoes: Because of the importance of public space in the city, performance and physicality—in other words, exteriority—are highlighted in this episode. Loren's body becomes spectacle on an over-the-top scale. The bustling southern city also brings to mind its abundance of children and the united sentiment of the community against authority. Jacqueline Reich affirms that "Naples itself is the quintessential unruly city, where the world is constantly turned upside-down and rules, be they legal or social or gender-related, are made to be broken."[46] Adelina and her husband are not the only ones to rejoice over her pregnancy. The entire city participates in her triumphal march through the streets when her first "get-out-of-jail-free" pregnancy is celebrated. The camera tracks the progression of the news spreading through the neighborhood, each vendor, client, and neighbor shouting one to another, "Se n'ha la panza!" The tracking camera pans from the street-level to aerial shots to show how dynamic and wide-reaching the neighborhood network is, from the stalls, to the balconies, back to the streets. Even a group of children triumphantly chant "Se n'ha panza! Se n'ha panza! Se n'ha panza! Ta ta ta!" accompanied by the beat of off-screen

[46] Reich 106.

drums while marching in a procession-like file [figure 13]. Again, the setting being Naples, one can't help but recall the religious processions dedicated to the Virgin Mary, another icon hailed for her "ventre." The primary dissonance with this image, as we shall see, is not only Adelina's lack of innocence, but more importantly the unquenchable sexual desire that Adelina arouses, despite or perhaps because of her prolific reproductive abilities.

13 "Se n'ha panza!"

During her one-woman parade through the neighborhood streets, Adelina is praised and congratulated by the townsfolk she passes. One roadside huckster shouts out playfully, "Tengo una specialità americana, il parto indolore!" This "parto indolore" becomes an important theme of the episode. Adelina's births are not only "painless," but they are that which takes *away* pain, i.e. the avoidance of prison. Through her womanhood, or better, her status as expectant mother, Adelina has apparently vanquished patriarchal authority, at least for the time being: Reich asserts that "Adelina appropriates the traditional tools of female domestication as a means of her own empowerment."[47] We shall see, however, that this facile conclusion ignores the full and complex implications of Adelina's dispensation.

[47] Reich 127.

The implausibility of the premise of this episode—which, it must be said, is born out to some extent by the true story of Concetta Muccardi[48]—is rendered even more incredible with the addition of the motif of the impotent husband. Adelina's only problem, it turns out, is not being able to maintain pregnancy. At a certain point, the task overwhelms her comically sexually exhausted husband; she gathers strength from the procreative act, while he is debilitated, not only from the act itself, but from having seven young children with which to contend, all in a one-room house [figure 14]. Carmine's plight arouses little pity in his wife, and she repeatedly calls his manhood into question. In this way, Adelina also reduces Carmine to his baby-making potential (or lack thereof). Witnessing the doctor's attempt to diagnose Carmine's sexual fatigue, Adelina is unconvinced when he determines that at least Carmine's reflexes are good: "Che me ne fotte se muove la gamba, Dottor?" Ironically, the doctor prescribes injections for the enervated Carmine, reversing his role from giver to receiver. Her crowning insult to her impotent husband occurs before, exasperated, she turns herself over to the authorities, shouting a parting "Addio, ricchione!" as she walks out the door of their home.

14 Carmine, too exhausted to accept his wife's invitation to bed

[48] In fact, Muccardi gave birth to *nineteen* children in order to avoid serving jail time. One can observe the disparity between Muccardi's biography and the comedic portrayal of Adelina in the former's obituary: http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/2001/novembre/22/Napoli_addio_alla_contrabbandiera_che_co_0_0111225293.shtml

Despite this seeming domination of Adelina over her husband, however, we begin to see that pregnancy has become for her an expected state of being, of normalcy. Children are the mere by-products of evading the law. In a scene in which friend-of-the-family Pasquale plays the father-surrogate for the ailing Carmine, the seven young children are gathered at the kitchen table with Adelina. This kitchen scene provides a stark contrast to the one in *Umberto D.* [figure 15].

15 Maria and her silent tears, Adelina and her joyful brood

Pasquale, who has formerly joked about "helping out" with maintaining Adelina's perpetual pregnancy—naturally, even when playing the "mamma di figli," Loren must always be a source of male sexual desire—takes on his role as Adelina's helper. Adelina, in a rare moment of non-pregnancy, bustles about the kitchen in a low-cut, glittery blouse, big-haired, fussing over this and that child. When Pasquale marvels at her energy, she claims, in the manner of a good fascist housewife, that motherhood invigorates her: "I figli mi fanno bene." In fact, she insists that she's not the type of woman who "falls apart" after her first child, and even laments that she's not used to not being pregnant. Pasquale also gushes over her appearance, claiming that she's more beautiful than ever. In response, Adelina proudly grabs her flat tummy and exclaims, "Sette figli!" [figure 16]. Her heightened beauty and lithe body are the physical proof of the beneficial effect of child-bearing (once again, a demonstration of which Mussolini would likely have

approved). Pasquale is so appreciative of her “autentiche doti” that he lays an unwelcome kiss on her.

16 Maria, reflective and alone; Adelina and her boast, "Sette figli!"; Pasquale’s irrepressible desire

Though she is the quintessential *donna popolana* in this episode, the Loren character here is not treated as an equal member of society—she is marginalized, given exception, treated as “Other.” Her body inhabits a privileged, fantastic place within the community, a status made manifest not only by the extreme visibility of her publicly celebrated pregnancies, but also on the level of plot, wherein she is made “special” by her circumvention of the law. This reprieve hardly emancipates Adelina, for not only does she face prison when she is unable to produce another child, she also must confront the fact that she will have to come home to seven hungry mouths in the event of a pardon. This legal loophole seems to be, more than anything, a *guarantee* of the woman’s permanent domestication; Adelina is exploiting the only role that society has invariably found appropriate for women—and the one that, in most recent history,

was so fervently championed by the fascist regime. Though she is clearly the more sexually potent of herself and her husband, though she is the "woman on top," her continual pregnancies and births reduce her to impotence—she is trapped within a generative cycle.[49]

When her husband fails to perform his role in the bedroom, Adelina briefly considers turning to the eager Pasquale for sexual assistance, but her fidelity to Carmine and traditional family values prevent her from upsetting the status quo, from corrupting the spectator's star image of Loren. Rather than suffer the humiliation of being arrested, she turns herself in. Ultimately it is not her reproductive powers that save her, but instead the community's rallying around her through the institution of an "Adelina tax," intended to go towards her jails fines and, eventually, the granting of a pardon. Again, she is a special case; the other mothers in the jail are not given the same treatment. We are forced to see that Adelina's pardon, the community's miraculous response to her crisis, is more than unusual—it is incredible [figure 17]. The woman's ability to bear children fails her, and only an unlikely confluence of hierarchical forces can succeed in setting her free. Adelina is not allowed to determine her own destiny, but must depend on a pardon granted by a patriarchal structure.

17 Forcella throws a parade for the newly released Adelina

[49] It must also be noted that here, as in almost all of her roles, Loren is allowed to arouse desire as an object of the gaze, but she is never allowed to feel it herself. Though she is relentless as a sexual partner in this episode, she has only one goal when engaging in the act, and it apparently has nothing to do with (her own) physical pleasure.

The happy ending of the episode only serves to reinforce this return to the status quo. The viewer is treated to the image of the entire family gathered in the bed, rejoicing in the mother's pardon [figure 18]. The bed becomes, in a way, a metonym for the female body: it is the place of pleasure for the man of the house, and the place of conception and delivery for the woman. Surrounded by her seven children, Adelina sees her bed become her prison.

18 Drowning in children, Adelina is blissful

De Sica's embrace of the escapism of the boom era, with its avoidance of coming to terms with recent historical reality, is writ large on the "spectacular" body of Adelina. What the prolific yet always sexy mother ultimately represents is a sort of wish-fulfillment for chauvinist men: she will want to have all your babies and look great while doing it. Where the body of Maria arouses an inescapable sympathetic discomfort on the part of the viewer, the body of Adelina allows the viewer to indulge completely in the fantasy. As Cardullo notes of the episodes in *Ieri, oggi, domani*,

> All three of these stories are fairy tales of Italy […]: fabrications woven out of popular mythology and wish. For example: All Neapolitans are mutually helpful and have hearts of gold; their prisons are spotlessly clean and are quiet, pleasant places all around; the black marketer-cum-slum wife, who has seven children, never changes in shape, gains a wrinkle, or loses a tooth.[50]

[50] Cardullo, *Vittorio De Sica: Actor, Director, Auteur* 61.

In *Ieri, oggi, domani*, De Sica time and again lets Loren's body be the instrument of comic fantasy: the appearance of the comic overthrow of patriarchal values maintains an underlying message of sexual subjugation.

Una giornata particolare*: The Re-elaboration of the Maternal Body*

I conclude this discussion with a consideration of one of Loren's last critically significant films, which manipulates and builds upon the inherited star image of Loren. The similarities and contrasts both in style and content illustrate the extreme to which De Sica had taken Loren's body as gendered spectacle. In Ettore Scola's *Una giornata particolare*, we are given a problematized version of the aging maternal figure, liberated from her star discourse to the extent that the director knowingly exploits it. Scola, with the very iconography Loren's bombshell-cum-*donna popolana*, with this star discourse in mind, offers an alternate view of the "mamma di figli" through a complex interplay of cultural, political, and domestic demands.[51] He realigns the female body as the center of this fascist family drama, and thereby recuperates pregnancy as fundamentally connected to historical setting, in this case, through the precarious perspective of the fascist housewife.

[51] In the next chapter, we will see how Rossellini, through experimental visual regimes, also works knowingly against Bergman's "type" (the Hollywood diva).

19 Scola presents a very different maternal body than De Sica's Adelina

In the 1977 film, the audience beholds not the buxom siren of previous Loren portrayals, but the realistically frowsy, unmade-up figure of an exhausted mother of six [figure 19]. Loren's De Sican partner-in-crime, Mastroianni, is the neighbor with whom Antonietta experiences her "giornata particolare." Mastroianni is cast drastically against type: he is a gay man disenfranchised by the Fascist regime. He is present, then, not as the focalizer of sexual desire, but as a similarly marginalized entity within the fascist culture. Therefore, while Scola shows us a representation of Loren as a victim of sexual oppression, he does so without visually exploiting her physical attributes, without defaulting to her confining star discourse.

The pairing of Loren and Mastroianni inevitably recalls the joint collaborations of De Sica's *commedie all'italiana*. The lives of Antonietta and Mastroianni's Gabriele, both victims of the male-dominated fascist regime, are the focus of the film. Unlike De Sica, Scola never turns Antonietta into a visual or filmic sex object. Her sexuality, instead, is exploited on the level of plot, insomuch as it establishes her role in fascist Italy as a "baby maker." He overcomes what De Sica could not: Loren is no longer a glamour-queen with thick eyeliner and big hair in the guise of a Neapolitan *mamma*, but a convincing representation of a modest-looking mother after many years of raising children. Moreover, Mastroanni serves to de-"Lorenize" the Antonietta

character even further, to negate insistently her definition as object of male desire. At one point in the film, she is the desiring sexual aggressor who is rebuffed by Gabriele. When the two finally come to a compassionate understanding that leads to love-making, Gabriele insists upon their shared solace and companionship as the defining entities of his connection with her. She has not "converted" him to heterosexuality.

In *Una giornata particolare*, much like "Adelina of Naples," the role of space is essential to gaining an understanding of the function of the woman's body in the containing home and society [figure 20]. Where Adelina is the earth-goddess who rules both the streets and the home with her spectacular presence, Antonietta is not even commander of the domestic space to which she is relegated, as we shall see. Adelina's supreme self-assurance seems to derive from an utter lack of interiority: in her world, the public is private, and vice-versa; all is exterior, or surface, representation. In 1938 Italy, the public and private are also constantly confused and conflated, though the wife and mother does not gain autonomy from this confusion. Adelina has no onscreen "inner life" or internal contradictions: she knows that her sole purpose is to have babies. Antonietta, however, becomes increasingly aware of her marginal status and the precariousness of privacy, continually subject to the encroachment of ideology.

20 The fascist housewife in her kitchen, the very picture of drab domesticity

This violation of the private space by the looming presence of the regime is evident throughout the film.[52] The radio program that announces the day's events—Hitler's visit to Italy—intermittently invades the otherwise quiet condo, emptied as it is of the parade-attending inhabitants. Thanks to both Antonietta and the nosy, vitriolic *portiera*, the domestic space is permeated with the fascist presence: tributes to Mussolini, hand-crafted by Antonietta, decorate the apartment, and the rabid nationalism of the *portiera* drives her to surveil the goings-on of the "subversive" neighbor and the housewife she normally considers respectable. But the private behaviors in the film visually undercut the superstructure of ideology. As we witness in the first scenes, many of the family members stray from the prescribed fascist regimens: one son uses a dreaded French word and is chided by his father for not "Italianizing" it; another smokes surreptitiously in the bathroom; Antonietta asks a daughter if she's going to a parade or a party, judging by how much makeup she's put on; yet another son, drawing a mustache onto his pubescent face, is discovered by Antonietta for having pornography—given to him by his father, no less. Perhaps the worst offender is the proudly fascist father himself, who despite his appearance as "family man" carries on a series of infidelities and treats his wife with so little respect it makes the viewer cringe. Especially egregious is his wiping his hair oil-slathered hands on Antonietta's dress; when she remarks on the rudeness of the gesture, he tells her that her shabby appearance invites the disrespect.[53]

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[52] Marcus notes that the film is structured according to binaries: "From the very start [. . .] Scola sets up two antithetical versions of that 'special day' (May 6, to be precise), and in so doing, activates a series of binary oppositions: history vs. story, factuality vs. fiction, public vs. private, documentary vs. feature film or, in other words, what happens in the streets vs. what happens in the bedroom." "Un'ora e mezzo particolare: Teaching Fascism with Ettore Scola," *Italica* 83.1 (2006): 54.

[53] After Antonietta confesses her husband's infidelities to Gabriele, she says, "Ad un'ignorante si può fare qualsiasi cosa perché non c'è il rispetto." Words that echo the sentiment Umberto expressed to the "ignorant" Maria.

Once again, as in both *Umberto D.* and "Adelina of Naples," scenes in the domestic space reveal deeper levels of signification of the maternal body. After the film's initial introductory black and white footage of the propagandist documentary, *Il viaggio del Führer in Italia*, the screen fills with the full colors of the Nazi flag being hung from a balcony by the malevolent *portiera*—already a proof of the invasion of ideology into the home. The camera tracks along the exterior of the building, finally entering Antonietta's cluttered kitchen. In an over-the-shoulder tracking shot, the camera follows Antonietta as she goes from room to room, awakening a seemingly endless succession of children. The tracking shot is interrupted by cuts into the small, cramped rooms filled with the chaos of six children preparing for the day. In radical contrast to Adelina's happily bustling one-room house—which feels large by comparison—here the home is partitioned into a series of claustrophobic spaces in which Antonietta fights to make her voice heard (particularly in her dealings with her husband and eldest son and daughter). She is treated largely as alarm clock and maid by the children, and little more than a rag by her husband. Her tired body recedes in their wake as they file out to join the public ritual, access to which she is denied.[54]

Like Maria in *Umberto D.*, however, Antonietta is not essentially a self-effacing individual, and is indeed concerned with how years of child-bearing and –rearing has transformed her body: it only takes the intrusion of an outside perspective to heighten her self-awareness. As Gabriele sits in her kitchen, Antonietta catches a stolen glimpse of herself in the mirror [figure 21]; her expression shows subtle dismay at her reflection, as if the Loren starlet had suddenly realized the body she had stepped into. She sneaks into the bathroom to pinch color into her wan cheeks and tidy her hair. In this ironic move, the housewife attempts to improve her

[54] The entire first sequence, including the documentary film, can be seen here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_YtSYd74tg

appearance not for her “virile” husband, who thinks her slovenly, but for her gay houseguest, for whom her appearance is inconsequential.

21 Antonietta considers her reflection

In fact, the “giornata particolare” becomes a day of the carnevalesque, even, or especially, in terms of gender roles. Unlike in “Adelina,” these inversions serve to destabilize the norms traditionally associated with “masculinity” and “femininity,” not re-enforce them through comedic reversal. The inversions include Gabriele grinding coffee beans in Antonietta’s kitchen, happily taking her place in the domestic sphere, and later, his cooking lunch for both of them in his own kitchen; Antonietta’s sexual advances toward the passive Gabriele and his decisive rejection; and finally Gabriele’s emotional admission that he is “né marito, né padre, né soldato” (Mussolini’s three requirements for being a “man”). Gabriele, often the imp, playfully taunts Antonietta, riding her children’s scooter around the house, teaching her the rumba, and irreverently laughing at the absurdity of the day, a day which began with him contemplating suicide.

Working in tandem with the theme of the carnevalesque is the concept of deterritorialization. Throughout the film we are shown Antonietta’s transformation, her “mid-life crisis”: thanks to Gabriele’s destabilizing presence, her internal contradictions and contradictory

desires are awakened. On the surface, she is the ideal fascist housewife: her quaint Mussolini-worship is the outward sign of the troubling internalization of the concept of power qua sexual potency: not only does she gush to Gabriele about her run-in with the "virile" gaze of Mussolini—to which she apocryphally attributes her sixth pregnancy—she boasts that she will be up for a fascist prize if she bears a seventh child. By the end of the film, however, her ingenuousness about fascist ideology and its implications for the private sphere begins to fail her. The concept of deterritorialization comes into play on several levels of the film, above and beyond the impact on star image of the inverted Loren-Mastroianni sexual dynamic. First, the squalid, claustrophobic space of the apartment, scattered with shrines to Mussolini, is gradually freed from its monolithic (fascist) significance as Antonietta begins the re-orient her view of Gabriele's increasingly apparent victimhood. This domestic space is also deterritorialized as Antonietta confesses her husband's infidelity and doubt creeps in as to her position as mother and wife. Gabriele's facing apartment is freed from its previous network of meaning as Antonietta discovers that the unknown neighbor she had fantasized about as a lover is in fact the catalyst for her perspective on family, womanhood/motherhood, and the driving fascist ideology behind it. Antonietta's body, then, is a site of deterritorialization, undergoing a constant battle for self-(re)definition: of Loren's star image (through its undoing), vis-à-vis Gabriele (as a source of shared solace in extreme alienation), and even for herself and her own conflicting desires. The very knowledge of this other—and the full realization of his marginality—makes their encounter a deeply transformative one for both parties, and ultimately what renders the title a more apt description for their personal, "private" day, rather than the very public spectacle of Hitler's visit to Rome, for which it is ostensibly named.

Though Antonietta and Gabriele's "special day" introduces them to never-before imagined perspectives, much like the ephemeral experience of the carnevalesque, their encounter does not change the hard facts of their existence in the fascist state. At the end of the film, Gabriele has been escorted from the building to begin his political exile. Antonietta has once again assumed the role of obedient—if distracted—wife and mother. Her husband hints that it would only be right to commemorate such a special day with the conception of a seventh child (to be named "Adolfo," no less). Like De Sica's Maria from *Umberto D.*, she finds herself propelled into an extreme vulnerability due to her inescapable status in society. Scola's ending implies that whether Antonietta herself decides to conceive or not, there is not much room for the possibility of shirking the reproductive role that has hitherto defined her place in society.

Scola's approach—that is, maintaining the historicity of the embattled female body as a thread of his story—reflects a conscious decision to manipulate the accepted view of Loren's specific star discourse. Antonietta is subject to the full impact of the competing forces of familial duty, political indoctrination, and personal exploration. This representation, though, because it is exceptional in actress's corpus, only serves to highlight the extent to which De Sica built and bolstered the image of Loren as eroticized body, free from history, an object of male fantasy, in his comedies.

III. Encountering the Other: Rossellini, Bergman and the Creation of a New Cinematic Language

As a director and as a man, Rossellini's experience with women was far from uncomplicated. For an artist who purportedly basked in the chaotic commingling of the disparate aspects of his life, this is hardly surprising. In addition to being the focus of many of his films, women were seen by Rossellini as the embodiment of "illusion," of cinema itself.[1] Ingrid Bergman, so unlike any of the women with whom Rossellini had previously worked, had the greatest impact on his cinema, radically redefining filmmaking for the director. She promised a mode of transition from his war trilogy films and the creation of a cinematic aesthetic that, while securing his place as an *auteur*, would finally spell the end of his career in narrative cinema. Her embodiment of transition—between nations, between languages, between filmic styles, as a vulnerable spiritual being who somehow survives the cultural upheaval—guaranteed her essential role in Rossellini's modernist cinema, sustained as it was by themes of alienation, repressed post-war trauma, and the failure of communication. The expressive possibilities of Bergman's delicate features also led Rossellini to develop to its full potential his documentary-inflected experiment of the "encounter," the awaited epiphanic moment revealed through the camera's close observation of the character as reactive being. Through the analysis of *Stromboli*, *Europa 51*, and *Viaggio in Italia*, I will show how Bergman allows Rossellini to explore fully what it means to be the foreign other, where traditional systems of language fail and a new cinematic language takes over, and how the deterritorialized body of the diva becomes the source for the epiphanic encounter.

[1] For two examples, see Adriano Aprà, *In viaggio con Rossellini* (Alessandria: Falsopiano, 2006) 45, and Marcia Landy, *Stardom, Italian Style* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2008) 201.

In initiating their collaboration, both director and actress were subject to a decentering of their cinematic identities, a deterritorialization of their previous positions. Their shared experience of displacement introduced the possibility of new filmic encounters. Already, in his neorealist films, Rossellini began flirting with the gaze of the other (e.g. the American soldiers in *Paisà*, the Germans in *Germania, anno zero*, the mentally challenged outcast of "Il miracolo"). And yet, as Alain Bergala observes, "Quando Rossellini accolse Ingrid Bergman, non sapeva letteralmente che fare di quel corpo straniero: non riusciva a scrivere un soggetto che gli si adattasse, tanto l'attrice era estranea al suo universo cinematografico e all'Italia. Fu costretto a reinventare il proprio cinema per farle posto. Scelse di accostarla all'alterità assoluta [...]"[2] Thus, *Stromboli* was born, "un'esperienza cinematografico del tutto nuova che metteva in crisi il processo drammaturgico stesso."[3] Rossellini is not the only member of the couple with the outsider's perspective: if Bergman faced the difficulties of living in a foreign land in her flight from Hollywood, the experimental director similarly faced the post-realist cinematic context as an "alien," according to Elena Dagrada.[4] Through Bergman, a radical other, Rossellini had complete freedom in feeling out the limits of his cinematic landscape, a simultaneous continuation and transcendence of his neorealist project. And through Rossellini, Bergman was given the opportunity to explore her role as other.

As Bergala mentions, it is Bergman's very body that throws Rossellini's cinema into crisis, so different from the body of his former leading lady and mistress, Anna Magnani. Bergman, "la straniera, la statuaria scandinava," substitutes "la romana, la popolana allo stato

[2] Alain Bergala, "In ordine di apparizione sullo schermo: Rossellini, Antonioni, Godard," *Lo sguardo di Michelangelo Antonioni e le arti*, ed. Dominique Païni (Ferrara: Ferrara arte, 2013) 232.

[3] Bergala, "In ordine" 232.

[4] Elena Dagrada, *Le varianti trasparenti: i film con Ingrid Bergman di Roberto Rossellini* (Milano: LED, 2005) 30.

puro."[5] With *Roma città aperta*, Magnani's becomes intimately associated with neorealism: Pina's lifeless figure becomes a testament to the trauma of war and a polemic on the future failure of post-war reconstruction.[6] One might argue that the thrust of Rossellini's corpus post-*Roma città aperta*, beginning most clearly with *Germania anno zero*, is its exploration of victimhood. Or, put differently, how the outcast individual, whose subjectivity is challenged and suppressed, interacts with the world, and is ultimately rejected by it. There is a strong argument to be made that this theme is what unites Rossellini's body of films, even during his "neorealist" period. Karl Schoonover argues that the violence enacted on the bodies of the Resistance members in *Roma città aperta* causes dramatic shifts in narrative and viewing position, transforming the gaze from that of the historically specific Resistance's struggle to a more global, humanist perspective.[7] Rossellini declared that he had his own unique neorealistic practices; he didn't "invent" neorealism, because every director possessed his own form of realism.[8] In his own words from a 1955 letter, his neorealism is "costatazione," "un prendere contatto diretto con l'uomo."[9] Even more emphatically, Rossellini says that "Neorealism consists of following someone with love and watching all his discoveries and impressions."[10] In his Bergman films, Rossellini takes that "direct contact" with the man (or woman) of the streets or in the trenches and reorients it towards Bergman's expressive face. Beginning in *Stromboli*, his love existed behind and in the camera's lens; Sergio Amidei believed that, in filming *Stromboli*,

[5] Bergala, "In ordine" 230.

[6] For more on the historical and cultural significance of Pina's death, see Millicent Marcus, "Pina's Pregnancy, Traumatic Realism, and the After-Life of Open City," *Italica* 85.4 (2008): 426-438.

[7] Karl Schoonover, *Brutal Vision: The Neorealist Body in Postwar Italian Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012) 114, 147.

[8] Roberto Rossellini, *Il mio metodo: scritti e interviste,* ed. Adriano Aprà (Venezia: Marsilio, 1997) 108.

[9] *Il mio metodo* 125.

[10] Roberto Rossellini, *My Method*, ed. Adriano Aprà, trans. Annapaola Cancogni (New York: Marsilio, 1992) 63.

what interested Rossellini was "not so much to make a good film as to capture Ingrid—and not for speculative reasons but for love. He was really in love."[11]

This "filming with love" does not seem to square with the on-screen representations of the perpetually suffering Bergman and her status as eternally alienated foreigner. In fact, Bergala alleges in his study of *Viaggio in Italia* that Rossellini records the "destruction" of his actors in order to capture a cinematic truth.[12] Peter Bondanella, on the other hand, argues that Rossellini "wanted to restore the actor to a central position of importance" in his Bergman films.[13] Pre-Bergman, however, when asked how he chose his actors, Rossellini declared that actors in themselves didn't interest him.[14] I would argue that this continues to be the case, even in the Bergman films. Actors are useful to the director only for their ability as mediators of the encounter, not for their "talent" or even their beauty.[15] Some of the unluckier non-professional actors in *Stromboli* were even used as workers on the set, as mentioned in an amusing anecdote by Bergman.[16] We shall see further evidence of this in the subsequent argument about the treatment of language in Rossellini's films and his manipulation of it; actors were kept out of the loop as long as possible, so as to prevent their preempting an "authentic" moment when filming began. We shall also see that this disregard for the traditional place—or primacy—of the actor

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[11] Tag.Gallagher, *The adventures of Roberto Rossellini* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998) 321.

[12] Alain Bergala, *Voyage en Italie de Roberto Rossellini* (Crisnée: Yellow Now, 1990) 28.

[13] Peter Bondanella, *The Films of Roberto Rossellini* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 18.

[14] *Il mio metodo* 55.

[15] In what was perhaps also a jealous concern, Rossellini, according to Bergman, would even tell her that her face was "too beautiful." Marcello Sorgi, *Le amanti del vulcano: Bergman, Magnani, Rossellini: un triangolo di passioni nell'Italia del dopoguerra (*Milano: Rizzoli, 2010) 170.

[16] Two men picked up by Rossellini in Salerno, who were selected from *Stomboli*, were made to carry equipment. Rossellini apparently commented to Bergman, "Now, you see why I use amateurs. If I'd used actors they wouldn't carry all that stuff." Ingrid Bergman and Alan Burgess, *Ingrid Bergman, My Story* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1980) 234.

falls in line with Rossellini's destabilization of traditional narrative structure. Throwing the actors into direct contact with the setting and with each other, unmediated by scripts and rehearsals, effectively deterritorializes their previously defined positions and, for Rossellini's purpose, prepares them for the "moments of truth" that wouldn't otherwise have occurred. In this way, the character is more a reflection of the actress herself than a fictional construct.

This is not to say, however, that Rossellini could completely harness what Bergman brought with her to the screen. Most critics agree that Bergman's star image could never be fully assimilated into Rossellini's films,[17] and I would argue that, knowing Rossellini's position on actors and especially stars, it is unlikely that Rossellini had an active "anti-diva" agenda when it came to his projects for Bergman. First, this assumes a unified plan and forethought on the part of the director, who so famously refused to pen screenplays and gave the actors their dialogue for a scene mere hours before shooting. Such a rigid agenda would be out of step with the seemingly natural and spontaneous nature of his techniques. More significantly, though, the fact that it was Bergman herself who approached the director, coupled with Rossellini's initial ignorance of the actress's exalted status in Hollywood (or better, his general ignorance of her existence) all but precludes the hypothesis that Rossellini took Bergman on in order to take her (star image) down. In fact, the notion that Rossellini "destroyed" Bergman from this perspective was an emotional accusation often leveled at him by contemporary American critics possessive of their adoptive diva's legacy.

What Rossellini accomplishes is a realistic treatment of the diva, her Hollywood beauty an added dimension of her otherness. She is, in the films, a beautiful and striking woman who is

[17] Stephen Gundle agrees that Rossellini's attempt to "reinvent" Bergman in his own style failed and that he "ended up in thrall to her star quality." Stephen Gundle, "Saint Ingrid at the Stake: Stardom and Scandal in the Bergman-Rossellini Collaboration," *Roberto Rossellini: Magician of the Real*, eds. David Forgacs, Sarah Lutton, and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: British Film Institute, 2000) 76.

not special and admired for these qualities, but is ostracized because of them, an outward sign of her foreign status and the impossibility of being assimilated. In *Stromboli*, Rossellini takes Bergman's ingrained diva trappings—her fairness, her build, her Nordic features—and makes these the very sources of her otherness, her physical disjointedness from her surroundings. What once elevated her above the rest of the world as an object of admiration and desire in her Hollywood films makes her terribly alienated and outcast on the island of Stromboli. Rossellini manages to tame her divistic body—even take possession of it—in this manner.

Bergman submitted fully to this treatment, anxious to leave behind her Hollywood oeuvre. Both members of the couple have admitted that they were both looking for an escape—in the case of Bergman, both personally and professionally[18]—and they found it, in the most dramatic fashion, in each other. The impact of life on art might not be worth examining were it not for the many confluences that come through in the films, starting with *Stromboli*.[19] Additionally, Rossellini's extreme possessiveness, to the point of domination, is well known, and he himself was not ashamed to admit that, after the birth of their child Robertino, he wanted to provide for his household and wanted Bergman at home.[20] In the films themselves, as we shall see, the former diva is never permitted a shadow of the steamy scenes she once shared with actors like Cary Grant. She consistently lacks a strong male counterpart; her husbands in the films are impotent and the couples show an anemic romantic attachment. As a consequence, she is made to suffer alone. As Bergala notes, the man in the couple is the "social being," and the woman, instead, prone to solitary "profound suffering." Bergala claims that, for Rossellini,

[18] Bergman and Burgess 211.

[19] The most dramatic of these confluences being the real-life pregnancy of Bergman, which occurred in the middle of filming.

[20] Rossellini admitted in an interview to his "Sicilian" tendency to want to take care of Bergman and to have her stay at home. *Il mio metodo* 83.

Bergman was the "ideal, sensitive, suffering surface," and her alienation throws this element into relief.[21] The camera focuses on her facial expressions, often reactions of anguish or surprise, frequently to the exclusion of the rest of her body [figure 22]. In a twisting of Mulvey's theory of the spectator's scopophilia, what becomes essential, the focalizing point, is not the desiring male gaze at Bergman's body, but our gaze at *her* gaze, which reveals her relation to—or rather, alienation from—the world. This alignment of gazes would not be possible were it not for the denial of Bergman's sexuality.

22 Typical close-up reaction shots of Bergman's face in each of the films discussed.

The historical considerations attending the portrayal of Bergman's body are multiple, and reveal as much about Rossellini's view of the body in the post-war era as his personal relationship to his actress. Many of the commercial films of the 1950s and '60s "turn up" the volume of the female body through the spectacular physicality of the *maggiorate fisiche*, thereby

[21] Bergala, *Voyage* 27.

drowning out the attendant historical concerns: the body eclipses history. In the Bergman films, on the other hand, her body is alienated from history, in an inverse process: it is diminished, vanquished by history. The body is mastered by its primary function of looking outward, absorbing the world, as if for the first time. In these films, Bergman is largely denied a personal narrative and only ever obliquely reveals her position in the historical context, letting small but significant hints escape. If the body of the *maggiorata fisica* is spectacle, the observed, the unalterable, the body of Bergman is a hybrid of performer and medium, an observer, undefined and permeable. We shall see that, as a result of the body's permeability, the landscape constantly threatens to swallow it.

If the body is denied sexual expression in Rossellini's Bergman films, verbal language is even more destabilized. The movement in these films is always towards the ascending power of the ineffable. Focusing solely on post-production dubbing or the languages in which each film was released is not my aim, given the conventions of the era. These "linguistic" decisions were often driven either by the director's filming process, commercial concerns, or some combination thereof. I would, however, like to investigate the moments of linguistic failure in Rossellini's films, in tandem with the development of his new cinematic language. The deterritorialization of language occurs on three levels: first, as the failure of the lingua franca, second, as the lack of personal historical narrative or expression, and lastly, as the recasting of the cinematic codes as a language of ineffable images.

In the case of Bergman, the argument for attention to language is strengthened even by her first, now infamous letter to Rossellini. The majority of her short communication concerns her linguistic expertise: "If you need a Swedish actress who speaks English very well, who has not forgotten her German, who is not very understandable in French, and who in Italian knows

only 'ti amo,' I am ready to come and make a film with you."[22] Clearly, Bergman's grasp of language, at least in her eyes, to some extent enhanced her qualification to make international film. Having made films (already) in three languages, the actress proved not only her linguistic fearlessness but also her malleability. The penultimate provocative phrase—"who in Italian knows only 'ti amo'—is a flirtatious addendum (and an actual line she uttered in *Arc of Triumph*) that conveys her lack of familiarity with Rossellini's mother tongue. One might also interpret it as an invitation to the director to take her on as a student of the Italian language (also often referenced as a "language of love"[23]).

That Rossellini had to have this fairly plain-spoken letter translated by his secretary is also significant.[24] The director did not travel between languages with the same ease as the international star. In her autobiography, Bergman mentions that her Italian was slow to develop, and she and Rossellini initially communicated in rather strained French.[25] The lack of a shared language was by no means an impediment to the blossoming professional and romantic relationship: in fact, Bergman has said that the better her Italian became, the less that she and Rossellini had to say to each other[26]: "The silences between us grew longer."[27] This inadequacy of words, this failure of linguistic communication, is naturally reflected in the films (one thinks particularly of the estranged couple in *Viaggio in Italia*). Additionally, Bergman expressed her

[22] Bergman and Burgess 4-5.

[23] Though this is a somewhat facetious comment, it does perhaps bear some truth. By the time Bergman met Rossellini, she admits that she was looking for a way both out of Hollywood and out of her marriage. Bergman and Burgess 211.

[24] Bergman and Burgess 6.

[25] Bergman and Burgess 277.

[26] Charlotte Chandler, *Ingrid: Ingrid Bergman, a Personal Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006) 204.

[27] Bergman and Burgess 326.

own anxieties about language when it came time to film *Stromboli*, and Rossellini characteristically dismissed them, as Bergman remembered:

> […] I asked, "What language shall we use?" "Language? Any language you feel at ease with. Wouldn't Swedish be the easiest thing?" I suppose I got a little irritated by that. "But how can I do it in Swedish? *You* don't even understand what I say then. What language will you write the script in?" "I shall write it in Italian, but the dialogue doesn't matter. You can say whatever you like because it will be dubbed anyway."[28]

It is clear that Rossellini's filming techniques did not demand the actors'—or even his own—comprehension of the dialogue recorded on set. The director made clear that his working process did *not* involve providing dialogue on the shooting script.[29] The prime directive was an authentic, if unpolished, reaction, or encounter, on the part of the actors. The setting was the essential element. Any linguistic flubs could be cleared up with post-production dubbing. As he revealed in a 1972 interview, he was not interested in the actors' dramatic control of language:

> [Interviewer] *E se uno legge male le sue battute, che fa?*
> [Rossellini] Lo doppio [...].
> [Interviewer] *Perciò uno può essere visivamente perfetto man non funzionare come voce?*
> [Rossellini] Sì. Ma vede, se gli chiede di non avere nessuna espressione, di dire la battuta come se leggesse un telegramma, reciterà sempre bene. Leggerà piatto.
> [Interviewer] *Chiede a tutti i suoi attori di leggere «piatto»?*
> [Rossellini] Esatto.[30]

Thus, Rossellini effectively removed one of the instruments from his actors' arsenal, and in so doing diminished the traditional method of their delivery. This diminishment was effected through his shooting techniques—the lack of finished scripts, etc.—and, we will see, on the level of narrative and cinematography. Rossellini, as discussed, is one of a group of directors who

[28] Bergman and Burgess 194.

[29] *My Method* 69.

[30] *Il mio metodo* 413.

exalted the landscape while reducing the actor—in the end, the encounter, the image, was all, not a virtuosic performance of the role.

The post-production dubbing, the "meaninglessness" of the dialogue recorded on set—even, as noted by some critics, the flatness of Rossellini's final dialogue[31]—all of these elements contribute to the devalorization of language that occurs in Fellini's Bergman films. Already, in *Paisà*, we see the diminution of the value of verbal communication in scenes like Carmela's death and Joe's encounters with Pasquale: in these episodes the difficulty of the attempts at spoken language is underscored by extraneous ambient sound and the eloquence of the image. We shall see the development of this theme in all of the Bergman films: the encounter with the real transcends the power of speech. On the other hand, since the director himself is the final arbiter of the dialogue that makes it onto the soundtrack, its place is essential to the overall meaning of the film. Where, then, do we place language in the hierarchy of elements in Rossellini's films?

Bergman's persistent, primary, "foreign" presence introduces a linguistic disruption with which Rossellini must contend. Rather than as a peripheral, passing consideration—as in the case of the foreigners in *Paisà*, whose communicative shortcomings are often present for their symbolic value or as narrative device—Bergman's foreignness forms an arc over the course of several films. The choices that he makes in terms of which language to use, and which words, define not only his relationship to Bergman, but her relationship to his films, and their joint relationship to a language which they (often) do not fully possess.

In these films, on an interpersonal level, the Bergman character is often at a loss regarding how to express herself, how to make herself understood. Whether grappling with the

[31] Bondanella looks at this language in his analysis of *Viaggio in Italia*. 110. Marcia Landy also notes the use of clichéd dialogue in the film. Landy 203.

cultural distance in *Stromboli*, the radical clashing of ideologies in *Europa 51*, or the romantic alienation in *Viaggio in Italia*, Bergman lacks the words to enunciate her subjectivity. As each film progresses, the protagonist moves from a relative linguistic stability to a realization of the futility of her words. The Bergman characters, to varying degrees and in different incarnations, experience a deterritorialization as speaking subjects, destabilized in their power of speech and made to reconsider their relationship to the world vis-à-vis language. In turn identity, formed in linguistic terms and defined by personal narrative, is experienced as a continual loss.

The dissolution of the power of language implies not only a failure to speak and be understood, but also a failure to understand. Bergman's protagonists often do not apprehend the signs and symbols, the social codes, as the "natives" do.[32] Her inability to "speak their language" allows a privileged place for her character, outside the shared network of meaning. The gaze of the outsider furnishes a view onto that which those on the inside cannot see. The loss of one system of language deterritorializes her understanding of the world, leaving open the space for new vision, for epiphany, for rejecting her place in the symbolic order. As Slavoj Žižek explains, her "position of a 'stranger'" permits her to renegotiate her relationship to the world and to herself.[33]

Žižek's Lacanian analysis of Rossellini's Bergman films examines the connections between language and the displaced subject and, on a larger scale, the role that Bergman played in Rossellini's life and art. Žižek sees Bergman's traumas in the films—e.g. Karin's collapse on the peak of Stromboli and Irene's son's death—as "moments of truth," encounters with the real. On these critical occasions, Bergman, the alienated other, effects a "symbolic suicide," refusing

[32] In the case of *Europa 51*, though Bergman begins as one of these "natives," she ends as a foreigner in her own community, incapable of seeing the world as others do, or of speaking their language.

[33] Slavoj Žižek, "Rossellini: Woman As Symptom Of Man," *October* 54 (1990): 41.

her sacrificial position within the symbolic realm and renouncing all symbolic ties. She loses her identity—her place inside the realm of language, which is itself already a loss in Lacanian terms—in order to open herself to the possibility of a renegotiation of identity. Žižek notes that Bergman accomplishes this "symbolic suicide" in reality when she forsakes Hollywood, cutting her cultural and personal ties in order to join the Italian director. This first act sets up the dynamic that will continue throughout their collaboration: Bergman becomes the mediator for Rossellini's "encounters with the real"; she lives the epiphanies that he merely records. Harkening back to the title of Žižek's study, "Rossellini: Woman as Symptom of Man," the director is "externalized" in his "symptom," Bergman; "his entire being lives 'out there,' in woman."[34] Thus, contends Žižek, do Rossellini's hallmark features of "modernism" in the films betray his failed attempts to "manipulate, to bring under control the excesses of the real […] Each of his films is an ultimately failed attempt to come to terms with the real of some traumatic encounter."[35] Rossellini can never match the power of Bergman's own suicidal, liberatory feat; she may be, in the end, stripped of language, but "the act remains hers."[36]

Structuring his films on the anticipation of the "encounter" dramatically redefines Rossellini's cinematic language. As early as *Paisà*, we see the abandonment of traditional narrative structure, of a straightforward historical accounting, for a more reactive construction, fluid and fragmented by turns.[37] Much of the neorealist aesthetic—one thinks of the pacing, for example, of De Sica's *Ladri di biciclette*—casts off the strictures of dramatic structure for the

[34] Žižek 21.

[35] Žižek 44.

[36] Žižek 44.

[37] Deborah Amberson describes *Paisà* as "a film that, in its repetition of meaningless suffering and anonymous sacrifice, simply folds in on itself in order to deny the very possibility of a linear narrative of historical progress." Deborah Amberson, "Battling History: Narrative Wars in Roberto Rossellini's *Paisà*," *Italica* 86.3 (2009): 392.

sake of in-depth character study. The influences of documentary style intrude on the fictional framework so that the genre of "narrative film" is redefined. Giuliana Minghelli states, with this hybrid approach, "Neorealism does not choose between the objectivism of the documentary and the storytelling of classical fictional movies, but rather embraces both […] Neorealism simultaneously returns fiction to a documentarist vision while revealing the fictional side of documentary."[38] In Rossellini's Bergman films, the cinematic language is recast in a reconfigured network of authentic *images* (the body in the landscape, the body reacting to the landscape) rather than premeditated fictional tableaux. In terms of the development of a new cinematic language, this deconstruction of traditional narrative filmic language opens a space for the truly unexpected, Rossellini's "encounter," a documentary-influenced recording of the meeting of the actress and epiphanic image. Noa Steimatsky deems Rossellini's "enigmatic revelations and epiphanic endings […] a product of narratives on the humbling of self in the face of transcendent powers and the sheer fact of being. Such saints' tales formulas are not only pursued by the narrative, but also reflect back on Rossellini's technical refusal to use finished scripts or to otherwise pre-determine meaning."[39]

Rossellini undermines the standard cinematic codes and clichés in each film, upsetting our expectations of genre, dialogue, the demarcation of reality and fiction, and even, as we have seen, narrative structure. His collaborations with the former diva go beyond the limits of the screen and narrative filmic fiction to reveal something about Bergman herself, *to* herself. It is in this way that Rossellini's experiments with Bergman's self-revelatory encounters with the

[38] Giuliana Minghelli, *Landscape and Memory in Post-Fascist Italian Film: Cinema, Year Zero* (New York: Routledge, 2013) 183-184.

[39] Noa Steimatsky, "The Earth figured: An exploration of landscapes in Italian cinema" (Diss. New York University, New York 1995. ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing): 76-77.

other—or, as Žižek would have it, with the real—erode the traditional practices of narrative film and, as an ultimate consequence, lead him to abandon this mode of film-making. The loss of Bergman as a protagonist may have meant the end of Rossellini's experiments with narrative film from a practical perspective, as she was the medium for the exploration of the encounter between reality and fiction. But the failure was already built into the machine[40]: in his creation of a cinematic syntax without words and without speakers, a language of pure images born of moments of grace, Rossellini took narrative film to its furthest reaches.

Stromboli: ***The Loss of the Speaking Subject***

Bergman and Rossellini's first collaboration lends itself easily to a multilayered investigation, given both parties' cinematic break with their previous work, and especially in light of the scandal that arose out of Bergman's romantic involvement with the Italian director. The autobiographical influences are hardly incidental to the world of the film—not only in the details of the two couples' lives, decidedly present in the narrative, but also in Rossellini's exploitation of the fuzzy line between "reality" and "fiction." Rossellini's lens documents the clash of Bergman, former Hollywood diva, with the hostile island surroundings as much as it records the fictional plight of Karin, war refugee. Bergman's gaze, the gaze of the Nordic goddess descended from the modern world, both on the diegetic and metafilmic levels, is a colonizing force on the primitive Stromboli. The gaze of the inhabitants, their distrust of her invasion, is in turn a colonizing force which, through its judgment, attempts to bring her exotic body in line with their cultural practices. In the process of this reciprocal deterritorialization, Bergman's divisitic body is stripped of its speaking power by Rossellini's lens, and the body of

[40] Or, as Žižek would have it, "Rossellini's greatness lies in the fact that he intentionally included in his films the traces of their own failure." Žižek 44.

Karin, "survivor," is silenced, even voided, by the constant cultural clashes to which it is subject. I would like to examine this deterritorialization through the lens of language and Bergman's body, both undergoing continual loss in the film. This approach opens an interpretive window onto three key elements of the film: first, the nature of Karin's marginalization and her ultimate denial of identity in the island community, second, the obliteration of the character's and actress's body as speaking subject, which, however, continues to leave traces in the film, and thirdly, the introduction of Rossellini's "encounter" as a plenitude through loss.

The first scenes of the Italian version of the film[41] establish the modern Tower of Babel that is the refugee camp. The camp, Farfa, located in Fara di Sabina, was a former wartime P.O.W. camp. In the barracks, women of various nationalities chat in several languages—Italian, Spanish, French, and German—showing at once the extent and variety of the war's reach. At no point does the film offer us subtitles, denying a linguistic transparence for the viewer but also mimetically presenting the confusion of the post-war cultural upheaval. Rossellini continues to develop the theme of communication in a multinational setting, a theme central, as we have seen, to many of the episodes in *Paisà*. Here, however, in this multi-lingual discourse, the women communicate without hesitation or difficulty—even laughing together at a joke told in French; only once does an interlocutor ask for a translation (into Italian). In this strange space, the polysemy of language becomes a unifying, rather than divisive, reality. Later in the film, this linguistically harmonious space will be contrasted with the hostile silence and opacity of intention on Stromboli.

[41] The international version of the film was dubbed in English, so between versions there is clearly no equivalence in treatment of spoken language. Further, according to Dagrada, out of the three versions released of the film none is considered the "complete" version, or, as she puts it, there is no "Ur-text" for *Stromboli*. Dagrada 38-40. Her book is invaluable for its cataloguing and description of the different versions of each Rossellini-Bergman film. One of her central theses, that Rossellini's Bergman films represent the most "densi e omogenei" group of his career, both among variations of a single film and among the films, is a strong starting point for a unified reading of the variations and of the group.

When Karin leaves the women refugees for a tête-à-tête with her eventual husband Antonio at the perimeter of the camp, linguistic confusion begins to creep in. In fact, the first sign that Antonio comes from a different expressive universe than Karin is the fact that he serenades her from outside the barracks to alert her to his presence, and it is not she but another refugee who initially recognizes the call. When she finds her singing "innamorato," she opens with small talk, telling him, "Fa freddo stasera!" and when he asks quizzically, "Freddo?" she responds with "Sì—*cold*! Brrr." This is one of several moments in the movie when the Bergman character spontaneously breaks from her fluent Italian into English. This linguistic fluidity does not present any obvious narrative explanation. Though it does seem rather far-fetched that a war refugee's Italian would be as sophisticated as Karin's, the viewer can comprehend its narrative necessity and place it in context of the uncertain nature of Karin's post-war wanderings. The bursts of English, however, are less easily explained. On the narrative level this disruption seems completely unmotivated, given that the English translation offers no clarification to the uneducated Italian peasants among whom she lives—and no clarification to the Italian audience—and also and more importantly, because presumably it is not Karin's native language either, hailing as she does from Lithuania. A possible hypothesis, then, lies in Rossellini's echo (deliberate or otherwise) of Bergman's international background, her command of English as a vestige of her former currency as international star. Perhaps, through these moments of linguistic slippage, the director alerts us to the radical displacement of the star, like her out-of-place English.

Language is not only verbal, and Bergman's physical presence and gesturality are the most visible manifestations of her upsetting presence on the island. The inadequacy of Karin's recently acquired standard Italian quickly becomes apparent as she struggles to communicate

with her neighbors on the island. From the outset of his acquaintance with Bergman, Rossellini relays to her in writing the contours of the part he wishes her to play in the film, and the Karin character's struggles to make herself understood; he draws his inspiration from a woman he encountered while driving by a refugee camp, extrapolating from her appearance her fictional trajectory: "Ho intuito la sua impossibilità a comunicare con quella gente dalle abitudini fenicie, che parla un dialetto aspro, in cui si mescolano parole greche, e l'impossibilità di comunicare anche con lui, l'uomo incontrato al campo di Farfa."[42] It is not, however, merely her lack of verbal means of communication that ultimately preempts Karin's social assimilation. It is, rather, the disrupting presence of her body and its failure as tool of survival. Not just her otherness, but her *Nordic* otherness, so physically different from the short, Mediterranean village women, so reminiscent of the Aryan physical ideal put forth by the Germans—makes her assimilation impossible [figure 23]. On the fictional historical level, Karin's glaringly foreign body is a constant reminder to the natives of the trauma of the war, in a time when the land should be healing, soldiers like Antonio returning to their homes and native wives, refugees like Karin finding their way back to their respective countries, or at least the next best alternative. On the real level, Bergman's incongruous divistic body was a reminder of the break that she had made with Hollywood and, before that, Sweden: Bergman is forever a refugee.

[42] Roberto Rossellini, "Lettere di Roberto Rossellini a Ingrid Bergman," *Close-up: storie della visione* 2.3 (1998): 22.

23 Ingrid's otherness: a still from a scene not included in the film and a photo taken between scenes

And yet the source of Karin's alienation is not merely physical. She is unfamiliar with the social "language" of the island and does not understand how her foreign practices, especially in her interactions with men, become a source of suspicion and alienation. Initially, committed to surviving on the island, she attempts to make her appearance and her home reflect her own identity. She is unaware or unconcerned that her midriff-bearing poses on the rocky beach are out of sync with the values on the island. Further, in a sense, painting flowers onto the stucco walls of her humble home, romping playfully in the sea, she tries to write herself into the surrounding context. She's subsequently rebuffed by the village women, snubbed or told that she has no modesty. What little of her attempts at home decorating isn't destroyed by the volcano's eruption is finished off by her jealous husband. Karin is not passive in her marginalization, however. There are several scenes that reveal her sexual disingenuousness—including her physical flirtation with a receptive fisherman [figure 24]—but the most striking is the scene in which Karin applies to the village priest for aid to leave the island. Karin shows her absolute incomprehension of both village life and the priest's role within it. Though he continues to repeat that he is but a "povero prete," entrusted to protect and guide his community, Karin plays the role of vamp, drawing closer to him, prevailing on his "humanity," telling him he's the only man

who can understand her. Karin not only fails to recognize the priest's religious obligations, she also fails to understand his role in the community, and the gravity of her attempts to upset it. Karin's desperation blinds her to the damage she causes.

24 Karin flirting

Significantly, Karin's sexuality is never demonstrated in the "proper" context, i.e. her marriage, and thus even the "language" of her body denies her assimilation. Her misdirected sexual advances are almost always in service of self-preservation—her body, it would seem, may be her last means of survival after verbal communication has failed. These physical advances, which are never consummated, are a further sign of her rejection of island life, and the island community's rejection of her. Further, one doesn't have to probe too deeply into the biographical data to locate Rossellini's personal reluctance to have Bergman engage in sexual encounters with her male co-stars, with whom she has a consistently feeble contact. [43] According to Bergman's autobiography, when the fisherman who played Antonio asked when he would get to kiss the famous diva, Rossellini replied, "You don't."[44] When Karin finds herself pregnant, the news is perhaps somewhat surprising to the viewer given the cool and contentious nature of her

[43] It must also be noted that here, as in subsequent films, the presence of a male co-star is primarily a necessary narrative element. Rossellini has limited use for the male actors in his Bergman films.

[44] Bergman and Burgess 235.

marriage.[45] The distance between her physical relationship with Antonio and the fact of her pregnancy is such that it comes as no surprise that, by this point, it was in fact another man—Rossellini—who had impregnated the star.[46] Whether Rossellini's refusal to let his wife be an object of sexual desire was motivated by possessiveness, or concern for her image, or otherwise, the consequences on the narrative level of this refusal play out as a negation of a proper avenue for Karin's sexuality. Instead, it is presented as a twisted denial of her desire and desirability. She takes on all of the responsibilities of pregnancy without any of the pleasure that typically leads up to it.

On the metafilmic level, Rossellini was playing with the image of the Hollywood diva. The problematization of Karin's sexuality resounds in terms of Bergman's former *divismo* and the contradictions contained within it. The diva who is denied sexual success—even "reduced" to the status of pregnant peasant—is certainly a startling introduction to Rossellini's re-invented Bergman. Moreover, Rossellini, however unconsciously, is in line with a series of directors who put Bergman's character through what James Damico calls "spiritual torment."[47] Even the characters that exhibit "questionable morals" possess bodies that are gradually covered and obscured, as if on the path to spiritual or romantic salvation.[48] Rossellini claims that what drew him to Bergman for the part of Karin was her resistance to *divismo* even after years in

[45] Rossellini's description of the couple's first conjugal experience in his treatment of *Stromboli* is vastly different from what makes it onscreen: "[T]rascorrono la prima notte d'amore, una notte di passione e di resa totale." This treatment, however, varies significantly from the final product, also tacking on an ending which finds Karin returning to the village and fully embracing the cultural life of the island. Roberto Rossellini, "Il soggetto di Stromboli," *Close-up: storie della visione* 2.3 (1998): 28.

[46] And thereby, perhaps, implanted the idea of the pregnancy itself into the fiction of the film.

[47] James Damico, "Ingrid Bergman from Lorraine to Stromboli: Analyzing the Public's Perception of a Film Star," *Journal of Popular Films* 4.1 (1975): 7.

[48] Ora Gelley cites several examples of this in Bergman's films. Ora Gelley, *Stardom and the Aesthetics of Neorealism: Ingrid Bergman in Rossellini's Italy* (London: Routledge, 2011) 67.

Hollywood and the quality that she possessed that was "assolutamente sano e naturale."[49] Even so, as we shall see, the overarching theme of spiritual suffering that spans his Bergman films is a strong testimony to the endurance of Bergman's star discourse.

Karin's spiritual torment is not isolated to her pregnancy and subsequent ascent of the volcano; throughout the film, we are given small insights into her tortured past, most vividly in her encounters with animals. These animals are a strong objective correlative for Karin's position of fragile and fractured subjectivity and also provide a hint of her troubled personal history. Many have argued that her dismay at the tuna slaughter and at the ferret's instinctive killing of the rabbit is a sign of her disjunctive relationship with "primal" nature, or else a further argument of her misunderstanding of the culture in which she finds herself. This dissonance is certainly present on the narrative level, but neglects the similarity of Karin's position to that of the dumb and defenseless animals: even they do not willingly know or accept their positions as victims, even if they are "necessary" or "natural" victims. Just as they are unable to battle or even protest against the overwhelming force that vanquishes them, so Karin, especially in her last confrontation with the volcano, experiences an annihilation of the self (as per Žižek's argument). Additionally, it is when Antonio releases the ferret on the rabbit that one of Karin/Ingrid's outbursts in English occurs, with her screaming: "No! È orribile! Fermalo! Basta! Levalo! Oh, stupid, stupid, crudele, selvaggio!" while she strikes him with her fists; Antonio merely laughs in reply. The intersection of "star residue" and role is apparent here, not only for this exclamation in English, but also because Rossellini knew first-hand of Bergman's sensitivity to animal cruelty. Driving with Rossellini in his Ferrari on the Southern coast of Italy, she would make him stop so

[49] *Il mio metodo* 67.

that she could upbraid the horse-carriage drivers who beat their starved animals with a switch.[50] Later, on Stromboli, she was revolted by the sight of a fisherman "slitting open a live turtle," with Sergio Amidei commenting to Rossellini, "We must put that in the film!"[51] On the narrative level, the resonances of Karin's sensitivity to torture and suffering are also a reminder of her fictional past: whether a refugee for political or religious reasons, she may very well be acquainted with the atrocities of mass slaughter. Her curiosity-turned-horror when witnessing the killing of the tuna is one of the few moments when her silence—in her helpless distress—speaks to her personal history [figure 25].

25 Witnessing the tuna slaughter

By the end of the film, Karin's body has been voided by the condemnatory village women, her husband (who has beaten her in a fit of jealous rage), by her subsequent pregnancy, and finally by the obliterating volcano.[52] Karin's pregnancy is in many ways a castration; even

[50] Bergman and Burgess 213-214.

[51] Gallagher 319.

[52] Rossellini's previously cited short, "Il miracolo," (from 1948's *L'amore*), was likely an inspiration for *Stromboli* given the thematic similarities and the parallels in plot. The subject, conceived by Fellini, is the story of a mentally challenged woman (Anna Magnani) who is seduced by a tramp and impregnated, and who believes that she will give birth to the Son of God. Mocked by the cruel villagers and finally run out of town at the end of her pregnancy, she gives birth after fleeing to the mountains. The last frames find her ecstatically welcoming her "savior" son into the world, crying out to God in awe.

Rossellini posits that Karin "is double a prisoner [of the island] in that she is pregnant. For her, being pregnant is stupid, humiliating, ignoble, and bestial."[53] In terms of the sexual act, she is made impotent, unavailable to men—in a sense, she has become the property of the man whom with she's conceived; in terms of survival, for both herself and her baby, she is in a precarious position of vulnerability, dependent on others to see her through safe passage in labor. For Karin, then, stranded on an inhospitable island with no hope of escape, this castration is doubly severe, and her powerlessness, her surrender to a greater force, is complete by the end of the film.

While Karin's body undergoes diminution throughout the film—and the divistic body of Bergman is radically deterritorialized—her pregnancy and flight, though voiding the possibility of interpersonal communion, introduce instead the space for internal dialogue, written onto the suffering body. Loss—of language, of community, of her identity—becomes, in the closing moments of the film, plenitude. Karin's dueling impulses of self-destruction and self-preservation meet on the volcano as both character and actress are forced into an encounter with the obliterating forces of nature. As we have seen from Žižek's analysis of Rossellini's Bergman characters, Karin's ascent of Stromboli is the moment of her "symbolic suicide." Ascending the volcano, Karin is literally swallowed by the landscape as the volcano's smoke billows around her [figure 26], and she continually collapses onto the crags in pain and dejection, her hands holding her abdomen.

[53] *My Method* 73.

26 Karin's body is obscured by Stromboli's billowing smoke.

In her final collapse, her body now completely failing her, Karin comes face to face with "the real," the moment in which language and identity—the realm of the symbolic—falls away. Since entrance into the symbolic is defined by Lacan as a loss—that is, the loss of wholeness and integration (introducing as it does, during the mirror stage, the concept of the "Other"), the (re)entrance into the real for Karin becomes a "loss of a loss." In other words, in the moment of the loss of her subjectivity, Karin awakens to the "bliss" of renouncing all symbolic ties.[54] In Rossellini's terms, "capisce l'enorme potere di chi non possiede niente, la forza straordinaria che nasce dalla libertà, e diventa una specie di San Francesco."[55] Her subjective annihilation is then experienced as a fullness: her cries to an absent God are the last resort of a non-believer who has tried all other paths of escape, and in her extreme vulnerability she also experiences a permeability, or openness. The loss of language and comprehension of previously stable codes and the obliteration of her body by the landscape prime Karin for her encounter with the void. As Steimatsky argues, the "absorption" of the human body by the landscape is an image of plenitude, "epitomizing the embrace of the earth," both in the closing moments of *Stromboli* and

[54] Žižek 33.

[55] "Lettere di Roberto Rossellini a Ingrid Bergman": 22.

Paisà.[56] We see Karin's battered, seemingly lifeless body settled into the volcanic ash as she gives into her struggle [figure 27]. In fact, the last shot of the film is not of Karin in the throes of her epiphany, but instead of the birds flying over the peaks of Stromboli. This cutting-away is a cinematographic sign of the narrative irresolution that we will also see later in *Viaggio in Italia*. At the close of *Stromboli*, Karin has not yet decided what she will *become*, whether to go forward or to return to the village: "the film ends *before* Karin takes one of these alternatives, *before* her insertion in a new symbolic order."[57]

27 Karin, prostrate, "embraced" by the landscape.

This encounter with the volcano and all its attendant toil was not a trick of camera angles; Bergman (and the entire crew) had to experience first-hand the hardship of scaling an active volcano. Throughout filming, in fact, the former Hollywood diva was treated much like any other of Rossellini's non-professional actors.[58] The well-documented primitive living and working conditions, though, were nothing compared to the shooting on the volcano itself, the fumes of which even caused an assistant director to have a fatal heart attack.[59] The last scenes

[56] Steimatsky 36.

[57] Žižek 34.

[58] Bondanella 20.

[59] Peter Brunette, *Roberto Rossellini* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 111.

record more than just the actress's playing a role—they capture the encounter between Bergman and brute nature. We witness here the continuing evolution of Rossellini's "documentary" style, the experiment of throwing two clashing entities together for the first time and recording the subsequent interaction, or as he says, "following someone with love and watching all [her] discoveries and impressions." What allows for progression of this technique, of course, is the fact of Bergman herself: woman, foreigner, diva, other.[60]

The Dissolution of Boundaries in Europa 51

The urban world of *Europa 51* is far removed from the primitive Stromboli. Irene Girard, a bourgeois housewife and socialite, starts the film as a fully integrated member of her social sphere, unlike Karin, and it is only after an unexpected trauma that she begins to repudiate her identity, finally rejecting the notion of identity itself. After her young son dies, she decides she must abandon the structures to which she belonged and also must ultimately refuse the new and unfamiliar ideologies that offer themselves as institutions from within which to practice her new raison d'être. Her journey into the world of "charity," into a world that does not distinguish or discriminate, leads to a sort of self-deterritorialization, wherein Irene frees herself from all linguistic and social boundaries. *Europa 51*, like *Stromboli*, ends with a Bergman character who lacks a place in her community. Her loss of identity, however, is more final, more decided, and completely self-motivated: she has become a prisoner of her own vision and inability to enunciate it. Her Irene character is always losing her identity, experiencing crises of language and vision which dissolve the established social and personal boundaries.

[60] Dagrada submits that Rossellini effected the most dramatic change in his cinematic aesthetic by embracing Bergman's difference, by accentuating it through dramatically contrasting settings and contexts. Dagrada 21.

Irene may not be so very different from Karin in her personal history: her friend Andrea references her initial arrival in Italy in 1947, and the Giulietta Masina character "Passerotto" mistakes her for a war refugee. We could see Karin *becoming* Irene had she found a more suitable alternative than Stromboli in her escape from the refugee camp. Significantly, though, this setting feels ever more distant from the immediate post-war concerns of Rossellini's previous films, and *Viaggio in Italia* will continue to travel the path that pushes war into the (looming) background.[61] On the other hand, as previously discussed, the Bergman characters share an amnesiac personal history or damaged memory that characterizes post-neorealist films. In this case, Irene may either be from England or America—or neither, as she claims to have "sangue nordico." There is some confusion on this point in the film itself: her mother pays a visit from England, seemingly, but late in the film is said to have come from America. Additionally, Irene's husband apparently works for an American company, but gets several business calls from London. His surname is French. And none of this information speaks to Irene's country of origin. The fluidity of place and origin is likely intentional, revealing the deracination that resulted from the war and the lack of defined origin among the modern bourgeoisie. The dubbing into Italian in the official version of the film further obscures the origins of Irene and her largely expatriate community. In any case, from the beginning of the film we are introduced not to a war-torn Rome, but to the insidious discontents of the bourgeois household. Irene, like Karin, is a largely self-centered being, flitting around the grand rooms of her apartment in preparation for a night of entertaining. Her son Michel receives, in passing, a fraction of the attention that he asks of his mother, as he briefly expresses his dissatisfaction with his new tutor. She dismisses his needs and complaints as effeminate, and doesn't notice that, as she's making these very pronouncements,

[61] The spiritual crises of the post-war era—e.g. the lack of faith that Rossellini mentions as a consequence of having lived the war—remain, of course essential themes.

he is at the mirror, miming choking himself with one of her necklaces. At dinner, when Michel continues to request her presence, she laments his nervousness, his acting like a "feminuccia," ironically disparaging the "feminine" sensitivity that, as a mother, should have made more attuned to her son's psychological needs. Like Karin, though she is not intentionally cruel, she is self-centered. In short, Irene cannot read her son: and this failure of vision will continue to pursue her into her transformation after his death.

Michel's eventually fatal fall is sudden and serves mostly as a catalyst for Irene's character. The possibility of suicide seems to shake Irene as much as the death itself. She realizes that she was unable to understand the being she was most obligated to protect, and this sets off her desperate attempt to embrace any and all who are in need of aid or understanding. Her descent into grief is not resolved by a reintegration into her small community, but is instead protracted and savored in the form of an unwavering resolve to dedicate her life to a group of unknown victims she believes need her help.

Soon after Michel's death, we begin to see the ways in which Irene's social boundaries dissolve during her spiritual quest. In the first frames of the film, she is visually set off from the other Roman city-dwellers, who are forced to walk in the rain due to a bus strike. She, instead, glides by them, protected in her obscenely sleek Cadillac. Her first foray into the world after Michel's death is in this same car, as she is accompanied by her friend Andrea, who, with his communist sensibilities, begins to open her eyes of the role society has played in Michel's death. Her next outing is to see the results of having financially assisted one of these "victims" of society, as she and Andrea take a public bus to the tenements where the recovering child lives. Inside the tenement apartment itself, family, friends, and neighbors crowd into one room, singing and celebrating the child's health with Irene and Andrea. The permeability of the space, with

sounds intruding on one another from other apartments and neighbors coming and going, presents a marked contrast to the hermetic environments of Irene's car and home. Her absorption into the world of the disadvantaged is further visually marked by her solitary trips to the tenement and, later, to the factory [figure 28].

28 Irene's bourgeois boundaries crumble as she abandons her sedan for the public bus and sets off to work on the factory line.

Irene begins to embrace the dissolution of linguistic and social boundaries as her vision of the world is altered. Her desire to see, to observe and understand through sight, eclipses her need to enunciate. As Deleuze notes about the privileged place of vision in neorealism, the protagonist "records rather than reacts. He is prey to a vision, pursued by it or pursuing it, rather

than engaged in action."[62] For Irene, there is a leveling of the people she encounters: there are only those who need her and those who don't. Her attention is blind to social categories and is claimed by those she sees as needy. This leveling is increasingly radical: she works on a factory line, she then plays bedside nurse to a prostitute, and finally she helps a murderer flee authorities. Her clothing is a visible sign of this loss of social identity: the lux gown of her dinner party is forsaken for proletariat garb and finally monastic simplicity. In this process, Bergman's body is again obscured, as if in expiation of its sinful quality as an image. We begin to observe that, in these later films, while visuality takes over the narrative—image is all—the power of Bergman's own image is diminished, constrained.

The camera highlights the primacy of Irene's vision. Each new, increasingly jarring encounter is recorded through Irene's reaction to it, in a close-up of her gaze, which becomes more attentive, more penetrating. Deleuze posits that Rossellini structures *Europa 51* around this progression, and that by the end of the film "[Irene] sees, she has learnt to see."[63] Her gaze passes through stages of curiosity and joy, in meeting "Passerotto" and her children, to dismay and confusion, on the factory line, to anguished, silenced acceptance, in the final frames of the film. Her role is not so much to act but to witness, to be present, just as Deleuze notes of the neorealist protagonist. The final space in which she is witness is itself ruled by observation: the psychiatric hospital highlights not only Irene's gaze, but also her fellow patients' reciprocal stares, as well as the supervision of the doctors and staff. The white walls and clinical equipment make for a theater of vision drastically contrasted with the classical cinematic space, as we shall see in my subsequent analysis. Marcia Landy comments on the transformation of how Irene sees,

[62] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Robert Galeta and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 2005) 3.

[63] Deleuze 2.

slightly challenging Deleuze's statement: "Increasingly, [Irene] is removed from the familiar landmarks of cinema, culminating in her becoming a cipher through the film robbing her of speech, erasing the images of a conventional landscape, and thereby dissolving boundaries between normal and pathological vision."[64]

While in the hospital, Irene reveals how bruised her subjectivity is, how far she has excluded herself from the Lacanian symbolic, how far her compulsion to become "one" with the poor and neglected has become. It is here that we see that the dissolution of her identity and her increasing contact with the needy has finally guaranteed her alienation from her guarded, insulated bourgeois life, and later, from the very people she longs to help. As the famous Cadillac brings her into the grounds, it must pass through two locked gates. The space of the hospital itself is composed of walled-off areas which signify protected observation and suspension of reality. And yet these confined spaces are designed to allow visual invasiveness. Though the patients' rooms are under lock and key and the windows barred, the common spaces invite a nexus of gazes, and it is here that Irene engages in dynamic observation with other patients and the staff. As mentioned, one of the more enigmatic scenes in the hospital is Irene's entrance into the common room, walking by the other patients. Much as in the scene at the Museo Archeologico in *Viaggio in Italia* (discussed below), the interplay of gazes is an intense and harrowing experience. Unlike the blank stares of the statues in the museum, though, the looks of the patients are critical, almost accusatory, and Irene's quizzical expression in encountering them seems, if anything, to testify to her difference from these clinically imbalanced individuals and to the fact that she has been placed there under misguided judgment. The enigmatic scene perhaps speaks to the fact that, try as she might, Irene *is* an individual with

[64] Landy 202.

her own subjectivity, defined by difference. Later, we see Irene comforting a hysterical patient in bed, staring deep into her eyes and stroking her hair. Not insignificantly, to comfort her, she uses words very similar to those she used with her son Michel: “You’re not alone. Don’t worry. I’m with you. I’ll stay with you always.” Irene is now mother to the world, no longer able to maintain the distance that she once kept with her son, or even the prostitute Ines, whom she nursed on her deathbed. She is compelled to breach the expected distance—in fact, she no longer detects any qualitative difference between these three “victims” and their need of her [figure 29].

29 Irene's indistinguishable attitudes of comfort, with Michel, Ines, and the anonymous patient at the sanatorium.

Just as Irene’s all-encompassing vision ends in a dissolution of boundaries and categorization, her perspective on ideology suffers a leveling of value and purpose. For her, all ideologies eventually lead to the same unsatisfying end, which is an incompatibility with the authentic motives for her selfless actions—which not even she can enunciate. Communism and

Catholicism, which present themselves in turn to the searching Irene, both fail to coincide with her sense of charity, unique in its indiscriminateness. Her communist friend, as well as the priest, as well as the psychologist, all fail to discern the rationale behind her new life, and she, in turn, fails to locate the inherent value of their doctrines. Politics, religion, science: the standard categories that anchor others' actions are inadequate premises for Irene, due to their limited nature, their tendency toward exclusion. Again, we face a problem of language: Karin does not feel compelled to enunciate or explicate her rationale, or feel even capable of explication, and her attempts to do so only lead to confusion and concern on the part of a community that demands rational explanations and categorization.

The process of deterritorialization happens on multiple levels in the film, as noted: linguistically, ideologically, and even sexually. From *Stromboli* to *Viaggio in Italia*—and perhaps naturally, as she aged—Bergman was less and less determined by her sexuality, and her spiritual crises had less to do with her status as woman or mother. She begins as a pregnant newlywed in the first film and ends as a childless middle-aged doyenne in *Viaggio in Italia*. What has been consistently missing, of course, is a significant male counterpart. In *Europa 51*, Irene's husband is a nuisance to be cast off once she begins her voyage into charity; he's an amalgam of the clichés of the superficially concerned, ultimately stereotypically bourgeois disaffected husband, much like the Alex of *Viaggio in Italia*.[65] Her role as wife is merely the first definition to be abandoned. Which brings us to the question of Irene's womanhood: what does it mean in the film?

To answer this question, we must return again to the Bergman character's relation to the symbolic. While Karin, in *Stromboli*, undergoes an epiphanic moment on the crest of the

[65] For Rossellini, perhaps, these husbands were in fact interchangeable: George (Alexander Knox) becomes the Alexander (George Sanders) of *Viaggio in Italia*.

volcano, Irene realizes a slow, deliberate undoing of her place in the symbolic order. Žižek notes that Irene's son's death is her "traumatic encounter with the real," and that, by the end of the film "she falls away from the symbolic network and assumes distance towards the symbolic universe."[66] Here, as in Stromboli, it is the "feminine" act of saying "no!" to the symbolic, and all the attendant definitions and categories, that introduce her into a world in which words no longer signify, the notion of self is rendered obsolete, and the ineffable cinematic image is all that remains.

Irene is an entity that finally resists categorization, just as she has wished. At the end of the film, she stays the course of her self-erasure in selflessness when confronted by the group of men who will determine her (in)sanity: the doctors, the judge, and her husband. She refuses to communicate a clear rationale for her new philosophy—indeed, is incapable of outlining the philosophy itself. She realizes the loss of identity in the complete dissolution of attachments, and more, a refusal to comply with the men's expectations regarding her sanity or insanity—even though telling them what they want to hear would likely secure her release. The title of the American version of the film, with respect to Irene's motivation, is telling: *The Greatest Love*. The typical spectator immediately understands this "love" as Irene's love for her son, now mutated into a sense of *caritas* for the less fortunate, whom she ignored for so many years, as she ignored him. And yet Irene herself confesses that her actions are, on the contrary, motivated by an intense self-hatred. Her selflessness is exactly that: a radical rejection of the self. Just as the relations imposed by community and matrimony are dissolved, so the self becomes another set of distinctions with which to dispense.[67] Her sense of love, or charity, synonymous as it is with

[66] Žižek 32.

[67] The tagline to the American movie tries to bring some Hollywood flair to this spiritual drama: "Would she lose her husband, her home? - Her answer will stun you!"

self-erasure, is not unlike that of San Francesco in Rossellini's *Francesco, giullare di Dio*. Both Irene and Francesco operate on the same principle of all-encompassing love, service to the abject, driven by mortification of the self; here, the desexualization of the Bergman character, her corporal diminishment, goes hand-in-hand with the Franciscan philosophy of bodily chastisement. Both embrace the spirit of the biblical verses that begin *Francesco*: "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, / and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are." The driving force behind this type of charity is an exaltation of all that is low and weak, concomitant with an abasement of the self. Irene, however, unlike Francesco, does not experience this lowliness of self as a joyous innocence, or as part of a community, but, in the end, as a radical, sorrowful isolation. While Francesco's humiliation of self, in its radicality, confers a strong sense of selfhood and a strong voice, Irene's trauma, and the subsequent self-deterritorializing impulse, refuse her new definition. In fact, while speaking to the priest in the hospital, Irene makes the self-annihilating, vaguely Franciscan statement, "Solo chi è completamente libero può confondersi con tutti, solo chi è legato a niente è legato a tutti gli esseri umani." For her, spiritual fulfillment comes through obliteration of personal identity.

The doctors and lawyers who interrogate Irene subsequently discuss her mental state, how she's either insane or a visionary, and how historical figures like her have either been followed or burned at the stake. Besides the significance of the internal echoes—of both Bergman's "Christological" star discourse and her turn as Joan of Arc—this argument highlights how Irene will be kept in the hospital, in this state of suspension, precisely because she refuses definition, and to define. She ends as totally alienated from those she wishes to aid, sealed within

the walls of her own prison, locked in the sanatorium. The encounter is over almost before it could even begin, due to her refusal to make distinctions, to choose to participate in the symbolic order.

30 Irene, wordless

Irene's complete isolation is written onto the last frames of the film [figure 30], which find her at the barred window of the hospital, looking down at the people she has helped, who have made her a secular saint. Žižek calls the adoration of these recipients of Irene's charity "a cruel irony, proof of a missed encounter between her and them."[68] Irene is finally even cut off from the world with which she so longs to feel union, silenced by her unwillingness to speak. This is the moment in Rossellini's Bergman films when language faces its final failure and all we are left with is the cinematic image: here, not as ambiguously hopeful as that of the birds over the peaks of Stromboli, but still powerfully expressed through Bergman's tormented gaze. Trapped behind the bars, silent, she merely reaches her hand to her lips. In becoming one with all, she reaches no one.

[68] Žižek 40.

Spectacles of Erasure: Bergman and the Gaze of the (Other) Other

The epiphanic moment in the Rossellini-Bergman films—the moment of complete self-erasure (Bergman's "no!" to the symbolic order), of the failure of language, and of the transcendence of the ineffable image—is often prefigured by a series of scenes in which Bergman's protagonist begins to experience a shift in vision via the gaze of the other. I would like to compare three scenes that "prepare" her character for her ultimate self-annihilation, each one from a film considered in this chapter. Each film features at least one scene that highlights the striking interplay of Bergman's gaze and that which she observes. These representative scenes reveal the conflict at the heart of the film: Bergman confronting the other, and the other confronting Bergman (as other). These moments are constituted by the hostile gaze of the women villagers in *Stromboli*, the critical gaze of the sanatorium patients in *Europa 51*, and the vacant yet menacing gazes of the statues in *Viaggio in Italia*. In each case, the other party is silent and simply stares (and in all but *Stromboli*, Bergman is equally speechless). In each case, as well, the scene is filmed as shot/counter-shot, capturing Bergman's reaction in the role Bergala describes as "ideal, sensitive, suffering surface." Each scene also reflects the simultaneous dynamic of the Bergman character's vulnerability and exclusion from the community—her status as other—coincident with a new understanding of her context, and/or problematizaion of it, through observation. In other words, in these scenes social, cultural, and communicative boundaries are shored up while visual boundaries are dissolved. So often a visually sympathetic object, the diva's body is rendered instead a site of subjective erasure, locked in the gaze with the other. Bergman's body, the visual totem of her star presence, encounters the hostile, leveling force of the native gaze, preparing her for the epiphanic encounter.

In both *Stromboli* and *Europa 51*, we witness a network of gazes that posits Bergman's radical otherness and vulnerability as an observer. She is the object of the gaze and may even be said to be the victim of the gaze, given the threatening and accusatory nature of the stares to which she is subjected. (In *Viaggio in Italia*, this interpretation works on the figurative level by projecting a subjective perception of the "aliveness" of the statues onto Katherine.) The native members of the community—the villagers of Stromboli and the patients in the hospital—scrutinize her as an outsider; she catches the meaning of the gaze as an observer of those who observe her. We, as the audience, are aligned with both the threatening gaze and that of the displaced diva.

The extraordinary trick in the perception of these stares is that, taken in isolation, without the counter-shots of Bergman's face, they seem more expressionless, vacant, than menacing. The perceived hostility is only present when placed in context: Bergman is the outsider, she is being studied for the first time by members of a community into which she has intruded, therefore any look which is not welcoming appears, by default, menacing. Moreover, an expressionless stare without speech is doubly destabilizing, because both Bergman (the receiver) and the audience have no verbal cues to help toward definition. These looks, then, are a deterritorializing force: they negate Bergman's previously comprehensible perception, upend her former vision of the world, and offer no clues as to redefinition or re-placement.

In the scene from *Stromboli*, Karin is in the midst of her home makeover, covering the wall of a room with hand-drawn flowers, when three women stop at her open door [figure 31]. The women, short, heads covered, dressed in black, offer a severe contrast to the slacks-wearing, willowy, fair Bergman. Hoping to connect with her new neighbors, Karin invites them to cross the threshold into her home. The women merely stare at her, stone-faced, unresponsive. Karin is

insistent in calling out to them, bewildered by their impassivity, oblivious of her status as town spectacle, outsider, "civetta." Verbal communication is rendered impossible, and the silent gaze is all that the women offer. It is shortly after this scene that she receives clarification of their behavior from a fellow villager, who calmly relates to Karin, "Ti comporti male […] Non hai modestia, figghia mia." The stony presence of the town women, taking the form not of indifference, but of silent condemnation, guarantees that Karin will remain an outsider—she is not worthy of speech, and cannot make herself understood in any case. Similarly, Karin is made spectacle once again while visiting the seamstress's house, when a group of village men decide to serenade her outside the window, peeking in at her. Karin, though she has not overtly invited the look of the men, is viewed as the provoker of this desirous gaze—Bergman's "unintentional" divismo sneaks in. In both cases, though she is the "outsider," Karin is the one looking out, trapped by the gaze precisely because the lookers will not join her on the other side of the threshold. Though coming from a background of white European worldliness—and saddled with Bergman's star-baggage—Karin is reduced to the level of subaltern through the gaze of the villagers. Her uncomprehending attitude towards both the desiring men and the hostile women, however, comes off as somewhat disingenuous, given her knowledge of the world.

31 Karin welcomes the unresponsive women villagers into her home.

In *Europa 51*, however, Irene's gaze is just as wary as that of the patients. She is once again in the position of impossible outsider, a sane woman among the insane, and her naturally curious look is met with the unstable, distrustful stares of her fellow inmates [figure 32]. Instead of a direction of observation that travels outward/in and inward/out, we witness a nexus of looks trapped within the same walls. This setting of extreme subjectivity coupled with anonymity—the realm of clinical observation—promises that the meeting of these gazes is not observed by only the audience, but also by the staff in the sanatorium. There is a hierarchy of looks: at the top of this hierarchy, of course, sits the observing camera, guided by the director's gaze, and even above—or outside—the undetected, anonymous spectators. As Irene enters the common area, the camera slowly pans around the room to capture the multiplicity of looks and faces that greet Irene, interspersing these moments with Irene's reaction as she proceeds. A few of the patients circle Irene threateningly as they watch her. The looks of the patients—women—range from complacent, to curious, to slightly startled, to suspicious. Irene finally looks away, and down, dejected, as she sits and leans her head back, closing her eyes. Setting Irene off visually in this manner seems to signify her apartness, her difference: in her probing observation of this group of women, she is in a position more similar to the doctors than that of a patient. The overall wariness of the gazes also destabilizes Irene's newly discovered vocation as budding saint, foreshadowing her final isolation from those she wishes to help. The unbidden designation of "saint" excludes Irene from the community while containing her otherness—an imposition on Rossellini's part analogous to Bergman's permanent exile as "star" in his films. The universal charity for which she has strived is undone by their deterritorializing stares: they do not recognize her as an ally. She cannot reach these unstable, enigmatic women, just as she could not reach her unstable, fragile son; like the native women of Stromboli, they cannot cross the

threshold of her exceptionality. The lack of language guarantees this: just as she cannot explain herself to the doctors and lawyer, neither Michel nor the patients can speak to her.

32 The female patients study Irene, and Irene returns their gaze.

The network of silent stares in *Viaggio in Italia* is materially different: the party that "observes" Katherine is, in fact, inanimate. And yet, the level of intimacy contained in the scene is substantially heightened, even despite the presence of a narrating third party, the museum guide. This new interlocutor actually brings Katherine into closer contact with the other, a proximity that we see both in Katherine's discomfited reactions to his descriptions, borne out in the poses and aspect of the stone figures, and in the physically looming presence of the statues themselves. Katherine, unlike Karin and Irene, appears to feel almost threatened by the nearness of the deterritorializing agent [figure 33]. In one instance, the hand of a statue seems poised to touch her face.

33 The nearness of the statues threatens Katherine's personal boundaries.

As in *Europa 51*, a point-of-view panning shot introduces one after another of the statues' gazes. In a shot that dwarfs Karin, a hulking statue looms in the foreground [figure 34]. The over-the-shoulder perspective places its back to us, and we see something concealed in its hand—a perspective denied the "vulnerable" Karin.

34 Karin is diminished and her view limited by the camera's perspective

Much of the uncomfortable closeness is due to these camera angles that place Katherine in a vulnerable position, but a good deal is also owing to her prudish nature—so different from that of her counterpart Karin—which casts the statues as vulgar. At one point, the guide presents a statue of a voluptuous headless Venus, which he claims to prefer because of its "maturity." Embarrassed, Katherine replies "Perhaps; I wouldn't know," as she turns away. While Karin and Irene experience the unbreachable distance that the hostile stares indicate as a visual deterritorialization, Katherine's perception is instead threatened by the uninvited intimacy that accompanies her tour of the museum. As we will see, it is the sense of permeability, of visual invasion, that serves to destabilize her previous notions of self and other.

Permeable Bodies in **Viaggio in Italia**

The growing vulnerability of Bergman's characters as observers—their fragility as witnesses to their own undoing—comes to a head in *Viaggio in Italia*, which posits the weakness of the speaking subject against the power of the surrounding landscape. It is here that Rossellini's process of filming the "encounter" of Bergman and the other, culminating in the ineffable image, reaches its apex, and in the process helps to cement the cinematic style that established him as an experimental director so admired by the French *nouvelle vague*.[69] In *Viaggio in Italia* Rossellini destabilizes the linguistic and visual codes we come to expect in the genre of travel film while acting as the mere impartial "recorder" of the encounter between foreigner and foreign land. This landscape, composed primarily of the area in and around Naples, begins as a looming presence that, by the end of the film, overcomes Bergman's character Katherine. Katherine's tour of Naples reveals the city as a palimpsest of time and place, the personal and the communal. The city presents itself as the ultimate unruly, invasive force, commingling as it does life and death, the private and the public. In the course of her visits to the tourist sites and in her conflicts with her estranged husband, Katherine will experience the confusion of once-distinct categories, a dissolution of her selfhood, "destruction" at the hands of her director. Here we find Bergman's star appeal at its most normalized, swathed in the garb of a petty bourgeoise. The increasing permeability of Katherine's perception occurs as the power of language, largely banal, fails. As in the other Bergman films, the documentarist Rossellini leaves us with the cinematic epiphany as wordless image.

The dialogue in *Viaggio in Italia* pushes the banality of language found in Rossellini's Bergman films to its extreme, exposing the impotence of personal communication even and especially between husband and wife. From the first moments we see of their travels together,

[69] Of course, in reaching this apex, Rossellini also necessarily hastened toward the death of his career in narrative cinema.

Katherine and Alex, ensconced in their colossal sedan, are revealed as a typically bored and disaffected middle-aged bourgeois couple, Alex complaining of the rough foreignness of their new surroundings, Katherine vaguely defensive in response to Alex's carping. Their duty-driven journey to southern Italy affords them the realization of their estrangement from each other and from their new surroundings. The couple decides to make token efforts to "get to know" each other, a process Alex says "might be amusing," but from the start of their journey the power of communication is continually undermined and any possibility of (re)acquaintance rendered a painfully dull prospect. Both lack the linguistic and cultural understanding to communicate with the natives. Moreover, petty, untold jealousies occur when each observes the other receiving or inviting flirtatious attention at gatherings: Katherine stares across the table at Alex when he lightly banters with a female friend; Alex becomes irritated with Katherine at a party when she laughs too loudly talking to an Italian man. Halfway through the film, feeling threatened by Katherine's pilgrimage to sites memorialized by her dead poet friend, Alex defects to Capri to "have a little fun," merely leaving a note to announce his absence. Her main source of guidance is, in fact, the poems of this friend, Charles Lewington, an absent interlocutor.[70] Yet his writings begin to fail on some level as she misses the correlation between what they describe and what she experiences in person. When language does function, it is either in the form of pointless bickering[71] or the pedantic prattle of the Neapolitan guides.

And yet this failure of communication on the interpersonal level does not go far in characterizing Katherine and Alex. As in the other films, it is not an inherent or unique flaw in

[70] It is telling that to flee the sense of discontent in his marriage Alex blithely seeks sexual adventure, while Katherine—always Rossellini's wife, after all—seeks communion with a dead poet. Her distancing is even more radical, in that the object of her desire is not even a physical presence.

[71] Regarding the communication theme, Brunette says that it is "stated in a couple of obvious scenes of mutual miscomprehension, but it moves beyond *Stromboli* in that now words are used as weapons, or to *prevent* communication." Brunette 160.

the protagonists that renders them unable to rely upon linguistic communication: it is, rather, the fault of language itself. Rossellini reveals, through the flatness of the dialogue and its inefficacy, a reinterpretation of the cinematic cliché,[72] the travel film or the film of romantic estrangement, both promising happy resolution often mediated by language. Rossellini deterritorializes the function of dialogue, the film's generic structure, and many of the visual codes. Deleuze observes that *Viaggio in Italia* "follows a female tourist struck to the core by the simple unfolding of images or visual clichés in which she discovers something unbearable, beyond the limit of what she can personally bear."[73] Through a piling-on of clichés—on the one hand, via the Neapolitan mandolins, the southern stereotypes about public spectacle, death and fertility, and on the other, through the cold and fastidious British tourists—Rossellini sets up the encounter with the image as a moment of unanticipated authenticity. At the end of the film, the couple's bickering and complaints recede into insignificance as they are confronted by the ineffable image, which, for Katherine, forces an encounter with her own frailty.

One of the most obvious violations prudish Katherine experiences is the affront to her ideas of modesty that Naples and its inhabitants present. This characterization is in line with Rossellini's continuing desexualization of the Bergman character. Long gone is the sexual brazenness of *Stromboli*'s Karin. Instead, Katherine is the most prudish Bergman character of the films under consideration: swathed in her conservative fashion-plate clothes, embarrassed by the public squabbles of lovers, inhabiting a separate bed and even a separate room from that of her husband, the missish Katherine is primed to be shocked by the "vulgarity" that Naples promises.

[72] Rivette contends that it is narration itself that Rossellini dispenses with: "[He] does not care much for narration, and still less for demonstration; what business has he with the perfidies of argumentation? Dialectic is a whore who sleeps with all odds and ends of thought, and offers herself to sophism; and dialecticians are riff-raff." Jacques Rivette, *Rivette: Texts and Interviews*, ed. Jonathan Rosenbaum, trans. Amy Gateff and Tom Milne (London: British Film Institute, 1977) 61.

[73] Deleuze 2.

The couples' childlessness becomes both a sign and a symptom of the barrenness of their physical and spiritual union.[74] We have already seen the visual intimacy of the statues at the archaeological museum: the "flesh" of the bodies more present than that of the living observer, their invasive gaze, and the final moments in which tracking crane shots emphasize the grand statues' looming size. Throughout, the near-wordless Katherine looks on not in admiration but agitation and mild surprise.

There are two later scenes that visually destabilize Katherine's typically bourgeois notions about sex, life and death, and the sanctity of the demarcation between past and present: the Fontanelle cemetery and the excavation of the bodies at Pompeii. At the Fontanelle, as Katherine and Mrs. Burton enter the main chamber, ominous music plays, and the camera switches to a P.O.V. shot that pans over the rows and rows of human skulls and memorials [figure 35]. A reverse shot shows Katherine's reaction, standing, looking side to side in silent anxiety [figure 36].

35 The memorial of human remains at the Fontanelle.

[74] Brunette 163.

36 Katherine, with Mrs. Burton, in silent consideration.

As discussed in the previous section, here the Bergman character is forced into a visual consideration of—and a simultaneous estrangement from—another "other." She also does not react strongly when Mrs. Burton relates that she prays for both her dead brother and a longed-for baby while at the site, merely nodding her with a polite smile. In fact, Katherine is speechless throughout the visit, perhaps overwhelmed by the proximity of life and death, of mourning and hope. As Rossellini himself noted about the film, the proximity of life and death in Italy is merely part of the culture; death possesses a "valore vitale."[75] Though Charles Lewington may have died during the war, for Katherine he is safely contained in the writings he left behind. Not so in the Fontanelle: here, death—and through Mrs. Burton's words, war—are exhumed, and become inescapable visible realities. Ancient and recent history mix and irrepressibly bubble up to the surface, not unlike the smoke at the sulfur springs Katherine visits. As Minghelli notes, "Landscape *is* history."[76] In positioning Bergman, the consummate foreign observer, as a visual filter for the signs of Italy's historical trauma, this trauma becomes new and real, no longer conveniently tucked away in a corner of the collective memory.

[75] *Il mio metodo* 335.

[76] Minghelli 71.

This statement is never truer than at the excavation of the bodies at Pompeii, a scene that takes place right after the couple has decided to divorce. Much as at the Fontanelle, Katherine is merely a silent witness during the process of uncovering the buried couple. While their guide Mr. Burton excitedly relates the proceedings of the dig, Katherine's reaction is only revealed by her expression: the anguish faintly present at the Fontanelle becomes more pronounced as she reacts to the immortalized, ruined mirror image of herself and Alex that the bodies present [figure 37]. When Burton speculates out loud that they were husband and wife, Katherine lets out a sob as she turns from the unbearable image.

37 Katherine's uneasy observation at the excavation of the bodies.

This encounter with the "real," this distress in the face of death, would seem a more typical ending for Rossellini than that which follows. The spectacle of the bodies has clearly affected both of them: Alex admits as much. Katherine, in a moment of self-realization, declares that there were many strange things she'd seen that day that she hadn't told Alex about. Recognizing the paucity of their communicative connection, she tacks on, "There are many things I didn't tell you." She does not follow up with any confessions, however, for by this time there is no way to redeem their shared language from its essential meaninglessness. As they leave the ruins, they descend into the usual bickering and clichéd statements, Katherine exclaiming "Life is so short!" and Alex responding "That is why you have to make the most of

it." They leave the drama of the ruins for the isolating comfort of their car and its promise of stunted communication. At one point, on their way back to the villa, the foot traffic of a procession becomes too thick to pass.[77] Their exchanges during the car ride continue along the same lines as previously: Katherine's regret that they didn't have a child, Alex's counterargument, whether the divorce will be painful, etc. Their continued distrust and alienation ceases only when they get out of the car and Katherine is swept away in the procession. This moment of panic, of being overcome by a greater force, accomplishes that which dialogue never could: it brings the couple together. In fact, the subsequent dialogue—the final declaration of love—only reaffirms the weakness of the spoken word, falling flat. As Bondanella observes, this last exchange is particularly banal even relative to the rest of the film.[78]

The true transformative force, at the end of the film, lies not in the individual, but in the images of the landscape, both human and material.[79] Katherine's momentary absorption into the crowd is the culmination of her permeability as observer, and it is significant that she and Alex are abandoned as individuals to become mere members of the larger organism, gradually lost by the camera itself. There is a correlation, then, between this last image, Katherine and Alex in each other's arms, being slowly swallowed by the crowd, and the two lovers at Pompeii being unearthed.[80] Earlier in the film, we see this ominous possibility foreshadowed, as Katherine and Alex doze peacefully on the terrace of the villa with the threat of Vesuvius in the background [figure 38]. At the end of the film, Katherine and Alex are visually lost in their surroundings,

[77] The scene is, perhaps, a bit of autobiography from the lives of Rossellini and Bergman: the actress recalls her husband getting annoyed he couldn't drive his Ferrari through the crowded streets during Holy Week, declaring, "They're probably making another of those damned saints." Bergman and Burgess 278.

[78] Bondanella 110.

[79] Steimatsky describes "humanity itself" as an "engulfing landscape." Steimatsky 149.

[80] Landy sets this image down as confirming the loss of Katherine and Alex's individuality, "in much the same manner as the entwined excavated bodies exhumed at Pompei have no identity." Landy 205.

perhaps (temporarily) reconciled, but still "buried" by the living mass around them [figure 39]. It goes without saying that this is not a wholly positive image. To indicate further that we are withdrawing from the couple, that their story is already receding into history, Rossellini turns the camera away from them onto the unknown members of the multitude.

38 Katherine, Alex, and the looming Vesuvius.

39 The couple is lost in the crowd.

It is not surprising that many—eventually, even Rossellini himself—see *Viaggio in Italia* as a bitter film, one whose symbols leave little possibility of narrative plenitude. Karin's epiphany, her moment of liberation in self-annihilation, feels very distant from the détente between Katherine and Alex. In both films, the Bergman character is a foreigner in a southern Italian setting. In addition to their varying attitudes towards "modesty," they differ significantly

in terms of position: Katherine is legitimized in her "outsider" status by virtue of traveling with another foreigner, her husband. She is not meant to be assimilated into the culture, as Karin is, and her failure to do so carries no communal judgment. She is meant merely to be an unremarkable observer, a tourist. Even if the two are similarly "enveloped" in the environment at the end of their journeys, here is where the essential difference lies: Karin is completely at the mercy of the consequences of the meeting of her own active, resistant will and brute nature. She is the primary "actor" in her own destiny. In Rossellini's Bergman films, her characters become more and more prone to pure observation, to passivity. The narrative element that finally unites the two films is the irresolution of each ending, visually marked in both final scenes by a panning away of the camera. Bondanella points out that this movement of the camera towards members of the village at the end of the film undermines the significance of the reconciliation.[81] The process of dismantling dialogue and diminishing—even erasing—the place of the actor does not leave much room for the possibility of future films. Rossellini himself, when asked in a 1965 interview if the film had a "falso lieto fine" responded, "Certo, è un film amarissimo, no?, in fondo. Si rifugiano l'uno nell'altro con lo stesso atteggiamento di chi è sorpreso nudo e si stringe, si stringe all'asciugamano, si stringe a chi gli sta vicino, si copre, in un certo senso."[82] The potential of a reconciliation, then, is nothing but an "instinctual" gesture of shame, according to Rossellini. Peter Brunette, however, disagrees with the *auteur*'s perspective, arguing that in this statement, given in an interview more than ten years after the original release, Rossellini's stance on his own films had changed to such a degree than he might feel obligated to reinterpret them.[83] He was dissatisfied with having become a director credited with perfecting

[81] Bondanella 111.

[82] *Il mio metodo* 334.

[83] Brunette 169-170.

the themes of modern alienation and the failure of communication, and so he longed to distance himself from his Bergman films, once again reinventing himself as a documentarian.

As Rossellini's directorial trajectory with Bergman progresses, the image of the diva as spectacle is purged. Katherine's banality as character and the rigorous emptying of dialogue offers another facet of the actress: Bergman, not as diva, but as human being. As Steimatsky argues, "Rossellini locates the site of an encounter between the constructed fiction film and an epiphanic reality to be revealed not only to the *character* of Ingrid Bergman in the role of British tourist, but to her *person*, embraced by the landscape that is figured around her."[84] Working as he did without scripts, run-throughs or rehearsals, Rossellini left open the possibility of surprise in the film, of Bergman's real and raw reaction to the unknown, the foreign. Katherine's discoveries are her discoveries, just as Katherine's pain is her pain. Character, actress, and director meld into a symbiotic narrative-making machine.

The End of the Experiment

The strength of personalities in the Bergman-Rossellini collaboration leads to the inevitable question: who really *was* in control? We have seen that the treatment of language in the films betrays a tug-of-war between directorial manipulation and spontaneous, uncontrollable epiphany, which becomes the hallmark of Rossellini's modernist film. And yet, this silent battle may have taken its toll on the director, who agreed to end the collaboration less than a decade after it had begun. When Bergman finally asked him, after a period of mutual dissatisfaction, if he wanted a (marital) divorce, he agreed, saying he was "tired of being Mr. Bergman."[85] Could

[84] Steimatsky 78.

[85] Bergman and Burgess 356.

Rossellini have finally tired of living through his "symptom," Bergman, as Žižek would have it? Did he realize her divistic persona could never be sufficiently vanquished in their personal and professional lives?

It could certainly be argued that it took someone of Bergman's talent and critical stature to *allow* Rossellini to relinquish directorial control over the course of the films. Further, her relationship to language, to adaptation and to historical trauma made her the perfect medium for Rossellini's "encounter." Her deterritorialization as diva, as woman, and even as speaking subject allowed him to recast his aesthetics, to reconfigure the relationship between truth, reality, and fiction, and in turn to deterritorialize the tropes of his neorealist cinema. The professional relationship, however, effectively came to an end in conjunction with the personal one. The relative ease with which she reentered Hollywood films and the favorability of their critical reception[86] is remarkable considering the breadth of the international scandal caused by her marriage to Rossellini, and yet she was able to recuperate her position in Hollywood. Her "escape" from the relationship and her subsequent success in narrative film may be taken as proof that she was the critical agent for Rossellini's cinema, just as his defection to documentary could be taken as evidence of his inability to continue his career in narrative film without her. Bergman, then, constantly escaped her lover and director Rossellini and constantly escaped definition: in her first, unknowable act of abandoning Hollywood, in her primal, private cinematic encounter with the real, and finally in her continued successful self-reinvention after exiting the relationship.

Rossellini's post-Bergman career, on the other hand, was by no means a return to business as usual, or what it had been before the star entered his life. Not only did he abandon

[86] Bergman in fact won two of her three Oscars after her "Rossellini period." (And one before. The period of her Rossellini collaboration was—perhaps unsurprisingly, considering the critical response—award-free.)

spectacle film for more didactic media like television and documentary, Rossellini consistently repudiated the Bergman films centered on themes of alienation,[87] the genre which many critics gave him credit for inventing. He declared them to be complaining and impotent, and not in the service of "salute morale" and an engagement with reality.[88] As Deleuze summarizes, "In his last works, Rossellini loses interest in art, which he reproaches for being infantile and sorrowful, for reveling in a loss of the world: he wants to replace it with a morality which would restore a belief capable of perpetuating life."[89] The dissolution of language marked the end of Bergman and Rossellini's relationship, and the exhaustion of the syntax of narrative film left Rossellini with nothing more to say.

[87] *Il mio metodo* 337; 528.

[88] *Il mio metodo* 353; 399.

[89] Deleuze 166.

IV. Masina's Performance of Spectatorship in Fellini's Films

What happens when the female spectator is *inside* the cinematic image? The answer to this question has the potential to disrupt the relationship between actress, spectator, and director. Fellini's rich fantasy world is often filtered through Giulietta Masina's eyes. Her performances place her in the position of viewer; she becomes a focalizer for the audience. Fellini uses her unconventional screen presence to destabilize the traditional relationship between camera, spectator, and performer. Calvino contrasts Fellini's cinema to the escapist Hollywood films of the 1930s, how Fellini instead forced contemporary Italian spectators of the post-war to hold the mirror up to themselves, declaring, "ci obbliga ad ammettere che ciò che più vorremmo allontare ci è intrinsicamente vicino."[1] Fellini's dissolution of distance between ourselves and that which perturbs and reveals us is also at work when we see through the eyes of characters like Gelsomina and Cabiria. In this examination, I will address the role that Masina plays as performer within performance, and similarly, spectator within spectacle in the films *La strada*, *Le notti di Cabiria*, and *Giulietta degli spiriti*. Masina's atypical physicality, which resists traditional gender stereotyping, contributes to the fruitful contamination of spectator and performer. Her on-screen decentering deterritorializes the typical interplay of actress, on-screen focalizer, and audience. Using his enigmatic muse as the lens for a "post-historical" vision, a vision that comes from a position of indeterminacy, Fellini finds a new visual structure, a medium for the transition from neorealism. Each film builds upon themes of spectatorship and performativity, sight and blindness, and the appropriation and manipulation of female subjectivity.

[1] Italo Calvino, "Autobiografia di un spettatore," In Federico Fellini, *Quattro film* (Torino: Einaudi, 1974) xxiv.

Vestiges of Neorealist Practice

Much of what prepared Fellini for his collaboration with Masina derived from his directorial apprenticeship under Rossellini. Fellini's encounters with neorealism were essential to his development as auteur, though he did not sacralize the period; he went as far as to say that he did not see neorealism as a "regeneration," as commonly held by critics, but at best a "crisi vitale" that was perhaps too optimistic.[2] He had no wish to return to the ready-made themes of the immediate post-war (war, survival, and poverty).[3] In this way, Fellini followed in the footsteps of his once-mentor Rossellini. The grand realm of History is eclipsed by the personal story, rich with narrative possibility. In the case of Fellini, this story often crosses into autobiographical fantasy, about as far away from the world of *Roma città aperta* as one could get. Nevertheless, the manner in which Fellini viewed his actors and his screenplays was very much in keeping with the neorealist commitment to "authenticity." Much like Rossellini, Fellini disregarded the "intellectual 'work' of the actor"[4] and resented efforts to inhabit the role: "Detesto gli attori che riflettono sul personaggio, arrivano con le loro idee, imparano il copione a memoria [...] Mi sembra un'intromissione illegittima."[5] The spontaneous, authentic alignment of character and actor was key. Similarly, he had no interest in finding professional actors who

[2] Federico Fellini, *Le notti di Cabiria*, ed. Lino del Fra (Rocca San Casciano, Cappelli, 1965) 151.

[3] In fact, Fellini defended himself against Marxist critics like Aristarco by submitting that the world had drastically changed: "[A]fter the war our themes were ready-made. Primitive problems: how to survive war, peace. These problems were topical, immediate, brutal. But today's problems are different. Surely the neorealists would not hope for the continuation of war and poverty just because it gave them good material." George Bluestone, "An Interview with Federico Fellini," *Federico Fellini: Interviews*, ed. Bert Cardullo (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006) 5.

[4] John Caldwell Stubbs, "Mime and the Method: The Working Relationship between Fellini and Masina," *Literature Film Quarterly* 30.4 (2002): 266.

[5] Federico Fellini, *Giulietta degli spiriti di Federico Fellini*, ed. Tullio Kezich (Bologna: Cappelli, 1965) 52.

could easily enter the character; rather, he insisted that the *character* fit the *actor*, whether the subject in question had acting skill or not. His penchant for dubbing the dialogue rendered classical technique moot. He directed most of the actors to say whatever they liked on set, or else, to be more precise about timing, simply to count numbers instead of reciting dialogue: "My idea of casting goes far beyond what is called typecasting. I search for the flesh-and-blood incarnation of my fantasy characters. It doesn't matter to me whether they are professional actors or actresses or whether they have never acted before. It certainly doesn't matter whether they speak Italian or not. If necessary, they can recite numbers in their own languages."[6] To round off the list of idiosyncrasies, Fellini rarely produced a shooting script for his actors, preferring to leave the scene open to last-minute changes.

This seemingly contradictory combination of over-bearing and laissez-faire directorial practices is very much in line with the neorealist tradition, or rather is typical of the post-neorealist careers of the directors in my study, and especially Rossellini's example. But the rigidness of Fellini's approach did not sit well with intuitive, theater-trained Masina. The couple often quarreled over the finished screenplays,[7] and more specifically over the nature of her roles. On the technical level, Masina wanted to ferret out an emotional understanding of the character, as John Stubbs, in his study of the professional dynamics of the partnership, relates: "Masina was an actress who insisted on building her characters 'from within,' and she brings to the mix a certain grounding in internal motivation which gives her characters more resonance than we find

[6] Charlotte Chandler, *I, Fellini* (New York: Random House, 1995) 89.

[7] As Masina relates, "Quando il copione è pronto, [Fellini] me lo fa leggere, in attesa che gli dica cosa ne penso, se mi piace o no. Faccio per dirgli il mio parere, ma non me ne dà il tempo, interrompendomi e pregandomi di non andare per le lunghe. Si crea così fra noi una situazione di incominicabilità totale, la paralisi del contatto. Non mi resta altro che scrivergli. Gli scrivo infatti delle lunghe lettere, in cui gli dico quello che secondo me non va, esprimo dei dubbi, azzardo qualche vago suggerimento. Lui finge di non tener alcun conto di ciò che gli ho scritto, mentre in realtà fa tesoro di tutto." Giulietta Masina, *Gelsomina: Giulietta Masina racconta*, interview with Costanzo Costantini (Roma: Il Calamo, 2001) 73.

in many of Fellini's other characters."[8] This, of course, was in direct opposition to Fellini's approach, as we have seen: the external resemblance of the actor to character was all. On a more personal level, Masina was frequently displeased with the characters Fellini had allegedly derived from her real-life persona, to the point of resentment. Fellini expressed nothing but wonder and affection for the characters inspired by his life-long muse, but the stark contrast between her girlish imps and his typical buxom bombshells struck Masina forcefully.[9] Moreover, to all appearances, Fellini consistently compounded this contrast through Masina's costumes and makeup, as well as her diminution through the use of taller counterparts.

Fellini's neorealist background, then—accompanied by a disregard for the actor's intellectual contributions and an emphasis on the pure physicality of the character—was a first step in decentering Masina's position on-screen. Just as essential, however, was her professional resistance to Fellini's methods. As Stubbs puts it, "If Fellini is the one who insists on visual impact, spontaneity, and mimicry, a 'presentational' approach, and if Masina is the one who urges a certain conceptualizing of the character's inner state, a 'representational' approach, then the tension which results between director and actress is extremely fruitful. Fellini seeks to enliven, Masina, to deepen."[10] And one may argue convincingly for the permanency and ascendancy of Masina's characters over Fellini's more typical, totemic female creations. While the latter became mainstays of the Fellini oeuvre, bolstering his symbolic male-centered fantasy world and largely conforming to the traditional binary female archetypes (Madonna-whore, mother-lover), Masina's characters, in comparison, were without precedent. Often described as

[8] Stubbs, "Mime and Method" 265.

[9] Masina claimed in interviews that she was unfortunate to be an actress in the age of the *maggiorata fisica*, which explained her lack of roles in other directors' films.

[10] Stubbs, "Mime and Method," 270.

"infantile," "donna-bambina," "favolosa" and "clownesca" in both pressbooks and critical readings, Masina resists easy categorization. Fellini submitted that "[Her] little figure, with its tenderness, its delicacy, fascinates me to no end. Her type is crystallized, even stylized for me. As an actress, she represents a special type, a very specific humanity."[11] Further, she is the only woman Fellini deemed worthy to play the main character and focalizer in his films. Her eccentric, dynamic presence becomes for Fellini a means of reorienting standard cinematic narrative, of dismantling established modes of viewing: "Masina gives [Fellini] a means to 'defamiliarize' the material of his movies—to set the material off from the quotidian train of events we experience—and to have us see the material as something new or as something on the level of myth of fairy tale."[12] Oddly enough, it is through her eccentricity, her underdog status, that Masina becomes one of Fellini's most sympathetic characters, and becomes such a radicalizing force in terms of cinematic focalizer, as we will see. But the development of her seemingly simple characters in fact conceals a network of directorial practices of containment, reflection, and projection.

"Un parto felliniano"

During their long collaboration, Masina was (and sometimes still is) in fact seen as the creation of Fellini. Unitalia Film's pressbook for *Giulietta degli spiriti* captured this sense of Masina's inevitable debt to her director, no matter her personal accomplishments: "Giulietta Masina è ora un'attrice celebre, al punto da guadagnarsi un 'Oscar' e diventare negli USA la beniamina di quel pubblico. In Italia non riuscirà mai ad essere qualcosa di più che un 'parto

[11] "Playboy Interview: Federico Fellini," *Federico Fellini: Interviews*, ed. Bert Cardullo (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006): 45-46.

[12] Stubbs, "Mime and Method" 265.

felliniano.'"[13] To make such claims about any given contemporary director-actress collaboration of the day was not unusual; several of the actresses in my study were only deemed successful insofar as they allowed themselves to be molded by their directors.[14] But very few of the collaborations consistently entailed the actual creation of a character based on the director's personal understanding of his actress. Liliana Betti, Fellini's assistant and assistant director, likened the professional skirmishes between Fellini and Masina to "the subterranean skirmishes between a character and an author."[15] Fellini himself felt a special kind of ownership of his wife as actress, so much so that he would get uncharacteristically angry with her on set for failing to perform—she was, after all, his creation; why couldn't she intuitively understand how he wanted her to act?[16] Germaine Greer highlights the positive artistic effect of this dynamic when she says, "As the chosen protagonist for *La strada* and *Le notti di Cabiria*, Giulietta Masina has functioned as an alter ego for the frail, vulnerable, childlike part of Fellini, who says sometimes, not altogether apologetically, that she is part of him."[17]

The more insidious side of Fellini's perceived authorial ownership of his "creation" was her part in bolstering his self-image. He says of their early relationship, "She was so tiny and needed my protection. She was innocent, trusting, sweet, good. I towered over her. She looked up to me in every way, not only physically. I had never impressed anyone else that much before.

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[13] *Italia presenta . . .* Giulietta degli spiriti *di Federico Fellini* (Pressbook, XXVI Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematografica di Venezia, 1965).

[14] The unfairness of this in the cases of actresses like Bergman and Masina hardly merits elaboration.

[15] Liliana Betti, *Fellini*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979) 64.

[16] "I have such a firm grip on [Giulietta's] character that if she ever gets out of character—rather, out of the character I have imagined for her—I get angry at her. I never get angry at any other actor in that same way." Chandler 161.

[17] Germaine Greer, *Fellinissimo*, in *Perspectives on Federico Fellini*, eds. Peter Bondanella and Cristina Degli-Esposti (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1993) 233. Fellini's principal biographer Kezich also asserts that Fellini felt Masina to be "part of himself." *Giulietta Masina: La forza di un sorriso* (Rome: Rai Radiotelevisione Italiana: Istituto Luce, 2009) DVD.

I suppose partly I fell in love with my own reflection that I saw in her eyes."[18] This quote is an affirmation of Woolf's claim that "Women have served all these centuries as *looking* glasses possessing the magic and *delicious* power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size."[19] In fact, Fellini's view of Masina as his mirror was in keeping with his personal belief that a life partner should function as such.[20] From a psychoanalytical standpoint, Masina is the "other" that guarantees the space of fantasy, speaking in Lacanian terms.[21] As such, she is closer to Lacan's "other" (the *objet a*, the "'stand-in" for desire" and "support of male fantasy") than she is to the "Other," woman as radical alterity. Fabio Vighi submits that Masina's role as wife (in both the cinematic and nonfictional realms) allows Fellini to keep "the fantasy of the voluptuous woman" forever beyond his reach, beyond realization and therefore alive and kicking from a psychoanalytical perspective.[22] Masina is many things in Fellini's films, but classic male sexual fantasy she is not. But it is not her (a)sexuality that intrigues Fellini, artist. Rather, more than just a mirror, Masina is the unclassifiable catalyst, the "crack within the symbolic network itself"[23] that forces Fellini to reconsider his approach to vision.

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[18] Chandler 41.

[19] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001) 43.

[20] He professes in an interview that "[t]he problem for man is to reunite himself with the other half of his being, to find the woman who is right for him—right because she is simply a projection, a *mirror of himself*." "Playboy Interview" 41 (emphasis mine).

[21] Jacques Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, eds. Juliet Mitchell and Jaqueline Rose (New York: Norton, 1985) 48.

[22] To quote Vighi in full: "Is not Giulietta Masina, Fellini's wife and leading actress in several of his films, the perfect obverse of the typical Felliniesque fantasy of the voluptuous woman beyond reach that inhabits both his films and his notebooks? Similarly to Paola in *La dolce vita*, Giulietta Masina is precisely *what we cannot account for through Fellini's fantasy*. Here the reference to the Lacanian notion of the excluded part sustaining the whole is crucial. What if the vital strategic function of a wife who does not fully fit the husband's fantasy scenario is, as it were, to keep the latter alive by denying the possibility of its concrete realization?" Fabio Vighi, "Fractious Companions: Psychoanalysis, Italian Cinema, and Sexual Difference," *Italian Studies* 63.2 (2008): 247.

[23] Slavoj Žižek, "Troubles with the Real: Lacan as a Viewer of *Alien*," *How to Read Lacan*, *Lacan.com* (16 April 2014) http://www.lacan.com/zizalien.

Inhabiting the Muse? The Deterritorialization of Viewing Positions

If we take Masina's role in Fellini's life to be one of mere self-reflective intimacy, then the onscreen consequence of the of this relationship is a dissolution of subject boundaries. In that case, for Fellini, Masina becomes a space to inhabit. Unlike the majority of his other female characters, she can potentially act as a surrogate for the director himself. He often expresses a particular affinity for her characters, and she confirms their autobiographical slant. She asserted that all of the roles she played—even the simple-minded Gelsomina—were in fact more a reflection of Fellini than herself: "In realtà tutti i personaggi che ho fatto io non sono Giulietta Masina, sono in gran parte Federico. [...] fondamentalmente tutti i personaggi di Federico sono degli autoritratti."[24] I would argue that Masina's characters contain a stronger dose of Fellini than the others: not, perhaps, in the more autobiographically obvious manner of Guido in *8½*, but in terms of the purest expression of his imagination. In *Giulietta degli spiriti*, his attempt to appropriate the female psyche reaches its apex. But, in her inassimilable role as *objet a*, Masina possesses a vision that resists complete appropriation.

As mentioned in the introduction to this study, the relationship between director and actress, author and creation, is reminiscent of the turbulent relationship between D'Annunzio and Duse, discussed in my introduction. Lucia Re asserts that in his art, D'Annunzio hoped to "possess" some of the power of the actress through possession of her body. Much like Fellini with Masina, D'Annunzio looked to Duse as an innovative force in his art, not only as a source of inspiration.[25] Like many cinematic *auteurs*, D'Annunzio's literary stand-in Stelio believes that

[24] Tullio Kezich, *Giulietta Masina* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1991) 15.

[25] Lucia Re, "D'Annunzio, Duse, Wilde, Bernhardt: il rapporto autore/attrice fra decadentismo e modernità," MLN 117.1 (2002): 119.

he has created his muse. The relation between author and actress is ultimately an agonistic one, leaving the actress "costantamente mortificata e strettamente controllata nei suoi ruoli, e perciò subordinata anche simbolicamente all'autorità dell'autore."[26] Duse even falls victim to the Dannunzian attempts at corporal purification, which push her body towards elimination or exorcism.[27] One might argue that Fellini similarly "mortified" the body of Masina, both physically and in terms of the humiliation and suffering inherent to her roles; perhaps, again, Fellini abased her body in order to occupy it. But more importantly, the battles fought between Masina and Fellini over the characters themselves reveal the extent to which the idea of ownership—or possession—of these characters came into play. Fellini confirms that "Giulietta attrice vorrebbe essere il contrario del personaggio che fa con me. Ogni volta è recalcitrante, si sottomette dopo lunga resistenza, come se avvertisse di dar vita a qualcosa di oscuro, che è in lei e che lei rifiuta. Sulle prime detesta i vestiti, lo sguardo, la maschera dei suoi personaggi."[28] Masina protested not only on account of her vanity—of which we will see evidence—but also because, according to Kezich, "le ripugna assumere la sindrome della vittima."[29] Masina's resentment over the victimization of her characters is most obvious in her interviews about *Giulietta degli spiriti*—perhaps not surprisingly, the role in which Fellini most co-opts the female psyche. Following the thread of Masina as *objet a*, this resistance also signals the impossibility of the male artist fully inhabiting the "modern" female psyche—for both D'Annunzio and Fellini. More importantly, just as Duse represented to D'Annunzio an undefinable, changeable *something* that made her modern and thus an avenue for artistic

[26] Re 139.

[27] Re 148.

[28] Fellini, *Giulietta degli spiriti* 65.

[29] Kezich, *Giulietta Masina* 8.

renovation, so the distorting, dynamic filter that is Masina offers Fellini a rejuvenating conduit in his post-neorealist, post-historical films of the fifties. Just as Bergman for Rossellini, Masina provides a passage from neorealism through the alterity of her vision.

And yet, there is a disturbing rigor in Fellini's on- and off-screen attempts to desexualize Masina. Her childlike qualities, her waiflike figure, her modesty: all made this imposition feel instead like a natural extension of her persona. Fellini intentionally magnifies these qualities, frequently to the exclusion of Masina's other inherent traits. She was completely aware of and generally opposed to Fellini's cosmetic program: "I have never loved myself: I am a dwarf with a little round face and bristly hair. Ever since he was preparing *La Strada* I have dreamed that Federico would give me the face of Garbo or Katharine Hepburn; instead he has made my face ever rounder and my hair ever more bristly and has shrunk me even more."[30] Through this highlighting of Masina's physical atypicality, her diminutive stature [figure 40], Fellini enacts a sort of inverse program of Joan Riviere's "masquerade": instead of having Masina exaggerate her femininity, putting it on as a type of mask Fellini exaggerates Masina's a-sexuality. As Stubbs notes, regarding almost every role Masina plays in Fellini's films, there is always at least a trace of the "clown":

> By cutting her hair short or pulling it back, he emphasized the circle of her face. He often used heavy base make-up to flatten her face like a mask or mime's face. He drew on artificial, dark eyebrows and made up the eyes with eyeliner. Finally, he emphasized Masina's lips with a heavy use of lipstick. Masina's face is, therefore, often a clownish one that seems drawn by a child with a crayon.[31]

[30] Cotanzo Constantini, "Introduction," *Conversations with Fellini*, ed. Costanzo Costantini, trans. Sohrab Sorooshian (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1996) xi.

[31] Stubbs, "Mime and Method" 267.

40 Cabiria and Giulietta visually dwarfed by her glamorous counterparts

Compounding the effect of this "mask" are the costumes Masina dons [figure 41], by turns oversized and masculine (*La strada*), bizarre (*Le notti di Cabiria*) and dowdy (*Giulietta degli spiriti*). Even off-screen, Fellini, at least during the era of *La strada*, "seems determined to deprive her of any elegance—even in life. In fact, the many party dresses the actress buys are destined to languish uselessly in the closet because he doesn't like to see her 'dressed up like a lady.'[32] We have seen how Fellini was "fascinated" by that "little figure"—which is likely why he preferred not to see her in "elegant" garb.

41 Gelsomina in her oversized men's coat, Cabiria in her feather jacket, and Giulietta in her homely garb

[32] Kezich, *Federico Fellini: His Life and Work*, Minna Proctor, Viviana Mazza, trans (New York: Faber and Faber, 2006) 146.

Masina is never discernibly sexual—whether in appearance or contextually—even when she is playing a prostitute. It's not unusual for female characters generally to be devoid of sexual desire,[33] but Masina lacks both desire and appeal. She is never completely *stripped* of her sexuality, for even in *La strada*, she is implicated in sexual situations. Yet her sexuality is always strictly contained and, at most, only ever hinted at. It is perhaps for this reason—the containment of Masina's sexuality—that she is never presented as mother or fleshed-out lover in these films, but rather primarily as a "donna-bambina."[34] This could, in part, be traced to the painful autobiographical fact that Masina never conceived again after a miscarriage and later the death of her infant son during the war. Yet we see a similar operation in *8½*, with the character of Claudia. Though Cardinale was already widely viewed as a bombshell, Fellini's Guido sees Claudia as a potentially salvific figure, "giovane e antica, bambina e già donna." She provides a means of escape from his squalid artistic and spiritual stagnation. (She finally fails to perform this role because, as she says, Guido "non sa voler bene.") Through this intermediate character—between the "donna-bambina" Masina and the *maggiorata* Sandro Milo (to cite just one example), we can trace Masina's development as potential itself for change—potential that (unlike in the case of Claudia) persists in presenting a useful space of indeterminacy, of new vision. It is Masina's resistance—in her off-screen protestations and in the on-screen dynamism of her figure—that continues to transform the vision within the relationship, that makes its way on-screen. Despite Fellini's attempts to contain and inhabit her.

[33] As Teresa De Lauretis points out, "[I]n Fellini's films, as in all patriarchal representations of gender in Western culture, sexuality is located in Woman, but, like desire and meaning, it is the property and the prerogative of man." Teresa De Lauretis, "Fellini's 9 ½," *Technologies of Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) 104-105.

[34] One may object that Fellini did present Masina as more of an adult "woman" in *Giulietta degli spiriti*; she was, after all, in her middle age at the time of filming. Fellini himself discusses the difficulty of stripping away the baggage of the childlike Gelsomina and Cabiria from Masina's performance as Giulietta, and Stubbs makes a clear distinction between the "waif" and "deceived wife" characters Masina plays in Fellini's films. And yet, the frumpy costumes, the lack of children, and the diminution through contrast all persist into this later film.

The Female Spectator, Specular Spectacle

The process of containing Masina's sexuality carries implications for the mechanisms of spectatorship. The boundaries established by traditional cinematic binaries are dissolved through the polymorphous nature of her performance. On the level of character, she embodies several contrasts: "androgynous"/woman, vulnerable/resilient (a favorite descriptor of critics), and active/passive. This last pairing extends to her dual role as both performer and spectator in Fellini's films. Here, because life itself is spectacle,[35] the protagonist's perspective becomes a comment on viewership. Not only does Masina become a performer-within-the-performance (or a "meta"-performer) in these films, she also experiences marked and self-conscious moments of spectatorship.

Because of the fluidity and contradictions of her nature, Masina is never tied down to a traditional performance, especially, as we have seen, in terms of gender. Though she is still trapped within the marginalizing gaze of the characters around her, her resistance to definition leaves open an interpretive space not available to them and, as mentioned, uninhabitable by her director. As a non-traditional female protagonist, the actress thwarts or deflects traditional viewing modes. In Laura Mulvey's conception of spectator theory, the male spectator aligns his gaze with the male on-screen focalizer, viewing the on-screen female protagonist as object. The female spectator, on the other hand, is reduced to the state of narcissistic "transvestism" (viewing the on-screen woman from the male spectator's perspective) or "masochism" (viewing the onscreen woman from the female spectator's perspective, which does not allow her to objectify

[35] The idea of the world of Fellini's film as spectacle also impacts the narrative level, or more specifically the interplay of time, space, and memory, as Deleuze notes in his discussion of Fellini's "crystal": "It is a crystal which is always in the process of formation, expansion, which makes everything it touches crystallize, and to which its seeds give a capacity for indefinite growth. It is life as spectacle, and yet in its spontaneity." Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Robert Galeta and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 2005) 87.

her own image or, in other words, a perspective that suffers from over-identification).[36] There is no means of visual entrance into the film for the female spectator that allows her to keep her own subjectivity.[37] This begs the question I asked at the beginning of this examination: What happens when the female performer is also the spectator, when she is *inside* the cinematic image? When she is an atypical female protagonist? I will address these questions more fully when I deconstruct several scenes in the three films in which Masina finds herself in the position of on-screen spectator. It is safe to say, however, that Masina's atypical performance, her gender "de-centering," opens a new space for modes of viewing.

Many of Fellini's films, by his own declaration, are indebted to the mystery he sees inherent in women. He views cinema as woman because of its "ritualistic nature." He explains:

> This uterus which is the theater, the fetal darkness, the apparitions—all create a projected relationship, we project ourselves onto it, we become involved in a series of vicarious transpositions, and we make the screen assume the character of what we expect of it, just as we do with women, upon whom we impose ourselves. Woman being a series of projections invented by man. In history, she became our dream image.[38]

Of course this declaration contains the possible admission that Masina, on-screen at least, is, by his account, a "projection invented by man." In terms of his auteurial stylistics, it reveals the power of woman as cinematic vessel, on perhaps both the conceptual and structural levels. Fellini's exploitation of the female psyche and viewing position deterritorializes the relationship

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[36] Doane, building up to her own theory on female spectatorship, gives a good summary of both Mulvey and Metz, as well as a conception of the argument in terms of the "distance" and "closeness" of the on-screen image. Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 22-24.

[37] This is not to say that feminist theory on female spectatorship has uniformly embraced the rigid system of viewing discussed by Mulvey (male spectator=fetishist/female spectator=masochist or transvestite). As mentioned, and speaking specifically of Fellini, there is dissent among feminist critics about the nature of spectatorship/perspective in *Giulietta degli spiriti*.

[38] Gideon Bachmann, "And His Ship Sails On: Federico Fellini Interviewed," *Federico Fellini: Interviews*, ed. Bert Cardullo (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006) 125.

of spectator and focalizer. His conception of woman as guiding presence in cinema—a dream vessel—already works to distance his directorial aesthetics from neorealism.

La Strada: *Learning New Modes of Vision*

Though it is perhaps the most lyrical, even allegorical, of the three films in my study, *La strada* does not depend solely on Masina to carry the film, as in *Le notti di Cabiria* or *Giulietta degli spiriti*.[39] Gelsomina, the simple-minded peasant girl, is, however, the emotional and focalizing center of the film. Much like Rossellini, Fellini saw one of the main evils of the post-war a societal poverty of spirituality.[40] In his "trilogy of grace" of the 1950s[41]—and arguably throughout his oeuvre—Fellini seems to offer up the figure of the woman as the agent of redemption for a culture experiencing a crisis of personal and collective history. Analogously, in this, his most dramatic departure from neorealism to date, Masina plays a central role. The stark alterity of Gelsomina's body and her position of performing spectator are responsible for redefining traditional notions of the woman as salvific agent. Transformative vision is cast as an experience of inhabiting the vision of the other.

The figure of the road in Fellini's film is complex and contradictory. As many critics have noted, the film employs a circular structure that defies notions of linear narrative. Further, far from tying the protagonists to a specificity of place, the road instead acts as an impermanent, geographically vague entity, as Millicent Marcus observes: "Unbound in time and space, Fellini's story thus announces its departure from neorealist historicity and its preference for an

[39] Her performance in the film (which helped garner an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film) was no doubt a proof to Fellini that she *could* carry a film.

[40] Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 1990) 141.

[41] This is Bondanella's term for the grouping of *La strada*, *Il bidone*, and *Le notti di Cabiria*. Bondanella, *Italian Cinema* 70.

ahistorical rendering of the human condition."[42] The allegorical dimensions of the characters signals a clear transition from the historical specificity of neorealist films. Gelsomina, a radical departure from the neorealist focalizer—the serious, solid, representative man—gives us an immediate indication of the shift from historicity. Through Gelsomina's atypical vision, we learn to see the spectacle, and spectatorship, differently.

The characters consistently demonstrate a post-war historical aphasia that extends to their relationship to self and other. Their travelling performer status reduces them to "bastardi"—they are social outcasts with no permanent homes, no origins. They are even more dramatically aphasic than Rossellini's Bergman character. We see this most strikingly when Zampanò deflects Gelsomina's probing personal questions with vague, tautological answers, e.g. "Di dove siete?" "Del mio paese." This deracination also manifests as an inability to communicate on a human level: Il Matto cannot say what compels him to torment Zampanò and Zampanò is completely baffled by Gelsomina's enduring grief after the death of Il Matto. The strong man is the very picture of self-estrangement. Gelsomina, however, though existing equally outside the realities of historical circumstance, demonstrates an unending curiosity about her relationship to others: her constant attempts to reach Zampanò, to get her to notice him, reveal her need for human warmth, for a connection to the things around her, as Masina notes:

> [Gelsomina] [s]ente inoltre il bisogno di parlare con tutto e con tutti; sente la vita degli alberi, del cielo, del vento. Pure tutto questo è piú un groppo nella gola, è il sogno di un vivere armonioso. Su tutto pesa il silenzio di Zampanò, che è la sola presenza umana nei giorni angosciosi, e racchiude in sé tutta la desolante distanza che c'è spesso tra uomo e uomo.[43]

[42] Millicent Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986) 149.

[43] Masina, "Gelsomina sente la vita degli alberi," *Cinema: quindicinale di divulgazione cinematografica* 7.139 (1954): 450.

In addition to its effect of awakening Zampanò's humanity, Gelsomina's journey, existing outside of or beyond history, entails introducing the viewer to her fantasy world, unveiling the secret to her vision, which complicates our relation to the spectacle, and further confuses the boundaries between performance and spectatorship. We shall see this in her evolution from spectator, to imitator, to performer.

42 Our first glimpse of Gelsomina

The exploration of Gelsomina's vision initially suggests integration and optimism. When we're first introduced to her, we see her obliquely, walking the beach, away from the camera, with a bundle of sticks strapped to her back [figure 42]. We immediately associate her with a specific place—the beach—and with a humble domestic task. Throughout the film, as Zampanò draws her along on his seemingly random journey, she gives signs of her own desire for permanency, for a genuine relation to place. In addition to being the only character whose home we see, on the road with Zampanò she naively plants tomatoes at a roadside camp, where she also imitates the shape of a tree and talks with the children. These normally neglected—unseen-presences become sources of communion for the simple Gelsomina.

Gelsomina, as our main focalizer, attentive to the world around her, becomes intimately aligned with vision. Her wide-eyed stare absorbs her surroundings and simultaneously transforms them into spectacle, enchanting the quotidian. Abandoned for the night by Zampanò, she sits alone as a horse, mysteriously without a rider, passes before her eyes. After her flight from her keeper, sitting by the roadside, she follows the paths of ants and is then drawn along by the spectacle of musicians in a procession [figure 43]. Gelsomina is truly childlike in her curiosity. This creative vision stands in stark contrast to the willfully blind (and deaf, and dumb) Zampanò and, to a lesser extent, to Il Matto, both of whom unequivocally assert a stubborn independence (they both profess not to need anyone), whose blindness ends in their destruction. *La strada* posits, then, useful and productive post-historical indeterminacy—in the vision of Gelsomina—against the destructive, determined aphasia of the male characters.

43 Gelsomina watches the unexplained approach of a horse, musicians

Fellini visually transmits the spiritual qualities of these allegorically inflected characters through their costumes and gesturaliy. Each character, at least for a time, dons clown makeup, revealing the extent to which their lives themselves are an "act."[44] Yet perhaps no body is as

[44] As Marcus affirms, ""Not only do all three remain 'in character,' they practically remain in costume, wearing toned-down versions of their theatrical garb throughout the film, as if their stage personas were simply heightened expressions of their unmasked selves." Marcus 152.

"worked upon" as Gelsomina's. From a production standpoint, Fellini insisted on makeup and costumes that would infantilize her appearance: "For the part, Masina had her hair cut short and bleached. A mixture of shaving cream and talcum powder was added to her hair to make it bristly. Finally, Fellini asked her to smile with her lips closed tightly, as he had observed in Masina's child photographs, in order to capture a little girl look"[45] [figure 44]. In addition to accentuating her "childlike" appearance, Fellini placed Masina in oversized clothing—a military-style cape and men's coat—in order to diminish her stature.

44 Gelsomina, "infantile," "clownesca"

A wide shot of Zampanò sizing up his new recruit heightens the contrast between the threatening power of Zampanò and the childlike innocence of Gelsomina [figure 45]. Zampanò is also the first to manhandle Gelsomina, hitting her with a switch when she fails to perform correctly and later tossing her into the back of the van. Masina's ragdoll body is thrown about throughout the film, a mortification that will continue into *Le notti di Cabiria*.[46]

[45] Stubbs, "Mime and Method" 268.

[46] Karl Schoonover examines Masina's physicality in *Le notti di Cabiria* from a historical perspective. Though I will address this study further in the next section, it is worth noting that many of the arguments could equally apply to the body of Gelsomina. Karl Schoonover, "Histrionic Gestures and Historical Representation: Masina's Cabiria,Bazin's Chaplin, and Fellini's Neorealism," *Cinema Journal* 53.2 (2013): 93-116.

45 Fellini's wide shot emphasizes Gelsomina's diminutiveness

It is ultimately Zampanò who reminds us that Gelsomina is, in fact, a woman. Her sexuality in *La strada* is more complex than that of her counterparts in *Le notti di Cabiria* or *Giulietta degli spiriti*, because it *is* easy to dismiss Gelsomina as a woman, even her self-awareness of her womanhood. During their late-night tête-à-tête, Il Matto, staring at Masina, quips, "Sei sicura di essere una donna? Sembri un carciofo!" On the extra-filmic level, dismissing the importance of Gelsomina's gender, Masina jests, "Gelsomina non sapeva nemmeno a quale sesso apparteneva."[47] And yet we cannot ignore Zampanò's sexual exploitation of Gelsomina, nor her complicity in it. When threateningly approached in an early scene in the film, depicted above, Gelsomina says tentatively to Zampanò, "Io dormo qui fuori." She is aware of what will happen to her once they enter the van together. Additionally, during their travels Gelsomina begins to understand the breadth of her tormenter's sexual appetite, asserting, "Allora siete uno che va con le donne!" Her ambivalent reaction to their first sexual encounter reveals both her tenderness, as well as her shame over what has just occurred: smiling down at Zampanò, sleeping, she blots her tears. At the wedding performance, she reacts with

[47] Kezich, *Giulietta Masina* 90.

surprise and pain when she understands that Zampanò has taken the chatty cook to bed. Her attachment to him is manifest when she asks him, “Mi volete un po’ di bene?” or tells him “La mia casa è con voi.” Her expanding vision of the world comes to encompass herself as a woman, and Zampanò as her male companion, however abusive he can be.

As in other films of the Fellini-Masina collaboration, the body of Masina’s character becomes a contested site, as does the source of her inspiration. Though the director claimed in interviews that the creation of Gelsomina—indeed, the entire universe of *La strada*—began with his tracing the circle of Masina’s head onto paper, Giulietta consistently sustained that she was *not* Gelsomina, that she was a difficult character to inhabit, that Gelsomina was merely a lyrically autobiographical version of Fellini himself. The push-pull over the character adds another layer of interpretive trouble when it comes to Gelsomina’s body. It also conforms to the characterization of Gelsomina as the embodiment of dualities and contrasts: she is the “new” Rosa, she is both victim and (finally) savior, simple-minded and wise, comic and tragic. The most significant duality is for my purposes Gelsomina’s status as both spectator and performer, signaling as it does a new way of seeing for the audience.

Gelsomina’s transformation into performer begins with her ability to observe and imitate. We have seen the importance of her enchanting vision and so, throughout *La strada*, her role as spectator accompanies her growth as performer; I will be doing a close reading of two illustrative scenes later in my discussion. From the first frames of the film, Gelsomina proves her natural tendency toward performing. When leaving home, her playful gesture of “Partenza!” shows her ability to enter a space of fantasy, especially under difficult circumstances. Later in the film, after she has abandoned Zampanò, she takes on the role of imaginary “drill sargent” to the “soldiers” lying about the nighttime piazza. The ease of these moments of spontaneous performance are at

odds with Zampanò's forced efforts to teach Gelsomina her part in his act. Superficially, she is prepared, given the trappings of costume and makeup. But it takes Gelsomina's quiet observation and imitation to secure her transformation into a performer. Masina offers her own insight into Gelsomina's private performances: "[Gelsomina] [n]on è mai al giusto centro, è piena di sofferte inibizioni, di mancanze, di crisi. Perciò tenta cosí spesso di sconfinare, cioé di immaginarsi a essere 'altra', e recita, anche per sè stessa: per esempio quando visita il convento, andando dietro alla suora si mette a camminare instintivamente come la suora, o davanti a un albero si atteggia come quell'albero, e apre le braccia come rami."[48] Gelsomina approaches communion with things through watching and imitating them, through performing the "other." Her success is complete when even Il Matto recognizes her comedic potential and aks to use her in his act [figure 46].

46 Gelsomina's transformation into "performer"

Gelsomina's successful transformation into public performer is all the more significant in that it is dismantled after Il Matto's death. Her psychic unraveling manifests as an increasing failure to perform, to keep Il Matto's murder at a safe remove [figure 47]. In a devolution of her transformation into performer, she can no longer fully enter or escape her stage persona,

[48] Masina, "Gelsomina sente" 451

maintaining only the drawn-on eyebrows of her makeup during both Zampanò's act and when on the road. Her inability to reconcile her warring realities comes to the fore in her refrain of "Il Matto sta male," punctuated by her mournful animal whine. She utters the phrase continually, even during the act, in which she fails to participate. When Zampanò attempts to climb into the van with her at night, she can no longer accept her established role as bedmate and, in a moment of uncharacteristic tenderness, Zampanò does not force her to. In their final scene together, camped at the stone ruins by the side of the frosty road, Gelsomina vacillates between the reality of her current surroundings and the overwhelming emotional reality of Matto's death: "Voi l'avete ammazzato . . . si sta bene qui al sole . . . voleva scappare . . . ci vuole un po' di legna." In an affirmation of her reduction to raw emotional animal, dog-like in her wounded confusion, she pats her own head, self-soothing. Gelsomina is no longer a reliable focalizer: her communicative, constructive vision of the world is shattered by Zampanò's violence, manifesting in her horrified stare. We begin to lose Gelsomina as the observing center of the film after Il Matto's death. Fellini pulls the rug out from underneath the spectator.

47 Gelsomina is unable to "perform" both in Zampanò's act and in his bed.

Gelsomina's becoming is therefore an inverse metamorphosis: as she disappears from the screen, reduced to a sign of her former self in a musical theme, she becomes a stronger presence

in the aging Zampanò's life. Her ability to reach him as a salvific, humanizing element reaches its height when she is present only associatively, in the space surrounding him, the beach, when her vision finally encroaches onto his own. Gelsomina's downward trajectory from madness, to muteness, to death is a confirmation that she is strongest when most evanescent, most vulnerable. Her gradual vanishing redefines the role of cinematic "savior," indeed, deterritorializes the standard conception of epiphanic agent. Her decentering forces the spectator to consider new modes of viewing. What is the spectacle, the performance of the one whose vision gives it new life? What happens when this spectacle/spectator abandons the screen? Gelsomina's disappearance obliges someone else to carry her vision, in an empathetic procedure—much in the same manner as Gelsomina herself performs the other, or as Fellini attempts to harness Masina's vision as *objet a*. This disembodied vision passes first to us, then to the aging Zampanò: once blind, finally irreversibly, painfully clear-sighted.

The Spectacular Body: Le Notti di Cabiria

In *Le notti di Cabiria*, as in *La strada*, Fellini employs a circular structure that resists narrative progression, as least until the final episode of the film. In many ways, the uncontainable, indefatigable physicality of Masina is mirrored in the narrative structure of the film itself, relentlessly repeating Cabiria's cycle of suspicion, hope and despair. This marriage of physicality and form, of the resilient body and the resilient narrative, is also reflected in Fellini's use of Rome's periferia, which is not merely a geographical or historical marker. Guided by Pasolini's screenplay, Fellini brings in the landscape as a correlative for Cabiria's marginality, a complement to her tatty jacket and unsightly scowls. Cabiria's blind, bursting physicality is coupled with a wishful vision of the world that must finally reconcile her dual role as spectacle

and spectator. Through this unlikely heroine, at the mercy of her own bad luck, the audience is introduced to new forms of spectatorship and narrative and introduced to a post-neorealist viewing body that redefines our notions about physical dynamism and resistant vision.

Cabiria is a bundle of contradictions. Ostensibly successful in her profession, at least given her earnings, she is never remotely shown in the act for which she's paid. The closest thing we see is her sitting in passenger seat of the car of one of her johns. Physically, she is perhaps the most asexual prostitute ever shown on the silver screen. She dons the cutesy clothing of a little girl playing dress-up: bobby socks, t-strap sandals, and a short jacket made of feathers, and later, a sailor suit. Masina compares Cabiria's game of "dress up" with Gelsomina's: "Come Gelsomina, che veste con orgoglio i panni del clown, Cabiria ha il gusto di mascherarsi, un piacere del vestir pittoresco, che non ha nulla a che vedere con la *mise* tradizionale delle donne del marciapiede."[49] Her physical screen presence only magnifies the contradictions: her exaggerated swagger one moment is supplanted by a pratfall or physical altercation the next. As Kezich says, "She's practically a cartoon."[50] Her voluptuous co-workers tower over her. But it is her contradictions that make Cabiria such a engaging personality in the film, that establish her as our heroine and lens. It is because she is "skeptical and gullible," "a feisty battler and a woebegone loser"[51] that her performance as a winning prostitute is so convincing, despite the whitewashing of her profession. This performance, in great part reliant on her physical vitality, once again highlights the power of her small figure.

[49] Fellini, *Le notti di Cabiria* 143.

[50] Kezich, *Federico Fellini* 179.

[51] Stubbs, *Federico Fellini as Auteur: Seven Aspects of his Films* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006) 13.

Much of the film depends on visual contrast, comic or tragic in effect. Fellini is fond of emphasizing Masina's physical eccentricity by way of unlikely pairings and doubles. Cabiria is set side-by-side with more typically beautiful blondes, or even, at Lazzari's villa, a lifeless Roman statue depicting the feminine physical ideal [figure 48].

48 Left, Cabiria's childish figure juxtaposed with the curvaceous nude torso; right, one of Masina's blond counterparts

Her physical shortcomings, however, are not as ostensible as her irrepressible energy. Masina is in rare form in the film, breaking into dance one moment, throwing punches the next. Her mercurial disposition is nowhere as apparent as in her changeable body. She vacillates between sneers and smiles, curses and laughter. She is often manhandled during the film, from having her inanimate body flipped over and shaken by the locals who save her from the Tiber, to her engaging in several skirmishes with various co-workers, to her final scuffle with Oscar by the lake. On the other hand, Cabiria breaks into dance at several points in the film, delighting in performing for the patrons at the dance club, or else happy to dance alone on the street to the wafting sounds of jazz [figure 49]. These joyful performances end in further confirming her outcast status,[52] but Cabiria has not reached a level of self-awareness that would require her to tame her physical outbursts. There is a disconnect between vision and reality.

[52] Schoover 106.

49 Above, Cabiria, the fighter, and below, her uncontainable energy, on display in the street and in the dance club

Her joy, as her anger, is a spontaneous physical emanation, confirming her authenticity. These performative moments also serve another purpose: they expand the definition of Cabiria. She is not merely (or perhaps not at all) "Cabiria, prostitute," but instead "Cabiria, romana" or "Cabiria, fighter," or any number of appellations that can be attached to her extreme, amusing physicality. In fact, in defending the picture to producers, who feared possible controversy over the protagonist's profession, Fellini countered reassuringly, "La farebbe Giulietta Masina e non Sophia Loren."[53] And perhaps no other actress could have played a non-sexual prostitute as convincingly, embodying with ease the extremes demanded by the role.

[53] Fellini, *Le notti di Cabiria* 134.

Masina's makeup in the film is similarly variable, accentuating sometimes the aggressive power of her grimace, sometimes the persistence of her youthful optimism. Compared to Gelsomina, Cabiria looks visibly older, not only in the increased angularity of her features, but also in the fierceness of her expressions: her laughs and her sneers are all on a greater scale; she has seen more of the world than her simpler counterpart. Not surprisingly, given her profession, Cabiria's makeup is heavy (where Gelsomina's is practically nonexistent, see figure 50): she is consistently shown with dark lips, lined eyes, and short, straight eyebrows.[54]

50 Gelsomina's wide-eyed, childish face with its rounded contours vs. Cabiria's short, angular eyebrows and dark lips.

But as the film approaches its close and Cabiria has been repeatedly wrung through the cycle of cynicism, disappointment and hope, her makeup and costumes reflect her apparently final transformation, into respectability. Made-over by Oscar's duplicitous love, she ditches her tattered street-wear and dons a lady's conservative clothing; the severity of her makeup is diminished, her eyebrows given a natural arch. Her (deluded) vision of herself has expanded to include the possibility of a middle-class existence. After the crushing revelation of Oscar's cowardice, in the final moments of the film, instead of the haggard picture we might expect,

[54] In fact, the short, angled eyebrows reappear in *8½*, when Guido draws them on his mistress Carla's face to make her look more like a "slut."

Cabiria's teary expression is softened even more, a mere small smile appearing on her lips [figure 51]. Filmed in close-up, with her mascara running down her cheek, she begins to shed the mask that she had worn throughout the film.

51 Cabiria's makeup (especially defining her eyebrows) is softened for the final scenes of the film.

The mask is not merely an external manifestation; it is also through her vision that Cabiria deceives herself. Her vision is, in many respects, as untrustworthy s her uncontrollable physicality. As Karl Schoonover posits, Cabiria's physicality repositions the spectator's expectations of the cinematic body:

> *Nights of Cabiria* narrates our relationship to the physically excessive performance style of Masina in a manner quite different from canonical neorealism. With each of its gestic offerings, the film challenges the complacent and sequestered spectator; it does so by questioning the notion that the body can serve as a vessel for transparent expression. As in the drowning scene, the film weaves the themes of performance and spectacle in and around Masina's exaggerated but highly effective physicality in a way that heightens the semantic indeterminacy that haunts all filmic bodies.[55]

I would argue, similarly, that her flawed but sympathetic vision also forces viewers to renegotiate their relationship to spectatorship and performance. Though not possessing the same brand of willful, brute blindness as Zampanò, Cabiria is also ultimately forced to confront herself

[55] Schoonover 99.

through a crisis of vision. She is miles away from the earnest focalization of the neorealist protagonist, or even Gelsomina. We are given hints early on that Cabiria may not be the most reliable of focalizers: in the beginning of the film, she tries to convince her rescuers that Giorgio "ran away" after she "fell in" the river. Later, she boasts to Lazzari, "Questa qui non ha mai dormito sotto gli archi. . ." then adds hesitatingly, "una volta, forse, o due." Cabiria is not afraid to whitewash her past or her profession. Fellini confirms that she feels "un bisogno straziante di credere che la sua vita di sciagure fosse così come se la raccontava lei, colorandola con le ingenue sentimentali fantasticherie della sua povera testa di bambina ignorante e sfortunata."[56] Hers is not the unbounded, open, creative vision of Gelsomina but rather a more mature vision, one which seeks a compromise with cruel reality. Alternately, addressing once again her physicality, Schoonover posits that Cabiria longs to "transcend her body's social circumscription and to escape its placement in social space by the gazes of others […]." This "trouble with surfaces" reflects her rejection of social barriers.[57] Her disingenuous focalization does not, then, alienate the spectator: on the contrary, we root for Cabiria when she is most embarrassed, most out-of-place. Her lies are venial, a coping mechanism that makes her even more relatable as a focalizer.

Given Cabiria's tribulations, it is not surprising that she rejects the world as it stands, or that she can at times be a reluctant performer in it. When laid bare, the structure of *Le notti di Cabiria* reads like a relentless repetition of disappointment. Cabiria is drawn through the cycle of hope and despair, each time overcoming her skepticism to become a trusting subject. This relationship between cynicism and trust plays out also on the level of spectatorship: Cabiria finds

[56] Fellini, *Le notti di Cabiria* 9.

[57] Schoonover 106.

herself teetering on the precipice between watching and engaging, becoming a participant, and then retreating. If we take the first and last episodes as a frame, we can see this pattern in effect in each episode. With Lazzari, she begins as a spectator of his argument with his lover Jessie, and is then drawn into the drama once Jessie departs. She's later thrust back into the position of mere spectator, displaced on Jessie's return (a scene which I will analyze in the next section). During the pilgrimage to the shrine, Cabiria finds herself pulled into the ritual of the zealous masses, to the point of singing fervently in the church and weeping over the promise of grace, only to have her illusions dashed when no apparent grace is granted; outside, she goes back to watching, ridiculing the still faithful followers. Though she attempts to be only a spectator at the vaudeville show, she is forced into the position of performer through the collusion of hypnotist and crowd, then made witness of her own humiliation [figure 52].

52 Cabiria's shift from spectator to performer

Finally, it is with Oscar that she seems finally to abandon her skepticism, her reluctance to engage, for a genuine encounter, and yet is deceived and cast off at the last moment. Not only is Cabiria deceived: as an audience, we are given no hints of Oscar's deception, and equally no reason to believe he would pick up and string along an apparently poor prostitute encountered incidentally at a vaudeville show. We share Cabiria's naïve vision. This disappointment, then, is

a betrayal deeply shared by audience and protagonist and, as Stubbs points out, a kind of magnified repetition of the scenario in which we were introduced to Cabiria.[58] The final scene presents a hybrid of Cabiria-spectator, and Cabiria-performer, as she watches then unwittingly joins the impromptu procession, finally turning her gaze upon us, the audience. The function of this scene as epiphany depends on our realization that Cabiria truly has nothing more to lose, and that her most valuable possession is her stubborn vision. She is completely out of her element, stranded. Cabiria does not, in fact, find her grace within the squalid confines of the periferia, but instead coming out of the woods, coming from the shore of the lake, site of her emotional destruction. She is a part absorbed into the whole, a performer in the procession. What gives this circular narrative a sense of progression is an ending that promises a new beginning, a moment when Cabiria shows signs of humanity, even optimism, despite having every reason not to. Her gaze toward the camera revises her position once again as she breaks through the fourth wall: she has reached a level of self-awareness not present when she was merely spectator or performer. Her vision faces inward as much as it does outward, in a reorientation of her subjectivity: she has found a space between deceptive vision and outsize physicality. In this direct connection with the audience, she betrays both the "authentic" technique of neorealism, as well as its historical focus.[59] Just as with the members of the group around her, she nods to the camera with a smile, almost grateful, a tacit recognition of the spectator who has shared her vision and her trials.

The Performing Spectator: Masina's Role as Focalizer

[58] Stubbs, *Federico Fellini* 17.

[59] Schoonover explains how her gaze breaks with the neorealist representations of the body: "No longer the body caught unaware by a neorealist gaze, our heroine seems to look both at us and at herself being watched by us. In this way, Cabiria's gesture comes to flaunt those subjective instabilities of the cinematic body that neorealism aimed to elide." Schoonover 115.

We have seen that Masina's unique screen presence allows her alternately to dominate the screen space as a performer within performance or else exist as a spectator on a parallel, or decentered, plane. The actress often accomplishes both tasks simultaneously. The latter position, placing her in the role of observer, still draws heavily upon her gestural abilities and the expansive expressive potential of her face. In all of the films I consider, Masina, through a shot/counter-shot framing of the scene, is a stand-in for the cinematic spectator. Through her responsive viewing, she becomes the lens through which we experience a scene emotionally. Additionally, each film evidences the displacement of Masina: in *La strada* and *Le notti di Cabiria*, insofar as she is removed from the "action" of the scene and visually cedes her role as dynamic protagonist. In *Giulietta degli spiriti*, she is instead destabilized as the emotional center of the film, forced to confront in a brutally visual way a reality she had previously refused to see. The interplay between spectator and performer, then, involves a tension between sight and blindness. Masina's characters find a third space between binaries, creative indeterminacy. We shall see, however, that by the time of *Giulietta degli spiriti*, autobiographical intrusion and the disenchantment of middle-age largely preclude this fruitful third space.

As discussed, Masina fails to conform to the model of the classic on-screen heroine, so it follows that, as a focalizer, she disrupts the typical viewing modes of the spectator. Because her sexuality is obscured and she is often infantilized—even made physically unattractive through costumes and makeup—she deflects the sexual(izing) desire of on-screen protagonists and therefore denies the male viewer's objectifying gaze.[60] This viewing construct, then, invites immediate empathy, an empathy that is nurtured as the Masina character's vision is deepened

[60] At least when looking at her. One could make a compelling argument that the male spectator has plenty to objectify in the female characters surrounding Masina in Fellini films, regardless of the presence of an on-screen male focalizer.

and complicated, given a performative dimension. In these scenes, we see not only through her eyes, but we reach a deeper understanding of her character through the lens of her spectatorship, her reactions.

La strada features a complex interplay of Masina's status as spectator and performer. Gelsomina learns to perform primarily through imitation, which starts with observing. It is because she is presented both as spectator and performer (and spectator of her peers' performances) that hers becomes the dominant vision in the film. In the two scenes I consider—Gelsomina's first viewing of Zampanò's act, and successively, that of Il Matto—her physical viewing position foreshadows and reveals her personal relationship to the performers. In both cases, she is distinct from the surrounding audience. We first see Gelsomina-spectator in her introduction to Zampanò's show; she has not yet been initiated into the performance. The scene begins with the camera panning to follow Zampanò, shirtless, walking in front of the crowd to display the chain he will be using in the act. As he walks behind the van, Gelsomina momentarily comes into view, leaning forward against the tailgate, facing toward the camera, glancing around her, unsettled. She is both part of the surrounding crowd, in terms of her viewership, and also separate. She sits, in fact, at the center of the circle Zampanò traces during the act. She disappears as the camera continues to follow Zampanò. After declaring that he will break the chain's hook using only his chest muscles, the camera cuts away to a medium shot of Gelsomina, eyes widening slightly and continuing to glance around. She exhibits a similar reaction to the remainder of Zampanò's spiel: as he describes the gruesomeness of the possible outcomes if something in the act goes wrong, Gelsomina, in the background, in contrast to the impassive crowd, looks worriedly around her. Making a full circuit of the crowd, Zampanò stops next to the van, and we see Giulietta to the left of the frame, off-center, studying him [figure 53].

When Zampanò kneels and begins drawing in his chain-breaking breaths, the camera cuts away again to Gelsomina, continuing to look around at the crowd, eyebrows raised, slightly alarmed. After the chain breaks, we see her again: her expression has barely changed, though she passively applauds along with the audience, finally giving a small uncertain smile, perhaps of relief.

53 Gelsomina looks on obliquely

Her positioning and response is markedly different when she later witnesses Il Matto's act. Il Matto enters the scene as a shadow on a building—a winged silhouette of the man on the tightrope—but a wide-angle camera quickly pans up to him, the audience below clapping. The camera tracks his assistant as she walks through the crowd, communicating with him through the P.A. system. A high-angle shot cuts to Gelsomina in the audience below the tightrope; her bleached hair, wide eyes, and the lighting single her out from the spectators around her, but she is a member of the audience, centered in the frame. Though this inclusion contrasts with her separation during the previous performance, her reactions to the show, her intermittent glancing around for feedback, signal her singularity. The high angle perspective—the camera looking down on Gelsomina—visually establishes Il Matto's "lofty," ethereal position in her world

before they ever meet. Throughout the show, Gelsomina's reactions to the jokes between Il Matto and his assistant are delayed, almost as if she is taking cues from the crowd around her, imitating them. Her expression of wide-eyed anticipation differs from the anxious stare that endured through Zampanò's act [figure 54]. In many ways, though the distance between performer and viewer is greater, her spectatorship here feels more intimate—she is more clearly entertained, engaged, eager to see what follows. Cinematographically, she is also more central, as noted. When she finally "gets" a joke and laughs with the audience, she looks around at them all, nodding in appreciation of Il Matto's physical and mental agility. Her glances toward the crowd during Zampanò's performance, on the other hand, display uncertainty and isolation. By the end of Il Matto's performance, she is reacting as one with the crowd—their gasps and their relieved applause. After Il Matto steps off the tightrope into the building, the last shot of the audience shows Gelsomina still clapping enthusiastically.

54 Gelsomina, rapt at Il Matto's performance

The similarities between these scenes (the visual focus on Gelsomina, the singularity and depth of her reactions, the camera angles that both orient us to her perspective and reveal her eccentricity) are perhaps less significant than the differences. And yet, her tendency of looking to

her fellow spectators reveals her need to connect, as well as her impulse to imitate: she learns how to be not just a performer, but a spectator through imitation. She occupies a third space, that between spectator and performer. In many ways, this third space is intrinsic to Masina as character: both woman and child (and neither), self and other, individual and collective. In watching these displays, Gelsomina learns about the qualities of the performers themselves, the mechanisms of a good (or mediocre) performance, and how to be a spectator, a member of a larger community. She learns that her position of otherness supplies a privileged site for vision. We see her spectatorship as an important aspect of her becoming.

Even more expressive than Gelsomina in her viewing state, Cabiria is the only version of Masina's spectators who moves around and gestures, much in keeping with the physical dynamism of her character. We have seen that where Gelsomina is put-upon, passive, Cabiria is aggressive. Sequestered in the bathroom of the film star Lazzari on the return of his jilted lover, Cabiria patiently waits for the skirmish between him and the blond bombshell Jessie to play out. She has already been witness to the set-up for this scene, the lovers' quarrel on the street that drove Lazzari to pick Cabiria up for a night of frivolity. Fellini cleverly turns the bedroom scene into that of a Hollywood romance, in both framing and content.[61] Again, the formal viewing codes fly in the face of the "spontaneous" or "authentic" visual regimes demanded by neorealism. The starring couple argues and later embraces on Lazzari's bed, the glamorous Jessie, in her furs and evening dress, daintily pouting, and later dramatically sobbing about Lazzari's neglecting her. Cabiria, sent awkwardly into hiding with a plate of chicken in one hand, a signed autograph of Lazzari in the other, puts her eye to the bathroom's keyhole in order to better observe. In counter-shots, she is shown in profile, her eye illuminated by the light from

[61] In describing an original treatment of the scene to Anna Magnani, whom he originally approached to play the role, Fellini pointedly refers to Cabiria's reactions as those of a spectator of a film. Fellini, *Le notti di Cabiria* 6.

the bedroom [figure 55]. She reacts with visible emotion, nodding and smiling in support of Jessie's initial refusal to accept Alberto's offer of friendship, giving a "That's right, you tell him!" hand gesture. Wordless in the scene, Masina demonstrates her mastery of storytelling through body language. She breaks again from viewing to panic momentarily over what a reconciliation of the lovers might mean for her, standing up, signaling to herself and the bathroom around her in a "What about me?" moment of desperation, and a few moments later she leaves the keyhole to comfort a whining puppy who she discovers is her cellmate. But, each time, she's drawn back to the scene framed by the aperture, the performance by her fantasy double.

55 Cabiria, voyeur?

Unlike in the case of Gelsomina and Giulietta, we are not privy to Masina's facial expression while viewing—only her insuppressible reactions. She is perhaps the most voyeuristic of the three characters—privy to an intensely private scene in which she is completely uninvolved, but in which she likely intimately casts herself. This is among the most playfully meta-filmic of the scenes, Fellini even offering a last shot of the couple embracing, framed in the mid-fade that the keyhole naturally creates. Cabiria comes away from the "screen" at this point, perhaps respectful of what will inevitably come next [figure 56]. She leans back against the door,

puppy in arms, with a wistful look on her face: might she have been the fortunate recipient of Lazzari's caresses, had Jessie not returned? Cabiria adopts the performance of the typical female film viewer, alternately jealous of and sympathetic towards the female film star. But it is not Jessie's fate—nor her performance—but Cabiria's, that engages the spectator. Placed at a remove, the glamorous on-screen actress becomes not a simple scopophiliac object, but instead a means of revealing Cabiria and her wishful vision. We see here the dynamic interplay of Giulietta performer and Giulietta spectator.

56 As the camera fades out on the happy couple, Giulietta feels the isolation of the spectator

The central scene of Masina's spectatorship in *Giulietta degli spiriti* abandons all of the wonder and humor present in the previously described tableaux. Much in the same manner of the metafilmic *8½*, autobiography, marital infidelity, and a looming, sadistic male gaze come together to complicate and contaminate viewing positions. Giulietta is forced to witness her husband's infidelity as humiliated spectator: here we see Masina as abject viewer. This spectatorial performance is also, by far, the most passive. The only signs of reaction from Giulietta are the subtle movements that reveal her distress, and her final refusal to continue watching. The film, in its exploration of Giulietta as middle-aged focalizer, necessarily demands that the Masina revise her previous relation to the spectacle and, similarly, that the spectator

revise the previous relation to Masina's creatively rich vision, the formerly productive dissolution of the boundaries between performer and spectator.

Giulietta begins as an unwilling spectator: in the previous scene, at home, she asks Occhio di Lince whether it is necessary to come to his office, why he can't just deliver the results of his search over the phone. With the response "non è la nostra abitudine," Giulietta is forced to view the evidence in person. As she reluctantly enters the darkened office, the detective is boastful about the quality of the results, acting like a proud film director. His assistant immediately unscrolls a screen against the curtained back wall for the viewing, and the lights dim. Fellini's camera first captures Giulietta, the sole member of the audience, from behind. (This camera angle returns several times, and is essential to the visual impact of the end of the scene.) As the reel begins unspooling, the camera offers a counter-shot of Giulietta in medium close-up, looking uneasy, smoking.[62] Giorgio enters the frame on the screen, smiling as he silently chats on a payphone. The camera cuts to Giulietta in medium close-up: a bar of light sits over her eyes, in contrast to the many instances in the film when her eyes are covered or veiled, or when Giulietta's perspective is otherwise obscured. The detective almost immediately begins reciting the notes that accompany the footage, which read like the action of a screenplay. Giorgio enters a flower shop. Fellini's camera cuts to Giulietta: as the light of realization dawns—she knows the flowers weren't for her—the camera slowly zooms in, and she simultaneously lowers her gaze, shrugging slightly and slowly shaking her head. But she forces herself to continue watching. As the reel progresses, the P.I.'s camera captures ever more intimate moments between Giorgio and his lover. He makes a consoling comment that the images are perhaps not

[62] Smoke, shadows, veils, and glasses play a prominent role in the film, which continues to play on the blindness-sight motif.

what they seem, they could in fact be innocent, and that the perspective of the detectives is limited—an irony-laden comment considering Giulietta's former, willfully blind perspective.

The first reel ends, and the assistant suggests looking at some slides. Giulietta is bombarded with evidence of Giorgio's infidelity in a variety of media: film, photos, written reports, even a recording of her husband and his lover Gabriella.[63] The space of the office becomes a type of editing room where all the forms of footage converge to create a fragmented but powerful narrative. Giulietta, expression passive, cannot prevent her eyes from filling with tears. She most visibly displays emotion when she wipes her face with her gloved hand [figure 57].

57 Giulietta, in chiaroscuro, suffers through her spectatorship

The film reel reaches a lull—the image of Gabriella's arm, dangling outside the car window, playing with the wind. Suddenly, a silhouette appears on the screen, that of Giulietta, rising [figure 58]. This dramatic device works on a number of different levels. Visually, her shadow overwrites the image of Giorgio's infidelity. The shadow is both a symbolic confirmation of her role as looming spectator, but also, by means of a presence-in-absence, an assertion of her (missing) role as the third character in the drama. Narratively, it confirms Giulietta's passivity: she is but a shadow in Giorgio's playboy spectacle. While her rising to

[63] The last of which, incidentally, reveals that Giorgio had had mistresses previous to Gabriella.

leave the screening proves her refusal of her passive role as observer, it also transforms her into a faceless blank space. It is a visible obliteration of the fantasy of the viewing space, a theme discussed below, prominent in *8½*. Giulietta's position as spectator-performer is left as a void, an erasure, an empty viewing space cast onto the overwhelming spectacle.

58 Giulietta's silhouette

Fellini's *8½* employs similar mechanisms in revealing the cruel interplay between unfaithful husband/director and betrayed wife/spectator in the scene of the screen tests. Guido's wife Luisa, played by Fellini favorite Anouk Aimée, is costumed in a similar to Giulietta: short hair, face make-up-free, donning "andorgynizing" glasses and a baggy, collarless button-down shirt that accentuates rather than obscures the slightness of her build. The scene begins in a similar manner: Pace, the producer, stands before the scattered audience, members of Guido's coterie and production team. In a similar position to Occhio di Lince, he introduces the clips and exhorts the director finally to choose the women he wants—also one of the central crises of his personal life.

Luisa undergoes a similar viewing process to Giulietta's. Initially placid, she becomes increasingly visibly uncomfortable as the reel—revealing the autobiographical details of Guido's affairs—progresses. Mistress after buxom mistress prances across the screen, dressed in the identical outfit Luisa observed earlier on Guido's real-life mistress (Sandro Milo). She is even

forced to watch herself, betrayed wife, made spectacle, hearing her own biting criticisms of Guido thrown back at her. Like Giulietta, she begins smoking, expressing a figurative desire to obscure the painful images on the screen. She bites her nails and shifts in her seat. In a further attempt to blot out the images, she removes her glasses [figure 59]. Finally, the succession of sadistic images becomes overwhelming and, like Giulietta, she rises and leaves the theater.

59 Luisa, another Giulietta

Even more than Luisa's public humiliation, Guido's supervising presence is what calls into question the intentions of the director—on both the diegetic and extradiegetic levels. Guido sits above the rest of the audience, watching Luisa's pained reactions. He also displays visible discomfort and perhaps remorse, shifting in his seat [figure 60], sitting intently forward and whispering, "Luisa, ti voglio bene." Yet, if this is the case, why on earth would he let Luisa be present for this procedure? Is he hoping for forgiveness, or to make crystal clear the extent of his betrayal?

60 The director looks down at the spectators

In any case, as he follows Luisa out of the theater, he attempts to excuse the sadism of the viewing by dismissing the material of the screen test as "un'invenzione." Luisa, however, will not be fooled: it is an invention, yes, "un'altra bugia." She agrees that "la verità è un'altra, e la so io," trying to reclaim a space for her own subjectivity, a selfhood and story that lies outside of the realm of his fantasy.

The scene is a painful one, both for the betrayed wife and for the cinematic spectator. Its autobiographical resonances compound the emotional impact on the audience. But *Giulietta degli spiriti* raises the stakes by removing the remove: now Masina is, at least to some extent, playing Masina, Fellini's betrayed wife. Giulietta's qualities as spectator and performer, unlike those of Gelsomina and Cabiria, are defined by her role as tortured wife, despite the fantastical trappings of her "spirits" (a paltry attempt at recompense on the director's part?). Fellini's rumored infidelity was an aspect of their marriage that Masina usually avoided addressing directly, but she seemed reconciled to it through a combination of willful blindness and grudging acceptance—not unlike the Giulietta of the film. The argument for the autobiographical reading is bolstered by the act of smoking—a real-life habit of Masina that her husband detested. Though her eyes are illuminated, Giulietta still attempts to swath herself in the comforting, concealing haze. Having her husband direct her in such an emotionally vulnerable scene, blurring the line

between fantasy and reality, further complicates her role as both performer and spectator. As Stubbs puts it,

> We may well speculate that the situation was torturing for her in that he could well imagine such a situation in her own life and easy in that once she did imagine it, as a sort of emotion recall, the tears came readily. Important, then, to the dynamics of the acting situation was that Masina's own husband was narrating to her the activities of the deceiving husband. We are dealing here with a trick, perhaps even a sadistic one, but the kind that directors use to get strong results.[64]

Here is Gelsomina, disenchanted, or rather, here is the middle-aged Peter Pan, stripped of her performance personality, put in an impossible position as both performer and spectator, precisely *because* of the invasion of autobiography, the denial of creative indeterminacy. The spectacle is uniformly debased and debasing; perhaps, not surprisingly, this is the closest we come to Fellini, documentarian. Masina merely performs, and is made party to, her own disappearance. It is almost as if, turning his lens so aggressively on his life, Fellini forecloses the possibility of creative overflow. Had he exhausted the potential of Masina's vision as becoming? Did he see her as too fully formed, fixed, to embody the dynamic possibilities of the other's vision?

Projected Performances, Projected Perspectives

Fellini, with *Giulietta degli spiriti*, asks Masina to play one of the most uncomfortable roles: herself. Or rather, herself as viewed by her husband: a middle-aged bourgeois housewife; his Cabiria, finally allowed a home, husband, and a touch of the elegance he found so contrary to her whimsical spirit. Giulietta, too, is Fellini's attempt to harness Masina's vision. Though one could debate the initial premise of her statement, Betti's summation of Fellini's attempt at projection is incisive:

[64] Stubbs, *Federico Fellini* 163.

> Cabiria, Juliet of the Spirits, but above all Gelsomina are female archetypes that denounce the profound mortification of women as sacrificial objects, perennial victims. And those personages are also self-absolving projections of the male desire for a new innocence, a more rigorous internal cleanliness, a more adult spiritual morality. However, the basic irreparable impotence behind the projection is the same one condemning it to remain a projection.[65]

Fellini, in many ways, uses Masina as an avenue of grace, both as an artist and as a husband. It is when he defines his muse too narrowly that the tenuous distance between these two roles collapses and disrupts the singular function of Masina as focalizer of the fantastic. The dynamic bodies of Gelsomina and Cabiria, the narrative power of their simple reactions—whether through gesture or facial expression—provide the spectator an active filter through which to experience their drama. Their claim to a vision at the margins—uncatergorizable—both affords Fellini a bridge to a post-neorealist aesthetics while forcing him to question the position of spectatorship itself. Stripping Masina of her changeable, restless body yields a static focalizer. And yet the role also confirms, through its exceptional status, the revelatory power of Masina's decentered body, its unparalleled potential as a medium for her director's, and our, post-historical vision.

[65] Betti 64.

V. Resistant Subjectivity: Antonioni's Appropriation of Vitti's "Modernity"

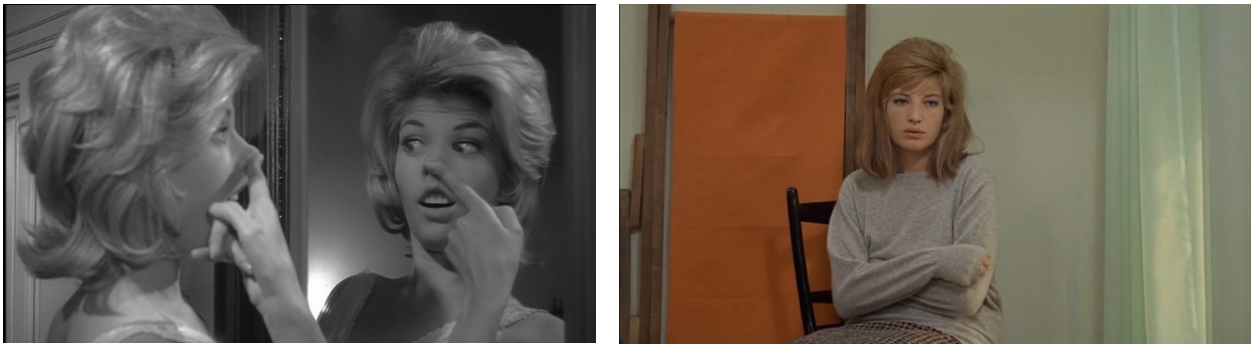
Monica Vitti, the protagonist and empathetic and moral center of his films, is Antonioni's most prominent (human) focalizer. Her physical presence—her blondeness, her slight body—in no small part contributed to the execution of his modernist vision. Like Giulietta Masina, Vitti is praised by her director for her "expressiveness," for having an extremely mobile face.[1] Though Vitti was formed in the theater and well suited to comedy (like Masina), Antonioni says that, regardless, she is still "un'attrice molto moderna; quindi anche in teatro non aveva mai quegli atteggiamenti che si suol definire «teatrali.»"[2] But it is, rather, her emotional impenetrability that determines her "modernity," that undefinable, mysterious something that sets her apart from the beautiful *maggiorate fisiche* of her generation. Vitti's otherness in Antonioni's so-called tetralogy of alienation derives from her moral resistance, her interrogation of the status quo. Her male counterparts, far from exhibiting the sensitivity and consciousness of Vitti's characters, are often too seamlessly integrated into their reality, whether the Borsa of *L'eclisse* or the factory of *Deserto rosso*. The female protagonists, on the other hand, experience an uneasy relationship to their surroundings, offering a counterpoint to the men's rational, but unquestioning adaptation. Antonioni attempts to harness this vision, exploiting the otherness of her perspective for his own aesthetic ends. He experiments with the place of actors and acting, shifting the emotional "work" onto objects and landscape, in an attempt to contain the expressive human element. And yet, there is something in Vitti that cannot be contained, the mysterious element that transcends his authorship. It is in this space of "overflow" that we see the deterritorialization of the director's intention, which leads to new and productive networks of vision.

[1] Antonioni, *Fare un film* 41.

[2] Antonioni, *Fare un film* 41.

Vitti's Body, Vitti's Vision

Vitti herself and various voices in the cinematic world acknowledge that she is an atypical specimen in 1960s Italian cinema: fair, with freckles, and lacking the monumental curves of the *maggiorate fisiche* [figure 61]. She explains: "Non venivo dai concorsi di bellezza, mi avrebbero bocciato subito, ero così diversa dalle attrici del momento. Ero troppo magra, troppo alta, troppo bionda, avevo fatto l'Accademia, il teatro, ero piena di lentiggini, la voce roca, non mi truccavo mai e vestivo con un golf nero e pantaloni neri."[3]



61 Vitti, "modern" female protagonist

A radical departure even from Antonioni's previous leading lady, Lucia Bosé (a "classic," brunette Italian beauty), Vitti is a catalyzing element for Antonioni's new stylistics. Alain Bergala argues that "Quando Antonioni scelse Monica Vitti per *L'avventura*, si trovò con un elemento nuovo tra le mani, qualcosa di mai visto nel cinema italiano, un prototipo di donna cinematografica moderna che gli avrebbe suggerito inquadrature del tutto inedito; trovò insomma una forma e una fonte d'ispirazione per la nuova estetica che andava inventando."[4] Just like the objects that overtake the narrative in *L'eclisse* or the expressive use of color in *Deserto rosso*,

[3] Monica Vitti, *Sette Sottane* (Milano: Sperling & Kupfer, 1993) 188.

[4] Alain Bergala, "In ordine di apparizione sullo schermo: Rossellini, Antonioni, Godard," *Lo sguardo di Michelangelo Antonioni e le arti*, ed. Dominique Païni (Ferrara: Ferrara arte, 2013) 232.

Vitti becomes a new formal element for the director, one that helped transform the face of his films.

Antonioni's belief that women make more subtle "filters" of reality is well publicized.[5] His word choice points to his technique of seeing *through* female protagonists, of using them as a lens. The director's stylistics develops around this projection through the other, a reorientation of the camera to this new viewing position. Giuliana Minghelli discusses how, from the period of his documentary shorts, Antonioni used the external element—in this case, the landscape—as a filter for his cinema: "The physical, emotional and aesthetic pervasiveness of the [Po] river exerts its cinematic impact in two distinct ways, not only as a privileged *object of vision*, but, unexpectedly, as an elusive *subject of vision*."[6] In this manner, the river can "sneak behind the lens and this posit for Antonioni a new point of view." In the sixties, Vitti becomes this filter for Antonioni, equally innovative, equally "elusive." It is perhaps the point between his own vision and that of an external filter that the director refers to when he says, "I believe that something all filmmakers have in common is [the] habit of keeping one eye open to the inside and one open to the outside. At a certain moment the two visions approach each other, and like two images that come into focus, they are superimposed upon one another."[7] We shall see the problematic possibilities of this "meeting" come dramatically to the fore in *Deserto rosso*, though Vitti remains Antonioni's filter as long as she plays his protagonist.

The role that Vitti can play that the landscape cannot, however, is as an on-screen surrogate for the director himself. There are several moments in the films when Vitti's gaze

[5] Antononi says that the "personaggio donna" is a "filtro molto più sottile della realtà, più inquieta e molto più capace dell'uomo di sacrificio e sentimento d'amore." *Fare un film* 170.

[6] Giuliana Minghelli, *Landscape and Memory in Post-Fascist Italian Film: Cinema, Year Zero* (New York: Routledge, 2013) 138.

[7] Architecture 58.

seems to align with the gaze behind the camera, and not only from the moral/ethical perspective, which I will discuss below. Demonstrating an artist's bent for troubling distances and recasting the aesthetic roles of objects, Vitti in some ways becomes a "director" herself. In the beginning of *L'eclisse*, for example, Vittoria reaches through a frame to rearrange the objects it displays. Like the director, she must be certain that the composition before her suits her. Her adjustments are reminiscent of Antonioni's confession that he often feels the urge to rearrange life itself, positioning himself and his interlocutors in more visually pleasing manners. [8] We see this not only in her "framing" of the objects, but also in her attempts to change the lighting of the apartment she's in [figure 62]; after a long night of discussion with her estranged lover she opens the curtains, signaling also her desire for illumination and a connection to the outer world. Her tactile interaction with objects, her attempt to wield power over them, and her recurrent outward gaze puts her in the position of artist, an idea that is alluded to visually throughout the film.

62 Vittoria, "artist," in *L'eclisse*

All the same, there is an inherent struggle between the protagonist's vision and that of the director, stemming from the inevitable distance between the subjective vision of the other and the hand that tries to wield it. Even if Antonioni identifies with Vitti, using her as a bearer of his

[8] Antonioni, *Architecture* 106.

gaze, "è anche vero che l'identificazione non è totale, che rimane un margine di distacco."[9] Again, in *Deserto rosso*, we will see how the artist's vision finally rejects conflation with his troubling focalizer.

Models of Resistance

The Vitti protagonist, in addition to enjoying a privileged relationship to the objects around her, is consistently cast as a force for ethical interrogation of the status quo. Though battling tenaciously for subjectivity and a sense of connection to their worlds, her characters serve as restless searchers, unsatisfied with easy answers, conciliating appearances, or prescribed narratives. From this restlessness derives much of the conflict with the male characters, seamlessly integrated into their realities. Vitti's protagonists do not hesitate to ask difficult questions, of both their relationships and their realities, and this questioning stance is revealed in their physical relationship to their environment. In *L'avventura*, it is Claudia who laments the renunciation of the search for Anna; in *L'eclisse*, Vittoria reveals the inherently abstracting dimensions of the Borsa [figure 63]. Further, Vitti's protagonists are consistently reluctant to be drawn into romantic relationships, often rejecting the first proffered kiss, uncertain of what these men represent.

[9] Lorenzo Cuccu, *La visione come problema. Forme e svolgimento del cinema di Antonioni* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1973) 214.

63 Though Piero is "complete" and whole in the space of the Borsa, Vittoria's body is bisected, obscured

This refusal to capitulate to the narrative of the love story is mirrored and enlarged by the director, constantly unwilling to respect generic or narrative conventions. In fact, far from the ideal of Hollywood's narrative digestibility, Antonioni's films resist even the logic we normally find in narrative film, the displays of emotion or cause and effect. They no longer require a spectator's "interest," but rather his "availability"[10]—thus the director's dictum that a film ought to be *felt* rather than *understood*.[11] We shall see in these analyses the dissolution of strict categories of rationality and irrationality as Antonioni explores a cinematic perspective that exists on the margins of these binaries.

"Neorealismo interiore"? Antonioni's Displacement of Acting

Antonioni's declaration that his cinema must be felt rather than understood often leads critics to a discussion of his so-called "interior neorealism." The term was coined based on the director's own claims about post-neorealist cinema: "Il neorealismo del dopoguerra, quando la realtà era quella che era, così scottante immediata, poneva l'attenzione sul rapporto tra personaggio e realtà. […] Invece oggi che la realtà, più o meno, bene o male, si è normalizzata,

[10] Pierre Leprohon, *Michelangelo Antonioni: An Introduction*, trans. Scott Sullivan (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963) 65.

[11] Gian Luigi Rondi, *7 domande a 49 registi* (Torino: Società editrice internazionale, 1975) 222.

mi sembra sia importante andare a vedere quello che è rimasto dentro i personaggi da tutte le esperienze passate."[12] Like the other directors in my study, Antonioni felt that the post-neorealist cinema was not one of historical collective trauma, but of the alienated individual. The claim to a "interior" neorealism, however, involves a contradiction in terms when it comes to the cinematic product. What exactly is "interior" about the filmic surface? Rather, critics have given this misleading name to Antonioni's displacement of the actor, or better the displacement of the actor's traditional expressive role. In fact, it is the complete opacity of these characters that may be mistaken for "interiority." The spectator is radically excluded from their emotions. Instead, the emotive force of the actor is often deflected onto objects and landscape. Now, it is well known that Antonioni had little respect for the creative powers of actors. His statements on actors and his critical domination of them have reached something of a mythical status.[13] One of his more typical declarations is that an actor must never become "his own director"[14]; "[A]n actor must make the same effort to follow what the director tells him as a dog does its master."[15] He praised Monica Vitti and Vanessa Redgrave precisely because they faithfully followed him, regardless of their own understanding of his requests.[16] Like Fellini, however, he would have disputes with his leading lady, and he was "costretto a pregarla di non intromettersi in quello che

[12] Michelangelo Antonioni, *Fare un film è per me vivere: scritti sul cinema* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1994) 7.

[13] For a revealing look at Antonioni's relationship with his actors, see David Forgacs, "Face, Body, Voice, Movement: Antonioni and Actors," *Antonioni: Centenary Essays*, ed. Laura Rascaroli and John David Rhodes (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) 167-182.

[14] Antonioni, *Fare un film* 18; Antonioni, *The Architecture of Vision: Writings and Interviews on Cinema* (New York: Marsilio Publishers, 1996) 163.

[15] Bert Cardullo, "Film is Life: An Interview with Michelangelo Antonioni," *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews*, ed. Burt Cardullo (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008) 141.

[16] Antonioni, *Architecture* 164.

era il mio campo."[17] The fact remains, then, that actors were most productive for Antonioni when they were working in conjunction with their environment.

We see this repeatedly in the meticulous framing of characters, a painstaking visual integration of body and landscape, or body and architecture [figure 64]. The static actor is posed against the backdrop (or foreground). There are even moments when Antonioni (prefiguring Thomas in *Blow up*?) becomes a kind of fashion photographer. David Forgacs confirms this, speaking specifically about the camera's treatment of Vitti and her "star discourse" between films: "Frozen into a series of almost still shots, the beautiful woman momentarily leaves the cinematic narrative and re-enters the paratexts of cinema: the fashion photograph, the illustrated magazine article about the film star."[18] This analysis of Vitti's photographic quality highlights the static quality of Vitti's face. Though heralded by her director for her "expressiveness," it is rather her serene seriousness, the indeterminacy of her searching gaze that intrigues and remains with the viewer. Her lack of expression leaves open the interpretive space for the spectator.

64 The body, fragmented and framed by the landscape

[17] Antonioni, *Fare un film* 41. Antonioni, like Fellini, uses the word "intromettere" when discussing the tendency of actors to offer their own opinions. The comparisons with Fellini are not incidental. I will be examining Antonioni and Fellini's similar treatments of their leading ladies in the last section of this chapter.

[18] Forgacs 173. For more on Antonioni's "construction" of Vitti as star and an examination of the cinematic evidence, see Federico Vitella, "Molding a Modern Star: Monica Vitti in Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'Avventura*," *Women's Film History Network* (online publication), http://wfh.wikidot.com/dwfh-full-programme (accessed 7 March 2014).

Subjectivity, Objectivity

This discussion of the actor's place in Antonioni's "cinema of alienation" may lead one to believe that landscape and surrounding objects usurp the subjective position of the human element, that actors are no longer important. Indeed, Antonioni professed feeling a special relationship to objects, a visual fascination, and this comes through clearly in the films: "I have a great sympathy for objects, perhaps more than for people," he submits. He continues: "[B]ut the latter interest me more."[19] Though the director makes his characters—and us, as spectators—question the relationship of people and objects through a systematic visual scheme, he still does not create his narratives around objects, but rather around people.

Because Antonioni encroaches upon the actor's role as maker of meaning by deploying objects and settings as metonyms, these externals are sometimes more psychologically revelatory than the actor's gestures or dialogue. Tonino Guerra reveals that in co-writing screenplays with Antonioni, he was astonished when even the most beautiful and formerly "necessary" line would fall away.[20] The external objects that come to take the place of dialogue, beloved by the director from a visual standpoint, often function in the process of corporeal fragmentation of the actors. There are moments when the object literally takes the place of a body part, as in *L'eclisse*, leaving us with a "body-object" [figure 65]. This visual melding of the human and inanimate is not a purely visual move on the part of the director: the space created in this "collision"—like the

[19] André Labarthe, "A Conversation with Michelangelo Antonioni." *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews*, ed. Burt Cardullo (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008) 8.

[20] Tonino Guerra, "Le parole," *L'eclisse*, ed. John Francis Lane (Bologna: Cappelli, 1962) 27.

collision between Antonioni's vision and that which he takes as his lens[21]—is the deterritorialized space, freed up for new interpretation.

65 In *L'eclisse*, Riccardo's head is "replaced" by a lampshade (right), and Vittoria's head obscured by a shutter.

The final scenes of *L'eclisse* are an experiment in this world of objects that is still associatively tied to the human subject. Though the landscape is emptied of our protagonists, the objects themselves act as ghosts of their presence: Claudia's water barrel, the building materials at which she gazed, the street corner on which the lovers met. Through the use of the blinding illumination of the last image, the streetlamp, Antonioni perhaps conveys that the final solution to man's struggle for subjectivity is not illumination or lucidity, but rather an acceptance of the subject's fragmentation, an exploration of the third space between the human and inhuman.

The objects and landscapes, though they do require a human focalizer, often have their own stories to tell, and in so doing assume some of the narrative work. As Minghelli states, "Much like Rossellini's treatment of Bergman, as the actor is flattened toward the background, the latter emerges as the meaningful figure."[22] Just like the actors, these are complex, mysterious environments, offering visuals not easily decoded [figure 66]. In *L'avventura*, for example, the ghost town near Noto that Claudia and Sandro stumble upon unnerves them through its

[21] "A Talk with Michelangelo Antonioni on His Work," *Film Culture* 1962, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Interviews*, ed. Burt Cardullo (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008) 27.

[22] Minghelli 161.

emptiness. Similarly, the factory and its surroundings in *Deserto rosso* can either be a space of potential beauty—according to Antonioni, and perhaps his male protagonists—or else a harrowing, dehumanized atmosphere, as for Giuliana.

66 Active landscapes: the "ghost town" of *L'avventura* and the factory in *Deserto rosso*

The objects and landscapes to which Antonioni gives life are part of a cinematographic scheme that also problematizes the role of the camera. The camera is rarely concealed; Antonioni makes its presence felt, exposing its self-consciousness via improbable angles, disorienting jumps. His is not the disappearing camera of Hollywood, or even of neorealism. In order to better "interrogate" the world, the camera makes itself known.[23] Antonioni's perspectival shifts are disorienting, offering multiple points of view and working in tandem with the thematic content to make perspective feel disconnected, fragmented. The camera's eccentric position makes us call into question who is seeing; in *Deserto rosso*, for example, we see a shot of seagulls, and immediately after are offered the "bird's-eye view" of Giuliana and Corrado [figure 67]. The dissociation of perspective from character and conventional cinematographic placement challenges the viewer's received notions about focalization.

[23] Cuccu 95.

67 A literal bird's-eye view

Networks of focalization in these films implicate not only Antonioni's relationship to his camera, but the interplay between on-screen focalizer (Vitti), director, and camera. Like the objects previously discussed, the camera may act as an agent upon the characters, and there are several moments when we witness the Vitti character submit to perspectival physical fragmentation, as in *L'eclisse* [figure 68]. But to see Vitti merely "acted upon" would neglect the essential role she plays in the films as witness and guide. The protagonist-guide's vision works in tandem with the camera to pique our visual curiosity and problematize perspective and distance. Moreover, Vitti herself, the gazing interrogator, acts as a lens for both spectator and director, becoming a sort of "second camera."

68 The character Vittoria's hand lingers on the screen, dismembered by the camera

There are continual over-the-shoulder shots of Vitti, often standing before a window, especially in *L'avventura* and *L'eclisse* [figure 69]. These framings present her contemplative gaze, unseen by the spectator, against a landscape that is also partially obscured by her body. The

composition, then, is a curious one: while Vitti's placement does not further the narrative, and expresses very little about her "interior" state—and certainly tells us nothing about how she "feels" about the object of her vision—its repeated occurrence makes clear her connection to and curiosity about landscape. The camera dramatizes Vitti's role as filter, but not just in a general sense; rather, she stands as lens between the camera and a landscape that *also* functions as Antonioni's lens.

69 Vittoria, attentive observer

There is no epiphanic transformation awaiting Vitti's character in these landscapes, as there is for Rossellini's Bergman. Antonioni's positioning of his female focalizer rather sees like a superimposition, reminiscent of his comment about the meeting place of his internal and external vision. The image both reveals Vitti's role as a surrogate for the director, embodying his searching, restless vision, while her inscrutability exposes the distance between herself and him. Once again, there is something beyond Antonioni's control in this attempted appropriation, a deterritorialized space of potential interpretation, the presence of which grows throughout their collaboration.

L'avventura*: The Search*

The points of contact between Rossellini's *Stromboli* and Antonioni's *L'avventura* are striking enough that the films bear comparison. Both tell the story of a female protagonist,

alienated in her surroundings, whose crisis of subjectivity begins on an island. The physical similarities between the two women (slight, blond, tall, and fair) underline their "modern" quality, their difference from the ideal of feminine Italian beauty. From a formal point of view, these women offer the directors a new perspective from which to film. And yet, made a decade later, *L'avventura* reorients the gaze of the protagonist. While Bergman's Karin desperately seeks an escape from her foreign world, only to be transformed through an encounter with it, Vitti's Claudia acts as an agent of restive examination of her surroundings. Far from a subject of directorial experiment, Claudia's enigmatic presence problematizes the very visual networks meant to contain her. Her positioning vis-à-vis the landscape and camera creates the "third space" previously discussed, the quality of excess or overflow that deterritorializes the space between authorial intention and resistant female vision.

L'avventura casts the precariousness of identity as wrapped up in the tenuousness of narrative. Antonioni's cinema is the story of the vanishing body. As Pascal Bonitzer puts it, here, the story becomes the "*disappearance of the disappearance* of Anna."[24] The disappearance of Anna's body, in a sense, means the disappearance of the narrative, at least in terms of generic expectations: with her goes the genre of the pleasure cruise. The "disappearance of the disappearance" of her body means the disruption of the detective or mystery genre. And, in terms of character development, her vanishing act transforms the body of Claudia: as Antonioni shows, she gradually becomes the male protagonist Sandro's "replacement" lover, taking her friend Anna's place. This idea is reaffirmed on the visual level via Claudia's donning the missing Anna's blouse. Claudia experiences Anna's disappearance as a crisis of identity; when she dons a brunette wig at the villa, the character Patrizia tells her, "sembri un'altra." Claudia, too, will

[24] Pascal Bonitzer, "The Disappearance," in Michelangelo Antonioni, *L'Avventura*, ed. Seymour Benjamin Chatman and Guido Fink (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989) 216.

eventually be replaced—if fleetingly—by another (true) brunette, Gloria Perkins.[25] Claudia's search, then, is based in an examination of her own changeable identity. She is the only character in the film to express conflict over her actions, as we shall see.

The spectator senses early on Claudia's special relationship to the camera. In several respects Claudia acts as a sort of "second camera," as mentioned; she serves as witness in many scenes, performing a role as viewer that borders on voyeurism. In the beginning of the film, as Sandro and Anna make love in his apartment, leaving the waiting Claudia to circle the building, we see her trying to gain visual access to the scene. She is pictured looking through doors and windows that frame her figure, facing towards the camera [figure 70]. Unlike the camera, however, she does not enter, even finally shutting the open door that would apparently grant her entrance. Her visual exclusion in this series of shots, contrasted with her later role as witness, is perspectival proof of the inaccessibility of her enigmatic friend. In later scenes, Claudia is in fact invited or pressed to watch: she is either present as a guarantor of an assignation's authenticity (in the case of Giulia and Goffredo) or else as an agent of interruption or prevention of their consummation (Patrizia and Raimondo, and of course Sandro and Gloria Perkins, in the betrayal at the end of the film).

[25] Of course, Claudia initially fears that Sandro's disappearance at the hotel means Anna has returned. Thus, in a sense, Gloria Perkins is (also, like Claudia) a stand-in for Anna. We also mustn't forget that, at one point during the search on Lisca Bianca, Caludia mistakes Giulia for Anna.

70 Claudia, framed

Claudia's framing is not easily categorized as aesthetic move, nor a subjective one; her contemplating presence occupies an indeterminate place. When she looks out at the world, Claudia is a contemplative spectator who implicates the audience as interrogators of vision [figure 71]. The over-the-shoulder shot is typically used during a two-person conversation, to orient the viewer and to feature reaction shots. Seeing over her shoulder into the landscape, however, the spectator wonders, *What does she see?* Or rather, *What are we only given a partial picture of?* The repeated shots of Claudia looking out the window act as metonym for her unsatisfied search, her desire to reach out beyond herself to connect with the world. We musn't forget, however, that this perspective is also a point of entrance for the director himself, and that the troubled female psyche is easily exploited for its expressive potential. In *L'avventura*, Antonioni sews the seeds for what will become his destabilizing use of "free indirect subjectivity"—as Pasolini terms it—in *Deserto rosso*.

71 Restless searcher

Even on the level of plot, Vitti's character occupies a privileged viewing space in the film: she is distinct from the other characters in her loneness and her lower socioeconomic class (a bit of background that isn't revealed until almost the end of the film). As our guiding character, Claudia is our focus: but, unlike Masina, for example, she does not pull us in through her "spectacular" performance, but rather attracts us through the inscrutability of her body, her face, her gestures. Her unique position allows her not only her role as witness, but also the ethical distance that that position affords—at least for a time. As in *L'eclisse* and *Deserto rosso*, it is often Claudia's rhetorical questions or offhand comments that deliver a subtle moral critique of her counterparts. For example, when on the yacht Anna reveals her shark story to have been "una balla," Claudia responds that she doesn't want to know why Anna does these things—Sandro, she supposes—and ends with the slightly recriminating, "Ti ha servito, almeno?" Later, after Anna's disappearance and Sandro's declaration of his desire for Claudia, she confronts him

with the question, “Basta così poco per dimenticare?” Her initial resistance to Sandro’s advances proves her desire to maintain a moral position in her life—through her loyalty to Anna—even as others revel in their amorality. Claudia eventually overcomes her moral scruples in exchange for the promise of an authentic connection with the other—a connection which, though she can’t know it, is over before it begins.

L’avventura previews the male-female relationship dynamics that will persist throughout the tetralogy with subtle variation. As mentioned, while Claudia begins the film searching for lucidity and connection, Sandro seeks diversion. Just as he is impatient with her tenacious dedication to Anna’s search, he is surprised by her questioning the apparent ease of the transference of his affections to her. He tells her with exasperation, “I’ve never seen a woman like you who needs to see everything clearly.” In *L’eclisse*, Piero will communicate a similar judgment to Vittoria. These female characters often express doubt and maintain a resistant stance to the inertia that seems to pull everyone else unquestioningly along. They offer an alternate vision of the world, yet through the “rational” men they are cast as confused and changeable.

Sandro is driven primarily by the erotic hunt, sublimating a desire for a satisfying vocation through sex, in a Freudian reversal. He finds his work, providing estimates for others’ architectural projects, unfulfilling. Admiring the greatness of the cathedral at Noto, his lament to Claudia over the fleetingness of “beautiful things” becomes an ironic one: he seems to lose interest the moment she celebrates their intimacy. His lament is followed by a spontaneous marriage proposal to Claudia, confirming his lack of seriousness and capacity for reflection. This impetuousness is highlighted in the series of scenes in Noto in which he spills the artist’s ink over his drawing. As William Arrowsmith observes, he undergoes a visual regression after he

first childishly challenges the artist to a fight, then joins the line of retreating schoolboys.[26] Sandro is compelled by the hunt, always in pursuit of the resistant body, whether it be Anna's or Claudia's.

As Claudia settles into the love affair, momentarily conquering her lingering doubts about Anna, she blossoms into a playful performer. In their hotel room in Noto, she dances light-heartedly before the bemused Sandro [figure 72], who instead goes out. Later, after his return from his ink-spilling walk to the cathedral, he attempts to take Claudia forcefully, as if to reinstitute her role as sexual prey. She refuses with the statement "Mi sembra di non conoscerti." He spitefully throws her decision to pursue their romantic relationship back in her face: "Non sei contenta? Hai un'avventura nuova."

72 Claudia, beautiful object

Claudia resists easy objectification by the male gaze, whose agent supersedes the predatory Sandro. The presence of this gaze is felt throughout the film, contextually implicating the scourge of hyper-masculinity in the Sicilian culture. The "writer"-poseur Gloria Perkins, in actuality a polished prostitute, acts as Claudia's foil as a victim of the collective desirous male gaze [figure 73]. Sandro is witness as a veritable mob hounds Gloria through the streets of Messina. Even the town reporter is disgusted with the men's behavior. This threatening,

[26] William Arrowsmith, *Antonioni: The Poet of Images* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 43.

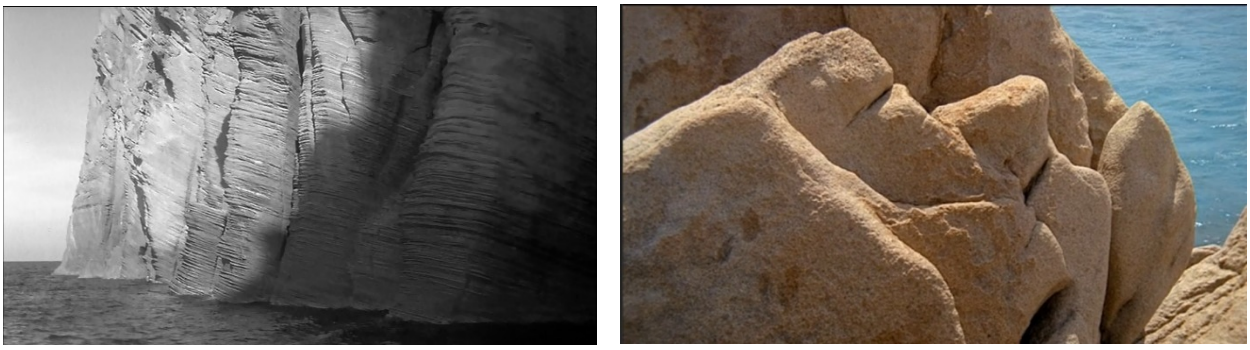
collective eye is given its most forceful visual treatment, however, in a later scene in Noto, when Claudia, temporarily alone, is literally and figuratively followed by the numerous men in the piazza. Unlike the rowdy mob at Messina, this group of watchers is silent, looming, as they surround the self-conscious, increasingly uncomfortable Claudia. Unlike Gloria, who basks in the gaze, Claudia is once again thrown into crisis as she questions her new relationship to Sandro. The external, objectifying gaze is deflected by the gaze inward, the examination of her own conscience.

73 Gloria Perkins, Sandro's new object

This interplay between the internal and external gaze, the subject and the object, once again brings us to the relationship between body and landscape. Another desirous male gaze may be found in the young, louche painter Goffredo, whose studio is lined with female nudes. When the flirtatious Giulia asks why he paints only women, he retorts, "Nessun paesaggio è bello come una donna." The comment feels almost self-reflexive on Antonioni's part; has he indeed shifted the focus from the landscape to the body of Vitti? As if in reply, Claudia turns away, going to the window to gaze out onto the green scenery as the camera looks over her shoulder. As discussed earlier, the shot places her in that third space of vision, inscrutable, deterritorializing the subject of the gaze.

The landscape in *L'avventura*, far from ceding its place to the woman's body, remains a strong lens for Antonioni. Geographic setting is *L'avventura* essential: southern Italy becomes the site of loss and estrangement for the group of Roman pleasure-seekers, just as Ravenna's post-industrialist factories and painted *pinete* must be the setting for Giuliana's neurotic unraveling. In *L'avventura*, the barren, hostile landscape of Lisca Bianca, coupled with Anna's disappearance, reveals the psychological distance between the characters, their own spiritual barrenness. The southern setting makes them foreigners in their own land. Antonioni's strength of continuity is such that we can even find similar shots from film to film; the group of friends, scattered across the landscape, that Sandro beholds on Lisca Bianca is resurrected and recast in *Deserto rosso* [figure 74]. The sense of loss and confusion is expressed not by the characters, emotionally opaque, but by the expressionistic surroundings. Antonioni makes these rocky shores speak, just as he will do, in a dramatically revised role, in *Deserto rosso* [figure 75].

74 The separation of bodies in *L'avventura* is compounded by their obscuring in *Deserto rosso*



75 The hostile cliffs of the Aeolian Islands are softened and "humanized" in Giuliana's fantasy sequence in *Deserto rosso*

The landscape itself also has a narrative function, as we have seen. There are two striking examples of this in the film: one in which the characters play an essential role, the other in which they are merely witnesses. On Lisca Bianca, there is a certain ravine, across which splashes the surf, that is shown repeatedly. The camera frames it first in isolation, later, after several intervening shots, with Sandro, and finally, with Claudia [figure 76]. Many critics make a claim for Antonioni's use of the objective correlative, but it is a difficult device to apply to characters whose emotional state is, in fact, inaccessible. Through his displacement of focus from the actor to the object or landscape, Antonioni exposes the emotional inaccessibility of the character; here, more specifically, he lets the landscape take the place of the body. As Anna's disappearance—and perhaps death—becomes more certain, the site of her possible escape or drowning becomes more loaded as it recurs, each time focalized by her lover and closest friend, to whom her disappearance should mean most. The ravine comes to stand in for the disappearance of the subject.

76 The ravine on Lisca Bianca revisited

Another landscape that "speaks" in the place of the actor is found in the "ghost town" that Claudia and Sandro visit [figure 77]. This abandoned site, home of modern, fascist-influenced architecture, is a symbol of the failure of the modern "paese": for some reason, no one inhabits this town. If not privy to the history, one wouldn't know that the homes of the Borgo Schisina, built in 1950, were eventually abandoned because of their shoddy construction and lack of electricity and running water. This backdrop, then, is a resounding correlative to Sandro's later statements about modern architecture, how buildings are no longer made to last. Even if we cannot access Schisina's history, its resemblance to De Chirico's dehumanized piazze and Claudia's statement about the neighboring town ("Quello non è un paese, è un cimitero") are enough to provoke in the spectator the realization that the contemporary structures are merely a cheap, empty attempt at city planning.

77 The modern abandoned church

It is perhaps Sandro whom we most strongly associate with the abandoned town, a shoddy, modern attempt at a lasting structure. But, though the men of the tetralogy often get a bad rap, one could contend that Claudia and Sandro are equally fruitless searchers. Claudia fails in her pursuit of Anna, then fails again in seeking a human connection in her relationship with Sandro. While she searches for lucidity and an honest connection to the other, Sandro seeks constantly to lose himself in the other. But Claudia emerges at the ethical center of the film. The final shot of *L'avventura* is an apt picture of her empathetic superiority: it is she who finally takes pity on the broken Sandro. It is her vision that allows for change and growth.

Deserto rosso*: Seeing through Neurosis*

Of all the films of the tetralogy, *Deserto rosso* most calls into question Antonioni's subject positioning vis-à-vis his female protagonist. Vitti's protagonist, Giuliana, an apparently neurotic woman overwhelmed by her frayed senses, the assaulting sights and sounds of industrial Ravenna. Her attempt to claim her subjectivity in this alienating setting is to strive to make connections to the external world, to interrogate it, not unlike Claudia, in her striving to reach Sandro, or Vittoria, the protagonist of *L'eclissse*, whose interactions with objects betray an internal need for external confirmation in a world in which appearances often take the place of

meaning. Giuliana's vision, however, answering to Antonioni's stylistic needs, necessarily exists as an extreme externalization of an internal conflict, pushing her into a liminal space. Antonioni would have us believe that her perspective is her sickness and that she "sees" via this sickness. The director ends by pathologizing the very vision that offers an alternative, critical view of the world. *Deserto rosso* therefore has the effect of confounding our notions of sickness and health in the post-industrialist age: what is health, and who is "healthy" in this world? Antonioni's requisition of Giuliana's "diseased" vision problematizes perspective and calls into question where the character's vision ends and the director's vision begins, how he aims to distance himself from his troubled protagonist while simultaneously exploiting the expressive possibilities of her vision.

One of the common observations about Giuliana's neurosis is its amplification, which, at times, has the effect of reducing Vitti's performance to an amalgam of wounded animal noises and physical spasms. Giuliana vacillates between fully functioning and enunciating character—analogous to *L'eclisse*'s Vittoria—to mannerist neurotic. Antonioni claims that she is an "extreme version" of the other "neurotics" in the film,[27] and Arrowsmith argues that Antonioni's method is to generalize the neuroses of the protagonists, "making their individual illnesses the detailed visible form of a general infirmity."[28] But Giuliana's dual personality compounds the problem of who sees in the film. The multiplicity of vision in *Deserto rosso* received a detailed treatment from Pasolini. Speaking of Antonioni's formalism, Pasolini submits that even the characters are subject to the aestheticized framing of Antonioni's camera: "il mondo si presenta come regolato da un mito di pura bellezza pittorica, che i personaggi invadono, è vero, ma

[27] Samuels 98.

[28] Arrowsmith 32.

adattando se stessi alle regole di questa bellezza, anziché sconsacrarle con la loro presenza."[29] He argues that Antonioni has liberated the camera's perspective through the "free indirect subjective," that appropriating the vision of a neurotic allows him complete visual freedom. He ends with this powerful statement: "È chiaro che la «soggettiva libera indiretta» è pretestuale: e Antonioni se ne è magari arbitrariamente giovato per consentirsi la massima libertà poetica, una libertà che rasenta - e per questo è inebriante - l'arbitrio."[30] Pasolini hints that this is a potentially exploitative situation, but that the artistic liberation validates the brashness of the move. I would argue, however, that it excuses the "poeticization" of perspective—an outlet for Antonioni, painter—while allowing the director a stance of rationality that distances him from his pathologized focalizer.

Antonioni made it clear in interviews that he did not share Giuliana's visual fear of the industrial world: in fact, he submits that "Le linee, le curve delle fabbriche con i loro camini possono essere anche più belle del profilo degli alberi, che siamo già abituati a vedere."[31] And yet, independently of Giuliana's presence, industrialized Ravenna is still portrayed as a world full of slag heaps, smoke, and electronic beeping and whirring; some might say it is objectively and actively unpleasant. This visual and aural cacophony is apparent from the very beginning of the film—not only during the credits, but in the first scenes of the factory, before Giuliana enters the story [figure 78].

[29] Pier Paolo Pasolini, *I film degli altri*, ed. Tullio Kezich (Parma: Guanda, 1996) 80.

[30] Pasolini 81.

[31] Antonioni, *Fare un film* 255-256.

78 One of the first shots of narrative action captures the pollution of Ravenna's *pineta* by the looming smokestacks

We have come to expect a certain independence of the camera—as in previous films, Antonioni continues his cinematographic program of fragmentation and a "self-conscious" camera. But the story here is supposed to be about *Giuliana*'s vision, and how it renders her radically other. The blurring of lines between her vision, "objective reality," and Antonioni's artistic lens (to say nothing of other possible perspectives, e.g. Corrado's) adds another layer to his typically complex network of perspectives, and creates a problem for interpretation.

This interpretative trouble comes most strikingly to the fore in discussions of Antonioni's expressionistic use of color. The literal painting of objects—the gray fruit, the vibrant factory machinery—and even landscape (the "grayed" greenery) allows us to share Giuliana's subjective, skewed vision. It reinforces her sight as "sickness," as Lorenzo Cuccu frames it, "fallimento del tentativo di ricostruzione della circolarità simpatetica fra l'uomo e il mondo."[32] Antonioni, through color, attempts to paint Giulian's unstable world. This idea of "coloring" vision brings to mind Deleuze's pronouncements on Antonioni's protagonists: "[T]he world is painted in splendid colours, while the bodies that people it are still insipid and colourless. The world awaits its inhabitants, who are still lost in neurosis. […] The unity of Antonioni's work is the confrontation of the body-character with [her] weariness and [her] past, and of the brain-

[32] Cuccu 214.

colour with all its future potentialities […].[33] This romantic idea, however, is hardly convincing in the case of Giuliana (or Claudia or Vittoria, for that matter). It is an intriguing inversion to associate Antonioni's focalizers—women—with creativity and "brain-colours," and not just the superficial appearances typically attributed to female protagonists. And yet, this assessment fails to take into account that Giuliana's brave new world (post-industrial Ravenna) is not "painted in splendid colours" that are set up in opposition to her neurosis, as Deleuze claims. This accounting seems to rely too heavily on Antonioni's own assertions on the "beauty" of factories, etc., and Giuliana's "maladaptation." The landscape is, in fact, painted over with the brush of pollution, and the director takes pains to highlight this fact. Even if Deleuze intends for the idea of color to be taken figuratively, what is a "figurative" color? Additionally, how do we separate out the "neurotic" body from the "neurotic" vision that Antonioni so exploits? How does Deleuze hope to unentangle the brain (vision, "brain-colour") from the body (neurosis, "weariness")?

Antonioni's colors are apparently meant to explore this figurative dimension, however: Vitti confirms that "Michelangelo dipingeva il suo film con una precisione da alchimista: un verde sbagliato era una parola sbagliata."[34] Color is one of the languages of the film, then. But it is a language that, by its nature, provokes multiple interpretations and perceptions, not just on the part of character and director, but also on the part of the spectator: our impressions of Giuliana's (mis)perceptions may differ, even, or especially, from Antonioni's. There are not many viewers, I suspect, who would see the same visual "beauty" in a factory or share his disdain for trees.[35]

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[33] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Robert Galeta and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 2005) 204-205. Edit mine.

[34] Vitti 81.

[35] In expressing his visual appreciation for urban landscapes, Antonioni claims, "[N]othing weighs heavier on me than an old tree." Cardullo 143.

The proof is in the interpretive pudding: there are several critics who have differed on the meaning of the post-coital pink of Corrado's hotel room. Some have argued that it represents the safety and comfort of a womb for Giuliana; some claim it recalls the pink sand of her fantasy island; still others have observed that it's a dingy sort of pink, not comforting at all, and rather reminiscent of the blurred pink "stain" that Giuliana sees. How can a color possibly communicate with any certainty a message, even an emotion, especially when filtered through a supposedly "sick" perspective? Does Antonioni want his colors to act like the objects in his other films, displacing the expressive subjectivity of the actor? But he asks his colors to go beyond this, to reveal the worldview of his protagonist. The subjective colors consequently call into question all of the visually extraordinary shots in the film. The massive fog bank, for example, that rolls into the harbor and obliterates the figures of Giuliana's friends: is that real, or imagined [figure 79]? Antonioni uses color expressionistically at the expense of coherent meaning—a consequence, no doubt, of his oft-repeated philosophy that a film should not be understood, but felt.

79 Who sees?

Giuliana undoubtedly has trouble making sense of her world, but we must ask where the sickness lies, in Giuliana's critical gaze, or in the world itself. Peter Brunette asserts that Giuliana's greatest difficulty "is her inability to understand the exact nature and demands of her 'appropriate' subject position, a position that is not at all natural or given. If all subjectivity is

always a kind of unconscious 'performance' (which is especially true, perhaps, of gender and sexual roles), then she has forgotten her 'lines,' she has lost the script provided by culture."[36] I would argue that it is the culture itself that has lost the script vis-à-vis the subject: everyone in the film is acting outside of traditional institutions, improvising. But it is Giuliana's dissatisfaction with the status quo, her efforts to reclaim a fixed identity, to "center" herself, that set her apart. She longs to feel needed and integrated, and so strives to internalize external reality: "Giuliana potrà finalmente rapportarsi al paesaggio industriale senza esserne turbata solo quando avrà profondamente interiorizzato il suo aspetto esteriore [...]"[37] At one point, Corrado teasingly asks her, "Per amare un animale, lo devi mangiare?" The answer, in a sense, is yes. Giuliana tries to use external objects as a guarantee of identity, of equilibrium—but they turn out to be unstable. We see this take physical form several times in the film: her leaning on walls, walking against the side of the street; her (empty) shop as a potential site of "real" object-relation (she will "take care" of her merchandise, if it ever materializes); even the gyroscope Ugo shows his son is a cruel reminder of Giuliana's lack of internal balance. Her fears confirm this impulse: she expresses being afraid of drowning, being adrift, losing her footing. She even feels compelled to verify *instability*, to convince herself she's not imagining it: at the beginning of the film, she uses a thermometer to show Ugo that her temperature *is* above normal, and on her walk with Corrado, returns to pass over a teetering board, to reassure herself that the instability is not her own creation. The others are either unaware of this instability, or have interiorized it as part of their "integration."

[36] Peter Brunette, *The Films of Michelangelo Antonioni* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 103.

[37] Saverio Zumbo, *Antonioni: Lo spazio dell'immagine* (Salerno: Ripostes, 1995) 23.

Guliana is offered temporary respite from her obsessive questioning when she's surrounded by her friends at the "faux" orgy. They make the kind of human wall that she later confesses to Corrado she'd like to protect her [figure 80]. She reaches a level of diversion during the scene, playfully eating the so-called aphrodisiac quail egg and performing a dance, even suppressing her disconcerted reaction to the scream she hears outside, the existence of which is later called into question. As the fog rolls in around the shack, however, Giuliana's distraction returns, her vision of the reposing revelers blurring, as if the fog has crept inside. The sequence of scenes reaches its apex with the group standing outside, separated and obscured by the billowing fog [figure 81].

80 The illusion of closeness

81 The dissolution of closeness

Corrado is the only member of the "orgy" who largely keeps his distance from the other participants. Because Giuliana's husband Ugo is something of an automaton, Corrado is Giuliana's male foil; he presents an off mixture of superficially sincere concern and sexual desire

towards Giuliana. While her impulse is to abolish distances between herself and what she beholds, internalizing her image of the world, Corrado's response to the crisis of modern subjectivity is what may be considered more typical of a man, that is, constant movement.[38] Corrado's travels have been so extensive and continuous that he can no longer answer with certainty where he comes from. Reflecting on her visual crisis, Giuliana asks, "What should I look at?" She seeks her cure in associative and empathetic mapping of her visual surroundings, the construction of an internal geography. Corrado counters with, "How do I live?" He has not even determined a purpose to his life, because he does not comprehend the innate necessity of attachment—interested as he is with external geography, forward movement. It is no coincidence that he is associated with the maps that appear in the film [figure 82]. By his account, everyone is a little bit sick, and it seems that busy-ness (or perhaps business?) is the cure: when speaking of the worker Giuliana had met in the hospital, Corrado asserts that his return to work is proof of his health. His attentions to Giuliana in the film—sexually-driven, and ultimately futile—confirm his physical and emotional impermanence.

82 Corrado, obscuring Giuliana

Giuliana's supposed illness relative to those around her raises questions about the very nature of sickness and health, integration and interrogation. What makes her "unhealthy"? In this

[38] This may be an "essentializing" reading, but the evidence is there to support it. Antonioni does seem to make Corrado a slightly more empathetic male than his predecessors in *L'avventura* and *L'eclisse*.

brave new world of dehumanized and dehumanizing landscapes, what is sickness, and what is health? The notions of these two psychological states are deterritorialized through Antonioni's positioning relative to his protagonist. The director would have us believe that her "diseased" vision is a consequence of dehumanizing technology. Yet, though she's unnerved by the steam escaping from the factory floor at the beginning of the film, she is more distressed by the obliterating fog outside the shack, a naturally occurring phenomenon. We could even say that the cargo ships, such a darkly looming presence in the film, peacefully—and aesthetically—co-exist with Giuliana, "framed" by her window like pictures as they sail slowly by [figure 83]. These visual cues point to a relationship with the industrialized world that is not strictly antagonistic. Or, rather, we may say that Giuliana's imposed neurosis cannot be traced to this single, reductive origin. As Robin Wood says, "[W]e never really accept industrialism as sufficient explanation of Giuliana's condition, and are left wondering whether she would be able to adjust to *any* milieu."[39]

83 "Picturesque" ships

We also must question the "health" of the characters around her, who are sometimes even more out of step with reality than Giuliana. For Ugo and Corrado, work seems to equal health: unlike Giuliana, they *can* easily use superficial factors as a measure of their identity. But

[39] Robin Wood, "Il Deserto Rosso," *Antonioni*, ed. Ian Cameron and Robin Wood (New York: Praeger, 1971) 123.

Corrado proves that he is no more able to define himself than Giuliana—though he could not admit as much. Despite her neurosis, Giuliana maintains the role of truth-speaker we have seen in the Vitti characters of previous films. When Corrado explains his feeble political and social views, vacillating even in his platitudes, Giuliana smiles indulgently and says, "Hai messo insieme un bel gruppetto di parole." Her adamancy about the occurrence of the scream confirms the level of her conviction and unwillingness to accept the indifference of others; the men, as integrated as they supposedly are into reality, are insistent that the scream—even if it happened, which they deny—does not matter. Giuliana even presses the equivocating Linda—another supposedly "healthy" character—to explain why she said she might have imagined hearing it. What is this tenacity in the interrogation of reality, if not a sign of mental health? "Whatever Antonioni may say, it is Giuliana in whom all the film's true positive values are embodied, and in this respect she is consistent with the Monica Vitti characters throughout the tetralogy," says Wood.[40] Antonioni himself confesses that reason, as an ideal, is overrated, and that he always "got along" with insane people, adding: "I pazzi vedono cose che noi non vediamo, e io non sono di quelli che credono tanto nella ragione: la ragione non ti dà felicità, con la ragione non ti spieghi il mondo né l'amore né niente di importante."[41] There is an inherent value in irrationality, in *feeling* rather than *understanding*—is this not one of the bases of Antonioni's own cinema? Why, then, does the director takes pains to distance himself from the character of Giuliana in interviews, to contain her vision by pathologizing it? "Giuliana, the protagonist, is a neurotic," he declares. "And where do her neurosis take her? To attempting suicide."[42] To make certain that the viewer does not confuse his life with that of Giuliana, he insists that *Deserto*

[40] Wood 116.

[41] Antonioni, *Fare un film* 171.

[42] Architecture 284.

rosso is the least autobiographical of his films: "Ho raccontato una storia come se la vedessi accadere rivolto all'esterno. Se c'è ancora dell'autobiografia, è proprio nel colore che si può trovarla."[43] He further explains, "I have to say that the neurosis I sought to describe in *Red Desert* is above all a matter of adjusting. There are people who do adapt, and others who can't manage, perhaps because they are too tied to ways of life that are by now out-of-date. This is Giuliana's problem. […] She therefore finds that she has to reinvent herself completely as a woman."[44] The extremeness of the phrase "complete reinvention" is a testament to the director's view of Giuliana as broken, to his rejection of her vision as a workable alternative to that of the characters around her. He doesn't even believe she's capable of this adaptation: he confirms that though Giuliana might find a "compromise" with reality, her neurosis would always remain with her.[45] We see this in the film: Though Giuliana claims at one point to be well—or rather, tells Corrado that the girl at the hospital, whom we discover to be Giuliana, "è guarita," she laters laments to him, "Non guarirò mai."

Antonioni's uneasy appropriation of the irrational female perspective in *Deserto rosso*, his conflation of the interrogation of reality with mental instability, forces us to examine how the marginal female vision relates to larger questions of modernity and subjectivity, and if the exploration of this vision is finally an unsustainable project for the director. I am strongly reminded of Zeno Cosini's uneasy relationship with psychoanalysis and his striking claim that "A differenza delle altre malattie, la vita è sempre mortale."[46] At the end of Svevo's novel, the protagonist has suggested that self-examination itself is the source of his neurosis. Zeno's cure,

[43] Antonioni, *Fare un film* 78.

[44] Architecture 288.

[45] Antonioni, *Fare un film* 259.

[46] Italo Svevo, *La coscienza di Zeno* (Milano: Mondadori 1988) 412.

like that of Corrado or *L'eclisse*'s Piero, is commerce—his financial speculations and acquisitions give him external purpose and save him from the disease of introspection, an effete pursuit. Zeno's statements about the environment are also telling vis-à-vis the polluted world of *Deserto rosso*: he mentions the proliferation of the "gas velenosi,"[47] and posits that "La vita attuale è inquinata alle radici. L'uomo s'è messo al posto degli alberi e delle bestie ed ha inquinata l'aria, ha impedito il libero spazio."[48] Zeno's acceptance of this fallen world, his "integration" manifesting as a refusal to continue his book of self-examination, makes us question the value of his "cure." We might say that the Corrados and Ugos of the world see no place for interiority, even for creativity. When asked about the lack of art and poetry in the science fiction genre—set in the future—Antonioni admitted that he and his contemporaries could be the last to produce things as apparently superfluous as works of art.[49]

Giuliana's sensory sensitivity represents perhaps the last vestiges of the resistant, dissenting, artistic temperament. Her vision may be seen as her sickness, Cuccu admits. But is also reveals her "superiority" to the men in the film, who have no awareness of their alienated state.[50] Just as the unidentified scream in the film confirms the blindness of the "integrated" perspective or, similarly, a habituation to the toxicity of the surrounding world (as Antonioni claimed he was habituated to the sight of trees), so too this scream reveals the necessity for a sensitive and stubborn rebellious voice in Giuliana.

The ending of the film, however, returns Giuliana to her position of containment and finally negates her questioning vision. We see this even in the visual symmetries with the

[47] Svevo 413.

[48] Svevo 412.

[49] Antonioni, *Fare un film* 260.

[50] Cuccu 214-215.

beginning of the film: the poison gas-spewing smokestack of the last few frames mirrors the flaming tower of the first shot and, of course, Giuliana and Valerio return to the factory, the site of their first appearance. While Valerio plays among the plumes of steam coming from the ground, curious as to their origin, Giuliana still keeps her distance, nervously pulling him away [figure 84]. Giuliana's statement about the "uccellini" learning about the dangers of the poisonous gas, and their avoidance of it, is undermined by the subsequent over-the-shoulder shot that transforms her view of the factory into a blurred field of colors, not unlike the stain that has plagued her vision throughout the film. The last shot—the humanless industrial landscape of barrels and buildings, the latter spouting smoke—is visual proof that Giuliana's troubled, troubling vision is only ever marginal, disappearing.

84 At the beginning of the film, Giuliana turns and runs from a steam valve in the factory floor, while Valerio explores the steam seeping from the ground at the end of the film

Valerio's presence in the last scene and his seeming comfort with technological phenomena offer an intriguing contrast to the unstable Giuliana. Though her son is the representative of the next generation, the future scientists and astronauts, symbolically, Giuliana is also a "child" of this new era, searching for her identity within it. As discussed in the introduction to this study, children and neurotics may be seen as similar focalizers, given their fragile subjectivity, their imagination, their potential for transformation. But we may also see Giuliana as the model of resistance to the robotic Valerios of the world, resistance to the

"automatonization" of man. Her interaction with the world, though tortured, offers an alternative path to that of the majority, made insensitive to their, and her, emotional needs. Giuliana's neurotic vision acts as an interrogation of the status quo and life itself, "inquinata alle radici."

Where does Giuliana's vision ultimately intersect with her creator's? I would argue that the creation of Giuliana may also hint at Antonioni's subconscious unease about the fate of "superfluous" art in the increasingly automated world. It is in his stubborn extra-filmic distancing that we may locate his own anxieties about a dehumanized, fully "integrated" human ecology.

Unstable Visions: Deserto rosso *and* Giulietta degli spiriti

I'd like to close this discussion of Antonioni's use of Vitti as focalizer by way of a comparison with *Giulietta degli spiriti*. The films are similar on several levels: technical, historical and cinematic. Both are the first feature-length films in color by Antononi and Fellini[51]—*Deserto rosso* came out in 1964, one year before *Giulietta degli spiriti*'s release. Each film also marks a break in terms of the "type" their leading ladies had previously played in their films: Masina's Giulietta is stripped of all the physical vitality of Gelsomina and Cabiria, and Giuliana is made a shaking, stammering neurotic against the more relaxed, stable presence conveyed by Claudia and Vittoria.[52] Most significantly, in terms of my study, these films both employ the protagonists as "hysterical" female focalizers; both, to some degree, exploit the troubled female psyche while simultaneously destabilizing this perspective. For both of the directors, these films mark the apparent limit of their experimentation with female focalizers or,

[51] Fellini first forayed into color with the episode "Le tentazioni del Dottor Antonio," his contribution to *Boccaccio 70* (1962).

[52] And also Valentina of *La notte*, in which she plays a supporting role.

more specifically, the exhaustion of the possibilities of the creative directorial surrogacy allowed by this perspective. The directors used their actresses as primary focalizers for the last time during this era in these films.[53] The films become a sort of swan song for the marginal female perspective, elevating it while enacting its destruction.

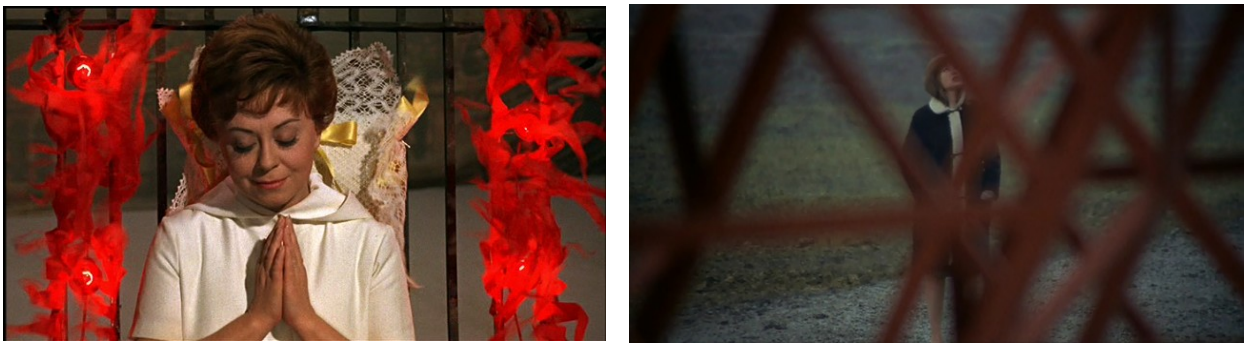
While they do share many features, each film deserves to be taken as a unique and unified work in order to better understand the significance of their similarities and the resulting comment on the historical and artistically unique moment during which they were made. The excess of Fellini's visual style comes across even in the costuming of his middle-aged protagonist, bedecked in gaudy (if matronly, and even ugly) garb. Similarly, Antonioni's dull, gray scenery seems to cast itself onto Vitti, draped primarily in shapeless, drab knitwear [figure 85].

85 Giuliana's oversized, drab, protective clothing vs. Giulietta's exaggerated matronly costumes

These aesthetic choices extend into the directors' cinematographic approaches: Fellini's camera, while mostly employing Giulietta's perspective, is always at the mercy of the spectacle, presented in all its visual glory. Antonioni's technique instead vacillates between typical "objective" shots and more uniquely de-centered perspectives (e.g. the shot of a character from

[53] Fellini would next work with Masina in 1986's *Ginger and Fred*, co-starring Marcello Mastroianni, and Antonioni with Vitti in 1980's *Il mistero di Oberwald*, an adaptation of a Jean Cocteau play.

above, or through a grate, etc.; see figure 86). On the meta-narrative level, both Fellini and Masina recognize the autobiographical aspects of the film, while Antonioni insisted *Deserto rosso* was the *least* autobiographical of his films, as previously noted.



86 Typical views of the protagonists: Giulietta, in a medium shot, immersed in her vision, and Giuliana, "cut-up" by the camera's perspective

Both directors are widely associated with proliferating the themes of "alienation" or "incommunicability," so it is perhaps not surprising that the protagonist-guides we see in Vitti and Masina are both liminal characters, maladapted to the worlds in which they live. In many ways, they are anachronisms: the emptying of traditional social institutions (marriage, family, friendship) leave them without the new scripts that the surrounding characters seem to possess. They are victims of their husbands' emotional inadequacies, as well as of the lack of positive female relationships—and images—in their lives. Each character displays, to varying degrees, a discomfort with—or at least a hesitance about—their sexuality [figure 87]. Significantly, the apparent "cure" for each woman suffering from fractured subjectivity is an abandonment of their former ideals and means of relating to the world in favor of new object relations. Both search for subject-validation (in other words, their identities) in the external world, which turns out to be an unstable source of female subjectivity. Everyone deserts or fails Giuliana, says Arrowsmith, "With each fresh abandonment she feels a wound, a hurt like death, yet each desertion drives her

toward her own identity, away from fantasy toward a workable myth of her own."[54] The world is far too painful for Giuliana, whose probing of reality involves a sensory aspect. She "feels" the world around her, contrary to what she tells the Turkish sailor ("I corpi sono separate . . . se Lei mi punge, lei non soffre.") According to Murray Pomerance, "When the world reacts, she does suffer. She is, in fact, the world that happens to her."[55] Similarly, Giulietta needs an identity independent of the diseased culture around her, a culture constantly presenting her with absurd and inaccessible female ideals.

87 Inert bodies: Giuliana and Giulietta both estranged from the "orgy" experience

The treatment of these "hysterical" women, on both the diegetic and cinematographic levels, is often tainted by a conventionally male perspective. For both Giuliana and Giulietta, sex is proposed as a solution to their psychic troubles—a jab, perhaps, on the part of the male directors at the typical cure offered for female hysteria. On a more insidious level, these women are left without voices: Giulietta is constantly drowned out by her over-the-top peers. Even her potentially creative vision is drowned out by the spectacle of her husband's infidelity, as explained in the last chapter. Angela Dalle Vacche makes a convincing argument that Giuliana is

[54] Arrowsmith 100.

[55] Murray Pomerance, *Michelangelo Red Antonioni Blue: Eight Reflections on Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011) 108.

left voiceless by her "ventriloquial" relationship to Antonioni.[56] But Giulietta and Giuliana are contained not only on the linguistic level, but more importantly, on the physical level: they possess "eccentric" bodies, bodies that resist integration into their surrounding setting. Dalle Vacche suggests that "In a sense, Vitti is Antonioni's diva, for *Red Desert* is a historical melodrama about the female condition, which captures a woman's ambition and ends with her containment."[57] Giuliana is effectively contained when the spectator accepts her characterization as "abnormal" and when she is made to admit her own alienation within the confines of her social constructions, e.g. her marriage. Or rather, according to Wood, the ending of *Deserto rosso* is the "summing-up of her final position of total defeat: she will henceforth try to get along, not by coming to terms with her abnormal condition or with her environment […] but simply by blocking them out—by systematically deadening her own responses. Unlike the birds, she can't fly away: she has to live among the objects and sights that are poisonous to her."[58] There are some critics who take an alternate view: perhaps Giuliana will, as Antonioni says, reach a compromise with reality that still permits her her eccentric vision, though for Houston, this essentially means that Giuliana is trapped in her neurosis, "from which the only escape seems to be through 'adjustment' to a mind-deadening reality or through the safety valves of fantasy."[59] Giulietta's containment is perhaps less obvious, given the light-imbued, apparently empowering vision of the ending, which finds her exiting the gates of her bourgeois villa. But her compromise will have to come after the diegetic time of the narrative; though she has

[56] Angela Dalle Vacche, *Cinema and Painting: How Art Is Used in Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996) 77.

[57] Dalle Vacche 60-61.

[58] Wood 119.

[59] Penelope Houston, "Michelangelo Antonioni," *Cinema: A Critical Dictionary: The Major Film-Makers*, vol. 1, ed. Richard Roud (London: Secker & Warburg, 1980) 93.

released her spirits, "escaped" her marriage and perhaps even her social milieu, she, unlike Giuliana, is a middle-aged, childless housewife on the brink of marital separation in 1960s Italy: her alternatives are practically non-existent.

The liminal positioning of these protagonists' bodies allows for the directors to inhabit their deterritorialized subjectivity, to "borrow" their vision. Antonioni, through Giuliana, "can be both filmmaker and painter, and experiment freely," while Giuliana is never allowed to overcome the role of the neurotic.[60] Fellini is equally liberated as an artist through his use of the visual schizophrenia of Giulietta. The directors, given their external vantage point, are permitted to distance themselves from the neuroses of the women. It is suggestive that both directors, at one time or another, declared that these neurotic characters, out of all the roles they had previously played in their films, most resembled their actresses.[61] Again, it is as if the directors occupy the characters' vision while rejecting—or deflecting—any meaningful association. Fellini also allows himself to project his own childhood memories and traumas onto Giulietta, displacing their psychological origins onto her troubled mind [figure 88]. As Dalle Vacche aptly summarizes, *Deserto rosso* may in fact be a film about "the power relations between male and female, director and actress."[62] We have certainly seen this to be the case in *Giulietta degli spiriti*, wherein Masina fights Fellini on every level of Giulietta's conception and execution.

[60] Dalle Vacche 79.

[61] Architecture 83. *Giulietta degli Spiriti di Federico Fellini,* Kezich 65.

[62] Dalle Vacche 79.

88 Giulietta, in thrall to the spectacle of her childhood memories (Fany, left) and the illusions of marriage ("staged" wedding scene, right)

The respective "illnesses" of these women, freeing the directors from the bounds of rational vision, end in undermining the protagonists' subjective viewing positions. They are both neurotics, troubled by the mismatch between internal projections and external reality. Thus, they make the ideal expressive focalizers: incarnations of Jung's anima, they present a world awash in creativity, imagination, and (over)sensitivity. But due to the directors' implementation of this vision, we are left asking ourselves who is *really* seeing. The appropriation of the "troubled" female perspective diverges into multiple perspectives, one grafted onto the other: that of protagonist, the "objective" camera, and the director. We are forced to ask, just as Teresa De Lauretis does of Fellini, whether this is not an abuse of directorial power. The approaches, of course, differ. When Fellini's camera offers us fantastic visions or hallucinations, we know that it is Giulietta who is seeing. When it comes to Giuliana, on the other hand, it is not only what she sees—the painted fruit, the stain, etc.—but *how* she sees it. Her perspective distorts external reality into an expressive interpretation of her neurosis, pathologizing vision. When Giulietta *projects* fantasy onto reality, her unconscious is not appropriately contained. Both approaches, however, offer interpretive trouble: in Giuliana's case, when do we as viewers see as she does, and what does her expressive vision mean (e.g. the pink room)? On the other hand, are

Giulietta's fantastic visions merely a projection of the director's dream world, and she merely a convenient delivery mechanism [figure 89]?

89 Giuliana's unstable vision (left, with "stain" in background during the sex scene with Corrado) manifests much differently than Giulietta's "spiriti" (right)

One might argue that Antonioni's use of Giuliana at least leaves open the door to the possibility of creative autonomy: her vision is that of the proto-artist, a synesthetic experience of reality that could naturally lead to a creative purpose to her life.[63] This idea is bolstered by her vivid story-telling abilities, demonstrated in the "fable" about the island that she tells Valerio. It is less clear what will become of Giulietta's *spiriti*: after Giorgio leaves the house once and for all, Giulietta descends into the madness of her apparitions, eventually untying her childhood self from her martyr's bindings, seemingly releasing the evil visions. As she exits the gates of her villa, the whisper of a spirit reassures her that they can now be her friends. But what will this "friendship" look like, and how could it possibly benefit the ever more marginalized Giulietta? As proposed in my chapter on Fellini, might not Giulietta's spirits merely be a "creative" concession to Masina, whose perspective and very subjectivity are mortified after watching the spectacle of her husband's infidelity? The positioning of these actresses as middle-class housewives, lacking professional or personal autonomy, exploited as filters of a male vision,

[63] For a reading of Giuliana's vision as that of a proto-artist, see Millicent Marcus, "Antonioni's *Red Desert*: Abstraction as the guiding idea," in *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986) 188-207.

leaves little room for any sort of real personal freedom, as much as the directors would like to give them a compensatory ending.

The diverging use of color in the films further reveals the directors' unique treatment of their female focalizers. There are some commonalities: we could say that both use color unrealistically, forgoing mimesis in favor of visual impact. Further, the "faux" orgy scenes—both unconsummated events in the films, and both occasions for the objectifying male gaze [figure 90]—employ a saturated red to convey potential (but ultimately unconsummated) eroticism.

90 Bourgeois orgies, both invaded by the male gaze

Fellini's penchant for spectacle, however, leads him to paint the screen with saturated colors, bringing to life the Technicolor fantasies. Bolstering the theme of vision and blindness, or truth and deception, Fellini also often uses chiaroscuro in close-ups. We could see this, perhaps, as an aesthetic bridge or borrowing from black and white. Antonioni instead uses colors expressionistically, subverting the natural color schemes of scenes and objects. His engagement with color can even appear a *refusal* to use color, a refusal to let nature's hues shine through [figure 91]. The factory is a comparatively chromatically rich space compared to the *pineta*, for example. Both directors, however, agree that color is necessarily subjective. According to Antonioni, "Sì può arrivare a dire—anche se non lo si può provare—che ognuno di noi vede in un oggetto un colore diverso: una variazione di tono, una sfumatura, un elemento comunque che

non riesce a rendere assoluto quel colore."[64] Fellini gives an even longer analysis of this phenomenon of perception:

> For me there is another basic fact, that color is a subjective factor, psychological. […] [I]f you photograph in color a blue sea, you may give that sea a blue that is not accepted by the spectator . . . he does not recognize it as his. […] So I want to say that it is difficult on a technical level to re-create a chromatic reality that is all subjective, because the camera's eye is not the human eye, it does not have memory, it does not have nostalgic sensations, it does not have sentiments, it does not intervene with feelings. […] *Giulietta* had to be done in color because it is truly a dreamlike film."[65]

There are (at least) two noteworthy aspects to this statement: the first, that Fellini clearly did not see the camera's expressive potential in the same way as Antonioni. For the latter director, the camera *is* treated as if it's the "human eye"—Giuliana's, to be specific. Secondly, Fellini's discussion brings up the interpretive trouble color introduces. If an artist decides to use it lyrically, there's no guarantee that the viewer will take it as intended; according to Fellini, the viewer may even reject this use. Thus we run up against the problem of the divergent critical interpretations of *Deserto rosso*'s colors.

91 Fellini's chiaroscuro vs. Antonioni's painted sets

Deserto rosso and *Giulietta degli spiriti* proved that their directors took their first experiments with color seriously, exploring what it means to use the device subjectively; perhaps

[64] Carlo Di Carlo. *Il Deserto Rosso* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1964) 31.

[65] Irving R. Levine, "'I Was Born for the Cinema': A Conversation with Federico Fellini," *Federico Fellini: Interviews*, ed. Bert Cardullo (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006) 6.

they would never again be as consumed by the possibilities of this technical aspect. It may not come as a surprise, then, that these were also the last films that used female focalizers to explore a crisis of vision. Giulietta and Giuliana, though creative mediums for their directors, are at least in part destroyed by their deterritorializing vision. Can we say, then, that these "feminine" sensibilities are exalted in their destruction?[66] In the post-Boom society from which they spring, these films present women as a challenge to established modes of seeing the world, perhaps even an implicit challenge to the institutions of marriage and capitalist society, their ability to provide women subjectivity.

For Antonioni, woman is a way of seeing: he calls her a "filter," but ultimately, in tandem with the camera, she becomes his *lens*. She is a lens, however, that reaches its expressive or imaginative limit—its extreme subjectivity—in *Deserto rosso*. In the post-Boom, industrialized world, is art itself passé, and therefore woman exhausted as a focalizer? Vitti's protagonists have brought Antonioni through a certain era, a certain type of vision that he can now transition from with male protagonists. In *Blow up*, the director will embrace a new country, new values, new perspectives. At the end of the Antonioni-Vitti collaboration, perhaps the inhabiting of the "third space"—seeing through the difficult lens of the marginalized female psyche—becomes too troubling for the director. Or rather, it becomes too problematic for Antonioni to distinguish his autonomous artistic vision from the "sick" vision of his protagonist.

[66] One could also bring Rossellini's treatment of Bergman into this discussion.

VI. Grotesque Vision, Visions of the Grotesque: Wertmüller and Giannini

Thus far, my study has focused on the male director/female actress collaboration during the 1950s and '60s in Italy. In order to better put these case studies in context, I'd like to conclude with an analysis of a "reverse" relationship, at a decade's remove. Lina Wertmüller's films, in many ways, could not be more different from those of her male forerunners, yet this divergence does not always manifest along expected lines. Her films featuring Giancarlo Giannini, concentrated mainly in the early- to mid- 1970s, present a distinct shift in focalization, both on the part of the actor and of the spectator. Complicating her works with a heavy dose of politics and an exploration of the grotesque in all its forms, Wertmüller embraces a challenge to established modes of viewing in keeping with the *Sessantotto* spirit while still problematizing her generation's accepted ideologies. Her commitment to popular audiences and to the grotesque form, however, makes her a unique case. The luxury of aesthetic and historical distance from the neorealist movement gives her complete freedom over her stylistic choices while permitting an unfettered engagement with political questions. Giannini, unlike the actresses previously analyzed, is not his director's means of artistic renewal, but instead a key element in her deployment of the grotesque. We shall see that it is the grotesque form itself, with Giannini as its primary focalizer, which deterritorializes visual tropes and provides Wertmüller with a means to her transgressive, trans-generic act of cinematic liberation. In Wertmüller's four most popular films of the era (*The Seduction of Mimì*, *Love and Anarchy*, *Swept Away*, and *Pasqualino Settebellezze*), I will analyze how the destabilizing mechanisms of the grotesque function.

Wertmüller's films of the 1970s were famous for testing the boundaries of good taste, so it is no surprise that her popularity stirred up contemporary controversy, and that the artistic merit of her work is constantly re-evaluated. The over-the-top vulgarity, gross-out humor, and

violence in her films are more typically associated with male directors—minor ones. Does it matter that Wertmüller is a woman? She doesn't think so, but her gender identity came to be inexorably wrapped up with her critical reception. She was, and is, accused of being "anti-feminist," or at least not a supporter of the cause. Ellen Willis reproaches her for "want[ing] desperately to play on the boys' team."[1] Gentler critics reproach her films for tracing an "ambiguous trajectory of feminism/antifeminism."[2] Wertmüller's own statements hardly help her case. Though she is vehement in her denunciation of love, family, and children as a "trap" for women, or even a form of blackmail, she has said in several interviews that women provide a necessary "security valve" for men, bolstering the fragile male ego.[3] This arrangement posits the woman as the stronger member of the couple but it also comes across as a legitimization of female abuse and repression: she praises the southern Italian woman, who "aveva capito che deve aiutare l'uomo a vivere la sua, per così dire, prosopopea di 'gallo mediterraneo'. Perché l'uomo è forte, è seme, è energia, è proiettato in avanti, è straordinario nel calcolo ipotetico, però è fragile, mentre la donna, in questo senso, è sempre più forte."[4] Further, her statement about humor, her preferred means of communication, presents a disturbingly phallacized metaphor: "For me, laughter is *the Vaseline* that makes the ideas penetrate better. Not in the ass, but in the

[1] Ellen Willis, "Is Lina Wertmüller Just One of the Boys?" *Women and the Cinema: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Karyn Kay and Gerald Peary (New York: Dutton, 1977) 383.

[2] Rodica Diaconescu-Blumenfeld, "Regista Di Clausura: Lina Wertmüller and Her Feminism of Despair," *Italica* 76.3 (1999): 392.

[3] Gideon Bachmann and Lina Wertmüller, "'Look, Gideon--': Gideon Bachmann Talks with Lina Wertmüller," *Film Quarterly* 30.3 (1977): 6. Wertmüller also claims that "The day that man loses this woman upon whom he relies for so many services, he will become even more fragile than he is now." Ernest Ferlita, *The Parables of Lina Wertmüller* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977) 81.

[4] Claudia Cascone, *Il sud di Lina Wertmüller* (Napoli: Guida, 2006) 93.

brain. In the heart."[5] Does the director then believe that humor is a "masculine" power? Or is she problematizing the received notion of penetration and humor as belonging to the male domain? On the filmic level, at least, we may find the influence of the dialogic, the feminine, which Rodica Diaconescu-Blumenfeld locates in Wertmüller's stories, where we observe a "feminist counterpolitics that posits small lives, living persons, an alternate history opposed to a macropolitics of monuments and machismo." Wertmüller's history is not one of "great men and great events."[6]

Placing Wertmüller in a group of the auteurial ilk of Antonioni, De Sica, Fellini and Rossellini is no doubt a controversial move, considering her avowed dedication to popular cinema. As Wertmüller proclaims proudly, "I couldn't give a shit about the intellectuals."[7] Yet we could observe that, if not aligned with the artistic imperative of a director like Antonioni, this desire to reach a mass audience is in keeping with the founding spirit of neorealism, as is her use of dialect and her focus on protagonists from lower socioeconomic strata. Is she to be condemned because her cinema is more "American" in its timing, "readily consumable"?[8] Sergio Rigoletto argues that Wertmüller's embracing of "low" culture is that which elevates her popular cinema: the "originality of Wertmüller's engagement with popular cinema is dependent precisely on [the] inferences of contamination and degradation."[9] The director's aesthetics, then, are far

[5] Peter Biskind, "Interview with Lina Wertmüller," *Women and the Cinema: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Karyn Kay and Gerald Peary (New York: Dutton, 1977) 332.

[6] Diaconescu-Blumenfeld 390.

[7] "Maybe I could have made a little monument to Lina Wertmuller [sic], Engaged Artist, but this didn't give me any pleasure. It gives me more pleasure to entertain, to make movies that everybody sees, not just the intellectuals. I couldn't give a shit about the intellectuals." Biskind, "Interview" 331.

[8] "She has a sense of ("American") timing in her flawless pacing. Her small crew of actors […] is skilled, and they work well together. A Wertmüller product is well crafted, like a *pièce bien faite*, and, as such, readily consumable." David Grossvogel, "Lina Wertmüller and the Failure of Criticism," *Yale Italian Studies* (Spring 1977): 178.

[9] Sergio Rigoletto, "Laughter and the Popular in Lina Wertmüller's *The Seduction of Mimì*," *Popular Italian Cinema*. eds. Louis Bayman and Sergio Rigoletto (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) 120.

afield of the auteurial stylistics of the post-neorealist careers of the directors in my study, whose new cinema was aimed at an intellectual audience.

Wertmüller's position vis-à-vis neorealism is worlds away from Rossellini's or Fellini's; these directors, already associated with the movement, are necessarily forced to take an artistic stand with respect to its ideological and aesthetic strictures, even after they have outlived their usefulness. Thus why they feel the need to redirect their vision using the alterity of the woman as their lens. Wertmüller, however, firstly from a successive generation, and secondly a woman, finds no rulebook awaiting her cinematic project. Her most immediate political and historical reference is the *Sessantotto* movement and its rejection of tradition and authority. Any semblance of a cinematic connection to neorealism is found in her relationship to Fellini, for whom she worked as assistant director on *8&½*—though it is obvious he is more responsible for the development of her grotesque aesthetic rather than any received notions about neorealism. She is not therefore adhering to nor rejecting any movement, nor (re)negotiating her position to the recent historical past or national trauma. In short, her engagement with politics is voluntary and unconstrained.

The director's hybridized cinematographic practices immediately reveal her freedom from any overarching cinematic program. The presence of the camera, with its distorting lenses, rapid zooming, and clever cuts, forecloses any pretense to realistic depiction. Several of her films are period pieces, and all depend on opulently crafted sets and costumes, painstakingly fashioned by Wertmüller's artist husband Enrico Job. Her "grotesque" lens is not unlike that of Fellini, "provoking, agitating and also exhausting the senses […]."[10] Various aspects of her cinematography call into question the objectivity of the camera: not only the distorting lenses,

[10] R. T. Witcombe, *The New Italian Cinema: Studies in Dance and Despair* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982): 245.

but her expressionist use of color and grotesque, fantastic visions, all of which indicate a shift to the subjective vision of her protagonist, Giannini [figure 92].

92 A common close-up shot: Giannini's eyes

Such anti-mimetic practices are found also in the director's treatment of dialogue, whose meaning or importance is often undercut. Several of the films in question defer instead to gestures or an exchange of looks between the characters; these "silent" scenes cut dialogue altogether. But, unlike in Antonioni's cinema, for example, which also may minimize dialogue, Wertmüller's films still depend on the actor as an emotive presence and narrative agent. Moreover, the sometimes overwhelming volume and speed of a character's dialect is an assault on conventional cinematic dialogue. The lunch scene at the brothel in *Love in Anarchy* is an example of this, the women's rapid-fire barbs and insults converging into polyphonicity. Similarly, the profanity or vulgarity of the dialogue, a gem in Wertmüller's directorial crown, is in keeping with her address of a popular audience. This vulgarity, however, is often itself undercut by a good deal of irony, as we will see.

A discussion of Wertmüller's stylistics naturally raises questions about her filming of the body, especially considering the prominence of questions surrounding the female body in previous chapters. Many feminist critics have taken issue with her treatment of the female body,

echoing Tania Modleski's charge that Wertmüller "despises women who are not beautiful."[11] Mariangela Melato, Giannini's counterpart, is often given the typical cinematographic treatment afforded to lissome women: respectful or objectifying, depending on the focalizer. Wertmüller's less conventionally attractive women, in contrast, fill the screen with their massive bodies, calling attention to their grotesqueness and shattering the objectifying male gaze [figure 93]. Diaconescu-Blumenfeld conceptualizes this visual double standard thusly: "The pretty females are subject to the male. Their desire is appropriated to a male economy of desire. In contrast, the ugly ones emerge as figures of irreducible subjectivity."[12] Yet, though Wertmüller frames these women within the economy of sexual desire, she also does not shy away from reveling in the ugliness of the masculine; absurd, unattractive men litter her films. One could argue that the reduced, ridiculed body of Giannini's lothario Pasqualino, whom we shall address, presents one such case.

93 Wertmüller's women: Melato in *The Seduction of Mimì* and Elena Fiore's "grotesque" body double in *The Seduction of Mimì*

It may be that the filter that Giannini's characters provide is intended to determine the relative beauty and goodness of the women, revealing his own perceptual deficiencies. If Wertmüller is hard on her women, she is even harder on her men. Giannini's characters in these

[11] Tania Modleski, "Wertmuller's Women Swept Away by the Usual Destiny," *Jump Cut* 10-11 (1976): 1, 16. Web. 16 Mar. 2014. http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC10-11folder/SweptAwayModleski.html.

[12] Diaconescu-Blumenfeld 396.

films, barring the sympathetic Tunin of *Love and Anarchy*, are consistently a caricature of the Mediterranean "Latin lover" carried to its mortal extreme [figure 94]. We may sense in this comparison between the sexes the first hints that Wertmüller is, in fact, more egalitarian in her uses and treatment of actors and actresses than the directors of the previous generation. No one is spared the mortifications of the grotesque lens.

94 Pasqualino Settebellezze: Marcello Mastroianni's "inetto" (from *Divorzio all'italiana*) made fatally violent and impotent.

Conceiving of Wertmüller's most influential films without Giannini as their focalizer is difficult—or rather, it is difficult to imagine who could have embraced these caricatures so whole-heartedly.[13] It is hard to call Giannini a "sympathetic" character—though he is not wholly unsympathetic. The question is, can a cartoon character be sympathetic? Is there room for sympathy in the grotesque form? Scott McCloud posits that human beings unconsciously maintain a rudimentary mental image of their own faces—a type of "mask." The face of the cartoon, also crude in its outlines, is therefore an image that invites identification.[14] Wertmüller's insistent close-ups on Giannini's eyes push us toward this identification—indeed, she seems to

[13] Giannini demonstrated the discipline of the method actor in preparing for roles. His in-depth research into dialect is one aspect of this preparation; he spent several months in Sicily collecting recordings for his role in *Mimì*, for example. For the role of Tunin, he was transformed in manner and vocal expression, aided by transformative makeup and Enrico Job's costume choices. *Giancarlo Giannini: Il fascino sottile dell'interprete*, eds. Gianni Volpi and Anton Giulio Mancino (Nardò: Besa, 2002) 26, 75.

[14] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1994) 35-37.

require us to identify with him before having him radically estrange us. We must get close—perhaps even experience a modicum of self-recognition—before we can adequately distance ourselves through judgment.[15]

Though Giannini serves as Wertmüller's focalizer in these films, we must not overlook the equally "cartoonish" presence of Melato, around whom the narratives also take place. She becomes the other half of Wertmüller's famous couple and, in fact, the director often spoke about them as a pair. Though the male directors in my study regularly supply their female protagonists with male counterparts, they are largely flat characters and certainly do not give repeat performances. Melato, on the other hand, is a strong foil to Giannini's *inetto*. Her presence reaffirms Wertmüller's distance from the post-neorealist directors' impulse to essentialize, generalize about, or privilege gender.

The cartoonish performance of Giannini and Melato is a foundation upon which Wertmüller builds her grotesques. The director herself deemed her films "grotesques" and not "comedies,"[16] in a strategy that removes them from the generic expectation of a happy ending (hers are uniformly tragic), or even from generic expectations of any kind. What, then, is a grotesque? Wertmüller's brand certainly differs from that of Fellini, whose grotesquerie is mainly composed of over-the-top (female) bodies. Wertmüller, on the other hand, uses the grotesque as a pretext for a "contaminated" form, one that draws heavily on characteristics traditionally relegated to "low" culture. Some critics have argued for a reading of her work through the "carnivalesque," though the theoretical narrowness of this label seems to attribute too much (purely subversive intentionality) and too little (in overlooking the political and tragic

[15] "The very objection some have raised about Wertmüller's pandering to Giancarlo Giannini's eyes, as if to suggest that she finally adores what she presents for scorn, becomes a touchstone of her art." Ferlita 74.

[16] Lina Wertmüller, *Tutto a posto e niente in ordine: vita di una regista di buonumore* (Milano: Mondadori, 2012) 143.

aspects).[17] It is worth asking whether Wertmüller doesn't make the form itself part of the message: its operations are destabilizing, especially in terms of spectatorship. Does, then, the grotesque function in an analogous fashion to the female focalizers in my study? That is, in promising freedom from the strictures of mimesis—complete aesthetic freedom, in fact—is the grotesque similar to Fellini and Antonioni's appropriation of female vision? I believe that the use of the grotesque performs a similar deterritorializing function, allowing for a new interpretive freedom. The grotesque, similarly, for all its conceptual loudness, allows a commentary that causes the spectator to reflect on him/herself. "[H]er comedy aims at making us feel uneasy about what is presented as comical on the surface," Umberto Mariani notes, reminding us of Pirandello's concept of *umorismo*.[18]

Wertmüller's most striking use of the grotesque, however, may be found in her deployment of "grotesque" visions in destabilizing the male focalizer's gaze. This destabilization has the further effect of problematizing the traditional network of gazes between camera, male focalizer, and audience. Rigoletto undertakes a study of this disruption within the framework of Wertmüller's popular cinema, noting that it "moves from a moment of familiarization to a subsequent state of discomfort appearing when the terms of a political and/or moral dilemma are revealed."[19] In *The Seduction of Mimì* and *Pasqualino Settebellezze*, particularly, Giannini's characters make (im)moral decisions that end by alienating the spectator from their vision. In *Mimì*, for example, the protagonist's little brother, his Communist friend, and his girlfriend

[17] Joan and William Magretta make a case for the carnivalesque in Wertmüller's films, and indeed do identify many common features: "use of various forms of carnivalesque language, a preference for stylistic techniques emphasizing an anti-mimetic, self-conscious theatricality, and the use of *lazzi*." William R. Magretta and Joan Magretta, "Lina Wertmuller and the Tradition of Italian Carnivalesque Comedy," *Genre* 12 (Spring 1979): 27.

[18] Umberto Mariani, "The 'Anti-Feminism' of Lina Wertmüller," *Annual of Foreign Films and Literature* 2 (1996): 107.

[19] Rigoletto 122.

become stand-ins for the audience, the "camera dwelling on the faces of characters who silently condemn Mimì's deplorable conduct […]."[20] Rigoletto relates this breakdown of focalization to the overall structure, declaring that "[T]he film seems to be involved in a self-conscious analysis of its own structure, one that concerns also the kind of oppressive masculinity epitomized by Mimì, with which we are first invited to sympathize and then to experience unease."[21] Wertmüller's undermining of the male gaze through the lens of the grotesque serves to cement her moral stance against all forms of institutionalized violence and culturally embedded orthodoxy.

Tunin, the meek and mumbling protagonist of *Love and Anarchy*, ends as a victim of this cultural indoctrination of violence. The grotesque element in the film comes to life in the peripheral characters (such as the fascist Spatoletti) and, above all, in the m*ise-en-scène. In this film we see, most clearly, Wertmüller's tribute to the Resistance politics that defined Italian post-war cinema. Marcus affirms that* "By representing the sad plight of Tunin, Wertmüller is fulfilling the neorealist mandate of memorializing Resistance activists who died a traceless death."[22] The grotesque, then, serves to undermine the "masculinizing" project of the fascist culture, ridiculizing the fascist officials and dramatically demonstrating its eventual destruction of the would-be hero Tunin.

Many critics have commented on the meticulously disordered brothel in *Love and Anarchy* as a meeting place of sex and history, or rather where the state meets the body. Peter Biskind, comparing Wertmüller to her mentor, claims that here "Fellini's spectacular world is

[20] Rigoletto 122.

[21] Rigoletto 130.

[22] Millicent Marcus, "*Film d'amore e d'anarchia*/*Love and Anarchy*," *The Cinema of Italy*, ed. Giorgio Bertellini (London: Wallflower, 2004) 184.

[…] reclaimed, grounded in human situation and historical circumstance."[23] It seems that the bulk of the clients are fascist officers or supporters—one of the prostitutes notes how busy the brothel is after fascist rallies. Against the film's framing of Rome's monumental fascist architecture and the absurdly Mussolinian figure of Spatoletti, we are treated to the disarray and polyphony of the women's space; the lunch scene alone, highlighting the wide range of dialects, shouted proudly and with merry vulgarity, presents a dialogic hell for the orderly fascist ideologue. And yet, this is also a fantasy space for the fascist clients, as we will see. Marcia Landy asserts that Wertmüller gives a "psychosexual accounting of fascism as opposed to a purely historical analysis."[24] One feature of the mise-en-scène that emphasizes the multiple perspectives in the brothel is the abundance of mirrors [figure 95]. The bed-reflecting mirror, on the other hand, is a clichéd fixture of the lothario's den, and may be present for the client's benefit, reflecting his narcissistic desire to watch himself in flagrante.

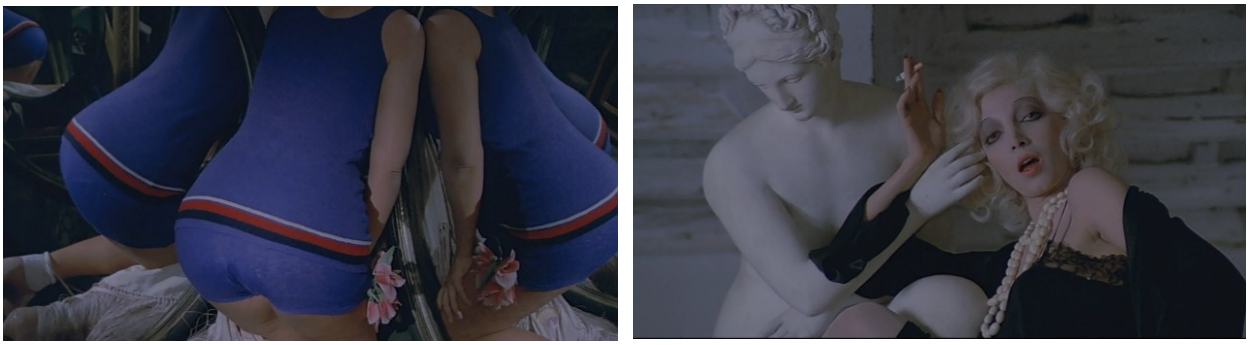
95 Tunin, multiply reflected, lounges on Salomé's bed

The objectifying fascist gaze itself becomes an object of derision, though it may be difficult to sense this subversion underneath obfuscating surface appearances. Just as they indulge the narcissism of the gaze with the installation of mirrors, the prostitutes play to the absurd desirous gaze in their theatrical posturing in the brothel's vestibule [figure 96]. Bust upon

[23] Biskind, "Lina Wertmuller: The Politics of Private Life," *Film Quarterly* 28.2 (1974): 15.

[24] Marcia Landy, *Italian Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 301.

headless bust is panned over, behinds are enlarged and multiplied, all for the benefit of the gazing men. Tunin's entrance into the space destabilizes this male gaze—he carries with him the "subjectifying" gaze of love (for Tripolina). Marcus calls this the "transformation of the gaze, from voyeuristic to activist, from consumerist to engaged […]," claiming that Tunin brings with him "a whole new way of focalizing this scene," rendering the "play-acting" prostitute Tripolina "a human being about to live her life's most decisive few days."[25]



96 Absurd framings of the prostitutes "on display"

The final scenes of the film, however, betray the extent to which the fascist culture of "heroic" violence has been internalized by Tunin. Tripolina, in her motherly, fiercely apolitical love, convinces the anarchist collaborator Salomé to let Tunin oversleep his chance to assassinate Mussolini. When Tunin finally wakes and realizes his missed chance, he goes berserk, senselessly killing a group of fascist soldiers on a routine inspection of the brothel. His show of "impotent" male violence, which ultimately leads to his death, is Tunin's revolt against Tripolina's protective apolitical impulse. Tunin is estranged from his naturally gentle disposition and commits a violence that becomes his oppressors' very pretext for silencing him.

Tunin, however, is an atypical Giannini character in the Wertmüller pantheon, displaying a normally meek, generous temperament. The majority are defined—and undone—by their

[25] Marcus, "*Film d'amore*" 190.

"grotesque" machismo. Decades removed from the traumas of WWII, Wertmüller's films still manage to expose the fascist mentality that continues to plague Italian society. As the director herself says, "Each one of us has Mussolini inside of us. Each one can become Mussolini. Each one can become Mafioso. Without knowing it."[26] *The Seduction of Mimì* reveals how conformity to the pervasive chauvinist culture ends as impotence. Through Mimì's political development—or rather, involution—we observe how good intentions end up in thrall to ancient notions of "manhood," family and honor. It is through this enslavement to pernicious traditionalism that we finally break with Mimì and begin to question our alignment with his gaze.

At the beginning of the film, the mine-worker Mimì is fired for having voted for the communist candidate. He flees the Mafia-controlled Catania for Turin, hoping to escape the cultural oppression of the ruling mentality in Sicily. There he falls in love with the committed communist Fiore (though he still has a wife in Sicily); he appears to have fully entered the world of political engagement. After impregnating Fiore, however, Mimì begins to revert to a protective, insulating impulse that demands familial security and financial well-being. He secedes from the communist activities at his factory job, citing his commitment to his new family. As Rigoletto explains, Mimì enjoys an "opportunistic relation to leftist politics" in contrast with Fiore's sincere engagement.[27] A series of unfortunate events involving the Mafia—present even in the "civilized" north—forces Mimì back to Catania, Fiore and child in tow. When he discovers that his Sicilian wife has been unfaithful in his absence, he demands *vendetta* against her married lover Amilcare, by way of Amilcare's wife, Amalia. His communist friend Peppino reminds Mimì that a communist wouldn't act in such a fashion, and Mimì retorts, "Ma

[26] Biskind, "Interview" 330.

[27] Rigoletto 122.

che communista? Cornuto sono!" Traditional notions of "honor" have overcome any claims of political awareness. As Wertmüller outlines, Mimì's is the "experience of the false progress, of the false consciousness-taking, of the false political growth," lived superficially.[28]

Catania becomes a living caricature of the mafia mentality, with Mimì gradually surrendering to traditional cultural ideals. Now in a supervising position, he denies his workers the possibility of unionizing and demands "ordine" above all. It is clear that the mentality of the Mafioso is not far from that of the fascist; both demand conformity and appeal to individual fear. Mimì takes to wearing suits and ties and slicking his hair back, casting aside the colorful hand-knitted sweaters knitted by Fiore. In one scene, the nearly identical appearance of the Mafiosi henchmen is magnified by their simultaneously sipping their espressos, supervised in parodic fashion by Fiore's Lenin poster [figure 97].

97 I conformisti.

Pictures of totemic male figures are a running sight gag in Wertmüller's films[29] and emphasize the enervating gaze of authority. Several times throughout the film, Mimì is haunted by authority figures with a triad of moles on their cheeks, figures who inevitably cow him into

[28] Bachmann 8.

[29] In *Mimì*, in Fiore's apartment, pictures of Marx and Trotsky are witness to Mimì's initial sexual impotence. *Pasqualino Settebellezze* also features a photo of Mussolini in the train station, as Pasqualino awaits military deployment; in the German commandant Hilde's office, a picture of Hitler looks down on the suffering Pasqualino as he tries to summon an erection during their encounter.

silence, in compliance with the law of *omertà*. We are partially sympathetic to Mimì's panic in the face of these threatening men, though, as Biskind posits, it is possible that "Mimì's delusions of persecution are an externalization of his own voluntary but unexamined choices."[30]

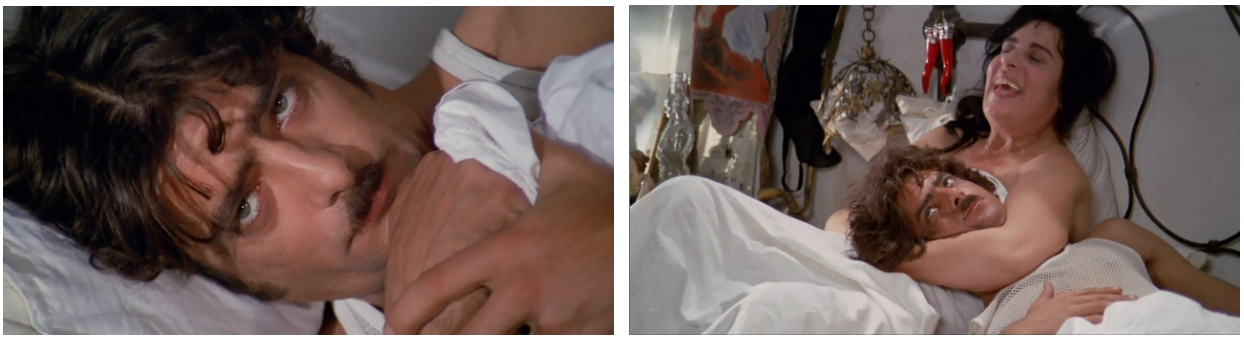
Our decisive break with Mimì comes in the form of Amalia's monumental ass. Reduced to seducing the homely Amalia in order to vindicate his "honor," Mimì finds himself terrorized by the very prospect of the sex act. An absurdly unsexy striptease is followed by a fish-eye lens framing of Amalia's behind[31] as she crawls toward the cowering Mimì. In this moment, as Wertmüller explains, "when the viewer finds himself in front of this incredible object, this ass, his desire for vengeance, for civilization, breaks. The spectator experiences a catharsis, that is, he detaches himself from this thing that he has identified himself with up until this point and begins to see it objectively, from the outside. He no longer identifies himself in Mimì, but sees Mimì as an idiot."[32] Repeated, rapid zooms on Giannini's panicked eyes and his subsequent look of defeat [figure 98] reveal the greatness of his fall; many have argued that Amalia is degraded in this scene, but it is Mimì, in obeying the morally and viscerally repugnant demands of his "honor," who becomes an object of derision.[33]

[30] Biskind, "Politics"13.

[31] In fact, the behind in question belonged to another, shapelier woman, and Wertmüller was insistent on magnifying the corporeal gifts of this body double and insistent on keeping the scene, even when asked to cut it for the Cannes Film Festival. Grace Russo Bullaro, *Man in Disorder: The Cinema of Lina Wertmüller in the 1970s* (Leicester: Troubador, 2006) 119-120.

[32] Bullaro 119.

[33] Marguerite Waller argues that the viewing position of both men and women is equally jarred by this scene: "Whether chauvinists or feminists, most spectators desperately want not to identify with Mimì's gaze at this point, and react uncomfortably to the film's aggressive structuring of the viewer's gaze." Marguerite R. Waller, "'You Cannot Make the Revolution on Film': Wertmüller's Performative Feminism in *Mimì metallurgico, ferito nell'onore*." *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 6.2[12] (1993): 21.



98 Mimì's successful "seduction."

We are shown, if obliquely, that this scene isn't really about the women at all, as Marguerite Waller explains: "What we are looking at on the screen is precisely the social consummation of Mimì's relationship with another man, Amilcare."[34] This fact is reinforced by Mimì's subsequent humiliating struggle to impregnate Amalia, who by now wants her own vengeance on her husband.

The last scenes of the film continue to undermine Mimì's adherence to traditional (male) values. After Amilcare is murdered, Mimì is falsely charged with the crime and jailed. When the protagonist is finally released, he is greeted first by Fiore and his son, but quickly descended upon by his Sicilian wife and her child, plus Amalia (now widowed) and her five children. Much like Adelina in De Sica's *Ieri oggi domani*, though Mimì is set "free" he is now responsible for a multitude of mouths to feed. Unlike for the improbably blissful Adelina, however, there is no joy here for the bereft Mimì, suffocated by his familial obligations [figure 99]. The last scene sees him finally undone, canvassing for the Mafioso candidate at the site of the old quarry, witness to the departure of his cherished, disappointed Fiore with his former friend and communist comrade Peppino.

[34] Waller 21.

99 Drowning.

Swept Away presents a similar portrait of the southern Italian male, in this instance one who enjoys a fantasy space that is both created and destroyed by his machismo. The chauvinist Gennarino, communist pretender and enemy of all that resides under the banner of capitalism, is a victim of his macho blindness. Gennarino's outrage over the wealth—and behavior of the wealthy—embodied by the rich shrew Raffaella is the main source of his desire to hurt and humiliate her. Further, the sadomasochistic relationship developed by the couple on their paradisiacal islands confirms Gennarino's delight in violence. In Wertmüller's world, even a professed communist can espouse violence. In *Swept Away*, the supremacy of Gennarino's macho gaze is emptied, recuperated, and once again emptied, reflecting the tumultuousness of his "insolito destino" and revealing the importance of context to the power of the gaze.

Wertmüller's film generated plenty of critical controversy on account of the sadistic physical abuse enacted on the Raffaella character, some of which debate was merited, all of which was likely welcomed by the intentionally provocative director. When taken as a parable,[35] however, each character symbolizing the consequences of extremism, the film is no longer merely a story of sexual politics. On the island, which is ruled by Gennarino, "One form of society gives way to another, and because they are both extremes neither is the ideal

[35] Ferlita argues for a parabolic reading of Wertmüller's films in *The Parables of Lina Wertmüller*.

instrument."[36] Wertmüller stresses in interviews the inherent inimicality of freedom and exploitation: one is only free to the extent that he does not enslave another.[37]

Further, the political rhetoric Raffaella and Gennarino wield is feeble indeed, and puts them on a level of social awareness similar to Mimì's; if anything, Wertmüller is ridiculing their facile conflation of sex and politics and the manifest divide between strident ideology and action.[38] We see this conflation reach a hilarious climax in their hurtling a series of vulgar insults at each other on first reaching the island, Gennarino's "industrial whore!" matched by Raffaella's "sub-proletarian!" In fact, these two nemeses-turned-lovers never really become more than superficial devices for each other, Raffaella playing the masochistic, humiliated bourgeois to Gennarino's sexually potent, "primal" man.[39] The relationship is doomed removed from the context of the island, which maintains this fragile dynamic, this unsustainable vision.

The most problematic aspect of the film, then, is not the "abuse" of Raffaella, but in the increasingly tender love scenes. The victimized woman, true to Wertmüller's "cartoon characters," never bruises or bleeds [figure 100]. Gennarino's ferocious, absurd pursuit of Raffaella over the sand dunes demeans him more than his victim (as is the case with Amalia and Mimì).

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[36] Ferlita 34.

[37] "I am free as long as I do not make you my prisoner. The moment you become my slave, what I have is no longer freedom; it is a lie. […] To be free, to be humanly free, without exploiting someone else: this is the issue for any new society." Lina Wertmüller, "Lina Wertmüller," *Interview with the Muse: Remarkable Women Speak on Creativity and Power*, ed. Nina Winter (Berkeley: Moon Books, 1978) 200.

[38] According to Mariani, this was a barb directed at contemporary Italian society: "[I]n spite of the high ideals today's politically sophisticated and articulate Italians profess or pretend to, the gap between their ideals and their age-old conditioning is enormous." Mariani 112.

[39] Modleski submits that Gennarino "certainly never loves Rafaella, person in her own right, but only her bondage to him and the creature he himself has shaped and molded." Modleski (Web).

100 Raffaela, post-beting, bruise-free, with hair and makeup intact

But what of the soft lighting or tender words that imbue their love scenes, the seductive or sentimental framing of their bodies [figure 101], or their heart-felt tears on realizing the fragility of their relationship once they've returned to civilization? Generic contamination in Wertmüller's films is just that—contamination. And its results are rarely pretty or palatable. If the grotesque allows her to commingle disparate genres, she explores this liberation to its full potential. Thus Raffaela's absurd, apparently unmotivated masochism, Gennarino's incredible sadism, can mutate into a love story. Modleski's indictment of the film on the grounds of generic consistency, then, becomes an apt summary of the effect of Wertmüller's grotesque: "if Wertmuller wanted to convey only a political message, she has clouded rather than clarified the issues."[40]

101 Gennarino protectively embraces Raffaella

[40] Modleski (Web).

Wertmüller's treatment of the male gaze, however, still undermines its power. While Gennarino plays the "peeping tom" on the yacht, sneakily ogling the topless sunbathers [figure 102], he triumphs in the freedom of his objectifying gaze on the island. He upbraids Raffaella for formerly ignoring his desirous male gaze, depriving it of its rightful potency. Reveling in its reinvigoration, he boasts that he can now look at her all she wants, and she will feel it.

102 Gennarino, peeping tom

Male vision as a phallic extension is coupled with violence as the physical manifestation of Gennarino's objectifying gaze; he smilingly tells Raffaela "You become more beautiful when I beat you."

The demands of machismo, or rather, the demands of the machist gaze, are what finally destroy Gennarino's fantasy space. Raffaella must prove her love to him outside the bounds of the island (or rather, prove the renunciation of her former life before the eyes of her peers) and naturally the gamble turns out to be fatal to the relationship. He's willing to renounce his marital and familial obligations for Raffaella: an honorable feat indeed! (But what could one expect of a character who proudly declares, "Io sono un ignorante e me ne vanto"?) She, on the other hand, has a more realistic attachment to her former life, and regretfully but resolutely leaves Gennarino behind. In both *Mimì* and *Swept Away*, the lover's departure frames Giannini as a vanishing figure, a mere speck in the landscape [figure 103]. Adding insult to injury, the last scene of

Swept Away finds Gennarino struggling with his scorned wife to carry her luggage as they leave the marina, attempting, in a servile move, to ingratiate himself to her after his discovered infidelity.

103 Mimì and Gennarino, disappearing into the landscape

The violence, impotence, and ultimate futility of the machist vision find its most complete incarnation in the protagonist of *Pasqualino Settebellezze*. Though Wertmüller has claimed that the spectator does not finally break with Pasqualino until, in yet another capitulation to his survival imperative, he shoots his friend Francesco,[41] I would argue that the viewer undergoes a progressive, irreversible estrangement from Pasqualino, continuously asking, "To what lengths will he go to keep living?" *Pasqualino* presents the spectator with a series of aesthetic and ethical provocations, thereby pushing Wertmüller's uncomfortable hybridization of genre—the grotesque—to its limits. In following the journey of the hapless Pasqualino, the director destabilizes the categories of oppressed and oppressor, strength and weakness, death and survival. She exposes the fragility of the distinction between these categories through a relentless mortification of Pasqualino's machist value system.

[41] "There is a cathartic moment where the viewer stops identifying with the hero. In *Mimì* it is the moment he sees that big ass, in *Seven Beauties* when he shoots his friend, not before. Up until this point the spectator, despite all the compromises, continues to follow him. […] There is a point of rupture within the rapid arc of the catastrophe." Bachmann 9.

Introduced as a theme early on in the film, the fragmentation and dehumanization of the body become important aspects of Pasqualino's character. His fixation on female body parts [figure 104][42] is transformed into a macabre display of dissection once he is confronted with disposing the corpse of Totonno, the pimp he's murdered for "dishonoring" his sister.

104 Pasqualino caresses the bottoms of the mattress factory workers.

In this grotesque scene, as in many others, Pasqualino's virility is undercut by impotence. He struggles with Totonno's body, taking swigs from a bottle of booze between unsuccessful attempts to drag the snoring, belching body onto the "operating" table. When inevitably arrested for the crime, he is declared mentally incompetent to avoid jail time. In the German prison camp, he is confronted by his greatest challenge, the seduction of the camp commandant Hilde. His friend Francesco advises against the venture, saying simply, "Sinceramente, sei un cesso," and "Fai proprio schifo. Io rinuncerei." Coming from the mouth of the clear-eyed, sympathetic Francesco, this estimation of Pasqualino's ugliness carries multiple meanings.

The sex scene in Hilde's office finds Wertmüller at the height of her grotesque aesthetic, showcasing once again the female body that resists objectification. Emasculating, monolithic, and wielding a switch, Hilde incarnates the "monstrous feminine"[43] [figure 105]. Pasqualino,

[42] Pasqualino seems to see flesh as consumable matter; before his attempted rape of the female patient in the mental hospital, he explains to her that her inert body is going to waste.

[43] Millicent Marcus, *Italian Film in the Shadow of Auschwitz* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) 58.

weak with hunger and repulsed by Hilde's mass of flesh, just barely manages to appease the heartless German, who is more disgusted than impressed with his relentless will to live. Later, in a terrible irony, Pasqualino's most effective act of penetration occurs when he fatally shoots the self-sacrificing Francesco, forced by Hilde either to kill his friend or to face communal death.

105 Hilde, phallic switch in hand, awaits Pasqualino's attempt at sex

Pasqualino's moral ineptitude also manifests as blindness: the gaze which refuses to see, or perceives selectively. His squinty, cartoonish glare, part of his macho posturing early in the film, emphasizes his diminished sight. At one point during their disastrous sexual encounter, Hilde forces his eyes open, making him witness to his own degradation. His final moral misinterpretation takes place when he finally returns home. He twists the anarchist Pedro's words—his caveat about the brutal repercussions of global overpopulation—into a mandate to his fiancée to bear him dozens of children, to better protect themselves against this harrowing future. The last shot of the film presents Pasqualino's face framed in a mirror, his eyes looking at his own reflection, but also out at the audience. His dead-eyed stare is a cold reminder of the atrocities to which he has been witness, especially those committed by his own hand [figure 106].

106 Pasqualino struggles with metaphoric blindness

The efficacy of Wertmüller's films in stirring up controversy, starting a conversation, makes it difficult to trace why she lost critics' attention after the mid-1970s. Her dedication to a mass audience may hint at an answer; perhaps she also lost the interest of this same audience through an unsustainable pattern of provocation and one-upping. Wertmüller had a good read on the climate of post-*Sessantotto* political engagement, its restless discontent, not dissimilar to that of the Italian intellectuals during post-war reconstruction. But Wertmüller herself sensed that something had changed as the Anni di Piombo progressed: "era cambiata l'atmosfera, il clima politico, e io lo sentivo molto."[44] Perhaps her "degraded" form, which made both sex and politics objects of derision, was no longer as funny in the tense political climate. Her use of Giannini tapered off into two critically failed films,[45] and the dissolution of this partnership may also have contributed to Wertmüller's growing artistic marginalization.

One final possibility is that the director had reached the limits of the grotesque genre, the limits of the possibilities of spectatorial distancing. Much like the male directors in my study who probed the boundaries of female focalization, Wertmüller perhaps found just how far she could effectively take Giannini's alienating male gaze in *Pasqualino Settebellezze*. Her cinema

[44] *Giancarlo Giannini* 80.

[45] *A Night Full of Rain* (Wertmüller's attempt at an American) and *Blood Feud*, both released in 1978.

never pretended to offer solutions, but the constant interrogation of the protagonist's vision—and consequently the spectator's own modes of viewing—becomes too incessantly fatalistic.

Like the post-neorealist films of the male directors in my study, Wertmüller's cinema essentially becomes a rewriting of the formal and ideological mandates that came before her. In this way we begin to see how each cinematic movement also inevitably marks a moment of transition, of reaction to what preceded. Wertmüller, however, is not faced with a difficult historical transition, as her predecessors were. They are confronted with the problem of a redefinition of their very cinema. Rossellini, Antononi and Fellini are in great measure "saved," both aesthetically and existentially, by a vampiristic appropriation of the female vision (and De Sica reinvented through exploitation of the female body). This vision allowed a new focus on the personal, the marginal, so counter to the accepted practices of neorealism. Seeking an escape from history and even biography, these directors found the expressive alterity of the woman's body. The figure of woman herself, traditionally seen as changeable, mutating, is an apt vessel for the transition to a new vision. In exploring this complex territory, the directors often tried to possess it, but ended instead by elevating what is resistant, mysterious, full of creative potential.

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