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# Resistance heroes and resisting spectators: Reflections on Rossellini's *Roma, città aperta*

JoAnn Cannon

*Roma, città aperta* occupies a unique position in the history of Italian cinema. Rossellini's film has been viewed by historians and critics alike as a historical document which preserves for posterity the essence of the Italian Resistance movement. The film has come to be perceived not only as a cinematographic masterpiece but as an archival source. The influential Italian historian Giuliano Proccacci cites Rossellini's film as representative of the spirit of the Italian people during the Resistance. 'Di questo spirito [*Roma, città aperta* e *Paisà*] sono rappresentative non solo perché molti dei loro personaggi sono uomini e donne della Resistenza [...] ma soprattutto per il tentativo in cui essi pienamente riuscirono di fornire dell'Italia, e del suo popolo, un'immagine autentica e viva'.[1] Procacci was not alone in his assessment of the testimonial character of the film. Rossellini's scriptwriter, Sergio Amidei, called the film 'the instrument of the will of an underground army that was anxious to write its page for the book of history'.[2] Italy's foremost film scholar, Gian Piero Brunetta, writes in his comprehensive four volume *Storia del cinema italiano*: 'in futuro sarà possibile riconoscere, studiare e capire il senso della lotta di Resistenza italiana ed europea grazie ad una sola sequenza di *Roma: citta aperta* [...] più che mediante la consultazione di decine di libri di storia e migliaia di pagine di documenti'.[3] In short, countless critics and viewers have considered the film to be an accurate portrayal of the last days of the Resistance movement.

*Roma, città aperta* is indeed a film which dramatizes a glorious moment in Italy's history. Rossellini's film catapulted Italian cinema into a position of international prominence and launched the influential though short-lived neorealist film movement. *Roma, città aperta* projects the image of a new Italy, united in its opposition to the fascist past and dedicated to a future which allows for a plurality of political perspectives.[4] The male

characters embody the political ideals and moral resolve which helped free Italy from the yoke of fascism. But what is the role of women in this mythical narration of the birth of a nation? In this essay I would like to focus on how female gender roles are constructed and defined in Rossellini's film.

In order to understand the construction of gender in *Roma, città aperta*, it is important to expose the hypothetical or implied spectator position inscribed in the film. In recent years feminist film criticism has come to distinguish between two types of spectator positions, the hypothetical and the empirical.[5] The distinction is more or less equivalent to that often made between the implied reader and the empirical one. Implicit in this distinction between the hypothetical and the empirical spectator is the notion of a possible resistance to the spectator position consciously or unconsciously inscribed in the cinematic text. The hypothetical or implied spectator accepts the ideology inscribed in the film while the empirical spectator may distance herself from it. In my reading of *Roma, città aperta*, I will occupy the position of a 'resisting reader'. (I will return later to the question of the empirical Italian spectator of 1945.) I will resist the film's portrayal of certain gender positions as universal or natural. My reading of Rossellini's film will lay bare some of the mechanisms by which gender constructions are 'naturalized' in film. Drawing on Roland Barthes' notion of myth, Claire Johnston has accurately described the process of 'naturalization' of sexism in cinema: 'Myth, then, as a form of speech or discourse, represents the major means in which women have been used in the cinema: myth transmits, transforms the ideology of sexism and renders it invisible [...] and therefore natural'.[6] *Roma, città aperta* is no exception to this rule. The film naturalizes the ideology of sexism in its portrayal of women in very limited and stereotypical roles.

The male heroes in *Roma, città aperta* are Giorgio Manfredi, the anti-fascist partisan leader of the Committee of National Liberation, his friend and fellow Resistance fighter Francesco, and the partisan priest Don Pietro. Don Pietro is patterned after an actual historical figure, the partisan priest Don Morosini, and was originally to have been the subject of a semi-documentary film by Rossellini. Giorgio Manfredi represents the Resistance leader Celeste Negarville.[7] Unlike the male protagonists, the females have no particular historical counterparts.[8] The principal female characters are Pina, Francesco's fiancée and the widowed mother of Marcello, her frivolous and promiscuous sister Lauretta, and Marina, the *femme fatale* corrupted by the Gestapo, who supply her with pocket money,

food coupons, and drugs. I would like to focus first on the most important female character, Pina.

As played by the great Anna Magnani, Pina is clearly constructed in the film as a positive figure. We first encounter Pina at the storming of the local bakery, in which she has played an active role. This implicitly places Pina in the ranks of the anti-fascist heroes. Once this has been established, however, Pina is quickly relegated to the domestic sphere. Pina's first appearance as political activist is overshadowed by her role as nurturer. When Pina and Giorgio first meet, Pina bustles solicitously around her fiancée's fellow partisan, offering apologies for the war-time coffee and homilies about Giorgio's love life. Giorgio is in the process of extricating himself from a relationship with the *femme fatale*, Marina. Although Pina tells Manfredi that a woman can change if she's in love, it soon becomes clear that Marina will not rise from her status as 'fallen woman'. The discussion of Marina, who as we shall see in a moment, is diametrically opposed to Pina, brings out by contrast all of Pina's nurturing, domestic, 'positive' qualities.

One of the most important characteristics defining Pina is her motherhood. We learn in Pina's 'domestic' scene that she is carrying the child of Francesco, the partisan typesetter of the underground newspaper *l'Unità* which so effectively heralded the anti-fascist cause. The contemporary American viewer might expect Pina's illegitimate pregnancy to compromise her position as a positive 'role model'. In reality, the fact that she is with child reinforces the idealization of Pina as mother. Not only is she the mother of Marcello, one of the leaders of the youth Resistance movement, but she is also the mother of the unborn off-spring of the partisan hero, and one of the potential heirs of the new and better Italy which Francesco envisions on the eve of their wedding. Pina's nascent sense of political commitment and her strong identification with motherhood clearly establish her as a positive figure within the filmic discourse. This reading of the character of Pina is a reading from the perspective of the implied spectator inscribed in the film. The cinematic text, in other words, projects an image of Pina as the embodiment of all that is good in Italian women. A resisting spectator, however, may find this reading of Pina problematic. Before pursuing this point further, I would like to take a closer look at one particular scene to see how the character of Pina serves to naturalize certain gender roles in the film.

The stairwell scene is a pivotal one in putting Pina in her 'natural' place. As Pina and Francesco seek privacy on the stairwell on the night

before their wedding, Pina is tired and dispirited. She can only focus on the domestic sphere – the domain in which patriarchy contains women's activity. Her argument with her sister and the sister's refusal to attend the next day's wedding overshadow any concern with larger issues. Francesco haltingly yet eloquently exhorts Pina not to lose faith as he articulates his vision of Italy's future. The spectator's gaze is positioned by the camera angle on Pina, who in turn gazes lovingly at the hero, Francesco.

> Francesco: Credo che sia così. Non dobbiamo aver paura né oggi né in avvenire. Perché siamo nel giusto, nella via giusta. Capisci Pina?
> Pina: Sì Francesco.
> Francesco: Noi lottiamo per una cosa che deve venire, che non può non venire. Forse la strada sarà un po' lunga e difficile, ma arriveremo e lo vedremo un mondo migliore. E soprattutto lo vedranno i nostri figli – Marcello e lui, quello che aspettiamo. Non devi aver paura mai Pina qualunque cosa succeda, vero?

As Francesco tells Pina his dream for Italy's future, Pina hangs on his every word, eyes uplifted and riveted on his face, which we only see in profile. Pina is positioned by the camera as dependent on male paternalism. Although the camera's gaze falls on her, she is not the protagonist in the drama. The protagonist is instead the male hero, the beloved object of Pina's unswerving gaze. Francesco's political prowess is reflected in Pina's adoring eyes. Pina herself is relegated to the political status of a child. She sits silently on the step below Francesco's, and expresses no thought of her own. The heroine's only contribution to articulating the partisan aspirations for Italy's future is to nod in assent and murmur 'sì Francesco'.

This scene establishes Francesco as the mouthpiece of anti-fascist convictions while it silences Pina. Pina is fighting for the just cause not out of an ability to articulate the political aims of the Resistance but rather out of an innate sense of goodness. The stark contrast between the articulate, politically committed male hero and the faithful, yet politically inarticulate female character epitomizes a basic opposition which subtends the prevailing ideology. Claire Johnston has called this 'the basic opposition which places man inside history and woman as ahistoric and eternal' (p. 209). Pina perfectly embodies these latter qualities. She only enters history as the mother of the child who will rebuild Italy (Marcello) and of the unborn child who will inherit the renewed fatherland. There is no question that the child referred to in the stairwell scene is a male: 'lui, quello che aspettiamo'. The redundancy of this construction reinforces the fact

that the masculine pronoun is not a universal pronoun potentially signifying both male and female offspring but a male child.

The male hero is constructed by Rossellini's cinematic discourse as an agent of change. At a crucial time in Italy's history, as the Nazi occupation was drawing to a close, *Roma, città aperta* presents to the Italian public the vision of a radically new nation which makes a clean break with its fascist past. Rossellini's vision of a healing Christian humanism captured the imaginations of Italian moviegoers. The film was made at a time of optimism, a time of euphoria for the leftist partisans who hoped to rebuild Italy in the image of the broad coalition of Marxists, monarchists, communists, and Christian Democrats that had united to defeat fascism. It is all the more striking, therefore, to realize that in the new Italy projected in Rossellini's optimistic film the position of women is remarkably similar to their status under fascism. Pina's role as articulated by Francesco in the stairwell scene is precisely that of the fascist mother – to produce male children to defend and rebuild the *patria*.[9]

The treatment of Pina's death reinforces the stereotypical dimension of the heroine. The scene in which Pina is brutally gunned down by the Nazis as she pursues the truck in which her fiancée is being held prisoner is one of the most powerful and moving episodes in the history of Italian cinema. It seems to place Pina's martyrdom on an equal footing with that of the partisan hero Giorgio at the end of the film. As Millicent Marcus has pointed out, Rossellini 'accords her the dignity of a saint. Her death is followed soon after by a scene in church where the desperate prayer to the Madonna seems addressed to Pina herself: "Mater Purissima [...] Mater Castissima [...] Mater Inviolata [...]" ' (pp. 50-51). Pina's transformation from a mother to Mother *par excellence* is clear and unequivocal. The question is what 'reading' we give to this stereotype. In Marcus' reading the association between Pina and the Madonna is interpreted in a positive light. As feminist critics have pointed out, however, the idea of the maternal is at best ambivalent.[10]

To understand how Pina's association with the maternal might function in a limiting rather than empowering fashion, one must recognize that Pina is the embodiment of one of the two universal female types constructed by patriarchal culture. As Simone de Beauvoir argued in *The Second Sex*, male representations of women generally reduce women to variants of two types, the angel-mother and the monster-whore. If Pina the martyred Madonna-mother is a projection of the idealization of women by patriarchal culture, Marina the showgirl/whore is the expression of the

patriarchy's misogynistic tendencies. Marina first appears in the dressing room of the Copacabana night club. Everything about her marks her as a hard-hearted, dissatisfied woman. Clad in a glamorous and alluring gown, Marina anxiously searches her purse for drugs to feed her habit. She brushes off Lauretta's questions about her feelings for Giorgio Manfredi and only shows affection when the wicked Gestapo henchwoman Ingrid enters the dressing room to supply her with cocaine. The suggestion of a lesbian relationship between Marina and the sinister Ingrid seals Marina's fate as a negative role model.

In case the viewer fails to comprehend the error of Marina's ways, the point is driven home in a later scene. When Giorgio and Francesco take refuge at Marina's apartment, Giorgio lectures Marina on her taste for the finer things in life:

> Giorgio: Povera Marina [...] Credi che la felicità consista nell'avere dei bei vestiti, una cameriera, degli amanti ricchi. E per avere tutto questo hai rinunciato alla sola cosa per la quale valeva la pena vivere – quello che rende sopportabile la vita, anche quando è dura e crudele come ora. L'amore, l'amore per il proprio uomo, per i propri figli, per i propri compagni. Perché quello che tu chiami amore è una povera cosa quando non è una cosa sporca.

It is after this scene with her former lover that Marina predictably betrays Giorgio by reporting his whereabouts to the Nazis. Ultimately, Marina betrays her lover to the Gestapo in exchange for drugs and a fur coat. Giorgio's prophecy is of course fulfilled: 'Poor Marina' will never find happiness.

The binary opposition into which Pina and Marina fall calls to mind the implicit binarism of the 'woman's film' made during the fascist period. As Marcia Landy has pointed out in *Fascism in Film*, the tension between responsibility and irresponsibility, loyal subordination and wanton freedom characterizes the choices available to female characters in fascist films. Landy identifies devotion to service as the common bond between a number of films which foreground women's roles. These films define as woman's proper role the enhancement of the male and of the family, and offer a wide range of female stereotypes – seductresses, entertainers, and fallen women on the one hand and wives, mothers, daughters, and unequal comrades on the other.[11] Many Italian movies of this era, like *Dora Nelson* and *Zazà*, deal with the choice between marriage and career, and drive home the message that devotion to family and to husband leads to happiness, while devotion

to career leads to isolation and loneliness.[12] In *Zazà*, the early images of the entertainer's glamorous life are undercut by the final images of the entertainer abandoned and unloved. Landy convincingly reads Zazà's abandonment at the end of the film as punishment for her neglect of 'the woman's socially supportive role in maintaining family life'(p. 96).

The characters of Marina and Pina fit seamlessly with earlier, fascist film portrayals of women. This continuity between the construction of gender in the fascist woman's film and Rossellini's film should not be altogether surprising. As Lino Micchiché argues, postwar Italian film did not spring up *ex nihilo* but obviously grew out of the fascist film industry. Although we must respect the degree to which neorealist films and film-makers consciously broke with the films of the fascist period, we must also recognize that there may be certain unacknowledged continuities between the films of the pre- and postwar period. This is the skeleton which was kept in the closet for thirty years. It was not until the mid Seventies that a number of Italian scholars began to call for an evaluation of those continuities. Although the focus of these critics was not specifically on the construction of women's roles, this area would seem to be particularly worthy of study.[13]

To return now to Rossellini's film, the diametrical opposition between Pina and Marina is reminiscent of the underlying binarism of female roles in fascist films. The hypothetical spectator comes to appreciate Pina's virtues through Marina's failings. Pina is the embodiment of the lesson that Marina has not learned: women belong only in the domestic sphere of marriage, family, and children. As Marcus has persuasively shown, the two characters are implicitly compared to each other throughout the film. The stairwell scene in which Francesco shares with Pina his vision of a brighter future for Italy is in stark contrast to the scene in Marina's apartment, where Giorgio gives up all hope for his former mistress. There is little doubt that Marina's unwillingness to heed Giorgio's lesson will lead to her ruin. As Marcus points out, 'While Pina dies in the name of strength and defiance, Marina survives because of her weakness, and when confronted by the spectacle of her dead lover Manfredi, she merely faints in a coward's version of Pina's heroic death' (p. 39). Marina is vilified in the film's conclusion to an almost comic degree. As she lies in her 'coward's faint' following the sight of her dead lover in Gestapo headquarters, she is shorn by the wicked Ingrid of the very fur coat for which she had sold Giorgio's life. The punishment of Marina in *Roma, città aperta* mirrors the ritual punishment of the show-girl/seductress which became formulaic in women's films of the fascist

era (Landy, p. 95). Pina's martyrdom and Marina's vilification unequivocally figure the misogyny/idealization opposition at the basis of patriarchy's construction of the second sex.

The hypothetical spectator inscribed in Rossellini's film idealizes Pina's limited role in the patriarchy and applauds the vilification of Marina. The resisting reader of Rossellini's film suspects that the positioning of Pina and Marina contrives to bar their entry into the paternal cultural order. To what extent Italian women in the audience in 1946 identified with the hypothetical spectator offered by the film and to what extent they resisted the film's gender constructions is impossible to guage. One can imagine that the identificatory mechnanisms at work on the female viewer of the period must have been powerful indeed. Pina's political activism and her martyrdom offer a compelling and 'positive' role model for women in the audience, just as Marina's downfall sounds a cautionary note. Yet we cannot forget that the opportunity for subversive, resistant readings of the film were as numerous as the female spectators in the audience.[14]

Before developing further the question of the female stereotypes in *Roma, città aperta*, I should point out that most of the characters in the film, both male and female, fall into stereotypical patterns. As Liehm has observed: 'There is the bad woman causing the man's tragedy; there is the good priest endowed with some comical traits of the "fatso"; his servant (the sexton); there is "la Mamma" (Pina), a woman who suffers and dies for love; and, finally, there are the stereotypes of eternal damnation, the Gestapo man Bergman and his lesbian assistant Ingrid'.[15] Liehm traces many of these stereotypes to the popular *rivista* tradition from which the two professional actors in *Roma, città aperta* emerged. Bondanella emphasizes the Manichean dualism which characterizes the film: 'These people are strongly stereotyped into good and evil categories').[16] Although critics have concurred on the obvious stereotyping in the film, little attention has focused on the sexual stereotyping. The fact that there are other forms of stereotyping in the film does not obviate the need for a closer look at the overt stereotyping of female characters.

In 'Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema', Johnston examines the way myths of women have operated in film. Drawing on Panofsky's study of primitive stereotyping in early cinema, Johnston asks 'why the image of man underwent rapid differentiation, while the primitive stereotyping of women remained with some modifications' (p. 209). *Roma, città aperta* falls neatly into this pattern. The male heroes are more thoroughly differentiated and less stereotypical than the women. The heroines fall

perfectly into the universal angel/whore model. The male heroes represent differentiatied responses to a specific historical crisis – Don Pietro the Catholic option, Manfredi and Francesco the Communist one. Rossellini's message of Christian humanism as a solution to Italy's crisis is expressed through Don Pietro and Manfredi.[17] Pina on the other hand, is not part of the historical solution to Italy's problems. Pina dies not for love of country but for love of her man, while the male heroes, Don Pietro and Manfredi, die for the greater good of the community.

It should perhaps come as no surprise that sexual stereotyping is rampant in *Roma, città aperta.* Johnston argues that the development of female stereotypes is less a conscious strategy than a reflection of the dominant ideology (p. 209). Much of recent film criticism has in fact been an attempt to read film as a cultural expression of the collective unconscious of patriarchy. In the case of *Roma, città aperta*, however, it would be difficult to talk about patriarchy's collective unconscious when the film so consciously projects the 'othering' of women. The female stereotypes hit the viewer over the head with about as much force as Don Pietro employs to subdue the old man in the 'frying pan' scene. Yet if any spectator happens to miss the point, Rossellini serves it up in a scene which year after year never fails to draw a chuckle from my undergraduate audience. Pina's son, Marcello, has just returned from his initiation into the Resistance movement. With a group of boys from his tenement led by Romoletto, Marcello has blown up a Nazi gasoline truck parked close by. Upon his return Marcello is unceremoniously cuffed on the ears by an enraged Pina and summarily sent off to bed. As he enters a bedroom occupied by several children, one of the female children in the extended family dwelling, presumably a cousin of Marcello, asks him why he never takes her out on his heroic exploits. Marcello, precociously wise in the ways of patriarchy, responds:

> Marcello: Te sei una donna.
> Andreina: Le donne non possono fare l'eroismo?
> Marcello: Sì lo ponno pure fa [...] ma Romoletto dice che le donne son sempre guaie.

These words of wisdom come from no mere child but a higher authority, Romoletto, the leader of the youth Resistance movement and the hope for rebuilding Italian society in the post-fascist era. It is difficult to imagine a more blatant instance of putting women in their place than with this 'disarming' scene. The positioning of women outside 'l'eroismo', outside

histor,y is perhaps more powerful because it comes from the mouths of babes – Marcello and Romoletto. The innocence of the child's remark naturalizes his position. It is interesting to note how comic relief is used in this particular episode to sugarcoat the construction of the female position as subordinate. This scene makes explicit the naturalization of female subordination which is implicit throughout the film. The entire film constructs the female position as the devalued counterpoint to male heroism.

The humorous scene in which the innocent Marcello puts women in their place is immediately followed by a scene in which the young man is initiated into the male social order. The sequence in which the two scenes appear seems to suggest that the empowerment of men follows upon the disempowerment of women. Marcello's stepfather-to-be enters the room to tuck Marcello in bed. The exchange between Franceso and the boy clearly delineates the male gender position. Unlike Pina, who disapproves of Marcello's political activism, Francesco applauds the boy's heroic exploits:

> Francesco: Non dormi?
> Marcello: Non ho sonno.
> Francesco: Dove sei stato con Romoletto?
> Marcello: Non te lo posso dire.
> Francesco: Nemmeno a me?
> Marcello: No, è un segreto.
> Francesco: Allora c'hai ragione. Non lo devi dire a nessuno. Buona notte.

Unlike the uncomprehending Pina, Francesco approves of Marcello's silence. Marcello will not betray his comrades; he will observe the code of silence which protects their identity. This is of course the code which the martyred Giorgio Manfredi dies to protect at the end of the film. (His last conscious moment is spent straining to hear Don Pietro's reassurance: 'Non hai parlato'.) Francesco pats Marcello on the head for his faithfulness to the partisan ideal. As Francesco turns to leave, Marcello calls him back and asks permission to call Francesco father. This passing of the mantle of heroism from generation to generation is unquestionably a male rite of passage. The girl child, who had earlier asked 'can't women be heroes too?', is in the same room but outside the frame which commemorates and aesthetisizes the initiation of the hero. This is clearly a case of 'structured absence'. Women are physically removed from the male sphere. The gender

roles are unequivocally established in the two consecutive scenes. Men are heroes, women are either caregivers or 'trouble'.

I have attempted to show that the mother-whore opposition in *Roma, città aperta* is not a 'realistic' representation of women in Italy but a construction of patriarchal ideology. I make this claim in opposition to a long history of reading this film as the epitome of neorealism's essential authenticity. Earlier critics who endorsed the neorealist claim to historical accuracy have been joined by contemporary scholars. Marcus, for example, cites Sergio Amidei's 1947 defense of the historical authenticity of Rossellini's film and suggests that American critics have gone too far in emphasizing the film's 'illusionist', anti-realistic tendencies (p. 36). It is indeed essential to consider *Roma, città aperta* in its historical context and to recognize the film's historical roots. But to suggest that a film has its roots in a historical moment does not mean that the film mirrors reality.

At this juncture I could counter Rossellini's images of women with historical proof that 'real' women did not fit into the angel/whore moulds inscribed in the film. I could cite historical evidence that women not only fought in the Resistance movement but generally adopted the whole spectrum of human behaviours that are a mark of their humanity. The very actress who played the drug-addicted, amoral *femme fatale*, Maria Michì, was an active participant in the Resistance movement.[18] Ultimately, this 'recourse to reality as a counter to stereotyping' is naive, as Gledhill has suggested.[19] I am more interested in studying the film as creating a powerful myth for a new Italy than as an imperfect reflection of historical reality. Certainly the film is grounded in historical reality and cannot be studied outside the socio-political context in which it emerged. The partisan priests, Resistance leaders, and anti-fascist youth, all have some basis in fact. Yet the film was not a mirror held up to that reality, but rather a morality play for Italians reminding them of their past failings and presenting alternative myths in which to believe. In the context in which it was first received, and in the present context in which we view the film as embodying universal values of brotherhood and solidarity, it is important to recognize the film's 'mythic' structure. What Rossellini's 'neorealist' camera captured was not the nature of women but 'the natural world of the dominant ideology' (Johnston, p. 214). By 'de-naturalizing' the construction of gender in Rossellini's film, we can lay bare the powerful mythic structure underlying *Roma, città aperta*.

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**Notes**

[1] For a discussion of the film's importance as a documentary, see G. Procacci, *Storia degli italiani* (Bari, Laterza, 1968), p. 543.

[2] S. Amidei, '*Open City* Revisited', *The New York Times*, 16 February 1947, Sec. 10, p. 5.

[3] G. P. Brunetta, *Storia del cinema italiano dal 1945 agli anni ottanta*, 4 vols (Rome, Editori Riuniti, 1982), p. 410.

[4] See Brunetta, pp. 321 and 373, as cited in M. Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 52.

[5] As Ann Kaplan points out: 'There is a delicate negotiation in any film reception between the hypothetical spectator offered by the film and the reading formations of the viewer. Depending on the social practices through which this viewer is constructed, she or he will be more or less receptive to the hypothetical spectator-position of the film': E. A. Kaplan, 'Dialogue', *Cinema Journal*, 25-i (1985), 40-53 (p. 52), as quoted in D. Waldman , 'Film Theory and the Gendered Spectator: The Female or the Feminist Reader?', *Camera Obscura*, 18 (1988), 80-94 (p. 89).

[6] C. Johnston, 'Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema', in *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, edited by B. Nichols (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976), pp. 208-23 (p. 210).

[7] See R. Armes, *Patterns of Realism* (South Brunswick-New York, A. S. Barnes, 1971), p. 68, for information on the historical counterparts of the film's characters.

[8] The death of Pina is based on an incident observed by the actor Aldo Fabrizi; however, nothing is known of the woman's life: see Armes, p. 68.

[9] Fascism's definition of motherhood as the only role for women in society was not only evident in Mussolini's speeches but, more importantly, also in his social policy. 'In 1927 Mussolini set a twenty five year goal of increasing the Italian population from 40 to 60 million. He imposed a tax on "unjustified celibacy" and [. . .] ordered civil service and private firms to discriminate against women in favor of employing family men': L. Chiavola Birnbaum, *Liberazione della donna* (Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 1986), p. 37.

[10] Naomi Schor has pointed out that 'the place of the maternal in feminism is [. . .] ambivalent; empowering when it involves recovery of and reconnection to a lost maternal body [. . .] potentially fatal when it involves unmediated fusion and an inability to enter the paternal cultural order': 'Feminist and Gender Studies', in *Introduction to Studies in the Humanities*, edited by J. Gibaldi (New York, The Modern Language Association, 1992), p. 269.

[11] M. Landy, *Fascism in Film* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 22-23.

[12] See Landy, pp. 85-87 for a detailed discussion of women's roles in *Dora Nelson*.

[13] For an overview of the debate which began in the mid Seventies, see *Cinema italiano sotto il fascismo*, edited by R. Redi (Venice, Marsilio, 1979). The volume includes essays by numerous film critics, including Micchiché, Aprà, Geli, Kezich, Brunetta, Pistagnesi, Lizzani, and Redi.

[14] For a useful discussion of women's refusal to be 'contained' within a particular gender construction, see Robin Pickering-Iazzi's *Mothers of Invention. Women, Italian Fascism and Culture* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1995). As Pickering-Iazzi points out, critics have come to reject the tendency to demonize Fascism as a hypnotic force' and to point instead to the 'inventiveness' of women as they challenge the dominant ideology (p. xxviii). I would like to borrow that concept of 'inventiveness' for my discussion of the audience reception of *Roma, città aperta*. In short, we cannot assume that women of the postwar years were utterly coerced by the dominant ideology.

[15] M. Liehm, *Passion and Defiance: Film in Italy from 1942 to the Present* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984), p. 64.

[16] P. Bondanella, *Italian Film from Neorealism to the Present* (new York, Ungar, 1983), p. 37.

[17] See Marcus, pp. 51-53, for a detailed discussion of Rossellini's synthesis of Marxism and Catholic humanism in the film.

[18] V. Jarratt, *The Italian Cinema* (London, Falcon Press, 1951), p. 57.

[19] C. Gledhill, "Recent Developments in Feminist Film Criticism', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 16 (1978), 457-93.