

ITALIAN NEOREALIST CINEMA

TORUNN HAALAND



ITALIAN NEOREALIST CINEMA

Traditions in World Cinema

General Editors

Linda Badley (Middle Tennessee State University)

R. Barton Palmer (Clemson University)

Founding Editor

Steven Jay Schneider (New York University)

Titles in the series include:

Traditions in World Cinema

by Linda Badley, R. Barton Palmer and Steven Jay Schneider (eds)

978 0 7486 1862 0 (hardback)

978 0 7486 1863 7 (paperback)

Japanese Horror Cinema

by Jay McRoy (ed.)

978 0 7486 1994 8 (hardback)

978 0 7486 1995 5 (paperback)

New Punk Cinema

by Nicholas Rombes (ed.)

978 0 7486 2034 0 (hardback)

978 0 7486 2035 7 (paperback)

African Filmmaking: North and South of the Sahara

by Roy Armes

978 0 7486 2123 1 (hardback)

978 0 7486 2124 8 (paperback)

Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma and Memory

by Nurith Gertz

978 0 7486 3407 1 (hardback)

978 0 7486 3408 8 (paperback)

Chinese Martial Arts Cinema: The Wuxia Tradition

by Stephen Teo

978 0 7486 3285 5 (hardback)

978 0 7486 3286 2 (paperback)

Czech and Slovak Cinema: Theme and Tradition

by Peter Hames

978 0 7486 2081 4 (hardback)

978 0 7486 2082 1 (paperback)

The New Neapolitan Cinema

by Alex Marlow-Mann

978 0 7486 4066 9 (hardback)

The International Film Musical

by Corey K. Creekmur and Linda Y. Mokdad (eds)

978 0 7486 3476 7 (hardback)

American Smart Cinema

by Claire Perkins

978 0 7486 4074 4 (hardback)

Italian Neorealist Cinema

by Torunn Haaland

978 0 7486 3611 2 (hardback)

Forthcoming titles include:

The Spanish Horror Film

by Antonio Lázaro-Reboll

978 0 7486 3638 9 (hardback)

American Independent-Commercial Cinema

by Linda Badley and R. Barton Palmer

978 0 7486 2459 1 (hardback)

The Italian Sword-and-Sandal Film

by Frank Burke

978 0 7486 1983 2 (hardback)

New Nordic Cinema

by Mette Hjort, Andrew Nestigen and Anna Stenport

978 0 7486 3631 0 (hardback)

Italian Post-neorealist Cinema

by Luca Barattini

978 0 7486 4054 6 (hardback)

Magic Realist Cinema in East Central Europe

by Aga Skrodzka

978 0 7486 3916 8 (hardback)

Cinemas of the North Africa Diaspora of France

by Will Higbee

978 0 7486 4004 1 (hardback)

New Romanian Cinema

by Christina Stojanova and Dana Duma

978 0 7486 4264 9 (hardback)

Contemporary Latin American Cinema: New Transnationalisms

by Dolores Tierney

978 0 7486 4573 2 (hardback)

Visit the Traditions in World Cinema website at www.euppublishing.com/series/TIWC

ITALIAN NEOREALIST CINEMA

Torunn Haaland

EDINBURGH
University Press

© Torunn Haaland, 2012

Edinburgh University Press Ltd
22 George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LF

www.euppublishing.com

Typeset in 10/12.5pt Sabon
by Servis Filmsetting Ltd, Stockport, Cheshire, and
printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 0 7486 3611 2 (hardback)
ISBN 978 0 7486 3613 6 (webready PDF)
ISBN 978 0 7486 6478 8 (epub)
ISBN 978 0 7486 6477 1 (Amazon ebook)

The right of Torunn Haaland
to be identified as author of this work
has been asserted in accordance with
the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

CONTENTS

List of figures	vi
Acknowledgments	viii
1. A moment and a country	1
2. Realism and neorealism	33
3. Literary neorealism: narration and testimony	62
4. Rossellini's cities of war and resistance	91
5. Wandering among De Sica's urbanites: shoeshiners, bicycle thieves, miraculous outcasts and a man with a dog	123
6. Visconti's worlds of aestheticism and ideology: between tradition and invention, from country to city	146
7. Faces and spaces of neorealism: from dystopian cities to utopian countries	169
8. The journey beyond neorealism: streetwalkers, political rebels, anti-mafia resisters, stolen children and unwanted citizens	193
Filmography	219
Bibliography	222
Index	233

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	Bruno and Mariuccia in Camerini's <i>Gli uomini che mascalzoni!</i> Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.	10
Figure 1.2	Gino and Giovanna in Visconti's <i>Obsession</i> . Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.	17
Figure 1.3	Pricò and his father in De Sica's <i>I bambini ci guardano</i> . Courtesy of the British Film Institute.	20
Figure 2.1	Caterina Rigoglioso and her son in <i>Amore in città</i> . Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.	56
Figure 3.1	Chiara Samugheo's 'Le baraccate di Napoli' (<i>Cinema Nuovo</i> , 1955); Courtesy of Chiara Samugheo.	64
Figure 3.2	Renato Guttuso's <i>Crocifissione</i> , 1940–1. Courtesy of Archivi Guttuso. © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SIAE, Rome.	65
Figure 3.3	Carlo Levi's <i>La Santarcangelese</i> , 1935–6. Courtesy of Raffaella Acetoso. © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SIAE, Rome.	86
Figure 4.1	Dale shortly before he is killed by Nazi soldiers in Rossellini's <i>Paisà</i> . Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.	114
Figure 4.2	Edmund in Rossellini's <i>Germania anno zero</i> . Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.	120

Figure 5.1	Antonio and Bruno in De Sica's <i>Bicycle Thieves</i> . Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.	133
Figure 5.2	Totò with Edvige and fellow homeless in De Sica's <i>Miracle in Milan</i> . Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.	139
Figure 6.1	The Valastro women in Visconti's <i>The Earth Trembles</i> . Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.	153
Figure 6.2	Livia and Franz in Visconti's <i>Senso</i> . Courtesy of the British Film Institute.	161
Figure 7.1	Lidia and Ernesto in Lattuada's <i>Il bandito</i> . Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.	173
Figure 7.2	Barbara, Saro and his son in Germi's <i>Il cammino della speranza</i> . Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.	180
Figure 7.3	Silvana, centre, with fellow <i>mondine</i> in De Santis' <i>Bitter Rice</i> . Courtesy of the British Film Institute.	184
Figure 8.1	Tunin and Tripolina in Wertmüller's <i>Film d'amore e anarchia</i> . Courtesy of the British Film Institute.	202
Figure 8.2	Witnesses to the building collapse in Rosi's <i>Le mani sulla città</i> . Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.	206
Figure 8.3	Rosetta, Luciano and Antonio (far behind) in Amelio's <i>Il ladro di bambini</i> . Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.	211

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been started nor certainly completed without the unreasonable faith and patience of the series editors, Linda Badley and Barton Palmer. I thank them for the relentless enthusiasm with which they have participated in my languid progress.

I am thankful to Gillian Leslie and Rebecca Mackenzie at Edinburgh University Press for their encouraging assistance and to my copy-editor Sally Davies for her meticulousness.

Many practical and financial issues were solved thanks to library staff at Gonzaga University and The Pennsylvania State University as well as to funds from the College of Arts and Sciences at Gonzaga University.

I am grateful to the Archivi Guttuso, Raffaella Acetoso and Chiara Samugheo for their generosity in providing access to illustrations.

Warm thanks go to senior colleagues who at various stages supported this and my other endeavours: Gabriella Brooke, Stefania Nedderman, Sherry Roush and Maria Truglio.

If, in the text, one can sense the choral quality of neorealist narratives, it stems from professors whose voices of wisdom continue to inspire, direct and merge with my own: Paula Amad, Gill Branston, Andrea Ciccarelli, Sara Gwenllian-Jones, Chris Holmlund, James Naremore and Massimo Scalabrini.

If, on the other hand, there are imprints of the disconnected spaces that extend into new life, for these I am indebted to friends who in a particular way have opened their homes and unravelled their cultural heritage to me: Marta Moretto, Nadia Nocchi and Angela Porcarelli.

The absent presence belongs uniquely to my brother Vegard.

Like some other things that are utterly useless to most people but in becoming have unleashed the most valuable exchanges of thought and human understanding, *Italian Neorealist Cinema* originates in the indolence of Peter Bondanella and develops in the genuine pleasure he always takes in following his students' growth. I hereby return it to him – washed and ironed and ready for use – along with new vistas of appreciation. Standing on the shoulders of such a giant, there is no end what you can see and I can only hope that some of the revelations are reflected here.

Torunn Haaland

With the exception of *Open City*, *Shoeshine*, *Bicycle Thieves*, *Miracle in Milan*, *Obsession*, *The Earth Trembles* and *Bitter Rice* which many readers will know by their English titles, all Italian films are referred to by their original title and English translations are provided in the filmography. All other translations, unless otherwise stated are mine.

TRADITIONS IN WORLD CINEMA

General editors: **Linda Badley and R. Barton Palmer**

Founding editor: **Steven Jay Schneider**

Traditions in World Cinema is a series of textbooks and monographs devoted to the analysis of currently popular and previously underexamined or undervalued film movements from around the globe. Also intended for general interest readers, the textbooks in this series offer undergraduate- and graduate-level film students accessible and comprehensive introductions to diverse traditions in world cinema. The monographs open up for advanced academic study more specialised groups of films, including those that require theoretically-oriented approaches. Both textbooks and monographs provide thorough examinations of the industrial, cultural, and socio-historical conditions of production and reception.

The flagship textbook for the series includes chapters by noted scholars on traditions of acknowledged importance (the French New Wave, German Expressionism), recent and emergent traditions (New Iranian, post-Cinema Novo), and those whose rightful claim to recognition has yet to be established (the Israeli persecution film, global found footage cinema). Other volumes concentrate on individual national, regional or global cinema traditions. As the introductory chapter to each volume makes clear, the films under discussion form a coherent group on the basis of substantive and relatively transparent, if not always obvious, commonalities. These commonalities may be formal, stylistic or thematic, and the groupings may, although they need not, be popularly

identified as genres, cycles or movements (Japanese horror, Chinese martial arts cinema, Italian Neorealism). Indeed, in cases in which a group of films is not already commonly identified as a tradition, one purpose of the volume is to establish its claim to importance and make it visible (East Central European Magical Realist cinema, Palestinian cinema).

Textbooks and monographs include:

- An introduction that clarifies the rationale for the grouping of films under examination
- A concise history of the regional, national, or transnational cinema in question
- A summary of previous published work on the tradition
- Contextual analysis of industrial, cultural and socio-historical conditions of production and reception
- Textual analysis of specific and notable films, with clear and judicious application of relevant film theoretical approaches
- Bibliograph(ies)/filmograph(ies)

Monographs may additionally include:

- Discussion of the dynamics of cross-cultural exchange in light of current research and thinking about cultural imperialism and globalisation, as well as issues of regional/national cinema or political/aesthetic movements (such as new waves, postmodernism, or identity politics)
- Interview(s) with key filmmakers working within the tradition.

To Peter

for all the work, the help, the fun:

‘Amo i film divertenti e, al contrario di Umberto Barbaro che va al cinema soltanto per istruirsi, io preferisco andarci per dimenticare quel poco che so.’

Ennio Flaiano, 1948

I. A MOMENT AND A COUNTRY

‘... one feels that everything was done too fast and with too fierce a sincerity to run the risk of bogging down in mere artistry or meditateness [. . .] The film’s finest over-all quality [. . .] is this immediacy.’

James Agee, review of *Open City*, 1946 (2000)

VIEWING HISTORY

What affinities there are between cinema, urban streets and history had been amply explored before Roberto Rossellini (1906–77) shot *Rome, Open City* (1945; *Roma, città aperta*), whose heroine is killed during a Nazi raid in the winter of 1944, a few months before the city is liberated. From the Lumière brothers’ pioneering views on work and quotidian moments in 1890s’ France, to the emergence of urban documentaries in 1920s’ Russian and German cinema and *noir* cities in 1940s’ Hollywood, the spatiotemporal capacities of the moving image to evoke the life that flows, privileging social milieu and collective events over individual conflict, had made filmmakers look to the streets the way Rossellini did only months after the events he depicted had taken place. Few moments in world cinema had, however, captured with such an immediacy those intrinsically cinematic streets where ‘history is made’ that Siegfried Kracauer singled out as a characteristic of cinematic realism (1960: 72; 98). When Pina falls lifeless in via Montecucciolli in front of her son; her fiancé; a partisan priest, who will soon face the same fate; and a neighbourhood unified in the claim to freedom, the world is brought to a

standstill in which the forces of destruction are neutralised by the life-giving act of sacrifice. What we witness when Pina breaks away from the guards and runs after the truck, her screams and her hand reaching out to seize Francesco, is 'an irreversible choice' that affirms 'the freedom of thought as a value'; a futile, apparently irrational and decidedly passionate act that demonstrates her identity as a woman who in response to recent national history has assumed an unprecedented place and voice in the public sphere, and as the incarnation of 'the new individual', unbendable in her beliefs and prepared to die for her city's openness.¹

Moving away from the fiction of Pina's death, the image of Anna Magnani (1908–73) as a defiant Resistance martyr symbolises the real-life stories of war, destitution and collective battle we all associate with neorealist film. *Open City* was shot with improvised economic and material means, within the streets where similar brutalities and claims to freedom had been everyday reality, at a time when the north of the peninsula was still fighting against Nazi-fascist occupation. Italy's long and violent struggle for liberation is the focus of Rossellini's next film, *Paisà* (1946), which evolves as a series of encounters between Allied soldiers and Italian civilians and partisans. Both rest on dimensions of actuality and ordinariness, and like *Bicycle Thieves* (1948; *Ladri di biciclette*) and *The Earth Trembles* (1948; *La terra trema*) – acts of testimony whereby Vittorio De Sica (1902–74) and Luchino Visconti (1906–76) respectively explore the moral necessity and cinematic possibility of turning unspectacular events into spectacle – they demonstrate how the urgency to chronicle recent or current national realities inevitably also became a matter of making cinematic history.

INTERWAR CINEMA AND THE FABRICATIONS OF THE REAL

Neorealist cinema is inconceivable if detached from the historical exigency and the unprecedented freedom to disclose the country's 'here and now' and give voice to those whom fascism had displaced and excluded. It cannot be seen as an outcome of the Liberation alone, however; although within a culture founded in opposition to the *ventennio* – the twenty-odd years of fascist rule (1922–43) under Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) that concluded with an additional twenty months of Allied and Nazi-fascist occupation – this was the leading interpretation of a progressive realism that brought prostitutes and street kids to national and international screens. Whether fascism was explained in liberal terms as a parenthetical 'moral ill' and a collective 'loss of conscience', or along Marxist lines as an anti-proletarian alliance between the regime and the bourgeoisie, the need for reconciliation in the name of national rebuilding produced a collective amnesia rather than a *de facto* purgation, and films produced between the birth of the talkies and the fall of fascism were

rejected as products of totalitarian structures that escaped both critical assessment and a radical reform.² Dismissed as propagandistic or, at best, escapist, the so-called fascist cinema was considered disconnected from the film culture that grew out of the war, despite the fact that several of those who during World War II and in the immediate post-war years experimented with realist filmmaking had been trained and often operated within the Duce's film industry. Continuities in personnel and artistic tendencies were ignored and the cinema moved on 'as if nothing had happened'; as if the events of the country's recent past had not taken place.³ Only by acknowledging that fascism, as a 'form of coercion deeply sedimented at all levels of Italian life, is the repressed of neorealism itself', can we understand its foundation as a culture of reaction and opposition that, before taking on aesthetic qualities, developed as a moral commitment to anti-illusionist practices and national rediscovery (Re 1990: 113).

When critics and cineastes in the mid-1970s rediscovered twenty years of forgotten filmmaking, it appeared that much of what one had celebrated in neorealist film – natural locations, non-professionals, ordinary material and characters – was far from miraculously new.⁴ More recently, an awareness of the circumstances that conditioned film production and viewing experiences in fascist Italy – ideological contradictions and lack of a coherent cultural policy, first and foremost, but also the dominance and influence of American film – have convinced film historians to dismiss the notion of a 'fascist cinema' altogether.⁵ The Italian film industry might have been close to bankruptcy in the 1920s, but at the outbreak of the war it ranked among the world's most developed, including among its institutions: the *Unione Cinematografica Italiana* (Italian Film Union, founded 1919); *Istituto LUCE* (Institute of Educational Film, founded 1924); Cines production company (founded 1930); *Cinecittà* studios (founded 1937); and the national film school *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia* (founded 1937). This systematic cultural and industrial reconstruction in the 1930s was never intended to form a propaganda machine; instead its aim was to bring Italian cinema back to the prominence it had enjoyed in the silent period thanks to epic spectacles such as *Quo vadis?* (Guazzoni 1913) and *Cabiria* (Pastrone 1914), while at the same time creating a film culture that would be popular while also serving to forge unity around the fascist state and nation (Brunetta 2001a: 16–17). The interests were therefore as many and as contradictory as the influences at work: those concerned with marketability looked towards Hollywood which Vittorio Mussolini (1916–97) considered a far more suitable model than any European film culture for a national cinema aimed at reinforcing the industry and at bringing the 'fascist wisdom' abroad (1965b: 56–7). His father the Duce – a passionate cinephile with a personal preference for cartoons, historical films and newsreels – may, on the other hand, have been terrified by Soviet films but

he admired Lenin's approach to the cinema as a weapon with which to control the masses (Argentieri 1974: 37–9). Neither of the models could of course have been ideologically more removed from what the 'Foundations and Doctrine of Fascism' – a manifesto co-written by Mussolini and his Secretary of Culture, the philosopher Giovanni Gentile – presented as an 'anti-individualistic' movement opposed as much to liberalism as to socialism (Mussolini and Gentile 2000: 48–9).

While the cinema became increasingly integrated according to the policies of fascist corporatism, where all interests – economic, social and cultural – were directed towards the state, it was not defined as a state organ. Instead, a twofold objective of 'entertainment' and 'education' demanded that newsreels, documentaries and endless recordings of Mussolini's speeches be produced by LUCE and screened prior to melodramas, literary adaptations, costume dramas and comedies produced by various private companies (Reich 2002: 6–13). In this way, the Duce became Italy's uncontested *divo* (star) and could spin his rhetoric into an evasive web defined by Hollywood myths rather than political doctrine.⁶ Restrictive laws were introduced throughout the 1930s, predominantly to protect indigenous production, but only after American films earned 78.5 per cent of gross income in 1938, were they banned from exhibition. Imperatives of cultural prestige and international viability tended to favour exchanges rather than isolation, and the Venice Film Festival (founded 1932) as well as the presence of Christian Dreyer, Walter Ruttmann and Jean Renoir, who all were invited to work in fascist Italy, suggest what aspirations there were to modernise and internationalise the cinema (Brunetta 2001a: 5; 245; 336–8). All initiatives towards revitalisation were in many ways consecrated by Mussolini's inauguration in 1940 of Cinecittà and the Centro Sperimentale, whose innovative approaches to film art and instruction were conceived in the early 1930s by Alessandro Blasetti (1900–87). A prolific intellectual and uncontested director in fascist Italy, he exposed future cineastes to contemporary avant-garde practices and theories, as well as to more 'concrete' ways of seeking 'contact with reality' by visiting hospitals, jails, and sanatoriums (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 40). What relative ideological openness the Centro Sperimentale offered during the years of the regime has been documented by ex-students such as Giuseppe De Santis (1917–97) who considered the encounter with Soviet cinema and Marxist theories in 1939–41 as having played a pivotal role in bringing him from anti-fascist sentiments to militant resistance. The fusion of exploited women and gangsters, class solidarity and boogie-woogie in *Bitter Rice* (1949; *Riso amaro*) – one of the most popular and internationally successful films from this period – epitomises the contradictory cinematic and ideological influences that formed post-war directors.⁷

In light of this, we can more easily perceive why those who had been active

in interwar cinema could move into the realm of neorealism without seeking to excuse past affiliations. While there was a shared sense that theirs had been a professional rather than an ideological compromise, there was also an awareness that the cinema during fascism had offered a 'neutral ground' and a 'free harbour' for exchanges of ideas and influences that somehow set their work apart from the political context (Brunetta 1987: 74–6). The relative freedom Italian directors enjoyed compared to their German and Russian colleagues is not ultimately measured by a few cases of state intervention and prohibitions; this reflected, according to Cesare Zavattini (1902–89), efficient self-censorship rather than tolerance among the fascist hierarchy (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 24). Most illuminating is the conviction espoused by Luigi Freddi, the Director General of Cinema during the 1930s, that a propaganda machine on the German model would harm not only the industry, but also the ultimate purpose of imposing totalitarian structures on a nation that still, some sixty years after its unification, was marked by enormous regional and socio-economic disjunctions.

To foster unity and a sense of nationhood, the cinema should not merely offer 'bread and circuses', although most films of the *ventennio* were produced under this banner; the new Italian cinema should also create celebratory images of current and concrete local realities. From a neorealist perspective, authenticity and immediacy are synonymous with an anti-fascist stance and demystifying intentions, but a realist aesthetic had already been advocated by fascist leaders and intellectuals to create a unique, national, culture that was social, yet not socialist (Ben-Ghiat 1995: 631–2). Politically, as well, Mussolini and Gentile wrote, 'fascism aims at realism', crucially implying that the anti-liberal and anti-socialist revolution they envisioned would be embedded in the 'actual historical conditions' of a corporate state formed by hard-working Italians (2000: 48–9). Related ideals of 'Italianness' and 'the fascist man' created a web of collective myths that sought to encourage identification between the people and fascism.⁸ Mussolini's public appearances were unmistakably keyed towards this perspective: when interacting with small-town and rural communities he would emphasise his rustic origins and the rural essence of the 'Italian race'; during encounters with urban audiences the Duce's public image was crafted to perpetuate ideals of antique roots and imperial rebirth. While both the folkloric and the colonial myths reproduced visions of fascism as the outcome and the protector of the people's roots and values, they also aimed to fabricate and align rhetorical practices with their everyday experiences.⁹

Within artistic and intellectual life, these strategies of consensus-making found parallels in two opposite, equally essentialist, movements – *strapaese* (Ultra-Country) and *stracittà* (Ultra-City) – that both emerged independently of, but in conjunction with, Mussolini's declaration of dictatorship in 1925.

The first, associated with the Tuscan periodical *Il Selvaggio* (founded 1924) would denounce bourgeois and urban elements in fascist culture by promoting rural traditions and community structures. By contrast, *stracittà* grew out of the Rome-based, French-language periodical *Novecento* (founded 1926) and celebrated the modernist aspects of fascism within a cosmopolitan perspective, spreading its ideas abroad while also challenging the europhobic and anti-American stance of the fascist state. Both were, however, essentially anti-bourgeois tendencies driven towards the dual objective of influencing fascist leaders and bringing the people closer to the regime.¹⁰ Considered as complementary consolidating forces, they responded to fascism's twofold exigency of establishing populist relations with the masses without excluding the middle class from which it drew both political and financial support.¹¹ Considered, instead, as myths that could also be contested, *strapaese* and *stracittà* created a space of negotiation where non-hegemonic influences could intrude and where critical views could masquerade as legitimate discourse.

That the promotion of realism became a far more ambiguous endeavour than fascist hierarchs may have wanted was partly due to concurrent and ideologically contradictory realist practices in European and American culture (Ben-Ghiat 1995: 632). The interwar years, marked by social crisis and unrest, the rise of socialist movements in wake of the Bolshevik revolution and the effects of the Great Depression, but also the transition to modernity and the emergence of urban societies, created a wide-ranging and manifold urgency among artists and intellectuals to give pressing social realities a voice and an image. In Weimar Germany, disillusioned artists formulated a *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) of concreteness to voice a cynical critique of post-World War I conditions and solidarity with the lower classes, whereas Soviet directors conveyed revolutionary propaganda of proletarian unity through dialectical realism. Among French filmmakers, radical opposition to the rise of Nazism forged the bleak forms of 'poetic realism', whereas American writers and directors sought forms of reportage and documentation, as well as stylised depictions of pre- and post-war anxieties. What role these and other influences played in the formation of neorealist poetics shall be explored more closely in Chapter 2. At this point, it is clear that whether realism involved social commentary (Walter Ruttmann's experimental documentaries), or an endorsement of social realism (Sergei Eisenstein), or whether it articulated anti-fascism and pacifism within the Popular Front (Jean Renoir), or social awareness within the parameters of Hollywood entertainment (King Vidor), it contradicted everything fascism stood for. Yet such realist discourses circulated among Italian artists and critics and were in part officially endorsed as aesthetic and industrial models for a cinema of the fascist revolution.

One of the first signs in Italy of the turn towards the real is Alberto Moravia's (1907–90) novel *Gli indifferenti* (1929). Giving concrete images

to illicit sexual relations, conformism and corruption within a middle-class family in 1920s' Rome, it displays an atmosphere of indifference that denies official ideals of commitment to state and family, deconstructing any notion of *stracittà* without offering *strapaese* as a viable alternative. It was in response to Moravia's concrete language and merciless social and psychological analysis that critics started to speak of 'neorealism'. Etymologically rooted in *Neue Sachlichkeit*, the term was occasionally used in the 1930s to connect some young Italian writers to the larger panorama of new realisms, suggesting their rejection of the solipsist forms of contemporary bourgeois art as well as of the aggressive forms associated with futurism (Brunetta 2001a: 202–3). The 'neo' suggested, however, also a clear distinction, not only from contemporary foreign trends, but also from past national traditions, in particular the late-nineteenth-century tradition of *verismo* ('truism') whose major exponent was Giovanni Verga (1840–1922). His short stories and novels depict marginal, Southern communities and aspire, on the model of French naturalism, to a detached, total view of the society represented. However, whether Verga's focus is on dishonoured women or exploited fishermen, he rejects the Darwinian determinism so central to the French school and adheres neither to the positivist faith in social progress or the objective or scientific literary descriptions of Émile Zola (Aitken 2006: 20). Instead, by assimilating regional syntax, terms, and proverbs within free indirect discourse and in choral voices, Verga seeks to convey both individual and collective experiences in more expressive, at times even lyrical and ironic rather than mimetic ways, while at the same time relating mental life to the wider social and natural ambience. The adaptation of Verga's *I Malavoglia* (1881) in Visconti's *The Earth Trembles* is the most obvious indication of the influence his regional poetics and attention to long-neglected Southern Italy would have on neorealist art.

NATIONAL REVITALISATION AND CINEMATIC INNOVATION: THE 1930S

It would take more than a decade before a *cause célèbre* of confrontational realism manifested itself in the cinema, but Moravia's example and the vision, more specifically, of a cinematic gaze directed towards 'rural dramas in rice-fields [and] fishermen in the morning' started soon to act upon certain cineastes and critics as well (Alberti, quoted in Brunetta 1969: 36). The idea of the need to reject scripts and 'spectacular' values, an idea Zavattini presented in 1944 as filmmakers' 'responsibility' to tell 'humble' stories of a destroyed country and in the 1950s as a radical neorealist thought, had already emerged in the early 1930s (2002: 664). At that time, his ideal of immediacy between life and image was paralleled by that of the journalist Leo Longanesi who envisioned films shot in the streets to expose what usually tends to be ignored (1980: 118–20), inciting directors to take the time to observe 'the life of the

anonymous' (1965: 292). Both demonstrated an affinity with contemporary avant-garde cinema, in particular that of Dziga Vertov, whose convictions regarding the 'kino-eye' pinpointed the camera's ability to reveal all that which escapes the human eye (1989: 69–72). However, whereas the revolutionary truth Zavattini promoted presupposed humanistic and increasingly universal values, Longanesi favoured an anti-bourgeois discourse that in promoting fascism and national 'myths' avoided the imitation of foreign cinema. When he criticised Blasetti's *Terra madre* (1931), which embraced fascist ideals of realist representations, it was precisely for its engagement with Russian formalism.

Blasetti would later emphasise the importance both of Soviet filmmakers and of German and French directors in inspiring the 'humanistic' visions that unify his vast and varied oeuvre, which includes costume dramas, melodramas, comedies and *Vecchia guardia* (1936) – one of the three explicitly fascist films made during the *ventennio* (Faldini and Fofi 1979: 28). Although the Duce considered his work a salvation for the national cinema, Blasetti was fiercely opposed to a state organ and aimed to revitalise Italian film alongside foreign trends and in contact with the concrete elements of local life (Brunetta 2001a: 125–8). Regional specificity and ordinary characters are privileged concerns of *1860* (1934) which draws on historical accounts of the liberation of Sicily by Giuseppe Garibaldi and his 'thousand' volunteers during the Risorgimento – the decades-long process of national unification concluded in 1871. The narrative follows a shepherd, Caemeniddu, on his mission to bring the provisional army from Genoa to Sicily; once the battle against foreign rulers is won, Caemeniddu declares to his wife, Gesuzza, that 'we have made Italy', without at all having grasped the political and institutional implications of this nation-making. Both the use of local non-professionals for the main characters and the foregrounding of the Sicilian countryside through panoramic views and natural lighting, draw on the regional poetics of *verismo* and Neapolitan silent cinema – a little known branch of Italian filmmaking that promoted realist practices as opposed to contemporary epic spectacles (Bruno 1993). Where Blasetti deviates from these traditions is in his failure to view History (macrohistory) from 'below' and present the events as lived by the lower-class characters and in the light of their everyday life and social environment. The perspective of *1860* is predominantly that of the nation, and while it pays exceptional attention to regional varieties of speech and culture as well as to socio-economic and ideological disjunctions, the scope is ultimately to reduce such barriers and project the historical moment of national unification onto fascist myths of regeneration.

Regional peculiarities are, on the contrary, a defining element of *Acciaio* (1933) which in its innovative approach to community life in the Umbrian town of Terni demonstrates what room the official celebration of work rela-

tions and local structures left for alternative influences. The film was drawn from a short story Mussolini had requested from the internationally acclaimed dramatist Luigi Pirandello (1867–1937) and Walter Ruttmann was commissioned to direct it. With his experience of *Neue Sachlichkeit* documentaries such as *Berlin: The Symphony of a City* (1927), he was considered capable of fulfilling Cines' twofold objective of internationalising Italian cinema and of communicating more current images of Italy abroad (Garofalo 2002: 240). Shot in and around Terni's steelworks, the story of modern machinery and destructive passions follows Mario, who upon his return from military service finds his best friend Pietro engaged to his sweetheart, Gina. His selfish behaviour at the factory where they work provokes a conflict that causes Pietro's death and suspected of murder, Mario escapes. It is ultimately Pietro's father who brings him back – to Gina and to the community – so that order is restored and individualism is condemned in favour of collective production. Enacted by local and non-professional actors, the narrative is conveyed through sophisticated variations in shots and lighting, a constant juxtaposition of images, and a suggestive harmony between the visuals and the musical score that reproduces the rhythms of the factory machines (Garofalo 2002: 241). All of this attests to Ruttmann's sense of montage-cinema and its ability to convey social and interpersonal tensions, but as the rather traditional storyline moves unambiguously towards the norm of the community, these techniques ultimately fail to affirm the dialectical thought he would have aspired to communicate.

Their innovations notwithstanding, neither Blasetti nor Ruttmann changed the standardised codes of interwar Italian film, but they suggest the range of influences and interests involved in the twofold project of national and cinematic revitalisation. Both films engage with ideals of *bonifica* (reclamation): a socio-cultural project of rustic revival launched to raise demographic and agricultural growth, something that became increasingly urgent following Italy's Colonial War against Ethiopia in 1935–6 when economic autarchy was introduced in response to sanctions from the League of Nations. Another objective of this 'reclamation of soil and souls' was to reduce an increasing migration to the cities, since fascist hierarchs feared that urbanisation would facilitate the formation of a political opposition (Ben-Ghiat 2001: 80–1). It was precisely the growth of Northern cities, which with their long traditions of workers' unions and political radicalism in effect would see the first initiatives to resistance, that inspired Mario Camerini's (1894–1980) *Gli uomini che mascalzoni!* (1932).

Shot on location in the rapidly expanding centre of Milan, this romantic comedy features the city as protagonist and setting for social analysis with a basis in the romance between Mariuccia, a salesgirl in a luxurious drugstore, and Bruno, a soon-to-be-unemployed driver eventually re-employed as a street-advertiser. Both aspire to the wealthy and degraded world that keeps



Figure 1.1 Bruno and Mariuccia in Camerini's *Gli uomini che mascalzoni!* Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

them employed, but ultimately they find happiness with each other. While the morally evaluative representation of social classes and denial of social mobility in favour of the lower-middle-class family does little to contest official discourse, the treatment of unemployment and economic dependence exposes social inequalities, while also emphasising the individual private and professional opportunities offered by urban modernity. Ultimately, notions of collective revitalisation are undermined by an individualistic view of the present as a question of finding one's place.

The twofold search for concrete portrayals and popular appeal is encapsulated in the prominence given to an ordinary romantic couple, and contemporary box-office figures relied to a great extent on the presence of De Sica who starred as a whimsical, but solid hero in several of Camerini's comedies. In *Mister Max* (1937; *Il Signor Max*) he portrays a newsstand attendant who masquerades as well-off and sophisticated to pursue a rich lady, before falling in love with her maid. In *Grandi magazzini* (1939), we see him as a delivery

boy in a world of consumer-goods, criminal trafficking and illicit relations who is finally 'saved' by a salesgirl: both find protection from the threats of the corrupt surroundings in lower-middle-class family life and domestic safety. In contrast to the authenticity achieved in *Gli uomini che mascalzoni!*, however, this film was almost entirely shot in the studio, retreating from the city's socio-geographic realities in order to convey a moralistic approach to urban modernity while the deliberately artificial world of fashion and the successful lives it presents falsely portray pre-war Italians as wealthy and modern. This reactionary escapism reflects sensitivities towards the policies of self-sufficiency with which Italy faced its increasing economic and political isolation in the late 1930s. While the constant display of Italian products can be interpreted as satirising disastrous policies that severely lowered standards of living, rather than as serving a consolidating function (Spackman 2002: 276–92), the contemporary reviewer Umberto Barbaro, granted *Grandi magazzini* no such critical merit, discerning within it an illustrative indicator to the current state of 'crisis' in Italian cinema (1939: 9). As he was well aware, the problem was not merely artistic, but it was ultimately neither material shortage nor pre-war tensions that made directors seek to convince audiences that they were as happy as fascist ideals of rural regeneration and imperial rebirth implied. At stake was rather the awareness that by 1939 such myths had lost their power to convince.

Several events were instrumental in the gradual decline of fascism, both prior to and during the first years of the war. If Mussolini's 'Declaration of the Empire' in 1936 marked the peak of popular consensus,¹² his successive moves – the support of Franco in the Spanish Civil War (1936–9) and the alliance with Hitler and the introduction of Racial Laws in 1938 – alienated the people from the regime and gave rise to an anti-fascist consciousness that increased following Italy's declaration of war as Germany's ally in 1940. Massive military defeats in Greece and Russia, causing thousands of dead and missing, as well as an estimated 50 per cent reduction in national consumption between 1938 and 1944, left the country in ruins and created discontent even within fascist circles (Corni 2000: 157). These circumstances reinforced restrictive laws and surveillance of cultural as well as political activity. No longer open to Soviet cinema and French anti-fascist directors, the Venice Film Festival became a parade of Nazi-fascist propaganda (Stone 2002: 296) and Luigi Freddi, who had previously expressed disgust for Goebbels' Nazi pictures, redefined the LUCE's 'educative' purposes, launching a series of military documentaries that sought to prepare the nation for war (Brunetta 2001a: 15; Fanara 2000: 128). Only a few feature films were made along this propagandistic line: it was far more common to offer evasion from the current conflict through portrayals of claustrophobic, upper-class worlds, whether by translating late-nineteenth-century novels that favoured so called 'calligraphic', or superfluously

decorated and formalist, pictures, or a type of parlour-comedy later referred to as 'white-telephone films' for their tendency to foreground glossy status symbols to evoke a fake social mobility. Although neorealism, as an anti-rhetorical, demystifying and nonconformist practice, emerged in opposition to all of these tendencies, the passage from propagandistic docu-dramas or easy evasion to innovative chronicles of evolving national history could be shorter and involve more overlap than has often been recognised.

Nowhere are these continuities between pre-war and post-war cinema as evident as in the work of De Sica whose *Maddalena zero in condotta* (1940) and *Teresa Venerdi* (1941) range among the more sophisticated 'white-telephone films'. If they still have a power to amuse, it is in particular thanks to elaborate characterisation and the performance of established comic actors, headed by De Sica as the romantic male lead. *Maddalena* follows a businessman tracking an anonymous letter whose author turns out, after much ado, to be a marriageable school teacher. The gratuitous complications that arise allow for, first and foremost, a satire of hypocritical school authorities who profess nationalist discourses and threaten to fire the nonconformist young teacher, but the play with identity deception and masquerade, so central to De Sica's work as actor and director, seems also to draw parallels between falsities in the claustrophobic world represented and the isolated and intolerant world it implicitly reflects (Landy 2000: 110). Questions of true and false identity are even more central to the Cinderella story of *Teresa Venerdi*, whose title character was born into a family of travelling performers. Her passion for acting is penalised at the orphanage where she lives, but it conquers the aristocratic, albeit poor and completely unqualified, Doctor Vignali who, for his part, fakes the necessary medical expertise to be hired by her administrators. Having rescued him from creditors, a cabaret-dancing ex-fiancé played by Anna Magnani, and an unsophisticated pursuer of nouveau-riche parents, Teresa can finally run away with her debt-free prince, abandoning a world of institutional rigour and falsity for a journey of undefined destination.

Products of studio-fabricated illusionism, De Sica's comedies are comfortably abstracted from historical realities and, with the exception of an aerial view of Rome in *Maddalena*, from any geographic anchorage, but the protection formed by escapist formulas and vapid images has allowed for potentially critical messages. While the subtle critique disguises itself in levels of performance, it appears more overtly in the evaluative juxtaposition of the hypocritically condemnatory upper class, on the one hand, and the sincerity and imperfection of the harassed school teacher in *Maddalena* as well as in the ingenuous orphan girl deprived both of roots and a voice. Giuseppe De Santis, then a critic severely opposed to 'the general situation of the Italian cinema' welcomed De Sica's 'sincerity and spontaneity' and the ability of

Teresa Venerdi ‘to set free, with itself, a humanity now afraid to manifest itself [. . .] now highly expansive’ (1942: 198). Retrospectively, we can see not only which humanity De Santis referred to a year before Northern workers’ protests announced the emergence of an organised Resistance movement, but also that the sympathetic presentation of such marginalised characters foreshadowed De Sica’s future commitment to the underprivileged. If, during the war, the repertoire of romantic comedy served to obfuscate messages that may, at the time, have been received as a form of political opposition, we should also expect to find comic elements in his postwar films the way we do in *Open City* and in a series of ‘minor’ neorealist works (Landy 2000: 110–11; Wagstaff 2007: 93). In part, this reflects the authorial contributions of the extraordinarily imaginative Zavattini – unaccredited but as palpable in *Teresa Venerdi*, as in De Sica’s successive films – but it also suggests that past experiences with comedy continued to shape his vision of the cinema, even when it produced stories of victimisation.

ROSSELLINI AND THE FASCIST WAR

It was in reference to such continuities in personnel and poetics that André Bazin, founder of *Cahiers du Cinéma* (1951) and one of the first and most influential critics of neorealism, insisted, against common opinion, that although the ‘rebirth’ of Italian cinema was decisively imprinted by the Liberation, it was no ‘unprepared miracle’. If critics during the war, he wrote in 1948, had not ‘been, and rightfully so, of a preconceived opinion, films like *SOS 103* or Rossellini’s *La nave bianca* might better have caught our attention’ (2002: 276). Like Francesco De Robertis’ (1902–59) *Uomini sul fondo* (1941; ‘*SOS 103*’), which reconstructs an real-life rescue story, *La nave bianca* (1942) takes a documentary approach to the naval war, enjoying not only De Robertis’ contribution to the extent of complicating questions of authorship, but also collaboration with the armed forces, approval from the Committee of War and Political Film, and the supervision of Vittorio Mussolini, affiliations that subsequently supported *Un pilota ritorna* (1942) and *L’uomo dalla croce* (1943) (Ben-Ghiat 2000: 20–4). Although the official intention of such projects was to convey the continuity of the war as an everyday and ‘serenely accepted’ fact among soldiers (Brunetta 2001a: 152), for Rossellini, who later emphasised his disassociation with fascism and association instead with the Duce’s son, they offered an opportunity to develop experience through assisting on projects that experimented with documentary filmmaking (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 48). When he retrospectively traced the birth both of neorealism and of his own cinematic vision to these ‘fictionalised documentaries’ it was, however, not first and foremost for the fusion of historical material, realist aesthetics and melodramatic narratives, although such hybridisations become increasingly

prevalent in the post-war years, but for the 'choral quality' and 'spirituality' that often subvert the films' bellicose and ideological thematics.¹³

La nave bianca is introduced by a caption presenting us with the film's theme and the director's method: the characters are the actual crew of a warship, and they are captured – 'dal vero' (from real life) in their own environment and with *verismo* in sentiment. Both the authenticity of locations and characters, as well as the rapid editing that structures documentary footage of actual naval combats in the first part of the film reveal at least an indirect knowledge of Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and of his theories of dialectical montage (Rondolino 1989: 58). More specifically, the film's claim to authenticity evokes Verga's commitment to provide verisimilar representations by assimilating the characters' speech patterns and collective voice, radically reducing authorial comments on the world portrayed. The camera works with similar strategies of detachment, observing the navy operatives' singular features of regional speech and individual interests within the frame of their collective life. It also captures their union when they work together to defend the ship under attack and when they pay tribute to the king and the Duce ('*Viva il Re*' '*Saluto al Duce*') once the battle is won. Like the sequence covering their fraternal relations with German sailors, these were diplomatic elements that would have been obligatory less than a year into the war (Rondolino 1989: 58). Such semi-documentary tendencies fade, however, in the second half of the film, which is sentimental and patriotic in tone and which is centred around Elena, a school teacher serving as a nurse on the hospital ship, *Arno*. She decides to suppress her secret love for a wounded sailor since such feelings would compromise her duty to serve all the naval heroes equally.¹⁴ The dialectics between the individual and the collective, between self-interest and self-sacrifice, find no unequivocal synthesis. The melodramatic narration may reinforce heroic commitment, but the detached, overall view of social ambience also encompasses severe injuries and deaths occurring during the attack, and while these disquieting 'facts' are left to 'speak for themselves', as Verga prescribed, they unavoidably come to speak for all those who lost their lives to the fascist war and, by extension, for those whose individual freedom was suppressed by totalitarian structures.

A success among audiences and critics alike, *La nave bianca* aroused little enthusiasm among fascist officials, and *Un pilota ritorna*, which Vittorio Mussolini scripted, depicts, as a result, all the rhetorical heroism Rossellini sought to avoid, ignoring entirely that at the time of production the war was practically already lost (Rossellini 1987a: 93–5). To showcase the air force, the film moves to Italy's invasion of Greece, omitting the details of a campaign that was launched as a sure 'walk-over' in the autumn of 1940, only to end disastrously in a rescue by Hitler the following spring (Corni 2000: 157). Although the attention to collective life and hierarchical structures within the

air force and the inclusion of spectacular battle scenes partly constructed from documentary footage achieves a verisimilar representation of pilots at war that is reinforced by the presence of lesser-known actors and non-professionals, this tentatively unbiased perspective is ultimately undermined by anti-Allied messages and by the patriotic-romantic endeavours of Lieutenant Rosati to whom Massimo Girotti (1918–2003) lent his latent stardom. Escaping from a British prison camp on the Greek front, he leaves his new-found love Anna, who looks after the prisoners, to take off with an Allied aircraft and return to duty in Italy. Although the portrayal of innocent victims and the solidarity within the prison camp can be said to condemn the war, questions of guilt and responsibility are unequivocally related to the enemy's cruelty without ever challenging fascist ideals of sacrifice or the legitimacy of a rapidly declining regime.

Encapsulating the contradictions between a political order unwilling to recognise its defeat, and a tired population longing for freedom, *L'uomo dalla croce* is just as far-fetched in its bellicose propaganda as it is prophetic of Rossellini's future work. Scripted by the fascist ideologist Asvero Gravelli, it glorifies the Italian expedition to Russia in the summer of 1942 – a disastrous event that more than any other marked the failure of the fascist war. Once it was released in June 1943 it was already passé and enjoyed a limited run. It is important to recognise that both the extensive battle scenes and the anti-communist stereotypes are challenged by the historically far more accurate and ideologically rather ambiguous story of an army chaplain, modelled on Father Reginaldo Giuliani who was actually killed on the Russian front (Rondolini 1989: 60–5). Determined to prove a hidden spiritual vision in everyone, the 'man with a cross' presents himself in apolitical terms as God's soldier and dies while absolving a Russian adversary. Like *Un pilota ritorna*, *L'uomo dalla croce* was shot in natural, if not authentic locations, and it adopts the same reserved style, but its focus on a figure of unconditional charity, invested with the anonymity of a non-professional actor and the community gathered around his Christian humanism, ultimately leads us away from any purely patriotic heroism, demonstrating better than any other film the many uncertainties and contradictions in which neorealism was formed.

TOWARDS A NEW CULTURE: FROM VERGA TO VISCONTI AND BEYOND

The ideal Rossellini developed of a 'veristic' look at historical realities was, from his side, never outlined as an artistic aim, but it engaged with a contemporary debate wherein the premise for a cinema of honesty and concreteness was established with aspirations to political and national reorganisation. In an article titled 'Truth and Poetry: Verga and the Italian Cinema', Mario Alicata (1918–1966) and De Santis looked towards the Sicilian author for inspiration

for narrative cinema and a 'revolutionary art inspired from a humanity that suffers and hopes'. Besides having created 'a country, a time, a society' (Alicata and De Santis 1941b), Verga's stories about farmers, fishermen, fallen women and brigands contained, beneath their formal elaboration, elements traceable in oral culture and popular novels and had therefore the power 'to communicate with a vast audience' – an invaluable lesson for cineastes determined to support a 'national reawakening', a detachment from 'all that which merged in fascism' and a 'maturation of a new way of feeling and of being' (Argentieri 1996: 112). The article provoked a wave of responses within the periodicals *Bianco e nero* (founded 1937) and *Cinema* (founded 1936); the former was the organ of the Centro Sperimentale, the latter was co-founded by Luigi Freddi, but both operated with considerable liberty from official polices. In the politically critical years 1938–41, *Cinema* enjoyed the ideological legitimacy of its director, Vittorio Mussolini, who called for images of the beauty (not the possible ugliness) of the 'Italian race' (1980: 33) and for documentaries showcasing 'the power and greatness of Italy' to promote the government's 'actions' while leaving relative room for alternative views (1965a: 7). It became therefore much more than a periodical, enabling encounters and exchanges for critics and future filmmakers gathered around the collective objectives that made *Cinema* the cradle both of neorealist thought and of Rome's Resistance movement. That critics in these years looked beyond their cultural objectives transpires from Visconti's critique of a film industry that tied the hands of young directors with 'loads to say': for a new cinema to take form, he wrote in 1941, certain conformist 'cadavers' would have to be buried (1986a). The funeral he prophesied as a presupposition for rebirth indexed, in its purifying scope, a new political order wherein the cinema would serve as a socio-political as well as cultural agent devoted to engage and activate spectators around critical viewing experiences.

Visconti's initiatives towards cinematic renewal were programmatically outlined in his article 'Anthropomorphic Cinema', which discusses the ideal of freedom of artistic 'specialisation' as a 'human responsibility' to tell stories about real people in real-life situations. Rather than allowing the artist to evade society as had traditionally been the case, creativity should serve realities constantly made and changed by humanity (1943: 108). This perspective inspired several projects that were censored, but it was intrinsically connected to *Obsession* (1943; *Osessione*) wherein Verga's regional poetics and social pessimism encounter James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1934), which Visconti had obtained from Renoir.¹⁵ Having inexplicably passed preliminary censorship, this film about adultery and murder emerged in 1941–2 as a collective manifesto among De Santis, Alicata and other *Cinema* critics, and while Visconti's private funds guaranteed freedom from industrial 'cadavers', their work was closely observed as police control intensified pro-



Figure 1.2 Gino and Giovanna in Visconti's *Obsession*. Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

portionally with rising anti-fascist activity and as several of the collaborators were arrested (Visconti 1976a; Argentieri 1996: 111). Two months before Mussolini's arrest on 25 July 1943, the film was edited despite disapproval from censors who had already eliminated several scenes, and a private viewing was arranged that astonished critics and cineastes: 'people saw a film they did not think they could possibly see', Visconti later recalled (1976a). It was his editor, Mario Serandrei, who first referred to the anti-aesthetic visuals as 'neo-realist' (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 68) and Umberto Barbaro, who since the late 1920s had applied this term to Russian film and literature, welcomed the 'improvised and screaming realism' that demanded as much engagement from spectators as the authors had invested in it (1976: 504–8).

Reversing the critical strategy of *Gli indifferenti*, *Obsession* deconstructs ideals of *strapaese* without presenting *stracittà* as a viable alternative, but it goes several steps further both in displaying unacknowledged realities and in rejecting existing codes of representation. Gravitating towards the edges of society, it traces squalid milieus and provincial monotony in the Po Plains – a territory so far unknown to the cinema and destined to reach international screens though *Paisà* and *Bitter Rice*. Our guide into this anti-escapist world is a vagrant who wanders right into Giovanna's *trattoria*-kitchen where her beauty is equally shadowed by the bleak surroundings and by her own

discontent. She feeds her broke and attractive guest and will soon talk him into plotting against her old husband, Bragana. This representation of Clara Calamai (1909–1998), a stylish *diva* of 1930s film, and of Massimo Girotti, known to many as Rossellini's patriotic aviator (from whom Visconti's wanderer has inherited the name Gino), and the atmosphere of melancholy without the sense of meaning and purpose would have had a de-familiarising effect and is clearly aimed at destroying their previous, conformist characters.

Split by divergent interests, the miserable lovers are unable to enjoy the life insurance, not to mention the freedom they killed for, and their attempt to run away towards a new start ends with a car accident that kills the pregnant Giovanna. Besides italianising Cain's errant characters, the scriptwriters also invented Lo Spagnolo, a travelling artist who, like the prostitute-figure, Anita, distracts Gino from Giovanna. Conceived of as an ex-partisan from the Spanish Civil War whose frequent (dis)appearances are meant to simulate a political conspirator on constant missions (Ingrao 2002: 16), he would, according to Alicata, have signified a proletarian vagrant who in professing anti-fascist and communist ideals seeks to direct Gino towards more important matters, but censorship made him so ambiguous that he has often been read in terms of sexual transgression rather than as 'the film's political conscience' (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 65–6). Two years later, the unprecedented freedom of speech unleashed by the Liberation nurtured illusions that a revolutionary art founded on a hopeful suffering humanity was possible, but there were 'cadavers' ready to succeed those buried with fascism and they would continue, we shall see, in many ways far more efficiently, to tweak, distort or mute, the voice of those with too much to say.

Mussolini would not have recognised political subtleties and certainly not himself in the decapitated Signor Bragana, because while local state representatives banned *Obsession* as soon as it appeared and archbishops blessed the theatres where it was screened, he extended its tormented distribution by a few weeks before it was removed and eventually confiscated by Nazi troops.¹⁶ More representative of official views was Mussolini's last Minister of Culture, Gaetano Polverelli, who denounced it as a 'bomb of anti-conformism [. . .] it mirrors an Italy immersed in misery and in pain that has nothing in common with the official face spread by governing authorities', without evidently realising that these were the very reasons for the film's success (quoted in Argentieri 1974: 57–8). What most troubled an already edgy establishment may not have been Visconti's sympathy towards the murderous lovers, but that the ordinariness of his gallery of outcasts and the unmistakable socio-geographic anchorage made it impossible to ignore the country's unofficial truths. More than its 'realism', debatable considering the narrative rigour, the implausible coincidences and the frequent use of close-ups and expressionist lighting to dramatise inner and interpersonal tensions, what marked the film's novelty

was its concreteness and the contact it sought with the nation. The cast, the basis in American *noir*, the story of sex, murder and tragic death, and the cinematography of the innovative Aldo Tonti all imply an intent to make a 'soft impact on spectators' in order to engage them in a new culture of confrontation and social consciousness (Argentieri 1996: 111).

No other film before *Open City* manifested such a break with contemporary cinematic paradigms or with rhetorical images of Italy's natural and human landscapes and few artefacts conveyed the sentiments of a nation exhausted by the war as well as *Obsession*. Nonetheless, a similar sense of unease drawn from unspectacular and un-narratable realities infuses *I bambini ci guardano* (1942) which bridges the tentative critique of *Teresa Venerdi* with the narratives of children's exposure to moral degradation, poverty and social injustice in De Sica and Zavattini's post-war films. Based on Cesare Giulio Viola's rather obscure novella *Pricò* (1924), the melodrama depicted in De Sica's retrospective view is a compromise between the old and the new cinema, and certain though it is that the story of a middle-class woman whose infidelity drives her husband to suicide is both moralistic and abstracted from the war and its casualties, their seven-year-old son Pricò's isolation and abandonment to unspeakable suffering are as far from cathartic resolution as they are from Depression-era comedies (De Santi and De Sica 1999). As implied in the title (*The Children Are Watching Us*), we follow perceptions of a world denounced for its false respectability through the foregrounding of a child as the focaliser and source of a study of inner life. This innovative approach to cinematic narration is encapsulated during a nocturnal journey in which Pricò reviews the events that have caused his present trauma. Looking out into the dark, the feverish boy sees images of his mother walking away with her lover and also superimposed images of his incomprehensible grandmother yelling at him and these merge with his own and his father's reflections in the rainy train window. This visualisation of a psychological state of mind is reinforced by subjective shots that align our viewing with the child's gaze, inviting us to share his ambiguous feeling of not seeing clearly and yet of having seen far too much.

Like *Obsession*, *I bambini* announced convictions shared among a new generation of cineastes and critics, as well as the poetic visions of its authors. Although no references are made to the war except for the sense of economic scarcity that hits even Rome's bourgeoisie, the film moves through different contemporary environments, from the city to the provinces and to a decadent seaside resort, laying bare the hypocrisy and judgemental attitudes that prevail everywhere without excusing anybody's neglect of the sensitive child. Socio-geographical markers and thematic concerns are enough to make us perceive 1940s' Italy as a time, above all, when children were suffering because of adults and, as such, as a time when actions obfuscated by deception and pretence were revealed as betrayals. Herein lies also the premise for the



Figure 1.3 Pricò and his father in De Sica's *I bambini ci guardano*. Courtesy of the British Film Institute.

child-subjectivity that characterises the successive collaborations between De Sica and Zavattini. Inherent in the fatally voyeuristic boy named appropriately 'precautious' (Pricò), there is already present the pain of lost childhood that we will later recognise in Giuseppe and Pasquale in *Shoeshine* (1946; *Sciuscià*) and Bruno in *Bicycle Thieves*. For these boys, the premature entrance into adulthood is the effect of post-war conditions of which Pricò is still unaware. He lives through the painful experience of seeing traditional pillars of security fall, suggesting how, beyond the massive material losses and increasing levels of disintegration the war would come to cause, there were also existential losses involved that a truthful cinema would have to account for.

No tragedy, but a light-hearted and ironic treatment of loss and nostalgia on the one hand and repressive social conventions on the other prevails in *Quattro passi fra le nuvole* (1942), widely considered to be Blasetti's pre-neorealist film. The rhetorical ruralism of 1860 is gone, thanks in part to Zavattini's contribution to the script, in favour of a bitter-sweet story that leads from the city to the country and back again, evidently leaving no way of escape from urban malaise to regional idyll. The narrative follows Paolo, a travelling salesman who is easily distracted from the economic motives of his journey when one of his fellow travellers – the young and melancholic Maria – insists that he comes along to her parents' farm. There, he acts as the husband she does not have and

the father of the child she is expecting. The celebration of their alleged union creates an ironic exposition of provincial power-relations and repressive ideals of family honour, all of which are juxtaposed in evaluative terms to Maria's innocence and sincerity. When their deception and her moral fall are disclosed, Paolo delivers a polemical speech on true honour that saves her position in the family, while he returns to the humdrum life of a travelling salesman and a loveless marriage.

Paolo's transient immersion in peaceful pastoral landscapes establishes an evaluative opposition between the lost Eden of his childhood which this unexpected encounter evokes and the mundane city life he now lives, but the melancholy and uncertainty inherent in the protagonists and in their story, are ultimately not associated with the disintegration of traditional societies. Rather, they point to an existential condition that, like Gino's rootlessness and Pricò's pain, may be interpreted as the expression of disillusion and quiet dissent. Wrapping illicit relations and social commentary within the comic framework of identity deception and a search for authenticity in natural and human ambiances, *Quattro passi* avoids both the scandal and the destructive fatalism of *Obsession* and *Children*, but by uncovering the more general implications of its immediate concerns, reading the critique of intolerant traditions as a denunciation of totalitarian structures, the film appears equally suggestive in its call for political and cultural renewal. All of these works demonstrate a significant re-elevation of the cinematic potential of ordinary life, throwing glossy telephones out in favour of dusty roads, milk bottles and kitchen curtains, and the rejection of escapist formulas is reinforced by the prominence given to marginalised characters that are allowed to view History from the perspective of those who had suffered the most from and had the least impact on its course. The production of these films in the years 1942–3 – a difficult time market-wise, as well, that hindered immediate mass distribution and the critical acknowledgment they later acquired – is a testimony to a hunger for freedom that after decades of muted existence could no longer be held back.¹⁷

VOICES OF RESISTANCE

Anti-fascist forces had been officially non-existent since Mussolini declared Italy a totalitarian state in 1925 and the socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti, who was assassinated by the fascists in 1924, had been one of the last to openly criticise the anti-democratic laws introduced during Mussolini's first years as a 'democratically' elected prime minister. Of the parties that had stood in opposition to fascism before 1925, only the Italian Communist Party (PCI; founded 1921) survived and *L'Unità* (founded 1924), its official party organ, circulated clandestinely in Italy and France during the *ventennio*. Communists who were not jailed, as was the case of the Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci

(1890–1937), or killed, would like other anti-fascists keep a low profile and still risk political internment, or seek exile, as did the legendary party leader Palmiro Togliatti, who in 1943–4 started to broadcast to Italy from Moscow. Along with the PCI, the French-based exiled groups *Concentrazione anti-fascista* (founded 1927) and *Giustizia e libertà* (founded 1929) had already organised clandestine units in Italy when Mussolini was arrested on 25 July 1943 (Corni 2000: 158–62). More than national unrest and the vote of no confidence in the fascist Grand Council, however, it was Allied bombing that made King Vittorio Emanuele III regret having appointed this man to lead the country two decades earlier. An armistice was reluctantly signed on 8 September 1943, while the King and the newly elected cabinet led by Marshal Badoglio, Italy's commander in the Ethiopian war, flew to the South where Allied forces offered protection from vengeful Nazi troops pouring in from the North.

Having split the country into two and reduced it to a battleground for foreign forces, the highly anticipated and for many desired defeat saw a revival of fascism in northern-central areas where the Germans established the neo-fascist Italian Social Republic. While its administration was in the town of Salò and Mussolini was rescued by Hitler's men to act as its pro-forma leader, neither the 'decapitated' Duce nor the Italian soldiers who joined the Nazis' scheme of violence and persecution, or fascist leaders who sought to restore the 'old' fascism, left much doubt about the republic's dependence on The Reich (Mack Smith 1997: 414–19). Attempts to revive the cinema in Venice after Cinecittà was destroyed by Allied bombing and most equipment was confiscated and shipped to Germany, failed, since all actors and directors with any degree of credibility went into hiding. Rossellini embarked on months of wandering and became attached to the *Cinema* critics who now constituted the centre of Rome's Resistance movement, whereas Visconti was arrested when he was about to enter the partisan war. In refusing summonses both from Mussolini and Goebbels, De Sica found an alibi in *La porta del cielo* (1945); a film produced but never released by the Catholic Film Centre. His major concern in the winter of 1944 was to prolong production until Rome had been liberated and to house as many refugees as possible in the Basilica of San Paolo where shooting took place (Faldini and Fofi 1979: 70–8).

While it was far from the case that the entire nation suddenly became anti-fascist or indeed that all of those who did, or who had long nurtured anti-fascist sentiments, now let thought materialise into action, the months of lawlessness following Mussolini's arrest created a climate of enthusiasm and opposition against a background of mass demonstrations and strikes in the Northern cities and appeals in the anti-fascist press for peace and solidarity between workers and soldiers returning from the front (Pavone 1994: 6–13). The state of unrest intensified following the armistice which rather than

peace and defascistation brought the war closer to home, and while soldiers on the run from German capture formed the first partisan groups, communists, socialists and *Giustizia e libertà* devotees came out of hiding to face the logistics of systematising anti-fascist sentiments and action (Cooke 2011: 5). The Resistance movement was subsequently centralised under the multi-party CLN (Committee for National Liberation) and by the winter of 1944, it had reached out from organisational centres in Rome and Milan to most of the German-occupied areas. Partisan action ranging from guerrilla wars; attacks; sabotage; weapon smuggling and intelligence provision tended however to be concentrated in the Alps, the Po Valley and the Apennine Mountains, and as several towns in these areas reclaimed temporary liberation from Nazi-fascist control, they were transformed into provisional Partisan Republics lead by the CLN and the local populace (Corni 2000: 158; 175). Besides such concrete accomplishments, what made post-war political activists and artists celebrate the revolutionary potential of the popular war for liberation was its democratic constitution. Of the 200,000 formally recognised as members of the Resistance, 35,000 fighters and 20,000 patriots were women, and while a majority belonged to the political left, it also included liberals and conservatives, and Catholics collaborated with Jews just as much as intellectuals and students fought alongside workers, peasants and ex-soldiers.¹⁸ Some partisans had joined the Republicans' battle against Franco in the Spanish Civil War in 1937 and considered the two anti-fascist struggles as continuous; others found inspiration in the revolutionary forces of the Risorgimento and the peasant protests and working-class activism that fascism had emerged to suppress; but many were driven to the mountains by opportunism and taste for adventure rather than by ideological or patriotic intentions.¹⁹

If a common motivation among those who first took up arms against Nazi-fascist violence was the instinctive freedom to *choose* and to express disobedience towards those who illegitimately claimed obedience, the increasingly centralised struggle developed, as the ex-partisan Claudio Pavone relates, into three distinct wars. Besides the war for national liberation, there was a class struggle, wherein workers and peasants saw an occasion to claim freedom from an exploitative bourgeoisie, and a civil war where the neo-fascists who had gone on to fight for Mussolini's republic were often considered a fiercer enemy than the Nazis themselves (Pavone 1994: 23–39; 225ff.). In the years of the Reconstruction, these two facets of the Resistance which were both motivated by a vision of socio-political reorganisation were largely undermined by an opposite interest in reclaiming the Resistance as a unitary national battle against the German enemy – as if fascism and social disjunctions had not and did not continue to divide the country. Although the Resistance was a far less harmonious and consequential force than the myths of national memory account for, this does not diminish its contribution to the Allied war effort or

the function it initially played as an inspiration to moral and cultural renewal. The anti-fascist coalitions in power between 1945 and 1947 continued the unitary, albeit far from unproblematic, line of the CLN and while these administrations remained sadly inconsequential, they kept the hope alive that what had motivated the most progressive factions of the Resistance – the vision not of a restored pre-fascist order, but of socio-political reform – was historically achievable. Only in the light of this climate of a long-desired liberation and projects of national reclamation across socio-economic and geographical divisions can we understand the specific objectives, manifold manifestations and undeniable shortcomings of neorealist film.

A NEW WAY OF SEEING: RECEPTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS

Unquestionably the most formidable and critically acclaimed area in modern Italian culture, neorealist cinema has often been celebrated for its masterpieces and questioned for its practical and political limitations. Of the 822 feature films produced in Italy between 1945 and 1953, only 90 can be defined as neorealist. Significantly, none of these were the works of the two most prolific directors of the 1930s, Blasetti and Camerini, although they were equally active in the post-war years, but instead of directors who had emerged in the 1940s. What is more, with the exception of *Open City*, *Bicycle Thieves* and *Bitter Rice*, most were commercial failures that in some cases proved more successful with foreign audiences.²⁰ That Italian moviegoers preferred Hollywood heroes once the fascist ban was lifted explains only in part this unpopularity. More significant was the spectators' increasing desire to move on from recent disasters without seeing their own misery on the screens. Neorealist film became therefore out of tune with a society in which the socio-cultural transformations launched by Marshall Aid soon made bombed-out buildings, guerrilla fights and black markets passé, but it was also clear that the films in most cases had been either too elitist, sentimental or populist to reach an authentically popular dimension. Such, at least, was the critique featured on the pages of *Cinema nuovo* (founded 1952) in the mid-1950s when the 'involution' of progressive filmmaking was discussed in relation to Rossellini's *Viaggio in Italia* (1954) and De Sica's *Stazione Termini* (1954), accused respectively of spiritualism and conformism, whereas the historicist perspective of Visconti's *Senso* (1954) was welcomed as a promising 'passage from neorealism to realism', from observation to critical participation (Aristarco 1980: 19; 46–8; 64). According to Pier Paolo Pasolini, a prominent heir but also a severe critic of these directors, this moment so rich in revolutionary potential had suffered from a lack of systematic 'thought' for cultural reorganisation and had as a consequence produced nothing but a 'vital crisis' (1965: 231). A systematic project would,

he maintained, have promoted relations between intellectuals and the people established during the Resistance and thus have forged the type of 'national-popular' art Gramsci described as based on the authors' identification with their lower-class subjects and their responsibility to foster unity and consciousness among them (1996: 71–2).

To what extent the neorealists found a model in Gramsci's prison writings once these started to be systematically published in late 1947 is a crucial question to be considered more closely in Chapter 3 (Chemotti 1999: 61). Some accuse the directors of exploiting the power of their humble characters to stir emotions and 'passive contemplation' rather than operating didactically among the spectators (Kolker 2009: 64). The political failure of neorealism also reflects the state of a country that, after the Christian Democrats defeated the Popular Front in the 1948 elections and processes of Reconstruction were subjected to Marshall Aid, Cold War sensitivities and the Catholic Church, was hardly a place for social revolution. Committed filmmaking was systematically hindered by intensified censorship and laws that, after initial years of 'lawlessness' and *ad hoc* production outside established systems, recast the cinema as a state-supervised culture industry of productive, ideological and cultural standardisations.²¹ We can accordingly delineate an initial phase of neorealism between 1945–9 that embraces most of its masterpieces and a second phase that only the most generous critics stretch to include Federico Fellini's *Le notti di Cabiria* (1957). By 1950, what initially was an improvised and economically risky form of filmmaking had become systematised by industrial imperatives and state regulation, and the term neorealism had achieved decisive political connotations (Sorlin 1996: 89). In both phases, the films that strictly speaking qualified as 'neorealist works' occupied a numerically marginal position alongside popular genre films attuned to the twofold challenge of increasing competition from Hollywood productions and audiences in search of spectacle, without however ignoring post-war conditions of unemployment, exploitation, and social disintegration. At the margins of, but in dialogue with, the aesthetic and moral ideals encapsulated in the works of Rossellini, De Sica and Visconti, these works may, as Farassino has suggested, be defined as films 'of neorealism' (1989a: 21–32) and frequently it is their fictionalisation of the real that best illustrates the thematic and aesthetic distinction of neorealism, as we shall see.

The notion of a second phase of systematisation also points to the critical reflection the reborn Italian cinema started to awaken as represented by the writings of Bazin and Zavattini between 1948 and 1953. Up until that point, between 1943, when neorealist thought among critics and filmmakers had started to take form, and 1948, working theories came not from critical formulations of a poetics, but from historical and material circumstances (Farassino 1989a: 32). To the extent that any thoughts were formalised, they were so by

a handful of films that according to De Sica never reflected prescribed criteria or adherence to a movement:

There were no studios, nor cameras or film [. . .] Still, neorealist cinema was coming to life, as a vast collective movement of everyone [. . .] It was not that one day we sat down around a table in via Veneto, Rossellini Visconti, I and the others and said to each other: now let's make neo-realism. We hardly even knew each other. One day they told me that Rossellini had started to work again. 'A film about a priest,' they said. (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 80; 90)

Recent stories, already turned legend, of loss, betrayal, repression and sacrifice inspired Rossellini to go out into the streets and cast citizens who had lived through similar events, but with scarce equipment, hazardous funding and a disintegrated industry, he had little choice but to improvise solutions and 'invent' a technique that proved perfect for the urgency of the material (Rossellini 1987a: 107). The same artistic freedom – inconceivable within conventional systems of production – and commitment to lived experiences saw De Sica embark on a film project based on Rome's street kids a year later, but *Shoeshine* offers a thematically and formally very different image of Rome during the last year of the war. Their successive films, *Germania anno zero* (1948) and *Bicycle Thieves*, incidentally both trace life in destroyed cities through the eyes of young boys, but what strikes us is their affirmation of a personal poetics rather than a certain set of norms, an impression that the radically different *The Earth Trembles*, produced in the same year (1947–8), certainly reinforces.

What unifies these films, which all represent the 'artistic freedom and commercial disarray' of the first phase of neorealism, is the search for a relation of immediacy between the cinematic eye and current socio-historical realities (Wagstaff 2007: 13). To some extent they all address the ideals formulated in pre-neorealist criticism, but not even Visconti let theoretical preconception of realism exclude his lyricist and often stylised approach to an underprivileged community at the country's remotest margins. As a result, the question as to whether a neorealist visual language actually existed came to occupy critics as soon as the phenomenon itself was recognised. Tired of being referred to as the father of neorealist literature, Elio Vittorini objected in 1951 that 'there are as many neorealisms as there are principal authors', an argument Bazin evoked a couple of years later, insisting that 'neorealism *per se* does not exist, but there are more or less neorealist directors' (1975: 690). More recently, Pierre Sorlin has recognised the homogeneous nature of the phenomenon while suggesting that only for those 'critics, intellectuals and politicians' who grouped certain films and labelled them as neorealist did they represent a genre (1996: 91–3).

In similar terms, Peter Bondanella disputes the existence of a ‘group identity’ since shared thematic concerns never embraced ‘a programmatic approach’ (2009: 34), whereas Lino Micciché defines it as an avant-garde phenomenon on the basis of the deliberate and decisive separation it represented from preceding trends in national cinema (1999b: 21–8).

Considering the absence of the intellectually elevated ‘*theoretical tables*’ and a centralised leading group around which avant-garde movements tend to take form, neorealism constituted, according to Alberto Asor Rosa, an ‘a posteriori’ poetics of what it actually *was* rather than of what it may have *wanted* to be. In that sense, we can talk of a ‘fortunate combination’ of largely unrepeatable elements and ‘a bundle of highly individualised energies’ converged by moral, political and cultural exigencies (1975a: 1610–13). This evaluation evokes both Bazin’s anti-essentialist concept of a ‘revolutionary humanism’ (2002: 263) and Zavattini’s related observations that neorealism would always be defined by a ‘moral position’ (2002: 913). Inherent in these views there is a conviction that, more than ‘aesthetics’, it was an ‘ethics of the aesthetics’ consolidated by the awareness among young filmmakers of their role in promoting human and social growth (Micciché 1999a: ix–xxiii); in that regard, Millicent Marcus’s observation that the ‘ethical impetus’ in effect produced a ‘certain school’, seems justified (1986: 23). The difficulty in arriving at an aesthetic definition sheds light on the essentially hybrid nature of the phenomenon. Carlo Lizzani, who like Zavattini lived the neorealist experience as cineaste and critic, looks back at it as an extraordinary moment of ‘interlinguistic dialogue’ [and] reciprocal fertilization’ that, by activating a range of models, styles, and genres, changed completely the frames of cinematic narration and the relations between its characters and the world (Lizzani 1998: 13–15). These ideas of a moral coherence and formal eclecticism suggest that what took place in post-war Italy was not as much a question of realism, but rather of a reinvention and re-combination of past and current traditions to form new artistic and ideological perspectives on reality. As will become clear, this objective tended to be reached through unconventional visions of history and country and of time and space.

CINEMATIC JOURNEYS AND NATIONAL DISCOVERIES

The notion, fundamental to this study, that more than a *movement*, neorealism was a *moment*, rests on a presupposition of the cinema’s relation to and position in history. In exploring works that operate within and between socio-economic circumstances and artistic as well as critical practices, this study will seek to account both for individual poetics and for the common intentionality and consciousness that, as Giulia Fanara observes, created a ‘circularity of *discourse*’ (2000: 101). Its manifold manifestations in literature and film as

well as in other visual arts form a web of aesthetic, thematic and narrative continuities and move, with 'unitary convergences' within a 'cultural, moral, social and ideological space' virtually open to all anti-fascist forces (Brunetta 2001b: 347–8). Considering Zavattini's notion that the only rule neorealism knew was 'Don't do today what you did yesterday' (2002: 887), the fusion of styles and conventions and individual articulations of something essentially collective appear in themselves programmatic, implying a collective 'refusal' of the culture of the *ventennio* (Bettetini 1999: 136); a reaction to the 'cultural standstill of fascism' (Pasolini 1965: 231) and an antithesis to the aestheticism of epic spectacles, Italian and American alike (Bazin 2002: 260–2). To capture both coherent forms of opposition and variations of individual expression, neorealism will be considered an *optique*, a term that etymologically denotes both vision and option and that as such will direct our focus towards correlations between a given ocular and ideological perspective and a set of aesthetic and thematic possibilities available within a moment of cultural history. As Dudley Andrew writes in an exquisite study of French 'poetic realist' cinema, the concept of *optique* has the advantage of accounting for elements both of style and genre, while going beyond these in distinguishing 'the specific type of experience offered by a set of films to the public' (1995: 19; 233). As such, it will enable us to appreciate the specific choices and solutions that distinguish not merely individual directors but singular films, while also tracing coherences in the critical practice with which they sought to engage post-war audiences.

Among the constants that allow us to view neorealism as something coherent is the search for an anti-rhetorical language with which to redefine relations with the people, an imperative that in particular motivated those who had witnessed and even actively engaged in the popular anti-fascist forces. An unprecedented experience of democracy and socio-geographical representation, the Resistance fostered an awareness, first, of the need to reach a social mass that for the first time had claimed the position of a historical agent and, subsequently, to create politically creative art without renouncing the aesthetic uniqueness and spontaneity of the first neorealist works (Asor Rosa 1975a: 1607). These motivations may have proved illusory or defective, but they were nonetheless authentically felt, and they allow us to see why *Open City*, anchored as it was within the themes and ethics of the popular war for national liberation, achieved the status of a sudden invention and, at the same time, why *Obsession* may be considered an anti-fascist, but not yet neorealist film insofar as it preceded the fall of fascism and the Resistance. These events had seen the lower classes imposing 'themselves as protagonists of history and of the destinies of our country', De Santis wrote in 1951, and assimilating this new reality, the cinema had opened its screens to 'orphans [. . .] widows [. . .] a suffering and ruffled humanity' (quoted in Fanara 2000: 83). Along

these lines, Italo Calvino emphasised the oral culture that had evolved among partisans like himself, spreading out through the nation and giving life to the choral, anonymous mode of the neorealist narrative. More than a 'school', he wrote in the retrospective preface to his Resistance novel *Il sentiero del nido dei ragni* (1947), neorealism had been 'a togetherness of voices, in major parts peripheral, a manifold discovery of the different Italies' (Calvino 1993: vi). The search for a truthful art conducted as an act of resistance had, as we have seen, engaged filmmakers before the armistice and writers since the early 1930s, but not until it emerged from clandestinity and assumed a reborn freedom of speech; a national identity to construct from zero and hopes, however short-lived, of reform and justice, did the thought of renewal manifest itself as a journey of national and cinematic discovery that radically changed perspectives on the nature and scope of cinematic narration.²²

Moving from the streets of war and sacrifice in *Open City*, to the quest for freedom that leads from Sicily via Naples, Rome and Florence, to the Po Valley in *Paisà* and returning to a cultural and existential quest in Naples in *Viaggio in Italia*, the journey that is illustrated here by Rossellini's trajectory but that takes multiple paths, alongside, across and far beyond his, proceeds as a socio-geographical investigation and finds a constant in the concern of recomposing the landscape and rebuilding the city in relation to processes of modernisation (Shiel 2006: 15). Tracing this act of reclamation and redefinition through its manifold pathways and common destinations, *Italian Neorealist Cinema* begins with a discussion of realism as a mode of representation and with an outline of the traditions and critical thought that led towards neorealism, as well as the theoretical reflections it provoked in the works of Bazin, Zavattini, and Gilles Deleuze. The complexity of the terrain is mapped out further in Chapter 3 through an exploration of Resistance writing and neorealist fiction, whereas Chapter 4 examines Rossellini's project of chronicling war-ridden cities in *Rome*, *Open City*, *Paisà* and *Germany Year Zero*. Chapter 5 follows walks at the margins of the post-war city in De Sica's *Shoeshine*, *Bicycle Thieves*, *Umberto D.* (1950) and *Miracle in Milan* (1951; *Miracolo a Milano*), whereas Visconti's vision of historical action in country and city is discussed in Chapter 6 with reference to *The Earth Trembles*, *Bellissima* (1951), and *Senso*. Chapter 7 explores films that bring neorealist spaces and practices into contact with conventions of popular genres, focusing on Alberto Lattuada's *Il bandito* (1946) and *Senza pietà* (1948), Pietro Germi's *Gioventù perduta* (1947) and *Il cammino della speranza* (1950) and Giuseppe De Santis' *Bitter Rice* and *Non c'è pace tra gli ulivi* (1950). The dialogue with neorealism leads towards its most immediate as well as its more recent inheritors, moving from Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni and Pasolini to Lina Wertmüller, Gianni Amelio and Nanni Moretti, among others. In following some of the many ways in which the concretised narratives, anti-heroic characters, dislocated spaces and civic

engagement have found new life in the works of such very diverse directors, it reinforces the sense of neorealism as having constituted a vast, hybrid and travelling phenomenon that recreates itself through cinematic experimentation and in confrontation with individual or shared struggles as well as the universal human condition.

NOTES

1. See Brunetta (1996: 37; 23). The title refers to the fact that although the Holy City had been declared 'open' or a demilitarised zone, and the Germans had agreed to maintain this status, as soon as city was occupied in September 1943 it became subject to military command and to Allied bombing. 'Open city' subsequently became a slogan of the anti-fascist and popular resistance that *Open City* celebrates (Forgacs 2000: 33).
2. The historical-pathology thesis is associated with the philosopher Benedetto Croce (1856–1952) – one of few openly non-fascist intellectuals who escaped jail and exile – while the Marxist thesis represents the view of fascism as a universal expression of capitalist forces and bourgeois means of self-preservation, denying the quintessentially Italian and anti-bourgeois revolution that fascism often presented itself as (Gentile 2002: 36–7).
3. The loss of collective memory that Brunetta describes was far from exclusive to the cinema (2001a: 359–60). The major voice of consciousness with regard to the country's fascist past and to past compromises belongs, as ever, to Cesare Zavattini whose writings will be studied more closely in Chapter 2. A few months after Rome was liberated, he called for a collective confession as the start to a new cinema: 'All the same, it is not a question about liquidating demagogically the work of twenty years but to identify what our individual sins were [. . .] we will not load onto fascism all individual responsibilities [. . .] We no longer have the right to be hypocritical and poverty will provide us with all privileges' (2002: 663–4).
4. Spurred by the post-1968 climate and contemporary cultural debates, the revisioning of fascism that took place in the 1970s involved historians, social scientists and cultural critics, as well as a community of filmmakers and critics whose 'paradigm shift' was marked by a convention held in 1974 in Pesaro, which confronted both the many continuities that exist between films made during and after fascism, and the nature and shortcomings of neorealism itself (Farassino 1989a: 22). In the cinema, which after the war had approached fascism in various, mostly stereotypical ways, and with scarce historical analysis, the 1970s saw a tendency to evoke the past for the parallels it offered to the present (Zinni 2010: 179–237). This connection will be illustrated with reference to Lina Wertmüller in Chapter 8.
5. For recent works on the cinema during fascism, see in particular Jacqueline Reich and Piero Garofalo (ed.) (2002), *Re-Viewing Fascism. Italian Cinema, 1922–1943*, and Steven Ricci (2008), *Cinema and Fascism. Italian Film and Society 1922–1943*.
6. For studies of the Duce's status as 'divo' see Gundle (2000) and Brunetta (2001a: 110–11). Vittorio Mussolini discusses both his father's viewing habits and his awareness that the scarce success of the only truly fascist films produced during the *ventennio* – *Camicia nera* (Forzano 1933), *Vecchia guardia* (Blasetti 1934) and also *Il grande appello* (Camerini and Soldati 1936) – proved the people's low tolerance for propaganda (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 22; 32).
7. Besides De Santis (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 42), among the students of the Centro Sperimentale we also find Michelangelo Antonioni, Pietro Germi and Carlo Lizzani, as well as critics and actors such as Gianni Puccini, Mario Alicata,

Leopoldo Trieste and Alida Valli. Several others who were not enrolled in the school, such as Visconti, took part in its cultural exchanges and debates (Faldini and Fofi 1979: 40–7).

8. Whereas *italianità* evoked the singularity and self-sufficiency of Italy's imperial past, Gentile's idea of the loyal and consistent *uomo fascista* drew on Nietzsche's *Übermensch* and aimed at producing soldiers and workers: 'the ideal fascist man is the Black Shirt. He is the soldier ready to risk everything [. . .] he aspires to become Mussolini's new Italian who corresponds to the great, dynamic fatherland . . .' (Gentile 2000: 264).
9. I have explored this topic in 'The "I" and the "We" in Mussolini's Bread and Circuses: Performing a Fascist *Communitas*', *La Fusta. Journal of Italian Studies*, Fall, 2006: 53–66. The Duce's speeches are published in Benito Mussolini (1959), *Opera Omnia*, ed. Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel, 36 vols, Firenze: La Fenice; and U. Hoepli (1934), *Scritti e discorsi, Dal 1932–1933*, Milano: U. Hoepli; or can be viewed in *Balconi e canoni: i discorsi di Mussolini*. Istituto LUCE, 1990.
10. The concepts of '*strapaese*' and '*stracittà*' are dealt with in Franco Masiero's 1975 article ('Strapaese e stracittà' in *Problemi: Periodico Trimestrale di Cultura*, 44: 260–90), and, more recently, in Ben-Ghiat (2001: 26–7). Anti-bourgeois tendencies were recurrent not only within singular nationalist and fascist writers and ideologists, among whom may be included the Duce himself, but also within official fascist organs such as the periodical, *Il Bargello* which in particular attracted young intellectuals (Asor Rosa 1975b: 111).
11. The collaboration of the privileged middle class was essential to fascism from its beginnings in the 1920s when the fascist *squadristi* (armed squads) were set up to suppress popular insurrections that emerged following World War I in rural communities as well as in the northern cities (Gentile 2002: 11–12). In relation to the lower middle classes, the regime introduced economic redistribution that guaranteed a fixed income and permanent social distinction from the proletariat (Candela 2003: 24).
12. Renzo De Felice's understanding of the Ethiopian war as Mussolini's 'political masterpiece' was grounded in the consensus it allegedly met within the public (De Felice 1974: 642).
13. Rossellini's statement dates back to 1952 (1987b: 85) – decades before critics started to explore the 'Fascist War Trilogy' and its continuity with his neorealist films (Rondolino 1989; Bondanella 2004); and, as Ben-Ghiat has recently demonstrated (2000), with films such as *Luciano Serra, pilota* (Alessandrini 1938) to which he contributed as scriptwriter and assistant director. Reception has otherwise ranged from Visconti's insistence on separating Rossellini's 'fascist films' from other pre-neorealist cinema (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 67) to Gallagher's assessment of their opposition to fascist ideals (1998: 72).
14. The division of the film into a 'documentary' first half, where montage editing is frequently used, and the sentimental storyline in the second half reflects the dual contribution to the film by De Robertis and Rossellini respectively (Faldini and Fofi 1979: 60; Bondanella 2004).
15. One of these was a script based on Verga's epistolary story about a woman's relation to a brigand in *L'amante di Gramigna* (1880), but Cultural Minister Alessandro Pavoloni had had 'Enough of these brigands!' (Faldini and Fofi 1979: 61).
16. The negatives of *Obsession* were confiscated by Nazi forces along with other precious films and equipment stored at Cinecittà and the version we see today is a copy Visconti had made for himself (1976a).
17. Having enjoyed brief distribution before Mussolini's arrest in 1943, *Obsession*

and *Children* were shown in cut versions in Venice during the Salò Republic, but both lacked publicity due to the cancellation of the Venice Film Festival that year and once they were screened in Rome after the Liberation, they could not rival the immediate popularity of *Open City*. Both were re-released between 1948–50 along with *Four Steps* and other pre-war films that somehow seemed to anticipate neorealist cinema, including the popular comedies *Avanti c'è posto* (Bonnard, 1942) and *Campo de' fiori* (Bonnard, 1943), both of which starred Anna Magnani and Aldo Fabrizi, as well as remakes of the Neapolitan silent films *Assunta Spina* (Mattoli; 1948; originally Serena, 1915) and *Sperduti nel buio* (Mastrocinque, 1947; originally Martoglio, 1914), which had been destroyed during the German occupation (Lughi 1989: 54–8).

18. See Jane Slaughter (1997), *Women and the Italian Resistance, 1943–1945*, Denver: Arden Press, 33. Corni (2000; 164) estimates that 9,000 men were actively fighting in the winter of 1943–4 and the following year the number had grown to 12,000–13,000. The largest faction of the armed Resistance was the Communist Garibaldi brigade. See also Cooke (2011: 6).
19. See Corni 2000: 165. Carlo Roselli's famous motto 'Oggi in Spagna, domani in Italia' ('In Spain today, in Italy tomorrow'), suggests both what a formative, anti-fascist experience the Spanish Civil War was for young Italians and the continuity in solidarity, modes of warfare and objectives to be achieved that connected the two Resistance movements.
20. See Micciché (1999b: 20–2). Christopher Wagstaff has usefully observed that, while most of the critically acclaimed neorealist films individually failed at the box office, as a group, they did no worse and at times better than generic groups such as melodrama and comedy (2007: 18).
21. See Grignaffini (1989: 42). As will be shown more clearly in Chapter 5, in 1947 the Under Secretary of Culture Giulio Andreotti reintroduced censorship and preventive review commissions as practiced during fascism. The objective was to discourage producers, who freely presented scripts to the commissions, from investing money in projects that would later face obstacles from censors and, in the worst of cases, not be granted release permission. The infamous Andreotti laws, which also had a fascist precedent promised incentives to artistically qualified films on the basis of their box-office profit (Grignaffini 1989: 40–2).
22. Initially presented in Zavattini's writings (2002), the view of neorealism as a journey of national rediscovery is elaborated in Melanco (1996); Brunetta (1996); and in Fanara (2000: 101) and post-neorealist continuities of this discovery are discussed in *Italian Locations: Reinhabiting the Past in Postwar Cinema* (Steimatsky 2008).

2. REALISM AND NEOREALISM

‘. . . a true and proper revolution: a film about a man who sleeps, a film about a man who argues, without editing and I would dare add, without story treatment. [. . .] Certain film lengths obtained placing the camera in a street, in a room; looking with an insatiable patience [. . .] Nothing magical [. . .] We shall renounce the *truca*, the *transparancier*, the infinite subterfuges dear to Méliès. *The marvel must be in us to express itself without marvel.*’

Cesare Zavattini, in *Cinema*, 1940

WHAT’S NEW ABOUT NEOREALISM AND HOW REAL IS IT?

What is it that makes Pina’s death look ‘real’? Is it the streets in which she falls, where bombed-out buildings and shabby apartments bear iconic testimony to civilian life and recent tragedies? Or the re-enacting of a historical conflict and our conviction that similar confrontations between occupier and occupied took place under similar circumstances? Could it be Pina’s instinctive reaction to suppression, the irreversible silencing of her declaration of love, and the sense we get of how it *felt* to be living in Rome during the German occupation? If this is the case, realism is not as much a question of historical accuracy, as of socio-psychological verisimilitude. Equally decisive seems however the ‘veristic’ qualities of the cinematic gaze which refuses to interfere in all the events represented while the narrative elevates the woman of the people and the Roman populace to the status of heroine and chorus worthy of a Greek

tragedy. How do we recognise the film's realistic aspirations, and how can we think of them as a neorealist *optique*? Questions relating to the coding and decoding of the real are the focus of this chapter. To look at neorealism as a moment of cultural history involves an awareness of the socio-political circumstances dramatised in Pina's scene, but it also requires accounting for the cultural influences and traditions that inspired their cinematic representation as well as the prescriptive and descriptive theoretical reflections they provoked.

The critical terrain and its historical context can usefully be framed by two classic studies whose appearance respectively in 1921 and 1946 incidentally bracket the rise and fall of fascism and, more symptomatically, the emergence of trends that announce neorealism: Roman Jakobson's essay 'On Realism in Art' and Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*.¹ Realism, Jakobson writes, is 'an artistic trend which aims at conveying reality as closely as possible and strives for maximum verisimilitude;' thus, works which 'accurately depict life by displaying verisimilitude', may be considered realistic. The problem with this definition is, as Jakobson observes, its intrinsic ambiguity, in that the author's aspiration to accuracy may not be recognised as such by the reader. A range of artists, from the Classicists and the Romanticists to avant-garde artists such as the Futurists, have claimed faithfulness to reality, but few of us would think either of Ugo Foscolo or of Marinetti as seeking verisimilitude (Jakobson 1971: 38–3). Even *Open City* may be denied its realist status on several counts, among which the Manichean division between characters and the alternation between semi-documentary takes on the city's exteriors and expressionist lighting of devilish interiors. Why do these elements of the work strike us as unrealistic, and why is it that the 'serious, problematic and even tragic representation [of] random individuals from daily life in their dependence on current historical circumstances' assures us of the film's realist intent? The latter is Auerbach's formulation of modern realism as it first took form in Balzac's and Stendhal's novels, but it could very well have been a description of neorealism, as could the primacy he assigns to moral over formal features. Only when faced with neglected and suppressed realities does realism, according to Auerbach, assume stylistic features (1953: 489).

There is no single standard against which to measure the degree of realism in a work, Jakobson argues. Rather, it is a question of conventions which we have learned to recognise and by which we can also discern the author's aspirations to verisimilitude and accuracy. The generic hybridisation of Rossellini's Resistance drama is highly unconventional; it contradicts our expectations of a historical reconstruction, whereas the various choices of representation Auerbach outlines reconfirm them. Partly, this is what the *neo* in neorealism refers to: while defying conventions, neorealist film and fiction elaborate on the moral and social components of traditional realism, and of *verismo*,

more specifically, thereby extending and reformulating its borders. Far from being unique to Italian post-war culture, this dialectic between old and new is what permits realism to constantly take on new forms. Gogol and Dostoevsky experimented with unessential detail, an unrealistic trait by nineteenth-century conventions, whereas in the 1910s the Futurists and the German Expressionists indulged in excessive distortions; and they are all, in Jakobson's view, 'neorealist'. Deforming outmoded codes that due to their very conventionality, had lost meaning, these writers and artists captured contemporary realities more tellingly by modes of exaggeration which delay recognition and make the object represented clearer, or 'more real' (1971: 40–3). Formulated from within the ambit of Russian formalism, Jakobson's evaluation of deformation as the basis for a 'revolutionary realism' (1971: 40–3) refers to the ways of "estranging" objects' that, as Viktor Shklovsky outlined in his 1917 essay 'Art as Device', serve to break the 'automatization' through which 'life fades into nothingness' by drawing attention to the 'artfulness' of common objects. It is not for the objects' own sake that we have 'been given the tool of art,' but to make perception so 'long and "laborious"' that we experience '*the process of creativity*' (original emphasis 1990: 5–6). For artists in post-war Italy, subjective moods, surreal occurrences, deformed images and explorations of dead time and empty spaces, became, as Lucia Re has shown with specific reference to Calvino, means to question accepted perceptions of history (1990: 198). Similar techniques did, however, also define the existential realism Luigi Pirandello and Italo Svevo (1861–1928) had experimented with since the turn of the century as well as the 'analytical and psychoanalytical' proceedings and the 'occasional complacency over the morbid' that critics of *Gli indifferenti* referred to as 'neorealist,' indicating the opposition such deformations of the present formed both to past realisms and to contemporary 'art-for-art's sake' movements (Milano, quoted in Brunetta 1976: 32). The latter was more specifically associated with Gabriele D'Annunzio's (1863–1938) aestheticist prose and poetry and with costume dramas such as *Cabiria*, which D'Annunzio scripted, as well as with the solipsist and convoluted 'prosa d'arte' (art-prose) and Futurism, the movement closest to fascism. None of these trends could inspire 'a new Italian spirit', Elio Vittorini complained in 1929, polemically directing the search for innovation towards the European and American literature he, like Moravia and other current or aspiring writers, were active in translating and publishing.² A few years later Vittorini would re-appropriate realist conventions to camouflage calls to political opposition, but he initially embraced cultural interchanges and renewal as a means to make fascism a modern, anti-bourgeois and cosmopolitan culture. This radical change in ideological objectives and continuity in intellectual direction illuminate the contradictory influences and intentions involved in the formation of a new realism as well as the conditions that allowed anti-fascist views and neorealist sentiments

to emerge within, and in some respects share codes with, the official culture to which it reacted.

MYTHS OF FOUNDATION

Among the critics and cineastes who already in the war years called for a revolutionary film culture and whose thoughts in many ways were formalised in *Obsession*, there emerged a point of unity in the principle of authenticity and where to look for its models. Whether the source of ‘inspiration and education’ was identified in Verga’s ‘essential and violent language’ (Alicata and De Santis 1941a) or in the unmediated manifestation of ‘life itself’ (Montesanti 1941: 281), it was clear that the modernist avant-garde practices of Vertov, Eisenstein and René Clair, and the realist tendencies of Jean Renoir, Marcel Carné, Buster Keaton and King Vidor exemplified the ‘love and practice’ of a truth (Alicata and De Santis 1941b) apt to give ‘meaning to human existence and its travails’ (Pietrangeli 1942: 20). Albeit of secondary importance compared to such masters, the disillusioned *Neue Sachlichkeit* – artists who opposed the abstract forms of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Wiene 1920) and other expressionist art with an obsessive concreteness – must also be considered among the roots of neorealism (Brunetta 2001a: 203; Re 1990: 15–18). Conventionally translated as ‘New Objectivity’, an accentuated ‘matter-of-factness’ (*Sachlichkeit*) in the approach to ‘things’ (*Sachen*) describes more precisely the often cynical rather than objective portrayals with which writers, directors and figurative artists exposed the socio-economic and political conditions of defeated post-World War I Germany. Otto Dix’s painting *Card-playing war-cripples* (1920) clarifies both this crucial distinction and why someone like Hitler would purge the public sphere of such ‘degenerate art’.

The defamiliarising practices associated with Weimar culture may be best seen in the theories and plays of Bertolt Brecht. Starting from the ‘epic’ (narrative) theatre which Luigi Pirandello had already formulated in opposition to the illusionism of conventional, bourgeois theatre, Brecht applied the Marxian concept of *Entfremdung* (alienation) to develop a dramaturgic method of *Verfremdung* (estrangement) wherein non-mimetic effects such as direct addresses to the audience work to exclude a passive and emotional identification with the characters. Such techniques would alienate the spectators from what appears obvious in the play and their everyday life, thus making the stage a place devoted not to cathartic relief but rather to exposing the effects of modern capitalism and to the instruction of the masses (Brecht 1964: 71–6). Only a few neorealist films demonstrate aspirations to the didactic intent Brecht envisioned, but his works, published in Italy after the Liberation, would have reinforced both the sense of the artist’s social function, and the awareness that realism emerges in the intersection between

innovative modes of expression and adaptation to historical circumstances (Re 1990: 26–7).

Cinematic formulations of *Neue Sachlichkeit* took the form of a series of *Strassenfilm* (street films) of which Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a City* is the best known. Taking a documentary approach to Weimar Germany's largest metropolis, it presents a flow of isolated objects and activities in thematic order (for example, 'going to work,' 'newspaper-reading', 'vehicles') to bring the rhythms of machinery and the wandering masses to a level of abstraction that draws attention to the city's impersonal nature as well as to its many contradictions. The rhythmic montage of human and mechanical life would carry over into *Acciaio* as would Ruttmann's alternately celebratory and dystopian perspectives on the impact of industrial progress on work relations and social life. While refusing the categorical denunciation of modern capitalism Fritz Lang had presented in the expressionist portrayal of Berlin in *Metropolis* (1927), the city symphony constructs suggestively polemical juxtapositions of manual workers and entrepreneurs, jewellery stores and the city's homeless, conveying political implications the fascist-financed melodrama excluded. This approach to the social disjunctions involved in urban modernity found, significantly, a much clearer resonance in *Gli uomini che mascalzoni!* where Camerini started from the streets of Milan to create a cinematic city split between lower-middle-class employees and their newly rich employers. Although the film's denial of social mobility and celebration of its anti-heroic, lower-middle-class characters are based on moral values and not on the kind of commitment to social justice De Sica would convey in *Miracle in Milan*, as we shall see, Camerini anticipated the use of the city as a protagonist and a basis for the social analysis that would become so central to neorealist cinema.

A singular model for Ruttmann and others who explored affinities between the moving image and the flux of urban life was Vertov's portraits of Soviet cities and his theoretical writings on the ability of the 'kino-eye' to 'gather and record impressions' in order to provide a 'fresh perception of the world' (1984: 17–19). Like several other 1920s filmmakers who experimented with 'avant-garde impulse and documentary orientation' – including Luis Buñuel, whose *Land without Bread* (1932) combined images of extreme poverty in the Spanish region of Hurdanos with a surrealist form of ethnography (Nichols 2001: 588–94) – Vertov rejected so-called objective photography and continuity editing which merely reproduce the limits of the human eye, and approached the cinema as a unique means of fostering critical knowledge of the world (1989: 17–19). Symptomatically, in *The Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), the act of deciphering an ordinary day in Moscow is also a study in filmmaking, and while the flow of objects captured by split-screens, freeze-frames and dissolves finds no place in the neorealist city, Vertov's faith in authentic street life as a source of revolutionary knowledge, and his fundamental idea that new

ways of seeing will also foster new ways of thinking, were among the greatest influences upon the critical debates that preceded and accompanied the formation of a new film culture in post-war Italy, leading, as we shall see, towards Zavattini's idea of a cinema of encounters and of national discovery.

Vertov and other Soviet directors were banned from commercial theatres, but their works were screened at the Venice Film Festival and among the Gruppi Universitari Fascisti (GUF: Fascist University Groups) and constituted accepted didactic material at the Centro Sperimentale where promising cineastes and critics received a cinematically and ideologically far more eclectic education than fascist officials certainly would have desired.³ The spirit of this openness was Umberto Barbaro, a professor at the school who, just as Mussolini raised walls around the 'Italian race' and Stalin imposed socialist realism, advocated 'cultural exchanges' without prejudice to either Marx or Freud (1976: 105). A relative tolerance towards prolific intellectuals considered more beneficial than harmful may have been what hindered close control of Barbaro's lectures and writings on Russian film and literature, although more significant still was probably the prestige the Soviet cinema enjoyed in fascist culture.⁴ Fascist leaders may themselves have been inspired by Barbaro without realising that, when in the 1930s he spoke of the cinema as 'the university of the people', it was with the conviction he later made explicit, that communism is a question of denying 'truths imposed as eternal and unchangeable [. . .] what matters [. . .] is a continuous research [. . .] a constant *thinking dialectically*' (1976: 429; 607). It was, accordingly, the use of dialectical montage where antithetical shots are juxtaposed to form a synthetic signification that Barbaro praised in Soviet directors whose works in the late 1920s he had already had defined as 'neorealist', indicating, in Jakobson's sense of the word, the function of their deforming strategies in encouraging a critical reception. Drawing on Eisenstein and Pudovkin whose theories he translated, Barbaro considered editing the very basis of cinematic art: only in their encounter did shots achieve a meaning and a vigour capable of emancipating spectators from the pacifying and exclusive world views foregrounded in conventional cinema (Barbaro 1976: II, 456–9).

Looking back at the neorealist experience, Barbaro would observe the didactic role films such as *Battleship Potemkin*, or Pudovkin's *Mother* (1927) and *The End of St. Petersburg* (1927) had played in 'opening the eyes of young Italian directors' and indicate realism as the way towards an anti-fascist cinema (1976: 212–14). As it appears from his increasingly polemical contributions to war-time criticism, this had always been his intention. It was to denounce a 'degraded' cinema in 'crisis', content to serve up easy spectaculars and, indirectly, to leave the regime sadly unchallenged, that he promoted an academic and cultural knowledge of anything opposed to fascism (Barbaro 1939: 12). The dialectical realism of Eisenstein's 'cinema of attraction' which

aggressively subjects the spectator to 'sensual or psychological impact' would, however, not ultimately serve to emancipate Italian spectators (Gunning 1990: 4). What was needed was a revival of a visual and regional realism that Barbaro traced from the Neapolitan silent films *Sperduti nel buio* and *Assunta Spina*, via Verga, to Caravaggio (Barbaro 1976: 313). While this visual tradition could be traced back to Masaccio and Giotto's Renaissance frescoes and even to the graphical precision of Boccaccio and Dante (Pietrangeli 1942: 21), it was unquestionably the baroque painter's human sensitivity and shadowed life in defiance of the Counter-Reformation's prescriptions and prohibitions, that made Barbaro look towards him for an artistic, and also implicitly political, model (1976: 379). Not surprisingly, when he welcomed *Obsession* as a sign of radical change it was in particular for how this 'visual lineage', had manifested itself in carriages, workers' hands, shabby hats and houses of 'dubious morality' to communicate the regional specificities of 'an anguished reality' (1976: 504–7).

If the iconography of *Obsession* brought to life a quintessentially Italian tradition, its depressive mode and tone betrays origins in French cinema, specifically in a genre established by René Clair's depiction of urban everyday life in *Under the Roofs of Paris* (1930) and the satirical anti-capitalist comedy *Liberty for Us* (1931). Focusing respectively on a romantic street-singer and his working-class neighbourhood and an escaped convict's road to financial success, the two films foreshadow the proliferation of authentic locals, vernacular cultures and social consciousness in neorealist film and literature. Less obvious, perhaps, are the parallels to the stylised, poeticised, and carefully scripted star vehicles of Marcel Carné and Jean Renoir, but Barbaro recognised a 'neorealist' attitude in their crude exposition of human brutality and their 'noble' attempt to examine its social causes and responsibilities. This tendency reveals the legacy of nineteenth-century French literature, which often provided the source for poetic realist films, but if exposition of tragic destinies and self-destructive behaviour in Renoir's *The Human Beast* (1938) reproduces 'the murky biologism' of Zola's homonymous novel, anchoring the protagonist's depressive and violent nature within generations of alcoholism, Zola's 'scientific sociology' (Andrew 1995: 301) arguably disappears in a poetics that refuses to 'demonstrate' like a theorem, seeking instead to 'express' a moral world with an '*artistic*', but not objective, 'truth and verisimilitude' (Barbaro 1976: 502–3). This would be the moral, and implicitly also, ideological, lesson offered by French directors, unmistakably associated with the anti-fascist Popular Front. That Barbaro a few months after the fall of fascism eagerly promoted the pacifist *The Great Illusion* (Renoir 1937) and other films that were consistently banned albeit often honoured at the Venice Film Festival, suggests that his academic and critical work unfolded as an act of defiance, and that the formulation of a neorealist

poetics, rooted in national figurative traditions, was conceived of as a call to action.

Besides Renoir, whom fascist hierarchs true to their incoherent cultural policies invited in the heat of 1939–40 to direct and teach at the Centro Sperimentale,⁵ French and Italian realisms were connected through Visconti, who spent extensive time in Paris in contact with the Popular Front while assisting on Renoir's *A Day in the Country* (1936). The short film features a young, bourgeois women's initiation in love during her family's yearly retreat outside Paris. A year later, her immersion in nature appears, nostalgically, as a memory eclipsed by a loveless marriage in the city. Both the melancholy and the continuity between human and natural landscapes carry over to Visconti's work, but it is Renoir's *Toni* (1934), a real-life melodrama of fatal passions among Italian immigrant workers in Southern France, that seems to have resonated most with him. Toni, a mine worker fed up with his partner, arranges to marry his true love Josefa, but she is raped by and forced to marry his tyrannical foreman whom she eventually kills. Suspected of the murder and persecuted by the police, Toni is shot before Josefa can declare his innocence. Such was roughly the account of a local police officer of Les Martigues where Renoir went to reconstruct the events as they had occurred a decade earlier, shooting in authentic locations and with unknown actors supported by local workers and peasants. To apply the codes of the prestigious French cinema to underprivileged and hitherto ignored social realities while denying its theatrical conventions by dedramatising the sordid material constituted an artistic 'scandal' that implicitly affirmed the director's anti-fascist stance (Andrew 1995: 205; 284). This act of opposition, constructed around ordinary encounters traced with a detached look at the totality of work and family relations and the openness to immigrant voices merged with Neapolitan songs and provincial French, foreshadows many of the strategies by which the neorealists would seek authenticity in representing marginal social experiences.⁶

Both the holistic look at characters and milieu and the combination of social analysis, destructive passions and human consciousness are re-appropriated in *Obsession*, as is the break with current cinematic codes and the foregrounding of deviant characters. These features were, however, also inspired by more recent French films, the debt to which is acknowledged in the opening shot which tracks a lorry down a dusty road in the Po Plain until Gino rolls out from the back, evoking the appearance of Jean Gabin's fatally doomed characters in *The Human Beast* (Pietrangeli quoted in Taramelli 1995: 65) and, more obviously, in Carné's *The Port of Shadows* (1938) where a truck picks him up amidst foggy darkness and we learn that he is a military deserter – a detail fascist censors sensitive to the imminent war were quick to cut before releasing the film to national audiences (Argentieri 1974: 56). The three establishing sequences all lead to worlds of provincial tedium, inner darkness and

interpersonal tension, where a murder designed to free troubled lovers only completes their tragic fate. They also introduce a character largely unknown to contemporary moviegoers and if the 'bedraggled Gabin [. . .] ushered in a new morality, a new, anonymous hero, and a new style of filmmaking', so did Girotti in *Obsession* (Andrew 1995: 14). Knowing no convictions or commitments, this 'new character' ushered out the white-telephone *divo* and romantic aviation hero, entering 'the adventure [. . .] like a stray dog [. . .] The name of this vagabond? The Italian neorealism' Visconti's collaborator, Antonio Pietrangeli observed in 1954 (quoted in Taramelli 1995: 65), pointing to the vagrant's function as not merely taking spectators into 'a part of Italy' never seen at the movies, but also in conveying the call for freedom and for openings to different worlds that Pina would soon consecrate as the nation's road to rebuilding (Barbaro 1976: 507).

Although the landscape and characters in *Obsession* were constructed to identify Italy's hidden realities, they originated from *The Postman Always Rings Twice* – a story from the Californian provinces selected, no doubt, for what the subjective narrative, the direct, anti-literary language, and the graphic portrayal of social and moral squalor, offered as the basis for an 'anthropomorphic' imagery. Along with the works of Hemingway, Faulkner, Steinbeck and other American writers, Cain proved essential, as we shall see, to the development of neorealist fiction and, more generally, to the creation of a hunger for truth and freedom and a new sense of self within an entire generation of intellectuals. It was, however, the ability of popular Hollywood productions to foster interest among spectators, critics and intellectuals – anti-fascist or not – in the world it represented and in the cinema more generally, that made the myth of America the most significant one for the foundation of neorealism (Brunetta 2001a: 158–60). That Hollywood provided more than just a spectacular antithesis to the anti-illusionist objectives of engaged post-war directors becomes clearer when we consider those who managed to negotiate its standardised mode of production and interact both with the wider panorama of modernist avant-garde practices and with the 'here and now' of modernisation, urban expansion and the Depression. The most illustrative example is Chaplin's critical form of popular entertainment. Starting from experiences of European immigrants arriving in New York, his bizarre tramp formed a poetics of solidarity with marginal subjects and a taste for social satire that reaches its ideologically most critical point in the depiction of unemployment and poverty in *Modern Times* (1936) and of Nazism in *The Great Dictator* (1940). Whereas war bans hindered the former's immediate encounter with Italian spectators, the latter perplexed fascist censors and it was Mussolini himself who passed it with one cut, no doubt recognising the Hebraic and anti-authoritarian artist's universal acclaim (Argentieri 1974: 45–60). A similar development of the comic to convey human authenticity and

social analysis infuses Buster Keaton's films too, but, as illustrated by the story of newly-wed house builders in *One Week* (1920), his world is more concentrated around lower-middle-class characters and based on gags derived from recognisable episodes of everyday life. This apparently natural form of comedy appears in some of the most dramatic sequences of *Open City* and the most languid moments of *Shoeshine* and *Bicycle Thieves*, as well as of several lesser known neorealist films, but only in *Miracle in Milan* are non-mimetic modes adopted systematically to forge a social commentary. This inability to conform to spectators' search for entertainment was clearly one reason why neorealism remained a generally unpopular and short-lived phenomenon.

The paradigms of commercial film are challenged further in Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922), which follows Eskimos in the Canadian Arctic with the detachment and temporality of naturalistic observation. Both the documentary feel and the ethnographic interest in a human world subjected to natural forces resonates in the portrayal of Sicilian fishermen in *The Earth Trembles*, and in the partisan scenes, in particular, of *Paisà*, but Visconti and Rossellini both pay more attention to the dialectics between socio-geographical life and economic as well as historical circumstances. No less inclined to confront unspoken realities, King Vidor traces the losses and disillusiones involved in modernisation in *The Crowd*, in which an ocean of skyscrapers, pressing crowds, anonymous office buildings, and threatening vehicles provide evidence of the structural changes that transformed inter-war America into a truly urban society (McArthur 1997: 25). Captured with a sense both of documentary observation and surrealist accentuation, Vidor's sequences of urban impressions reflect links between Hollywood and European avant-garde films, but whereas Vertov and Ruttmann captured urbanites without tailing them, *The Crowd* follows a young provincial into New York and presents the kaleidoscopic, impersonal city as both the socio-cultural ambience and the narrative frame for the protagonist's repetitious days as an office clerk and family man. As anonymous as his name, John Sims disappears in the crowd, and only when his daughter is hit by a car and, disheartened, he loses his job, does he reflect on the destructive nature of city life. Saved from attempted suicide, John is engaged as a street advertiser and, costumed as a clown, is finally able to laugh at the petit-bourgeois ideals he once had and his lack of social mobility. The struggles of ordinary people against antagonistic and hostile forces can be traced to Camerini's city films, where De Sica's clumsy characters tend to be portrayed in similar clown-like terms, but it is in De Sica's own works that Vidor's conflicting view of urban modernity comes to the forefront, in particular in the portrayal of the traumatised child of *I bambini ci guardano* and, more eloquently still, in the irresolution of the unemployed bill-poster in *Bicycle Thieves*. Like Gino, these are characters who fight with a feeling of uncertainty, discontent and resignation

that cannot be traced back to the unevenly distributed forces of modernisation alone.

Cinematically, the most significant result of these ventures into street life, factories, jails and queues of the unemployed in the films of Chaplin, Keaton and Vidor was a move away from idealised characters to an exploration of ordinary or disenfranchised people, and a reduction of action and events in favour of human relationships in the spheres of work and domestic life. Not even Vidor's pioneering portrayal of African-American cotton farmers in *Hallelujah* (1929) sacrificed the art of characterisation, stylisation, and storytelling, however, and the rare box-office success of *Open City* and *Bitter Rice* reflects a similar ability to embed socio-political critique within the parameters of conventional cinema or genres that in themselves often had developed in opposition to the mass-produced Hollywood spectacles. Gangster films such as *Little Caesar* (Le Roy, 1930) and *Scarface* (Hawks 1932) offered a model for how to combine contemporary critique with commercial success, but it was more specifically the transformation in the 1940s of this current genre of crime films into a 'collective style operating within and against the Hollywood system' known as *film noir* that proved most influential. Combining 'hard-boiled' subjectivity and human wickedness with expressionist lighting and concrete, metropolitan settings, these crime melodramas blended 'social realism and oneirism; an anarcho-leftist critique of bourgeois society', appealing in particular to French critics who just when they championed neorealist film also discovered the 'noirness' of the Hollywood thriller (Naremore 1998: 9–26).

There are several affinities, besides the retrospective poetic formulations, between *film noir* and neorealism that point to their concurrent origin and development as film cultures of opposition during and after World War II. Both found a unique point of reference in the pioneering narrative and formal rendering of self-destruction in Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941) and had by the time of *Touch of Evil* (1958) reached definite closure. Taking form around the lethal fetish in *The Maltese Falcon* (Huston 1941) and around war, corruption and melancholy in *Casablanca* (Curtiz 1942), the *noir* cycle reached canonical perfection in *Double Indemnity* (Wilder 1944) and *The Big Sleep* (Hawks 1946). In the former, an insurance agent's sardonically regretful voiceover reconstructs his ex-lover's opportunistic scheme to obtain her husband's life-insurance, while the latter follows Humphrey Bogart's private eye along rainy city streets and obscure paths of interconnected killings. Both films retain the refined dialogues and complex narratives of their hard-boiled sources and allow no means of escape, despite their hyperbolic upper-middle-class settings and closure of formal justice, from the dark realities of a country the war had spared from physical destruction, but not from social tension, political turmoil, and cold-war anxieties. What the distorted angles and flashing shadows of *film*

noir sought to give graphic form to was ultimately not the mean streets and the underworld of the American city, but the pessimism, the uncertainty and the complete lack of purpose and meaning troubling the post-war subject.

Rarely do aesthetic and psychological darkness correspond so perfectly as in Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) which for its articulation of historical disconcertedness, of evil lingering nearby and within us, offers an illuminating comparison to *Obsession*, released in the same year. Both films are set in local communities where nothing happens until an external force breaks in. The shadows that introduce the charming but fatally psychotic Uncle Charlie to his niece, Charlotte and her tedious life are similar to those that bring Gino into the murky monotony of Giovanna's untidy kitchen. In both cases, expressionist lighting conveys a crescendo of tension culminating in the accidental death of the serial killer and of the murderous wife respectively. The suspense film seeks, however, to purge evil and reconsolidate the bourgeois family, forging at least a seemingly pacifying conclusion. Gino's despair in confronting the body of his lifeless lover makes, on the contrary, for a tragic closure that betrays Visconti's sympathy for his lawless characters and his intention to unsettle and raise awareness. No other adaptation of Cain's novel transfers the fragmentary and ambiguous narrative, or the characters' marginal status and imprisonment within their social and natural surroundings, as well as *Obsession* does, and, bridging the concurrently developing anti-illusionist practices in American and Italian cinema, no other film illustrates so clearly what function American culture played in providing new perspectives and modes of expression.⁷ Incidentally, the influence of *film noir* also reinforced the revitalisation of Italian artistic traditions. In the world of the cinema, chiaroscuro lighting may have emerged with Dr Caligari, serial murderers and gangsters, but it originated in the 'myth of light and dark' that infuses Caravaggio's world of biblical beheadings, crucifixions and martyrdoms, and it is this visual lineage that interconnects and gives a stylised shape to the most verisimilar of the neo-realist films (Barbaro 1976: 313).

To consider *Obsession* the point where all roads of rupture and regeneration, theoretical and creative, political and institutional met (Brunetta 2001a: 297), highlights the amalgamation this seminal film formed from all previous realisms, and its intention to embrace the hidden and suppressed social realities that for Auerbach created realist art. It also articulates the 'lived experience' and 'certain disagreeable realities' that the French critic, Nino Frank discerned as the elements by which the Hollywood thriller fundamentally changed the relationship between the cinema and the audience (quoted in Dimendberg 2004: 5–6). Elaborating on this notion of lived experience as a sensitivity to radical twentieth-century socio-cultural transformations, Edward Dimendberg locates *film noir* within 'the violently fragmented spaces and times of the late-modern world;' a violation it reproduces and intensifies through disjointed narratives

and settings within centripetal or centrifugal urban space (2004: 5–6). Both the emphasis on existential verisimilitude and affinity with spaces of modernity allow us to anticipate further parallels between *film noir* and neorealism, suggesting, as will become clear in the chapters that follow, that the latter formed a far more modern film culture than has often been recognised. What we think of as typically neorealist (real locations, non-professionals, natural light, rejection of fabricated stories) never excluded anti-realistic elements. Improvised studios, highly professional actors, expressionist lighting and criminal melodrama feature with variations both in *Open City* and *Shoeshine*, the two films that most suffered, and benefited, from scarce funding and a disintegrated film industry. On the other hand, the documentary tendencies that more by choice than by necessity became a way to authentically portray social realities and lived experiences were not exclusive to Italian directors. Shot in the streets, in a private residence and in local business buildings, with the inhabitants of Santa Rosa, California, as extras, *Shadow of a Doubt* brought Hitchcock back to the old days of location shooting (McGilligan 2003: 312). These techniques crucially anticipated the presence the American metropolis would acquire in *film noir* where it acts, like the neorealist city does, as a fictional character, as a specific socio-topographic milieu, and, finally, as a confirmation of the director's intentions of establishing an altogether different relation with the audience.

These affinities, and to some degree also the cross-influences of immediately distributed and widely acclaimed Italian films, are more easily identifiable in a cycle of semi-documentaries that emerged from Hollywood in the wake of the war and of which Jules Dassin's *The Naked City* (1947) forms the most representative example. Combining melodramatic themes of greed and destructive relationships with a realist aesthetic to reconstruct the most 'noirish' of recent criminal cases, it is also the one film of the genre that most critics have linked to neorealism.⁸ Manhattan Island is introduced with night-for-night aerial cinematography and a voiceover claiming authenticity of location and with New Yorkers cast as themselves, before the film approaches deserted streets and buildings, introducing the weariness of a cleaner and a nocturnal radio presenter, and finally arriving at the killing of a *femme fatale*. In the morning, the victim, Jean Dexter, is all over the tabloids, causing much frustration for the New York Police homicide squad. The investigation techniques are scrupulously observed by the film's story writer Malvin Wald and are dramatised by unknown actors lead by Barry Fitzgerald. Offices, crowd scenes, private homes and small shops, as well as Williamsburg Bridge where the killer meets his own death, underline aspiration to verisimilitude but despite the fact that narrow interiors and crowded exteriors demanded improvisation in shooting and freedom from studios, the film is far from achieving the critical tone Dassin aimed for (Prime 2008: 146–9). This is partly due to the distributor cutting images that Dassin had included to juxtapose wealth and poverty, but

more decisively it stems from the nature of such police procedural films which privilege the panoptical powers as well as the human integrity of the city's law enforcement over the citizens' social and human conditions (Dimendberg 2004: 65–7). *Open City*, which would have formed the most obvious neorealist model, takes the exact opposite approach: avoiding the panoptical aspirations of aerial perspectives, it moves along the ground, away from institutions towards characters observed within the totality of their everyday life and the indefinite nature of open space and everyday tragedies.

Both the human ethos and the social critique of neorealist film find more eminent expression in *The Wrong Man* (1956): the most atypical of Hitchcock's films and, according to some critics, a failure, but also a project for which he at the peak of his career, waived his salary to complete.⁹ As his cameo-prologue declares, the story of 'truth' and 'gloom' is not the usual, invented suspense thriller, but a real story narrated in expressive black-and-white that in many ways brings the *noir* cycle to a coherent conclusion of visual texture and dramatisation of despair and delirium. Based on a 1953 *Life* magazine article about Manny Balestrero, a New York musician who was tried and jailed for robbery in a case of mistaken identity, the film involved extensive local research and interviews before it was shot with no overt artifice, in the ordinary locales where the events had transpired (McGilligan 2003: 532). What is most reminiscent of De Sica's unfortunate worker who loses and steals a bike – a story Hitchcock appreciated precisely for its 'perfect double case' (McGilligan 2003: 533) – is the instance of *chance* that causes the nightmare based on Manny's being the double of the actual robber. Other points of contact are the complete helplessness, conveyed with genuine incomprehension and bitterness by Henry Fonda, before the New York Police officers – far less sympathetic than those in *The Naked City* – and the strain the Kafkaesque trial causes him and his family, leaving him exonerated of charges and his wife in a mental hospital. Like *Bicycle Thieves* and other neorealist films treating individuals neglected or threatened by society's institutions, Hitchcock depicts powerlessness from the victim's point of view, asking us not merely to identify with his despair, but to live his social and psychological disempowerment by being drawn through dedramatised moments of frustration, waiting, formal procedures, futile searches for witnesses and anguish over his wife's alienation, so as to fully understand that when another chance occurs and Manny's double is caught, certain disagreeable realities are already so strong that they overshadow the relief of newborn freedom.

BAZIN AND THE AESTHETICS OF REALITY

It was precisely the dominance of chance and the real time of quotidian events over causality and action that Bazin had in mind when he spoke of the 'dis-

appearance of the story' in *Bicycle Thieves*. Refraining from any attempt to 'cheat' with reality, the verisimilar unpredictable chain of events does not 'demonstrate' the effects of poverty, but its episodic narrative is constructed in ways that 'show' what the outcome of the worker's dilemma will be (2002: 307; 299). Bazin's description evokes Barbaro's appreciation of the Popular Front directors' ability to express, without demonstrating, a moral world, and it applies to *The Wrong Man* as well, where the actual material is not undermined, either by an authorial critique of the judicial system, or by a sense for dark stories, but is perfectly suited to incorporate both factors. All of these directors inspired the theoretical and critical formulations Bazin published simultaneously with, and partly in direct response to, the rise of neorealism and its fade. Moving away not only from falsifying performances, but also from the violent images of expressionism and the dialectical 'montage of attraction' which both 'add to' more than they 'reveal' reality in order to impose a given interpretation of the events represented, Bazin privileges films that reduce editing to look as closely and insistently at the world as to 'reveal its cruelty and its ugliness', or simply, its ambiguity (2002: 64–7).

Bazin's fundamental essay 'The Evolution of the Language of Cinema' (1950–5) traces a new realist narrative that has developed in reaction to leading cinematic traditions and with increasingly defined forms in the films of Renoir, Carné and Orson Welles, and ultimately, those of Italian directors. The nature of this 'dialectical progress' towards a modern cinema is explored with specific reference to *Citizen Kane* (1941): a film Bazin considers too excessive in its expressionist dark and unusual angles but which he cherishes for a series of lengthy, uninterrupted shots extending both the spatial depth and temporal duration of the cinematic field. The world of Charles Kane (the indoor scene early on in the film which spans out, through the window, to the garden, capturing levels of simultaneous actions, is emblematic) gives the viewer the illusion of depth similar to that of, say Raphael's *The School of Athens*, where the characters' positions and relationships are distributed according to precise rules of perspective linearity. Outlined already in 'The ontology of the photographic image' (1945), this connection between Renaissance painting and the cinema resides in the invention of three-dimensionality which in the Western consciousness created an 'obsession' with realism unknown to medieval art. The subjective and static nature of painting, however, did not fulfil the 'entirely psychological desire to replace the exterior world with its double'. As a remedy for this unsatisfied 'need of illusion', a fourth, mental dimension capable of representing life in the 'tortured immobility' of baroque art, would, Bazin relates, have served as a temporary solution until photography completed the baroque by unmediated mechanical reproduction (Bazin 2002: 11–12). If the 'essential objectivity' of the photographic lens, known in French as 'objectif', added credibility to any image, no matter

how ‘deformed’ or void of ‘documentary value’, on the basis of its ontological relation to the original model, only the cinema, as the ‘completion in time of the photographic objectivity’, would have fulfilled aspirations to a ‘total and integral’ representation of the external world in its spatiotemporal continuity and as such give the ‘perfect illusion of the external world in sound, colour and relief’ (Bazin 2002: 13–14; 22).

With Bazin, we have thus returned to Caravaggio’s ‘myth of light and dark which substituted the myth of sweet perspective: the great revolutionary myth of reality directly and freely watched that creates [. . .] a new vision of the world’ (Barbaro 1976: 313). Although it was the baroque painter’s iconographic properties and oppositional stance Barbaro wanted to regain as the foundation for a new cinema, his objectives were ultimately those Bazin saw achieved through deep-focus photography.¹⁰ Presenting a temporal condensation of the pro-filmic material, it enables us to view the diegesis the way we encounter the external world, and thus to take part in the construction of the image by choosing which among its ‘facts’ (objects, events, characters) to focus on. In contrast to dialectic montage and analytical continuity editing, the synthesising functions of deep-focus photography make it intrinsically ambiguous and as such apt to preserve ‘the mystery’ immanent in reality itself (Bazin 2002: 76–7). What Bazin ultimately championed was a psychological realism but critics ignored this for decades, dismissing the ‘technological fatality’ of his theories as a belief in the existence of an objective reality (Rosen 2001: 8–17) and assuming notions of a “mechanical recording” implied a neglect of the artefact separating lived reality from its reproduction (Andrew 2011: xiii). The postscript note of the ‘Ontology’ essay that cinema, after all, ‘is also a language’ emphasises on the contrary the constructed nature of images (Bazin 2002: 17). The premise Bazin establishes of a human need for illusions of the world’s reproduction as well as the understanding of reality itself as ambiguous and open to subjective interpretations demonstrates an awareness of the cinema’s ability to make us ‘believe in the existence of the object represented, in effect, re-presented, that is to say, made present in time and space’ (Bazin 2002: 13–14).

Bazin’s own reservations about cinema’s ontological realism surface in his reception of the ‘Italian school of the liberation’, the artifice of which demonstrates that ‘there was never a “realism” in the arts that was not in principle profoundly “aesthetic”’ (2002: 268). Hitchcock’s way of applying means of abstraction to images of intensified realism, writing ‘directly in cinema’ and modifying ‘reality from within’ with a distinct authorial vision, is another case in point. This appreciation of the Master of Suspense who, like Rossellini, inspired the ‘politique des auteurs’ Bazin and other *Cahiers du Cinéma* critics developed in the mid-1950s, suggests that realism is an experimental matter and if it appears more akin to the cinema than to other arts, this depends on the ability of the moving image to ‘integrate the real time of things, the

duration of the event', evoking the infinite nature of reality itself (2002: 80). Drawing on Henri Bergson's concept of duration and intuitivist theories of the possibility of experiencing succession without distinction, past and present as a totality, Bazin establishes an overarching understanding of human consciousness and life itself as an unfixable flux. A cinematic exploration of spatiotemporal continuity is able to reproduce our perceptive encounters with reality in that it registers the spatial relations of objects and the duration of events the way we perceive them in the real world (Aitken 2006: 173–4). The perceptual thesis presupposes in fact that reality is subjective and ambiguous and that a truthful cinema should therefore reproduce the inconclusive nature of the world, instead of forging an exclusive interpretation of it. Depth-of-field directs the cinema away from action towards senses of being, from the closed to the open-ended, from the definite times and constrained spaces of painting and of the theatre, toward the unconstrained spaces and the imperfect tense of the novel (Aitken 2006: 269). That the cinema is a narrative and temporal medium was also what Alicata and De Santis emphasised when they called for a return to Verga's holistic look at underprivileged realities. Indicatively, among the signs of national artistic heritage that Bazin discerned in post-war Italian film, including short stories, frescoes and *commedia dell'arte*, there were also cinematic techniques of narration he saw as equivalent to those that in the 1920s had already created a realist revolution in the modern novel (Aitken 2006: 282–5).

It was, as we shall see more closely in Chapter 4, precisely the episodic and discontinuous composition of *Paisà* and its ability to respect the continuous nature of reality that formed the starting point for Bazin's discussion of neo-realism. Moving in time and space without constraints of unity or resolution, the detached, durative and inclusive cinematography creates a similar spatial realism to that of *Citizen Kane*. Narratively, Rossellini's innovative chronicle of national liberation recalls Faulkner and Hemingway whose fragmentary anti-literary writings integrate social documentation and psychological introspection with techniques of reportage. The cinematic collection of short stories is composed with an oral, journalistic ease that shows and alludes to the 'facts' collected without imposing a unity of meaning. Besides these literary and cinematic models – Rossellini would often refer to Welles as a source of inspiration, their stylistic differences notwithstanding – Bazin shows how the Resistance has offered not merely source material but also a tone and spirit. Forming 'reconstituted reportages' of recent national events when their social, political and moral effects were still vividly felt, *Paisà* and other neorealist films achieved an exceptional documentary value, but they were ultimately products of an 'aesthetics of reality' and a manifestation of no documentary truths, but of a 'revolutionary humanism' carried on from the popular experiences of the Resistance and the Liberation as moments of unprecedented

solidarity and claims to social justice (Aitken 2006: 262–3). As is the case with reportage writing, neorealist film seeks openness to the reality represented, improvising scenes and letting stylistic properties emerge from the encounter with the human material. More than a sign of regression or lack of technical refinement, the apparent simplicity and lack of unity conceals a complexity and an originality that, as Bazin perceptively foresaw in 1948, laid the foundations for modern cinema.

ZAVATTINI'S JOURNEY OF NATIONAL DISCOVERY

Addressing critics, writers and filmmakers gathered in 1949 at the first international conference on neorealism, Zavattini stated that while there was nothing new in aligning the cinema with everyday life, indirectly engaging both with Vertov and Bazin, neorealist film appeared in a particular way to be born in the streets. Knowing no distinction between the spectacular and the unspectacular, it had 'started its creation of the world, here's a tree, here's an old man, a house, a man who eats'.¹¹ It was therefore a shame that Italian directors soon had 'preferred plots', being no different from their American counterparts who for the profitability involved in advancing the human desire for escapism, walked the path of Méliès rather than of Lumière (Zavattini 2002: 678–81). While Zavattini throughout the 1930s had challenged directors to devote 'two hundred meters of film [to] a brook and a child' or to scrutinise the bourgeoisie from the point of view of their maids – something he and De Sica partly did in *Umberto D* – the war had critically made him realise the duty to open the spectators' eyes and foster opposition to atrocious injustice (Zavattini 2002: 641–5). Zavattini's contribution both to *Teresa Venerdi* (uncredited), *Four Steps in the Clouds* and *The Children are Watching Us*, as well as to the contemporary critical debate, articulated in *nuce* the elements he, only in the 1950s, systematised as neorealist 'thought'. That no one during the *ventennio* had been courageous enough to form a free and poetically valid cinema was not ultimately to blame on the totalitarian state; more liberal than most would imagine, but rather the producer-capitalist's regime of money-making, degraded spectacles which posed economic limits to any honest use of the medium. Looking at the situation shortly after the Liberation of Rome, in the light of the damage of the war and a disintegrated national cinema yet to be reborn, Zavattini found, paradoxically, that the prospect of cinematic regeneration had never looked more promising.

At that moment, when critics and directors emerged from clandestine activity and formed the 'Italian Cultural Film Association', Zavattini's enunciation of a collective hunger for 'sincerity and truth' contained no programme for neorealism, a term that does not appear in his writings before 1949, but, rather, a method for cultural and socio-political revitalisation (Zavattini 2002:

806). The starting point would be a public confession of sins committed either out of fear or in collaboration with fascism, initiating a 'human dialogue' wherein the cinema would no longer figure as a 'socially privileged zone', but as a source, available and infinite, of knowledge of self and of others:

This conscience will have to constitute the unity of the Italian cinema also with regard to foreign cinemas where professionalism [. . .] prospers without the urgency of the humble narrative that we Italians have to start [. . .] Our stories will communicate with the world via a language that transcends the limited antinomy between vanquished and victor. By now, we no longer have the right to be hypocritical, and poverty offers us all privileges. (Zavattini 2002: 663–4)

This evaluation dates back to the end of 1944, when Northern Italy suffered the bloodiest battles for liberation, and the cinema lingered in a limbo between the largely unseen *Obsession* and the recently started project of *Open City*. Neorealism was therefore not yet born. Eight years later, when war and Resistance for some were history, when the street kids Zavattini and De Sica had featured in *Shoeshine* were gone, and certain critics announced the 'death of neorealism' in favour of nice pictures, great themes and traditional structures, Zavattini declared that 'we are not yet at neorealism' (Zavattini 2002: 724). There was still a gap between reality and spectacle, between 'verb and action', that according to one of Italy's most imaginative scriptwriters could only be bridged if one eliminated scripts and actors and started to narrate 'that which *is happening*', avoiding the exceptional and the illusory for an exploration instead of the spectacular and the poetic qualities of what usually escapes attention (Zavattini 2002: 694; 705).

Moving between acute descriptions and polemical prescriptions, Zavattini praised the achievements of neorealism in terms very similar to those of Bazin, emphasising its ethical position and dialectical dynamics. As an anti-conformist, egalitarian opposition to hierarchical fascist structures, neorealism knew no stratification of forms or subject matter, although the imperative of truthful narration had inevitably led towards 'hunger, misery, exploitation on behalf of the wealthy'. In approaching spaces and experiences unseen in the movies, it had reached beyond the national here-and-now, appropriating the cinema's intrinsic capacity to look into 'a country and a conscience' so as to allow all spectators, regardless of their cultural background, to share the 'common punishments and hopes' projected onto the screens (Zavattini 2002: 742; 737; 714). Furthermore, Zavattini welcomed a much longed for end to the 'nightmare of heroism' and to pacifying endings, whether sad or happy. Relating the predilection for illogical and unresolved narratives to a post-fascist awareness of being 'neither good nor bad [. . .], *we are*: we are only

creatures scared by too certain voices' (Zavattini 2002: 672), he confirmed the historical uncertainty Bazin identified in the way reality, in neorealist film, before being condemned, 'simply is' (Bazin 2002: 280). The achievements Zavattini acknowledged may all be considered techniques of defamiliarisation that expose the obvious and favour an active spectatorship, the way both Vertov and Brecht prescribed, but to achieve the didactic function of revolutionary art neorealism would have to more radically deviate from fiction. The problem with heroes, tear-jerking stories and cathartic resolutions is that they draw our attention and sympathy towards fictive characters rather than towards our fellowmen and spare us from an examination of conscience that is the first step towards knowledge of self and others.¹² Actual material and real-life characters would not only confront us with our own social reality and human suffering, but it would also encourage conscience, community and solidarity – recurrent concepts that capture Zavattini's vision of the objectives and the future of neorealism.

While Zavattini insisted on the absence in his project of formal and thematic agendas, both his most noted essay 'A thesis on neorealism' and other writings from the 1950s are morally and socially programmatic and can be polemical as when he denounces Andreotti, the Under Secretary of Culture's, call for 'optimistic' films as an egoistic desire for undisturbed sleep. They show a fierce opposition to the increasing reindustrialisation of the cinema as well as to forms of state intervention that, whether it was in the form of governmental rewards for commercially successful films or censorship and consequent practices of self-censorship, brought the state of intellectual freedom back to the times of Mussolini.¹³ Against these anti-democratic tendencies, Zavattini called for a reduction of technical-professional collaboration, envisioning a film made cheaply, 'in a few weeks, maybe with a terrible cameraman [to] evade the laws of the capital that deviate the cinema from its social mission'. Bridging inter-war experimental film and the various forms of *cinéma vérité* that took form in the 1960s, the non-industrial film Zavattini envisioned would chronicle events in a diary composed of 'all that which is knowledge, immediate and unbiased, of others and of ourselves' (Zavattini 2002: 709; 690). Ideally, it would unfold as an improvised journey of discoveries referred to variably as 'cinema of encounters' and an '*film inchiesta*' (investigative film), but it could also be a '*film lampo*' ('lightning film') wherein any aspect of contemporary life would be re-enacted by the real-life people originally involved (Zavattini 2002: 745–9; 708–13). Both approaches require the director's artistic autonomy and presence in the reality encountered, and both would, given the subjectivity of selection and perspective, decisively be creative acts. This, essentially, is what distinguishes the social documents from documentaries. Lingering in the intersection between an anthropological study and a poetic discovery, such a film carries no potential of, nor any aspiration to, a mechanical reproduction,

but, thanks to its ‘naturally courageous technical structures’, it could achieve an ‘almost scientific knowledge’ of life (Zavattini 2002: 680–99; 705). Seen in such a light, realism appears to be a question of integral representation, the way Bazin also described it, to be achieved through uninterrupted long takes. This is essentially what Zavattini defines as *pedinamento* or the act of shadowing an event, a person or an object with an immediacy and duration of attention that reveals the multifarious aspects and dimensions of the studied object, decidedly emancipating the spectator from all *a priori* interpretations.

Starting from the presupposition of neorealism as ‘naturally socialist’, however, Zavattini moved beyond Bazin’s psychological thesis for a view of art as a means to social consciousness. While he acknowledged that mental experiences also promote knowledge of humanity, the purpose of shadowing ‘the real duration of a man’s pain and his presence in the day’ would first and foremost be to reveal the social context of his suffering and make spectators recognise it as their own (Zavattini 2002: 742; 695). In contrast to bourgeois stories which offer a synthesis of idealised aspects of reality, neorealism seeks a total analysis: the former may show a glossy telephone and will emphasise difference and distinction, while the latter would approach such a status symbol with a focus on relations of production and suppression, revealing ‘correlations between the facts and the process of birth of these facts’ and encourage identification with victims of exploitation (Zavattini 2002: 746; 730). This illuminates the notion of neorealism as first and foremost a ‘moral position’ – the *knowledge* of one’s own world through the means of the cinema (action is provoked by moral shock) – and a social force of revolutionary potential. As the filmmaker would engage with ‘civic-moral participation’ in the pro-filmic world, discovering it to share its values and experiences, the film would interpellate spectators to participate in the ‘collaboration’ being communicated and live the characters’ suffering as their own (Zavattini 2002: 913). This perception of the cinema as a relational medium anchored to the artist’s autobiographical mediation reveals the influence of Gramsci’s writings, to be discussed in Chapter Three, on the post-war cultural debate. With its unprejudiced openness and potential for transformative encounters, the method of *pedinamento* would promote the solidarity and consciousness that for Gramsci was the objective of national popular art and the route to all forms of collective action. Symptomatically, what such a cinema would require was, Zavattini recognised in 1971, not only a deindustrialised mode of production where scripts are ‘thought up during’ rather than ‘before’ the moment of shooting, but ‘a different type of life [. . .] a total, revolutionary way of life [. . .] a total, relational change’ (Zavattini 1979: 395).

Despite the cinematically hypothetical and socio-politically utopian nature of these ideas, they articulated with rare precision both the experimental nature of neorealist film and the value critics and practitioners ascribed to it

as a socially active and morally anchored rather than programmatic cultural phenomenon.¹⁴ Throughout the 1960s, Zavattini came increasingly to look beyond national borders, launching appeals for amateur contributions to a 'Film Journal of Peace' that would have circulated worldwide had it not been for the many practical obstacles it faced, and welcoming Godard within the Italian tradition on the grounds of his ability to unify 'metaphor and document,' 'mediation and recording' through autobiography. Neorealism might in its spontaneous modernity have 'understood Godard's drama *ante litteram*', but its origins, Zavattini always insisted, were unambiguously to be found in the Resistance, which as an unprecedentedly democratic force of socio-political commitment had revealed and legitimised the artistic representation of unrepresented and suppressed spaces and experiences (Zavattini 2002: 900–6; 572; 587; 771–2). The many experimental films he envisioned, including an investigation into contemporary religious devotion and a journey of discovery entitled *Italia mia*, were intended to act upon this exigency to know the country and its people. Ideated in 1940 as an investigation into Zavattini's village, the latter was re-proposed with national dimensions in 1944 and both accepted and abandoned respectively by De Sica and Rossellini in the early 1950s, a loss most critics consider the saddest result of the economic and political conspiracy he denounced.¹⁵ We can usefully picture *Italia mia* as a chain of encounters, freer in its construction compared both to *Bicycle Thieves* and *Paisà*, and more intentional in its attempt to consolidate popular forces across geographical and socio-economic divisions.

Among the collaborative inquiries Zavattini did complete, we should note *Siamo donne* (1953), which explores the private lives of Anna Magnani, Ingrid Bergman, Alida Valli and Isa Miranda, and *L'amore in città* (1953), a film periodical to which six directors contributed with their own vignettes of Rome. Introduced in newspaper layout as the first issue of 'The Spectator' and dated 1953, a voiceover presents the *film-inchiesta* as a reconstruction of real events with unknown people acting as themselves. A prologue devoted to young couples at different times of the day and at different stages of their love affair, establishes love as the recurrent theme and the city symphony as a point of reference, before Carlo Lizzani's 'Paid Love' sets an apt tone for the gradual revelation of human and topographical grey areas. Locating the forbidden spheres and nocturnal rhythms of prostitution – a social 'fact' represented in several films from this period, but that was still a touchy subject without the shield of fiction and vague allusions – it delineates the itineraries of actual prostitutes who all narrate stories of seduction, illegitimate children, unemployment and perpetual poverty to illustrate the social correlations of their predicament. The director's voiceover sets a critical frame for these encounters, but while he clearly states his view of women as victims of injustice and hypocrisy, the inconclusive ending ultimately challenges the viewer to locate the social and

moral responsibilities for their predicaments and to reflect on what their future might look like. Less confrontational in tone and theme is Antonioni's investigation into amorous despair. 'Attempted Suicide' begins and ends against white, sterile walls in a studio where people have met allegedly to 'examine' their past suicidal inclinations. Some young women reconstruct the nearly fatal act where it took place: one at the Tiber, another in her room, revealing scars on her wrists, while a seduced and abandoned mother-to-be relates how she threw herself in front of a car. Driven, according to Antonioni, by 'exhibitionist complex' and opportunism rather than a need to process common suffering, their testimonies do not convince nor do they fulfil the exploration of interpersonal and psychological relations that such a thematics might have produced (quoted in Faldini and Fofò 1979: 243).

Far more authentic is Dino Risi's visit to a modest dance hall in 'Paradise for Three Hours', which, as the time frame aims to convey, captures the fugitive sense of independence among young men and women who seek escape on Sunday afternoons at the end of a tedious working week. Whereas information in the two previous episodes is relayed through interviews, the lively atmosphere in this segment is reconstructed by verbal, tacit and physical exchanges that convey the role such venues play in changing patterns of social interaction and in fostering a distinct youth culture. The light-hearted approach to social change carries over into 'Marriage Agency', which Fellini scripted entirely without Zavattini's intervention and Fellini's conviction that 'everything must be invented' clashes, notably, with the project's ethos (Kezich 1988: 208). The narrator-protagonist is a journalist engaged to investigate a marriage agency. To achieve the desired authenticity, he presents himself as a client, inventing a story of a rich, but lunatic friend whom no-one wants to marry. The profit-seeking marriage-entrepreneur would like to match him with Rosanna, who wishes to marry to help her impoverished peasant family, but the ingenuous girl stirs so much compassion in the journalist that he withdraws the fake proposal, confirming the girl's presentiment that the prospect of a rich, albeit sick, man was too good to be true. While the social investigation is eclipsed by Fellini's predilection for the bizarre and the grotesque, the exploitation of poverty and the disconcerting lack of a resolution clearly address the film's moral impetus and contemporary critique.

By contrast, Zavattini and Francesco Maselli's 'The Story of Caterina' reconstructs a recent headline story and is the closest the film gets to realising the poetics of the *pedinamento*. Rejected by her Sicilian family, Caterina Rigoglioso fled to Rome and gave birth outdoors to a son whom she abandoned in a park one day, unable as she was to find a job or any form of assistance.

The endless queue at the services for 'illegitimate children' they visit confirms the impression we have acquired of Rome as a city full of 'seduced and abandoned' mothers, disenfranchised by what the narrator defines as



Figure 2.1 Caterina Rigoglioso and her son in *Amore in città*. Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

the 'respectable bourgeoisie'. Including newspaper cuttings and identifying every person and institution is obviously intended to name and shame both a social system and collective prejudice, but it also aims to modify our understanding of the 'real' and of 'spectacle'. Contemporary critics objected to the crudeness involved in asking the desperate mother to re-enact such a painful event and to the 'tailing' of her as she leaves the two-year-old, furtively watching him before running away and then retrieving him from a convent the following day, but Zavattini defended this as a 'ritual' necessary to incite awareness in the viewer. By repeating and making public an individual act the media had exploited, the film would give the public a second chance to analyse the event and judge it in the light of all its social correlations, ideally arriving at the solidarity and awareness denied by the tabloid press (2002: 788; 712).

In the last segment, 'Italians Turn Around', Lattuada fuses Rome's most familiar piazzas and sunlit streets with male gazes and their female objects. Adopting rapid editing techniques and suggestive jazz rhythms to create a cascade of elegant women watched and followed by unsuccessful pursuers, the

slightly ironic exploration of beauty, fashion, and appearance deviates radically from the previous episodes. Rather than denying the overarching framework of social critique, however, the dynamic city symphony demonstrates the complexities and alarming social differences of a city that lingers uneasily between deprivation and social immobility, on the one hand, and American-inspired aspirations to modern lifestyles, on the other. The film's thematic and stylistic incoherence, according to Zavattini, was the result of a lack of communication between the individual directors – an error of experimentation he would have known to avoid if the project had continued – but it has the merit of encompassing the socio-economic disjunctions Zavattini ultimately wanted to expose in ways that reflect his ideals of a civic cinema as industrially anti-conformist and aesthetically undefined (2002: 782).

DELEUZE ON THE 'TIME-IMAGE' AND 'ANY-SPACE-WHATEVER'

This overview of origins, influences, receptions and reflections aims to give a sense of neorealism as a moment of cultural history and a gradual formation of new *optiques* understood as defamiliarising representations of everyday realities as well as an option among a set of available aesthetic, thematic and narrative solutions to engage audiences in ideological and optical perspectives. While an emphasis has been laid on the continuities and affinities with pre-war culture, a decisive goal has also been to convey why the films that mark the start of the neorealist experience may have made it *feel* as if the cinema, like the rest of the country, was reborn: reborn as a field of contradictions and discoveries nurtured by an unconditional faith, both in the possibility and purpose of reviving national traditions and in the cinema as a source of knowledge and immediacy to the people (Brunetta 2001b: 9). As critics had anticipated already before the fall of fascism, an honest and socially active cinema would have to start from new perspectives on land and nation and from the intersections between the two, exploring peripheral landscapes, whether urban or rural, and local realities with a particular attention to regional speech and space. In opposition to the fascist myth of the *bonifica* – an idealised reconquest of land and people – neorealism reclaims decentralised, unidentified areas and displaced, struggling, anti-heroic characters. To locate human and geographical shadowlands implied an act of testimony and recomposition that most obviously sought to reach out to a defeated and divided nation with elements for moral, as well as social, reconstruction. The narrative and aesthetic estrangement involved in bringing under-represented realities to the screen suggests also, however, that the disintegration of values, beliefs and certainties that had already inspired the grey areas and abysses of poetic realism and *film noir* meant that accentuated forms of representation during the post-war crisis were even more urgently called for.

It is precisely this thesis of the war as having radically altered narrative structures that informs Gilles Deleuze's philosophy of the cinematographic image. Drawing on Bergson's theories of movement and time, he opens the second volume of *Cinema* by evoking 'the new form of reality [. . .] dispersive, elliptical, errant' around which Bazin formulates his reception of neorealism. For Deleuze, this reality of 'weak connections' and 'floating events' relates to a new type of character we discern already in Giovanna's 'hallucinatory sensuality' and Gino's irresolution; a 'seer' rather than an 'agent' who registers and reflects on external situations while failing to act in response to them. The 'pure optical situations' that stem from these temporised moments block the causal connections and the spatiotemporal unity of the traditional 'movement-image', creating what Bazin understood as 'fact-image' and which Deleuze redefines as the 'time-image' (1989: 1–2). In continuing Bazin's reception of the modern cinema and of neorealism as a decisive step in its formation, he relocates the focus from the real to the mental experiences, suggesting that as 'perception' no longer extends into 'action', it connects instead with 'thought' (Deleuze 1989: 1–2). That this fracture in the traditional 'sensory-motor situation' – announced in film sensitive to the crisis in the American Dream but ultimately denied the freedom to break Hollywood's generic frames – took decisive form in neorealism, points to the favourable combination of:

a cinematic institution which had escaped fascism relatively successfully [and] a Resistance and a popular life underlying oppression, although one without illusion [. . .] all that was necessary was a new type of tale (*récit*) capable of including the elliptical and the unorganised, as if the cinema had to begin again from zero, questioning afresh all the accepted facts of the American tradition. (Deleuze 1986: 211–12)

Distinguishing Italian post-war cinema from its French and German counterparts which only in subsequent decades saw the emergence of the 'time-image', Deleuze's assessment crucially identifies the structures and the historical circumstances that both facilitated and demanded a reaction to conformist filmmaking and an opening up to those uncertainties that make for episodic, ambiguous, and disconcerting compositions. Deforming conventional codes of spatiotemporal representation, this break encompasses the duration Bazin emphasised as the basis for realistic viewing experiences and which Deleuze extends to include memory and dreams in a Bergsonian vision of time as the only form of subjectivity (Deleuze 1989: 82; Arnaud 2011: 88–9). This 'new type of tale' also leads to empty and undefined spheres that break the 'spatial coordinates' by which conventional film establishes logical passages from one specified place of action to another. Anchored to the destruction

caused by the war as well as the disintegration of the 'movement-image', 'any-space-whatever' opens up the possibilities for fragments of demolished cities, deserted fields and languid riverbanks that all contradict the rhetorical landmarks foregrounded during fascism as well as the determined spaces of traditional realism (Deleuze 1986: 120; 212–13). Ultimately, what constitutes the greatest point both of novelty and of coherence within the multitude of the vast neorealist *optique* is the proliferation of decentralised landscapes that derive meaning from the social life and individual perceptions incorporated within them.

NOTES

1. My discussion of the two texts is indebted to Lucia's Re's study on Italian neorealist literature (1990: 7–11).
2. The quotation is from (Ben-Ghiat, 2001, 51). When Francesco Jovine talked of neorealism as 'a tendency to reclaim reality [...] a polemical antithesis to a stylistic literature void of content', he referred precisely to the artistic, rather than ideological, motivations that drove young writers like himself, towards concreteness in language and imagery (quoted in Milanini 1980, 8). For a reading that instead focuses on Moravia's ambiguous engagement with fascist discourses, see Ben-Ghiat (1995, and 2001: 55–7).
3. See Garofalo's essential study on Italo-Russian relations during fascism as well as on the status of Bolshevik cinema and the direct influence it had on 1930s Italian cinema (2002: 223–49).
4. Besides the theories of Eisenstein and Pudovkin, Barbaro's vast corpus includes translations of Russian, French and German writers. While he was briefly under police observation in 1940, when it was discovered that there was a 'dangerous communist' at the Centro Sperimentale, all it took to let Barbaro stay was a guarantee of responsibility from the school's director, Luigi Chiarini, and an assurance that the communist was not only harmless, but also a most capable teacher. Only after the 1948 elections when the Under Secretary of Culture, Andreotti, sought to purge the cinema and other cultural sectors of anything that threatened his Cold War sensitivities, was Barbaro removed (Chiarini, quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 40).
5. Vittorio Mussolini later recalled having invited the anti-fascist and 'least likely' director to take on the project of *Tosca* (1941) out of the conviction that it is preferable to 'earn the friendship of intelligent adversaries rather than the interested sympathy of stupid friends' (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 50). Renoir was, however, forced to leave when the war broke out and the film was completed by his collaborators, Visconti and Carl Koch.
6. That there runs a line of continuity from the 'cinematographic naturalism' Renoir developed through *The Bitch* (1931), *Toni* and *The Human Beast* to Italian neorealism (Andrew 1995: 104) was suggested by Renoir himself, who saw *Toni* as announcing techniques that would be perfected in neorealist films (Renoir 1975: 193–4). Elaborating on this, Bazin observed in 'Il profeta del neorealismo' that the experimentation with an anthropological and documentary approach in *Toni* caused a lack of psychological verisimilitude that Italian directors – and, we must add, the later Renoir – would know how to avoid (Bazin 1975a: 195–6).

7. Visconti appears not to have seen *Le Dernier tournant* (Chenal 1939); the aspiration both to glamour and comedy makes Tay Garnett's 1946 version with Lana Turner and John Garfield a less sinister *noir*, whereas Bob Rafelson's 1981 version with Jack Nicholson and Jessica Lange gives graphic form to the novel's most savage material.
8. Richardson's study of *The Naked City* relates its history of production and reception, noting the influence *Open City* would have had on Malvin Wald's writing of the story treatment (1992: 95–7); Dimendberg's study of the film's use of space in relation to post-war socio-geographical transformation and political turmoil points to the anticommunist 'witch-hunt' as having worked antagonistically against its production (2004: 72–3) in effect hindering a development of the social objectives Dassin aimed to achieve (Prime 2008: 142–51).
9. Warner Brothers were ambivalent about the non-cinematic and politically edgy material, according to Patrick McGilligan who also emphasises Hitchcock's admiration for Rossellini and the neorealist aspirations of this project. Seeking absolute authenticity and the exclusion of fantasy in reconstructing the story, however, he realised the difficulty such an 'anticlimactic' approach to filmmaking meant for a director used to adding to reality as he found fit. Starting with a less than satisfactory script, Hitchcock was never too fond of the film (2003: 532–8).
10. Barbaro's idea of a visual realism with roots in the figurative arts appeared first in his review of the 1939 Venice Film Festival, and thus, as an explicit denouncement of the 'crisis' and 'decadence' he had observed among the Italian films presented. In the same year, André Malraux wrote in his article 'Esquisse d'une psychologie du cinéma' that 'the cinema is nothing but the most evolved point of plastic realism, the principle of which appeared in the Renaissance and found its ultimate expression in Baroque painting'. Quoting Malraux's article, Bazin could note that 'photography, in completing the Baroque, has liberated plastic arts from their obsession with resemblance' (2002: 12).
11. The 'Convegno internazionale di cinematografia' was held from 24–29 September 1949 in Perugia, hosting Italian as well as foreign cineastes and film critics (Zavattini 2002: 682). Besides the oft-cited 'A thesis on Neo-Realism' (in Overbey 1978: 67–85), which synthesises three of Zavattini's most central articles, and the memoiristic *Zavattini: Sequences from a Cinematic Life* (Weaver 1959), the vast corpus of his writings has not been translated.
12. The dependence, Zavattini writes, on invented stories, is nothing but a 'subconscious need to masquerade human defeat', and, like heroic characters, it serves to hinder identification and exclude seers from the fake reality presented: 'I have always felt an instinctive hatred towards them [heroes]. I felt offended, excluded together with a million other individuals' (2002: 694; 730–1).
13. Brunetta corroborates Zavattini's critique. In the 1950s, 'compared to fascism, the work of censorship had taken another step towards centralisation of powers and of controls in the hands of bureaucrats immediately responsible to the Under Secretary of Culture (sottosegretario per la stampa, lo spettacolo e il turismo) [...] The techniques of censorship ideated by Andreotti and followed and applied for years to come [...] radiate a powerful light of intelligence' (2001b: 74).
14. 'Neorealism said: "Don't do today what you did yesterday"' Zavattini recalled, while also observing the need, in the mid-1960s, for avant-garde cinema to be 'moral in the sense that it can be transformed into action' (2002: 887; 928).
15. See Zavattini (2002: 782, xxxv; 32; 45), Aristarco (1980: 12) and Brunetta (1996: 45; 2001b: 74–87) among others note all the ideated and sometimes fully scripted

films that, like *Italia mia*, were never produced due to what Argentieri, describes as a censorship that ‘whoops up, slaughters every film of every nationality and preventively discourages Italian producers from embarking on inconvenient projects’ (quoted in Zavattini 2002: 739–40). For an overview of the Italian cinema industry both prior to and after the Liberation, see Wagstaff (2007: 7–40).

3. LITERARY NEOREALISM: NARRATION AND TESTIMONY

‘The need to tell “the others”, to make “the others” participants, had achieved, among us, before the Liberation and afterwards, the quality of an impulse so immediate and violent as to rival other elementary needs; the book was written to satisfy this need; thus, first of all, the objective of interior liberation.’

Primo Levi, *Se questo è un uomo* (1947)

The present attempt to revisit neorealism six decades after apocalyptic intellectuals denounced its traitors and their reactionary opponents invoked its death is motivated by what this moment in Italian cultural history reveals, more generally, about the art of cinema and its socio-political ramifications. If the films devoted to war, resistance and the post-war crisis were long considered miraculously new and entirely disconnected from the country’s recent cultural history, this also reflected their capacity to turn the Italian cinema into, on the one hand

an expressive power and a driving force capable of modifying all models and reference systems, cultural paradigms, prosody, syntax and poetics of the international cinema and, on the other, the most authoritative political and diplomatic representative of the new, republican, Italy.¹

Precisely for its power to represent collective experiences and to change ways of thinking and seeing within and beyond the cinema, this anti-illusionist

film culture has helped generations of international directors 'to escape the aesthetic and political limitations' of Hollywood and a handful of cinematic masterpieces have therefore enjoyed the eternal life of global influence.² Little is however known outside of Italy about the ways in which neorealism manifested itself in the other arts.

It was, in fact, both more prolific and enduring among photographers such as Chiara Samugheo (1935–) whose photo-documentaries from the South privileged children and women to confront alarming inequalities the Reconstruction had left unresolved. Her exploration in the mid-1950s of the denunciatory potential of the visual arts found a celebrated precedent in Renato Guttuso's (1911–87) *Crocifissione* (1940–1) – a work that both for its specific strategies of disfiguration and exposure of human suffering evokes Pablo Picasso's depiction of the Spanish Civil War in *Guernica* (1937). Pope Pius XII threatened to excommunicate all those attending the 1942 Bergamo competition where the allegedly heretical painting won second prize thanks to Giuseppe Bottai, the Minister of Education to whose periodical *Primato* (founded 1940) Guttuso had contributed.³ The Nazi-fascist violence he subsequently witnessed as a liaison officer between partisans informs both *Fucilazione dei patrioti* (1944) and the drawings of *Gott mit Uns* (1944) which he made while hiding in a press office in Rome (Calvesi 1987: 25–6). The popular participation in the Resistance is celebrated in Luciano Minguzzi's (1911–2004) *Monumento al partigiano e alla partigiana* (1947) whose iconic features became a symbol of communication between the ex-partisan sculptor and the people. These individually very distinct works all accentuate realities the public would recognise as their own or as occurring around them while also fulfilling the twofold aspiration of preserving national memory and operating as agents in the present.

FROM INDIFFERENCE TO CONSCIOUSNESS: THE 1930S

The major counterpart to neorealist film emerged among young writers and there are several thematic and formal continuities between the two modes of expression. Neorealist fiction may, for instance, take a panoramic look at the world represented and 'zoom in' on its characters as agents within social networks and collective events, suggesting that the writers, as the poet Eugenio Montale observed, were influenced by the ability of post-war directors to chronicle the present (quoted in Bo 1951: 19). On the other hand, neorealist cinema also articulated many of the narrative and discursive innovations that had taken place in American and European fiction since the early 1920s (Bazin 2002: 282). Both the renewed focus on social issues and local milieus, and the increased exploration of marginal characters that make us think of *Obsession* as the start of something new, had, following the publication of *Gli*



Figure 3.1 Chiara Samugheo's 'Le baraccate di Napoli' (*Cinema Nuovo*, 1955);
Courtesy of Chiara Samugheo.



Figure 3.2 Renato Guttuso's *Crocifissione*, 1940–1. Courtesy of Archivi Guttuso.

indifferenti, engaged young Italian writers whose novels were often those that would later inspire neorealist directors. Carlo Bernari's (1909–92) Neapolitan novel *Tre operai* (1934) appeared to contemporary critics as a sign of the 'new objectivity' associated with the social documentation of Alfred Döblin's *Neue Sachlichkeit* novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929). Among Bernari's sources of inspiration there were the alienating poetics of Vidor, Dreyer, Eisenstein, and Buñuel whose works he had seen in France (Bo 1951: 245–52). To determine in which medium neorealism first originated is therefore rather problematic as film and fiction prove to have evolved contemporaneously, drawing on shared roots and objectives and, to some extent, on cross-influences.

Born as a reaction to the culture of the *ventennio*, neorealist fiction

demonstrates the role the war and the Resistance played in fostering an awareness of the intellectual's duty to be present as a witness and promoter of change. Like the cinema, however, it emerged from realist discourses that flourished within and beyond national culture in the inter-war years, whether they offered occasions for continuity and elaboration, as exemplified by Moravia and other writers who had resolutely broken with contemporary traditions, or they became objects of categorical rejection, as did the regime's folklorist populism. That an anti-rhetorical immediacy to post-war society would demand an entirely new literary language was clear to those who, like Cesare Pavese (1908–50), faced the writer's task as a question of giving voice to the need for a new sense of nationhood and a reformed society of popular representation, without however going 'towards the people', which had been fascism's major strategy of propaganda and consensus-making:

Fascists go towards the people [. . .] We *are* the people. Even the intellectual. Even the 'gentleman' [. . .] are the people and prepare a government of the people [. . .] Democracy means this government. (Pavese 1968: 214–15)

Like many other anti-fascist intellectuals, Pavese was in search of a 'new legend [a] new style' that, if anything, would go 'towards man' (1968: 198), seeking a closer proximity to the world through a twofold line of enquiry that sought something essentially human and, as such, universal, within the singular story of the disenfranchised and the under-represented. Fascist use of realist codes was, in contrast, profoundly nationalistic and ideologically exclusive. Moving between *stracittà* and *strapaese*, from imperial ideals of *italianità* and *romanità*, to rural simplicity in the ideals of the *bonifica*, it excluded not only the beliefs and lived experiences that implied an individuality in opposition to an imposed collective, but also the actual social conditions of the very populace it allegedly sought to protect – poor peasants or workers displaced to the outskirts and to underdeveloped villages and for whom the country's leaders represented nothing but another force of exploitation. Both acts of denial – of ideas and of social justice – were at stake when a generation of writers identified new means to make the familiar look strange and to make the foreign and apparently unfamiliar appear as a long desired home of freedom and shared human experiences.

When *Gli indifferenti* is considered the basis for such practices, it is in particular for the unadorned language used to conduct a social and psychological analysis of a morally corrupt society. Only two of Moravia's characters – Carla, and her brother Michele – feel contempt for the world they belong to, but they remain impassively entangled in their mother's web of opportunistic relationships. Carla accepts the imperative of marrying her mother's lover who

threatens to defraud the family and her dreams of an honest life fade into a vision of complete annihilation in the world's immobility, whereas Michele – himself brought to abandon ideals of true love by his mother's seductive friend – arrives at a rational understanding of the necessity to overcome, once and for all, 'one's own indifference and act', but a vain attempt to shoot Carla's future husband is the only form of opposition he can show to hypocrisy and conformism (Moravia 1991: 201). The destructive portrayal of fascist Italy offered no solutions or initiatives to action, but there was little doubt among contemporary readers about the call it presented for a completely new, anti-literary form of writing that while moving decisively away from the lyricist and introspective conventions of the bourgeois *prosa d'arte* (art-prose) which dominated post-World War I literature, revived national traditions the way Visconti would do in *Obsession*. If Moravia's denouncement of contemporary morality revived the moralist realism of Alessandro Manzoni's historical novel *I promessi sposi* (1828), the inquiry into a collective state of indifference and nihilism evoked the existential realism of Luigi Pirandello and Italo Svevo (1861–1928) whose novels depicted pre-World War I sensitivities of modern consciousness (Candela 2003: 49). While the political intentions Moravia may have had found camouflage in his apparent adherence to official realist discourses (Ben-Ghiat 2001: 55–7), later critics have tended to see the result as an anti-fascist statement and, more specifically, as a 'phenomenological and psychological study of the *fascistizzazione* [fascistisation] of the Italian bourgeoisie and a forerunner of neorealist narrative' (Re 1990: 114–15). While this act of literary innovation and social analysis presents none of the commitment we associate with neorealism, there is little doubt that Moravia was already seeking the truer image of 'man' that both Pavese and Zavattini aimed for as the moral basis for a critical and socially engaged art.

Gli indifferenti inspired both established and aspiring writers to seek a defamiliarising concreteness when writing about not only current actualities, but also their own local environments in order to give voice, the way Verga had done, to experiences normally excluded from official or artistic representations of the country. Reversing Moravia's portrayal of urban decay, Corrado Alvaro (1895–1956) turns to a small village in Calabria in *Gente in Aspromonte* (1930) – a collection of short-stories that all feature a closed, archaic world at the verge of de-feudalisation. While both autobiographical and folkloric elements tend towards mythic idealisations of harsh, rural realities, the stories also juxtapose a miserable, hard-working and honest peasantry with the culturally degraded aristocracy, creating a critical vein that culminates in the title story, 'Gente in Aspromonte'. The story follows an exploited shepherd's son, Antonello, who grows up in tacit obedience to the ferocious laws of a few land-owners. Only when he is forced to seek work in the city does he experience a gradual formation of consciousness. Upon returning to the village, Antonello

incites the other peasants to a ferocious rebellion that brings the wealthiest family to ruin, an achievement he faces with the satisfaction only destructive revenge can offer. The suggestion that aggression and material destruction is the only means to social justice points to the limits of this call for reform, as does Alvaro's nostalgic vision of the peasantry as possessing an authenticity lost in more developed social formations. Nevertheless, his sincere attempt to represent the characters' worldview by relocating the voice away from authorial discourse to their own language laid a fundamental ground for the critical discourse of social representation that increasingly would engage young writers.

The signs of a new tendency of committed, regional writing are even more evident in Bernari's contemporary *Tre operai*, where the bleakest areas of Naples set the scene for a portrayal of the equally grey and depressing life of factory workers. Going back to the years between 1914 and 1921 when Naples experienced waves of political radicalism and popular unrest, the narrative traces Teodoro from unemployment and temporary jobs, to studies and the achievement of a class-consciousness that nevertheless fails to provoke effective collective action. Neither a conscious search for a new literature nor an overt attack on fascism, this portrayal of unemployment, losses and fruitless struggle expresses an indirect opposition that escaped fascist censors, something Bernari related to his way of 'deactualising' the events as a 'memory' of pre-fascist times, while also casting a destructive light on both collective initiatives to social reform and on individual attempts to material improvement (1965: 240–6). The crude, colloquial language and matter-of-fact narrative might also have passed for being supportive of intellectuals who called for realism as a way to advance fascism as an anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois revolution. Writing in the fascist periodical *Il bargello* (founded 1929), significantly, Vittorini did not criticise Bernari's subject matter, but his style and the limitations of his attempt to represent the lower classes.⁴ Against such a verdict, we must recognise the novelty inherent in the complete alignment of the literary language with the vernacular expressions of the lower-class characters, among whom there is also an independent young woman, and the frequent change from third-person narrative to interior monologue that allows us insight into the lives and futile desires of exploited workers.

Tre operai may not have matched the literary qualities of Moravia and Alvaro, but by focusing on the class struggles that provoked the rise of fascism and by democratising the narrative, it came closer to a revival of Verga's attention to neglected socio-geographical realities. An equally significant critical dimension runs through the contemporary *Fontamara* (1933) which Ignazio Silone (1900–78), a founding member of the Communist Party, published during his exile in Switzerland.⁵ The novel looks back at the first years of fascism as they were experienced in a village called 'Fontamara' ('bitter

source') in Silone's native Abruzzo, where extreme lack of natural resources is reinforced by the systematic exploitation of village authorities reporting to the nearby city and ultimately to Mussolini's Rome. Only following a fascist attack on the village and the torture and death of the local hero Berardo, mistakenly held to be a notorious Communist, does collective action take form. With help from the very anti-fascist activist for whom Berardo dies, the villagers found 'the first peasants' paper' entitled '*Che fare?*' ('What is to be done?'), revealing an authorial alignment with Lenin's thesis on the organisation of working-class revolution.⁶ This call to action is re-evoked in the end when fascist violence has reduced the already small community to a few living members. The first-person narrative is identified with the peasants themselves, alternating between the individual members of one family and an anonymous village choir, and it adopts no means of dissimulation when denouncing political corruption and social injustice. Only after the war was Silone's denuded vision of fascism and of the South more specifically made accessible to Italian readers and writers he surely influenced. At that time, Silone himself showed far less faith in historical action as we can tell from his successive novel, *Pane e vino* (1935; revised as *Vino e pane* in 1955) and its sequel, *Il seme sotto la neve* (1941) where a Marxist intellectual sees his revolutionary ideals fail against fascist propaganda and turns towards Christianity and a fatal, last act of self-sacrifice.

Bernari and Silone were unique among early 1930s writers in reviving the regional poetics and critical practices of *verismo*, on the one hand, and in foreshadowing the concreteness and the exposure of social injustice that post-war culture would derive from anti-fascism, on the other. In the midst of their initiatives towards cultural renewal and neorealism as an *optique* of everyday themes and experimental forms stands *Conversazione in Sicilia* (1937), wherein Vittorini retreats to the socio-geographical specificities and autobiographical myths of his and Verga's own island to locate obfuscated voices of opposition. Vittorini's singular position as a critic, writer and translator in pre-and post-war Italy originated in 1930s' Florence, where his ideas, radical albeit initially sympathetic to fascism, were voiced both in the regime's official organ, *Il bargello*, and literary periodicals such as the apolitical *Solaria* (founded 1926) which promoted foreign literature and cultural exchanges.⁷ Crucially, although his first novel, *Il garofano rosso*, criticises official myths and accepted morals, it appeared in censored instalments in *Solaria* between 1933 and 1934, whereas *Conversazione* appeared uncensored in *Letteratura* (founded 1937) between 1938 and 1939 before it was banned and withdrawn from publication in 1942: by that time Vittorini had become active in Milan's underground organisations (Candela 2003: 37–8; Bonsaver 2000: 83). His intellectual development underscores the ambiguous nature of fascism and its relative openness to non-official discourses, while it also highlights the

inestimable role of periodicals in circulating opinions and offering a space for aspiring artists to develop cultural and political consciousness.

Vittorini's decision to abandon flourishing Florentine circles and fascist beliefs in an anti-bourgeois revolution in favour of Marxism and editorial work in Milan reflects the alarm caused by Mussolini's Declaration of the Italian Empire in 1936 and his subsequent support of Franco's coup d'état against the Spanish Republican Government (Bonsaver 2000: 29–34). The Spanish Civil War became for many an indication as to where fascist Italy was heading, and their suspicions were confirmed by reinforced alliances with Hitler and the introduction of racial laws in 1938. Vittorini's increasing awareness of the exigency to take a stance and communicate his views through altogether new linguistic and cultural paradigms conveyed, however, also the freedom of thought and creativity encountered in Irving, Poe, Faulkner, and Andersen and many others whose works he anthologised alongside non-fictional texts, photographs and cinematic stills in *Americana* (1941). Immediately censored, the unorthodox collection was re-published in 1942 without Vittorini's commentaries on the 'new voice' of American literature void of 'doctrine or attitude: products of Europe' (1957: 107–9). Most influential to the increasingly polemical tone and extra-literary intentions he developed in these years was perhaps Hemingway: the master of concrete language and reportage writing who in the heat of 1937 went to cover the Spanish Civil War. It was precisely a fake reportage from Malaga submitted, unsuccessfully, to *Il bargello* that saw Vittorini expelled from the fascist party in 1936 (1986: 345–53); a year later he used Hemingway's accentuated dialogues as inspiration for his conversation pieces of political and literary opposition.

Conversazione starts with Silvestro's unenthusiastic departure from Milan and ends when he returns from Sicily a few days later. Between these points, the 'abstract furies' that drove him have transformed into awareness of the need for 'new duties [. . .] things to do for our conscience in a new way' (Vittorini 1986: 31; 161). The journey proceeds dually through poetic descriptions of the social and the natural world and surreal conversations with depersonified characters whose coded messages identify them as either fascist, indifferent, or anti-fascist. Encounters with an impoverished farmer and Silvestro's mother, who earns a living giving injections to the sick, are therefore accompanied by anti-fascists reminding Silvestro that 'the world suffers', whereas the appearance of his brother who died during Italy's campaign in Ethiopia denounces colonial aspirations and the rhetoric of glory and heroism that promoted it (Vittorini 1986: 294). The defamiliarising representation of the historical present would have appealed not only to those already opposed to the regime, but also all those who had recently started to question its legitimacy and both the 'lyrical realism' of the narrator's descriptions and the repetitious dialogues distracted censors long enough for the novel to become

an anti-fascist manifesto (Bonsaver 2000: 83). De Santis would later recall that 'Vittorini's *Conversazione in Sicilia* appeared in 1941. Renato painted *La crocifissione* [. . .] in '42, Visconti shot *Obsession* [. . .] three moments of the same urgent turn that marked the time of a wish and a need for renovation' (De Santis 1996b: 196). Beyond the response to a historical crisis, however, Vittorini had more universal objectives that he makes explicit in a postscript note: the setting is only incidentally Sicily and might as well have been Persia or Venezuela. If by extending the applicability of his historical message, Vittorini sought another means to obfuscate that which today we must read as a condemnation of fascist intolerance, more significantly the aspiration to a universal dimension reflects a culture that, as it endorsed the imperative to lay bare the country's undiscovered grey areas, actually went 'towards man', as Pavese would describe it, in search for something mutually shared and humanly lived.

Pavese began a very similar career in the early 1930s, focusing on translation and critical promotion of American and British literature, but the atmosphere he assimilated in Turin – an industrial city where working-class traditions and popular unrest intensified persecution and violence – made him far more exposed to fascism's undemocratic methods than Vittorini had been in Florence. Pavese was never a militant anti-fascist, but his collaboration with Giulio Einaudi's newly established and notoriously dissident publishing house, and his work as editor of the associated periodical, *La cultura* (founded 1882), where several of the collaborators had been arrested, created enough suspicion for the fascists to have him interned in Calabria in 1935. Domestic exile to remote Southern villages became the regime's way of dealing with noted intellectuals considered subversive but not directly threatening, and it could often be a politically and artistically formative experience. Of even greater significance for Pavese was his chosen exile in foreign literature – a defiant choice of intellectual and human freedom the fascists pretended not to see rather than having to admit that what young writers 'sought in America, in Russia, in China and who knows where [was] a human warmth that official Italy did not offer us. And even less that we were searching ourselves' (Pavese 1968: 197). In these foreign worlds, known through authors whose experiences with the Depression and turmoil were analogous to his own, Pavese discovered the need to address the universal and existential as well as the nationally specific implications of being deprived of all freedom.

Written in 1939, Pavese's first novel *Paesi tuoi* (1941) retreats to a closed, rural community and projects the agonising presentiment of devastation through an archaic system of rites, myths and destructive vitality. While the acute attention to continuities between human and vegetal landscapes is indebted to Faulkner, the influence of Cain's vagabond, Frank, in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* is evident in the rootless mechanic, Berto, who narrates with a paratactic rapidity and vague allusions as well as graphic descriptions.⁸

Berto starts where Frank ends up – in jail, guilty of having run into a cyclist – and would have preferred to enjoy his release among the prostitutes of Turin, but Tolino, a peasant jailed, and mysteriously released, for having set fire to a neighbour's farm, insists he accompany him home to shield him from his father's violent welcome, and to work during the harvest. The juxtaposition between city and country is a constant in Pavese that most often reflects his own connections to Turin and the Turinese hills, but here, it accentuates Berto's exposure to what he calls 'deformed peasants', implying that they are uncivilised, and his attraction to this world which moves him to stay on despite himself, while enjoying secret encounters in the fields with Tolino's sister, Gisella (Pavese 2001: 8). Allusions to an incestuous relation between the two siblings are consolidated by Tolino's bestial jealousy when he discovers Gisella's passion for Berto and stabs her in the neck with a hayfork. This explosion of primal passions is apparently condemned within the community, but the doctor can only lament the girl's healthy physique, and the harvest continues, suggesting that it is accepted within a circular logic of ritualistic sacrifice and vitality, against which Berto, disgusted and ready to return to civilisation, remains powerless and ultimately indifferent. Hiding his authorial voice behind Berto's unadorned language and regional structures and alternating between free indirect discourse and truncated dialogue, Pavese takes a naturalistic approach and lets the facts narrate themselves according to Verga's dictum, destroying not only the solipsist techniques of bourgeois literature, but also the fascist myths of the 'rustic man' and of national revival. While shedding light on the deformation of hidden provincial realities as well as on the darkest sides of human consciousness, *Paesi tuoi* also uses alienating language and an unreliable narrator to convey a stance of opposition and a claim to freedom the way Vittorini did in *Conversazione*. Alongside *Obsession*, which a few years later would adopt similar techniques of defamiliarisation, these novels illuminate the nature of neorealism as a product of national traditions and current trends that in its reaction to current artistic and political realities also sought to formulate a new language suited to incorporate and communicate lived experiences.

'AN INVOLUNTARY CURRENT': VOICES OF RESISTANCE

The fundamental function Vittorini and Pavese played as mediators to *verismo* and as models for a new mode of writing finds testimony in Calvino's retrospective preface to his 1947 Resistance novel, *Il sentiero del nido dei ragni*. Young writers would draw 'a line,' Calvino wrote, 'or rather a kind of triangle' – *I Malavoglia*, *Conversazione in Sicilia*, *Paesi tuoi* – that directed their urgency to express personal versions of national history (Calvino 1993: viii). Considering the politically tense and culturally ambiguous climate in

which neorealism took form and the socio-geographical and also the human discoveries its multiple sources inspired, we can also understand why Calvino would deny it the programmatic unity of a 'school' and talk instead of 'a togetherness of voices, in major parts peripheral, a multifaceted discovery of different Italies' (Calvino 1993: viii). These voices comprised a celebration of the end of twenty years of forced silence and a manifestation of the physical and existential need to tell and bear witness not only, as Calvino recalled, to the unprecedented and devastating circumstances of war, but also to the experience of solidarity and collective action that the Resistance had promoted. Besides restoring considerable freedom of expression and artistic inspiration, the events of 1943 brought at least a temporary end to collective indifference, challenging everyone to reject comfortable conformism and to choose a position. No longer was anti-fascism an intellectual and clandestine tendency, but a marker that divided the population into two major groups. Relating people across boundaries of ideology, religion and class, the Resistance changed the social function of the anti-fascist elite. What mattered was not so much to defend, in theory, an ideological position, but to extend the unprecedented proximity to the lower classes into a dialogic exchange around shared 'new duties', as called for by Vittorini (Calvino 1949; Asor Rosa 1975a: 1588).

An amalgamation of a complex set of historical circumstances and diverse, often contradictory, cultural influences, literary neorealism emerged, as Maria Corti has shown, spontaneously and collectively as an 'involuntary movement'. Following no programme or doctrine besides the opposition to 'a certain cultural-literary past', it tended to reflect the essentially choral quality of partisan narratives that circulated within and beyond spheres of action and that frequently appeared as fiction or documentary pieces in clandestine papers, memoirs, diaries, and letters (Corti 1978: 27–42). A celebrated example of these testimonial writings is the 'last letter' Giaime Pintor (1919–43) wrote three days before he fell victim to a German mine while trying to reach partisans in Rome. Pintor, who in 1941 had already denounced Nazi violence in *Primato* (Candela 2003: 30), saw joining the Resistance as a question of the intellectual's duty to renounce class privileges and work for collective liberation.⁹ Similar ideas inspired Visconti's vision of an 'anthropomorphic cinema', which presupposed that the freedom to formulate a creative specialisation should serve not to isolate the director, but to interact with the concrete realities of the people (1943: 108). Such sensitivities recall Gramsci's ideas of the bourgeois intellectual's historical function and although his prison writings were published only after the war, those who during the *ventennio* called for engagement and a new culture would at least indirectly have known the communist leader's earlier anti-fascist writings and probably also his essay on the 'Southern Problem', which identified the intellectual's duty to promote an anti-capitalistic solidarity between Southern peasants and Northern proletarians.¹⁰

The discovery of the long-neglected South that came from early 1930s fiction via Vittorini's journey in Sicily to the *Cinema* writers' revival of Verga indicates, furthermore, the *instinctive* notion of these thoughts. As critic and director Carlo Lizzani recalls, 'we barely knew a few lines of Gramsci's notes, but his problems, our generation lived them in full, and there was nothing in what we subsequently would have read that we had not obscurely felt' (quoted in Fanara 2000: 177).

That Gramsci presented a reaffirming sense of the *déjà vu* was implied by Calvino when in a 1949 review of contemporary Resistance writing he identified *Lettere dal carcere* (1947) and *Quaderni del carcere* (1948–51) – composed under the surveillance of fascist jail guards between 1929 and 1935 – as the first manifestations of this tradition. Those who after years of war and civil war sought either political or artistic means to act on the revolutionary potential of the Resistance would in particular have recognised Gramsci's notion of a historical absence of a true 'national-popular' literature. With few exceptions, he wrote, Italian intellectuals had been distanced from the 'nation', their 'bookish' and 'abstract' tendencies bringing them closer to writers of past traditions than to a 'Sicilian or Pugliese peasant', and they had therefore failed to forge relations of identification and solidarity with the exploited classes (Gramsci 1996: 72). These are ideas we recognise in Zavattini's view of the cinema's ability to incite empathy and consciousness around victimisation. Although they became available too late to inspire the formation of neorealism, Gramsci's status as an anti-fascist martyr would have awakened those who, like Visconti, combined clandestine activity, militant criticism and cinematic experimentation and those who had seized the turbulent years prior to and after the armistice as an opportunity to confront and reject, intellectually and socially, past fascist sympathies and of working for socio-political reorganisation, as was the case with Vittorini.

Written in proximity to a Resistance group in central Italy and with a nod to Hemingway's account from Spain in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), *Uomini e no* (Vittorini 1945) draws on partisan battles Vittorini had witnessed in Milan before going underground in 1944. It follows confrontations between anti-fascists and Nazi-fascists through divergent points of view, thus allowing insight into both adversaries, whereas a more contemplative narrative thread privileges the perspective of Enne 2, an intellectual Resistance leader caught up in guerrilla fights, and Berta, who is too involved with her husband to start a new life. Both dramas evolve within the boundary of Milan: the industrial, commercial and financial capital where the fascist squads were first founded in 1919 and which later became a centre for anti-fascist forces and a home for the partisans that would bring Mussolini to justice on 28 April 1945 (Borgomaneri 2000). The city is delineated by ideological divisions, directing the reader from private and clandestine interiors and areas of patriotic action, via infiltrated

partisans, to the SS headquarters, and to Berta's wandering amidst massacred bodies after the Germans have avenged a partisan attack. We end up in the prison of San Vittore where civilians are waiting to be deported or killed, and finally, in the apartment where Enne 2 faces a mutually fatal confrontation with the fascist leader, Black Dog – a human beast whose howls shatter the city with vibrations of terror and oppression. Enne 2's partisan name derives from Milan's canal (*navaglio*) number 2 and serves therefore to anchor the accurately depicted city map, but it may also connote 'no name' and thus underscore his failed search for identity in the historical battle (Cooke 2011: 32).

The narrative is constructed around ideological and spatial oppositions, moving from the beast-like Nazi-fascists to the workers whose commitment to the partisan cause rests entirely on an instinctive sense for justice. Between these two extremes stand some fascist soldiers who reflect on their collaboration with Mussolini's Republic and the SS as an act of fratricide, indirectly illuminating the true nature of the Resistance. What evolved in Italy during the German occupation was not only a struggle for national liberation, but also a civil war and a class struggle that many partisans may have considered their main cause, but which were radically downplayed during the Reconstruction when the Resistance figured as a myth of unitary struggle around which a new life and national identity were to be rebuilt. Vittorini immediately went beyond the collective desire to forget by opening up vaster areas of socio-geographic experience than the novel's title apparently suggests.¹¹ The opposition between 'men' and 'not' implies no Manichean distinction, but on the contrary an awareness that *men* can also be *not-men*; that human nature embodies good *and* evil, and that there is something human within the offender who nevertheless acts as a beast (Vittorini 1977: 427). Raising these universal questions is a distinct and consistently italicised narrative voice that relates the thoughts of Enne 2 and Berta; occasionally it appeals directly to him and fulfils his wish to bring Berta back to his childhood in Sicily so that they can meet before she got married. Covering the socio-geographical environment as well as the surreal atmosphere of *Conversazione*, the italicised narrative can modify history according to Enne 2's dreams, but the factual sections force him to confront the futility of unrequited love and abandon himself to the events. In contrast to Vittorini, who went underground when fascist papers declared him wanted, Enne 2 rejects the partisans' rescue plans, preferring instead to wait for Black Dog and allow their respective bullets to meet in an unreserved sacrifice for the common good.

Published two months after the Liberation, Vittorini's resistance novel was widely read, but not particularly warmly welcomed. While commending the historical accuracy and the ideological choice of representing the Resistance as mainly a workers' movement, critics objected to the dominance of cerebral intellectualism over visions of progressive popular action (Asor Rosa 1975b:

164–5) and to the self-reflective narrator too invested, according to Pavese, in autobiographical troubles to reach a collective scope.¹² The solipsistic narrative appeared to be at odds with the unprecedented freedom and political hope that Vittorini anticipated when he joined the Communist Party and launched the affiliated periodical *Il Politecnico* with a programmatic call for ‘a new culture.’ Rejecting not only fascist myths of glory and heroism and the ideals, illusions and abstractions of the culture that had supported it, but also romantic notions of art as ‘lyrical intuition’ and even of the ‘abstract furies’ that brought about a new conscience in *Conversazione* (Dainotto 2008: 105), Vittorini called for ‘a culture capable of fighting against hunger and suffering,’ of ‘eliminating exploitation and slavery’, and not merely of ‘consoling’ people (1977: 57–8; 1957: 187–8). To confront lived realities implied no neglect of inner life, however, and it was precisely by claiming an authorial freedom to exercise his unique insight into human nature, that Vittorini responded to criticism from Palmiro Togliatti and other party leaders, insisting that ‘the revolutionary writer’ should shed light on the human rather than the political reasons of the revolution.¹³ The juxtaposition in *Uomini e no* of historical chronicle and solipsistic lyricism that expose the author’s presence as historical witness and fiction writer proposes, in fact, a literature of historical authenticity wherein propaganda and naturalism are both excluded in favour of thought-provoking strategies of alienation. Vittorini evoked the authority of Gramsci who never ignored the aesthetic importance of arts or the Marxist separation between culture and politics, but his anti-Zhdanovist insistence on the artist’s freedom also found support in Sartre, whose writings were published and discussed in *Il Politecnico* before the fundamental *What is Literature?* appeared in 1947.¹⁴ Any author, Sartre writes, is ‘involved’ in history and so is the reader, both of whom engage in literature as the ‘historical fact’ of a given ‘collectivity,’ as ‘the subjectivity of a society in permanent revolution’. Engaged writers make this ‘historicity’ their art: avoiding the politicised as much as the escapist and the mystifying, they adopt defamiliarising and even deliberately negative poetics to ‘take a position’ while at the same time offering images of creative as well as human freedom (Sartre 1949: 67–76; 159, 278–85).

Sartre’s positive evaluation of subjective writings as promoting an active readership resonates in Calvino’s *Il sentiero del nido dei ragni* which in particular demonstrates how techniques of distortion could support an anti-fascist discourse while at the same time disputing some of the myths spun around the Resistance. Anchoring the narrative to the Ligurian Mountains where he had fought as a partisan, Calvino delineates fields of carnations where fascist prisoners dig their own graves and where proletarians form a band of opportunistic and useless fighters, deliberately deviating both from the geographical and the heroic world of Vittorini’s resistance city. At the centre of all this is an 11-year-old orphan, Pin, who steals a pistol from a German

soldier, escapes fascist jail alongside the partisan leader Red Wolf and seeks safety in the proletarians' camp. His imaginative mind leads to the paths where spiders build their intricate nests, whereas his intruding voice intensifies the expressivity of the camp, encapsulating both the polyphonic culture and the fusion of landscapes and human stories that for Calvino constituted the roots of the neorealist narrative (Calvino 1993: viii–x). The dysfunctional brigade is eventually dissolved when its apathetic leader, Dritto, in the heat of his affair with Giglia, the cook's wife, sets fire to their camp and is executed. Pelle, the weapon hunter turned fascist, is mercilessly killed by Red Wolf, the only ideologically motivated partisan we meet apart from Kim – the Marxist commissioner who voices Calvino's reflections on historical action. Closest to Pin is the serious, albeit disillusioned and cynically misogynist, Cousin; once betrayed, he discerns a spy in every woman and kills Pin's prostitute-sister for her espousal of the Nazi-fascists. Mediating between the eccentric comrades as well as between anti-fascists and Nazi-fascists, Pin gives at least a narrative, if not a human and ideological unity, to Calvino's disintegrated world of war and Resistance.

As the novel's major focaliser and source of its paratactic, vernacular language and distorted depictions, the child character enables Calvino to depersonalise the material and dramatise the intersection between individual and collective history in a story of lost innocence and initiation (Re 1990: 259). While Pin's naiveté serves to uncover both the Resistance and the adult world as inconsistent and treacherous, his marginal social status also directs the story towards the less glorious edges of the Resistance; to a world of grotesque, anti-heroic characters not modelled on the truly heroic partisans Calvino had known in the legendary Garibaldi brigade, but on Sartre's understanding of the revealing and alienating potential of negative portrayals (Re 1990: 65). Calvino's notion that 'neo-expressionism', rather than neorealism, more suitably describes this moment in Italian cultural history, suggests the essence and the objectives of his negative poetics, but his detached perspective moves within both registers (Calvino 1993: xii–xiii). Capturing Pin and his world from an omniscient and distanced position, the narrator can report interactions and movements at the level of the collective, while also 'zooming in', the way neorealist films tend to do, on singular characters and facts, framing small histories that all compose national 'History'. Nevertheless, this filtering lens attains no verisimilitude: while the depersonalised narrative aspires to objectivity in its inclusion of voices, the act of visualisation is deliberately distortive and presents the choice of joining the Resistance as a question of chance, convenience or at best, a way of escape, where anti-fascist hatred and revolutionary intentions rather than patriotic sentiments form the only motivating factors.

Calvino's study in distortions was polemically directed towards both radical

and reactionary factions of post-war culture. Against the Left's calls for positive portrayals of the partisans, he objected that pro-communist idealisations are no less rhetorical than fascist myth-making; whereas against the Right's understanding of the partisans as elements of social unrest, he suggested that even the most unmotivated of Resistance fighters had played a more decisive role in the course of 'History' than the indifferent, conformist, middle class (Calvino 1993: xiii–xiv). This is a stance we see completely reversed in Renata Viganò's (1900–76) *Agnese va a morire* (1949) which offers a unique account of female presence and formation of consciousness as a partisan within a communist brigade in central Italy. Active both in Bologna's clandestine press and in the hills of Ferrara, Viganò was one of more than 50,000 women involved in the Resistance, and her novel, written with journalistic simplicity and based on autobiographic material, is the only one within a vast corpus of women's writing that traditionally has been admitted into the neorealist canon (Zancan 1997: 224). We follow a middle-aged, uneducated and self-doubting woman who, after she learns that her husband who was denounced by fascist neighbours died during the journey to Germany, kills a German soldier and goes underground among partisans in the Po Plains. Her immersion in their everyday life is initially an instinctive act of vindication, driven by her hatred for the German tyrants and their fascist servants, but through her comrades' militancy she acquires political consciousness and assumes an increasingly consequential and hazardous function until she is jailed and faces her death as a sacrifice to the proletarian cause. If the uncritical celebration of lower-class heroes harmoniously united in their love for the Resistance falls into the populist and rhetorical trap that Calvino deliberately avoided, the greatest merit of Viganò's narrative, besides its topographic and historical accuracy, is the privileged voice given to female subjectivity within a male-dominated culture and the portrayal of the Resistance as a civil war and a class struggle with objectives far beyond the patriotic goal of liberation.

A less idealistic defence of proletarian action infuses Pavese's *La casa in collina* (1948) which by contrast unfolds as an account *about*, more than *from* the Resistance as the focus falls on the narrating protagonist's socio-historical, as well as existential, ambiguity. Starting with the Allies' bombing of Turin, in the summer of 1943 and the subsequent fall of Mussolini and the Armistice, the novel reconstructs the arrival of German soldiers and the constitution of partisan groups in the Turinese hills. It is, however, not their story we primarily hear, but that of a troubled intellectual who is politically and morally inclined towards the working-class resistance fighters he frequents but existentially unable to take part in their struggle. As a teacher in what are officially fascist schools in the city, Corrado returns at night to his house in the hills, where he may shrug his shoulders and welcome the war as an alibi for solipsistic contemplation, aware that both his social status and the room he rents in a

middle-class villa protect him from suspicion. This privileged state of 'immunity' is nevertheless constantly questioned in the tavern he visits at night, where class-conscious workers listen to Radio London and await the moment when they can break free in armed resistance. Within the group there is also Cate, a past love, and her son, Dino (Corradino), whom Corrado suspects is his. Shared childhood myth becomes the key to communication between the two, but Corrado is unable to act upon the boy's precocious political awareness. The country-city duality already seen in *I paesi tuoi* is reinforced by tensions between the private and the collective; between action and contemplation, and the narrative accordingly oscillates between historical chronicle constructed around news items and political discussions, and resentful reflections whereby the critique of protected inertness reveals itself as the author's self-confession.

Ideas of authorial historicity are no less central to Pavese's last novel, *La luna e i falò* (1950), where the regrets of non-participation are enunciated through Anguilla – a poor servant boy who, having fled to America during the war, returns as a successful businessman to his village where his communist friend, Nuto, tells stories of civil war, sacrifice and treason. That Anguilla was not there to fight reflects, however, a rootlessness stemming from his incapacity as an orphan to find a home. By contrast Corrado, who remains inactive when the tavern becomes an arms depot and a partisan shelter, acknowledges his retreat into his protected life as inertness. His friends' allegations that the comfortable middle class, himself included, has no reason to risk its privileges, are illustrated by the fears of his conformist landladies, the calculations of the opportunistic Black Shirts and also the Vatican's pacifying communications regarding the need for love and faith. When Cate is deported and Corrado, along with her son, accidentally escapes the round-up, he doubts whether he has actually been saved, considering the emotional troubles he is left with. Whereas Enne 2 immerses himself in fatal action, Corrado's only strategy of resistance is to change one protected state for another, but what they both have in common is the escape from 'History' typical of intellectuals who fail to act on ideological convictions (Falcetto 2006: 50). Retreating in the critical months of 1944 to a farm the way Pavese himself did, Corrado starts to write about the 'great illusion' it is to believe in a return to childhood, in victory and in immunity, if both you and the physical spaces of your past have lost innocence, if among the enemy dead, there is a man like yourself, and, lastly, if all you can do with your privileges is to accidentally survive and let war come and go without changing yourself at all.

While Pavese's twofold inquiry into human darkness and historical action always aspired to collective dimensions, it became, increasingly, a 'private matter' of existential self-destructiveness. The intellectual's historical crisis resonates with narrative variations in the works of Beppe Fenoglio (1922–63) which all draw on memories from partisan wars in the Piedmontese city of

Alba and an extensive knowledge of Anglo-Saxon literature. What in particular distinguishes Fenoglio from the previous Resistance writers who all responded to the ideological climate of the immediate post-war years, is a tendency, already present in his first short stories, *I ventitre giorni della città di Alba* (1952), to depoliticise the historical chronicle in favour of individual passions and existential questions. In his major novel, *Il Partigiano Johnny* (1968), the universe of his strongly autobiographical student-protagonist is projected through a contamination of the standard Italian prose by English terms and sentences as well as by dialectal variants and neologisms, creating a multi-linguistic discourse that as it rejects realist conventions, also excludes patriotic or ideological motivations as the basis for the protagonist's commitment and journey towards death. In the posthumous *Una questione privata* ([1963] 1986), a similar character, Milton, forgets any ideals of loyalty to collective duties when he suspects that Fulvia, who inspires his heroic actions, has betrayed him. Obsessed with the thought of abandonment, he is lead into an absurd search for truth and before ever reaching her house, he is surrounded by fascist soldiers, facing his death while hallucinating that she is still his. When critics have come to talk of Fenoglio's style as 'epical' it is precisely for his way of viewing a specific epoch of national history through the individual's search for honour and dignity in abandoning himself to his destiny (Corti 1978: 36). Within this frame, the Resistance is reduced to a scarcely heroic manifestation of an irrational, alienating existence and an occasion merely for individual rather than collective redemption. Whereas Corrado misses out on this occasion and questions the meaning of the life he is left to live, Fenoglio's characters never reach that point.

THE NEOREALIST NOVEL: HISTORICAL CHRONICLE AND PERSONAL TESTIMONY

If we think of neorealist narratives as taking a decisive form around the events of 1943–45 and adhering predominantly to either choral modes of enunciation or subjective, existential experiences, we can see how the 'involuntary current' in both cases achieves a coherence in themes and a discourse around the ideal of chronicling narrative events, on the one hand, and providing personal testimony of them, on the other. It is particularly the ideal of socio-historical accounts that is the motivation for Vasco Pratolini's *Cronache di poveri amanti* (1947), which draws on the author's experiences as a partisan in order to describe the rise of fascism from 1925–6. Set in a Florentine working-class neighbourhood, the novel tells of clashes between fascists and communists within the microcosmic parameters of everyday activities and relationships in Via del Corvo near the church of Santa Croce. Pratolini, who collaborated on scripting the Florence episode in *Paisà* while writing this novel, assumes a detached, holistic approach to the life of the street, letting the omniscient

narrator move from apartment to apartment to introduce an extensive gallery of characters and establish their interconnections, while also providing panoramic views of the street's ideological divisions. Among fascist sympathisers, we find Signor Ristori, whose hotel is a *de facto* brothel, and the coal vendor, Nessi, who exploits the innocent Aurora and the cold winter months with equal calculation. Like the rich and sexually deviant La Signora, they have a psychological and economic grasp of the community and live in tacit collaboration with the fascists, whereas Carlino, the fascist accountant, intimidates and assassinates anti-fascist neighbours, controlling everything except their hatred. The choral integration of the voices of resistance composed of young lovers and honest workers is not seen in an uncritically heroic light, but their human weaknesses never pose a threat to collective constructiveness the way the middle-class network of degradation and violence does.

Seeing national 'History' from the point of view of those who had made 'history' at the micro-level, either by contributing to or resisting the implementation of totalitarian realities, Pratolini revived a long national tradition of docu-fiction that can be traced back through 1930s authors and via Verga's village chorus to chronicles of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages in which ordinary citizens recorded the everyday life of the city (Re 1990: 95–6). The usefulness of this tradition was in particular sustained by the intellectuals who were associated with the Florentine periodical *Società* (founded 1945) and who argued that the only way to represent the country's recent past in times of historical uncertainty and ideological bias was to let events and characters speak for themselves without interpretative interference from the narrator (Re 1990: 91). With no sign of the intellectualism, polemical distortions, auto-confession and romantic heroism invested in narratives that, from *Fontamara* to *La casa in collina*, treat questions of popular agency within the historical context of Nazi-fascism, Pratolini opts for the type of 'reconstructed reportage' that Bazin recognised in neorealist film, seeing everyday occurrences with a sense for their spatiotemporal duration and social correlation. In this, his writing anticipates the poetics of *pedinamento* that Zavattini developed with an emphasis precisely on the author's 'civic-moral participation' in the world encountered. Pratolini's narrator crucially engages in the events with sympathy, irony or disapproval, conveying choral voices and individual thoughts while also addressing his characters with comments and questions about their past and present actions. The apparently neutral chronicling of events is therefore shaped by an authorial voice that, as it reconstructs things as they were, also suggests how they could, and should, have been.¹⁵

Moravia also became increasingly concerned to see socio-economic and moral conditions during the *ventennio* from the perspective of the lower classes rather than that of the middle classes to which he belonged. From *Agostino* (1945), a story written during the war, of a boy's loss of innocence

in a world gone wrong, to *La ciociara* (1957) which uses the Resistance as a thematic background for the portrayal of fatally victimised women, we discover a concern with the marginal, alienated and mistreated subjects whose experiences fascism had idealised or completely muted. Moravia's neorealist side is most evident in *La romana* (1947), a novel written in the turbulent years between 1943 and 1946 and which gives voice to Adriana's first-person, retrospective account of her adolescence in 1920s Rome. Relating with astute self-awareness how she was betrayed by her mother's egoistic petit-bourgeois aspirations and faced assault from Astarita – a powerful and wealthy inspector in the fascist police – Adriana describes the indifference and economic advantages she experienced as a call girl subjected to psychologically and economically determined power-relations. Only once Astarita has been killed by one of the city's most wanted criminals, and her well-to-do, intellectual boyfriend has committed suicide in remorse at having betrayed his anti-fascist comrades, is she able to start a new, independent life with her child. At the moment of writing, Adriana is critically aware of herself and of others and looks back at the events with a curious combination of cynicism and conscience, providing Moravia with a sarcastic lens through which to denounce the very same degradation and sexual obsessions that *Gli indifferenti* explored from inside the middle class. Like Pratolini, Moravia portrays fascism as a bourgeois ill of sexual perversion, manipulation and violence, juxtaposed with powerless and morally superior, albeit far from heroic, characters. Both the valid example of female subjectivity and the deliberately reductive focus on relational and psychological, rather than ideological, aspects of the *ventennio*, reflect a disbelief in 'pure chronicle' as the basis for artistic invention, and a conviction, instead, that any reconstruction will carry the imprint of the author's interpretation and historical position (Moravia, quoted in Candela 2003: 53).

The considerable room left for non-mimetic techniques, unreliable narrators and authorial engagement in these novels points to the nature of neorealism as an *optique* formed to defamiliarise official, uncontested realities and engage the reader in an ideological and literary perspective rather than presenting them with a presumed objective reproduction of collective events. What potential there is in a distinctly personal and historically shaped reflection on the 'facts' narrated becomes clearer when author, narrator and protagonist merge to form one voice, as happens in Carlo Levi's (1902–75) account of political imprisonment in *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (1945), and Primo Levi's (1919–87) memoirs from a death camp in *Se questo è un uomo* (1947). Claiming the authenticity and accuracy of mere personal experiences, no other Resistance narratives epitomise the testimonial value and the oral quality of neorealism quite as well as these works, both written by Jewish scientists motivated not by literary aspirations, but as Primo Levi attested, by the pressing 'need to tell to others' (2005: 9). He lived it as the survivor's

obligation towards humanity, whereas Carlo Levi, who went underground in 1941 to escape Hitler's Final Solution, felt it his civic duty to create awareness of what he had witnessed as an exile in the Southern region of Basilicata in the mid-1930s. Common to them both is that the very act of writing, which in both cases was started before the Liberation, and the decision to ensure that the nation's unspeakable past would not be forgotten were themselves lived and executed as forms of anti-fascist Resistance.

Cristo confirms the most central accusations of *Fontamara*, in particular with regard to the suppression and violence that define relations between a majority of exploited peasants and an incompetent leading class in comfortable collaboration with the regime. The title ('Christ stopped at Eboli') conveys the peasants' own understanding that Christ never arrived in their remote and resourceless village, Gagliano, or, as Levi paraphrases, that they have been marginalised by the State and by the course of 'History'. To be denied human and material progress and never gain a sense of time as linear or of life as change, means, according to their world view, that they were never 'humanised'. The peasants' feeling of being worth less than beasts is reinforced by their living conditions – typically they share one room with their animals – and in the death they frequently meet due to illnesses such as malaria, for which Levi, who is trained in medicine, offers the aid he can while also suggesting preventive measures the fascist administration refuses to implement. There is no electricity or facilities in their houses, nor are there images of Mussolini or of King Vittorio Emanuele III, both of whom figure in the village's public buildings and in the homes of fascist sympathisers. Instead, the poor villagers keep portraits of the Black Madonna and of President Roosevelt – mythical figures of local protection and faraway illusions that fall sadly short of altering the actual truths of their every-day struggles. Facing the powerlessness of the peasants and the uselessness of the ruling class, Levi soon finds himself acting as an urgently needed doctor and social contact, on the one hand, and as a detached observer, on the other. The literary result is a combined memoir, anthropological analysis and novel of oral narratives and lyrical prose wherein the author's historicity is seen in the light of both a social world structured by archaic myths and perpetual misery, and the larger society that causes its eternal damnation.

The attention Levi pays to social structures and singular stories offers a more disquieting view from below of history than most neorealist works achieved, but it also delineates a significant resistance to national ideals among peasants who know the regime only through taxes and who fall outwith its exclusive conception of nationhood. In fascist history, the time of Levi's internment (1935–6) is marked by the Ethiopian War, a colonial enterprise of national loss and international ridicule that culminated in Mussolini's Declaration of the Italian Empire in 1936. That the fascist State and imperial aspirations

are irrelevant to people who officially do not exist, is something of which Gagliano's patriotic mayor cannot conceive, not even when he orders a mandatory collective celebration of the war and the peasants get up before daybreak to leave the village before fascist officers close the roads. Similarly, his attempt to recruit soldiers by tempting them with free, fertile African land is met with legitimate mistrust among peasants who acutely enough consider it all a waste of money that would have been better spent at home. Such manifestations of passive resistance indicate an instinctive sense of justice that culminates when Levi's improvised medical practice is prohibited by those who cannot tolerate his success and popularity among the villagers. The only one who ever paid any attention to their needs and their perceptions of the world, the Northern visitor is barely able to redirect their violent intentions towards a satirical form of protest that demonstrates a sophisticated, albeit predictably unproductive, potential for collective action.

An account *from* and *of* confinement wherein the author's critique merges with the despair of his subjects, Levi's is a balanced piece of Resistance writing that in addition to ideological and intellectual intolerance also denounces administrative corruption and incompetence as well as disastrous regional policies. At stake more specifically stands the 'Southern Problem', and more specifically the fact that uncultivable land, deforestation, scarce livestock, lack of schools, industry and capital – all the things that have left the South in perpetual poverty – are ultimately due to a State that has implemented disproportional taxes and ignored regional differences and needs. Regarding the social aspect of the problem, Levi offers what in 1945 was a rather unconventional interpretation, accusing not the century-long repression by few rich landowners who, while perpetuating the peasants' economic dependence, at least minded their own business, but a corrupt administration and petit-bourgeois representatives of the fascist state who hindered the peasants' initiatives towards human and civic development (Levi 1990: 219–22). His position recalls Gramsci's denouncement of the Northern bourgeoisie and industrialists who ultimately benefited economically from the Southern peasantry's slave work.¹⁶ Fundamental to Gramsci was, of course, the intellectual's mediation in a north-south axis of proletarian solidarity which would support their liberation from misery and eventually from capitalist dominance. Levi, who after his exile had contemplated the intellectual's detachment from the masses during fascism in his 1939 essay *Paura della libertà* (1946) does not quite act as an 'organic intellectual'. As we can tell also from the many paintings Levi devoted to Basilicata during and after his exile, human dignity rather than political consciousness is the key both to his interaction with the peasants and to the representation he gives them, and his work does not seek a popular audience or a mediating function. Aware of his privileges as a Northern observer, however, Levi seeks to provide an encompassing representation of a world consistently

excluded from public and artistic discourses by seeing both its collective imaginary and circular history through the scientist's analysis, the intellectual's political accusations and the humanist's call for justice.

Primo Levi's account of Auschwitz relies on the very same modes of enunciation, but his essentially secular and sceptical vision excludes both passionate attacks and progressive initiatives to give a quietly disconcerting disclosure of the darkest side of fascist Italy. It is worth noting that only in 1938, when apartheid laws were introduced to exclude interracial relationships in Ethiopia and the Nazi Nuremberg Laws provoked a gradual exclusion of Italian Jews from all aspects of civil life, did Levi, like so many others, become aware of the 'criminal face of fascism' and join clandestine opposition groups (Levi 2005: 202). Fascist rhetoric and consensus-making were always essentially nationalist, but the supposed superiority that Mussolini related to Italy's antique roots and present virtues was originally rationalised in historical and socio-cultural terms and aimed to unify the people around the regime's ideals rather than stigmatising an antithetical and inferior 'Other'. While the laws implemented in 1938 were aligned with Hitler's 'differentialist' and biologically anchored racism, they nonetheless also addressed the continuous and increasing need in times of economic and political isolation to build a 'communal identity' (Gillette 2002: 4).

Although anti-Semitic discourses circulated along with imperialist themes throughout the *ventennio*, Mussolini long denied that Italy had a 'Jewish problem' and even welcomed persecuted foreign Jews until the mid-1930s. Only in 1937, when Italy grew increasingly close to Nazi Germany, was the 'Manifesto on Race' published as the official start to a more systematic anti-Semitic campaign (Mack Smith 1982: 220–2). While declaring Jews non-Italian, the Manifesto also distinguished Italians from other Aryan people in an effort to prepare the anti-Nazi population and make this racist turn look like an extension of pre-existing nationalist ideologies, rather than an imposed adaptation of German policies.¹⁷ Introduced in late 1938, the Nuremberg Laws caused a segregation but not yet a deportation of Italian and foreign Jews and they were in fact not imposed by Hitler, but the extension of the Final Solution to Italy's German-occupied areas following the establishment of the Republic of Salò in 1943 was ordered from Berlin and executed by Nazis and fascists alike (Collotti 2003; Zimmerman 2005). Of the approximately 40,000 Jews living on the Italian peninsula in 1943, an estimated 6,808 were deported to death and concentration camps.¹⁸

That Levi found himself among the 837 Italian Jews who survived, he attributed to the time of his deportation in January 1944 when the Reich, due to an increasingly scarce workforce, determined to extend the prisoners' average lifetime. A second stroke of fortune was a degree in chemistry which saw him promoted from outdoor slavery to laboratory work during the winter of 1945.



Figure 3.3 Carlo Levi's *La Santarcangelese*, 1935–6. Courtesy of Raffaella Acetoso.

His reconstruction of one-and-a-half years of miraculous survival exposes Nazi-fascism as the most extreme manifestation of human intolerance, but as it seeks an answer to the question posed in the title ('If this is a man'), historical accusations give way to the universal concerns encountered in *Uomini e no* and in Robert Antelme's contemporary Holocaust memoirs, *The Human Race* (1947), as well as in other works that start from the specific context of war, civil war, class struggle and ethnic cleansing to deconstruct assumptions of humans as a rational and moral race (Gordon 2006: 100). Levi's memoirs were started for therapeutic purposes in the laboratory where he worked, but their subsequent literary development embraced the obligation, so central to Hebraic belief and history, to preserve and transmit the memory of discrimination and persecution. The physical and psychological destruction endured in the camps was accompanied by the recurrent nightmare that what he had to tell, should he ever return, would only cause indifference and incomprehension. Therefore in order to be heard and believed Levi takes the reader back to December 1943 when he was captured as a partisan by the fascists, interned at the camp of Fossoli in Modena, and deported and deprived of personal possessions, privacy and identity.¹⁹ Giving equal importance to hunger, illness and extreme temperatures as well as to the material construction of the barracks and the methods of the Final Solution, Levi confronts us with the physical and psychological specifics of systematic dehumanisation in order to enable at least some form of understanding for what it meant to avoid the processes of elimination and to be saved, finally, when the Russian Army arrived at the camp in January 1945. At that point, he embarked on the long and complicated return home narrated, with the freshness only a new life can give, in *La tregua* (1963).

Levi's revelatory graphic descriptions and the complex figure of author/narrator/protagonist make his investigation of human essence comparable to that of *Cristo*, but as life in Auschwitz is both lived and observed by the narrator, the socio-psychological and historical analysis does not allow for scientific detachment – either for the narrator or the reader. Narrating in the present tense and with occasional direct addresses to the reader, Levi applies techniques of immediacy associated with Dante's *Commedia* wherein the pilgrim's journey through the underworld is conducted uniquely to return to the world and *tell*. The atmosphere and concentric circles outlined in the *Inferno* could very well have formed a model for the camps, where every measure of survival is clandestine and, according to norms of civil behaviour, amoral and non-human, and we also recognise Dante's devils in Nazi-Kapos who follow collective and subconsciously internalised objectives to reduce prisoners to animals. One of them, 'as light on his step as the devils of Malebolge', wipes his oily hand on Levi's shoulders with a mechanical gesture that becomes the standard against which the survivor later judges the entire Holocaust and any other offence to humanity (Levi 2005: 97). Levi's humanist vision is, however, no

more generous towards a deeply religious fellow inmate who thanks God for having escaped the gas chambers, thus ignoring the logics of selection by which one person's survival depends on another's condemnation. It invests, on the other hand, much affection in recalling Steinlauf who by maintaining objectively futile habits of hygiene inspires resistance to bestialisation; Lorenzo, an external worker who risks his life daily by bringing in food; and Charles who demands that Levi recite Ulysses' last journey as narrated in *L'inferno* 26, thus making him aware of still having a memory and of still being a man. These souls destined for Paradise serve as practical and moral forces in Levi's resigned fight and become, in the retrospective act of writing, objects of analytical attention in a 'quiet study' of 'the human soul' that categorically rejects Dante's divine vision (2005: 9). The only certainty Levi brings back from the underworld is that of God's non-existence, but he lives in full the Christian poet's mission to hinder a collective amnesia of the past and to act as a source of moral knowledge in the present.

Memory, responsibility and human essence bring us to the centre of Levi's testimony of death and survival, and also to the tradition of non-programmatic, orally based, witness narratives defined by a shared set of influences, circumstances and objectives as well as by the individual author's historical position and literary sensibilities. Far from comprehensive, the overview in this chapter has sought to trace constants and variations through emblematic and representative examples, while also bringing in non-fiction writings that historically have remained at the margins of the canons of both Resistance literature and of neorealism. Drawing a line from *Fontamara*, via *Conversazione in Sicilia* and Gramsci's prison writings, to these two personal narratives of deprived freedom that encapsulate both the immediacy and the testimonial value of the neorealist *optique*, what emerges as the strongest constant is the commitment to document the socio-geographical shadowlands observed and lived by authors who, to a great extent, identify with the social world depicted. On this basis we can formulate something more universal with regard to the function and potential of literature as reconstructed reportage. Vittorini maintained that literature does what politics cannot do, and the relationship between literature and historiography may be seen in similar terms. In contrast to non-creative narratives that describe macro-level events and aim to give objective accounts of official realities, literature explores history at the micro-level, relocating the voice of enunciation from sources of authority to subjects deprived of a voice and of public recognition. In this way, it seeks to provoke both the human interest and the empathy that historiography fails to provide (Enzensberger 1966: 7–22). Given its ability to narrate pluralistic histories, literature can better serve to chronicle and reproduce human life, and by fictionalising facts through the specific and the subjective, it creates a memory of historical events and an awareness of current reality as constantly emergent, as created by human action in

the everyday world. The more an artistic representation portrays history from below, from the position of those who suffer most from, and have the least impact upon, the course of 'History', the more it has moved away, not only from historiography, but more significantly from rhetorical images intended to distract the people from their own reality. Were we to identify one single feature of neorealist film and literature that distinguished it from previous and later traditions, it would be this ability to conduct such a move.

NOTES

1. See Brunetta (2009: v). A Monarchy since its unification in 1861, Italy became a Republic following the constitutional referendum of 1946.
2. See Ruberto and Wilson (2007: 8) and their anthology, *Italian Neorealism and Global Cinema*, for illuminating studies on the influence of neorealist film.
3. See Panza (2006: 32) and Lo Riparo (1987: 282). One of the founders of fascism and a member of the Grand Council that in 1943 voted Mussolini out of office, Bottai became increasingly aware of the regime's weakened position and ran *Primato* as a relatively open literary avant-garde periodical free from propagandistic objectives (Candela 2003: 27–30; Lo Riparo 1987: 282–3).
4. See Vittorini, 'Tre operai che non fanno popolo', *Il bargello*, 22 July 1934, quoted in Asor Rosa (1975b: 131).
5. The image of Silone as a heroic humanist and Marxist was severely tarnished in 2000 when historians Dario Biocca and Mauro Canali alleged that he infiltrated the Communist Party as one of the regime's informers, something which historian Giuseppe Tamburrano has long contested. For an examination in English of the 'caso Silone' see Elizabeth Leake (2003), *The Reinvention of Ignazio Silone*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
6. See Silone (1964, 229–34). Lenin's essay 'What is to be done?' written in 1901–2, appears in Lenin, Vladimir (1961), *Collected Works*. Vol. 5, trans. Joe Fineberg and George Hanna, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House.
7. Among Vittorini's most noted translations are stories by Edgar Allan Poe; Faulkner's *Light in August* (1932); and Steinbeck's *Tortilla Flat* (1935), as well as works by D. H. Lawrence. He later became the consultant for Anglo-Saxon literature in Milan's major publishing houses, Mondadori and Bompiani respectively (Bonsaver 2000: 21–34; 67–80).
8. It was Pavese himself who noted the profound impact Cain had on *Paesi tuoi*, which in its rapid and spoken narrative tends to hint at information that will be given later (2001: 129). In Pavese's successive novel, *Il compagno* (1946), Berto's character inspired the initially apathetic Pedro for whom anti-fascism leads towards class-consciousness, revolutionary action and communist affiliation.
9. See Pintor (1980: 37). The letter dated 28 November 1943 was published in 1946 in the Communist Party's organ *Rinascita* (founded 1944).
10. Written in 1926, the essay 'Alcuni temi della questione meridionale' was published in 1930 in *Lo Stato operaio* (Gramsci 1997: 180) and in 1944 in *Rinascita*, which was founded and edited by Palmiro Togliatti, who from 1944 was involved in editing Gramsci's writings (Argentieri 1996: 122; Chemotti 1999: 61). Gramsci was hailed as the model for the party's reorganisation (Asor Rosa 1975a: 1551–5), but his intellectual and ethical, rather than political, influence also reached the wider realm of post-war culture, as Calvino (1949: 46) and Vittorini testify as early as 1946 (1957: 237).

11. The complexity of the Resistance was first addressed in Giorgio Bocca's *Storia dell'Italia partigiana* (1966) and, more recently in Claudio Pavone's *Una guerra civile* (1994).
12. Whereas Pavese's 1946 article only alludes to *Uomini e no* (1968: 219), Asor Rosa directly attacks the use of the Resistance as a mere 'occasion' for a bourgeois, avant-gardist, moralist betrayal of the popular roots of this movement (Asor Rosa 1975b: 164–5).
13. See Vittorini (1957: 268–269); Vittorini's position in the post-war debate was in particular articulated through 'Una nuova cultura', *Il Politecnico*, 29 September 1945; 'Polemica e no per una nuova cultura', *Il Politecnico*, 10 November 1945; and 'Politica e cultura: Lettera a Togliatti', *Il Politecnico*, January–March 1947.
14. Vittorini's notes on Gramsci in 1946–1947 (1957: 257; 263–6) suggests that he would have had access to 'Per una storia degli intellettuali italiani', which had been reviewed in *Rinascita* in 1946 before it appeared in the first volume of *Quaderni del carcere* in 1948 (Dainotto 2008: 115). For Sartre's influence on Italian post-war culture, see Re (2000).
15. Carlo Lizzani's cinematic adaptation, *Cronache di poveri amanti* (1954), symptomatically identifies the narrative voice with one of the young lovers, suggesting the function non-naturalistic visions and subjective interpretations have in Pratolini's writing.
16. Argentieri sees the publication of Gramsci's essay 'Alcuni temi della questione meridionale' in 1944 and of Levi's book the following year as an indication to the tendency among leftists, anti-fascist and Catholic reformists to base their proposals for reconstruction on 'a reconsideration of the (southern) rural world to fulfil instances of social progress' (1996: 122).
17. Signed by ten scientists, and revised as well as critiqued by Mussolini, the 'Manifesto degli scienziati razzisti' presented a historical and anthropological excursus that was clearly aimed at Italianising German policies. For an English translation of the manifesto, see Schnapp (2000).
18. Added to these figures, reported by Liliana Picciotto Fargion's classic study *Il libro della memoria* (2002: 21–31), were the 1820 deported from the then Italian-ruled Dodecanese islands. Of these, only 179 survived.
19. Whether it was unwillingness or inability to understand, or desire to move on from the horrors of Nazi fascism, this fear was largely confirmed: few were willing to listen to Levi's experiences once he returned and his book did not raise interest until it was republished in 1958.

4. ROSSELLINI'S CITIES OF WAR AND RESISTANCE

there is . . . the Casilina road
onto which sadly are opened the doors of Rossellini's city . . .
there is the epic neorealist landscape [. . .]
Almost an emblem, by now, the scream of Magnani,
beneath the disorderly absolute locks
resounds in the desperate pans,
and in her vivid and mute look,
thickens the sense of tragedy
It is there that the present is dissolved and mutilated
and deafens the poet's song.
Pier Paolo Pasolini, *La religione del mio tempo*, 1961 (2003)

OUT OF THE RUINS: *OPEN CITY*

Deleuze's view of neorealist film as having unprecedentedly visualised senses of time and of spatial disconnection echoes Rossellini's own understanding of cinematic narration as a matter of 'waiting: [. . .] it is waiting that makes live, it's waiting that unleashes reality, the waiting that, after the preparation – gives liberation [. . .] Waiting is the force of every happening of our life, and so also for the cinema'. As a dramatic device, waiting involves tracing the characters' movements and revealing the spaces in which they move, while suspending the dramatic moment that eventually strikes them, unexpectedly, irreversibly (Rossellini 1987b: 92–3; 1995: 17–20). As a force of social conscience

and cultural change, however, in wartime Italy, waiting implied longing for political as well as artistic liberation. After *L'uomo della croce* was shot in the summer of 1942, a consortium of producers unimpressed with Rossellini's irreverent methods banned him from any cinematic activity. Once Vittorio Mussolini ensured him the rights to realise a story treatment Giuseppe De Santis had written on the work of railwaymen, the project was immediately set back by the turmoil of 1943. What little Rossellini was able to shoot between the Allies' first air strikes in July and the establishment of the Nazi-fascist Republic of Salò in September was later inserted into a completely different drama of fatal passions entitled *Desiderio* (1946).¹

The combination of living in a country split between foreign forces and of refusing, as Rossellini and most other cineastes did, to join the fascists' cinema in Venice, did not merely cause another period of professional waiting. As for most other Italians, the fall of fascism confronted Rossellini with an obligation and liberty to take a stance and *Open City* is, both in inspiration and realisation, a reflection of this ultimatum. It reconstructs the risks involved in active and passive resistance, and both the dramatic start where Manfredi barely escapes arrest, thanks to a timely warning from his landlady, and Pina's death in front of a traumatised neighbourhood, would have confronted contemporary spectators with recent and far from uncommon horrors. Another and perhaps even more significant objective of these sequences was to celebrate the 'web of solidarity' that arose among the several hundred thousand Italians who were persecuted during the occupation and to create a memory of the more than 650 ex-soldiers and civilians who died while defending Rome against advancing Nazi troops, the 1,735 partisans who lost their lives in combat or were tortured and executed during the ten months of occupation and the hundreds of civilians who were killed in the streets or in mass executions (Bentivegna 2002). Among the darkest memories of the occupation in Rome is the deportation of more than 3,000 civilians, mainly Jews, of whom only 420 returned, and the Fosse Ardeatine massacre (24 March 1944), which constituted a reprisal for an attack members of the GAP (Groups of Patriotic Action) had conducted in via Rasella the previous day, causing the death of thirty-three German military policemen.² The massacre was ordered by Hitler and many were rounded up indiscriminately to fill the 1:10 reprisal quota, but the majority of the 335 victims came from via Tasso and other prisons, as did the Resistance priest Don Pietro Pappagallo whose work and death created an instantaneous oral legend (Forgacs 2000: 14; Roncoroni 2006: 351).

While the execution of Don Pietro is the only reference included to these tragedies, they constitute a tacit premise not only for the thematics of *Open City*, but also for the collective engagement that inspired it. Months of inactivity, fear, wandering and hiding brought Rossellini closer to militant cineastes

and Resistance activists who in the spring of 1944 held 'passionate' clandestine meetings aimed at developing 'a program of the Resistance' to be activated following the imminent Liberation. The debate centred around realism, popular art and relations between art and society and Alicata, who had anticipated these questions as a *Cinema* critic and as a collaborator on *Obsession*, recalled that this was when Gramsci's concept of national-popular-art gained currency (quoted in Roncoroni 2006: 409). These collective concerns with art and the people operate, in harmony with Rossellini's predilection for choral representations, to form a view in *Open City* of history as built on the struggles of ordinary people. In discussing the film's 'documentary' qualities, critics have conventionally emphasised its aesthetics, the immediacy of its historical chronicle, and the authenticity it seeks in conveying the spirit of the Resistance as a popular force of solidarity and regeneration (Wagstaff 2007: 97–8). To these qualities, we must therefore also add the testimony it bears to a climate of regeneration and the practical model it provides for a new culture dedicated to redress decades of social injustice and enhance the country's moral rebuilding.

Started three months after the liberation of Rome on 5 June 1944 and released five months after Mussolini's execution on 25 April 1945, *Open City* was unique in the immediacy with which it reconstructed what in the film's working title was called 'Yesterday's Stories'. Nevertheless, Rossellini was not the first to envision a cinematic chronicle of recent tragedies. In fact, the idea for *Open City* came from a treatment for a documentary on Don Pappagallo written by Alberto Consigli, with whom Rossellini had collaborated on *L'uomo della croce*, and De Santis had already announced a film – unfortunately never realised – on GAP-fighters in Rome that would also have commemorated Teresa Gullace, a pregnant woman shot by the Germans outside the barracks where her husband was awaiting deportation (Roncoroni 2006: 22–6; 355). As the script developed, this episode gave life to Pina, and the story of Don Pappagallo was fused with that of another Resistance priest, Don Giuseppe Morosini. A common motivating factor among several script-writers, of whom only Sergio Amidei and Fellini have been credited, was the urgency, after years of forced adherence to official realities, to 'narrate what had happened, what we had seen', and when the title became *Rome: Open City*, it was to reinforce this testimonial function in historically very precise terms.³ Following the Allies' attacks in the summer of 1943, Rome, as the centre of Catholicism, had been declared a demilitarised zone or an 'open city'. This declaration passed through the Vatican and was repropounded as the condition on which the defeated Italian army surrendered Rome to the Germans. Neither the occupying nor the liberating forces respected the agreement and the term 'open city' was soon redefined by Resistance activists as a slogan around which to provoke anti-German sentiments (Forgacs 2000: 106).

The title therefore contains a sarcastic reference to historical realities that no contemporary viewer would have overlooked, while it also evokes the solidarity and sacrifices involved in the citizens' struggle to reclaim the right to their city.

In part, it was in order to capture this spirit of opposition while it could still be sensed that Rossellini started to shoot prematurely in January 1945, facing practical barriers as they came, while selling off personal belongings as well as the furs and jewellery of his wife and girlfriend respectively until more stable backing was found (Rondolini 1989: 98). The predicaments of having to pilfer electricity from a nearby American newspaper and procure film stock in bits and pieces, as well as the financial impossibility not only of shooting with a soundtrack, but also of developing the film stock in daily rushes to revise and keep track of what was shot, would have caused the greatest difficulties.⁴ Between technical hitches and moral as well as artistic drives to complete the project, Rossellini was obliged, as he would later recall

to invent a new technique that allowed making films without using studios. This realism was simply born from the condition of work. Perhaps also from the stubbornness, the desire to do things completely, despite the terrible conditions of work, without giving in to the temptation to say to oneself that in Rome in that moment, there were more important things to be done. (1987a: 106)

Implied in this account is not merely the physical and economic disintegration of the industry, encapsulated by the destruction of Rome's major studio, Cinecittà, at the hands of Allied and German invaders, and its temporary use as a camp for the homeless once the city was liberated (Rondolini 1989: 72). Like Zavattini, Rossellini considered the provisional lack of traditional industrial structures as having created an unprecedented freedom, opening up the most extraordinary and hitherto considered unworkable projects. Deprived both of the financial guarantee and the exigencies of film producers, Rossellini found that the distaste for rigid programmes for which he had once been excluded from the cinema had all of a sudden become an invaluable ability to survive and innovate.

There is no question that *Open City* was immediately considered 'exceptional, even emblematic, of a new, absolutely abnormal mode of working', but there are several reservations to the legend of insuperable obstacles and total reinvention of structures (Rondolini 1989: 81). Made 'from the truth', it still followed the 'old schemes' of cinematic techniques and narration, Amidei would later observe, pointing in particular to the many gags and melodramatic themes as well as to the characters' emblematic quality. Most of the indoor scenes were reconstructed in a vacant horse racing hall in via

degli Avignonesi and shot with classical, albeit terribly inadequate, lighting (quoted in Roncoroni 2006: 430–1) and the rough photography would have been caused by artificial light drawn from poor electricity and by damage that occurred during the development of the finished film, rather than by the stock which in itself was both available and appropriate for Rossellini's particular needs (Wagstaff 2007: 96–104). Furthermore, initial interruptions in shooting appear to have been a reflection of poor preparation as much as lack of funds, and the decision of the distribution company CIS Nettunia to rescind its contract with Rossellini in February 1945 on the basis of unsatisfactory previews suggests that some rushes were available early on, despite Rossellini and his collaborators' affirmations to the contrary (Roncoroni 2006: 27). What made *Open City* look intrinsically new was therefore first and foremost the subject matter, the immediacy it gave to the historical material and the authenticity it achieved in dramatising national sentiments. Only by relocating our perspective from the film's aesthetic to its moral qualities can we perceive the position it immediately acquired as the marker of national as well as cinematic rebirth.

The coexistence of the old and the new also shapes the cast as lesser-known performers, friends of the authors and ordinary citizens appear alongside Aldo Fabrizi, nationally the best paid and most in-demand actor and a perfect fit for the role of Don Pietro, and Anna Magnani, who with *Open City* attained iconic status as the quintessential *popolana* (woman of the people). Both claimed disproportional amounts of the non-existent budget and were crucial in making the hazardous project economically viable.⁵ Contemporary cinema-goers would, in particular, have recognised them as the jovial working-class protagonists of *Campo de' fiori* (Bonnard 1943) and *L'ultima carozzella* (Mattoli, 1943) which, being scripted by Zavattini, Fellini, and Amidei, and shot on location in the ordinary neighbourhoods of central Rome, testify to the regenerative function of certain wartime experiments. The birth of neorealism as a 'dialectal' cinema was born with these romantic yet anti-illusionist comedies, Rossellini later observed, and with the 'spontaneous creation' of the two Roman actors who had both been trained in the vernacular style of variety theatre (1995: 52). Their sympathetically imperfect personae had effectuated a decisive break with the falsifying structures of 'white-telephone films' and re-appropriating them in *Open City* was a crucial strategy that helped to form an image of the present with which the public could identify.

YESTERDAY'S STORIES

Set in the winter of 1944, *Open City* establishes its spatiotemporal anchorage with a panoramic shot over the city's skyline, capturing Saint Peter's cupola in the distance. Superimposed are the main titles and a caption reading:

The facts and characters of this film, albeit drawn from tragic and heroic stories of nine months of Nazi occupation, are imaginary. Thus, any identification with real facts and characters should be considered incidental.

As the camera pans slowly leftwards, an initially dramatic score gives way to singing German soldiers captured in archive footage while marching up the Spanish Steps. The fictional part of the narrative then begins with the SS arriving at an apartment block in the same square.⁶ A woman catches sight of them from the window and a cut leads to Manfredi who, in contrast to the Germans' song of terror, is listening to the illegal 'Voice of London', reminding us that the BBC had been broadcasting in Italian since 1938. Thanks to a warning from his landlady, Manfredi escapes by way of the roofs over the adjacent Spanish embassy, an area the SS would rather avoid.⁷ The following morning, Manfredi goes to Francesco's place and is received by his fiancée, Pina, unleashing an episodic narrative where singular stories are tied together respectively by relationships of solidarity, betrayal and monstrous power. The latter thread unfolds with the appearance of Gestapo leader, Bergmann, and involves his men as well as the fascists as passive accomplices; the former thread emerges from women raiding local bakeries for severely rationed bread and from partisans disposed to die for collective liberation.⁸ Their story reaches a caesura with the death of Pina and a conclusion with that of Don Pietro. Between good and evil we find Marina, Manfredi's ex-girlfriend, and Pina's sister, Lauretta, who have abandoned their working-class roots in pursuit of an easy life as nightclub entertainers.

Once Manfredi – a military leader of the CLN – has been reported, he must hide, and he asks assistance from Don Pietro whose priestly clothing and authorisation to go out after curfew will make the carrying of money to partisans easier. The mutual respect with which the two engage encapsulates ideals of a cross-political and unitary struggle, as does Don Pietro's immersion in secular life and his concern for matters of material and historical urgency. He may be slightly alarmed by Pina's son, Marcello, who instead of attending church receives lessons in Marxist thought from Romoletto, but during the round-up at Pina's place, he resolutely abandons the children gathered for Sunday school to cover up for the revolutionary kid's weapons. In vain does Bergmann talk of Manfredi as an enemy of the church in order to make Don Pietro betray him, since the priest is convinced that everyone who fights for freedom walks in the path of the Lord. This atmosphere of extreme deprivation and indiscriminate solidarity sets the context for the war-time wedding Pina plans to celebrate in a modest apartment where only the stairway offers a room for privacy and dreams. Francesco is confident in promising her the 'new springtime' she longs for, unaware as he is of the tragically ironic turn their wedding day will take. Having witnessed Pina's deadly protest against his

arrest, Francesco escapes two deaths: the first thanks to the partisans' attack on the convoy deporting him, and the second just before he is about to seek asylum in a convent. Marcello insists he take a scarf Pina gave him, delaying his departure by the two seconds necessary to escape the SS who capture Manfredi, Don Pietro and an Austrian deserter. The child's search for a connection of future togetherness will, it is assumed, allow them both to see the city reclaim its openness.

These scenes of collective struggles and sacrifices are juxtaposed with snapshots of Marina's apartment in the refined district of Parioli. Unable to renounce the intoxicating effects of consumer goods and cocaine, she is more uneasy about inhabiting a grey area of non-being and non-belonging than Lauretta, who spends her carefree nights with German soldiers. She therefore does not dismiss Manfredi's moralistic disapproval of her lack of values, but declares that if he had loved her, he would have made her change. The betrayal she immediately regrets is just as much a way not to acknowledge what human and emotional losses her desires of social mobility have brought about as it is a means to avenge Manfredi's abandonment. Marina's moral distance from the world she once inhabited shapes her characterisation as well. In contrast to Pina who, despite the sentimental pathos of her story, retains strong individual traits (her Roman speech, her sympathetic candour and her sense of solidarity and care for others) that make her credible as a woman of the people, Marina is easily recognisable as the 'fallen woman' of nineteenth-century melodrama, whereas Ingrid personifies the lesbian 'femme fatale' – a predatory figure developed by stereotyping homosexual identity. The captivating relationship of seduction and treason that unfolds between these two women serves primarily to establish a narrative connection to the enemy, and the overstated fictionalisation of their characters are attuned with the staged world of the Gestapo headquarters. Constructed and lit as a stage, Bergmann's office is conveniently located between a salon of whisky-drinking officers and the adjacent torture chamber, enabling an easy transgression between the two spheres, and both the intense desk light he points towards his victims during interrogation, and the illumination of Manfredi's grotesquely mutilated body, reveal the calculated use of chiaroscuro effects to accentuate the opposing images of the crude realism of relentless resistance and the performance of social and moral degradation.

This theatricalisation of the Gestapo leaders highlights not only the good and those that ultimately win, but also Italians who, like the Questore (head of the fascist police), are involved in their network. He smiles and nods at Bergmann's impressive city map which, modelled on what historically was known as the Schroeder-plan, divides the city into 14 zones to economise round-ups. Although they are both seeking to uncover facts about Manfredi, who escaped imprisonment in 1928 and fought with the communists against

Franco in Spain, Bergmann evidently does not trust his partner enough to allow him to capture their victim. The Questore, for his sake, appears slightly disturbed over the screams of pain penetrating Bergmann's office and he is never involved in torturing partisans or in decadent gatherings. Both characters were modelled on historical figures, but their representation is far from accurate, or even verisimilar. Whatever effeminate traits the Gestapo leader Colonel Herman Kappler historically may have possessed, these are magnified by the exaggerated mannerism of the declared homosexual Austrian-Jewish dancer, Harry Feist, whereas in the Questore we see little of Pietro Caruso, who was sent to Rome by Mussolini to handle intensified anti-fascist activity and later executed as responsible for the Fosse Ardeatine massacre. At worst, Rossellini's Questore appears ridiculous and completely undermined by Bergmann's rhetorical skills and devilish set-up. This systematic use of generic types and dramaturgic commonplaces to distinguish between the moral worlds that cohabit in the city point to the film's basis in traditional narrative structures, but the unbalanced distribution of evil also reveals an intent to ignore the nation's sins in favour of a conciliatory discourse aimed at unifying the people around ideals of collective rebuilding.

RECONSTRUCTING YESTERDAY

Moving between the city's adversarial spheres, the narrative unfolds as a string of episodes interrelated either by continuity or by opposition with regard both to characters, form of action and generic elements. From the melodramatic intensity and treacherous luxury of Marina's life, the film cuts to Don Pietro's spartan rooms of unconditional hospitality, and from his gag of staging a fictitious last rites during the fatal raid, we are lead to the tragedy of Pina's death and the detached observation of the partisans' rescue manoeuvre. Such forms of 'ethical intercutting' invest spatial and moral oppositions with an evaluative commentary, while also reinforcing dramatic tensions by providing more knowledge of the events than the protagonists themselves possess (Gottlieb 2004: 33). The frequent juxtaposition of parallel actions within the Italian and the German sphere of action is, in that respect, telling. After Manfredi's escape, a cut to the Gestapo headquarters leaves little doubt as to what it meant to have barely avoided capture, and it also explains why Manfredi's landlady later displays such terror at the thought of 'ending up in via Tasso'. Suggestive parallels can be drawn to *Uomini e no*, which was written and published contemporaneously with *Open City*. Vittorini employs similar literary techniques of cross-cutting to reinforce personal experiences with an encompassing and ethically evaluative insight, but in reconstructing 'the fear of everyone, but of mine in particular. I too have fled, I too have had friends who have been captured and killed', Rossellini created something rather different from

Vittorini's Resistance city, where the atmosphere of collective terror forms the backdrop to scenes of urban guerrilla fights and mass executions (Rossellini 1987b: 92). *Open City* tends to view the Resistance through clandestine connections, and only the children's sabotage of a German train and the attack on the German convoy represent the 'explosive city' the Gestapo leader Herbert Kappler described while being sentenced to life imprisonment in Italy in 1947 (Bentivegna 2002).

The partisan attack proves, however, to convey more subtle functions than the merely narrative one of connecting Francesco's arrest with his and Manfredi's successive arrivals at the *trattoria* where they escape the attention of German soldiers but fall into Marina's trap. Set in the outskirts of EUR, an area approximately 10 kilometres south of the city which Mussolini developed in view of the 1942 World Fair as the very incarnation of fascist planning and urban expansion, this manifestation of armed Resistance contains ideological undertones that appear reinforced if we consider the violent protests Gullace's assassination historically caused and, more specifically, the attack in Via Rasella. Given the scale of reprisals and the contradictory sentiments this operation had caused among both the Resistance and the citizens, it was a particularly uneasy chapter of collective memory that could only be implicitly evoked. This forms another contrast to Vittorini's narrative, which moves from a celebration of a similar GAP attack in Milan to elaborate descriptions of the atrocious reprisal it caused.⁹ The film's selective history is even more obvious in its categorical conceptualisation of the enemy. Pina, who acts as the oracle of popular opinion, may identify the ruins outside her house as the result of the Allies' liberation, and she refuses to be married by a fascist in the city hall, but evil as such resides exclusively within the Germans. Whether they gun down sheep for their dinner or manifest themselves through a disturbing equation of Nazism and homosexuality, the perversity of the foreign invaders permeates their every action. In a moment of drunken lucidity, Major Hartman severely questions the laws of the 'master-race', condemning the assumption of superiority and the hatred caused, but the moral ambiguity of his soliloquy is denied the following morning when he yells at the Italian firing squad for its hesitance to shoot a priest and dispatches Don Pietro with a furious *coup de grâce*.

As suggested by the opening caption that exclusively establishes Nazism as the context for tragic and heroic stories, *Open City* develops a Manichean perspective that dismisses not only the man within the beast but also the beast within the nation's self. The fascists who stop Francesco on his way home, and those who raid Pina's place, are more inclined to hunt women than the enemies of the Reich, and the firing squad of Italian soldiers refuses, passively, to kill Don Pietro. Even more problematic is the total exclusion of atrocious events in which Mussolini's men were actively involved – chiefly the deportation of the Jews in the winter of 1943–4 and the Fosse Ardeatine massacre

the following spring. The change in focus from Don Pappagallo, a victim of the massacre, to Don Morosini, reveals the systematic attempt to avoid the civil war upon which Vittorini's narrative and philosophical perspective focuses. In addition, while celebrating the sacrifice of exceptional priests, the film ignores the Church's official collaboration with fascism and its passivity vis-à-vis Nazi-fascist violence (Forgacs 2000: 64–5; Roncoroni 2006: 33). This systematic reduction of national conflict must be related to uneasy compromises between often conflicted authors and between authors and censors. In particular, Ivanoe Bonomi, head of the multi-party government that ruled Liberated Italy in the last year of the war, interfered with measures of a priori censorship to align the film's messages with the official policy of national pacification rather than the revolutionary tendencies within the Resistance. What the original script outlined as an explicitly anti-fascist representation and the ideals of historical accuracy and artistic freedom with which it would be realised had all to be sacrificed on the 'altar of realpolitik'.¹⁰ When the time came for *Paisà*, Rossellini would take a more critical stance toward conflicts and divisions during the war for liberation, but in 1945, to evoke yesterday's stories meant first and foremost to provide a coherent moral basis for a collective tomorrow.

CLAIMING AN OPEN CITY

If, in the attempt to bridge ideological and geographical divisions and provide foundations for restored national life and identity, *Open City* in effect came to anticipate the collective amnesia that reigned in post-war Italy, we must also recognise the call for change – social and moral, within and beyond the Church – that lies beneath its conciliatory discourses. As Forgacs has demonstrated in a sophisticated study of the film's spatiality, the diegetic world is seen through two major perspectives: a panoptical one connected to schemes of surveillance and extermination, on the one hand; and another that moves along the ground, following the steps of those who seek to escape these very schemes, while also bringing forth undiscovered areas and new uses of the city (2000: 33–6). After the first scenes near the Spanish Steps, the narrative gravitates away from the centre towards the working-class district of Prenestino where life takes place in streets that open up for collective protest (at the bakery) but also fragmentary exchanges and reflections (between Pina and the *brigadiere*; Don Pietro and Marcello, Don Pietro and Pina), and where the interiors house clandestine networks and unconditional charity. What emerges is a decentralising entity that infringes not only upon the Gestapo's city map, but also upon sites of monumental importance (Aprà 2006: 41). Between the distant appearance of Saint Peter's in the first and the final shot, papal institutions are displaced in favour of a parish church open to children, deserters and resisters

whereas an evanescent view of the Palazzo della Civiltà del Lavoro which was built with 'a classical and monumental feeling' as the main building for the ultimately unrealised World Fair is all that is left to recall Mussolini's imperial city (Grundman 1998: 323). Symbolically, it is in the EUR district and in front of this rationalist structure that the partisans liberate Francesco.

The extent to which Don Pietro allows the authority of hierarchical ecclesiastic structures to disintegrate in the face of the pressing needs of providing asylum, forging documents and assisting guerrilla fighters becomes evident when he postpones Pina's requested confession to honour his clandestine mission. As they leave church together, she nevertheless leads the conversation into a confessional mode, encouraged no doubt by the unorthodox approach to Christian charity of a priest who acts not as a mediating judge but as an interlocutor in questions of existential and doctrinal matters. That the wedding comes a bit late for her condition is a lesser concern for Don Pietro; what worries him are those who expect heavenly intervention in terrestrial suffering, without realising that the war is a divine punishment for collective disobedience and that the only means to peace is prayer and moral change. Most noteworthy here is not perhaps the ahistorical explanation of a conflict he fights with historical means, nor the collective 'us' he accuses, making no exception for clergy members or other privileged classes. Void of liturgical formulas, his response to Pina's concerns deconstructs both the sermon and the confession and what unfolds is an unintentional act of reformulation that continues in the Gestapo offices when Manfredi attempts to confess his subversive affiliations. The guards interrupt them and Don Pietro is not too anxious to hear what he probably has understood anyway and, seeing his comrade tortured to death, he praises his mortal silence and grants him unconditional absolution. Both interactions embrace the Christian imperative of social justice rather than Don Pietro's official mandate, but more than redeeming the Church by celebrating an alternative to comfortable neutrality, as has been suggested (Marcus 1986: 51), they call for a democratisation of a sacrament that has traditionally been questioned precisely for its reliance on authoritarian mediation.

One function of these spontaneous confessions is to give the quest for openness, understood in spatial and military terms, an ideological connotation and make it applicable to the Church but also other institutions that during fascism had disallowed debate and diverse viewpoints. If the truncated exchange between Manfredi and Don Pietro synthesises the Revolution and the Calvary as roads to tolerance and freedom, the last interaction between Pina and Don Pietro bridges the parallel processes of civil decentralisation and religious deinstitutionalisation. Leading away from the parish church, along the scarcely spectacular railways and towards the mountains where partisans are fighting, Pina and Don Pietro's walk captures the essence of what according to Sandro Bernardi defines Rossellini's realism: an exploration of the sacred within

human interaction and the landscape (2000: 50–1). If there is a nod here to the ‘religiosity’ and ‘choral quality’ that Rossellini identified as constants in his work (1987b: 88–9), the idea of an essentially social concept of the sacred also points to *Open City* as embedded in the ethos and culture of the Resistance, giving space and voice to traditionally underrepresented social subjects, who during the occupation emerged as historical agents. Pina, Don Pietro and the others are not heroes as Manfredi explains, calmer than ever in front of the agonising death awaiting him. At least, they are not the type of heroes fabricated by fascist rhetoric. Their opposition to the totalitarian state as well as their humble condition and individual imperfections (atheism, extramarital pregnancy, political use of ecclesiastic privileges), prove their affinity with Visconti’s Gino, who had already introduced the anti-hero as a new cinematic protagonist. Born out of the ruins of the war, however, Rossellini’s characters seek, successfully or not, to transform the wanderer’s destructive rebelliousness by defending their city and by engaging in historical action.

Connection between a new human type, on the one hand, and new perceptions of space and of cinematic narration, on the other, emerge more clearly when Pina falls to the ground, a moment so unfathomable that when Don Pietro embraces her lifeless body, assuming the posture and expression of a *mater dolorosa*, he does not immediately administer the last rites, in contrast to when Manfredi dies. It is not only the bystanders that feel the traumatic effects of this scene, but the spectators, unprepared as we are for the grotesque elimination of such a central and positive character (Marcus 2008: 428). The film, on the other hand, while tracing Pina’s movements to lay bare the environment in which she lives and map out her position at the edges of the city, has ‘waited’ precisely for this moment (Rossellini 1995: 20). If the unexpected tragedy serves to convey Pina’s lack of political agency through a dramatic situation that literally silences her voice, the complete futility of her protest motivated by passion rather than any notion of historical action also presents us with a woman who sees and reacts, but who fails to act in other than self-destructive ways. Existentially, as well as socially and topographically, Pina belongs to the margins, between the ‘agent’ and ‘seer’, announcing the essentially modern subjectivity that Deleuze sees visualised within decentralised spaces. The images from via Montecucciolli where Pina is slain amidst destroyed buildings and terrified inhabitants offers a rare ‘documentary record’ of Rome in 1945 as well as a suggestive indicator as to what everyday life during the occupation was like (Forgacs 2000: 22). As a cinematic space, however, it embodies the undefined, and fragmentary quality of the ‘any-space-whatever’. Invested by the ‘tragedy’ of sacrifice that in the late 1950s made its way into Pasolini’s Roman poetry with such an expressivity as to mute the poet’s own voice, the ‘neorealist landscape’ is to a great extent composed of such spaces where unspectacular streets and ordinary people may achieve the status of emblems.

Within this world of the ordinary and the unspectacular, we discern the techniques of deformation Jakobson saw as central to the formulation of new realisms. Along similar lines, Deleuze observes that it is precisely the exclusion of recognisable and logically interconnected spaces that separates neorealism from traditional realism (1986: 212–13). *Open City* relies on conventions of cinematic narration, but its intent to disorient us has highly innovative effects. From the roofs of Manfredi's apartment, the film cuts to a claustrophobic world of evil, and eventually to a raided bakery; from an inner-city tragedy, we are relocated to a suburban claim to justice, being constantly asked to reflect on the individual spaces before attempting to reconstruct their logical correlations. In response to Pasolini's regret over neorealism's political failures, Deleuze would point to the cinematic revolution promoted by its many discontinuities and the potential the proliferation of empty, decentralised space offers for rebuilding and renewal. Given their lack of inner and external connections, 'any-space-whatevers' may be reconnected in an infinite number of ways and constitute therefore 'loci' of the 'possible' or of 'becoming' (Deleuze 1986: 109). This sheds light on the conclusion of *Open City* at the Forte Bravetta – a fortress which historically saw the execution of seventy-seven anti-fascists, including Don Morosini, and later, Pietro Caruso, among other war criminals. Decentralising the fortress itself, a series of long shots visualise a seemingly unconfined field before the camera identifies Don Pietro, tied to a chair in the centre, and only when Marcello and the other boys leave the site do we see how displaced the fortress is from the city centre. Don Pietro's last prayer takes place in open space as does Pina's last scream. Both sacrifices are removed from landmarks of authority and glory, and just as the fatal passion of Pina's body seems to radiate in the street, so, too, does the moral and spiritual force of Don Pietro invest the ground beneath him. Capturing the parallel processes of decentralisation and deinstitutionalisation, the respective spaces of martyrrial death are loci of becoming in which the new, free civilisation will take on life. A creative entity as much as it is a reproduction of documentary value, the cinematic city offers a model for a new social formation that leaves room for collective redemption, but that more than anything else sets out to offer the children of the Resistance a place of tolerance and social justice in which to restart civic life.

DISCOVERY OF SELF AND OTHER: *PAISÀ*

Much of what emerged and what was aimed at in *Open City* takes more articulated forms in *Paisà* which elaborates on the cinematic potential of collective experiences while bringing the aspiration to sincerity, innovation and confrontational observations much further. The idea of a cinematic rendering of the Italian Liberation stirred immediate enthusiasm among Allied Forces, which

willingly provided soldiers, tanks and German prisoners. Initial relations with American producers grew, on the other hand, far more tenuous due not to the film's unconventional composition of six episodes all of which present different situations and characters, but to the authors' methods, the lack of detailed plans and the rejection of stars (Rondolini 1989: 94–5). According to Rossellini and his scriptwriters, *Paisà* should not 'describe actions of war' – in that case Hollywood heroes would have done – but it should create a 'realistic' and 'faithful' image of the Americans' relations with the Italian people. Such an objective demanded that actors, both American and Italian, be non-professionals and chosen as far as possible from within the environments represented (quoted in Aprà 1987: 93). Refusing all norms of cinematic spectacle, Rossellini insisted that faces, as well as spaces, be unknown to the screen and found himself, once again, searching for the required capital.

When shooting started in January 1946, an original scenario written by Amidei, Fellini, and others existed. The individual episodes were, as assistant director Massimo Mida recalled, substantially modified and to a great degree improvised, as the script took form day by day to incorporate the impressions and human conditions of locations and actors brought forth 'by chance' (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 108–9). Openness towards lived material became increasingly determining as the *thought* of a film developed into cinematic *experiment*, something which is suggested by the substitution of the provisional English title *Seven from the U.S.* with *Paisà*: a dialectal form of *paesano* (fellow villager/compatriot), etymologically rooted in *paese* (country/village), that embodies not only an 'epithet' and a 'sign of recognition' but also a 'sound' clear and elementary enough for foreigners to assimilate (Fanara 2000: 339). Besides the shift in focus it implies from the liberating forces to encounters between people brought together under circumstances and geographical zones defined by the war for liberation, this title also conveys the communion and choral quality that in Rossellini's world infuse both landscapes and human relations.

It was not only between Americans and Italians that a magical word of fraternity served to establish common ground; but also within a historically divided population that experienced the months between 1943 and 1945 very differently (Fanara 2000: 339). Whereas underground networks were ready to surface in Northern and Central Italy when fascism fell, Southern Italy was subjected to Allied power and a useless ex-fascist leadership within a few months and knew no Resistance. It may have escaped civil war but not socio-economic destruction and the ideals of unity, solidarity and social reform that initially marked the Reconstruction in the North had little or no meaning in the South where liberation meant not the establishment of a new society, but, instead, the return to power of great landowners and criminal organisations. These historical and socio-geographic divisions illuminate the film's twofold process of

recognising regional and cultural specificities, while at the same time seeking to reconnect fragments through a journey of national recomposition. Unfolding, as Bazin acutely observed, as the first filmic 'equivalent to a collection of short stories' (2002: 277), *Paisà* relates the encounters respectively between: Allied troops and civilians in Sicily; an MP (Military Policeman) and an orphan boy in Naples; a soldier and a girl turned prostitute in Rome; a nurse and partisans in Florence; military chaplains and friars in Emilia-Romagna; and lastly, Allied soldiers and partisans in the Po Delta. Discovering peripheral realities and experiences of waiting, chance encounters, warfare and unexpected moments of loss and death, this re-enacting of the long war for liberation becomes an artistic and moral act of reconstruction, far less equivocal and pacifying than *Open City* in its intent both to view history from below and to contribute to a national redefinition of self.

ASCENDING THE COUNTRY

1. *Paisà* opens with nocturnal images of ships docking in the harbour and troops coming ashore, while a voiceover contextualises this view as occurring during the Allies' landing in Sicily on the night of 1 July 1943. Similar para-fictional sequences composed for the most part by archival footage introduce each episode except the last, before the events are presented through what Bazin defined as 'reconstituted reportage'. Unsure of their direction and afraid of danger, the invading American soldiers end up by chance at a church where a number of Sicilians have sought refuge from bombardment. Tony talks to them in Italian, revealing his Sicilian origins, and gets information about the Germans' movements, but only Carmela, who wanders in search of her brothers and father missing at sea, knows where the roads are free from mines. Dismissing objections from the village women, she guides the soldiers on the stony trails along the cliffs until they reach a tower where the squad sets out on patrol, while Joe from Jersey remains with her. The initial aversion towards this unexpected moment of togetherness soon fades against the shared interest in challenging insuperable language barriers to kill time, and the illusory protection of sea and starlit sky makes them forget the surrounding dangers. Betrayed by the flame of his Zippo, Joe is shot by a distant German sniper in the dark. Intercuts between the group of Nazi soldiers and Carmela allow us to follow her haste in hiding Joe before they arrive at the tower and her plot to attack them with his carbine once she discovers that he is dead, whereas a narrative ellipsis leaves us in doubt as to whether the Germans effectuate their talk to assault her. What appears clearly from the conclusive parallel scenes is the revenge they take in throwing her onto the rocks on the seashore, while the Americans deduce from Joe's death that she betrayed him, unaware of the sacrifice she committed to protect them all.

As was the case with *Open City*, story information originates from within antagonistic sources, but the effect is not so much to elaborate on Manichean perspectives – even the Germans, after all, manifest human qualities of exhaustion and homesickness – as it is to explore encounters that evolve, gradually, from mutual suspicion to intuitive contact. Upon arriving, the liberating soldiers are lost in the Sicilian wilderness and would rather have completed their thankless mission without mixing with the local people, whom they have indiscriminately preconceived as being fascists and thus potential traitors. Instead, they must accept the guidance of a simple girl who is perfectly at ease in the obscure terrain and in the spooky tower that to them evokes the realm of Hollywood's *Frankenstein*, and not that of the war they have come to end. The Sicilian community, on the other hand, is powerless against foreigners with a gun ('You are all alike', Carmela complains to Joe 'you, the Germans, the fascists'). Luca, a fascist, hopes they are Germans and tries to hinder all collaboration when it appears, to the other villagers' relief, that they represent the liberating forces and Tony establishes a sense of fraternity and identification around common origins and shared objectives. The camera works with distance and mobility to include interactions within and between the two groups, revealing the foundation for a contact that will develop in various directions as the campaign for liberation progresses, whereas medium close-ups and long takes trace the understanding that emerges between the two protagonists. Slow-motion photography of Joe falling to the ground enables us to share Carmela's immediate incomprehension and the beginnings of a grief later conveyed in a studied close-up and chiaroscuro light that assign dignity to an unsophisticated character about to meet her tragic end. Carmela's sacrifice is known only to the spectator, and her body, facing the sea to which she belongs, conveys a no less exquisite message about injustice than Pina's.

Founded on the concreteness of historical events and socio-geographical landscape, no diegetic information reveals that the Sicily episode was actually shot on the Amalfi coast; that the last image of Carmela was filmed in Anzio six months later; or that Carmela Sazio came from a Neapolitan family of poor fishermen, and not from Sicily, as the other village people did. The Germans were prisoners held in Allied custody, while the Americans were soldiers stationed in Naples, who, like Carmela, invest the story with biographical experiences. Robert Van Loon was a soldier from Jersey, emotionally attached to the ocean like Carmela, and he possessed a natural acting talent her impassive performance failed to display.¹¹ Carmela's major communicative force is a matter of presence, her dark colours and clumsy body merging with the very surroundings that estrange and deceive Joe, and the expressive valence of the sequence resides unquestionably in their exchanges. Among the words Joe lists to align his experiences with hers – including 'spaghetti', 'mangiare', 'c'est la guerre' (which he mistakes for Italian) and 'Carmela' – it is 'paisà' that

captures the sense of identification and fraternity brought forth during this unpredicted encounter. The overlapping in this episode of English, German, and Italian spoken with foreign or Sicilian accents establishes the polyphonic immediacy and proliferation of vernacular expression Rossellini had experimented with since *La nave bianca* and made a primary basis for claims to authenticity in *Open City*. This and the successive episodes of *Paisà* provide, however, an even stronger sense of a 'linguistic Babel captured live' thanks to the economic possibility this time of shooting with sound and the considerable reduction of standard Italian conventionally used in pre-war cinema.¹²

2. Moving from the temple at Paestum outside Salerno, where white crosses mark the sacrifices of Allied soldiers, through Vesuvius to a harbour where military material is being unloaded, the second episode brings us to Naples which by the end of September 1943 had become the logistic centre for the war in Italy. The film's interest is however not in the official life of this port city, but in its children who, like the Roman street boys featured in Di Sica's contemporary *Shoeshine*, have had to grow up, despite themselves, making whatever they can at the outdoor market. Pascà is hired to look out for the police while his friends try to sell Joe – a black MP too drunk to defend himself – as if he were a black-marketable object, but he takes him instead to a puppet show where Roland, the legendary knight of Italian Renaissance epics, is featured in a battle with his Saracen enemy. Joe interprets the religious war between Christians and Muslims as an allegory of the racial prejudice he lives with in America, and he jumps on the stage in defence of the black knight, causing anger among the puppeteers and spectators in a manner that recalls the equally legendary adventures of *Pinocchio*. While forming a comic contrast to images of severe social disintegration, the sequence also demonstrates the intactness, amidst ruins and alarming living conditions, of the city's vernacular traditions. Neapolitan collective life and proverbial expressivity is personified by Pascà, who with a thief's honesty warns the inexperienced MP about falling asleep, since by nature and by necessity, he will steal his shoes. When a few days later Joe catches Pascà helping himself to supplies from a military truck, he demands to meet his parents and is brought to the Mergellina Caves where the boy lives along with many of the 200,000 Neapolitans whose homes were destroyed during the war (Ginsborg 1990: 37). Astonished by the view of a neglected city, Joe enquires in broken Italian about his parents ('Dov'è mamma e papà?') and understands, as Pascà imitates the sound of bombs, why the children of Naples steal.

The encounter between the orphan and the foreigner evolves through aimless wanderings and small adventures; through looks and gestures and eventually also music as Pascà plays the harmonica while Joe responds with a spiritual about life's tribulations. This picaresque composition reflects qualities that the non-professional actors, Alfonso Bovino and Dots Johnson, brought

to the characters – chiefly a shared inclination towards performance illustrated by Joe’s dream about navigating a military plane and of being welcomed back home as a war hero. Pascà is amused by his gesticulations and onomatopoeic words so akin to his own ways of expression and remarks that the airplanes have caused an awful disaster, but he cannot follow Joe’s swift change in mood when he remembers that his ‘old shack’ is surrounded by tin cans, very much like the pile of ruins where they are sitting. Joe’s resignation towards the poor in the caves conveys a sudden awareness of what suffering the Allied bombing campaign has inflicted upon the local population, but their physical and metaphorical displacement to the margins of society also reminds him that the country he serves deprives him of a material and an emotional home. Joe’s intervention in defence of the black puppet and the fantasy of honour, absurd as they are, both convey a critique of the ‘American Dream’ that points to the film’s overarching commitment to represent the most marginal and suppressed of social experiences.¹³ Among the Hollywood sources Rossellini acknowledged, including *Citizen Kane* and *The Crowd*, which he invoked in the construction of space and of cityscapes respectively, it would have been the representation of African-American sharecroppers in King Vidor’s *Hallelujah* that inspired this commentary on racial tension (Rossellini 1987b: 92). Remarkably, these influences later found their way back to the margins of Hollywood in Spike Lee’s *Miracle at St. Anna* (2008) where the encounter between African-American soldiers and the victims of one of the most savage Nazi reprisals Italy ever knew is reconstructed around the instinctive understanding between a black GI and an Italian boy.

3. The cinematic ascent of the country offers no conciliatory conclusions or harmonic passages and from the darkness of Pascà’s caves we are bought into the sunlight of Rome’s liberation on 4 June 1944. There tends, however, to be a temporal continuity between the parafictional narrative and the fictional one that in this episode is resolutely broken. After archival footage shows Nazi troops beating a hasty retreat from the Eternal City followed by the Allies’ triumphant arrival to the cheers of the citizens, a title superimposed on a nocturnal image brings us six months forward in time and to the boogie-woogie rhythms emanating from Moka Abdul, a noted meeting place for GIs and Italian girls such as Francesca. Their exchanges were written and shot in the bar itself, and like the MP’s round-up which she barely escapes, it reconstructs the socio-cultural specificities of this environment, giving a bleak portrayal of the winter crisis of 1944–5 when alarming levels of hunger and unemployment saw an increase in prostitution.¹⁴ Where this authentic reconstruction approaches the fictionalised qualities of Marina’s story in *Open City*, is when Francesca (played by the same Marina Michi), who escapes the police with the help of a usher in the nearby cinema, runs into Fred, a drunken soldier completely unresponsive to her advances. ‘Rome is full of girls like you,’ he

complains, recalling how different everyone was when he first arrived in Rome and met a girl named Francesca. A flashback-sequence reconstructs the previously documented arrival of the Allies with Fred as a hero who is invited into Francesca's middle-class home, presumably shared with her parents. In a city whose piazzas look alike to the foreigner, Fred has failed to relocate her apartment building and he is unaware that the 'happy' and 'fresh' girl is the stranger he has just met. Francesca moves to the edge of the bed, in front of the camera, while he dozes off behind her, and two sequence shots capture their distance as she explains quietly that many Italian girls have overcome hardship in more honest ways, an affirmation proven by the usher in the cinema who refused the money she offered. The next day before leaving the city, Fred throws away the note with her address, while she waits until night-time outside her old house for a reconciliation that will never happen.

It is in particular the conventional narrative, reinforced by medium shots and rapid editing, and the fictionalised characters, that makes this episode so out of place in a film considered the manifesto of neorealism precisely for its openness, visually and ideologically, to historical realities and for its deconstruction of generic conventions. The nostalgic look at lost love caused by an instance of fate but actually deeply rooted in socio-economic conditions may recall French poetic realism, and the last shot of Francesca, dressed up in the cold December rain to evoke the sun and smiles of the Liberation reaches a similar melancholic beauty. Although most contemporary critics, including Bazin, glossed over the episode as a pathetic, or even ridiculous, story at the margins of the film's true themes because it failed to achieve the dark tones of human insight and socio-political commentary of Renoir and Carné,¹⁵ we must appreciate the singularity of the flashback structure – unique in Rossellini's oeuvre – which juxtaposes the past (June 1944) to the present (December 1944) to suspend the film's progression and question the historical processes it traces (Fanara 2000: 369–70). The first encounter takes place in daylight and is marked by joy after months of waiting ('What took you so long?' Francesca asks Fred); the second is nocturnal and presents the disintegration of the collective spirit. This distinction of before and after repropose the Manichean vision of *Open City* with a crucial difference. The attempt in the former to downplay conflict and forge an image of national unity and innocence could, in 1946, no longer be upheld; instead, it recognises that the corruption and moral degradation previously ascribed to traitors and enemies resides within the city itself. At a moment when the 'springtime' Pina longs for is unmasked as an illusion and Don Pietro's sacrifice stands out as a lost opportunity for collective rebuilding, the rain may purge the fallen woman but it cannot restore the hopes she had or make her what she might have been.

4. The Florence episode takes us back to August 1944 when the material and moral reverberations of the war are still to come. Archive footage featuring the

arrival of the Allies through the Tuscan hills and tanks preparing for attack, leads smoothly into the fictional section where military ambulances filled with soldiers and partisans arrive at an infirmary. The voiceover recounts briefly the state of the city: only the southern side of Arno is controlled by the Allies and across the river partisans are fighting Nazi-fascists. The temporal gap before and after the liberation of the previous episode is therefore collapsed into a standstill where both moments occur in the present. Wounded partisans relate news from the war on the northern side and Harriet, an American volunteer at the hospital, learns that a painter she knew before the war has become the legendary partisan leader Lupo. Abandoning her duties, she sets out to find him and arrives at the Palazzo Pitti where the word is spreading that Lupo is wounded. Massimo joins her in the hazardous project of crossing the river where the Germans have destroyed all bridges apart from the Ponte Vecchio, and in the chaos of ruins and constant shooting, they almost forget the obvious solution of the Corridorio Vasariano.¹⁶ Breaking the barricade of partisans committed to keeping this passageway hidden from the enemy, they venture over to the other side where streets void of civil life offer an arena for German patrols and urban guerrilla fights. Disregarding once again the partisans' instructions, Massimo crosses the street to reach his family, escaping bullets that instead hit a resistance fighter. Before he dies in Harriet's arms, the wounded partisan announces that Lupo has just died, unaware of her acquaintance with him, while the other partisans execute a group of fascists.

Harriet's story of lost love presents as many implausible coincidences as Francesca's and it is no less fictionalised, if we consider the historical impossibility in 1944 of crossing the Uffizi Gallery and the bizarre encounters first with two British officers who contemplate the famous cityscape while waiting for their troops to arrive – the implicit critique being far from subtle – and an equally unconcerned World War I veteran analysing the warfare from his roof. Nonetheless, the quest through Renaissance Florence gains a considerable sense of authenticity thanks both to the prevalence of outdoor scenes shot in natural light and with spacious frames outlining the protagonists' milieu and to its anchorage in the Resistance, which is guaranteed by the co-operation of ex-partisans in telling the story, including the Florentine novelist Vasco Pratolini (Faldini and Fofi 1979: 109). The passage through crowds, endless ruins and devastating chance encounters delineate divisions between the liberated side of the city, where collective life is flourishing again, and the other, where social interaction is anxious and confined to domestic spheres. Both the civilians' passive resistance and the adventurous wanderers' selfless search contrasts with the partisans' actions, whose commitment and sacrifice is emblematised by the execution of the fascists and the deaths of Lupo and the partisan. These are the dramatic moments that we have *waited* for and which make the protagonists' dilemma appear secondary to the collective

cause they constantly jeopardise. From the partisans who arrive at the hospital with an urgent need to *tell* and the crowd discussing Lupo's critical situation, to the partisans' unitary defence and final act of punishment, this cause personifies the oral quality Calvino associated with the Resistance. While reaching another level of immediacy to the partisan war compared to *Open City*, *Paisà* also radically revises its selective history: the resister who falls in the street the way Pina does, his body evoking the Deposition of Christ until Harriet's Madonna-like figure embraces it, is significantly not killed by a foreign brute (Zagarrio 2005: 90). There is a clear intent to celebrate the partisans who were instrumental historically in the liberation of Florence where the northern side was temporarily governed by the Tuscan CLN (Ginsborg 1990: 55). However, in dramatising the civil war that *Open City* carefully avoids, this episode also conveys that for an act of commemoration to serve, as it should, to ensure that the past not be repeated, it would have to account not merely for innocent deaths and glorious sacrifices, but also for the many contradictions, conflicts and betrayals involved in the war for liberation.

5. Approaching the last and toughest phase of the war, the penultimate episode opens with battle scenes reinforced by a voiceover stating the impregnable quality of the Gothic Line – the German defence line that kept the Allies immobile across central Italy until April 1945, despite attempted breakthroughs dating from the previous fall. From this parafictional section the film cuts to a monastery in the Aventine mountains, at the moment when the ceasefire is announced. The friars gather to thank the Lord for the restored order; some farmers come to retrieve animals left in their custody, but it is the arrival of three American army chaplains that makes this day unusual. The strangers are served homemade liquer and they reciprocate with army rations and news from the conflict that has left their monastery comfortably untouched. Not until the friars discover that two of their guests, Jones and Feldman are respectively Lutheran and Jewish is their cordiality and curiosity challenged. Approaching Martin, who speaks Italian and professes the 'true faith', the guardian father asks whether he has not 'scrutinised' his friends' 'conscience' and attempted to save them, but their uncontested dogma is as foreign to Martin as is his relativistic understanding of faith to them. The tension increases during dinner when the cook, provided with gifts from the farmers, comes up with a meal none of them have seen for ages only to leave it exclusively to the guests. Such a sacrifice will presumably ensure that the two lost souls be illuminated by divine light, the guardian father explains with a bigotry accentuated by a close-up that reveals his literally and physically unreceptive eyes, whereas Martin, even more perplexed than before, responds by thanking them for the lesson of 'humility, simplicity, and pure faith' and concludes with an invitation to peace. In contrast to the agonising images of loss that close the other episodes, this retreat from the horrors of the war leaves

the spectator confused over the enormous gap between the incomprehension of the friars and their guests' essentially ambiguous expression of gratitude and recognition.

The idea of a place 'the war had touched but without entering it, a human collective left intact and primitive' came from a monastery on the Amalfi coast where this episode in fact was shot. For the Southern friars to welcome a film crew and American actors, among whom there were a Jewish and a Protestant chaplain, presented no reason for scandal, but an 'unusual air of holiday' that nevertheless never challenged their conviction of professing the only 'truth' (Mida, quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 109; Aprà 1987: 142). Through these highly unusual circumstances, the idea of historically contingent encounters between strangers are related to more universal questions of cultural and religious differences. Upon arriving, Martin speaks solemnly about the monastery's foundation before America was even discovered, but Jones and Feldman joke about miracles and wonder if the Franciscans are still living in the 1400s, suggesting that if America once was associated with nature and the monastery with culture, this binary relationship has now been turned upside down. The Hershey bars and canned food constitute marvels within a humble kitchen based on garden produce and Providence, but the true progress of the 'New World' is reflected in the open-minded chaplains, two of whom have entered into a forbidden religious domain (Martini 2005: 110). Coming from a society constructed on difference, and, more recently, from an immersion in the present that constantly exposes the fleeting nature of life, Feldman is justified in wondering: 'How can they judge us and life if they do not know what surrounds us?' True to his faith, Martin may admire the friars' 'joy', so simple in its limitedness, but he cannot consider as mistaken, or even different, the chaplains with whom he has shared a historical mission. Lingering between commotion and irony, the speech he delivers repropose the questions of tolerance, openness and democratisation of the sacred that Rossellini had played with already in *L'uomo dalla croce*, where an Italian army chaplain dies while giving the last rites to a Russian soldier, and which was developed in *Open City*. Don Pietro significantly shares the Americans' view of the need to live in contact with people's immediate, concrete realities, as well as the ability to respect people of different views and beliefs, provided there is unity around the search for peace.

6. From the Apennines, the journey proceeds to the Po, the river running from Piedmont to Veneto where it empties into the Adriatic Sea, forming the vast delta in which the final act of discovery and commemoration unfolds. No archive footage from the war introduces this segment; instead, long takes of a corpse drifting down the quiet stream, sustained by a lifejacket and labelled 'partisan', lead us directly into a crudely verisimilar reconstruction of a war fought by partisans and American OSS soldiers in harmonious unity. Shots

from both sides of the river banks show what reaction the death of yet another partisan causes respectively among civilians, some German soldiers, and, finally, Dale and Cigolani, who in order to retrieve the body explode a mine to distract the Nazi guards. While the unknown partisan is buried, some of Dale's OSS colleagues bitterly relate the last orders from Allied Headquarters to cease all operations and for the partisans to go home. Meanwhile, ammunition and provisions will be dropped during the night, on signals that will not escape the guards. 'We will die anyhow', one of them concludes, 'but that's a small matter for headquarters.' To reciprocate for the eels and polenta they are provided with by the farmers at the Casal Madalena, Dale leaves mosquito repellent for a child, and only when he returns to the farmstead after the supply drop has failed and discovers the massacred family and the screaming child, does he realise the fatality of this exchange. Several successive events- an aerial battle, the rescue of two British pilots from the crashed plane, the warning from other British soldiers about the rapid advance of well-equipped Nazi forces – all indicate the impending defeat. Seeing how the battle is evolving, one partisan shoots himself; Dale is out of bullets and throws his rifle; and one of the British soldiers lights a cigarette, before they are all captured and separated. When dealing with the Anglo-Americans the Germans intend to respect the Geneva Convention, whereas the partisans are tied up outside and thrown into the river the following morning. In an act of protest as spontaneous as Pina's, Dale jumps up and cries out, manifesting an unconditional solidarity with those who fight not for the British Empire, as one of his colleagues observes, but for their life. 'This happened in the winter of 1944', the voiceover concludes. 'A few months later the war was over.'

Historically embedded in a communication broadcast from the headquarters of General Alexander, the Chief Commander in Italy, on 13 November 1944, the episode gives testimony to the depressing implications of his order – only partially obeyed – to 'cease all large-scale organized operations' and go home, not only because these 'homes', if they existed, were surrounded by Germans, but more significantly because the partisans were unwilling to sit down and wait to be liberated (Pavone 1994: 667). If the retreat from the historical conflict to the monastery may be considered as symbolically representing the months of stagnation in the Allied campaign, this immersion into a struggle the war bulletins neglected and that, as the narrator observes, was perhaps more difficult and desperate than any other, gives voice to the operations and the many deaths caused during the winter crisis of 1944. Both episodes relied on the personal qualities and invaluable testimonies of actors playing themselves – the friars provided material around which to improvise a scenario, as did the farmers and Cigolani, a hunter who had helped the partisans in the area – but the dramatisation of the encounter between soldiers and partisans is unique both in its fidelity to life and its ability to capture the film's thematic



Figure 4.1 Dale shortly before he is killed by Nazi soldiers in Rossellini's *Paisà*.
Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

concerns and visions (Aprà 1987: 137). Nowhere is 'paisà' as an experience of identity and belonging more eloquently illustrated than in the interactions between Dale and Cigolani who understand each other's English and accented Italian perfectly, being bound by a fraternity of common action that extends to include the ensemble of soldiers, partisans and local people. Assuming Cigolani's historical cause and moral attitude, Dale has also immersed himself in his world, directing the wooden boats with the same ease and experiencing the sodden marshes and dense reeds with an equally ambivalent sense of being protected and isolated. The languid rhythms of the Po personifies the harmony embedded in their social and natural habitat, but it also crucially captures the *waiting* Rossellini considered as a source of life and liberation, and that which in this cinematic journey increasingly appears as an anticipation of death.

It was in particular the visualisation of continuities between the human and the topographic landscape that Bazin referred to when singling out *Paisà*, and its last segment more specifically, as a supreme manifestation of the spatial realism he championed. By featuring the horizon at the level on which it subjectively would be perceived, the cinematic gaze manages to align our viewing

experiences with the perceptions of those who live and die 'between sky and water'. Identification with the characters is therefore encouraged not on the basis of subjective shots which limit autonomy, but, on the contrary, on deep-focus photography and reduced editing which allow us to view the diegetic world the way we would in reality. Within this visual field, the characters' movements and interactions, as well as single events such as the killing of an eel and the screams of a terrified child are allowed to appear in all their extensions and ambiguity. Observing the force such 'facts', or fragments 'of brute reality, in itself both multiple and equivocal', assume as signifying elements, Bazin concludes that 'the unit of cinematographic narration in *Paisà* is not the shot, an abstract perspective on the analysed reality, but the fact' (2002: 281). As the viewer must interconnect singular objects for their significance to emerge, hence allowing the appearance of the 'facts' to precede the construction of meaning, this form of composition presents all aspects of the pro-filmic as 'equally apparent'. Since human life is not privileged over other facts, the actors acquire much more meaning from the environment than in conventional film (Bazin 2002: 281–2). Far from connected by logic and causality, the intrinsically ambiguous nature of these 'fact-images' is reinforced by the 'ellipsis' they leave in the story. How the Americans and the partisans got together in the first place is never explained and how the Germans learned about the farmers' hospitality and why the child and the dog are still alive remain unresolved (Bazin 2002: 279). In light of this, we can appreciate why Bazin would refer to the reportage and fragmentary narrative of Hemingway and Steinbeck, among other American writers, as having inspired a mode of cinematic narration that in the aim for a total vision, alludes, suggests and shows, without ever demonstrating relations between the facts of the world represented.

IN SEARCH FOR THE MAN WITHIN THE BEAST: *GERMANIA ANNO ZERO*

The thought of having once been banned from the Italian film industry must have amused Rossellini at a time when *Open City* and *Paisà* were awarded and applauded for months in the world's capitals and neither the French nor the other occupying forces in Germany hindered him and assistant director, Carlo Lizzani, from filming in Berlin, despite their belonging to an ex-enemy.¹⁷ After the focus on everyday tragedies and non-heroic characters had mainly served national memory and regional representation, the time had come to look towards those for whom the Liberation had meant defeat. Rooted in a conviction that 'the Germans were human beings like anyone else', the project reflected both a need to understand 'what could possibly have brought them towards a similar disaster?' and an aspiration to create a 'just', albeit 'incomplete' image of Germany (Rossellini, quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 111–12). Nonetheless, *Germania anno zero* does not lead towards the genesis

of a historical catastrophe, but to an innocent boy who when the only world he knows lies shattered in front of him, is lead by false ideals of strength and heroism to the cruellest of crimes. What confronts him with the monstrosity of his act is a 'little flame of morality' that totalitarian destruction has failed to extinguish (Rossellini, quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 111–12). Elaborating on the neorealist topos of child focalisers and deprived childhoods, the film moves from socio-historically specific events through mental spaces to arrive at more universal experiences that escape Manichean categorisation.

Shot in August 1947 after months of research and an endless search for funding, Edmund's story came to life around a schematic treatment that outlined each passage except its tragic finale (Rondolini 1989: 117–21). Research conducted into the topographic and socio-economic conditions of Berlin, and of its youth in particular, was incorporated as the script took form during filming in collaboration with the French writer, Max Colpet. All location shooting in Berlin was completed in less than two months, but the regulations of the Franco-Italian production required that indoor scenes be completed in Rome months later. Except for scenes involving American soldiers and French bar customers who give a sense of the linguistic presences in Allied-occupied Berlin, the film was shot in German and starred professionals alongside 'discoveries' such as Edmund Meschke in whom Rossellini would have recognised the seven-year-old son, Romano, he had lost a year earlier (Lizzani 2009). Authentic speech and locations and the dramatisation of everyday concerns and interactions are coherent with Rossellini's previous films, but it is in particular the initial *idea* that is allowed to develop in relation to spaces, testimonies, and impressions, as well as the primacy of long takes and spatiotemporal duration, that confirm his 'method'. Beneath opening credits and a dedication in memoriam to Romano, the destroyed city is introduced by a tracking shot moving rightward along a deserted road to map out wastelands of ruins. In the Italian release print, a caption establishes the historical and ideological context before the same shots reappear, accompanied this time by the director's voiceover. Conceived of as an 'objective' and 'faithful' portrait of 'an immense semi-destroyed city in which 3.5 million drag out a dreadful and desperate existence [. . .] not by faith, or spirit, but by tiredness,' *Germania anno zero* presents neither a defence, nor an accusation but a 'quiet attestation of facts' aimed at provoking awareness of the urgent needs of Germany's children.¹⁸

Objectivity, as always in Rossellini, is best understood in terms of a look that by seeking distance to and room around the facts of the story facilitates an autonomous perception of the diegetic world, without allowing indifference towards it. Although these and successive exterior shots document the appalling state Berlin still found itself in two years after the war, the material is selected and constructed in far from neutral ways to make us reflect on the

responsibilities involved in the course of history and Edmund's role as focaliser and emotional centre serves this purpose. We first see him digging graves alongside several adults but, too young to get a work permit, he is sent away from the churchyard. What the loss of this expected income means to him is put into perspective when he ends up in a crowd of people busy grabbing their share of a dead horse. All the boy catches is some coal: a poor contribution to a household where his father is ailing, his sister spends the days in ration queues and the nights in bars and his brother Karl-Heinz, a veteran who fought for Germany until the last minute, hides in fear of being sent to a prison camp. Mutual accusations and a shared sense of guilt are reinforced by the intolerable cohabitation with the Radermachers who, having been forced by the housing authorities to take Edmund's family in, avenge their intrusion through constant intimidation.

Narratively, we witness a detour from the innovations of *Paisà* for the more conventional, partly theatrical structures of *Open City*. The apartment becomes a stage where knowledge about the characters is delivered through heavily constructed dialogues and conflict either within or between the families, but compared to the Gestapo headquarters it still appears far more authentic thanks to the immediacy established by precarious living conditions and to a more nuanced portrayal of the Germans. Edmund's anti-Nazi father sought unsuccessfully to keep him out of the Hitler Youth; his embittered brother detests both the regime he served and what he refers to as the 'so-called victims of fascism', whereas his sister who, like most of Rossellini's women, reflects no ideological position, appears as a passive victim waiting for her war prisoner to return. Herr Radermacher is clearly disappointed over his country's defeat and declares to Edmund that they would all be better off if his father died, betraying a belief in the survival of the fittest that is more insistently advocated by Herr Henning, a school teacher expelled for Nazi convictions he still professes. Both represent the 'ideologies gone astray' and the 'criminal folly' announced in the intertitle as the origins to the story and that, far from producing a Master Race, has created a people driven to live on out of sheer exhaustion. To manage his own misery, Henning sends Edmund out to sell some recordings of Hitler's speeches and offers him a small percentage of what the American soldiers pay for the voice of a regime whose dominance still lingers through its destruction. Besides the devilish rationality, what in particular recalls Major Bergmann is the sensual pleasure Henning and his decadent friends take in angel-faced boys, giving life to an equation between Nazism and sexual deviance that severely weakens the authorial aspirations of producing unprejudiced portrayals of the enemy.

What strikes us about the cinematic city is its congruence between physical, socio-economic and moral disintegration. Fields of ruins more reminiscent of churchyards than of urban centres go along with disintegrated familial and

social relations, and the constant search for scarce provisions and questionable incomes are paralleled by a total lack of vision for the future that was unseen even in Francesca's Rome. While the extensive, undefined areas and the disconnected streets recall the spatial characteristics of *Open City* and *Paisà*, the ghostly atmosphere is unique to Edmund's world, infusing both the uninhabited inner-city zone of Alexandersplatz where he lives and the obscure suburbs he is driven into by the street kids Cristil and Jo, who are acquainted with Henning and experts in fraudulent transactions. The vast, deserted spaces contrast sharply with his claustrophobic apartment but they are no less ensnaring to Edmund who gets lost and must spend the night outdoors. His encounters and movements within the city's exteriors are, however, entirely unpredictable and bring him ultimately far away from the 'happy ending' outlined in the story treatment. Compared for example to the calculated gestures with which he takes the poison into the hospital and infuses it in a tea made exclusively for his father, his playful zigzag jumping from relic to relic and his visits to ruined buildings suggests that these sequences were largely improvised (Rondolini 1989: 119). As Bazin observed, however, none of these moments are tainted by the 'sentimental sympathy' that tends to arise from child characters – *Open City* and the Naples episode in *Paisà* being no exceptions. No signs on the child's face allow us to conclude anything more about 'his indifference and his cruelty, than of his possible sorrow' (Bazin 2002: 123), and only when he realises the impossibility of going home, turning to Henning who hysterically disapproves of the implementation of his own teachings, do we see the despair behind the child's apparently unconcerned and unmotivated use of space. In a last attempt to recover lost innocence, Edmund seeks to intervene in some smaller children's play, but their resolute disapproval only affirms his irreversible exclusion from the kingdom of childhood.

Driven away from all spheres of belonging – domestic, instructive, recreational, authoritative or affective – the abandoned city-dweller follows a long, lifeless street flanked on each side by uninhabited, demolished houses. His path is captured by a deep-focus photography that maps out no social ambience but rather a sinister immensity of distinctly gothic features. All of a sudden, this physical and mental necropolis is infused by a diegetic, initially off-screen organ music originating from a semi-destroyed church. Someone plays the tune of Handel's 'Ombra mai fu' – an aria that, in suggestive contrast to the scene's visuals, features the title character, Xerxes, as he contemplates the beauty and peacefulness of his plane tree. Along with other mesmerised wanderers, Edmund stops for a while before running away, as if afraid to seize the salvation this moment of spontaneous serenity might offer. A cut leads back to ruins and to hellish extra-diegetic rhythms introducing his last walk towards death. That the suicide, in contrast to the patricide, is the spontaneous outcome of growing self-annihilation appears when he reaches the last floor

of a building made immensely spacious by its destruction. Playing at war with his shadow and directing a pistol-shaped stone to his head, he seems to convey that all enemies are within himself. Some subjective shots directed towards the street below allow us to share the panoptical position from which he observes his home and his life. Seen from the outside, their apartment block is just as demolished as the one he stands in, and neither his brother's amnesty, nor the view of his father's coffin being taken away, nor his sister's anxious calls for him, are able to provoke a detour in his walk. Contrary to Pina, Don Pietro, Carmela and the partisans who die in open space and as a result of claims to freedom and reform, Edmund falls into a narrow spot between ruins and is driven by a refusal to live; by an inability to face a future that, compared to these previous cases of sacrificial deaths, leaves even greater doubts about the possibility of redemption, while stating more desperately the call for a complete, material and moral, rebuilding.

Marking a defeated country's year zero, the child's abyss brings us to a point of arrival. From dualistic perceptions of 'we' and 'they' based upon categorical conceptions of good and evil, the authorial vision has formulated a fragmentary exploration of common desires and destinies in order to arrive, finally, at a recognition of the enemy's obscure humanity. Experiences of communion in *Open City* have dissolved into the singular accounts of *Paisà* where the choral voice is constantly interrupted by personal tragedies that, in *Germania anno zero*, lead away from historical and nationally specific circumstances towards a death that severely questions the human rebuilding embraced in the previous films.

A constant in these works is the connection of space to death and to visions of life that in this case makes a rather surreal and entirely symbolic use of a specific topography (Bernardi 2000: 55). In that, we see that while Edmund's story synthesises and marks the peak of Rossellini's neorealist work, it also launches the direction he would take, particularly in *Viaggio in Italia* wherein a woman's wandering among Naples' dystopian realms parallels the crisis and the miraculous re-establishment of her marriage. This intensification of 'the religious, the mystic and the irrational' already present in the war trilogy, was criticised as an 'involution' of neorealism that according to Aristarco affirmed Rossellini's inability to let his interpretation of the world work 'didactically', in a Brechtian way, to modify it (Aristarco 1980: 58–65). Objecting to essentialist concepts of neorealism and ideological evaluations of artworks, the *auteur*-oriented Bazin praised Rossellini's abilities in times when most filmmakers had accepted 'commercial compromises' to maintain his 'elliptic and synthetic way of representing the events [. . .], filtrating' rather than analysing reality 'through the conscience of the heroine' (Bazin 1975: 687–90). His defence echoed among fellow critics of *Cahiers du Cinéma* who in 1958 ranked *Viaggio in Italia* as the third of All-Time Best Films (Hillier 1985: 287),



Figure 4.2 Edmund in Rossellini's *Germania anno zero*. Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

identifying in the story 'loose, free, full of breaks' a freedom from pre-existing uses of the cinematic language (Rohmer 1985: 205–6) that made it 'our cinema;' a unique starting point for aspiring directors of the emergent *nouvelle vague* (Rivette 1985: 203). This recognition of an anti-traditionalism the critics illustratively compared to the modern visions of Mozart and Édouard Manet intuitively drew from Bazin's notes on the 'disconnected' neorealist narrative to the 'time-image' which originates in the visions of immobilised characters who disjoin the causal chain between perception and action. To consider Edmund a 'seer' incapable of performing actions without failing (to work, to secure provisions, to trade without being cheated) and as someone who dwells in fragmented space and counted time while contemplating his life void of a future allows us better to account for the film's position between the classical and the modern cinema and for the testimony it bears both to the life of a post-war city and to the existential and emotional effects of historical catastrophes.

NOTES

1. See Rossellini (1987a: 91–2). The film was completed after the war by Marcello Pagliero who stars as Manfredi in *Open City*.
2. The ‘policemen in Nazi uniform’ who made their daily march to via Rasella in the centre of Rome were, as recently explained by Rosario Bentivegna who took part in the attack, ‘not there by chance: they were in fact “volunteers” who had chosen the police and not the army, for two reasons: to avoid the extremely harsh Russian front and to get higher pay. With this noble intent, they had sworn fidelity to Hitler . . .’ (2007: 22).
3. On the basis of a reconstruction of the original screenplay, testimonies and documents, Stefano Roncoroni has demonstrated that both Consiglio, Feruccio Disnan, and Ivo Perilli were involved at various stages and to a varying degree in writing either the story treatment or the script until conflict with Amidei made them leave the project (2006: 32; 52; 419; 432–4). As for the ‘collective paternity’ of Italian scripts more generally, Bazin observed that: ‘Almost all credits of Italian films present a dozen names under the heading “script”. One should not take this imposing collaboration too seriously. It has more than anything else the function of providing the producer with very ingenuous political cautions: usually there are the names of a Christian Democrat and a communist (as in the films there is a Marxist and a priest). The third scriptwriter is famous for knowing how to construct a story, the fourth to identify the gags, the fifth because he creates good dialogues, the sixth “because he knows the meaning of life” etc. [. . .] this interdependence is best compared to the improvisation of *commedia dell’arte* or of hot jazz’ (Bazin 2002: 275).
4. See Rossellini (1987a: 101–3 and 1995, 11–12). For a substantial account in English of the genesis of *Open City* see Gallagher (1998).
5. Out of a total budget of 11. 246. 579 Lire, Fabrizi’s honorary reached 830 000, against the 1000 000 that he initially requested, whereas Magnani had to content herself with 440 000 (Roncoroni, 2006, 399–400).
6. This study of *Open City*, as well as of *Paisà* and *Germania anno zero*, is based on the 2009 The Criterion Collection ‘Roberto Rossellini’s War Trilogy’, which reproduces the films’ original release print. Some scene-description may therefore not correspond to previous Anglo-American versions.
7. The episode replicates Amidei’s own experiences from escaping a Nazi raid; it was shot in the apartment at the Spanish Steps where he lived and where Rossellini and many others had been hiding during the occupation (Roncoroni 2006: 429).
8. It is the second time in a week that Pina and the other women raid the local baker. Such desperate measures against starvation allude to a radical reduction in bread rations that was introduced by the fascists, in agreement with the Nazis, on 25 March 1944 – the day after the Fosse Ardeatine massacre. Along with the deaths of Don Pappagallo, Gullace and Don Morosini, which all occurred in March–April 1944, this episode enables us to locate the diegesis of *Open City* in the late winter/early spring of 1944 (Roncoroni 2006: 351).
9. One of the several points of disagreement between the scriptwriters was the question whether to represent, or not, the GAP attack in via Rasella which Amidei, a member of the Communist Party, considered a deed of the partisans, but which many others condemned as the cause of the Fosse Ardeatine massacre. Both episodes were eventually left out of the script due to the conflicting views they had provoked not only within the CLN, and the Communist Party more specifically, but also among the citizens (Roncoroni 2006: 432).
10. The original screenplay stated explicitly, and with historical accuracy, that the firing squad responsible for Don Pietro’s execution belonged to a branch of the

fascist police. Bonomi's objections regarded allegedly the negative representation this would create of the police in general, but his intentions were unquestionably to hinder a portrayal that could promote the tendency among the communists to discredit the police forces that had lived in collaboration with fascism and Nazism. Considering the close connections that existed between those involved in *Open City* and the Communist Party, the ultimate objective would have been to hinder the film from becoming a vehicle for anti-government messages. As a compromise, Rossellini and his collaborators were provided uniforms belonging to the Italian Army, which were subsequently used in the scene, with the result of attributing the atrocity to the only group that had had absolutely nothing to do with it. Similarly, the *coup de grâce* that Major Hartmann fires on Don Pietro would historically have been fired by a fascist officer (Roncoroni 2006: 27; 369; 40).

11. Massimo Mida recalls how difficult it was to have the almost alphabetic Carmela move and talk in front of the camera. Sadly, she became 'the first victim of neo-realism', unable as she was to readjust to her impoverished living conditions once she had discovered the world beyond perpetual misery (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 108–9).
12. Where the actors' voices were dubbed, it was either to improve on the quality of sound and articulation, or to give the characters other dialects than their own: Carmela's Neapolitan speech was dubbed by that of a Sicilian, and the Neapolitan friars in Episode IV, which was shot on the Amalfi coast, were dubbed by voices from the Romagna area in which the episode is set (Parigi 2005b: 17–19). The budget of *Paisà* was 56,000,000 lire, compared to the 11,000,000 that went into *Open City* (Mida, quoted in Aprà 1987: 137).
13. The on-location scripting and realisation of the Naples episode produced a completely different tone compared to the original treatment which the novelist Alfred Hayes and Klaus Mann – the son of Thomas Mann who served in the US Army in Italy – had developed to reassure American authorities (De Franceschi, Leonardo (2005) 'Fra teatro e storia, la doppia scena del reale: Il secondo episodio', in Parigi 2005: 57; 66–7).
14. See Aprà (1987: 143). Post-war crisis as reflected not merely in the moral fall of honest women, but also wide-scale trafficking in young girls and other goods is the focus of Lattuada's *Il bandito* and *Senza pietà*, discussed in Chapter 7. The historical period is otherwise marked by the newsreel showing in the cinema where Francesca seeks refuge and which juxtaposes her nocturnal life to the war that still is going on in the North. The usher who helps Francesca while refusing to be paid for the favour seems to present a homage to Maria Michi, who herself worked in one of Rome's major cinemas (Fanara 2000: 369).
15. See Bazin (2002: 278); Francesco Callari's notoriously negative review of *Paisà* is reprinted in Aprà (1987: 147–62).
16. In 1561, Grand Duke Cosimo de' Medici commissioned Giorgio Vasari to construct a corridor that in connecting the Palazzo Vecchio with the Palazzo Pitti would cross the Arno above street level.
17. See Lizzani (2009). *Open City*, awarded the Grand Prix at Cannes, ran for a year-and-a-half in New York and *Paisà* ran for five months in London (Wagstaff 2007: 19); both films were nominated for Academy Awards and received awards from the New York Film Critics Circle and the National Board of Review, USA.
18. 'When ideologies go astray from the eternal moral laws and from Christian devotion that are the basis of human life, they end up as criminal folly. Even childhood prudence becomes contaminated by it and dragged from one horrendous crime to another; no less severe, in which, with the ingenuity typical of innocence [the child] believes that liberation from guilt may be found.'

5. WANDERING AMONG DE SICA'S URBANITES: SHOESHINERS, BICYCLE THIEVES, MIRACULOUS OUTCASTS AND A MAN WITH A DOG

Like the East, Italy lives in the streets. Instead of dressing up like a man of the people, the caliph dresses up like a movie camera. He goes in search of mysterious intrigues unfolding in the streets and in the houses. In *Miracle in Milan*, De Sica brings the Eastern narrative to its extreme.

Jean Cocteau, *Le passé défine* [1956–7]

AND THE CHILDREN ARE WATCHING: *SHOESHINE*

The exclusive inspiration would be ‘the children,’ De Sica wrote in the 1945 article ‘Sciuscià, giù?’ (‘Shoeshine, Joe?’), delineating what was still merely a hypothetical film: ‘only them: they feel that the life they live is not the one they should live’ (1994a: 237). That the historical present called upon children as witnesses was even clearer in wake of the war than it had been in 1942 when *I bambini ci guardano* introduced the focus on defenceless subjects destined to define future collaborations between De Sica and Zavattini. Giuseppe and Pasquale share Pricò’s incommunicable solitude and traumatising encounter with the adult world, but, as was the case with Rossellini’s Pasquà, their suffering is unmistakably embedded within the context of the war. Marking a passage from psychological concerns and an anti-bourgeois critique to encounters with victimisation, *Shoeshine* locates the formation of a neorealist *optique* to the ‘sciuscià’ whose survival depended on shining the shoes of Allied soldiers while their abandonment confronted De Sica with a measure of the country’s moral destruction (1994b: 252). Proposing a ‘film of the streets’ and a ‘cinema

in contact with life,' his article implicitly claimed authorial rights to an area of cinematic exploration, while the image of the emergent director as an investigator of worlds beyond the comfortable bourgeoisie aimed more crucially at contributing to collective processes of cinematic rebuilding (De Sica 1994a: 237).

A year earlier, Zavattini had welcomed a destroyed film industry and lack of producers as the source of a freedom that was indispensable for an innovative and honest cinema. Several steps towards industrial reorganisation were, however, taken in the wake of the war and *Shoeshine* enjoyed, as a consequence, a more stable, if lower, budget than *Open City*.¹ The limited technical resources were, on the other hand, very similar, as was the amalgamation of old and new methods. Milieus and institutions such as the reformatory of Porta Portese were researched for inspiration and accuracy, but indoor scenes were still reconstructed in a studio, and while most of that cast presented 'unseen faces' and actors 'not yet corrupted by the profession', as was De Sica's ideal, Emilio Cigoli establishes on the contrary an intriguing intertextual connection between the prison supervisor Staffera he personifies and the suicidal father he played in *I bambini ci guardano* (De Sica 1997: 11). Of the leading actors, only Franco Interlenghi (Pasquale) was discovered by chance on the street; Rinaldo Smordini (Giuseppe) was selected after repeated screen tests, whereas the two orphans De Sica had featured in his article and whose sad lives and passion for horses inspired the film, he considered 'too ugly, almost deformed', to play themselves (De Sica 1994b: 251–2). The commitment to reality is thus not absolute: while the search for unknown performers breaks with the conventions of the cinema, it depends on aesthetic sensitivities that undermine the very real-life characters and re-enactment that Zavattini would advocate as a means to consciousness and solidarity (2002: 314–15).

Shoeshine repropounded both the inconsistencies and achievements of *Open City*, but it missed its timeliness and denied its optimism and this may explain why the film that in 1947 won Italy's first Oscar ruined everyone except American and French distributors, although competition from previously banned American productions also severely reduced its commercial viability (De Sica 1994b: 251–2). What favoured De Sica and Zavattini was the political climate in which they worked. In the autumn and winter of 1945, the preventive censorship of films practised during fascism was temporarily halted and the unprecedented freedom of speech introduced by the Liberation was still alive (Argentieri 1974: 62–4), thanks to the coalition formed by the six anti-fascist parties of the CLN and headed by the ex-partisan leader Ferruccio Parri. Despite inner tensions and shortcomings in front of the country's urgent need of purgation and reform, the commitment of this administration to representative legitimacy nurtured hopes that the Reconstruction would bring something more than a mere return to the pre-fascist state (Ginsborg 1990:

89–93). The following year, things were already starting to change. *Shoeshine* waited for months to be released, and while it escaped censorial intervention it was one of the films that made ex-fascists 're-raise the tone of their voice: too much misery! too many shoe-shiners and prostitutes in Italian films' (Argentieri 1974: 70–1). Considering the civic conscience, the break of conventions and transient artistic freedom at play, it ultimately reaches beyond its depressive tone and vision in fusing the call for a total reorganisation of society with that of cultural renewal.

STOLEN DREAMS

Set in Rome a few months after the arrival of the Allies, *Shoeshine* lingers spatiotemporally between *Open City* and the Rome segment of *Paisà*, rejecting the vision of hope announced in the former for the fusion of nostalgia and disintegration in the latter. No panoramic view introduces the Eternal City, but instead a high-angle long shot of a barren, spacious hall with a high ceiling and large windows that through the shadows reflected on the floor are revealed as barred. The function of this location is still unidentified, but the chiaroscuro lighting and the dramatic turns in the initially playful score suggest what awaits the ragged shoeshiners evoked in the title and who in the next scene appear horse-riding in the sunlit gardens of the Villa Borghese. For Giuseppe and Pasquale, this is a treasured moment of escape from the abandonment and illegitimacy that make them easy prey for delinquents, such as Panza and Giuseppe's brother, Attilio. To push some American blankets on a licensed fortune-teller seems like a straight deal and not even when the instigators of the affair turn up at the woman's place, ushering them out with enough cash to finally buy their horse, do they see the plot they have been lured into. These and the increasingly disquieting events that follow are permeated by a comic vein equally indebted to Zavattini's invention and De Sica's direction, but neither the stylised caricatures nor the amusing dialogue undermine the exposure of degradation within and beyond a post-fascist officialdom.

The theme of justice announced in the opening shot is developed in its social and juridical implications through the boys' spheres of interaction, starting with their workstation. The location of the US embassy and the city's most luxurious hotels, via Veneto would later be depicted as the hangout of celebrities and scandal sheet journalists in Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1959), but in 1944 it was a locus of the black market and low-cost shoeshining. The inner-city street is therefore an obvious place for the police to search for the two indicted street kids who benefit from the tragically needed opportunities it offers, while also being subjected to its many traps since, as Pasquale acutely observes, they are not labour-organised and are constantly taken advantage of.² An orphan who spent months sleeping in an elevator, he now lives with Giuseppe's family

in temporary housing for refugees. Both contribute equally to the mother's tight budget, whereas the elegant and motorcycle-riding Attilio seems to be exempted from familial obligations and his only concern when the two are arrested is to keep their father away from the police station to save his own skin. Protected by the state of lawlessness that reigned during and after the Allied occupation when forces of law and order had still to be rebuilt, Attilio represents the increase by 527 per cent of theft and by 265 per cent of robberies that hit Rome between 1938 and 1945 (Marchesi 2000: 65), but he is also a cruel incarnation of times when 'everyone managed on one's own or by resorting to extemporary help in the absence of codified assistance' (Cosulich 1994: 45). Those times of social and moral degradation that *Paisà* represents through fallen women and disillusioned soldiers, *Shoeshine* captures through the exploitation of children's labour and loyalty. During such times, only a wretched childhood that has 'retained the power to transform its misery into dream' can shield children from the ills of the adult world, providing an art of survival that is unknown to Edmund but which we recognise in Pasquà, who seeks a faithful friend and a form of escape in Joe the way Giuseppe and Pasquale do in the horse (Bazin 2002: 324). This living toy is a concrete entity they purchase and board in a horse driver's stall, as well as a creation of their fantasy strong enough to sanctify their comradeship until adults use it to sow enmity among them.

The function of the horse in investing the socio-historically accurate and morally charged narrative with an anti-realistic dimension appears at first during the boys' triumphant ride in via Veneto, where sunlight and cheering children momentarily erase the hardship associated with this space, and, then the following morning, in the stall where they wake up to a sunny haze through which the mundane environment appears as a pastoral idyll. Inherent in the opaque veil covering present sadness and presentiment of tragedy there is a reference to Renoir and Carné, but in contrast to the poetic realist world wherein the nostalgic, dreamlike atmosphere remains intact until the end, here it is transformed into nightmare once the boys are exposed to the violent manipulations of the forces of law and order. It is precisely as a real and tangible incubus that we must make sense of the prison hall featured in the opening shot. Along the three levels of overcrowded and flea-infested cells run two corridors of loggia-formed ceilings with arcs of triumph on the wall. The correlation between the classical iconography promoted by fascist architects and the microcosm of evil they are brought into is personified by the tyrannical director who still resorts to the formal pronoun 'Voi', before correcting himself, 'anzi, Lei' and to the Roman salute, as if Mussolini's laws of courtesy were still in force.³ His observation that there are 60 per cent more inmates than in 1936 conveys a longing for times of totalitarian rule that the film reverses, aligning us with the humanitarian prison guard Bartoli who laments that the inmates have been

there for months without a hearing. Besides Arcangeli whose offences convey a rebellion against his affluent parents, the inmates, whether guilty of armed robbery or patricide, are victims of desperate poverty and in most cases have been abandoned by their parents. The sick and malnourished Raffaele, who ultimately dies in jail, is left with the disappointment of receiving a stranger in his mother's place, and only after prison guards have tricked Pasquale into talking, does Giuseppe's mother visit, reproaching him not for having ended up in jail but for having betrayed his brother. From this point on, their friendship is transformed, in spite of themselves, into a relation of enmity that finds truce only in the transient moment of a fight between Pasquale and Arcangeli. For the rest, it entails betrayal, hate and destruction orchestrated by forces and interests foreign to their universe.

The passing from relative freedom to captivity is delineated through the opposition of closed and open spaces that both replicates and pays homage to the structures of *Open City* (Casetti 1994). Rather than proceeding from a state of captivity to anticipation of freedom and rebuilding, the film starts in more or less unconfined spaces (Villa Borghese; via Veneto; the Tiber) in order to move to increasingly constraining spheres (the fortune-teller's apartment; the school; the police van) and ends up in the reformatory. Whereas the exteriors are often captured by deep-focus photography that maps out the boys' marginal position but also their pleasures and use of the city, their progressive loss of freedom is conveyed through distorted angles and camera positions that nail them behind bars and inside claustrophobic cells. The passage from relative freedom to total reclusion is delineated by opposing closed and open spaces and this both replicates and reverses the structures of *Open City* (Casetti 1994). Rather than proceeding from a state of captivity to anticipation of freedom and rebuilding, the film starts in more or less unconfined spaces (Villa Borghese, via Veneto; the Tiber) in order to locate increasingly constraining spheres (the fortune teller's apartment; the school; the police van) and end up in the reformatory. Whereas the exteriors are often captured by deep-focus-photography that maps out the boys' marginal position as well as their ability to use and find evasion in the city, their life behind bars is conveyed through distorted angles and camera positions that nail them claustrophobically to spaces of darkness and hostility. A close-up accentuates the violent separation of their tied hands as they are forced into separate cells while a high-angle shot delineates Pasquale's isolation from the other inmates who, with the exception of Raffaele, all accept Giuseppe's misinformed denouncement of Pasquale as a 'spy'. Evoking, as Bondanella has observed, Welles and French interwar film, this form of *mise-en-scène* editing serves, like the other spatial and stylistic juxtapositions, to visualise the destruction of childhoods as a direct result of adults' self-interest (2009: 82–3). The social accusations implied in the shoe-shiners' story are most clearly voiced during the court defence of Giuseppe and

Attilio when lawyer Bonavio states that if they are found guilty, then guilty are also 'all of us, us human beings, who in following our passions, abandon [...] our children, alone, always more alone'. Having compelled Giuseppe to blame the robbery on Pasquale, the cynical lawyer has only self-seeking intentions and can only be said to confirm, by his own example, the validity of his argument. Nonetheless, the ideological implications of his address to the judge reside in the way it directly engages the viewer in critical discourses that are otherwise dramatised and visualised (Casetti 1994: 75).

Even more striking than the boys' everyday responsibilities and injustices are, as Zavattini wrote, that 'no one interacts with them out of interest or duty [. . .] no one has given the two boys a bit of their own heart' (1994: 245). What protects them against the incapacity and egoism they face everywhere is the affection they offer each other – a veil of solidarity that while it survives in the streets, significantly disintegrates in the exposure to juridical and social institutions. The judge can only perceive of criminal motives and dismisses Giuseppe's explanation that the horse was acquired merely for them to 'ride on it', whereas the priests are content to educate and entertain by screening a newsreel and a comedy – precisely the way the cinema operated during fascism – seeking to distract the inmate from the depressing realities rather than bring an end to them. When the projection equipment catches fire, leading to chaos that Raffaele is too frail to survive while Giuseppe and Arcangeli escape to fetch the horse, all the priests can do is pray whereas Bartoli declares his resignation. To visibly disturb the abusive Staffera, whose son has recently died, it takes the view of Giuseppe's body spread out on the rocks after Pasquale has confronted him with the abduction of what was their common dream. Shot with stylised sets and lighting in a studio, the scene at the river presents a fairy-tale atmosphere perfectly congruent with the white-haired horse running gracefully away from the boys' violence and the world that provokes it; from authorities such as the judge who, insensitive to the horse's affective value, interprets its exchange value as sufficient evidence to condemn the least implicated. In this scene, the film's dreamlike and nightmarish dimensions reveals a tragedy that far from offering catharsis or promises of change, severely questions whether there is a future for the children of the Liberation.

AT THE MARGINS: *BICYCLE THIEVES*

There is no Don Pietro or Major Bergmann in the shoeshiners' world. Enjoying a freedom 'from ideological and religious conditions' unknown to most of their fellow filmmakers, De Sica and Zavattini were far more categorical in their accusations but less so in visions of good and evil: friendships collapse in betrayal and revenge, and cruelty turns into compassion when it is too late (Brunetta 2009: 52). Two years later, this pessimistic acknowledgement of

the ambiguity in reality arrives as the far less dramatic but no less alarming conclusion that, in a country haunted by the injustices of its past, 'the poor, to survive, have to steal from each other'. This is, as Bazin observed, the 'thesis' implied in *Bicycle Thieves*: the work that affirmed De Sica's mastery internationally and that still constitutes a milestone in the history not only of Italian post-war film, but of world cinema (Bazin 2002: 299). It was Zavattini who first discovered Luigi Bartolini's novel *Bicycle Thieves* (1946), adopting its title and major plot elements, but the script he developed with De Sica and others relied more fundamentally on collective wanderings around Rome in search for a reality not to be faithfully recorded but to be 'transfigured [. . .] a reality transferred on a level of poetry of absolute lyricism' (De Sica 1997: 11). Banal events and everyday impressions, a greyish texture, a melancholic score along with depth and distance make up the lyricism of a solitary wanderer's search through the urban landscape.

Antonio's story is proverbially simple. To accept the job as a billposter he needs the bike he just pawned. His wife Maria sacrifices their linen but the reclaimed bike is stolen on his first workday. Searching in vain, Antonio steals a bike and is caught. Having seen his father rise and fall from disillusioned and unemployed, to proudly employed, to (un)employed bicycle thief humiliated beyond belief in the course of two days, Bruno takes his hand and leads him back to exactly where they started. Whether it was the lack of action and abundance of misery or the recent commercial failure of *Shoeshine* that caused most scepticism, only David Selznick found a value in the project, but his request to cast Gary Cooper was incompatible with De Sica's vision of a true worker with blisters on his hands. *Bicycle Thieves* was shot with private funds in the streets of Rome and its main star was Lamberto Maggiorani, chosen precisely for the hands, gestures and movements that betrayed the factory worker in him. At his side were Lianella Carnell – a journalist who had come to interview De Sica – and Enzo Staiola, who was discovered on location when shooting had already started (De Sica 2000: 25–34). The stars of a cast completely composed of non-professionals, they demonstrate the director's noted ability to obtain performances that portray the sentiments of a situation without undermining the actor's own development of the character.

Why Hollywood stars would have been inappropriate is evident already from the film's incipit. A slow pan situates us in the uncinemantic area of Valmelaia; a *borgata* (lower-class neighbourhood) dumped on some waste ground approximately ten kilometres outside the city wall. The socio-historical context at play is established in two distinct ways: while the crowd of men who gather at the employment office represents the average 2,100,000 of Italy's 46,000,000 inhabitants who in 1948 were unemployed, the concurrent housing crisis is evoked through the rudimentary apartments where the women line up at the water pump while the men struggle in imposed inactivity (Sitney

1995: 91). Started and evidently never finished by fascist planners, housing projects such as this were built to relocate the lower classes to the outskirts in order to open up inner-city areas for road networks as well as the respectable and politically far less threatening middle class (Sorlin 1991: 118–19). As we can tell from the men's discouragement and from Antonio's endless commuting, the situation creates a self-fulfilling mechanism of displacement: while no subsidies are provided to develop the area and thus to create local jobs, the distance from the city centre limits access to the few jobs available (Sorlin 1991: 118–19). Spinning a story around an ordinary, unemployed man displaced from all means of self-betterment, the film does not spell this out but it shows the continuity of the fascist strategies of exclusion within the Christian Democratic administration that came to power in 1947–1948. While this year saw invaluable and highly overdue initiatives in political reform, including the abolishment of the monarchy by referendum, the promulgation of the Constitution of the Italian Republic and voting rights for women, both the lack of social reforms and the exclusion of the Communists from the government – partly caused by disharmony within the Left but more decisively by the Church's alliance with the Christian Democrats and Cold War American pressure expressed through the propagandistic implementation of Marshall Aid – proved the limits of defascistation and the inability of the Resistance to have a political and moral function in the country's rebuilding (Ginsborg 1990: 104–20).

EXCLUSION AND IRRESOLUTION

Under such circumstances, only a stroke of luck can lead to a state job, but after two years of unemployment Antonio is too disillusioned and needs his wife to seize the golden opportunity. All the linen and bikes stored in the pawnshops demonstrates that his situation is far from unique, but he lives through it in isolation and finds no solidarity among fellow jobseekers prepared to take his place but not to help him out of his immediate dilemma. At a time when the prevalently agrarian and mercantile country goes through changes destined to take it into the world's top five most industrialised nations, the film categorically rejects a nostalgic vision of *communities* as built on common interests extinguished by the self-interests of *societies* (Tönnies 2001). Instead, it juxtaposes the introverted and spiteful impassiveness the unemployed worker conveys in the *borgata*, with the untroubled voyeurism or zig-zag cycling he displays when receiving instructions for a job in the centre, suggesting the liberation associated with city streets that represent relative prosperity and a far more inclusive space than his immediate environment. Antonio's receptivity towards unknown spaces of an emergent modernity is visualised when he and Bruno, who works at a gas station, leave the next morning and they are

carried away from perpetual poverty by the light of dawn and the swarm of cycling workers. In this moment of untroubled pleasure, we can sense the childhood Bruno has lost; while much younger than Pasquale and Giuseppe, he completely lacks their playfulness. Antonio shares his son's joy, and in contrast to the long shots that capture his isolation in Valmelaina, the last stretch along via Nomentana into the centre is framed in a series of close-ups revealing serenity and anticipation.

The collapse of these hopes rests on a premise so fragile and for script-writer Amidei so ideologically wrong that he left the project, objecting that in Italy in 1948, the Communist Party would have provided Antonio with a bike (Moneti 1992: 247). Bazin, who considered *Bicycle Thieves* the most valuable Communist film of the decade precisely because it avoids propaganda, responded that without the search, there would have been no film. More importantly, the implausible story aims not to show social injustice as it really is but to create awareness around how it really is felt. As insignificant as the worker and as essential as the job, the bike is an obsession we share with the character like the horse in *Shoeshine*, and when we see him so absorbed in his new job that he fails to register the theft taking place beneath him, 'for five minutes, that point of Rome becomes the centre of the world' (Zavattini 1997: 51). The bike bridges a pre-industrial world of water pumps and endless walks with signs of modernity that rather than providing access reinforce Antonio's alienation. Busy streets full of traffic hinder his view and undermine his dilemma; offices and institutions receive him with paternalistic indifference and the leisure activities he witnesses, whether it is a bicycle race, a football game or the Hollywood films evoked in the promotional posters for *Gilda* (1946), are far removed from his material means and infinitely circular dilemma (Gordon 2008: 41; 93–5). Excluded from the city's opportunities and pleasures, Antonio is also unprepared for its dangers and naively hopeful that the police will mobilise for a bike, demonstrating an inexperience encapsulated in the ironic contrast between his clumsiness and Rita Hayworth's glamour (De Sica 2000: 40). This metacinematic moment seems also to acknowledge *noir* influences in the rainy mean streets Antonio and Bruno navigate and in the far from natural lighting of certain interiors, while there is also an authorial awareness that in 1948 when *Gilda* reached Italian audiences, American *femmes fatales* would do far better at the box office than bicycle thieves.

A point of spatiotemporal gravitation, the theft divides the film into an uplifting *before* and a disconcerting *after*, where the first part leads from the *borgata* to the city through four narrative blocks: problem-resolution-idyll-work. Only Maria's decision to reward La Santona for having predicted Antonio's change in fortune deviates from this linearity and only later, when he who ridicules his wife resorts to the same nonsense, do we see the importance of this episode.⁴

The second part takes a circular turn, moving from one theft to another and from a job in the city to, we assume, unemployment in the *borgata*. It also provokes a series of encounters that – from the labour union where radical intellectuals discuss injustice and ignore the singular victim and the church where hypocritical philanthropists shave and feed the poor provided they attend mass, to the *trattoria* where a bourgeois family reminds Antonio of his poverty – all suggest how a lack of solidarity and dysfunctional social institutions perpetuate his marginalisation. The novelty of *Bicycle Thieves* resides, in particular, in the absence of causal relations and spatial continuity between these moments; a feature that brings it closer to *Paisà* than to *Shoeshine*. A shower of rain forces Antonio and Bruno to take shelter under a roof, a vagrant brings them to mass, an accident in the river makes Antonio forget the bike and search desperately for Bruno. The duration of these moments asks us to wait and feel the alienating presence of the Austrian priests at their side or the father's fear that his son has drowned, before the quest continues, whereas the accidental succession of events makes it seem as if they just happen, as if there were no story. It is of course a meticulously constructed 'disappearance' of the story and it renounces neither a perfect tragedy nor an unambiguous message.⁵

Elaborating on these 'idle periods', Deleuze observes how the post-war economic crisis leads De Sica to 'shatter' the traditional 'action-image' which centres around an agent who reacts to an initial situation so as to create a new situation. Antonio's disconnected and temporal experiences with a materially entirely concrete dilemma break such chains:

there is no longer a vector or line of the universe which extends and links up the events of *The Bicycle Thief*: the rain can always interrupt or deflect the search fortuitously, the voyage of the man and the child. (Deleuze 1989: 212)

This voyage is not only deprived of opportunities, although that is the authors' strongest allegation, but it is also void of the consequentiality unquestioned by the type of cinema they reject. Chance and ambiguity are present from the start when Antonio is assigned a job merely for belonging to a certain category of worker: a job he cannot accept because he has and has not a bike (Moneti 1999: 41). That he runs into the thief twice in a day – after the rain and outside Santana's – without being able to turn the fortuitous moments to his advantage brings this logic to its surreal extreme. What makes us accept the episodes as part of the world represented is their integration into the film's disconcerting social portrait: the first instance leads to a church where people attend Sunday mass to get a bowl of soup, the second to a brothel and to the neighbourhood where the malefactor lives in even poorer conditions than Antonio but in the protection of a social network that undermines any law.



Figure 5.1 Antonio and Bruno in De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*. Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

These chance encounters are carefully written rather than indiscriminately observed the way Zavattini would have preferred. More in line with his thought is the dead time of wandering along narrow alleys and deep riverbanks; a walk between disconnected 'any-space-whatevers' that disorient our perceptions of the character's environment while aligning us with his displacement within it. The scene after Antonio has slapped Bruno is emblematic: a long-shot in deep focus captures their distance from each other as they wander towards the edges of the frame, leaving the camera to dwell on the desolate intersection they have just crossed. Still, exclusion is only one side of Antonio's dilemma. A heroic victim of social injustice, he is also inept, an irresolute, directionless anti-hero and a 'seer' who observes and reflects while making his wife, a friend, or the police, act. He lets the thief and the old vagrant slip out of his hands, hitting Bruno for noticing this error, and spends his last money on a lunch to re-establish their alliance, before paying a fake psychic for telling him that the bike will be found immediately or never. When he finally seeks to change the course of events the gesture hardly belongs to him, but the humiliation he suffers certainly does. The worker who steals a bike is 'an honest man

who becomes thief because he is out of himself [. . .] he lets himself get caught after a clumsy and uncoordinated attempt to escape, like someone who has given up' (Moneti 1999: 42).

Apparently a case of perfect duplication, there is a significant difference between the film's parallel thefts. Whereas Antonio's misfortune occurs in a congested street and is noticed only by a taxi driver, the solitary bike he spots, acting alone and with no strategy, is instantaneously reclaimed by a crowd mysteriously gathered from all sides of the previously empty square. Several critics have seen something Kafkaesque in the instinctive solidarity and collective effort turned against the mortified thief, but De Sica objected that Antonio's alienation is social and not metaphysical in nature (Bazin 2002: 323). Such a distinction is confirmed by the inequalities at play in this confrontation, as in the rest of the film: none of the men chasing him, least of all the bourgeois victim, depends economically on a bike, but where the social factor cedes and Kafka's surreal labyrinth seems to prevail is in the hostility Antonio faces everywhere, in his own neighbourhood and in that of the thief, as well as in the emptiness, the indecisiveness and uncertainty that would likely follow him even if he had a job. What we are left with when Antonio and Bruno merge with the indolently moving crowd so indifferent to their tragedy, and with the film's languid texture, so embracing of their tacit isolation, is this veil of ambiguity. Behind them rises the city, officially at the verge of modernity; ahead of them lie wastelands and unemployment, with no promises for the future. Today, it is however easier to see the human, rather than the social conditions, at play in Antonio's drama. Haunted by an intangible sense of anguish rooted in loneliness and non-belonging, he stands at the margins, isolated and weak in his uncertainty, between the outskirts where he has no roots, and a cityscape where he finds no foundation. Looking into this city, the searching worker also looks towards new spaces of cinematic narration that in the successive decades would develop around irresolute, drifting, wanderers like him.

WHERE 'GOOD DAY' REALLY MEANS 'GOOD DAY': *MIRACLE IN MILAN*

Two years later, when the post-war crisis was officially a closed chapter and neorealism had seen its heyday, *Miracle in Milan* made a move from tragedy to utopia; from the unspectacular *here and now* to a stylised *what if* that, while it is still embedded in the realms of the disenfranchised, presents a radical change in the authors' *optique*. The abandonment of the real appears both as a reflection of and an opposition to an increasingly reactionary post-war administration and the 'state of ideological curfew' it created (Brunetta 2001b: 84). A concrete manifestation of this climate was a set of film laws implemented in 1948–1949 that had the protectionist scope of limiting the

import of Hollywood productions while also establishing that films considered 'aesthetically excellent' would be subsidised by 8–10 per cent of their gross income (Argentieri 1974: 70). While this was supposed to support the 'healthy', 'very moral', yet 'attractive' film production the Under Secretary of Culture, Andreotti, envisioned, this reward system and the imperatives of national décor that motivated it – both of unambiguous fascist origins – implied a discrimination against commercially risky and ideologically charged films (quoted in Brunetta 2001b: 84). What troubled the moralising Under Secretary was not so much Rita Hayworth and her like, but the angry directors 'with loads to say' whose arrival Visconti had announced in 1941 and who now, once again, saw their freedom threatened. Censorship commissions took form around well-experienced ex-fascist officers who banned all Soviet films and a commission for self-censorship served to review scripts and warn producers about topics to be avoided – fascism, the war and the Resistance were the first to be declared passé. If things were worse than during fascism, it was in particular for the reason that all factions of the film industry were centralised around governmental institutions. In this way, even if an 'uncomfortable' film were approved and received funds, it could be blocked at the level of distribution or exhibition (quoted in Brunetta 2001b: 74–87).

What Brunetta describes as an 'Inquisition in Cinecittà' was part of a larger witch-hunt evolving in the 1950s with a model in McCarthyism and with the cinema as a scapegoat for penalties actually due to a community of worrisome intellectuals (quoted in Brunetta 2001b: 76–9). What ideological and juridical continuities it presented with fascism is suggested by the case of Renzo Renzi, an ex-officer and critic whose 'Proposal for a Film' published in *Cinema Nuovo* in 1953 caused him months in jail. In opposition to the heroism of contemporary military films which, ignoring the tragic consequences of the war, treated the army and its cause as sacred, Renzi delineated an 'examination of conscience, a condemnation of war' that would demystify the Italian campaign in Greece where he had served (1975a: 491). Some months later, he and the journal's editor Guido Aristarco were both condemned by the Military Tribunal of Milan for defamation of the armed forces.⁶ It was nevertheless not such extreme violations of artistic freedom Zavattini had in mind when he in 1960 examined the sad state of contemporary cinema, but all the topics that were no longer confronted and the films that were not even envisioned due to self-censorship (2002: 889). Under such economic and ideological opposition to critical commentary and cinematic innovation, *Shoeshine* and *Bicycle Thieves* would probably not have seen the light whereas, had it been made two years earlier, *Miracle in Milan* might have had a different ending. Zavattini originally intended to let the poor fly through an idyllic valley with signs saying 'PRIVATE PROPERTY' everywhere; unable to settle down, they

would have continued into the clouds towards a country where 'good day' really means 'good day', as we see them do. This anti-capitalist message was censored, which had the effect merely of increasing its ambiguity and, certainly not, of reducing critical discord. Whereas right-wing critics were certain that the broomstick flight was heading towards Russia, Soviet censors banned the film for its inconsistency with Marxist doctrine, and advocates of neorealism lamented the appeasing escape from the present (Parigi 1992: 308; 295; Argentieri 1974: 82–3).

MIRACULOUS MISERY

Written and rewritten over a decade as treatments and scripts; as a novel entitled *Totò il buono* (1943) and in dialogue with Zavattini's other fictional writings, *Miracle in Milan* presents a metadiscursive, rather than an unwritten cinema and its surreal elements lead far from the scriptwriter's call for an end to spectacles. When De Sica still considered this film a tribute to Zavattini, it was no doubt for the signs both plot and characters bear of his satirical look at a society of hypocrisy and injustice as well as of his vivid imagination. Through this story of spatiotemporal concreteness there runs a vein of fantastic playfulness announced with the manneristic scenery of Pieter Bruegel's 'Proverbs from the Netherlands' which is featured under the titles (Parigi 1992: 287–96). A prologue captioned 'once upon a time' affirms the move away from the practices of neorealism as it accounts for the protagonist's fairy-tale-like origins. In line with the Italian folklore of childbirth, Totò is found crying under a cabbage and, growing up with an adoptive grandmother who marvels over the milk he lets boil over, he learns to safeguard the 'poetic defence' of childhood.⁷ The multiplication exercise they share while she is dying recalls Staffera's interrogations of the inmates in *Shoeshine*, but rather than intimidating the child, it leaves him with a piece of lasting knowledge he later passes on to the city's street kids. Having grown up protected from the brutalities endured and internalised by other children of neorealism, Totò leaves the orphanage with nothing but altruism and faith in the ability of games to change the world.

At a point when Naples, Rome, Florence and Berlin have all acquired cinematic life, the journey of socio-geographical discovery arrives in Milan; Vittorini's Resistance city and the scene for De Sica's first endeavours as a comic actor. *Miracle in Milan* redirects the social analysis and comic situations of his 1930s comedies to the margins of the expanding financial capital where Totò and a group of the disinherited settle down. Their *borgata* demonstrates the relative prosperity of Valmelaina, but convinced in their common marginalisation that 'a shack is enough to live and sleep' in, they have no aspiration to enter the city centre. Significantly, what stirs tension in their community is

the introduction of capital, facilitated by the magic dove Totò's grandmother brings him from the otherworld, but they are reconciled when the magic fades and their home is attacked by greedy speculators. In response to critics who saw this as a glorification of poverty, De Sica insisted on the film's nature as a fable inspired more from the legends of the North than from the contemporary Latin world (2000: 26). Fusing the real with the surreal, it stars actual homeless people struggling amidst fake snow to take a share in the only ray of sun their world is granted; once spring comes, however, this imaginary land is filled with human warmth and it unfolds through medium shots, high angles, short takes and causal as well as surreal relations. While *Miracle in Milan* incorporates all the conventions rejected in *Bicycle Thieves*, it is neither conformist nor pacifying and, considering the debt De Sica acknowledged to two masters of cinematic narration, we can more easily see that it is in the film's most anti-realistic aspects that the authors' accusations appear most daring (2000: 26). If René Clair inspired the proliferation of foggy, peripheral areas and the seeking out of the peculiar in lower-class characters, the gags – from Edvige who declares her love for Totò with a bucket of water and the old man so famished he is taken away by a balloon, to the fur-dressed tycoons whose negotiations sound like dogs barking – evoke Chaplin's physical comedy and satire of capitalism.

The juxtaposition of the joyful folly of the poor and the greed of the rich – a topos in Zavattini's universe as much as in Chaplin's – runs parallel with an exposition of the city's geographic disjunctions. Arriving in the city centre after a futile job search, Totò stops to cheer presumptuous opera spectators exiting La Scala and spends the night in a freezing shack. Later, Mobbi ventures out to the outskirts to invest in the area, but seeing the unitary defence of their habitat by the homeless, he initially abandons these plans and talks of human equality. Only when oil spurts out between the barracks do signs saying 'Mobbi Properties' appear and the capitalist's secretary arrives with evacuation orders, parroting that the area is 'private property'. It is, however, when the tramps' transgress into the enormous office where Mobbi buys and sells through multiple phones, with servants and a police squad at his disposition, that we get the best sense of how satire serves to expose the contradictions of modernisation and urban expansion. The contrast between the extra-diegetic jazz music accompanying this sequence and the choral tone of the shantytown is illuminating: like Mobbi's self-absorbed smiling and nodding when they appeal to the speech he previously gave about equality, it suggests not merely a social organism structured around increasing socio-economic barriers, but also the impossibility of communicating across them.

While delineating the city's division into two opposed spatiotemporal zones – one being centralised and industrialised, the other displaced and pre-industrial – the fable also identifies a human gap that, as Zavattini emphasised

in *Totò il buono*, does not follow the usual categorisation 'rich and poor – but rather, good and bad', implying that evil can and does reside within the underprivileged as well (quoted in Spinazzola 1975: 247). Greed, egoism, and pretentiousness bring forth not only the Judas in Rappi who reveals the discovery of oil to Mobbi for a fur coat and a top hat, but also the claim to ownership in men who want the sculptured woman for themselves and in the competition for wealth that ultimately exhausts the capacity of Totò's magic dove to protect the community. While admitting that the marginalised are inclined to the very social ills that keep them at the margins, we must also allow for the modest and tender wishes Totò is happy to fulfil: a stammering man wishes to speak properly and a white girl and a black man ask to become black and white respectively, complicating further a love made impossible by social prejudice. These are wishes Mobbi could never appreciate, but what makes the poor morally superior to him is not, ultimately, the simplicity and sincerity they are still able to profess, but the unity with which they resist and eventually break free from forces that deny them their most basic needs. The flight towards a kingdom of sincere greetings conveys a refusal, similar to that of the horse in *Shoeshine*, to live in a society of selfishness and exploitation, but there is also a bitter realisation that the present social order allows no room for solidarity and social justice.

Recognising the pessimistic undertones of the satirical-utopian narrative and its call for a complete reorganisation allows us not only to situate the fable within the authors' visions of a civic cinema, but also to recognise its coherence with the social and artistic origins of neorealism. Inherent in the collective of disenfranchised living and fighting in the open there is a reference to the popular resistance and the deinstitutionalisation of communal life in *Open City*, as well as to novels that from *Fontamara* and *Uomini e no* to *Cronache di poveri amanti* celebrated the instinctive political battle of lower-class communities. Calvino's view of neorealism as a choral matter and polyphonous, as were the experiences of resistance and liberation, also illuminates the story of the homeless which is told from the piazza; a physical space they inhabit and at the same time a fantasy-land reminiscent of Bruegel's painting (Parigi 1992: 287). The fusion of Totò's singular voice with the pluralistic one of the tramps creates a narrative of exchanges similar, albeit far less provocative, to the one Pin incites in *Il sentiero del nido dei ragni*; a particularly apt parallel considering the fantastic dimension of Calvino's resistance narrative and its studied deformation of reality. Like his useless and opportunistic partisans, Di Sica's grotesque outcasts suggest that the worst of the lot is better than the privileged classes who are capable only of recreating their privileges. Far from embracing the cultural policies of 'passivity and pacification' (Kolker 2009: 57), *Miracle in Milan* exposes the falsity of idealised pictures through 'curious consonances with Brecht's poetics', although there was most likely no intention of making



Figure 5.2 Totò with Edvige and fellow homeless in De Sica's *Miracle in Milan*.
Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

a Brechtian film (Brunetta 2009: 55). Rather, the strategies of defamiliarisation appear as natural elements of the fable, suggesting how the comic and the bizarre were adopted to encourage critical viewing experiences in times when civic engagement was systematically obstructed.

A LETTER FROM ANDREOTTI: *UMBERTO D*

What was to become the last of De Sica's neorealist films set out to reclaim reality with 'absolutely no compromise', rejecting both the marvellous and the 'small, romantic sentimentality' he regretted having given into in *Bicycle Thieves*.⁸ The result – a portrait of institutionalised neglect that excludes all forms of abstraction – failed notoriously to thrill the Under Secretary of Culture:

And if it is true that evil may also be fought by laying bare its most crude aspects, it is also true that if in the world people have to be induced – wrongly – to reckon that the Italy of *Umberto D* is the Italy of the mid-twentieth century, De Sica will have rendered a terrible service to his motherland. (quoted in Aristarco 1980: 9)

Andreotti's open letter concluded with an invitation to a 'constructive and healthy optimism' and to clean 'dirty-linen' at home, perfectly coherent with laws he had designed to promote images of sunny Italy abroad as well as with the fear of having to justify in front of international affiliates the country's leftist directors.⁹ Clearly, at stake was not merely De Sica's inescapable call for an examination of conscience, but the cluster of films that since the war had exposed the country's many contradictions. That the attack came just now – Andreotti had kept quiet during the debates around *Miracle in Milan* and confessed to greatly prefer the 'divine gift of a suggestive ray of sun that made the disinherited laugh' to the disturbing pessimism of *Umberto D* (quoted in Aristarco 1980: 9) – reflected how politically charged neorealist film had become by 1952, when reactionary and clerical circles indicted it with promoting communism and leftists with failing to politicise culture (Sorlin 1996: 89). The 'involution' of neorealism subsequently denounced on the pages of *Cinema Nuovo* with reference to De Sica's *Stazione Termini* and other compromised films demonstrated Andreotti's success, but it was also clear that the current political and spiritual climate and the Americanisation of the customs and desires of the people only reinforced reactionary cultural policies. Even more crucially, critics had to acknowledge that neorealism had never become a 'popular matter'. Rather, it was argued, it had liberated the intellectual and the artist for whom art is a means to concrete liberation in real life, but the 'anti-*divo*, anti-epic, critical, documentary-like, anti-melodramatic' tendency had denied the 'catharsis', the liberation from immediate concerns that the public seeks in the cinema (Renzi 1975b: 447–9). Few films are more illustrative than *Umberto D* which in its pessimistic scrutiny and dwelling on banalities was far removed from a people ready for future prosperity.¹⁰ After the war, it had been a different matter, Umberto Eco recalls: 'Ragged as we were, we could as well go proudly selling our image as ragged, but now, we had to present ourselves as a respectable nation' (1995: 9). With a protagonist as unglamorous as a pensioner and as isolated so as to exclude choral dimensions and with a narrative dedramatised to an unwanted pregnancy and a failed suicide, the film designed its own defeat. While *Umberto D* offers the most unrestrained realisation of the authors' artistic and social objectives, these appear in a 'crepuscular' light nurtured by an awareness of having reached the end (Eco 1995: 9). And that at a time when Zavattini wrote polemically of a neorealism still to be fulfilled.

A BOTHERSOME OLD MAN AND HIS DOG

Umberto D situates us in a congested street with the credits and a dedication to De Sica's father superimposed. At the end of it, we discern a procession of some hundred elderly men calling for higher pensions and a political voice;

a demand that appears to have been denied from the outset since they never obtained permission to demonstrate. Squads of riot police consequently force them to break up and disappear, creating a quiet sense of defeat with regard to the practical execution of democracy that sets the film's critical tone. Umberto D soon forgets the predictable outcome for the urgency of procuring ways to pay off his rent arrears. A retired civil servant, he strives to live decently on a meagre pension of which more than half goes to a landlady who has just committed to an advantageous marriage and plots to evict him. His only consolation is the dog and Maria; the naive and candid maid from the country who will soon be homeless, too, once the landlady who profitably accommodates adulterous lovers, discovers her pregnancy. 'Certain things happen to you because you don't know your grammar,' Umberto D insists, and although the thesis that only education can bring an end to exploitation hits to the core of her dilemma, his humanistic values and sense of honour – incapable of begging, he sells off his belongings while continuing to dress impeccably and maintain exquisite manners – are useless in the 'post-human' society in which they live (Brunetta 2009: 57).

This quest for human dignity leads back to the streets of Rome where Umberto D wanders, like Antonio, out of material need and in utter solitude, although he has lived there for twenty years. Having experienced the rise and fall of Mussolini's empire; the war, the Resistance and the Liberation, he would have participated in a range of urban collectives, whereas now the city represents a threat of exclusion that materialises both in the police jeeps who force the pensioners to seek refuge in dead-end alleys and doorways and in the hostile indifference Umberto D faces in the park where the film ends. What brings him to the verge of suicide is, however, not ultimately the conviction among younger and more privileged citizens that 'old people stink', but the complete absence of the camaraderie that makes the homeless in *Miracle in Milan* so strong (Zavattini, quoted in Brunetta 2009). Deprived of a common cause, the group of protesters disintegrates; at the cheap café, the poor eat in silence while the waitress scorns Umberto D for giving his plate to the dog; even more disquieting is the unwillingness he discovers in a fellow demonstrator and a former colleague respectively to relate to poverty and be confronted with a request for help. His nostalgic look back at the war when the landlady called him 'grandfather' and poverty was shared suggests that a loss of *civitas*; of citizenship and social consciousness, has taken place during the times of shoeshiners and bicycle thieves when survival and quests for freedom became increasingly private matters.

These confrontations between character and environment are projected through a look that Bazin compared to the 'love for creatures' of directors such as Vigo, Renoir and Chaplin and that, as emblematised by Maria and Umberto D spying on a lawless couple through the keyhole, is as ungenerous with the

city's phony bourgeoisie as it is affectionate with society's victims (Bazin 2002: 321). Close-ups may highlight the brutality of an official yelling at the harmless demonstrators and the unattractiveness of the landlady's morning-face, or they may poeticise Umberto D's unbearable tiredness. Oscillating long shots and medium close-ups juxtapose his distressed gestures and vulnerability with the architectonic massiveness of the Pantheon as well as with people rushing by oblivious to his urgent predicament, whereas his entrance into the park is captured in a deep focus that, as it outlines Umberto D's physical and metaphorical distance to some children playing in the background, conveys his presentiment of death by means of opposition to their vitality. At the basis for this morally evaluative gaze we sense Zavattini's inventions, sardonically disclosing the falsity of the landlady's world – of her pretentiously singing friends, of her loveless husband-to-be, and of a young mother who visits secretly with her attractive lover and officially with her old husband. A calculating deceptiveness also invests, however, the positive ambience at the hospital where Umberto D asks the nun for a rosary to make her extend his stay and where two brothers discuss money while pretending to worry for their dying father. As seen in *Miracle in Milan*, the poor in Zavattini's universe are not necessarily good, but they must be separated, still, from the rich who have the means and power but no desire to change private interests and moral squalor for altruism and justice (Fanara 2000: 251). Symptomatically, only people even more marginalised than the petit bourgeois pensioner – the maid and the jovial charlatan speculating in free room and board at the hospital – offer the human warmth he misses, and the optimism with which he leaves after a week of unjustified hospitalisation suggests what little it would take to improve his quality of life. The emptiness awaiting him destroys all illusions of happiness, however, and seen from the window of his boarding house room destroyed by the landlady's renovations, the city appears in a dramatic chiaroscuro light that seemingly offers a terminal solution to all his troubles and longings.

It does not matter that, in the end, Umberto D chooses life, leaving us with the anti-climactic uncertainty as to how and where he shall live. While we watch him wait for dawn to break, pretending to the maid that he is moving down the road, and searching for a way either to abandon or to kill the dog, we truly witness the prelude to a suicide, and the last fifteen minutes of anxious looks and gestures include the viewer in a frantic conflict between mortal tiredness and a desire to live rarely seen at the movies. Elaborating the ontological perspective of uncertainty, irresolution and ambiguity developed in *Bicycle Thieves*, *Umberto D* offers a more precise image of what the poetics of *pedinamento* might entail, and while it is far from tracing ninety consecutive minutes of a man's day, as was Zavattini's ideal, it invites us to experience a week of his sadly inconsequential existence. The temporalised perspective takes form around what Bazin defined as 'concrete instances of life', point-

ing in particular to the maid's morning routines – her waking up in the hall, going over to the kitchen, watching the cat outside and drowning the ants. In succession, these instances show how 'the cinema of duration' renders 'spectacular and dramatic the times of life itself' (2002: 326–33). Maria's drama transpires from the juxtaposition of the mechanical act of grinding coffee and the impassivity with which she looks down at her stomach, a drama that not incidentally prompts Deleuze's exposition of the 'time-image'. In the encounter between the eyes and the belly there emerges a 'pure optical situation [. . .] it is as though all the misery in the world were going to be born' and she can only stare out in the air (1989: 1–2). Although this inability to act and to react with anything but quiet tears dramatises a socio-economically determined lack of agency, it also identifies her nature as the bearer of a gaze within a realism based on dwelling, chance encounters, disconnections and objects that fail to incite motion.

Embracing marginalised viewers, the universe of De Sica and Zavattini is one where loneliness is the only certainty, where the utopia of solidarity and playfulness fails to undermine insatiable pursuits of wealth, where indifference has outdone the interests of the collective and the right to human dignity. Their characters reveal an authorial affection and seek a corresponding emotive reception – thus Bazin's felicitous distinction between Rossellini's style as essentially a 'look' and of De Sica's as essentially a 'sensibility' (2002: 312). According to some critics, this 'sentimental attachment' to the subject and the 'special pleading' involved for child protagonists, in particular, betrayed both the people portrayed since they are never seen as victorious, and the audience who, identifying emotionally with the characters, is denied the Brechtian distance required to perform a 'sustained analysis' of their situation (Kolker 2009: 48–50). The neorealists' failure to offer visions of change was, allegedly, rooted in the 'aesthetic they promoted' since it forced them to observe without altering what they saw, leaving them with the conviction that to 'gaze into the book of God's creatures' was enough for the truth to transpire. A notion of passivity would also have been 'built into neorealist theory, as a result, the filmmakers only allow their characters and audience to reap the rewards of passivity: more pain, more poverty' (Kolker 2009: 50; 55). It is unclear which aesthetic exactly is at stake here. The differences between the directors and between individual films question the presence of any norms except faithfulness to the historical present which, as we have seen, could take a range of forms. More than aesthetic or religious sensitivities, it was the failure to change the political and commercial imperatives of filmmaking and to establish a radically new relationship to the people, that hindered the revolutionary potential of neorealism.

Even more questionable is the supposed theoretical limitation: the only one who consciously formulated a neorealist poetics insisted tirelessly on analysis

as the only means to knowledge and social conscience, but in contrast to Brecht, Zavattini saw identification as a presupposition for consciousness. Only by recognising a character's suffering as part of our reality and, ideally, as our own, can we become aware of the structures that cause it and form solidarity with the victim. Zavattini's concrete work at the movies was too far from eliminating the gap between 'verb and action' to realise these ideas, but six decades after the films were released, it is easier to see that the displaced urbanites he created to confront us with solitude, existential tiredness, agony over what is lost, and anxiety over the unknown, make for the universal dimension of human solidarity that in his poetics features as the ultimate objective of the cinema.

NOTES

1. *Shoeshine* was produced with less than a million lire; still it was for the producer, William Tamburella, 'a disaster' because, 'in Italy, practically no-one saw it' (De Sica 1994b: 252).
2. According to Zavattini's observations on the story, police raids in via Veneto were frequent but rather inconsequential, which is why Giuseppe and Pasquale show no sign of fear and do not attempt to escape. 'They are certain that it is only one of the usual operations caused by the battle against the black market' (1994: 244). After a night in custody, Pasquale still believes they will be liberated immediately since they after all have done nothing wrong.
3. During the *ventennio* the pronoun 'Voi' (you, plural) became an obligatory substitution for the formal pronoun 'Lei' which was considered anti-nationalistic in as much as it was of Spanish origin.
4. The episodes, included mostly as a token of popular Roman folklore, are inspired by the authors' many visits to a woman known in Rome as La Santona ('The Great Saintess'). She refused to appear in the film, but Ida Bracci Dorati who interpreted her artful strategies vividly suggests the opportunities there were for an entrepreneurial fortune teller to profit from post-war uncertainty (Zavattini 1997: 55–6).
5. See Bazin (2002: 315). According to assistant director Sergio Leone (1997: 22), who also played one of the priests, only the rain sequence was entirely improvised.
6. A positive outcome of the Renzi-Aristarco process was the polemics it created, engaging critics, filmmakers, writers and journalists in united calls for a free cinema (Aristarco 1975).
7. See Bazin (2002: 324). Totò's enchantment was inspired by an episode that occurred in Zavattini's home: 'The other morning I called my children to the kitchen to see the milk that came out from the pot. I had been told by my wife to oversee the boiling, so that it did not go over the pot. They were having a lot of fun: the creaking of smoke, the rivulets of liquid that spread out everywhere. And they saw with me in that boiling candor, cities that were decomposing, millions of microscopic beings battling with the tempests and dissolved ices and other things that I don't remember. All at the cost of 1.30 lire, a liter of milk' (quoted in Fanara 2000: 443).
8. See De Sica (2000: 40; 32). A reservation must be made to this restrictive view of De Sica's neorealist phase: the sketches from everyday life in *L'oro di Napoli* (1954), the comic treatment of the housing crisis in *Il tetto* (1956), and the resistance drama featured in *La ciociara* (1960) all reside at the margins of neorealism.

9. In 1954, the Italian Amateur Radio Association referred to a recent *Time* article and reported that: 'Of the fourteen major Italian directors, four at least are communists: Visconti, Monicelli, Lizzani, De Santis', whereas De Sica, Lattuada, Antonioni and Germi were denounced as 'sympathizing' with the country's communists and socialists. At the same time, Associated Press reported from Washington that "The highest exponents of the government have expressed their enthusiastic satisfaction over Prime Minister Scelba's decision to affront energetically the problem of communism in Italy' (quoted in Argentieri 1974: 107).
10. After the modest success of *Miracle in Milan*, *Umberto D* ended up as the 85th most seen film of 118 Italian productions in 1951–1952. Within the neorealist canon, only Visconti's *La terra trema* proved commercially more disastrous (Cosulich 1975: 471). The French-Italian comedy *Don Camillo* (Duvivier, 1952) which De Sica had refused to direct won that year's box-office race and achieved 216 million lire in government contributions, against the 16 million that went to *Umberto D* (Vigni 1992: 317). De Sica estimated the total costs of *Umberto D* to be 140 million lire (Wagstaff 2007: 430).

6. VISCONTI'S WORLD OF AESTHETICISM AND IDEOLOGY: BETWEEN TRADITION AND INVENTION, FROM COUNTRY TO CITY

Visconti [. . .] tries to reach raw and primordial impulses. But, too 'aristocratic', he does not succeed, because his true theme is elsewhere and is immediately concerned with time.

Deleuze, *The Movement-Image* (1986)

A QUEST FOR FREEDOM

A positive and, for the authorities, undesired effect of the 'campaign against dirty linen' was a wave of protest, loudly present in a range of media organs such as *Cinema Nuovo* which became a privileged forum for calls for a free cinema and accusations of paternalistic policies that many held responsible for the 'crisis' of neorealism (Aristarco 1980: 12). Andreotti's infamous film laws were revised in the mid-1950s allegedly to liberalise regulations and censoring procedures, but Barbaro, whom the Under Secretary of Culture had eliminated from the Centro Sperimentale film institute for convictions that never disturbed Mussolini's sleep, dismissed the official concept of 'good censorship' as a contradiction in terms. His call for abolition of this practice in all its forms resonated in a manifesto whereby the majority of the country's cineastes defended the 'common spirit' of their ideologically different works, 'the same Italian spirit that, with its need for criticism, for comprehension, for dialogue, manifests faith in life and hope that the world will become better, that it has to become better' (quoted in Argentieri 1974: 121). Not until the 1960s, when a prosperous individualistic culture illustrated the success both of Marshall Aid

and the related anti-communist battle, and when Italian film saw the golden age of art cinema and 'comedy Italian style', did the collective opposition to forced optimism and social peace produce results.

Visconti, as ever, stood on the barricades. Provoked by conservative editorials in *Il Mondo* (founded 1949) which spoke of neorealism as a 'scandalous' liaison between communists and the cinema, he reaffirmed the diverse manifestations of overarching objectives. What was

neorealist, was the basic idea that moved the new conception of national cinema. To fight for the neorealist cinema today means therefore to fight for the *national cinema*. The value inherent in the Italian neorealist cinema is the battle for freedom. This, for instance, was what I thought of when I, during fascism, started to work on *Obsession*. It is, therefore, not only a question about a particular poetics, but a democratic point of view [. . .] When I made *The Earth Trembles* and when I made *Senso*, my point of view did not change in the least.

(quoted in Argentieri 1974: 123)

Visconti's understanding of a collective rebuilding of the cinema anchored to ideals of freedom – from fascism, from war, from injustice and, lastly, from a censored circulation of ideas – confirms what most critics and artists have expressed regarding the absence of aesthetic or thematic restrictions and the presence instead of individual poetics at the service of ideas rather than the other way around. His emphasis, furthermore, on the universal value of democracy highlights the moral basis for neorealism: that it proved a political failure was also related to its inclusiveness and to the anti-dogmatic and anti-conformist legacies of anti-fascism. Finally, the individual conclusion to Visconti's explication of a collective phenomenon places his neorealist classic on an illuminating line of continuity between the film that in 1943 announced a new cinema and the one that eleven years later was considered both a betrayal and a promising passage from neorealism to realism.

A JOURNEY TO SICILY: *THE EARTH TREMBLES*

The Earth Trembles is not a work of the Resistance and the Liberation. To these events, which had seen Visconti so personally involved and present, he had responded by shooting the trial and execution of the fascist police chief, Pietro Caruso, for the documentary *Giorni di gloria* (Serandrei 1945), and by ideating a few, critically very promising projects which were turned down by producers wary of covering the horror of events that people sought to forget.¹ Far more rewarding outcomes transpired from Visconti's dedication to the theatre where, to expand his personal interests and to satisfy needs the public had

been denied during the fascist period, he staged everything from Shakespeare to Tennessee Williams and Sartre, establishing a directorial competence destined to encompass operas starring Maria Callas and ballets with Jean Babilée (Brunetta 2009: 70; 61). When Visconti finally returned to the cinema in 1947, it was with the commission to make a documentary for the Communist party's electoral campaign the following year. Expanding on the intended project on Sicilian fishermen to cover the economic and social exploitation of miners and peasants as well, he originally planned a three-part film but could barely procure funds for the first segment.² The choice of setting reflected recent uprisings concerning land reform and redistribution among Sicilian farmers, as well as the Massacre of Portella della Ginestra, where peasants were killed and injured during May Day celebrations.³ An equally determining factor was however the 'discovery' that the country's many contradictions and conflicts between North and South were 'problems of *social structure*, rather than of *cultural, spiritual and moral orientation*', a discovery Visconti later related to the formative experiences of the war and the Resistance (1976b: 48).

There was nothing entirely new about the project that in late 1947 brought Visconti to the Sicilian provinces. This neglected area of the country had attracted him ever since the period of anti-fascism when Alicata and De Santis championed a new cinema rooted in Verga. Their view of the 'Homeric and legendary Sicily', as the most 'solid and human, most miraculously virgin and true environment' (Alicata and De Santis 1941b), resonated in Visconti's article 'Tradition and invention' ([1941] 1986b) where he, following a visit to Verga's island, first discussed the cinematic potential of *I Malavoglia* and of the 'island of Ulysses'.⁴ For the aspiring director, the 'veristic' novel's 'violent' tone of 'epos' and the island of Greek temples and volcanic eruptions, still invested with the magic aura of Homer's hero who some 3,000 years earlier had crossed the strait of Messina, represented an opposition not only to the aristocratic urban culture he had grown up with in Milan, but also to fascist myths of progress, Roman antiquity and national superiority (Visconti 1986b: 116). Socio-geographic and literary escapism as a protest and motor of conscience was precisely what Vittorini had proposed and like *Conversazione in Sicilia*, Visconti's journey to Italy's most non-imperialist margins suggested the need for 'new duties' that in *Obsession* took the form of artistic and political opposition and that, by the time of *The Earth Trembles*, had developed into a didactic formulation of class consciousness absent among Verga's fishermen.⁵ Living in the isolated village of Aci Trezza, which had been largely unaffected by the recent processes of national unification, and oblivious to the violent revolts that subsequently activated the Sicilian lower classes, his protagonists are not ill-willed as the name '*Malavoglia*' implies, but ill-fated and powerless against corrupt village authorities as well as natural forces.⁶ Seeking economic independence, they establish a family business that seems promising until their

boat, bought on credit by mortgaging their house, is destroyed during a storm, and they fall into individual paths of destitution and social deviance. Verga's social accusations are formulated through the most merciless irony, but his message is ultimately that of faithfulness to one's roots, and herein resides the major difference between Zola's realism, rooted in a Darwinian faith in social progress, and *verismo* as a current of deterministic perspectives related to the South's illiterate and politically unconscious proletarians. Entangled by views of their economic condition as ruled by providence, the *Malavoglia* can only sense a 'vague craving for the unknown, the realisation that one is not doing well, or that one could do better' (Verga 1995: 107). When Visconti revisited their story six years later, viewing it in the light of 'the differences, the contradictions, the conflicts between North and South' that he had become critically aware of through the war and the Resistance, he could no longer maintain the original idea of a literal adaptation (1976b: 48). Transferring the events to the present day, *The Earth Trembles* provides the protagonists with a tentative awareness of the socio-economic basis for generations of misery, but their world is as timeless as Verga described it and anchored to the cycle of defeat and dwelling where political action seems doomed to fail.

It is 'Ntoni, the eldest of the Valastro sons, who starts to confront conditions his grandfather has never questioned. Drawing on a sense of justice acquired during military service on the continent, he objects to the fact that for all the fish they just brought in that morning, the wholesalers have only paid them enough to get some rest and food before they set out again. This cycle of exploitation has already been foreshadowed in the opening sequence where Aci Trezza appears shortly before dawn, in all its dark immobility, and a tracking shot follows some wholesalers down to the bay where boats are coming in. The scene and its space are infused by an '*ambient* sound' of church bells and whistling that is reinforced by verbal exchanges and radiant echoes as the wholesalers call out to the fishermen for news about the catch (Chion 1994: 71–5). Along with the mobile and increasingly inclusive panoramic shots leading from streets and houses to the bay so as to embrace the waterfront, the boats, and finally, the horizon, this chorus of dialectal voices establishes a holistic view of the community, before the film cuts to the Valastros' home where Mara and Lucia prepare for the men's arrival. Back at the port, 'Ntoni, his brother, Cola, and their fellow fishermen come ashore and argue with the wholesalers, while complaining among themselves about being reduced to 'work donkeys', thus introducing tensions of class conflict that are visualised when they go to sell their fish: a dynamic sequence shot at medium distance traces the fervent discussion over prices as unchangeable as the village's morning routines, as unbendable as their sisters' rules of honour and their grandfather's proverbs. What 'Ntoni has understood is that social structures are not fixed, but as long as there is no solidarity among the exploited, they go

uncontested. Following another failed attempt at fair trade, he throws what he condemns as 'the scales of Judas' into the water, protesting against the unbalanced economic relations they serve and claiming the equality associated with true scales of justice (Marcus 1992: 37–8). The immediate effects of his rebellion transpire through editing: a cut from 'Ntoni lifting the scales shows his colleagues already attacking the wholesalers. Another cut captures 'Ntoni as he throws the scales into the sea, a gesture we may have considered 'rhetorical' (Marcus 1992: 37–8) were it not for the concrete, albeit inevitably short-lived, experience of opposition and relief it would stir in someone burdened by generations of unchallenged oppression.

The transitory effect of the event, interrupting, but not altering the circular life cycle of the village, is mirrored by the narrow frames and the rapid editing which breaks violently with the film's solemn pace, suggesting that the instinctive uprising is based too much on personal indignation and the desire for revenge – on 'primordial impulses', as Deleuze calls them, reached at the exclusion precisely of temporal experiences associated with reflection and consciousness – to have any lasting revolutionary effect.⁷ Once the fishermen are released from jail because the wholesalers who grumble about rising communism lose money on imprisoned rebels, no-one is willing to risk what little they have to support 'Ntoni's idea of forming a cooperative.⁸ In the end, when the family boat is ruined, when their house is foreclosed, and Cola and Lucia have both gone astray, falling into respectively a life of black-marketeering and prostitution, 'Ntoni still envisions a day when those who scorn him for his rebellion against perceived incontestable laws see that what he did, he did for everyone. Then, his defeat will also have served them all.

Transforming the novel's logic of 'providence' into a call for proletarian solidarity, *The Earth Trembles* modifies Verga's regional sensitivity according to Marx's notion of universal class, presenting an unusual combination of concepts that is announced following the credits. Whereas the events and their locations are carefully located to 'the village of Acitrezza', the story they build up to is 'the same that has been renovating itself in the world [. . .] where people exploit other people'. The ideals of social injustice connecting the specific and the universal are also methodologically implemented:

All the actors of the film have been selected from among the inhabitants of this island: fishermen, girls, labourers, bricklayers, wholesalers of fish. They know no other language than Sicilian to express their rebellion, pains, or hopes. The Italian language is not the language of the poor.

The programmatic presentation of locations (decentralised and poor), subject matter (exploitation), characters (local and humble) and the mode of enunciation (dialect) illuminates the contemporary reception of *The Earth Trembles*

as the moment in which 'neorealism becomes a style' (Aristarco 1960: 377). For Visconti, to give the ethical practice an aesthetic program articulated a return – after 'comfortable compromises' had directed neorealism away from its moral objectives – 'to the origins, to the pure truth [to] demonstrate that this is the right way' (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 137–8). Partly, it was a question of denouncing socio-geographic differences by privileging the speech, spaces and struggles of a people unrepresented in public life, not to mention at the movies, but even more pressing was the need to redefine the *raison d'être* of neorealism. This entailed to go, not 'decidedly towards the people', as commanded by the Mussolini quotation on the wholesalers' walls, but, as Pavese had suggested in opposition to fascist populism, tentatively 'towards man'.

With such a prospectus, the 'anthropomorphic cinema' Visconti had sensed in Renoir and developed in *Obsession*, took on more defined forms. Approaching the actor as 'first and foremost a human being [. . .] human material' in the act of creation, he worked without a pre-established script, allowing the performers to form their characters and formulate the most authentic ways of expressing a given narrative situation or certain sentiments.⁹ Once the dialogues were transcribed, they were endlessly rehearsed to ensure clarity since *The Earth Trembles* unlike most neorealist films was shot with direct sound, but most importantly to satisfy Visconti's demands for naturalness and precise performances.¹⁰ The 'facts' are therefore far from improvised or 'narrating themselves' as was Verga's ideal, but no other film encapsulates the oral quality of neorealism or its exclusion of standard Italian with such rigour and with such sacrifices. Since the archaic dialect was unintelligible even to most Sicilians, a commentary was added for the premiere at the 1948 Venice Film Festival and when the film finally received public release after a two-year-long battle against the alarmed authorities, it was dubbed in Italian, cut an hour in length, and soon proved to be neorealism's most unpopular film (Rondolino 1981: 199). Current commercial versions combine the linguistic features of the original print with the length of the second version.

An undesired compromise, the voiceover does not merely interfere with the musicality of the dialect, although this was Visconti's greatest regret.¹¹ Paraphrasing the dialogues, it also assimilates the characters' thoughts and expressions the way Verga's free-indirect discourse does, and as it comments on the events, it also assumes an explicit ideological position to them. The voiceover tends therefore to estrange viewers from the diegetic world, in contrast to the film's photography which Bazin saw as achieving both a 'documentary'- and an 'aesthetic realism'; an immediacy to the world portrayed as well as a depth-of-field open to simultaneous actions and autonomous interpretation.¹² If, on the other hand, the audience experiences the sense of incomprehension and estrangement from the world represented as guilt and as an acceptance of the status quo, this anti-realistic effect may forge critical

moments of self-awareness Visconti himself would have known in approaching the long-neglected South as a privileged Northerner (Micciché 1998: 184). His encounter with the Southern 'other' recalls Levi's account of Basilicata in *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*. Starting with a detached analysis of socio-economic organisation, Levi conveys the estrangement he first felt in the remote, under-developed village, but he tends increasingly to illuminate the disenfranchised characters' personal qualities and their clever forms of resistance to dehumanising social structures and abusive, degraded authorities.¹³ Similar techniques to reclaim the characters' human dignity, other than their potential for collective action, characterise *The Earth Trembles* as well. The views, for instance, of 'Ntoni and Nedda launching themselves into sunny fields in transient playfulness; of Mara's black-dressed figure running for help through gusts of the dusty sirocco; and, in the last shot, of 'Ntoni returning to the sea, his body erect and rising above disgrace, are emblematic of Visconti's efforts to redress social justice by ascribing his humble subjects a singular exquisiteness and a screen presence of autonomy both from repressive power relations and from his act of creation.

This intention to liberate the wretched fishermen appears in particular from the distinct pace that, while it reproduces the 'magic [. . .] *intimate and musical rhythm*' Visconti originally had discerned in Verga's novel, also enables us to contemplate on and assimilate the ideological implications of their stories and their representations (1986b: 116). The persistent solemnity that, as Micciché has demonstrated, is constructed around moving frames, fades and dissolves between sequences, rather than by what has often been dismissed as slowness and immobility (1998: 91–4), fared less well with leftist commentators such as Renzo Renzi who in Visconti's 'Marxist mystery' saw a rule of 'mythologism' and 'long, static, contemplation' at the expense of historically concrete portraits of political parties and labour unions (1949: 66–7). In response to these objections, Visconti insisted on the aesthetic 'nudity' as well as on the socio-political accuracy of his portrayal: in the tumultuous election year of 1948 which saw the effects both of anti-communist propaganda and a lack of unity among the political Left, there were 'no parties' in Acì Trezza 'let alone labour unions' (quoted in Gandin 1951). Others insisted on the contrary that the film, spanning 'the times in its human and formal conception' while also setting a 'date' and indicating a 'way', demonstrated a 'revolutionary originality' that would take decades to be appreciated (Aristarco 1949: 3; 1960: 377). The inherent modernity of Visconti's *optique* became a major point of analysis for Deleuze, who in its temporalised images discerned a 'vision of man and nature' formally constructed around 'action that floats in the situation' (1989: 4). A literal example would be the fishermen at sea, their collective work following the languidness of the water, but moments of dwelling also occur at home, where 'Ntoni and Cola argue over whether the correct thing is to leave



Figure 6.1 The Valastro women in Visconti's *The Earth Trembles*. Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

or to stay, ending inconclusively with neither a disagreement nor a reconciliation, whereas Lucia is slowly entangled in Don Salvatore's game of seduction and abandonment. Reproached for her morals, she wanders out of the house and out of the story, while Mara, rather than acting to stop her sister, hunches over the kitchen table and is resigned to the social ruin her sister's disgrace has caused them both, accentuating the tendency of these liminal moments between motion and stasis to evolve into recognition. In that, they anticipate the 'optical situations' of the maid in *Umberto D*, whose apathetic presence in the kitchen recalls Mara's, as well as the wayward countess in *Senso*, as we shall see.

Made in the interlude between *Germania anno zero* and *Bicycle Thieves*, *The Earth Trembles* shares the tendency of these films to highlight the perceptions of their underprivileged characters, reaching the most eloquent results in the sequence at the *sciara* where Mara, her mother and sisters go during the storm. A long shot in deep focus fades in from behind as they are looking towards the horizon; moving to the left, it leaves them out of frame, illustrating their immobility in the dusk-grey setting of foaming waves. In the next shots their dark, motionless silhouettes are captured first together then individually by several low-angle frontal shots that accentuate their postures. In Verga's view '... those poor ones [...] forgotten on the *sciara*, at that time, resembled

the souls of purgatory', being caught, that is, in perpetual albeit not eternal suffering (1995: 152). Visconti's fisherwomen stand, on the contrary, as firm and resistant as the rocks beneath them and their masklike faces open to waiting and lingering vision do not speak of their suffering, whether it is temporary or eternal (1986b: 116).

The experience of dwelling captured in these scenes and, later, in 'Ntoni's aimless wandering along the beach is charged with myth and ideology, reflecting archaic laws of resignation to one's fate and economic laws of deprived agency. Like De Sica's characters, however, 'Ntoni and the women are also archetypes of Deleuzian 'seers' and the inconsequential restlessness and self-destructive dissatisfaction that 'Ntoni, in particular, has inherited from Gino in *Obsession* – equally at odds with his surroundings and incapable of defending his claim to freedom – points to the distinguishing factor of the new realism. In contrast to the logical passages between situations, actions and reactions of past realist traditions, post-war realism would tend to let cinematic conventions, literary sources or ideological agendas give way to the uncertainties, the lost connections and the utter meaninglessness that in the wake of so much material and human destruction severely questioned any form, political or other, of constructive action.

A DISCOURSE ON THE CINEMA: *BELLISSIMA*

Moving from country to city, from an ahistorical, isolated world to the historically specific milieu of Cinecittà – the studios outside Rome which Mussolini inaugurated in 1937 and which for their economic competitiveness became a second Hollywood in the 1950s – it was both a far more familiar and artistically conventional ground Visconti ventured onto three years later. A melodrama of neorealist tendencies starring Anna Magnani alongside the less talented but much sought-after Walter Chiari, *Bellissima* derived from Zavattini's story treatment but it deviates as much from his poetics as it does from *The Earth Trembles*. That the two most radical exponents of neorealism would come together in the film said to have affirmed 'the dawn of a cinematic utopia', reflects financial conditions and a political climate that had forced both to put more challenging projects aside, often after months of preparations.¹⁴ While the story about a lower-class woman who strives to make her five-year-old daughter a movie star hardly impressed Visconti, as Magnani was already engaged for it he seized the occasion to work with the actress he had originally wanted for *Obsession* and whose 'popular instinct' and ability for improvisation facilitated articulations of 'certain more inner and significant things'. Anthropomorphically, the focus fell on the character and only in the second instance on the environment (quoted in Gandin 1951) but Magnani has also been considered a vehicle to declare the end of cinema as an 'interpreter

of national-popular conscience' (Micciché 1998: 198), or, perhaps a bit too optimistically, to redirect the 'neorealist social commitment' by purging 'the industry of its regressive tendency' and 'exorcise the demons of melodrama' (Marcus 2002: 39–40; 58). A largely introspective treatment of an uncontrolled and predictably disillusioning encounter with a world of corruption, cultural degradation and social disintegration, *Bellissima* leaves few hopes of engagement, whether from filmmakers or their spectators. What it does offer is a 'discourse on the cinema' that as it intertwines levels of intertextual narrative strategies also abandons all assumptions to realist reproduction, thus enhancing and projecting the intrinsically innovative nature of neorealism towards future cinematic realms (Fanara 2000: 71).

The deconstructive intentions and socio-cultural observations that inform the film are anticipated in the opening sequence with a radio performance of Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* (1832). One of the last comic operas to reach canonical status before the *bel canto* tradition assumed the tragic qualities of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* (1830) and *The Duke of Alba* (1839), both of which Visconti later directed, it offered some well-known themes around which to construct a critique both of the cinema and its audience. Starting with Act II, Scene 4 where the choir relates how the poor Nemorino, disdained by the rich and beautiful Adina, has inherited his uncle's fortune, the film cuts to a radio presenter who announces the audition to find a 'gracious, Italian girl', compelling parents to believe that 'it could be your and her fortune'. Another cut leads back to the choir whose whispering warning about 'causing disorder' carries over as an extradiegetic counterpoint to the successive sequence in Cinecittà where a functionary calls vainly for 'order' and 'calmness' among the frenzy of hopeful girls and parents. Frantically yelling and running in search of her daughter, Maddalena Cecconi immediately distinguishes herself from the crowd, although her perception of the cinema as an unproblematic route to affluence also underscores her belonging to it. When she subsequently elbows her way through more reserved contenders to bring Maria in front of the jury, the tension between the individual and the collective is restated as a technique to privilege both the character's self-interest and the *diva's* performance. In contrast to *Open City*, *Miracle in Milan* and partly also *The Earth Trembles* where choral modes of narration reflect shared concerns and objectives, the choruses composed of hysterical mothers at Cinecittà and of grotesque neighbour-women intruding into Maddalena's domestic life have a theatrical function of contextualising and commenting on her drama, conveying authorial irony as well as disillusion with a society that has betrayed the collective spirit of the Resistance in favour of individualism and superficial values.

The director leading the search for 'Rome's most beautiful girl' is Alessandro Blasetti, who after having moved from rhetorical pictures at the service

of fascism to disillusioned concreteness in *Quattro passi fra le nuvole* had followed his own eclectic path at the margins of neorealism. While he moves through the crowd of contenders and picks one of them up to pose for the press, the theme of Donizetti's charlatan is playing, suggesting a parallel between the director of the planned film symptomatically entitled 'Today, Tomorrow, Never', and the street vendor who fools people into believing that his Bordeaux wine is a magical, multi-purpose elixir. The photographer entrusted with Maria's appearance and Anovazzi, who charges Maddalena the total of all her savings for unfulfilled favours, are subsequently identified as dealers in illusions, by means of this motif. Visconti's intention with the ironic commentary was to target directors like himself who gave false hopes to actors taken 'from the street' such as the extraordinary Tina Apicella and Gastone Renzelli who played Maria and her father respectively (Visconti 1976a: 72). This self-reflexive act of critique finds support in the editing girl Maddalena recognises as the protagonist in the neorealist comedy *Sotto il sole di Roma* (Castellani 1948, discussed in Chapter 7). While she is named after her screen character, Iris, she relates the story of her real-life self (Liliana Mancini) who, having appeared in two films simply because she was the right type, finally got nothing more glamorous than work in the editing room at Cinecittà where Visconti 'rediscovered' her (Faldini and Fofi 1979: 248). Her demystifying account of the illusions of the cinema worries Maddalena, who has emptied her savings account, extended her workload as a private nurse and exposed Maria to pointless acting and ballet lessons, without considering that rather than brightening her daughter's future, this might only perpetuate the cycle of struggle and defeat.

Iris distinguishes herself from the ensemble of charlatans by humbleness and sincerity that she shares only with Maria. A reflective child, Maria prefers solitary play to the chaos at Cinecittà, spoiling her outfit before presenting herself to Blasetti, and after unbearable pressure and neglect she ruins her screen test with an unrestrained cry of exhaustion. Her association with the motif of Nemorino's contemplative aria ('*Quant'è bella, quant'è cara*' ('How beautiful, how dear she is')) points to the juxtaposition of beauty as an entirely vulgar quality Maddalena seeks to fabricate, through expensive clothes and a hairdresser who accidentally destroys Maria's long curls, with the unaffected exquisiteness the girl displays at their humble home in Prenestino. This neighbourhood, where Rossellini's Pina also lived and where partisans have left room for gossiping women, stands in opposition to the cinema's institutions and illusions and is in particular associated with Maddalena's down-to-earth husband Spartaco. His major concern is the house they are buying by instalments – an unlikely privilege for a worker in the early 1950s that nevertheless illuminates Maddalena's distance from her usual environment and from what, it is assumed, are her everyday values (Micciché 1998: 203). Whatever claims

he may make to patriarchal power are severely challenged by her determination to make Maria the actress she never became in order to provide her with the economic independence she never had. Whereas the material losses become Maddalena's major point of furious defence against Spartaco, who considers it all madness, regrets over lost self-realisation are voiced in a dialogue with the mirror that captures the essence of her social identity. Whether it is in familiar environments, where she acts like a charlatan, selling injections to perfectly healthy people and engaging intrusive women neighbours in the most critical scenes of her domestic life, or at Cinecittà, where her affected appearance seeks to overshadow the defects of size and of speech that Blasetti observes in Maria, she demonstrates an adaptability that enables her to move within and go back and forth between two sides of the city's life without ever finding the support of a social network in either of them.

The striving mother's versatile presentation of herself identifies suggestive interconnections between the character, the *diva*, and Magnani's recent performances. Appealing to images spectators would have not only of Pina, whose motherly care Maddalena has assimilated at the cost of her collective consciousness, but also of her many comic characters and of the rebellious lower-class mother she had personified in *L'onorevole Angelina* (Zampa 1947, discussed in Chapter 7), among other performances, *Bellissima* engages with the manifold manifestation of stardom in ways that draw attention away from Maddalena's world towards the medium that constantly projects the actress as well as the fabrications of reality to which she has contributed. These concerns are enunciated during a courtyard screening of *Red River* (Hawks 1948), suggesting how far the Prenestino inhabitants are from past understandings of collective life. The horse-riding Montgomery Clift enchants Maddalena and the sunny, endless spaces of his Wild West superimposed onto their shabby buildings reinforce her dissatisfaction: 'Look at this, and look at how we live,' she dreams aloud, refusing Spartaco's understanding of it as 'fairy tales' she should let go of. It is, however, during the final stages of the contest when Maddalena compels Iris to show her Maria's unfortunate screen test, that the critique of the cinema's many illusions are most eloquently addressed. Only now does she consider the possibility that the cinema, far from being a stairway to fortune, constitutes the reality of the exploitation, fabrication and endless disappointments to which Iris testifies. What fundamentally changes Maddalena's perspective is, however, not the humiliating roar of laughter Maria provokes – even after she has transgressed into Blasetti's comfortable realm, accusing his collaborators of lacking respect, she implores him not to leave her without hope – but the remorseful awareness of having sacrificed Maria's needs for her own vain ambitions.

Concluding the film's metacinematic discourse, Blasetti states sardonically that 'this is what the cinema does to people', before re-viewing the painful

screen test and selecting the least likely girl for his film. In complete contrast to Zavattini's original story which saw Maria rejected, it is Maddalena who refuses to sign the lucrative contract, leading the focus away from typically neorealist concerns with socio-economic disjunctions towards questions of human dignity and a denial of social mobility that can hardly be interpreted as a 'triumphant personal agency' (Marcus 2002: 42). Rather, as she follows Spartaco's ideals and abandons visions of emancipation for domestic concerns, she restores 'the status quo of the patriarchal Italian family' (Micciché 1998: 202–3). The conciliatory closure does not, however, apply to the fundamental concern that cinema is heavily industrialised around the spectators' conformist desire for escapism, leaving us with a pessimistic vision with regard to the viability of the type of film Zavattini was delineating just at this time. Where *Bellissima* demonstrates a prospectus of innovation and a critical use of the medium is in deconstructing the assumed correspondence between reality and its cinematic reproduction that to some extent was always integral to neorealist film. In this, it announces the experimental approach to filmmaking destined to prove its potential and success in the 1960s through milestones such as Fellini's *8½* (1963), where the story of a film in the making evolves along explorations of artistic crisis, fantasy and dream states.

A RETURN TO ROOTS: *SENZO*

Bellissima was commercially more successful than *The Earth Trembles* thanks, in great part, to the actors, but it left contemporary critics rather indifferent and was soon overshadowed by the artistically and ideologically far more ambitious *Senzo*.¹⁵ Based on a diaristic short story by the lesser known, post-unification writer Camillo Boito (1836–1914), it follows a Venetian countess's love affair with an enemy officer during the Italian-Austrian war in 1866. The return to a national past revisited in terms of disloyalty and degradation succeeded both in engaging audiences and in replicating the polemical receptions of *Obsession* and *The Earth Trembles*. Some critics saw the historicist perspective infused by aristocratic indulgence as a 'betrayal', since it foregrounded the very literary and theatrical 'spectacles' against which neorealism had emerged as 'films' thematically and inspirationally embedded in current realities (Chiarini 1975: 884–6). Others maintained, on the contrary, that it manifested a valuable passage, *in nuce* already in *The Earth Trembles*, 'from neorealism to realism', from 'chronicle' to 'history', where the *a posteriori* perspective moved beyond objective 'recordings' of events in favour of a critical search for 'the causes' of the reality portrayed. The director's greatest merit was identified in the ability to 'narrate' and 'participate' in rather than merely to 'observe' and 'describe' the events, an art indebted to nineteenth-century novelists such as Balzac and championed by the Marxist philosopher and critic György

Lukács whose writings on realism became hugely influential in post-war Italy (Aristarco 1975a: 892–9). Contrary to Zavattini who in response to *Senso* insisted on the continuous artistic potential and social mission of a ‘cinema of conscience’ (1975: 889), Visconti seems in his frequent reliance on literary sources to have considered pre-established stories the very key to participant narration and civic engagement.

What more specifically would have attracted the cosmopolitan and Mittel-European director to Boito’s rather uninteresting piece was the return ‘home’ it enabled after the socio-geographical travels of his previous films: not only to the North, represented by a city whose sophisticated, multi-ethnic spirit and perennial state of decline he would revisit in *Morte a Venezia* (1972), but also to an equally decadent aristocracy he depicts with mixed tones of criticism and fascination (Aristarco 1975a: 892–9). The story, furthermore, of a noble Venetian who just when her city starts to break free from Austrian oppressors initiates a fatal relationship with an enemy official, thus betraying her class and compatriots along with her husband, presented a potential for a melodramatic elaboration both on the intertextual discourse of *Bellissima* and the conflict, so central to nineteenth-century culture revisited in *Senso*, between individual inclinations and social equilibrium. This tension connects Countess Livia to such different characters as Gino, ’Ntoni and Maddalena, but both she and the other protagonists of *Senso* are to a greater extent allowed to develop dialectically within their milieu and remain unconstrained by the director’s moral and ideological ideals (Aristarco 1975a: 896–7). Although Visconti’s heavily scripted dialogues and meticulous coordination limited the contribution of Alida Valli and, in particular, of Farley Granger, who appears inert in his role as a fatal seducer, their characters present both human life and psychological motivation that make them emblematic products of the historical era represented. As was the case with *Obsession*, the two wayward individuals who abandon themselves so destructively to the senses are the means by which he truly narrates a given time and a milieu in order ultimately to convey a set of ideological implications. In this way, *Senso* appears as an extension of Visconti’s anthropomorphic *optique* and of his understanding of neorealism as the battle for a national cinema and for freedom.

OPERATIC INSPIRATION AND HISTORICAL REVISIONING

The lavish costume drama opens during a performance of Verdi’s *Il trovatore* at La Fenice while a caption places us in Venice in 1866 during the last months of the Austrian occupation. Historical and cultural contexts are thus defined by a reference to the pivotal role opera played during the Risorgimento, when the originally elitist and exclusively performed spectacle was relocated to public venues and invested with ideals of independence and nationhood.

This transformation was intrinsically connected to Verdi whose melodic tunes and human, freedom-seeking and irremediably fated characters managed to stir emotions and forge national sentiments across socio-geographical barriers. Still one of his most popular tragedies today, *Il trovatore* juxtaposes the sincere passions of the troubadour Manrico with the violent ones of his rival, Count di Luna, who leads Manrico's gypsy mother to the stake and his fiancée to a sacrificial suicide before killing the troubadour without realising that he is his long-lost brother. We see Manrico deliver his passionate aria '*Di quella pria*', declaring the urgency to save his mother, before Venetian spectators start shouting '*Viva l'Italia*' while throwing tricoloured flyers on their foreign oppressors. Countess Livia embraces the call for her city's salvation, showing no concern either for her old husband or for his Austrian alliances: the one she fears for is Marquis Roberto Ussoni, her cousin who has just challenged the offensive adversary, Franz Mahler, to a duel. Disregarding entirely that he might denounce the Italian freedom-fighter to avoid danger, she calls on Franz to make him refuse the challenge, but rather than protecting Roberto she falls herself for the occupying officer's weapons of seduction.

The move away from neorealism's often dedramatised and apparently uncoordinated pro-filmic material is stated with spectacular effect as the drama unfolding on stage resonates and is reinforced by the one orchestrated among the audience. Juxtapositions of close-ups, long shots, and high or low angles and the colourful visualisation of extravagant costumes, glamorous décor and beautiful actors accentuate the farewell both to ordinary life and settings and to documentary-like photography, whereas Livia's voiceover narration marks the passage from occurring to occurred events; from a collective to a subjective perspective. The solipsistic recollection of 'a shameful love' allows, however, insight into her loveless marriage and Roberto's comrades, whose money is left in her custody, as well as to life around the villa in Aldeno, which offers protection from tensions in the city but not from Franz. The betrayal she commits when, yielding to his false affection and subtle forms of emotional blackmail, she hands over the patriots' money for him to bribe the army doctors and, as she will realise, finance his vices, gives her confession an agonising sense of remorse unknown to Boito's careless and largely unchanged countess. In exposing the naïve illusions that hindered her from analysing the events as they unfolded, what Livia seeks from her interlocutor is not empathy but a vivid participation in her categorical act of revenge. The deserter's execution in a dark and desolate area of Verona on the night of Austria's victory forms a dramatic and scenic contrast to their encounter in the colourful opera house, and the two poles frame the four-act narrative (La Fenice-Venice-Aldeno/Custozia-Verona) within the 'closed, compact structure' of Verdi's opera (Rondolino 1981: 309–10). Commenting on the film's theatrical inspiration, Visconti observed how the opera performance 'exceeds the stage and extends into life'



Figure 6.2 Livia and Franz in Visconti's *Senso*. Courtesy of the British Film Institute.

(1976a: 70), an idea conveyed at La Fenice, when Livia warns Franz about her distaste for opera taking 'place out of stage'. It is, however, not the matter of honour she thinks will create undesired continuities between *Il Trovatore* and her life, but a web of passion, deception, suspicion and revenge so easily carried over into the labyrinthine cityscape.

Besides the suggestive stage offered by ensnaring alleys and gloomy canals, what in particular makes the nocturnal Venice sequence so central to the film's operatic discourse are the movements, looks and gestures with which the adulterous affair takes life. Franz initially follows Livia like a despised second shadow, but his company is increasingly appreciated as he shields her from the sight of a dead Austrian soldier and their exchanges develop into 'melodramatic declarations' (Visconti, quoted in Rondolino 1981: 311). Picking up a piece of broken mirror, Franz leans against a well and contemplates his image to be certain 'that I am . . . I!' 'Only then are you certain of it?' Livia enquires; 'No, also when I see a woman looking at me the way you do now,' he replies, before resorting to far more obscure terms: 'It is Judgment Day. The dead arise to eternal joy or to eternal suffering. Only we remain embraced and nothing matters to us, neither Paradise nor Hell.'¹⁶ Citing, with variations and without the appropriate context, the last stanza of 'Lyrisches Intermezzo 32',

Franz omits that Heinrich Heine's poetic voice envisions this careless embrace as taking place in the otherworld, reappropriating the overtly morose lines to involve Livia in his narcissistic indifference to political questions and historical battles. But besides being a respectable woman who in the light of day is ashamed over the night spent with an Austrian, Livia is also a 'true Italian' convinced 'that the freedom of a people must be defended at the cost of one's own freedom and . . . of life'. She therefore rebukes the significance of Heine's words but not the spell of their tone and delivery. That the countess soon forsakes patriotic objectives and sentiments manifests, as such, no betrayal of principles but a hopeless romanticism and moral inconsistency Visconti ascribed to the aristocracy for whom Italy's unification was nothing but a long degradation and a gradual cession of power and privileges to an emergent bourgeoisie (quoted in Rondolino 1981: 298–9).

Musically, these structural changes associated with the fall of the Austrian Empire are articulated through the opposition between Verdi and Anton Bruckner, whose late-romantic Symphony No. 7 accompanies the treacherous lovers' encounters. Their squalid love affair comes, in this way, to encapsulate the historical processes that leave them in a limbo of lost identity and lack of meaning, both equally deprived of the integrity, convictions and sincere passions by which Verdi's heroes seek to hinder a tragic outcome. Livia is reduced to a troubled observer of her own actions, disproving of the 'madness' that induces her to give Franz the patriots' money and running in desperate search for him when she has just ordered his execution, whereas Franz, as the reference to Heine suggests, is driven by an aestheticist inclination to 'cling onto life', to its beauty and pleasures, so that, rather than dying heroically in a war he knows ultimately will be lost, he arrives at a point where moral and physical degradation collide (Rondolino 1981: 298–9). 'What does it matter,' Franz exclaims once the beast within him is exposed, 'that my compatriots today have been victorious in a place called Custoza, when Austria in some years will not be there any more and the world we belong to will disappear?' Unchaining Italy's offensive against Austria in the Third War of Independence, the battle of Custoza (1866) ended with disastrous losses and the numerically superior but disorganised and incompetently lead Italian army retreated within a day. The sense of defeat was reinforced by the awareness that Prime Minister General La Marmora at first had refused Austria's offer to cede Venice peacefully and, subsequently, by the fact that the city was never reclaimed through heroic deeds but surrendered to France and returned to Italy as a gift (Mack Smith 1997: 72–7). These historical conditions are embedded in the fear Livia's collaborating husband shows for the imminent future in which Austria, regardless of the war, will return his native city and the Venetians will avenge his betrayal.

The barely honourable war is aptly focalised through Roberto who, as an exponent of the Venetian 'garibaldini' – the army of volunteers with which

Giuseppe Garibaldi liberated the South, as represented in Blasetti's *1860* – escapes from exile to join up as a revolutionary irregular. His hazardous journey is given far more screen time than the battle itself, providing a pretext to represent the life of peasants whose routines continue apparently unaffected and in opposition to a flawed leadership. Roberto arrives to witness the call to arms and the unfolding of a brand new flag – a detail that, like the uniforms and the haystacks in the battlefield as well as the transport carriages, the slaughtered animals, and the hat falling off someone's head, is not accentuated but must be discerned within the embrative deep-focus photography (Bazin 1997: 152). Roberto is subsequently seen wandering against the stream of retreating soldiers, determined to resist without, however, being able to fight incisively in a war that is already lost. His gradual loss of forces and of direction in a deserted battlefield is juxtaposed with a cut to Livia, who goes astray in a very different fashion, abandoning definitively domestic and collective concerns for the illusion of a life with her romantic hero. Denying both the rhetorical representation Blasetti had constructed to enhance Italy's fascist rebirth and the contemporary campaign for positive images, *Senso* alarmed political and military authorities long before its premiere at the 1954 Venice Film Festival, where jury members were bribed and intimidated to prevent it receiving an award.¹⁷ Visconti's request for some thousand soldiers was rejected as too many 'for a battle lost by Italy', the film's proposed title 'Custoza' was deemed outrageous, and extensive battle scenes were eliminated along with the original ending where Livia was seen running among prostitutes and a drunken soldier crying 'Long Live Austria' (quoted in Argentieri 1975: 114). Ultimately, the censorial measures taken to limit the intended emphasis on the war in favour of the deplorable romance illuminate the nature of Andreotti's project for morally sound film production as concerned less with taste and decency than with political stability and foreign alliances.

A greater loss for Visconti was a confrontation between Roberto and the officer of the state who in the final cut gives him directions to the front. The officer's benevolence and concern for Roberto's safety actually conveys a sense of remorse, since in the censored scene, published on *Cinema nuovo* in 1955, he prohibits the volunteers from entering the battlefield on the grounds that 'the regular army is sufficient for the *patria*' (quoted in Lisi 1975: 864). Roberto alleges that this reflects the army's and La Marmora's own hatred for the revolutionary forces, alluding to the fact that after Garibaldi had handed over the South to the Piedmontese King Vittorio Emanuele III under whom the new nation was forged, moderate forces sought to suppress the 'garibaldini', who as supporters of the radical Giuseppe Mazzini were considered a threat to the establishment. The Venetian volunteers were consequently either excluded from the battle for Venice or displaced to subordinate fronts where they fought convincingly until they were ordered to retreat (Mack Smith 1997:

75–6). Never a patron of the country's militant cineastes, the Department of Defence objected – these were, after all, the times in which the mere proposal of an honest film on the fascist war was sufficient to put Aristarco and Renzi behind bars for defamation of the armed forces. Nonetheless, the implication of the censored dialogue – that the volunteers' participation might have saved national honour – is still conveyed through popular enthusiasm for Garibaldi and through Roberto's refusal to retreat. The allegation of an ideologically motivated conspiracy can, on the other hand, only be inferred if we know that what Roberto talks rhetorically about as 'our revolution' was resolutely suppressed by the course of History.

Inherent in Visconti's critical vision, camouflaged by studies in spectacle but traceable still in the film's subtext, there is a conviction that far from having constituted an inclusive moment of 'civil awakening' the way official culture liked to believe, Italy's unification had involved a mere transfer of power, leaving unjust social structures intact. The first, positive interpretation belonged to the liberal philosopher Benedetto Croce against whom Gramsci formulated the second, Marxist version of events (Dalle Vacche 1992: 122–32). Despite the historically unique occasion it presented, the Risorgimento had proved to be a 'revolution without a revolution,' Gramsci wrote, since the followers of Garibaldi and Mazzini had remained divided and failed to operate as a unitary formation among peasants and the urban masses. Rather than creating a popular front of opposition, this class of progressive intellectuals had gradually been absorbed by the political dominion and intellectual hegemony of moderate leaders close to the King (Gramsci 1997: 406–7). In *Senso*, the failed revolution is personified by Roberto, whom Visconti added to Boito's apolitical gallery and provided with selfless but disorganic and inefficient dedication to the underground movement and to the war. Insisting on avenging Franz's offence, Roberto is removed from the scene of the conflict and when he finally returns to Venice he remains detached from the masses and ends up as a passive witness to his compatriots' defeat. This incapacity to make 'our revolution' a popular and feasible event is both mirrored and measured in Livia's deviation from the cause which starts when Roberto is exiled and which conceivably could have been avoided had he engaged her more critically in the historical struggle.

A fusion of the classical disorganic intellectual and a modern 'seer' who reflects on individual and collective shortcomings the way Livia registers and regrets her disloyalty, Roberto was modelled on figures of the Risorgimento but, more crucially perhaps, on Visconti's own experiences as a radical aristocrat who had operated at the margins of the Resistance while never engaging with its grassroots organisation, and who had seen hopes of reform fade in the years of the Reconstruction when the pre-fascist era was reinstated and the Communists were excluded from the government. As an act of revisitation,

Senso looked therefore just as much towards the country's recent past as it did to the nineteenth-century with the implication that the Resistance had been a mere recourse of history – another failed revolution. This view would not merely have troubled authorities concerned with safeguarding political and social equilibrium, but also leading Communists such as Togliatti, who served themselves using the myths of the Resistance in an attempt to forge unity within the political Left (Dalle Vacche 1992: 132). That the political defeat had its cultural counterpart was also clear to those who had followed the publication of Gramsci's prison writings and realised that if Italian intellectuals historically had lived detached from 'the people, and thus from the nation', little had been done in the post-war years to bridge the gap and direct popular forces into an anti-capitalistic opposition (Gramsci 1996: 72). Despite the potential neorealist cinema had to abandon elitist and populist parameters in order to constitute an 'articulation, with organic function, of the people itself,' which would require to know and feel its 'needs, aspirations, diffused sentiments' (Gramsci 1996: 72), it had been essentially paternalistic, unpopular and inadequate as a political force, disclosing itself as a 'vital' but ultimately inconsequential 'crisis' (Pasolini 1965: 229).

The incommunicability with the masses was rarely as profound and insuperable as in the case of *The Earth Trembles*: the most programmatic and rigorously Marxist as well as the most unpopular manifestation of neorealism. Nonetheless, looking back at the film in 1960, Visconti emphasised the inspiration he had found in Gramsci's notes on the intellectual's responsibilities with regard to the Southern Problem. His effort as a privileged Northerner to expose the country's economic and geographical disjunctions and to restore beauty and dignity to his Southern subjects certainly corroborates this association, although in 1947–8 he would only have had access to some of Gramsci's writings.¹⁸ Contrary to *The Earth Trembles*, too inaccessible in its artistic aspiration to engage the masses, the populist treatment of social immobility in *Bellissima* appealed to the general spectator while failing to provide unifying and didactic points for national-popular identification. The relative popularity of Visconti's least committed film reflected what Gramsci defined as the Italians' 'taste for melodrama' – a socio-cultural phenomenon he regretted since it implied a sense not only of bourgeois life and culture, but also of rhetorical sentiments, formulaic language, and forced gestures and modes of behaviour, all of which distanced the people from their own realities. The only means to fight this would be a popular literature that reflected the life, values and language of the nation (Gramsci 1996: 49–50). Gramsci's view of *il melodramma* – in the original sense of the word (melody + drama) – as having constituted the only popular art form in nineteenth-century Italy, fulfilling needs of escapism soon to be catered for by the cinema, resonates in *Senso*, where Verdi's opera appears as a unifying mode of escapism

relating spectators to the purely patriotic ideals of the Risorgimento while distracting them from the political questions it entailed (Dalle Vacche 1992: 134–6). Nevertheless, if *Senso*, as its defenders maintained, proved to be the first national-popular film to come out of post-war Italy, this was mainly due to the operatic themes and structures framing its historical accusations (Aristarco 1975a: 893). By appealing to the ‘taste’ for melodrama in which the director himself invested so much of his career, the film managed to speak to the people’s sentiments and to their sense of self, in order to subtly communicate and seek unity around the artist’s historical interpretations and ideological positions.

NOTES

1. One story treatment co-written with Alicata proposed a film entitled *Pensione Oltremare* which would have told stories of partisans tortured and executed at the Jaccarino *pensione* where Visconti had been held prisoner (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 138).
2. Rondolino (1981: 196) and Giuseppe De Santis, who was referring Visconti’s own testimony (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 140), are among the few to mention the initially propagandistic scope of the project; that the first 6 million lire came from the Communist party is certain. It was a budget that, given the six months of shooting, soon sent Visconti out on tours for funding worthy of Rossellini (Rosi, quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 138).
3. One week before the massacre, The People’s Block formed by communists and socialists had won the local election, and the bandit Salvatore Giuliano and his men were sent, either by the government or the mafia, to suppress the celebration that took place (Ginsborg 1990: 111–12). Visconti’s treatment for the documentary outlined a reconstruction of the massacre (1998: 238–9).
4. See Visconti (1986b: 116). Having officially announced the project in 1942, Visconti failed to obtain the rights to the novel (Micciché 1998: 84). According to Marcus, ‘the impulse’ to an adaptation ‘came at a relatively late stage in the film’s elaboration’ (1992: 25), but both characters and events of the story treatment for the documentary are clearly indebted to Verga’s novel (see Visconti 1998; Rondolino 1981: 203). Francesco Rosi recalled that ‘Visconti’s intentions were in effect to complete the three episodes of the trilogy, but what I think he definitively desired more than anything else was to make a film of *I Malavoglia* and since the theme of that novel coincided with what would have been the episode of the sea in the trilogy, he left, in either case, in 1947, to film a documentary on the fishermen of Acitrezza. Money was short, very short . . .’ (quoted in Rondolino 1981: 196–7).
5. Visconti would recall the ‘alarm’ *Conversazione in Sicilia* had aroused in young anti-fascists when it was first published in 1938–1939 and in 1941 (1976b: 48–50). Significant in this regard is the agreement between Visconti and Vittorini regarding an adaptation of *Uomini e no* in 1946 – one of his inconvenient projects that met too many obstacles to see the light of day (Rondolino 1981: 158–9).
6. The most notorious of these was the massacre of Bronte, where starving farmers rebelled against the great landowners, demanding the redistribution of land Garibalidi had promised them when he conquered Sicily. A total of sixteen noblemen, officers and civilians were killed and land was plundered. The event, which occurred in August 1860 not far from Verga’s city Catania and was violently suppressed, inspired his short story ‘Libertà’ (1883).

7. Marcus, following Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and others, reads the scene according to Eisenstein's theories of dialectical montage (1992: 36–7), whereas Micciché excludes categorically any influence of the Soviet filmmaker on Visconti (Marcus 1992: 1050). More than anything else is it hard to see how the cuts from the individual to the collective and back to the individual which, more than juxtaposing images, have the narrative function of showing reactions to a progressing act of rebellion, would work dialectically to form a synthesis of revolutionary meaning.
8. The fatalist view on popular action evokes 'Libertà' in which Verga describes how, for one day, peasants unite in a violent revolt against their town's 'gentlemen' only to obtain jail sentences and further poverty. Shortly after, however, the poor return to the town 'to do what they had done before. The *gentlemen* could not work their land with their own hands, and the poor could not live without the *gentlemen*. They made peace.' (Verga 2004: 259)
9. See Visconti (1943: 108). His account of the procedures (1994: 249–50) is somewhat modified by that of his assistant, Franco Zeffirelli who elaborated on the actors' suggestions by having elderly men in the village translate them into the 'pure', Greek-sounding archaic dialectal forms Visconti wanted (Zeffirelli 1994: 30). What fascinated him was a 'lost, truly ancestral' mythic and poetic, more than authentic language, and its function is consequently 'expressionistic' rather than 'naturalistic' (Parigi 1994: 142).
10. See Rosi (1994: 21–2). Used to working with actors in the theatre, Visconti confessed to have 'spent hours and hours with my fishermen of *The Earth Trembles* to make them repeat even the shortest line', thus suggesting the degree of authorial control involved in making the actors merge with the characters and vice versa (Visconti 1994: 249–50).
11. See Zeffirelli (1994: 31). For a meticulous analysis of the commentary, see Parigi 1994: 156–162.
12. Bazin compares the first aspect to Rouquier's documentary *Farrebique* (1946) and the latter to the studio-created depth-of-field in *Citizen Kane* (2002: 288–92). While his notes on the running time of three hours and on the Sicilian dialogues prove that his review, dated December 1948, was based on the original version screened at the Venice Film Festival that year, he does not comment on the voice-over which, according to Micciché, was added for that occasion (1998). Visconti's own recollection that the complete version screened in Venice was subtitled (1976a) seems, however, also to be called into doubt by Bazin's observation that the film, due to its visual style, lacks subtitles. If these contradictory statements are based on lost memories, it would reflect the uneasiness Visconti felt about having added a commentary for the sake of comprehension, thus compromising the visual expression of the film's images.
13. Bondanella draws a parallel between Visconti's accentuation of circularity within an ahistorical, mythical world to that of Levi, suggesting that the celebratory treatment belongs more to the artist than to the ideologist (2009: 97). When Levi outlined all the myths and beliefs that made the peasants' world go round, however, it was to acknowledge an immensely complex worldview as well as to enable readers to appreciate what they meant by not being 'Christians;' by not having been humanised. Their lacking a sense of linear time is first and foremost a reflection of neglect from the State and from History and something similar can be said for Visconti's fishermen whose cyclical life is always related to cyclical poverty and who, as both 'Ntoni and Cola affirm, are reduced to 'work-donkeys'; to 'work-meat'.
14. See Micciché (1998: 198). Visconti's rationale for having agreed to direct *Bellissima* was that 'the choice of one treatment rather than another does not exclusively

- depend on what the director wants [. . .] After having had to renounce *Cronache di poveri amanti* [an adaptation of Pratolini's novel which Lizzani later directed] and *La carrozza del Santissimo Sacramento*, Salvo D'Angelo presented me with Zavattini's subject' (quoted in Faldini and Fofo 1979: 247).
15. Wagstaff estimates that the percentage earned by *The Earth Trembles* of total Italian receipts in its period of release was 0.084 whereas *Bellissima* would have earned 0.219 and *Senso* 0.597 per cent (2007: 436–9).
 16. The original reads as follows: 'Die Toten stehn auf, der Tag des Gerichts/Ruft sie zu Qual und Vergnügen/Wir beide bekümmern uns um nichts/Und bleiben umschlungen liegen.' Heinrich Heine, *Buch der Lieder*, <http://www.staff.uni-mainz.de/pommeren/Gedichte/BdL/Lyr-32.html> (accessed 18 February 2012). 'The dead resurrect, Judgment Day/Calls on damned and blessed/We both do not worry about anything/And we remain laying embraced.' I am indebted to Carlo Testa (*Masters of Two Arts: Re-creation of European Literature in Italian Cinema*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002: 195) for the identification of Heine's poem.
 17. The testimony belongs to jury-member Piero Regnoli who was compelled by the Minister of Culture (Ministro della pubblica istruzione), Giuseppe Ermini, to give his vote to Renato Castellani's *Giulietta e Romeo* which, as expected, won the Golden Lion for best film in 1954. For *Senso*'s unfortunate encounter with the censors, see Visconti (1976a: 73–4) and Rondolino (1981).
 18. Despite the fact that Visconti's 1960 article 'Da Verga a Gramsci' relates both *The Earth Trembles* and *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960) to the 'illuminating reading of Gramsci' (Visconti 1976b: 49), Micciché has categorically excluded that his writings, given their time of publication, could have inspired *The Earth Trembles* (1998: 85–6). Besides the knowledge Visconti would have had of his articles on the Southern Problem (see Chapter 3, notes 10, 14 and 16) before his works were systematically published starting in 1947–1948, an evaluation of Gramsci's indirect and direct influence must also consider the connections that existed between the Communist Party, which originally commissioned the film as a documentary from Sicily, and Gramsci's works, which the party leader, Togliatti, had received while in exile in Moscow in 1938 and started to edit for publication in 1944 (Gerratana 1975: XXXI; Asor Rosa 1975a: 1551–5).

7. FACES AND SPACES OF NEOREALISM: FROM DYSTOPIAN CITIES TO UTOPIAN COUNTRIES

‘I think that an author has to base his creativity on a utopia, even though this creativity aspires to be born from reality. Utopia, in my view, is healthy for artists. Of course, it has to be a utopia that contains values intended to bring forward the development of the world, the development of humans, the development of society.’

Giuseppe De Santis in *L'avventurosa storia del cinema italiano*

Gramsci's critique of intellectuals as being detached from the Italy's 'national-popular reality' and of the literary tradition as 'bookish' and made for a few 'selected souls' resonated among critics who in the mid-1950s confronted the unpopularity of neorealist film (1996: 48–9). Ignoring that 'divismo' is a popular matter, this 'avant-garde', 'anti-liberatory' cinema had championed truthfulness, experimentation and ordinariness to promote 'liberation in life', excluding the epic grandeur, heroes, melodrama and catharsis that offer spectators 'liberation in art' (Renzi 1975b: 447–51). While the popular masses were far from alone in being alienated by the absence of illusions – Calvino later lamented how it had deprived him of the 'distance, the dilatation of the limits of the real', that during fascism had brought him to the movies almost every day (1994: 41) – it was the failure to promote the inter-class relations fostered during the Resistance that critics saw as the major limitation of neo-realist film.¹ Since the aspiration to expose and ideally change socio-economic conditions had never extended into an identification with the people's values and sentiments, it had remained a 'populist' (Asor Rosa 1975a: 1610) or a

'neopopulist' art of regionalist and humanitarian inspiration (Fortini 1975: 273) that rather than 'being the people', had 'gone towards the people' (Aristarco 1980: 19), proving inadequate, despite its initially 'excessively optimistic and enthusiastic' quality, as a force of cultural reorganisation (Pasolini 1965: 229).

While the critics' distinction between *populist* and *non-populist* mostly concerned the authors' relations to and attitudes towards the world represented rather than the reception of the films, most post-war directors aspired to *popularity* and some sought to reconcile traditional narratives and generic conventions with socio-geographic concreteness and critiques of injustice. A notable example of these hybrid films is Luigi Zampa's (1905–91) *L'onorevole Angelina* which draws on a news story about of a rebellious mother of five to address deplorable living conditions in the Roman *borgata*. In contrast to Antonio in *Bicycle Thieves* who is resigned to the misery and injustice of this milieu, Angelina organises a group of women to raid a black marketeer whose pricy pasta they cannot afford and to occupy apartments owned by rich speculators. With their support, she also forms the People's Movement and runs to become an 'honourable' or a MP, but following a short jail sentence for public disorder, she withdraws on account of her domestic responsibilities and lack of experience, ending up back where she started and returning to the daily struggle of feeding her children. In Renato Castellani's (1913–1985) *Sotto il sole di Roma*, ideals of concreteness and authenticity are applied to the light-hearted *bildung* of a reckless adolescent. While his father works as a night watchman and his mother looks after him and his smaller siblings, Ciro and his friends swim in the streams of the Tiber and explore the Coliseum where they encounter the homeless kid, Geppa. The story, related through Ciro's retrospective voiceover, unfolds during the war and involves attempted black marketeering, a night in German jail terminated by a providential Allied bombardment and visits to Americanised dancing clubs where he courts the owner's wife. The historical context of fear and destruction fades behind myths of youth, and things do not change until Ciro decides to marry Iris, the girl next door, whom they have loaded with household chores since his mother died. Finding no honest job, he follows some racketeers ready to exploit his predicament, but Geppa and Iris stop him just when he is about to commit a criminal act while his father is accidentally shot by the criminals. Facing the reality of being a married orphan, Ciro is finally initiated into adult life. Decidedly *populist* rather than *popular* in Gramsci's terminology and with pacifying and misogynist tendencies unknown to the neorealist archetypes, both films enjoyed a relative commercial success due to the balance of comedy, romance, adventure and social issues, concrete ambiances and recognisable characters.²

Another asset of *L'onorevole Angelina* was the presence of professionals such

as Franco Zeffirelli and Anna Magnani, whose personification of the Roman *popolana* appealed to fans of *Open City*, whereas the actors of the slightly more profitable *Sotto il sole di Roma* were, except for the up-and-coming Alberto Sordi, taken ‘from the street’. Among them were Francesco Golisano, who would project qualities of the good-hearted homeless Geppa over to Totò whom he played in *Miracle in Milan*, and Liliana Mancini, whom Magnani’s character runs into at Cinecittà in *Bellissima*. In Visconti’s critical portrait of the cinema she appears as herself – a non-professional actor degraded to editor – but she is called Iris, like her character in Castellani’s comedy, and she seeks to warn the deluded mother about the dangers of the cinema. These are only some indications of the dialogues and exchanges present in post-war Italian cinema and for which Farassino has acutely accounted with a view of neorealism as a ‘diffused universe’ that while it concentrated around a few ‘high density [. . .] neorealist works’, also manifested itself as a ‘wandering, crossing phenomenon’ infiltrating a range of films we must consider not essentially or not at all neorealist (1989a: 29–33). It is to such ‘films of neorealism’ that we turn in this chapter – not so much to identify influences but rather to see what room the neorealist experience left for ‘contamination’ and ‘cohabitation’ of antithetical tendencies and what possibilities generic conventions, stylised visuals and stars offered to convey collective truths and authorial critiques (Farassino 1989a: 29–33). In contrast to works that from *Open City* to *Bellissima* adopted cinematic conventions to deconstruct escapist practices and, indirectly, the ideological universes with which they were associated, these more conventional films would rely on such elements as a means to face the invasion of 600 American productions – long-forbidden forms of entertainment that, once war bans were lifted in 1946 (Sesti 1997: 157), attracted Italians the way foreign popular novels had done in the past (Gramsci 1996: 72–5). A year later, various private initiatives were taken to reorganise the film industry and what originally had emerged as a spontaneous and financially hazardous film culture took a more systematised form. While the often commercially successful films that gravitate within the cultural field of neorealism most obviously responded to these national circumstances as well to foreign trends, the various means by which they hybridise truth and fiction are also suggestive of the unprogrammable, and, by definition, open and unconstrained nature of neorealism itself.

NOIR ALL’ITALIANA: *IL BANDITO* AND *SENZA PIETÀ*

Soon after the Liberation, the most disquieting manifestations of social crises and disillusion inspired a series of criminal melodramas stylistically and narratively modeled on *film noir*, 1930s gangster films and French poetic realism. In looking beyond national traditions, however, they also revisited the

foundations of neorealism as encapsulated in *Obsession* which adopted the very same influences to convey political opposition and visions of cultural renovation. As Visconti had discovered towards the end of fascism, a re-adaptation of traditions defined by darkness and depression served to capture the nation's sense of disillusion while at the same time appealing to spectators' fascination with adventure, illegality and tragic love in order to engage them in the call for reform. Furthermore, given the association of these traditions with social deviance, they also provided a means to voice the hatred and vengefulness war and civil war had caused and to represent a new social class of marginalised characters, whether it be adrift fascists, escaped German prisoners, Allied deserters, ex-soldiers and partisans deprived of connections, or street kids and abandoned women (Marchesi 2000: 65). For Lattuada, who, as we have seen, contributed to *Amore in città* with an episode on Rome's prostitutes, such outcasts provided a precious twofold route to realities fascism had systematically excluded and to the narrative and generic lessons of French and American film (Brunetta 2009: 76–7). These 'myths' of neorealist foundation, on the other hand, also opened up the common human experiences he had visualised already in 1941 with the photo-book *Occhio Quadrato* whose anthropomorphic intent to 'keep alive' the relation between people and things was modelled on Walker Evan's photo-narrative *American Photographs* (1939).³ The freedom to create and capture scenes from everyday life both inform *Il bandito*, which starts from an ex-soldier's demoralising return to war-ridden Turin to dramatise the alarming levels of criminality that, in particular, affected Central-Northern Italy (Marchesi 2000: 65). Placing prostitution, robbery, abduction, killing and tragic deaths in the framework of the *noir*, it presents a denudating albeit stylised image of the social chaos and individual fatalities that made their way into the contemporary *Shoeshine* and *Paisà*.

Inspired by actual criminal cases and conversations overheard 'on the street corner', *Il bandito* establishes its spatiotemporal anchorage through a newspaper page announcing the arrest of a group of gangsters (Lattuada, quoted in Brunetta 2009: 77). This foreshadowing of anything but a happy ending is reinforced by a dramatic score and a cut to a puffing train – an unmistakable reference to the opening of Renoir's *The Human Beast* – that immediately questions the optimism with which Ernesto and Carlo return after having survived the war and, following the armistice in 1943, German prison camps. Looking out over the ruined landscape they return to, Ernesto predicts centuries of work, but what awaits him is unemployment, disintegration and endless queuing for minimal social assistance. While rainy and shadowed streets establish an iconic *noirish* atmosphere, the urban milieu is far less privileged and the losses more inevitable than in the American models Lattuada evokes. All the same, it is not ultimately deprivation that leads Ernesto astray, but the chance encounter in a brothel with his sister, Maria and his failure to free her



Figure 7.1 Lidia and Ernesto in Lattuada's *Il bandito*. Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

from the slavery of a trafficker who attacks Ernesto just when they approach the exit. To escape his violent counter-attack, the pimp shoots Maria while Ernesto, despairing over her death, throws him over the handrail of the dramatically lit stair. An uneasy connection between life and death, exploitation and freedom, this liminal space metaphorises the ambiguities of their drama: having sacrificed innocence and dignity to survive, Maria dies like a tragic heroine, whereas Ernesto, who once saved Carlo's life and who shouts out in defence of an ailing ex-soldier denied benefits, is led away by grief and hatred for what destroyed her. Since the police are only concerned with the victimiser's death, Ernesto seeks protection from the astutely opportunistic Lidia and is soon heading her group of gangsters, operating triumphantly but with a melancholy and an idealism that isolates him as much from the law as from the criminal world.

The cash robbed at a lavish New Year's party he distributes in a shantytown, and while he condemns his associates' assassination of an honest man, he kidnaps and kills a wealthy trafficker in women, avenging his sister and so many other victims. In the end, when Lidia gives them up to the police and takes off with a new prey for her seduction, Ernesto refuses to flee, choosing

instead to bring home Carlo's daughter, whom, implausibly, he has encountered in the car they robbed, and surrender to the lethal forces of law and order.

If the charitable gangster appears too abstracted from the historical reality to communicate all the authorial pessimism he embodies, the returned soldier offers a verisimilar image of what was left after heroic fighting and months of imprisonment. While this division in the protagonist reflects an uneasy reconciliation between social analysis, gangster drama, 'grand guignol' and 'measured oscillations towards cartoons', it also enhances the versatility of Amedeo Nazzari who, along with Magnani, ensured the film's commercial success.⁴ Both appear in frequent close-ups and medium shots, and their faces are lit to create a quality of distinction that is reinforced by their tough appearance, witty dialogue and flamboyant costumes. While these strategies encourage identification with the stars, in the view of post-war spectators such escapist intentions would constantly be modified by the actors' defamiliarising appearance. Ernesto's marginal social position and criminal demise deny the dramatic and romantic heroes Nazzari had personified during fascism, whereas the *femme fatale* designed to fit Magnani's wit and practical industriousness contrasts with her image as a *popolana*. These contradictions are mirrored by Ernesto moving between impoverished and glamorous spheres wherein we sense the realities of the post-war city where boogie-woogie rhythms spread into bombed-out buildings, where enormous wealth flourished at the expense of extreme poverty and where the initial joy of liberation for many left nothing but disillusion, solitude and lack of meaning. The communicative energy of Ernesto's character resides in relating such existential suffering to the specific difficulties of reintegration facing soldiers who failed to find the domestic and social networks they had left behind. In this, he incites empathy and critical reflection rather than admiration and shows as such a greater affinity with the marginalised and ill-fated characters of Renoir and Carné than with cynical and privileged American gangsters.

Questions of moral innocence reach more polemical tones in *Senza pietà* as the loss of values and aspirations in favour of pessimism and indifference is related to experiences of social stigmatisation. The story is set in the Tuscan harbour town of Livorno where the US Army established a base and a military prison after the war, and this is chiefly why criminal relations appear more intricate than in the Northern city. Concentrating on relations between army members, African-American deserters, local gangsters and women, the film portrays a milieu of disturbing violence that presented the authors with adventurous working conditions. Scriptwriters Tullio Pinelli and Fellini would dress like vagrants to explore the area more safely and Lattuada negotiated with gang leaders in order to avoid problems while shooting on location (Faldini and Fofi 1979). Based on enquiries into this specific environment, the

story 'not of two races but of two persons who met in Italy after the war' is captioned as a 'testimony to truth', but there is also a claim to universality in events that could have transpired wherever 'the horrors of the war have made people forget pity'. The very same twofold ideal motivated Vittorini's *Conversazione in Sicilia* and later *The Earth Trembles*, which premiered a month before *Senza pietà* in the fall of 1948. Approaching two radically different faces of post-war Italy and adapting equally contrasting means to represent the country's many contradictions, Lattuada and Visconti seem to assimilate Vittorini's call for 'new duties' as they search regional realities and singular cases of victimisation for inspiration to articulate humanly shared needs of compassion and freedom.

Our guide into this world is Angela who has boarded a freight train to find her brother and escape parents with no empathy for the illicit and later deceased child she had. That Livorno is hardly a place for abandoned women, she intuits when Jerry, a black GI, jumps into her compartment in a vain attempt to avoid a gangster's bullets. Angela ensures his medical assistance and is rewarded with interrogation as the American officers suspect she was involved in the attack. They eventually send her to a convent with some prostitutes, whose confrontations with the nuns and each other offers a suggestive sequel to the police raid Francesca barely avoids in *Paisà*. Assisted by a group of black deserters, the girls escape and fall back into Pierluigi's network of smuggling and prostitution. Angela stays with Marcella and the other girls in some questionable lodgings and keeps away from the trap until Jerry, in order to protect and provide for her, implicates himself in the business and is caught. Left defenceless against Pierluigi who takes pleasure in revealing that her brother died in his service, Angela assumes enough indifference to survive his slavery and psychotic terror, hiding all remorse until Jerry breaks out of jail and finds her reduced to merchandise. The two are ready to leave for the US the way Marcella has done with a black fugitive, when Pierluigi turns up to avenge the money Jerry stole for their travel and his relationship with Angela. What the criminal's calculating mind had not anticipated was that she would throw herself in front of Jerry and take the bullet meant for him. If the expression of regret flashing over his devil's face confirms Vittorini's conviction that there is a man in every beast, this revelation comes too late: even if Jerry in the rush to save her had not driven off the road, she would not have made it to a new life in America. This devastating incident on a dusty provincial road recalls the ending of *Obsession*, but in contrast to Giovanna and Gino, Jerry and Angela are unambiguously seen as victims of other people's atrocities and their tragic trajectory severely questions whether the freedom Visconti's murderous lovers went in search of can be found.

Composed of gunfights, car chases, and melodramatic moments of loss and regret, the rapidly edited narrative belongs more to Hollywood than to

post-war Italy, and both the astute prostitute, Marcella, and the criminal masterminds – a fierce Tuscan, a pretentious Brazilian captain, and the pale, white-dressed and androgynous Pierluigi – suggest that the authentic material collected has been contaminated by Fellini's background as cartoonist. Nevertheless, *Senza pietà* relies on means of concretisation that in *Il bandito* were absent and it communicates, as a result, more authentically tragic emotions. The harbour infected by criminal trafficking, the pine forest housing a brutal nocturnal life and the church where Angela is shot are recognisable locations of sociological and auditory complexity, mirroring a unique social formation in which nuns must confront prostitutes and deserters, and the sonority of the Tuscan dialect is infused by streetwise English, minstrel song and Brazilian nightclub music (Brunetta 2009: 78). Seeking a confrontational portrayal of the antithetical realities that cohabited in Allied occupied Italy, the authors have left no room for glamour or *divismo*. Except for Carla del Poggio, who performed a similar role as Ernesto's sister, and Giulietta Massina, whom we shall meet as a less fortunate prostitute in Fellini's *Le notti di Cabiria*, most performers were non-professionals, including the Roman hotel keeper who gave sinister life to Pierluigi and the US army captain John Kitzmiller, who had been stationed in the area and appeared in several films of this period.⁵ What distinguishes the protagonists is their marginalisation within a lawless world, in itself on the margins of society. Dishonoured and condemned, Angela has no means to realise her honest aspirations or to evade the powers of unopposed illegal organisations, nor does Jerry who, burdened with centuries of racial violence, is captured while the real criminals go free and is brought, without a trial, to a military prison inhabited by black inmates and white guards. Along with greed, corruption and exploitation, the occupying army is also accused of having brought institutionalised racism into Italy (Bondanella 2009: 105–6). Given the focus both on the contribution and suffering of African-American soldiers and on their relation to Italian women – a historical grey area more recently re-examined in Spike Lee's *Miracle at St. Anna* – *Senza pietà* was, Lattuada recalled, so 'ahead of its time, for its decisively anti-racist content: this white hand and black hand united' that it was denied an American release (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 129). At the time, its most extraordinary achievement was that of having broken injurious codes of social representation, but what is likely to strike contemporary viewers is the continuing relevance of its attack on hypocrisy, prejudice and intolerance.

NO TIME FOR ILLUSIONS: *GIOVENTÙ PERDUTA* AND *IL CAMMINO DELLA SPERANZA*

It is a far more uniform world we encounter in *Gioventù perduta* which moves beneath the shiny surfaces of the Roman middle class to disclose some of the

moral implications of recent national tragedies. A master of social satire best known for comedies such as the Oscar-winning *Divorzio all'italiana* (1961), Pietro Germi (1914–74) attended the Centro sperimentale during fascism when Barbaro, Blasetti and Renoir illuminated the aesthetics and the socio-political power of film. Both lessons are combined in *Il testimone* (1945), which merges a courtroom drama with a love story of neorealist qualities (Sesti 1997: 38–49), but even more emblematic is *Gioventù perduta*, in which stylised images, professional actors, and a well-crafted narrative forge such a 'pessimistic' portrayal of Italy's youth that it became one of the first victims of recently reintroduced censorship laws (Argentieri 1974: 77). Only after a collectively signed open letter reached the Under Secretary of Culture and scenes featuring a student burglary at the university were cut for their allegedly 'apolgetic' look at violence did the film obtain permission to be released in 1948 (Sesti 1997: 158). What the censored sequence would have enacted, however, is captured in a later episode where statistics professor Manfredi demonstrates that criminality has increased the most among middle-class youth. Based on current news stories and notions of 'amorality', 'indifference' and loss of 'all values', his lecture is as lucid as the graph he draws, but what escapes the respected professor is that his son Stefano, whose presence in the lecture hall he also ignores, personifies the worrying trend. This instance of dual oblivion captures a generational conflict the father perceives of in terms of moral degradation, whereas the son lives it as resentment towards the authorities who have abandoned the country's youth to the very loss of values and of visions for the future his father denounces.

The surprising truths about post-war crime are suggested already in the opening scene where four impeccably dressed young men raid a bar and one of them kills an eyewitness. While their anxious retreat in an ambulance car belies their ingeniousness, the methodically planned attack on the solitary bar owner is the product of a disquieting professionalism as is the assassin's complete lack of remorse. His face is suggestively left out of frame during this episode, but we later recognise the arrogant voice and demeaning approach to others in Stefano, whose hostile indifference and mysterious whereabouts troubles his parents and sister, Luisa. That the night watchman he attacked during an attempted robbery at the university has died from the injuries leaves him unaffected; more worrying is the fact that Maria, his unsuspecting ex-fiancée, has retrieved the initialled lighter he lost at the scene of the crime. As she intends to hand it in for investigation, he kills her as well. The gang leader's atrocities and opportunistic dates with Stella at the nightclub Orfeo, are juxtaposed with Marcello's investigation and his encounters with Luisa, who believes he is a student. Alerted by her brother's extravagant habits and questionable hang-outs, the inspector seeks at first to abandon the case but indisputable evidence induces him finally to leave Luisa and mobilise for the arrest. Once Stefano

senses the danger, he disregards his fellow criminals' desire to buy themselves out and orchestrates a robbery at Orfeo intended to finance their escape. Instead, thanks to Stella's forced collaboration, he faces a fatal confrontation with Marcello and seeks, vainly, a shield of protection behind Luisa. Predicting the opponents' respective plots, she has come to avert fatalities but becomes instead a witness to events that bring the drama to a disquieting close, despite the hopes her reunion with Marcello leaves of domestic reconstruction.

The story of a gangster's downfall is framed by expressionistic images of Rome as a locus of disorder and degradation; it oscillates between crime scenes and police headquarters and involves a *femme* who becomes predictably *fatale* once Marcello brings her compromising past to the light. Against this construction of a nocturnal city of threat, Rome's daylight may be outlined in deep-focus photography and the ordinariness of its private and public spheres seek socio-historical referentiality, establishing an encounter between the *noir* and contemporary national trends that is mirrored in the rival protagonists. Marcello shares the hard-boiled sleuth's introspective nature and his conflict between private and professional interests, but after having fought in Mussolini's imperial wars, he is neither tough nor witty. His solemnity, perfectly captured by Massimo Girotti and balanced by one of Carla del Poggio's more optimistic characters, stands in contrast to Stefano. With the looks of a young Jacques Sernas, he embodies both the appearance and the mechanical ferocity of Alan Ladd's gangsters, but he is aware enough of what inner destruction recent events have caused to seek redemption (Sesti 1997: 160). Instead, killing Maria behind a fraudulent embrace at the river where they used to walk, Stefano eliminates the last connection to times when relations were meaningful and anchored to visions for the future. Where the responsibilities lie is suggested during his twentieth-birthday dinner, when he wonders why no one ever asks for 'the children's opinion before they bring them to the world', conveying a heartfelt contempt for his middle-class parents and, by extension, for the totalitarian authorities who stirred grand illusions in the country's youth. Possessing neither the ability to 'believe, obey, and fight' for the State and the family, nor the vigour and strength of fascist youth, all Stefano is left with is a destructiveness that after a crescendo of violence brings about his own death. While we may question Germi's choice to interpret the post-war crisis in the light of the social sphere that economically had suffered less from the war, both his historical allegations and the protagonist's nihilism bring us closer to Lattuada's soldier, to De Sica's shoeshine boys, and to Rossellini's Edmund than such a limited perspective might suggest.

As if to reject this urban world of post-fascist disillusion and degraded middle-class ideals, the Genovese director turned to Sicily for stories of injustice, neglect, myth and human warmth. The Western-inspired *In nome della legge* (1949) takes an unprecedented – albeit heavily romanticised – look at the

mafia's rule in the world of *omertà* (the law of silence), whereas *Il cammino della speranza* follows unemployed miners' journey of immigration to France. Scripted by Fellini and Pinelli and adapted from Nino de Maria's novel *Cuori negli abissi* (1949), the film engages with *Paisà* as well as with Ford's adaptation of Steinbeck's novel about sharecroppers migrating from Oklahoma to California in *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940). The closest model was, however, Mario Soldati's *Fuga in Francia* (1949), in which Germi played a clandestine immigrant pursuing a death-sentenced former fascist official across the French border. *Il cammino* was presented and awarded both at Cannes and Berlin, but Christian Democrats who had just established the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno (Fund for the South) through which to relocate parts of Marshall Aid to the South, were not impressed with the treatment either of poverty or of emigration. When the film was released after months of delay in 1950, it was denied the governmental 'quality prize' given to any work that left both social order and Italy's sunny image abroad unchallenged.⁶ The problem with Germi this time may, however, have been too much sun. A blinding light connects his disjointed story, and while it exposes the lack of resources driving Saro, a widowed father of three, and his fellows away, it also underscores the collective joy of their hampered journey and the hope they discover while crossing freezing French borders. At stake stands not merely the Southern Problem, a *topos* Germi had seen evolve with the new realism from 1930s fiction to *The Earth Trembles*, but also the 4.5 million Italians who immigrated to various destinations between 1946 and 1961 and, more specifically, the 143,416 workers who left for France between 1946 and 1950. 40–50 per cent of them were clandestine (Rinauro 2009: 58; 148). It was ultimately on these figures and on the social crisis they mirrored that the film shed an uneasy light.

While the title ('the path of hope') prepares us for wandering towards something that in its unfamiliarity is deemed preferable to the characters' present, the regional music accompanying the opening credits foreshadows the Southern ambience where some recently laid-off miners have occupied the poisoning depths of a closing sulphur mine, while their women wait anxiously outside. Behind their black-dressed figures lies an infinitely fruitless landscape; in front of them rises demolished houses and an isolated, inert village. As a benevolent accountant, sympathetic with the men's cause, insists the mine is profitless, they resign themselves to forced inactivity and are easily taken in by Ciccio's talk of booming French labour markets. Saro entrusts himself to the immigrant trafficker as do the newlyweds Luca and Rosa; the accountant; Mommينو, whose guitar playing consecrates their unity, and many others. For different reasons, the disgraced Barbara and her fugitive Vanni also leave. Only when Ciccio disappears at the station in Rome and Vanni escapes during a gunfight with the police, is the fraud unravelled, but rather than assistance,



Figure 7.2 Barbara, Saro and his son in Germi's *Il cammino della speranza*.
Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

all the marginalised Sicilians get at the police station are deportation orders to homes they have sold.

Continuing, all the same, they arrive in the Po Plain where a farmer's offer of paid work, room and board undermines recent misfortunes until local workers on strike attack the 'scabs', severely injuring Saro's daughter. While the group leaves, some returning to Sicily, Saro, his children and Barbara stay behind, joining the others in the mountains where they team up with two Venetians whose presence reminds past and present viewers that not only Southerners were forced to emigrate. Threatening their last walk is Vanni, who challenges Saro to a rustic duel over Barbara only to be killed, and a storm so fierce that the elderly accountant disappears in the snow.⁷ Eventually, 'as God wished', the narrator intervenes, 'the storm passed and they crossed the border', exhausted, saddened by their losses and anxious when some French and Italian guards ask for passports they don't have. Contrary to the uncompassionate police in Rome, however, they are amazed by the travellers' Southern origins and welcome them into a territory 'where loneliness is huge' but where 'people are less alone, and certainly closer than in the streets and cafés of our cities'.

The Northern director's voiced affection for his Southern subjects enters into a moral, rather than thematic, dialogue with *The Earth Trembles* that is established already with the statue-like female figures outside the mine who evoke Visconti's pictorial study of the Valatro women during the storm. Saro's conviction upon leaving, furthermore, that 'everything will be better than what we have now', echoes Cola's clandestine farewell to a life 'as a beast'. Traces of inspiration point, however, also to the vagrant lovers of the Po Plain in *Obsession* and the Southern Italian immigrants of Martinique in Renoir's *Toni*, which starts at the narrative point where *Il cammino* ends (Fanara 2000: 245). Both directors are present in Germi's focus on the characters' relationship to their environment and in his commitment to reclaim their dignity, but the escape he leads them into – from unemployment and from Italy – looks pessimistically not only at the specific situation of Sicilian miners and an assumed lost industry, but more generally at the collective change of which 'Ntoni still dreams.⁸ Rare signs of hope stem from characters such as the accountant, the Venetians, the border guards, and Saro – infinitely compassionate with those weaker than himself – who together form a call for solidarity. Both positive and pessimistic messages are reinforced by the authenticity of location and of non-professionals from the milieus represented, reminding us of Zavattini's lessons that real-life characters are the most crucial key to identification and reflection, which was most likely what the reactionary forces of the Reconstruction feared the most.⁹ Moving far away from ideals of *pedinamento*, however, Germi wraps critical objectives in an adventure wherein Raf Vallone – a journalist whose success in *Bitter Rice* (discussed below) offered an ordinary hero's image to Saro – directs the 'discovery of places in which history may still merge with myth' (Brunetta 1996: 24). Moving, along with American and French models, in the paths of *Paisà*, this discovery unifies the choral, the specific and the universal dimensions of neorealism, locating social features, regional characteristics and dialectal variations in order to transcend socio-geographic disjunctions and arrive at the 'human warmth' found among snow-white French Alps where the narrator discovers that 'borders are outlined on maps, but on earth like God created it [. . .] there are no borders'.

TOWARDS A NATIONAL-POPULAR CINEMA: *BITTER RICE* AND *NON C'È PACE
FRA GLI ULIVI*

If Germi's utopia of a territory marked by unlimited fraternity aligns with the humanism of Rossellini and, even more symptomatically, with that of De Sica and Zavattini who never delineated a more practical solution to socio-geographic disjunctions than a flight of the poor to a kingdom of justice, Giuseppe De Santis adheres to Visconti's vision of class struggle as the motor

of history and of the cinema as a medium to promote such historical processes. He experiments, however, with a vaster range of genres, forms and trends and is much more aware than any of the other directors of the importance of reaching the people by activating their myths and desires. Moving with unparalleled ease between old and new, between fiction and reality, merging ideological convictions with sensitivities towards the history of the cinema, De Santis epitomises the field of hybridisation that gravitates from and around neorealism, but he also personifies its anti-fascist openness and inclusion '*in all films*, of currents of various origins' (Lizzani 2007: 68). One point of unity among singular works and authorial *optiques* was, as we have seen, the discovery of neglected socio-geographical landscapes; a moral and, for some, a political act De Santis had delineated already during fascism, when he attended the Centro sperimentale and urged fellow cineastes to recuperate Verga's mythical world of 'truth and poetry' (Alicata and De Santis: 1941b). These were the times when militant criticism and anti-fascist activity merged in a quest for freedom and *Obsession*, which he co-scripted, became a collective manifesto for cinematic and national renovation.

De Santis may have been among those who laid the premises for a new film culture, but he had also been a partisan and would later insist that when the Italian people unprecedentedly had become a cinematic protagonist

that happened because it had really been a protagonist with the partisan fights [. . .] without the fall of fascism and the Resistance, it would never have happened that farm labourers, fishermen and small employees became protagonists of the histories of Italian cinema. (quoted in Fanara 2000: 83)

The intrinsically democratic, actual and narratively rich experience of the Resistance diverted the aspiring director from the literary sources he had championed initially. While *GAP*, a documentary he conceived of after Rome was liberated, never saw the light of day, its spirit materialised in 1945 through De Santis' contribution to *Giorni di gloria* (Roncoroni 2006: 355). Including ruined landscapes, everyday conditions and re-enacted partisan sabotages alongside bodies from the Fosse Ardeatine massacre and Visconti's documentation of the process and execution of Pietro Caruso, this collective montage project documents and narrates with epical aspirations and not without rhetorical results. It illustrates Calvino's notion that political celebrations of the Resistance created 'a new rhetoric' (1993: xiii–xiv), a view that may be extended to include all the chief texts, artistic and critical, that by means of abstractions and stylistic 'unrefinedness' presumed to oppose the falsities of the *ventennio* with 'true' images of the nation (Forgacs 2008: 42). *Giorni di gloria* does, however, reach remarkable heights in conveying lived experiences with a

national tragedy and in elevating the people to protagonists of History and of cinematic narration.

That the Resistance had involved a class struggle its protagonists aimed to bring beyond the moment of national and anti-fascist liberation is the premise for De Santis' first feature *Caccia tragica* (1947), which follows a group of partisans and soldiers who, after the war, have occupied and demined land to establish an agricultural cooperative. Obstructing their initiative, some landowners engage gangsters to steal their subsidies. Among them are Alberto, an unemployed ex-detainee, his ex-collaborationist girlfriend, whom he kills for threatening to activate landmines; and a German ex-soldier. Alberto is eventually caught and absolved by a peasants' court which acknowledges his desperation and willingness to change. Besides being financed by the National Association of Italian Partisans, the film was set to the spaces of *Obsession* in the Lower Po Plain – a key zone of the Resistance where De Santis' team still witnessed lethal confrontations between partisans and fascists and which the Left had adopted as a symbolic zone of regeneration – and was, as a result, released after being held back for a year for fear it would be prejudicial to the Right in the run-up to the 1948 elections.¹⁰ What De Santis sought to communicate through the fictionalisation of recent events, resorting both to innovative camera movements and to a mixture of local peasants and professionals headed by Massimo Girotti and Carla del Poggio was, more specifically, a belief in the continuous values and objectives of the Resistance. Gathered around shared 'political passion', scriptwriters as diverse as Umberto Barbaro and Carlo Lizzani – respectively traditional and modern Marxists – and Antonioni, the 'director of sentiments' along with Zavattini, the imaginative opponent of all invention, were, in fact, chosen to provide a 'unity of voices' rather than to forge propagandistic messages (De Santis 1996a: 37–40).

Inclusiveness and magnitude of invention was no less a determinant when De Santis returned to the Po Plain with a project, this time, on the *mondine*. These were the lower-class women who would come by the thousands from all parts of Northern Italy to work during the rice-weeding season between April and June, spending entire days bent over and barefoot in water, exposed to heat, bugs and the risk of disease. There were several reasons why he would investigate their conditions just when, incidentally, *L'Unità* writer Raf Vallone, whom he soon selected to play the film's leftist sergeant, published an article on the same subject (Masi 1996: 185). Since the early 1900s, inhumane conditions and miserable pay had provoked protests and strikes among these women, culminating first in 1918, when fascism emerged precisely to suppress such activism,¹¹ and in 1948, while *Bitter Rice* was in production and an attack on the communist leader Togliatti resulted in a general strike and waves of demonstrations.¹² A few months earlier, the Christian Democrats' victory had ruled out all hope of reform and the disillusion within the Left was increasingly



Figure 7.3 Silvana, centre, with fellow *mondine* in De Santis' *Bitter Rice*. Courtesy of the British Film Institute.

substantiated by a social climate of individualism and aspiration to modern lives of independence, consumerism and mass media: ideals that were perpetuated through accessible magazines such as *Grand Hotel* and other *fotoromanzi*, which in particular enchanted the youth and the popular masses.¹³ To oppose these tendencies cherished as emblems of American culture with a formative

utopia of class solidarity, De Santis looked to the *mondina* as a ‘symbol of women’s capacity to continue to fight’ (Chianese 2008: 389). A marginalised and at the same time aggressively present figure of erotic connotation, she achieved a perfect screen presence in Silvana Mangano – ‘Roman, 18 years old, face and hair like Botticelli’s Venus’ (Calvino 1996: 212) – whom De Santis initially rejected only to discover her a second time soaked in Rome’s rainy streets, ‘proud, unscrupulous, half goddess, half woman’ (De Santis 1996b: 198). Silvana’s image in the paddy fields was introduced to the public months before the film and it was she, and not the American actress Doris Dowling or the theatre actor Vittorio Gassmann, who became the film’s marketing strategy and one of neorealism’s few *divas*.¹⁴

A radio journalist covering the *mondine*’s departure from Turin train station establishes the film’s investigative quality, but he soon disappears as the camera searches the crowd to localise Walter. Before escaping two police investigators, he dances the boogie-woogie with Silvana while his girlfriend Francesca inadvertently follows the women to the fields of Vercelli. Highly receptive and conversant with the sensational stories of *Grand Hotel*, Silvana quickly associates the couple with a headlined robbery of a necklace at Grand Hotel and unloads both her curiosity and advice upon Francesca.¹⁵ Like many, the unemployed thief has no official contract and is initially rejected, but she persuades the other ‘illegals’ to outbid the regular workers to be hired, pleasing the foremen who take 10 per cent of their miserable income. Outraged by the competition and the necklace she has sequestered, Silvana incites polemical exchanges among the rice-weeding women that develop into mud-wrestling and a mass attack on Francesca. Marco, a sergeant in the area, convinces them to demand work for all and Silvana not to judge Francesca, who has been dismissed as a maid in an affluent home due to pregnancy before having an abortion and committing theft on Walter’s orders. Her confession stirs empathy as well as dreams in the *fotoromanzi* reader. When Walter arrives, sharing Silvana’s dance to reclaim the necklace she is wearing, he alienates her from Marco and dictates both her fantasy and her ingenious advances with such force that her screams amidst rainy fields merge with the horrors of Gabriella’s miscarriage. After initial objections undermined by the gift of the necklace, Silvana agrees to assist Walter and the foremen in stealing rice assigned to the women, flooding the fields so that people leave the farm to save the harvest. The petty robbery takes a tragic turn when the two lovers are caught in a shootout with Marco and Francesca. Learning that her engagement gift, as Walter knows, is fake, Silvana kills him and throws herself from the platform where she has just won the Miss Mondina 1948 contest, aware that only when her companions cover her body with rice, will she be reintegrated into the community.

This particular form of funeral rites was the *mondine*’s way of bidding

farewell to a deceased companion, and the scene testifies, therefore, indirectly to the brutalities not all of them survived (Gobbi 1996: 206). Fictive are, instead, the betrayal, revenge, remorse and catastrophe provoked by aspirations to economic liberation and by fantasies Silvana associates with an America where 'everything is electric'. Boundaries between reality and fiction are so blurred in her mind that she cuts pictures from glossy magazines and projects them onto Walter, wondering if he 'sometimes wears a black mask' while ignoring Francesca's warnings as well as his violence. Silvana is far from achieving the emancipation both her naked legs and her criticisms – of abusive foremen and others – suggests she aspires to. It is, nonetheless, not so much by embodying a history of male victimisation that she 'explains the film ideologically', as by exposing imported myths – from boogie-woogie and chewing gum to beauty contests – that De Santis considered corruptive of the people's customs and values (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 153; 238). *Bitter Rice* is no less categorical than *Senza pietà* in judging the Americanisation of post-war culture, but Francesca's reverse trajectory offers a perspective beyond the conclusive tragedy that also recognises the collective value of rejecting oppressive norms. Inspired by Marco's socialism and by the *mondine* who collectively assured her a living, Francesca opposes her parasitic ex-lover and safeguards both the women's pitiable rights and Marco's love. Her position in the community is consecrated when they collectively resume work after several days' standstill after forfeiting rice rations and Gabriella's screams break into the stormy field. While Francesca carries her away, the others form a choir of lamentation and of the political protest they carry within them. It was in particular this scene of naturalistic horror, iconographically indebted to Giotto and intercut with Silvana's agonising desolation following Walter's assault that worried producers and shocked authorities.¹⁶

Drawn from interviews and testimonies and with the authenticity of swampy fields, depressing dormitories, the presence of actual *mondine* in supporting roles and the song of their regional voices, *Bitter Rice* seeks a verisimilar anchorage from which to develop an experiment in contamination (Micciché 2002: 7–8). While reviving pre-Renaissance traditions, Verga's tragic female figures, contemporary realist trends, popular narratives and the traditional songs adopted by the *mondine* to express their immediate concerns, it also exploits the repertoire of gangster films while at the same time associating Silvana with musicals so as to allow the poor peasant girl to be 'frozen', as in a *fotoromanzo*, in enchanting dance performances (Gobbi 1996: 201–7). Both the spectators gathered around her and the masses filling the train station are mapped out with an attention to crowds inherited from Soviet cinema (De Santis 1996a: 44), whereas the women's choruses, their common predicaments and exchanges with local men are studied with a sociological interest in the comradeship and new impulses that could make the forty days of fatigue

a valued experience (Minardi 2005: 19). No other film came closer in unifying all the genres, styles, influences and tendencies hybridised in neorealism and *Bitter Rice* reflects on past and present cinema as much as on the reality represented (Lizzani 2007: 68). Against criticism that the distortions and stylisations made the *mondine* look like prostitutes in heavily romanticised conditions rather than as exploited women who, some argued, danced nothing but waltzes and read not only *fotoromanzi*, De Santis defended the intention not to observe their world dispassionately, but to assimilate ‘contaminations’ intrinsic to ‘the popular cultural world’ and engage the masses in a dialogue (1996a: 40–4). In this way, the thesis of collective action as the exclusive answer to individual struggles could more convincingly be presented and developed, in line with Pudovkin’s theories, through a narrative that forges the formation of a community while individualism and deceptive values produce a tragic end (Argentieri 1996: 122–3). The dramatisation of social injustice as a community matter of collective suffering and objectives offers viewers not merely a call for solidarity, but a practical programme and a perspective in which to place their own reality.

Bitter Rice reached out both to national and international audiences and much of its appeal was replicated when De Santis relocated to his native Ciociara, halfway between Rome and Naples, to tell a story about peace-making among the oppressed.¹⁷ *Non c’è pace tra gli ulivi* opens with a panoramic view over a remote mountain village, while the director’s voice intrudes to declare his belonging to this world seemingly unmarked by recent historical tragedies. Although, he explains with slight sarcasm, the Ciociara is best known in folkloristic terms for *ciocia* sandals and the *saltarello* dance, it is a century-old battleground for foreign armies as suggested by a rudimentary cross marking the death of a German soldier, and by a people made ‘suspicious towards others [. . .] jealous of their sentiments [. . .] despicable in suffering and in causing suffering’. The dark, sombre, characters immobile in their quiet disbelief convey a ‘homage’ – strikingly similar to the one opening *Il cammino* which was shot contemporaneously in 1950 – to *The Earth Trembles* (Zagarrio 2002a: 39). Like Visconti, De Santis starts from the specificity of a closed, atemporal society, unprecedented at the movies and ignored by the authorities of the Reconstruction, to address universal disjunctions between ‘those who possess something and those who possess nothing’. Developed through a story of deprivation, injustice, love and victory, these thematics assimilate both the conflict and the hybridisation of *Bitter Rice* in order to take its utopia a step further.

Winter approaches and while the other shepherds prepare to migrate, Francesco stands unemployed and indignant over seeing both his sheep and his girlfriend, Lucia, in the greedy hands of Bonfiglio. A shepherd like everyone else, but crueller and luckier than most, Bonfiglio has acquired wealth thanks

to the misfortune of people such as Lucia's parents, who to settle their debts have promised him their daughter, and Francesco, who has spent the last six years in war and internment. The narrative pretext is therefore that of the returned soldier, but unlike *Il bandito*, *Non c'è pace* approaches the theme of a destroyed economic basis and failed reintegration at the level of low-scale power relations, and it disregards the existential experiences of the post-war crisis to articulate a thesis of class consciousness. Everyone knows that the sheep belong to Francesco, but when he reclaims them in order to migrate with Lucia he is arrested, and Bonfiglio's violent intimidation forces the other shepherds into a conspiracy of false testimonies. Seeing that even Lucia, threatened by her parents, denies having witnessed the theft, Francesco resigns himself to the four-year sentence. Only when it appears that Bonfiglio has raped his sister, Maria Grazia, and she reveals this during the malefactor's wedding, liberating Lucia while constraining herself to domestic slavery, does Francesco react. Along with Salvatore, a Neapolitan jailbird, he escapes, and while Lucia's parents flee in fear of the fugitive prisoner's revenge, she breaks through the guards and is reconciled with her boyfriend. Spreading their flocks to complicate the *carabinieri's* search, the remorseful shepherds also back Francesco's final confrontation with Bonfiglio, while Salvatore surrenders in a similar effort to sidetrack the forces of law and order. Panicked to see himself abandoned, the detested tyrant strangles Maria Grazia, who has followed him when he fled, and jumps over a cliff to avoid Francesco's revenge, leaving him innocent and with the promise of a fair retrial.

Francesco 'fought for being right', the director comments, 'and achieved justice when the other shepherds understood that people can only separate right from wrong if they are united'. That he was right 'even against the law', was censored from the original script for the threat it allegedly posed to public order (De Santis quoted in Zagarrío 2002: 115–16). Still, this conclusive note presents an unambiguous directive to communities such as Francesca's in *Bitter Rice*, which in the subsequent rice-weeding seasons will face the very same injustices. Culminating during Easter, when the snow is gone and the migrators have returned, Francesco's resurrection to freedom also entails the betrayal and sacrifice leading up to Silvana's redemption, but rather than confirming the village's circular and destructive existence, the religious feast catalyses a collective change. Fleeing across stony hills, Francesco mingles with a shielding procession of pious villagers while Lucia runs ahead with the gun procured by the other shepherds. If this incorporation of the individual into the collective demonstrates social peace and solidarity in the making, Maria Grazia becomes, as Salvatore relates to the *carabinieri*, 'the lamb of this Easter,' the expiatory victim required to forge a unitary opposition among the oppressed. Communion turns into class consciousness when Bonfiglio is driven to suicide and it appears that, ultimately, Francesco's trial was distorted not by

repressive power relations, but by the individualism, conformism and *omertà* that perpetuated them. The moral of the implausible narrative rests on a verisimilitude that, besides the author's testimony to the truthfulness of the basic events and the use of local people as extras and in supporting roles, relies on an almost exclusive use of exteriors. A combination of close-ups, deep-focus and crane shots serve to map out relations as well as affinities between the human and the natural worlds – a rocky, arid and violent landscape void in Salvatore's outsider's view, of 'peace' among its olive trees – while also visualising social relations and creating a choral dimension around bystanders who observe, comment on and eventually align with the individual's actions.

What challenges these efforts to concretise the fictional world is the stylisation of story and performance. While the leading actors, Raf Vallone and the 1947 Miss Italia, Lucia Bosé, speak in standard Italian, the non-professionals' regional speech is dubbed by voices blending dialectal elements and traditional songs with refined Italian. Their way, furthermore, of posing for the camera make it appear as if they directly address the viewer, and although the intention was to reproduce sacred representations and puppet theatres from the Ciociara, it works, along with the author's self-reflexive commentary, like a Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* to hinder identification with the melodrama's heroes and promote reflection on the community (De Santis 1996a: 45). This theatrical dimension – epitomised when Maria Grazia interrupts Bonfiglio's wedding procession and he accuses her of 'putting on an act' – is embedded in the characters themselves. Whether we witness naturalistic horror in his strangling of Maria Grazia and comedy in Salvatore, superbly rendered by the popular Neapolitan actor, Dante Maggio, or musical in Lucia's *saltarello*, the generic contamination relies much more on the characters' stereotypical qualities than it did in *Bitter Rice*. The sensual dance Lucia improvises to distract the forces of law and order demonstrates the strong will and ingeniousness with which she faces victimisation, but it also radiates among the peasant women the way Silvana's did, and as the camera moves, from the individual performance towards the dynamics of the crowd, it anticipates the solidarity that eventually is formed around Francesco (Lizzani 2002: 27–36). His performance consists in opposing the law in order to achieve justice; a theme inspired from urban traditions of popular revolt but more obviously from Westerns from which De Santis appropriated both a social life embedded within a natural wilderness, and an archaic universe where the good and the weak are subjected to the violent avidity of authority figures (Argentieri 1996: 120–3). Compared to *Bitter Rice*, where Silvana's conflicting desires and loyalties distinguish her among villains and heroes, *Non c'è pace* is unambiguous in its Manichean structures. Partly, this derives from the pan focus lens which, as intended, accentuates every element within the visual field, outlining schematic relations between good and evil, just and unjust, and victims and victimisers

(De Santis 1996a: 45). At the time, this innovative stylistic asset enabled the stylised world of cartoon-like, Western-inspired characters to engage *fotoromanzi* readers and Hollywood fans with an unusual immediacy, while also making the message of social awakening as direct as the denunciation of exploitative socio-economic relations.

There was nothing unique about the intention, eloquently achieved both in *Bitter Rice* and in *Non c'è pace*, to 'see people's souls vanish in its concrete relations to the environment' and, in this way, to fulfil Alicata and De Santis' programmatic call for truthfulness (1941b). In particular, the relations established between social and natural shadowlands and the moral attitude behind geographical concreteness, human recognisability and historical authenticity invest the neorealist experience with a vein of coherence. Apart from Rossellini, however, no director operating within this cultural field came as close as De Santis to suggesting what a 'revolutionary art inspired from a humanity that suffers and hopes' might look like (Alicata and De Santis 1941b). Delineated with anti-fascist militancy and visions of an immediacy to the people's experiences, these directives for a new art contained an 'instinctive' idea, developed over the years and confirmed, after *Bitter Rice* was completed, by Gramsci's texts, about a national-popular art apt to establish revolutionary relations *to*, as well as *among*, the masses (De Santis quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 143). Only by assuming an interest in 'the living human, in life lived' and seeking not merely to represent 'the humble' but to free them from 'humility', could the intellectual aspire to reach and have a function among the people, Gramsci wrote. That his search for a rare exception to Italy's elitist literary tradition would lead to the 'popular content', the 'popular language in its expression', and the 'caustic critique of a corrupt and putrefied aristocracy' present in Carlo Goldoni's (1707–93) comedies' is, in this case, particularly relevant. Based on 'ideological attitudes: democratic before having read Rousseau' and on 'popular enlightenment' directed towards the middle classes, the reform Goldoni conducted in eighteenth-century theatre offers an illuminating parallel to De Santis' position in post-war cinema (Gramsci 1996: 42–5). Like his successive film, *Roma ore 11* (1952) which follows the frantic application of 200 women for one advertised position, the unrealised *Noi che facciamo crescere il grano* would unquestionably have broadened considerably the field of dialogue, narration and denunciation. The story of starving Southern peasants claiming their legal rights to uncultivated estate land was, however, too much for the Christian Democrats, since the specific episode in question – occurring in Calabria in 1949 – had stirred much turmoil after an armed police squad caused three deaths and several injuries in the name of reckless landowners (De Santis 1996c: 241–5). The promising project ended up in the archive of dreams along with Zavattini's inquiry-journey *Italia mia* and several other hypotheti-

cal films that in different ways might have contributed to the development of a truly popular cinema.

NOTES

1. That the tradition of the Resistance, for political reasons and for the symbolic language and collective expression it soon acquired, in itself failed to play a decisive role in recreating national identity must also be taken into consideration. See Stephen Gundle ('La religione civile della resistenza: Cultura di massa e identità politica nell'Italia del dopoguerra', in ed. Gian Piero Brunetta et al. (1987), *Cinema, storia, resistenza, 1944–1987*, Milano: Franco Angeli, 1–37).
2. Wagstaff estimates that the percentage of total Italian receipts earned by *L'onorevole Angelina* in its period of release was 0.310, whereas *Sotto il sole di Roma* would have earned 0.443 per cent (2007: 435–6).
3. Lattuada's preface is quoted in Taramelli (1995: 75). Having entered Italy clandestinely, *American Photographs* was reviewed on the anti-fascist *Corrente* (founded 1938) in 1939 and created a 'profound visual shock' among the Milanese 'bohemia' Lattuada frequented (Taramelli 1995: 66–75).
4. See Micciché (1999b: 26). The film would have earned 1.321 per cent of total Italian receipts in the specific period of release, compared to *Open City*'s 1.924 per cent (Wagstaff 2007: 435).
5. Kitzmiller was already known from *Vivere in pace* (Zampa, 1947) and *Tombolo paradiso nero* (Ferroni, 1947) which explored the very same criminal milieu (Sanguineti 1989: 142–4; Faldini and Fofi 1979: 123–9).
6. See Argentieri (1974: 86). The greatest achievement of the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno was, according to Ginsborg, infrastructural work that ended the isolation of the South. Lack of long-term, industrial projects and corruption severely limited the outcome of the 1,200 billion lire invested over a decade, however (1990: 62), allowing the North's comparative advantages in income and industrial development to increase (Mack Smith 1997: 434).
7. 611,000 immigrants came from the region of Veneto, 276,000 From Friuli-Venezia Giulia, 62,000 from Trentino-Alto Adige, 292,000 from Lombardy and 222,000 from Emilia Romagna, whereas 496,000 came from Campania, 420,000 from Calabria and 420,000 from Sicily (Rinauro 2009: 60–1).
8. De Santis observed that Germi ignored not only the harsh realities the immigrants would find in the land of hope, but also that a programme to regenerate the sulphur industry in Sicily at the time had been established. His pessimism would therefore have been unfounded and came, unintentionally, to support those who benefited from a closure of those industries (De Santis 1996c: 235–6).
9. 'Why does this film bother De Gasperi [Prime Minister 1945–53] so much? Is it perhaps not him who is forcing Italians to emigrate?' Tommaso Chiaretti asked from the pages of *L'Unità* (November 1950). 'Here it is – emigration; here it is depicted by a director not at all Communist, by a man who has looked around himself and reflected. But people who reflect are dangerous; it has been that way from time immemorial.' (quoted in Fanara 2000: 442)
10. See Vitti (1996: 29–31). Other Resistance films financed by the ANPI were *Il sole sorge ancora* (Vergano, 1946) and *Achtung! Banditi* (Lizzani, 1948); The testimony of post-Resistance confrontations between partisans and fascists belongs to Girotti (Faldini and Fofi 1979: 119–22).
11. See Minardi (2005: 13–25). The triumphant 1918 strike of the *mondine* in the area of Novarese was, according to Vivarelli (1991: 755), one of the most successful

- moments of the Socialist Union which, alongside the Catholic-inspired White Union, lead peasant activism in the North.
12. Several *mondine* workers and farm workers were killed by riot police still working under fascist laws during these demonstrations which reached a tragic peak in 1950 with the massacre of the Fonderie Riunite in Modena (Chianese 2008: 389). On the day of the attack (14 July), filming was interrupted and the entire crew went to take part in the local demonstrations (De Santis 1996a: 41).
 13. See Lizzani (2007: 60) and Vitti (2004: 53–4). Born to broaden the reading experiences of the masses, *fotoromanzi* consisted of still images of famous actors with speech bubbles and depicted adventurous and romantic stories in regular instalments. Both the suspense they created and the cinematic outlook they often assumed made this quintessentially Italian medium a no less telling sign of the emergence of mass culture than the cinema itself (Leconte 1989: 131–3).
 14. Having premiered in Cannes in the Spring of 1949, *Bitter Rice* was held back for release in Italy until autumn that year probably for two reasons: an intentionally long launch period for the debuting actress (Lughi 1989: 57) and the fear of what reactions the film would arouse in the tense political climate (De Santis 1996a: 41).
 15. The first of its sort, *Grand Hotel* was launched in 1946 as a comic book; a couple of years later it adopted the aesthetics of the *fotoromanzo*. A factor contributing to its immediate and unprecedented popularity was the drawings of the famous illustrator Walter Molino, whose characters often had the faces of famous actors and whose later repertoire included both Mangano and Gassman (Leconte 1989: 131). Walter seems to have inherited his name and the homonymy would have encouraged the associations among readers that Silvana establishes between the petty criminal and the fantasy world she escapes into.
 16. See De Santis (1996a: 41; 1996b: 197–8). Lizzani recalls: ‘From all Italian embassies, our diplomatic body, the most reactionary and conservative a democratic country has ever had, bombarded the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the government with telegrams and missives ordering them not to distribute Italian cinema abroad which only showed rags and misery. And *Bitter Rice* was this as well’ (2007: 64).
 17. *Bitter Rice* and *Non c’è pace tra gli ulivi* earned respectively an estimated 0.708 and 0.747 per cent of total national receipts (Wagstaff, 2007: 437). Like *Bicycle Thieves*, *Bitter Rice* ran for eight weeks in Paris where it was released two months before arriving in Rome and Milan, initially running for 22 and 28 days respectively compared to *Open City*’s respective 48 and 15 days (Lughi 1989: 57–9).

8. THE JOURNEY BEYOND NEOREALISM: STREETWALKERS, POLITICAL REBELS, ANTI-MAFIA RESISTERS, STOLEN CHILDREN AND UNWANTED CITIZENS

What a journey they made you do. Of no use. If they didn't want to accept me at the first institution they won't accept me at this one either. Me, they won't accept anywhere.

Rosetta in *Il ladro di bambini*

By the mid-1950s, war, Resistance black markets, shoeshiners, unemployment, and miserable living conditions had definitively lost their aura as the centre of cinematic narration. The fading of neorealism suited cold-war cultural policies perfectly, but it cannot be reduced either to a matter of resignation to censorship, spectaculars and commercialism, nor to a degradation of the public's taste and a failure in most cases to reach the masses. All of these factors played their role, but no less determining were the socio-economic effects of Marshall Aid and of neo-liberalist policies and industrial modernisation – aspects of the post-war economy that transformed the prevalently agrarian country into an aspiring industrial nation and founder member, in 1957, of the European Economic Community (Ginsborg 1990: 1; 212). Indicative of the country's sudden prosperity is the hundred per cent increase in net income between 1954 and 1964 whereas a cultural illustration is found both in the increase in film production from ninety-two in 1950 to over 200 every year throughout the 1960s, and in the inventions – from the Fiat 600 and Vespa to washing machines and swimsuits – that now became the icons of originally American-inspired ideals of consumerism, modern lifestyles and individual freedom.¹ As changes in leisure and social relations were accompanied by

secularisation, fragmentation and material as well as moral self-interest, traditional 'Communities' built around human associations and emotional collectiveness merged increasingly into a 'Society' made up of pluralistic, atomised and impersonal entities.²

Italy's transition to modernity was not only a predominantly private affair, it was also 'a quintessentially northern phenomenon' that widened socio-economic gaps and intensified migratory fluxes from the South to the North and from country to city.³ Growing populations as well as industries unleashed uncontrolled and often entirely inadequate construction work that changed entirely the landscapes of inner-city and suburban areas. Whatever intentions there initially may have been to make 'progress' and respect 'equilibrium' and 'environmental layouts', these were increasingly subordinated to the financial advantages and prestige of urban expansion (Crainz 2005: 130–3). Carlo Emilio Gadda who famously captured the ambiguities of transformation in the experimental crime novel *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* (1957), observed in 1955 that accelerated urbanisation left everyone from town planners and sociologists to civic administrators, estate agents and technicians with an ecstatic sense of hope, certainty, and an emulatory disposition:

The city is spreading: the city is expanding [. . .] we too shall arrive at the three millions of Paris, the four [millions] of Berlin, the eight [millions] of London [. . .] In the acropolis and in the turreted provincial town councils, this civic tickling is even frenzy. (quoted in Crainz 2005: 130)

Fellini's response to frenetic urban rhythms was the 'large allegorical fresco' *La dolce vita* offers of movie stars, tabloid journalists and a degraded aristocracy gathered in Rome's fashionable via Veneto (1999: 67), whereas Antonioni's *L'avventura* opposes it to silences left behind by the emotional and interpersonal disappearances of the idle rich. The negative effects that such radical transformation can have become clearer still from *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* as Visconti follows five Southern brothers from an overwhelming new life to material betterment and tragic disintegration in Milan. Uncontested winners at the 1960 Cannes and Venice festivals and, except for *L'avventura*, at the box office, these equally experimental approaches to socio-cultural commentary were welcomed as an artistic 'rebirth' among critics and filmmakers, while running into considerable obstacles on account of the Church and Milan's Public Prosecutor's Office (Argentieri 1974: 170–6). Shared among them is the formal and narrative alignments with transformations that were 'miraculous' not as much for their rapidity but for the 'short circuit' they caused 'between previous economic horizons, expectations, mental images, and the ones infused by the boom' (Crainz 2005: 60). Our journey beyond neorealism will accordingly present ruptures and reinventions, and while it will trace neorealist

legacies in portrayals of the nation, aligning with Alan O'Leary and Catherine O'Rawe's recent critique of 'a "certain tendency" in Italian film criticism' it will show no 'disdain' for popular films, nor will it presuppose neorealism as a paradigm and realism as 'a value category' (2011: 107–15). In some highly diverse works of directors who from the 1950s to the present have been among the country's most prolific, we will see that the play with neorealist themes and narratives is a question of reformulating the proximity to human and social hinterlands and in most cases of rejecting all forms of detachment from the pro-filmic. What remains unchanged is the moral objective of reducing distances between the cinema, History and those who make it.

STREETWALKERS: FROM THE MARGINS TO THE CENTRE

Fellini's film on Rome's prostitutes was not motivated by ideals of the reconstructed reportage he had co-scripted for *Open City* and *Paisà*, but by an encounter with one of them, a duteous study of many of them and a hypothetical *what if* with ample room for honest inventions:

If, in via Veneto, a prostitute from the periphery should happen to come around, of those who live in the *borgata* or among the ruins of Foro Romano, what happens? Her VIP colleagues will make a big deal, the *commendatori* will not even look at her, then a policeman will tell her to leave. Instead, let's make her live a fairy-tale night. (quoted in Del Fra 1965: 37)

Cabiria likely originated during Fellini's collaboration on *Senza pietà* wherein Giulietta Masina appeared as a peculiar and industrious prostitute among villains and heroes. She subsequently introduced Cabiria in a scene of *Lo sceicco bianco* (1952), but only with *Le notti di Cabiria* did the Chaplinesque figure come to life in full, one year before brothels were abolished in 1958. Besides the contentious topic, it was the gallery of streetwalkers, their pimps and their nocturnal life as well as the contamination of the holy and the profane that troubled those who for various reasons sought to preserve images of the Eternal City (Kezich 1988: 248–9). While critical reception varied along the ideological scale, there was no doubt that Cabiria's walk led towards 'the end of neorealism' (Bazin 2002: 337–45) and into a poetic, autobiographical world of mysticism and exemplary, rather than ordinary, characters (Aristarco 1975b: 644–9). Moving from one robbery by one deceitful fiancé to that of another, she superficially replicates the circular movements of Antonio in *Bicycle Thieves*, but her movements between the remote *borgata* where she lives in a hut and the street she walks at the margins of the city, delineate rather different paths.

Resentful both of Giorgio's attempt to drown her for 40,000 lire and social regulations that exclude her from the city's exclusive areas, Cabiria transgresses into Via Veneto where she encounters her favourite actor, Alberto Lazzari (played by Amedeo Nazzari). Tired of life and of his silly girlfriend, he takes Cabiria to the Piccadilly club and to his lavish villa where her clownish mannerisms eventually turn into tears as the girlfriend, predictably, returns. Equally disappointing are Cabiria's visits respectively to a sanctuary where she asks the Virgin Mary for help to change, and to a variety theatre where she is hypnotised and ridiculed. What motivates both her escapism and her savings for the future is suggested when she meets 'the Man with the Sack' and follows his nocturnal visit to the homeless in the caves. While the view of a former high-priced prostitute worryingly announces where Cabiria might end up in a few years' time, the humanitarian's unprejudiced charity makes her reflect on her life and confess how she first came to Rome as an orphan.⁴ This tentative self-awareness takes a more precise form when Oscar abandons her – alive but without all the money she got for her hut – and she rises to resume her walk. When we follow Cabiria's tired steps and evaluate what will become of her – chances are she will end up like Antonio without his bike: exactly where she started – Cabiria's path merges with that of some musicians while her look moves gradually towards the camera. Whether the tearful smile she directs towards us manifests 'a touch of grace' Fellini ascribed to several of his apparently destroyed characters (1999: 66) or whether it is just another mechanism to 'implicate' the viewer in her circle of 'illusions and disillusion', it takes us far away from the detached and denunciatory open-endedness of *Bicycle Thieves* (Shiel 2006: 120). What we do discern in Cabiria's self-reflexive look and in the comfort she finds in the cheerful, young musicians, is an authorial poetics that in its focus on the subjective experiences of a changing society will arrive at entirely different ways of seeing and of being in the world.

Like the aimless provincial bachelors in Fellini's *I vitelloni* (1953) and the travelling clown Masina performs in *La strada* (1954), Cabiria directs the neorealist journey towards new human and cinematic realms. The innovative intentions attached to these wandering characters come, nevertheless, to reinforce what according to Deleuze marked the very novelty of neorealism, accentuating 'not only the insignificance of the events, but also the uncertainty of the links between them and their non-belonging to those who experience them in this new form of the voyage' (Deleuze 1986: 212). Whereas Fellini's 'viewers' are driven along with utter inconsequentiality to exhilarating spaces of appearance and performance, the sub-proletarians Pasolini portrayed in *Accattone* (1961), which visualises his novel *Una vita violenta* (1959) and in *Mamma Roma* (1963), stand tragically immobilised to demonstrate how 'beyond the city a new city is born, new laws are born where the law is enemy, a new dignity is born where dignity no longer exists' (Pasolini 1979: 117–18).

A former prostitute gifted with a diligence memorably personified by Anna Magnani, Mamma Roma is now a fruit seller and thinks she can escape the laws of the *borgata*, bringing her son Ettore back from the country where he grew up and moving closer to the city centre where she attends mass with respectable neighbours. It works until the past knocks at the door in the form of Carmine's far too familiar intimidation. To ensure the pimp's silence, Mamma Roma resumes her old ways, whereas Ettore, who secretly knows his mother's story, remains as indifferent to the respectability she envisions as to the school she, after talking to the priest, wants him to attend and the job she blackmails an adulterous restaurant owner into offering him. When the boys she considers ideal company talk her feverish son into a petty theft, the project of refinement collapses: Ettore is caught and dies hallucinating and crucified by ropes to a jail bed. Some women neighbours prevent Mamma Roma from throwing herself out of a window from which she can only look out at the promising city she failed to enter.

If Mamma Roma's happier moments as a vociferous fruit seller relive scenes from Magnani's pre-neorealist comedy, *Campo de' fiori*, her final appearance as a secularised *mater dolorosa* turns the tables on Pina's death in front of her son, but it also evokes the motherhood by a 'miracle' Magnani experienced as a dim-witted country woman in Rossellini's *Amore*, as well as the pushy, but finally repentant, mother she personifies in *Bellissima*. While appealing to the audience's mental imagery of the actress and of the city, real and cinematic, with which she is unmistakably associated, the film also engages with Renaissance art, with Vivaldi's baroque tunes and with Gramsci's critique.⁵ In contrast to *Bitter Rice*, however, where hybridisation serves communicative and essentially popular purposes, Pasolini's vision is elitist and apocalyptic, suggesting the impossibility of national-popular didacticism in times when urbanisation, consumption and mass culture provoked a 'cultural homologation' he saw as having removed boundaries and made everyone identical, destroying both the humanism of the middle class and the prehistoric authenticity of the proletariat (1975: 50–6). In opposition to these levelling processes, *Mamma Roma* mythologises life in the *borgata*, featuring non-professionals in affected performances to dramatise their sociological and linguistic behaviour without offering a solution to their marginalisation. This anti-naturalistic realism is epitomised in two, extensive frontal shots that both track Mamma Roma as she walks a nocturnal road while relating her life's struggles to male passersby.⁶ Whereas the first monologue is upbeat, enunciating her perceived farewell to prostitution, the second occurs after Carmine once again has forced her back to the streets, and it leaves her in solitary reflection on the responsibility for her past and present defeats (Ryan-Scheutz 2007: 90–1). At stake in the unorthodox Marxist critique stands not merely fascism, to which Mamma Roma relates the poverty she grew up in, nor the uneven distribution of the

city's recent wealth, but also the 'chaos' that emerges between her origins and petit-bourgeois aspirations, creating a 'confusion' that destroys Ettore's primordial sense of self as well as her own chances of social mobility (Pasolini, quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1981: 237).

No apocalyptic vision but an agonising ennui and an obsessively visualised emptiness emerge when Antonioni explores the protagonists of modernisation and urban expansion. *La notte* (1961) opens with a descending tracking shot of Milan's 127-metre-high Pirelli skyscraper and of the vast cityscape as projected onto its window-walls. It is, however, not from this panoptical perspective that Italy's financial capital will be examined, but from that of a wanderer in search of meaning beneath domestic and social facades.⁷ Lidia's trajectory starts and ends respectively with classy receptions, the first launches her husband, Giovanni's new novel and follows on from their visit to a cancer-suffering friend who dies a few hours later; the second ends at dawn as Lidia reveals a 'thought' she starts to formulate upon leaving the launch party. Drawing on the energy of the urban crowd, her initially absent walk assumes the spontaneous inquisitiveness of a *flânerie* that leads from congested streets and massive skyscrapers to a demolished courtyard. As misplaced amidst modern constructions as she is among socialites and pseudo-intellectuals, this residue of the city's less prosperous past brings Lidia to an equally destroyed house in the suburbs where she grew up. Giovanni picks her up and, failing to comprehend her return to the places of their past, he takes her home to their inner-city apartment where domestic boredom drives them to a fancy nightclub and an industrial tycoon's villa. Giovanni is offered a position in the wealthy host's empire, but fails to seduce his daughter, whereas Lidia continues her detached observation and is ultimately incapable of accepting an admirer's advances. Their elopement is poetically rendered through a rainy car-window that drowns out the voices of their enthusiastic conversation, a noticeable contrast to Lidia's confrontation at dawn with Giovanni, who by conquering her body thinks he can obliterate her despair over realising that all she feels for him is 'compassion'.

All the commonplaces associated with Antonioni – incommunicability, alienation, 'Eros gone sick', lack of purpose and loss of meaning – surface from the predictably inconclusive night that gives the film its title. Halting in 'optical situations' where 'idle periods' and 'empty spaces' merge and memory crystallise past and present destruction (Deleuze 1989: 6–7; 79–81) as it happens in the courtyard scene, all Lidia arrives at is a longing for death that hopefully will start 'something new' or, she concedes, "perhaps nothing" at all. In formulating this nihilistic awareness, however, she has distanced herself from her unquestioning husband and their conformist social environment, following a path uniquely of her own devising. Her wandering evokes the claim Italian women staked in the 1960s to predominantly male streets,

suggesting what inner experiences such socio-cultural acts may entail (Bruno 1993: 50–4). A similar walk of emancipation unfolds in Agnes Varda's *Cleo from 5 to 7* (1962) where the fear of terminal cancer compels the materialistic singer Cleo to transform her previous window shopping and masquerade into self-reflection, objectification and *flânerie* along Parisian boulevards. This representation of a mobilised female gaze points to the legacy the neorealist journey left among the aspiring cineastes of *Cahiers du Cinéma* whose auteurist inclinations developed around essayistic road movies such as *La strada* and Rossellini's *Viaggio in Italia*. What in particular made the latter's focus on a woman's exploration of the 'providential city' of Naples a 'breach' through which 'all cinema, on pain of death, must pass through' was, Jacques Rivette wrote in 1955, the 'vast chords' springing from 'shots of eyes *looking*' and the 'new, contemporary tone that speaks to us [and] affects the modern man in us' (1985: 194–200).

POLITICAL REBELS: FAILED REVOLUTIONS AND THEIR AFTERTHOUGHT

Revisiting the rejuvenating characteristics of the *nouvelle vague*, Deleuze observed how a 'reflexive consciousness' unknown to the neorealists' intuitive modes had definitively freed the 'voyage-form' from 'spatio-temporal co-ordinates' and from social anchorages in favour of a focus on the 'soul'. With the release in 1960 of Rivette's *Paris Belongs to Us*, Truffaut's *Shoot The Piano Player* and Godard's *Breathless*, it was clear that the search for personal stories would concentrate around 'a new race of charming, moving characters' unconcerned by what happens to them (Deleuze 1986: 213). A decade later, both solipsistic nonchalance and individual anxiety had become increasingly problematic as the Vietnam War, the 1968 student revolts, and gaps widened by the 'economic miracle' had entirely changed perceptions of society. Students combatting a fossilised education system and generational hierarchies would join workers subjected to the logic of capitalism, whereas feminists claimed a formal and socio-cultural emancipation epitomised by the demonstrations for and legalisation of divorce and, in particular, the taboo-tainted subject of abortion (Crainz 2003: 130–56; 505–17). To what extent the social unrest influenced public opinion became evident in the 1976 election where the Communist Party won 34.4 per cent of votes against the 38.7 per cent won by the Christian Democrats, calling for a power-share after thirty years of exclusion that unified the two parties in a predictably short-lived 'historic compromise'.⁸ Both the wave of contestation and the conspiracy and suppression it often met from institutional and industrial authorities saw a range of responses from directors who could choose to address times of upheaval without denying either stylisation and generic conventions, nor disillusioned visions of revolutionary action.

An intellectual of working-class origins and past militancy, Elio Petri went on from Giuseppe De Santis' apprenticeship to develop a sceptical form of 'popular-political cinema' that is unmistakably associated with the *divo*, Gian Maria Volonté (Minuz 2007: 136). Together, they confronted the mafia's rule in *Ciascuno il suo* (1967) and the state's unchallenged impunity in the Oscar-winning *Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto* (1970), before analysing the workers' struggle in *La classe operaia va in paradiso* (1971) which won the Palme d'Or in Cannes.⁹ Our guide into destructive factory life is Lulù, a metal mechanic whose frenetic piecework is praised by owners and hated by co-workers, who are evaluated and paid according to his pace. To distract himself both from their contempt and from the pollution that is damaging his health, Lulù concentrates on the pieces he produces and the derriere of a virginal colleague he eventually lures into machine-like lovemaking in the car. What he brings home at night after hours of monotonous work is little more than a minimum wage and a frustration that ruins his domestic life. It is only after losing a finger in the machinery that Lulù abandons individualism, reacting not only to the factory's physical threats, but more importantly to a worrying awareness that he resembles an elderly ex-worker who was fired and later confined to a lunatic asylum. Symptomatically, his protests are met with psychological examination and, eventually, dismissal as he provokes a strike that thrills the students who yell all day outside the factory. What they fail to see is how useless audacious rhetoric about class struggle is to Lulù's concrete dilemma, whereas the labour union, which by virtue of the recently implemented Statute of Workers' Rights manages to reclaim his position, ignores entirely his needs for humane working conditions and fair compensation.¹⁰ As a punishment, both Lulù and those who fought with him are removed to an assembly line so deafening that conversations between them must be yelled and enunciated in fragments. Lulù's efforts to reconstruct a dream he had about facing an insuperable wall and seeing paradise behind it can therefore only result in confusion among his workmates.

Caught on the wrong side of the wall created to protect the bourgeois paradise, Lulù has few choices but to comply with laws of productivity that allow him consumerist satisfactions, such as a car, at the cost of uneasy interpersonal relations, sexual frustration and paranoia – all of which represent the 'alienating' effects of working within what Petri defined as the 'universe of a concentration camp'.¹¹ Articulated with a psychological rather than an ideological emphasis and by expressionist rather than didactic means, his assessment of capitalism outraged militant critics who saw themselves represented by a bunch of useless students while the compromised labour union offers the only solution and the film's model-worker appears as a 'beast' torn between petit-bourgeois aspirations and class consciousness (quoted in Della Casa 2009: 7–13). Infused by the intensity of the contemporary debate, these

critical voices tended to ignore the reference to the recent case of a worker who had been fired for professing radical objectives at the factory, as well as the authenticity of Northern voices and of the setting of a factory near Turin whose recently laid-off employees filled the supporting roles (Della Casa 2009: 16–18). With the exception of Mario Monicelli's *I compagni* (1963) which portrays textile workers in 1900s Torino, and Ruttmann's *Acciaio*, whose formalism Petri evokes through Ennio Moricone's weighty score aligned with the rhythm and the solidity of the machinery, no Italian feature film had portrayed an actual factory. More importantly, however, *La classe operaia* adheres to the awareness that the way of convincing spectators was no longer 'faithful' portraits, but 'baroque deformations' (Casetti 2008: 37); that to look at pressing political problems with 'grotesque' and 'oneiric' frames could better reveal their origins and engage 1970s' audiences in their implications (Castaldi 2006: 59–65). The exaggerated representation of greedy owners, on the one hand, and of disunity within the Left and among workers, on the other, discloses the complexity of exploitation, whereas Lulù's disfigured expressions and delirious experiences confront the viewer physically and mentally with a labour process that destroys people from within. Ultimately, such estranging strategies aimed, as Brecht theorised it, to disallow emotional identification and draw attention away from the particulars of Lulù's story to the historical realities he refers to when asking, desperately, 'what kind of life is this?'

That naturalism had played its part as the motor of ideological analysis is an accepted fact when Lina Wertmüller (1926) visits 1970s Turin, starting, as she does, with a Sicilian metalworker seduced by communism and by an emancipated Northern woman in order to satirise archaic notions of honour and the mafia's iron grip on individual and social life. Although both *Mimi metallurgico ferito nell'onore* (1972) and Wertmüller's successive comedies are inconceivable outside of Italian regional and social discourses, they travelled triumphantly within international theatres and stirred cult reactions among American cinephiles and critics alike.¹² Standing in a niche between Fellini – whose taste for the bizarrely vulgar and, according to certain feminist critics, for the misogynistic, she shares – and the 1960s' *commedia all'italiana*, which in itself drew on the regional stereotypes, stock scenarios, and anti-bourgeois satire of *commedia dell'arte*, Wertmüller balances questions of supra-national relevance – political commitment, exploitation and rebellion, conflicts of gender and ethnicity – with national traditions wherein grotesque registers serve to deconstruct repressive social conventions (Marcus 1986: 314; Bondanella 2009: 194). In *Film d'amore e d'anarchia* (1973), this equilibrium is anchored to Tunin, a young farmer who in the 1930s witnesses the assassination of an anarchist friend and takes on his commitment to kill Mussolini. In Rome, he meets up with Salomè, whose boyfriend was unjustly killed in Bologna for a plot on the Duce. Since then, she has lived for revenge, hiding as



Figure 8.1 Tunin and Tripolina in Wertmüller's *Film d'amore e anarchia*. Courtesy of the British Film Institute.

the queen at Madame Aida's luxury brothel and pumping Spatoletti – chief of the secret services and her most devoted client – for information. What ruins her plans is not Tunin's naiveté or fear of certain death, but her colleague, Tripolina, who after some days of Tunin's disinterested love, tries desperately to prevent Salomè from waking him up for the fatal mission. Their betrayal unhinges Tunin and rather than escaping with Tripolina, he shoots frantically at some *carabinieri* mistakenly thought to be after him and discovers, with the revolver pointed towards his head, that he is out of bullets. Spatoletti's torturers nonetheless report his death as an unidentified madman's suicide to hinder the increasingly numerous anarchists from getting another martyr.

Like Lulù, Tunin is predictably defeated. If *Film d'amore* appears even more pessimistic with regard to revolutionary objectives, it is not as much for the disquieting counterpoint his death forms to witty dialogues, stereotypical portraits, a well-paced narrative and ridicule of authorities such as the stupidly boastful Spatoletti and the presumptuous Madame. Nor is it the futilely tragic end it poses to Tunin and Tripolina's romantic idyll – a two-day holiday the Madame consents to after Tunin helps her get rid of a client just before he dies of a heart attack. The two anarchists may both profess a hatred for tyrants, reinforcing the messages of the brothel scenes which rather than demonstrating an 'unwillingness to deal with women as individuals' (Cottino-Jones 2010:

159) convey a critique of totalitarianism through women who display false and conformist identities, pretending a happily vulgar submission to male laws and desires. Ultimately, however, Tunin and Salomè are fundamentally driven by personal exigencies of vindication. While their anarchism, as Marcus shows, is embedded in history and in their native areas – Tunin grew up among socialists in the Po Valley and replicates an unnamed Sardinian anarchist executed after a failed attempt on the Duce; Salomè is from the equally radical Bologna where her boyfriend, the actual anarchist Anteo Zamboni, was killed during Mussolini's visit in 1926 – their fiction subjects personal sacrifice to Tripolina's individualism (Marcus 2004: 185–7). The disdain she expresses for ideals and belief in justice conveys, however, neither a 'typically female view of politics' (Cottino-Jones 2010: 161), nor certainly a 'nihilist' attitude (Russo Bullaro 2006: 44), but a knowledge, drawn from growing up in Naples and from surviving humbly in The Eternal City, of the immutable course of History. Her rejection of political action ultimately presents an 'alternative history' that testifies to the perpetually marginalising strategies of patriarchal powers (Diaconescu-Blumenfeld 1999: 390).

The characters' distinct temperaments, their broad dialects, and the regional folk tunes interconnecting the rural North with the urban centre and the maritime South all serve to reactualise the neorealist journey towards suppressed realities. While the parodistic portrayal may remain inadequate as a historical analysis, its value resides in the way the nature and intentions of fascist violence are projected onto 1970s Italy.¹³ Tunin's desperate call for human freedom when surrendering to the *carabinieri*'s ferocious capture comments on the gory, sometimes fatal, confrontations that arose between students and the forces of law and order summoned to suppress their protests. However, what would have struck contemporary viewers most is the flashback at the beginning to when Tunin, as a child, asked his mother what an anarchist is and his proclamation years later – 'Viva l'anarchia!' (Long live anarchy!) – voiced when he intends to shoot himself and in response to Spatoletti's interrogation.¹⁴ Herein, we discern specific references to a wave of extremist political violence that unfolded in the wake of 1968, peaking a decade later with the Red Brigade's assassination of former Prime Minister, Aldo Moro.¹⁵ Wertmüller's concern is the 1969 Piazza Fontana bombing in Milan which left seventeen dead and many more wounded, inspiring hasty conclusions within the police who immediately targeted the harmless Giuseppe Pinelli and other anarchists. After three days of illicitly long interrogations, Pinelli was seen falling from the fourth floor of Milan's police headquarters and would, according to infamously fabricated police reports, have screamed: 'Viva l'anarchia!' before jumping out of the window (Lucarelli 2007: 21–5). Joining the chorus of *Documenti su Pinelli* (1970), a *film inchiesta* promoted by Petri and Volonté, and Dario Fo's satirical play *Morte accidentale di un anarchico* (1970), *Film d'amore* engages

with the public anger this case caused, but more subtly still does it voice the suspicion many correctly had that the attack in Milan was orchestrated within the neo-fascist organisation Ordine Nuovo and promoted by the diversion of Italian and American Secret Services. Already at this time, critical observers talked of 'the strategy of tension', suggesting that the counter-revolutionary attacks on civilians staged as coming from the Left served to urge the country towards totalitarian structures and away from politics of inclusion and social reform.¹⁶

Few summarised the 1970s zeitgeist better than the feminists who in the search for revolutionary transparency extinguished borders between the domestic and the public, professing their convictions that 'the personal is political'. Seen in this light, the grotesque in Petri and Wertmüller appears as a means to put women's and men's tacit suffering up for collective debate (Crainz 2003: 509–10). Some twenty years later, when cult director and actor Nanni Moretti looks back at the radical Left within which his ideas were formed, the feminists' dictum is resolutely reversed: in *Caro diario* (1993), the political is idiosyncratically personal.¹⁷ While autobiography has been Moretti's method since *Io sono un autarchico* (1976), the first of several films in which he personifies the neurotic ex-68er, Michele, it was in this essayistic film that the director first played himself, thus presenting a manifesto of already publicly known obsessions and of the considerable freedom he enjoys as producer and distributor of his own films, winning international acclaim as the one of the most innovative of Italy's contemporary directors.¹⁸ *Caro diario* opens with a diary entry in the writing while the author's voiceover reads the text, declaring that there is one thing he likes the most. By the end of the first chapter, 'In Vespa', his favourites (old buildings observed while cruising around Rome's deserted streets in August) have formed a list of impressions (dancers, Jennifer Beals, random interlocutors, horrible movies) that continues in 'Isles' where he visits the southern Aeolians with Gerardo, a devoted reader exclusively of Joyce's *Ulysses*. Their odyssey in search of peace fails, as the things they wanted to escape (traffic, hostility, conformism, anti-social narcissism) are intensified on the islands, while Gerardo resigns himself to the industrialisation of culture and becomes addicted to *The Bold and the Beautiful*. In claustrophobic contrast to these open-air explorations, the last chapter, 'Doctors', gravitates around health centres as it reconstructs the months of arbitrary assessments and useless treatments Moretti underwent before being diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma. When frustration, pain and chemotherapy are all over, he can only state the doctor's ability to talk but not to listen and the supposed healthiness of water.

Unfolding as a collection of improvised, constructed, and re-enacted experiences, what Moretti referred to as a 'Vespa-film' (quoted in Detassis 2002: 9) fulfils in part Zavattini's ideals of a 'cinema of encounters', but it does not

extend into the 'civic-moral participation' he considered crucial to the diary as a chronicle of the present (Zavattini 2002: 690). Whether Moretti conducts a surreal nocturnal attack on a critic who justifies splatter films, or mocks parents subordinated to their only child and doctors protected by the authority of medical discourse, his moral look remains detached and a pervasive self-irony evades the generational burden of representation so prevalent in his previous films. This change in perspective is voiced during the first of his two cinema visits where a scene involving some bourgeois ex-68ers who lament past and present collective defeats annoys the eccentric director. Refusing their generalising terms, he leaves the empty theatre while declaring that '*You* screamed horrendous and violent things and *you* have turned ugly. I screamed righteous things and now I am a splendid forty-year-old!' Although the invented metacinematic scene ridicules the unoriginality, the sentimentalism and the artificiality Moretti would ascribe to much Italian cinema, his critique moves beyond industrial conformism, towards the larger anthropological processes of 'cultural homologation' against which he can only state his belonging among 'a minority of people'. In contrast to the narcissist mystics Moretti encounters on the most isolated of the Aeolian islands, however, he does not deny the present. As the search for authenticity is brought to extremes, including footage of his last chemotherapy session, the cinematic transcription of self both calls for and exemplifies a new cinematic language that may provoke critical reflection on current socio-cultural and political phenomena (De Gaetano 2002: 77–8). When at the end of the first chapter he decides to visit the monument in Ostia where Pasolini was assassinated, the homage speaks not to the controversial intellectual's apocalyptic vision but rather to his tireless ethical and fundamentally corporeal presence in public life and cultural imagery.¹⁹ To establish the body as a testimonial icon becomes for both a way to refocus the collective dimension of artistic activity. While Moretti, like Pasolini, is unable, historically and artistically, to act didactically as an organic intellectual, he embraces the possibility of operating 'socratically' as a provocateur, turning the personal into a basis for social consciousness and cultural transformation.²⁰

ANTI-MAFIA RESISTERS: THE SOUTHERN PROBLEM GOES GLOBAL

If what we can loosely refer to as the 'civic' tradition in modern Italian cinema can be defined by the challenges it poses to official representations of society as well as to that which in the self-evidence of public and social life 'goes without saying because it comes without saying', then we can also recognise within it a sense of belonging and responsibility vis-à-vis a specific civilisation and an ideal of transforming individual spectators into a *civitas*; a new form of citizenship critical both of authoritative discourse and unchallenged doctrines



Figure 8.2 Witnesses to the building collapse in Rosi's *Le mani sulla città*. Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

(Bourdieu 1977: 167). A significant example is Francesco Rosi's (1922–) *Tre fratelli* (1981) in which the Neapolitan provinces provide the setting for a discussion of left-wing terrorism, but it was originally to pursue the power relations already explored as Visconti's assistant on *The Earth Trembles* that he first looked to his native city. At a time when the government openly denied the problem of organised crime, *La sfida* (1958) unlocked the Camorra's control over low-scale businesses, whereas *Salvatore Giuliano* (1962) alluded to the criminal, political and economic forces behind the assassination of the mythologised Sicilian outlaw, Giuliano, and proved decisive for the formation in 1963 of the first Anti-mafia Commission.²¹ In *Le mani sulla città* (1963), corruption and collusion are related to real estate speculation that via manipulation of official building plans and funds for Southern development were mutilating both 'the face' and the 'soul' of Naples and other Southern cities (Rosi, quoted in Ciment 2005). No longer destroyed by bombs (*Paisà*) nor resting in its myths (*Viaggio in Italia*), 1960s Naples is a dystopia of concrete Rosi introduces in a sweeping aerial shot before localising a construction site in a poor inner-city street. Seconds later, the workers' loud strikes into the ground cause the collapse of an old, inhabited building. In the City Council the following day, the communist council member De Vita demands an inquest into the fatal project, directly targeting his right-wing adversary, Nottola, who acquires building

permits with political influence and the support of the Camorra and acquires votes with wealth derived from shoddy housing. An inquest is called, but as it includes complicit party members and proceeds through unaccountable public offices, Nottola is left predictably untouched, whereas the impoverished residents must evacuate the street where the incident occurred to leave room for his inexorable expansion. On election night, the right-wing mayor loses to the centre candidate with whom Nottola has allied to enter the governing committee as head of public works. It is the new mayor who eventually inaugurates Nottola's project launched against civically sensitive town planning schemes but with public funds and the blessing of governmental and clerical authorities.

The film's postscript note states that although events and characters are fictional, the reality forming them is authentic. Concealed within this apparently generic claim to authenticity are rather confrontational references to webs of collusion that reached far beyond Naples where the ex-fascist Mayor Achille Lauro, according to Rosi's compatriot and scriptwriter, Raffaele La Capria, throughout the 1950s had given speculators 'free hands on the city' (quoted in Garofano 2004: 243). It is as a product of his regime that we must perceive of Nottola who in himself is a force, not essentially evil, of constructiveness – memorably rendered through Rod Steiger's formidable screen presence – that political and historical circumstances allow cynical and destructive room for play (Rosi, quoted in Ciment 2005). Nottola's primary protector is the outgoing mayor who personifies both Lauro's opportunism and eventual defeat, whereas De Vita denounces their corruption with the lucid oratory of Carlo Fermariello, the Neapolitan communist councilman and Labour Union Leader who played his character. The story is, however, not about the heroes and villains of this society, although it separates morally as well as spatially those who pass off the abuse of power for the legitimate execution of administrative procedures of individual rights, and those who, like the boy who loses his legs in the incident, live in deprivation. Based on endless city walks, encounters with urbanists and architects and observation of innumerable city council meetings, as well as on the authenticity of non-professionals who act out their ideological and social positions, the film presents individuals as forces in a conflict; of interest not for their personal life, but for the public consequences of their actions. As character development is undermined by political discourse, allusions and ellipses, psychology becomes, as Rosi explained, a matter of 'editing', and 'truth' – something he ultimately leaves up to the viewer to 'judge' (quoted in Ciment 2005). By suggesting the nature and origins of processes that at the time were not publicly acknowledged, *Le mani sulla città* seeks to transform its spectators into a citizenship capable of substantiating De Vita's warning to Nottola that the people are developing consciousness and will soon challenge his game.

The retrospective awareness of how wrong De Vita was is partly what motivated Roberto Saviano (1979–) to investigate and expose the mechanisms

that have reduced what in the 1960s was an aesthetically, socially and environmentally devastating construction site, to a Gomorrah intoxicated by waste, drugs and bloodshed. By such means, Neapolitan clans have seen an enormous expansion, but their power remains founded in 'concrete. The oil of the South', an entrepreneurial capital derived from sand enough to construct 'half of Italy' and to destroy landscapes and farmlands around Naples (Saviano 2006: 235–6). Openly and unopposed, for in the kingdom of the Camorra, the wages of truth are death or, at best, exclusion, as is known both to the police-protected author and to some of his characters who have broken the *omertà* – a law that in Naples reigns as resignation, indifference and material necessity rather than fear. Nonetheless, the reportage-novel proves the power of the word, and in transforming it into the cult film that *Gomorrah* (2008) has become, Saviano and director Matteo Garrone (1968–) selected five stories defined by place and characters who all testify to the Camorra's territorial control. Don Ciro delivers money to the families of imprisoned clan affiliates in Scampia, a housing project founded in concrete in the North of Naples. His route interrelates with that of the sixteen-year-old Totò, who delivers goods from his mother's store and drugs between dealers. An aspiring *camorrista*, Totò is trained in fearlessness by being shot at while wearing a bulletproof vest, while the provincial kids Marco and Ciro reject all rules and affiliations, stealing money, drugs and weapons from a gaming house, illegal immigrants and a mafia boss respectively, realising only too late that to live like Tony Montana in *Scarface* also implies facing the death he suffered. Pasquale is a gifted tailor employed in a textile industry that in the battle for contracts with Northern designers has met increasing competition from the factories of Chinese immigrants. Having survived the fatal reprisal for clandestine lectures given to admiring Chinese employees, he starts work as a truck driver rather than returning to constrained, underpaid and unappreciated artistry, contenting himself with televised images of Scarlett Johansson dressed in his laborious creation. Franco's abilities, by contrast, are amply compensated as his job is to identify dumping grounds and immigrants or gypsy kids for hazardous transportations to rid Northern companies of their toxic waste in an apparently 'clean' and comparatively cheap manner. Roberto is Franco's eager apprentice until disgust over destroyed natural and human life makes him forgo the success of corruption.

The voice of all the morality and consciousness that is lacking around him, Roberto's quiet protest expresses both the author's civic commitment and the suffering of a people who have learnt to consider injustice a collective fate. To what extent criminal power infuses people's everyday life is dramatised when a group of secessionists demands autonomy from the leading clan, provoking 'a war, not declared, not recognised by governments' that killed people daily in the fall and winter of 2004–5 (Saviano 2006: 105). Don Ciro and Totò both

fall betwixt and between the imprisoning walls of Scampia: while the anonymous money-carrier is forced into a battle he wants no part of, the trusted kid is given the choice to die or to lure a woman into a fatal trap set by her son's enemies. Nobody is neutral or immune, and to dismiss mafia violence as a question of 'killing among themselves' the way governmental and law enforcing authorities have traditionally done is as naive as to reduce it to a Southern problem (Saviano 2006: 97). Whether fashion goes out to adorn Hollywood stars or garbage comes in to ruin Southern farmers, the Camorra stands behind and above, but the global dimensions of its parasitic power is most evident in an open-air drug market run like clockwork, with a workforce of children and unemployed youth and with distribution from Scampia to the whole of Europe.²² In contrast to Saviano, Garrone maps out this world as a stranger, and while he shoots on location with permission from Camorra bosses, with the expertise of drug dealers, and with local amateurs or non-professionals alongside professional actors, the cinematic gaze remains detached, excluding both the participant observations and the critical assessment of Saviano's passionate investigative writing. The commitment to document without judging a precarious and unacknowledged reality and the interconnection of freestanding episodes through the theme of war reveals, instead, the legacies of *Paisà*, evident in the dedication to socio-geographical spheres and characters previously unseen at the movies as well as in the inquiry into relations between History and history; between self-declared authorities and their subjects.²³ By recuperating moral and thematic aspects of Rossellini's journey of liberation, *Gomorra* appeals to viewers within and beyond the society represented with the very claim to freedom that during the Resistance saw socially distanced citizens unify against dictatorial atrocities.

STOLEN CHILDREN AND UNWANTED CITIZENS: REVERSING THE PATH OF HOPE

These accounts of speculation in human and material resources may usefully be related to the opposition Zavattini identified in 1965 between the 'rhythmic accentuation and geometric progression of scientific development' and 'a delay in the moral conception of this new world' (2002: 928). The seeming paradox between growth and degradation is most easily detected in political and financial practices at the local and the national level, but it may have equally devastating implications within the obscurity of the private sphere where the victims often are children aware, the way De Sica's shoeshiners were, that 'the life they live is not the one they should live' (1994a: 237). When Gianni Amelio (1945–) confronts disastrously lost innocence in the widely acclaimed *Il ladro di bambini* (1992) it is with a denudating, yet profoundly 'compassionate gaze', that reappropriates neorealist sensitivities as well as the scrutiny of Petri and Rosi whose attempt to address terrorism he had accompanied with

the allusiveness of *Colpire al cuore* (1981).²⁴ Evoking the basic facts of a recent news item, Amelio introduces the eleven-year-old Rosetta as she prays to the Guardian Angel while waiting for a man to enter her room in an untidy apartment. From the alienating spaces of a Milanese housing project reminiscent of *Gomorra*'s concrete-worlds, her little brother, Luciano, witnesses the arrest of their Sicilian single mother and of the decent-looking Northern client. The two siblings are accompanied onto a train by two *carabinieri*, but as one betrays the shared assignment of conducting them to a Catholic orphanage outside of Rome, Antonio must face Rosetta's rejection and follow the order to go immediately to another institution in Sicily alone. Luciano's asthma delays their departure, however, and Antonio finds a colleague's place in Rome where they stay. In Calabria, they participate in a First Communion Party at his sister's restaurant. Even Rosetta is enlivened until a woman reveals her image in a tabloid newspaper, driving the three travellers away to a hotel. The following day, to make up for their recent suffering, Antonio lets them stop at a beach in southern Sicily, being awarded with filial affection and admiration as he arrests an armed thief. The local warrant officer is, however, less impressed, predicting that the humanitarian law enforcer's disregard for orders will lead to charges of kidnapping and possibly sexual assault rather than the promotion he is aiming for. Exhausted and demoralised, Antonio can no longer comfort the children and their last, nocturnal, drive unfolds in a disillusioned silence that confirms their mutual abandonment. His solidarity has, nonetheless, fostered 'a different way of thinking' in the previously inimical siblings and while Antonio still sleeps in the car, they both wait with uncertainty for the Sicilian institute to open, aware that from now on all they have is fraternal love (Vitti 2009: 229).

'What a journey they made you do,' Rosetta reflects aloud to Antonio, who has been forced to extend an ungrateful mission she senses will end up exactly where it started. Rome or Sicily makes little difference: no one would expose innocent children to a girl sullied or, as the priest who refuses her suggests, possibly infected, by prosperous perverts. Whether things are as hopeless or as disastrous as she and Antonio eventually fear remains unknown; the fragmentary story constructed around looks and silences offers no solutions to the encounters and cases of injustice it entails. Their open-ended journey recalls both *Paisà* and *Il cammino della speranza*, which lead to uncertain borders of time (the war's end) and space (of France), but as *Il ladro di bambini* reverses these films' trajectories, it also denies their vision respectively of collective and individual freedom. The Southern characters who are ordered away from a menacing North while failing to find a home either in the dystopia of highways that has ruined Antonio's village, or in the utopia of Sicilian beaches, enunciate small-scale experiences with a conflict that throughout the 1980s had intensified around secessionist movements for Northern independence



Figure 8.3 Rosetta, Luciano and Antonio (far behind) in Amelio's *Il ladro di bambini*. Courtesy of the Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

and assassinations as well as the Maxi Trials in Sicily.²⁵ More importantly, however, they disclose 'a ruined environment, degraded human relations . . . an apathetic and blinded Italy', void of all 'desire to live as a civil society' (Amelio, quoted in Cheshire 1993: 82). Antonio's colleague who abandons public duties for private pleasures while exploiting the *omertà* of honest people and some men in Calabria who justify benefit frauds and illegal constructions to compensate for the state's absence are innocent examples compared to the trafficking and complicity imposed on children by a mother who herself has suffered abandonment and injustice. The most disturbing sign of this civil crisis is, nonetheless, the ostracism Rosetta faces at the orphanage and the religious celebration. That her only Guardian Angel appears in someone who would have been far better off minding his own business and performing his duties and who is judged as severely for his defiant altruism as she is for her victimisation ultimately reveals the ramifications of the climate of indifference, corruption and hypocrisy. To see, the way Antonio does, the nature of stolen childhood would require the form of 'revolutionary conscience' that Zavattini retrospectively declared was betrayed by the many constraints of post-war film but which he, through relentless calls for a new 'cinema of freedom', still cherished as an objective to be reached (2002: 932; 953).

Visions of freedom projected through vulnerable characters who from the

spectators demand both emotional immersion and detached reflection define the engagement of Marco Tullio Giordana (1950–) as well. As a storyteller, however, he operates differently from Amelio who favours single moments and ellipses over intriguing succession and who travels in ‘any-space-whatevers’ to disclose the least spectacular aspects of the present. Whether Giordana reconstructs the courage and assassination of the Sicilian anti-mafia activist Peppino Impastato in *I cento passi* (2000) or looks with the intimacy of everyday life at the last three decades of national history in *La meglio gioventù* (2003), he acts confrontationally to engage the viewer and to move through colourful panoramas of human and geographical diversity. This is in particular true for *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (2005) which, like Amelio’s polemical portrait from Albania in *Lamerica* (1994), revitalises the quest for freedom across closed borders narrated in *Il cammino*. The paths in these and several other recent films are however reversed as Italy is no longer a country of emigrants but of circa 360,000 immigrants – 25 times more than in 1970 – originating mainly from Eastern Europe, North and Central Africa and, as testified by the Chinese textile workers in *Gomorra*, East Asia.²⁶ Of the 100,000 illegals estimated to have been living in Italy in 2007, 36 per cent were repatriated in compliance with policies that since the early 1990s have come to oscillate between ‘reception’ and ‘refusal’. While regular immigrants are gradually granted civil rights and may achieve citizenship, quota regulations have complicated regular entrances and asylum, in particular for citizens from countries that, unlike Libya under Colonel Gaddafi, have refused anti-migratory agreements with Silvio Berlusconi’s administrations (Gramaglia 2008). Furthermore, controls of borders and coastlines are being strengthened to detain and identify undocumented incomers, and the most recent legislation penalises illegal immigration with fines of 5,000–10,000 euros, denial of public services, and likely deportation (Foschi 2009). These restrictive policies were, however, jeopardised by the political turmoil that in the Spring of 2011 brought waves of North Africans over to Sicily, creating a prolonged state of humanitarian emergency that has required the release and extension of 11,000 temporary residence permits.²⁷

Quando sei nato locates the emergent ethnic texture in Brescia; once a locus of anti-fascist resistance to the nearby Republic of Salò and today the city that, after Rome, Milan and Turin, has had the most immigrants. Past and present collective experiences merge in a building of classic iconography typically associated with fascism and with ideals of cultural purity advocated by the secessionist Lega Nord and other far-right movements.²⁸ Suddenly, a black woman appears in front of the building, announcing the alienating encounter in the same piazza between the 12-year-old Sandro and an inexplicably distressed African man. Sandro, whose best mate is African and whose parents have employed several immigrants in their factory, is astonished by the

stranger's incomprehensible words. Like the woman who is probably a foreign prostitute who shortly after stares at him with all her suffering, this failed communication foreshadows his traumatically illuminating experience of falling into Mediterranean waters during a sailing trip. Radu, a Rumanian illegal, saves Sandro and takes him on board a wrecked boat overcrowded by immigrants unified in dreams of Italy that Radu's sister, Alina, conveys through the music of Eros Ramazzotti. To deceive the Italian traffickers inclined to kidnap him, Sandro mimics the words of the African in Milan, and Radu, pretending to translate, says he is a Kurdish orphan. Once the fraudulent traffickers have taken off and coastguards have rescued the travellers and taken them to a Welcome Centre run by the jovial Father Celso, Sandro reciprocates the solidarity, insisting that he be treated like the others and asking his newly rich parents to help. However, as Radu is considered to be legally an adult and is subject to repatriation, rather than accepting their offer of hospitality Alina escapes with him. Warmly received at Sandro's lavish home, the two fugitives promise to return to the Welcome Centre but run away instead with his parents' valuables, thus evidencing Radu's documented criminal record. The tragedy behind the betrayed friendship appears first when Sandro sees Alina outside Milan in an abandoned factory occupied by other unregistered citizens. Reduced to a commodity, she illuminates the anger Radu expressed on the boat when Sandro rescued her from a trafficker's assault, thus depriving them of the water she would have been paid with. To his voiced suspicion that the alleged brother is in fact a parasitic boyfriend she answers with a silence camouflaged by Ramazzotti's voice on her stereo, but whether she will seize on his sincere compassion and follow him home, remains uncertain as the camera leaves them amidst the nocturnal lights of urban traffic.

Sandro's search through the labyrinthine building reactualises the final moments of Rossellini's tale of war-ridden Berlin (Cincinelli 2009: 169). In both cases, we sense the suffering of children who have seen more than their innocence can bear, but while Sandro shares Edmund's moral look at the world, discovering evil both in *us* and in *them*, he does not want to escape it. Determined to know the truths of individuals his father dismisses as calculating criminals, he embraces the African's incomprehensible words, deciphered to him by Socchi who works with Father Celso: 'when you are born, you can no longer hide'. This rule of wisdom does not ultimately target those who are defenceless because, officially, they do not exist, but the privileged who prefer not to see. The film is ultimately concerned with the latter group and it is '*us*, the spectators', we learn most about as migratory experiences achieve a 'mirror function' of uncovering all that which is hidden in our society (Lerner 2010: 3). These intentions are launched in the title sequence which tracks walls of graffiti the crew discovered while shooting in a Welcome Centre. Both the colours and the surreal forms with which actual immigrants have portrayed their experiences

come to life through the travellers who in their non-verisimilar ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity project the miraculously 'reborn' kid's changing look at stigmatised people whose worries and poverty he now shares (Cincinelli 2009: 173–8). Seen in contrast with the *other's* estranging magnitude, *our* prejudice and exclusion recall the type of indifference and conformism that in the past have nurtured totalitarian visions of desired and unwanted citizens. Part of the film's objective is to warn us about the recurrence of history and call for our civilisation to grow along with its ethnic landscape, but it also recalls times when the losses and levels of destruction made everyone equal and the cinema appeared as a revolutionary means to foster knowledge of the self and of others. Where we sense the neorealist ethos is in particular in the ability to use national cases of social injustice as a starting point for confronting universal ways of closing the 'door' on that which threatens our privileges and disturbs our conscience, without however denying the equally human capacity to create 'bridges' and relate to that which is different (Simmel 1994: 408). Delineating a trajectory of awareness that reactualises the altruism which is the basis of *Paisà*, *Senza pietà* and *Il cammino* – stories of times when *we* were *they* whose urgent struggles engaged strangers prepared to die for our cause – Giordana proceeds via ethnic diversity and bridges of solidarity and fraternal proximity to denounce the easiness with which we hide, comfortably and indifferently, from those who today carry the burdens of our past.

Claiming a place among the anarchists, resisters, workers, writers and directors who since the rise and fall of dictatorial rule have declared the truth about their world, *Quando sei nato* and *Gomorra* bring the cinema of the new millennium into a territory of collective memory and civic engagement. The narrative and aesthetic qualities of these and other post-neorealist films illustrate, by way of opposition, the limits of the anti-illusionist and dedramatised cinema Zavattini advocated and never saw realised to its potential. More importantly still, the society they portray denies, categorically, the possibility of scripts 'thought during' the moment of shooting and the 'revolutionary way of life' such a non-industrial and ideologically free method would require (1979: 395). Whether the obstacles are inequality and injustice, a faulty democracy or increasingly illegitimate power relations on the one hand, or the self-interest, corruption and indifference that exclude solidarity and social consciousness on the other, neither the miraculously modern nor the (post-) ideological Italy have promoted the 'irreversible choice' with which Pina, Don Pietro, Carmela, Dale, Enne 2, Agnese, Edmund, Ernesto and Angela affirmed 'the freedom of thought as a value' (Brunetta 1996: 37; 23). While the sentiments involved differ, their sacrifices rest on 'the true choice [that] "consists in choosing choice" and that is supposed to restore everything to us'. Anchored to 'moralism which is opposed to morality', it illuminates the affinities between philosophy and the cinema that frame Deleuze's film criticism

(1986: 116). It is, however, also suggestive of the immediacy between reality and the cinema Zavattini considered it a duty to achieve, and in this ethical basis for all vision and practice resides his greatest legacy. Besides corroborating the conviction that films may be ‘formally *documentary*’, and not at all realistic, or they may be ‘completely *invented*’, and present an ‘absolutely realistic’ content, this journey *beyond* suggests what an inspiration his tireless insistence on the moral act of discovering the nation and its people continued to constitute (Zavattini 2002: 738). Between them, the films in this section give some kind of life to *Italia mia*, moving from the North to the South and telling stories of ordinary people’s singular experiences of exploitation, suffering, engagement and solidarity. While it may be, as Giorgio De Vincenti has recently suggested, that the lesson of neorealism as a manifold, innovative and dynamic tradition today tends to be forgotten and, more specifically, that the idea of a cinematic journey, for instance in China, would be deemed of no interest and as such, unrealisable, both past and contemporary Italian cinema offer signs to the contrary (2008: 24–5). Amelio, who in *La stella che non c’è* (2006) follows the footsteps of Antonioni’s documentary *Chung Kuo – Cina* (1972) to conduct an intriguing journey of geographical and human discovery precisely in China, testifies to the continuous value of the universal vision that from *Uomini e no* via *Senza pietà* to *Miracle in Milan* increasingly defined the neorealist ethos, ultimately forming the very rationale for the ‘Giornale cinematografico della pace’ (Film Journal for Peace) Zavattini ideated in the early 1960s.

NOTES

1. See Wood (2005: 14). National income increased from 17,000 billion lire in 1954 to 30,000 billion in 1964, whereas the per capita income increased from 350,000 to 571,000 lire in the same period (Crainz 2005: 83).
2. See Ginsborg (1990: 239–49) and Sorlin (1996: 115); see Tönnies (2001) for the classic distinction between ‘Community’ and ‘Society’.
3. Between 1951 and 1961, Rome’s population increased from 1,961,754 to 2,188,160; by 1967 it had grown to 2,614,156. Milan similarly underwent an expansion from 1,274,000 inhabitants in 1951 to 1,681,000 in 1967 (Ginsborg 1990: 216–20).
4. Based on an actual freelance humanitarian whose nocturnal missions Fellini had followed, the episode was initially cut since neither the exposure of poverty nor the portrayal of a charitable soul outside the Church’s circles went down well with Christian Democratic authorities. Other controversial episodes such as the prostitutes’ visit to the Divino Amore sanctuary escaped censorship, thanks to the intermediation of a Jesuit and a cinephile cardinal (Kezich 1988: 260).
5. The most obvious iconographic references are to Da Vinci’s *L’ultima cena* (1495–98), ‘mocked’ in the opening sequence featuring Carmine’s wedding, and Andrea Mantegna’s *Cristo morto* (1985) which we recognise in Ettore’s death (Rodie 1995: 78; 12).
6. While Pasolini’s films exclude immediacy to the reality portrayed, his film theory

argues passionately for the cinema's referentiality. Intervening in semiotic debates that in the late 1960s evolved around Christian Metz and Umberto Eco, among others, Pasolini arrived at the controversial thesis of the cinema as constituting the written language of human action and, by extension, of reality. See Ben Lawton and Louise Barnett (trans.) (1988), *Heretical Empiricism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

7. Constructed over the years 1955–8, the style of the Pirelli skyscraper was intended to respect the city's architectural traditions, but the designer Gino Ponti also conceived of the crystal-like purity and lightness of its transparent surface as a manifestation of modernity (Arnardóttir 2004: 90–3).
8. See note 15.
9. Their collaboration also produced *Todo Modo* (1976) which, like *Ciascuno il suo*, is based on Leonardo Sciascia's homonymous novel; its protagonist – a president killed along with his party associates – was modelled on Aldo Moro, the president of the Christian Democrats, who two years later would be assassinated by the Red Brigades. See note 15.
10. The Statute of Workers' Rights was implemented in 1970 following a series of Labour Union struggles (Crainz 2003: 435).
11. Petri is quoted in Gili (1974: 76–7). Lulù's struggles are intended to illustrate parallels between Freud's concept of 'sexual misery' and the Marxian notion of 'economic misery', or 'alienation' (Gili 1974: 80), which presupposes that: 'labor is *external* to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his intrinsic nature; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind.' Karl Marx (1988: 74), *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Martin Milligan, New York: Prometheus Books.
12. Wertmüller's success in the US reflected, according to Russo Bullaro, a 'presumed originality' and a presumed radicalism, whereas to Italian critics and audiences she was neither original nor radical (2006: ix–xxii). By the time of *Pasqualino sette bellezze* (1975), however, she had become a 'victim of the American critical wars' (Biskind 1977: 324) and the decades-long career she would have in film, TV, theatre and opera remain largely unknown outside of Italy.
13. Both *Film d'amore e anarchia* and Wertmüller's treatment of fascism in *Fatto di sangue fra due uomini* (1978) point to Maurizio Zinni's observation that in the 1970s, the country's totalitarian past offered a way to address current conflicts (2010: 204; 254–6).
14. The police's violence was legitimised by a memo in which the Minister of the Interior, Paolo Taviani, demanded police intervention in protests at the universities, thus confirming the very authoritarianism that students were challenging (Crainz 2003: 217–18 ff.).
15. The leader of the Christian Democrats and a mediator in the 'historic compromise' between his party and the Communist Party, Aldo Moro was kidnapped a few hours before Prime Minister Andreotti was due to present the Chamber of Deputies with a government that for the first time relied on the communists' support (Ginsborg 1990: 378–84). Moro was executed after 55 days in captivity without much convincing opposition either from the state or from fellow party members. See Stephen Gundle and Lucia Rinaldi (ed.) (2007), *Assassinations and Murder in Modern Italy*, Palgrave Macmillan, as well as Leonardo Sciascia (2004), *The Moro Affair*, New York: NYRB Classics.
16. The totalitarian intentions behind the 'strategy of tension' found expression in two neofascist attempted coups in 1970 and 1974 (Lucarelli 2007: 46–7).

- For English-language examinations of 1970s' Italy, see Ginsborg (1990: 348–405); Mack Smith (1997: 455–66) and, in particular, Philip Willan (2002), *Puppetmasters: The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy*, Lincoln: iUniverse; for criticism of cinematic representation of terrorism, most of which did not come about until the 1980s, see Pierpaolo Antonello and Alan O'Leary (ed.) (2009), *Imagining Terrorism: The Rhetoric and Representation of Political Violence in Italy 1969–2009*, Oxford: Legenda and Christian Uva (2007), *Schermi di piombo: il terrorismo nel cinema italiano*, Rubettino: Soveria Manelli.
17. See Barotsi and Antonello (2009: 192; 203) as well as Mazierska and Rascaroli's thorough monograph on Moretti (2004; 14–46; 58).
 18. Michele appears as a useless student in *Ecce Bombo* (1978), as a misunderstood filmmaker in *Sogni d'oro* (1981), as moralistic serial killer in *Bianca* (1984), as an obsessive priest in *La messa è finita* (1985) and as an amnesiac communist water-polo player in *Palombella Rossa* (1989). Sacher Film was established by Moretti and Angelo Barbagallo in 1987 to promote innovative young directors and has produced all of Moretti's successive films.
 19. The suspiciously mysterious circumstances of Pasolini's assassination in 1975 are investigated, documented and fictionalised in Giordana's crime film *Pasolini: Un delitto italiano* (1995).
 20. I have previously explored the legacy of Zavattini and Pasolini in *Caro diario* in 'Moretti's epistemological realism: Cultural heritage and intellectual distance in *Caro diario*', *Forum Italicum*, Fall, 2006: 346–66.
 21. While Rosi is correct in taking credit for this (Crowdus 2002: 156), the parliamentary inquiry into the Mafia must also be related to Lattuada's contemporary *Mafioso*, and, in particular, to Leonardo Sciascia's *Il giorno della civetta* (1961), which use respectively the conventions of comedy and crime novel to outline the Mafia's control over civilian and political life. Ultimately, it was the cumulative effect of these works that forced the apathetic government to act. See Sciascia's 1972 afterword to *Il Giorno della Civetta*, Milano: Corriere della Sera, 1993.
 22. 'An immense supermarket of drugs. All of it, every type. No stupeficient is introduced in Europe without previously having gone through the piazza of Secondigliano.' (Saviano 2006: 77)
 23. See the video interview with Garrone in the DVD extras for *Gomorrah*, The Criterion Collection, 2009.
 24. See Cheshire (1993: 82). Besides the Grand Jury Prize at Cannes, *Il ladro di bambini* was awarded with a Nastro d'argento (Silver Ribbon) from The National Association of Italian Film Critics and two David di Donatello awards from the Italian Film Academy.
 25. See Vitti (2009: 209–11). Based on the innovative investigations of Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellini, the Maxi Trial saw 360 mafiosi convicted in 1987, many of whom were successively absolved. Having succeeded in bringing released Mafiosi back to jail, the two magistrates were killed in separate bomb attacks in 1992. For an illuminating account of the Maxi Trial and its protagonists, see Marco Turco's documentary *In un altro paese* (2005).
 26. See Gramaglia (2008). Recent films devoted to Italy's immigrants include *Lettere dal Sahara* (De Seta, 2004), *La sconosciuta* (Tornatore, 2006), *Io, l'altro* (Milliti, 2007) and *Nuovo mondo* (Crialese, 2007) which looks back to when Italians themselves were seeking new worlds.
 27. See 'Prorogati di altri 6 mesi i permessi umanitari per i migranti di Lampedusa', L'Immigrazionebiz, Il portale di riferimento per gli immigrati in Italia, <http://www.immigrazione.biz/3729.html> (accessed 13 October 2011).
 28. See Lerner (2010: 2–3). For documentation on Brescia's Resistance division,

Fiamme Verdi, and its three sub-divided brigades, see *La montagna non dorme: Le fiamme verdi nell'alta Valcamonica*, Brescia: Morcelliana (1968) and other writings by the ex-partisan Dario Morelli and Associazione Fiamme Verdi's website: http://www.fiammeverdivallecamonica.tk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=47&Itemid=13 (accessed 15 October 2011).

FILMOGRAPHY

- Acciaio* (1933; *Steel*). Director/Script: Walter Ruttmann. Story: Luigi Pirandello.
- L'amore in città* (1953; *Love in the City*). Directors/Script: Dino Risi, Michelangelo Antonioni, Federico Fellini, Alberto Lattuada, Cesare Zavattini. Directors: Carlo Lizzani, Francesco Maselli, Script: Aldo Buzzi, Luigi Chiarini, Luigi Malerba, Tullio Pinelli, Vittorio Veltroni, Marco Ferreri.
- I bambini ci guardano* (1942; *The Children Are Watching Us*). Director/Script: Vittorio De Sica. Story/Script: Cesare Giulio Viola. Script: Cesare Zavattini, Margherita Maglione, Adolfo Franci, Gherardo Gherardi.
- Il bandito* (1946; *The Bandit*). Director/Story/Script: Alberto Lattuada. Script: Oreste Biancoli, Mino Caudana, Alberto Lattuada, Ettore Margadonna, Tullio Pinelli, Piero Tellini.
- Bellissima* (1951). Director/Script: Luchino Visconti. Story: Cesare Zavattini. Script: Suso Cecchi D'amico, Francesco Rosi.
- Bicycle Thieves* (1948; *Ladri di biciclette*). Director/Script: Vittorio De Sica. Story: Luigi Bartolini. Story/Script: Cesare Zavattini. Script: Oreste Biancoli, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Adolfo Franci, Gherardo Gherardi, Gerardo Guerrieri.
- Bitter Rice* (1949; *Riso amaro*). Director/Story/Script: Giuseppe De Santis. Story/Script: Carlo Lizzani, Gianni Puccini. Script: Corrado Alvaro, Carlo Musso, Ivo Perilli.
- Caccia tragica* (1948; *Tragic Pursuit*). Director/Story/Script: Giuseppe De Santis. Story/Script: Carlo Lizzani. Story: Lamberto Rem-Picci. Script: Michelangelo Antonioni, Corrado Alvaro, Umberto Barbaro, Cesare Zavattini.
- Il cammino della speranza* (1950; *The Path of Hope*). Dir: Pietro Germi. Story: Nino Di Maria Story/Script: Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli.
- Caro diario* (1992; *Dear Diary*). Director/Story/Script: Nanni Moretti.
- La classe operaia va in paradiso* (1971; *The Working Class Goes to Heaven*). Director/Story/Script: Elio Petri. Story/Script: Ugo Pirro.
- The Earth Trembles* (1948; *La terra trema*). Director/Script. Luchino Visconti. Story: Giovanni Verga. Script: Antonio Pietrangeli.
-

- Film d'amore e d'anarchia, 'ouvero stamattina alle 10 in Via dei Fiori nella nota casa di tolleranza'* (1973; *Love and Anarchy*). Director/Story/Script: Lina Wertmüller.
- Germania anno zero* (1948; *Germany Year Zero*). Director/Story/Script: Roberto Rossellini. Script: Max Colpet, Sergio Amidei.
- Gli uomini che mascalzoni!* (1932; *Men, what Rascals!*). Director/Story/Script: Mario Camerini. Story/Script: Aldo De Benedetti. Script: Mario Soldati.
- Grandi magazzini* (1939; *Department Stores*). Director/Script: Mario Camerini. Story/Script: Ivo Perilli. Script: Renato Castellani, Mario Panunzio.
- Gomorra* (2008; *Gomorra*). Director/Script: Matteo Garrone. Story/Script: Roberto Saviano. Script: Maurizio Braucci, Ugo Chiti, Gianni Di Gregorio, Massimo Gaudioso.
- Ladro di bambini* (1992; *Stolen Children*). Director/Story/Script: Gianni Amelio. Story/Script: Sandro Petraglia, Stefano Rulli.
- Maddalena zero in condotta* (1940; *Maddalena, Zero for Conduct*). Dir: Vittorio De Sica. Story: Lasazlo Kadar. Script: Feruccio Biancini.
- 1860* (1933; *Gesuzza the Garibaldian Wife*). Director/Script: Alessandro Blasetti. Story/Script: Gino Mazzucchi. Script: Emilio Cecchi.
- Le mani sulla città* (1963; *Hands over the City*). Director/Story/Script: Francesco Rosi. Story/Script: Raffaele La Capria. Script: Enzo Forcella, Enzo Provenziale.
- Miracle in Milan* (1951; *Miracolo a Milano*). Director/Script: Vittorio De Sica. Story/Script: Cesare Zavattini.
- La nave bianca* (1941; *The White Ship*). Director/Script: Roberto Rossellini. Story/Script: Francesco Di Robertis.
- Non c'è pace tra gli ulivi* (1950; *Under the Olive Tree*). Director/Story/Script: Giuseppe De Santis. Story/Script: Gianni Puccini. Script: Carlo Lizzani, Libero De Libero.
- La notte* (1961; *The Night*). Director/Story/Script: Michelangelo Antonioni. Story/Script: Ennio Flaiano, Tonino Guerra.
- Le notti di Cabiria* (1957; *The Nights of Cabiria*). Director/Story: Federico Fellini. Script: Ennio Flaiano, Tullio Pinelli, Pier Paolo Pasolini.
- Obsession* (1943; *Ossessione*). Director/Script: Luchino Visconti. Story: James M. Cain. Script: Mario Alicata, Giuseppe De Santis, Gianni Puccini.
- L'onorevole Angelina* (1947; *Angelina*). Director/Story/Script: Luigi Zampa. Story/Script: Piero Tellini, Suso Cecchi D'Amico. Script: Anna Magnani.
- Paisà* (1946; *Paisan*). Director/Script: Roberto Rossellini. Story/Script: Sergio Amidei, Federico Fellini. Story: Alfred Hayes, Klaus Mann, Marcello Pagliero. Script: Annalena Limentani, Vasco Pratolini.
- Un pilota ritorna* (1942; *A Pilot Returns*). Director/Script: Roberto Rossellini. Story: Vittorio Mussolini. Script: Michelangelo Antonioni, Rosario Leone, Margherita Maglione, Massimo Mida, Gherardo Gherardi, Ugo Betti.
- Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (2005; *When You Are Born You Can No Longer Hide*). Director/Script: Marco Tullio Giordana. Story: Maria Pace Ottieri. Script: Sandro Petraglia.
- Quattro passi tra le nuvole* (1942; *Four Steps in the Clouds*). Director/Script: Alessandro Blasetti. Story/Script: Cesare Zavattini, Piero Tellini. Script: Aldo De Benedetti.
- Rome: Open City* (1945; *Roma città aperta*). Director/Script: Roberto Rossellini. Story/Script: Sergio Amidei. Script: Federico Fellini.
- Senso* (1954). Director/Script: Luchino Visconti. Story: Camillo Boito. Script: Carlo Alianello, Giorgio Bassani, Paul Bowles, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Giorgio Prosperi, Tennessee Williams.
- Senza pietà* (1948; *Without Pity*). Dir. Alberto Lattuada. Story: Ettore Maria Margadonna. Script: Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli.

- Shoeshine* (1946; *Sciuscià*). Director: Vittorio De Sica. Story/Script: Cesare Zavattini, Cesare Giulio Viola, Adolfo Franci, Vittorio De Sica, Sergio Amidei.
- Sotto il sole di Roma* (1948; *Under the Sun of Rome*) Director/Story. Renato Castellani. Story/Script: Fausto Tozzi. Script: Sergio Amidei, Emilio Cecchi, Ettore Maria Margadonna.
- Teresa Venerdi* (1941; *Teresa Friday*). Director/Script: Vittorio De Sica. Story: Rezső Török. Script: Aldo De Benedetti, Gherardo Gherardi, Margherita Maglione, Franco Riganti, Cesare Zavattini (uncredited).
- Umberto D* (1952). Director: Vittorio De Sica. Story/Script: Cesare Zavattini.
- L'uomo dalla croce* (1943; *The Man With the Cross*). Director/Script: Roberto Rossellini. Story/Script: Asvero Gravalli. Script: Alberto Consiglio, Giovanni D'Alincandro.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agee, James (2000), *Criticism and Comments on the Movies*, New York: Random House.
- Aitken, Ian (2006), *Realist Film Theory and Cinema: The Nineteenth-century Lukácsian and Intuitionist Realist Traditions*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Alicata, Mario and Giuseppe De Santis (1941a), 'Ancora di Verga e del cinema italiano', *Cinema*, 130: 314–15.
- (1941b), 'Verità e poesia: Verga e il cinema italiano', *Cinema*, 127: 1941: 216–17.
- Alvaro, Corrado (1955), *Gente in Aspromonte*, Milano: Garzanti.
- Andrew, Dudley (1995), *Mist of Regret: Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Andrew, Dudley and Hervé Joubert-Laurencin (2011), 'A Binocular Preface', in Dudley Andrew and Hervé Joubert-Laurencin (eds), *Opening Bazin*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, ix–xvi.
- Aprà, Adriano (1987), *Rosselliniana*, Roma: Di Giacomo.
- (2006), *In viaggio con Rossellini*, Alessandria: Falsopiano.
- Argentieri, Mino (1974), *La censura nel cinema italiano*, Roma: Riuniti.
- (1996), 'Cinema e vita nazionale', in Toffetti (1996), 109–26.
- Aristarco, Guido (1949), 'Presentazione', *Sequenze*, I, 4 December 1949, 1–3.
- (1960), *Storia delle teorie del film*, Torino: Einaudi.
- (1975), *Antologia di "Cinema nuovo." 1952–58. Neorealismo e vita nazionale*. Rimini: Gueraldi.
- (1975a), 'È realismo', in Aristarco (1975), 892–9.
- (1975b), 'La strada e Le notti di Cabiria', in Aristarco (1975), 637–51.
- (1980), *Neorealismo e nuova critica cinematografica*, Firenze: Gueraldi.
- Arnadóttir, Halldóra (2004), 'Architecture and modernity in post-war Milan', in Robert Lumley and John Foot (eds), *Italian Cityscapes: Culture and Urban Change in Contemporary Italy*, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 90–9.
- Arnaud, Diane (2011), 'From Bazin to Deleuze: A matter of depth', in Dudley Andrew

- and Hervé Joubert-Laurencin (eds), *Opening Bazin*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 85–94.
- Asor Rosa, Alberto (1975a), 'La cultura', in C. Vivanti and R. Romano (eds), *Storia d'Italia*, Vol. IV: *Dall'Unità a oggi*, 2, Torino: Einaudi.
- (1975b), *Scrittori e popolo*, Roma: Savelli.
- Auerbach, Erich [1946] (1953), *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Barbaro, Umberto (1939), 'I film italiani', *Bianco e nero*, 9, 3–9.
- (1976), *Neorealismo e realismo*, Vols I–II, Roma: Riuniti.
- Barotsi, Rosa and Pierpaolo Antonello (2009), 'The personal and the political: The cinema of Nanni Moretti', in Pierpaolo Antonello and Florian Mussgnug (eds), *Postmodern Impegno: Ethics and Commitment in Contemporary Italian Culture*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 189–212.
- Bazin, André (1975), 'Difesa di Rossellini', in Aristarco (1975), 685–91.
- (1997), *Bazin at Work: Major Essays and Reviews from the Forties and Fifties*, ed. Bert Cardullo, New York: Routledge.
- (2002), *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* Paris: Les Éditions du Serf.
- Ben-Ghiat, Ruth (1995), 'Fascism, writing and memory: The realist aesthetics in Italy, 1930–1950', *The Journal of Modern History*, 67, 3, 627–665.
- (2000), 'The fascist war trilogy', in David Forgacs, Sarah Lutton, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith et al. (eds), *Roberto Rossellini: Magician of the Real*, London: BFI Publishing, 20–35.
- (2001), *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bentivegna, Rosario (2002), 'La resistenza romana', from *la RINASCITA della sinistra*, 18 October 2002: 28–29, <http://www.storiaxisecolo.it/resistenza/resistenza2c18.html> (accessed 10 October 2009, Resistenzaitaliana.it).
- (2007), 'Rosario Bentivegna racconta della Resistenza a Roma', *Patria indipendente*, 23 September 2007, http://www.anpi.it/media/uploads/patria/2007/8/16-26_BENTIVEGNA.pdf (accessed 26 February 18 2012).
- Bernardi, Sandro (2000), 'Rossellini's landscape: Nature, myth, history', in David Forgacs, Sarah Lutton, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith et al. (eds), *Roberto Rossellini: Magician of the Real*, London: BFI Publishing, 50–63.
- Bernari, Carlo (1965), *Tre operai*, Milano: Mondadori.
- Bettetini, Gianfranco (1999), 'Realtà, realismo, neorealismo, linguaggio e discorso: Appunti per un aproccio teorico', in Micciché (1999), 109–140.
- Biskind, Peter (1977), 'Interview with Lina Wertmüller', in Karyn Kay and Gerald Peary (eds), *Women and the Cinema: A Critical Anthology*, New York: Dutton, 324–32.
- Bo, Carlo (1951), *Inchiesta sul neorealismo*, Torino, Radio Italiana.
- Bocca, Giorgio (1966), *Storia dell'Italia partigiana, settembre 1943–maggio 1945*, Bari: Laterza.
- Bondanella, Peter (2004), 'The making of 'Roma città aperta': The legacy of fascism and the birth of neorealism', in Sidney Gottlieb (ed.), *Roberto Rossellini's Rome Open City*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 43–66.
- (2009), *A History of Italian Cinema*, New York: Continuum.
- Bonsaver, Guido (2000), *Elio Vittorini: The Writer and the Written*, Leeds: Northern Universities Press.
- Borgomaneri, Luigi (2000), 'Milano', in Enzo Collotti, Renato Sandi, Frediano Sessi et al. (eds), *Dizionario della Resistenza: Vol.I: Storia e geografia della Liberazione*, Torino: Einaudi; Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d'Italia – Milano, http://www.anpi.it/milano_resistenza.htm (accessed 12 September 2009).
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1977), *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Brecht, Bertolt (1964), *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. and ed. John Willet, New York: Hill and Wang.
- Brunetta, Gian Piero (1969), *Umberto Barbaro e l'idea del neorealismo*, Padova: Liviana.
- (1976), 'Introduzione' in *Neorealismo e realismo*, Roma: Riuniti, Vols I-II.
- (1987), 'La cultura cattolica di fronte alla cinematografia sulla resistenza', in Brunetta et al. (eds), *Cinema, storia, resistenza, 1944-1987*, Milano: Angeli, 74-85.
- (1996), 'La ricerca dell'identità nel cinema italiano del dopoguerra', in Gian Piero Brunetta (ed.), *Identità italiana e identità europea nel cinema italiano dal 1945 al miracolo economico*, Torino: Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 11-67.
- (2001a), *Storia del cinema italiano: Il cinema del regime, 1929-1945*, Vol. II, Roma: Riuniti.
- (2001b), *Storia del cinema Italiano: Dal neorealismo al miracolo economico, 1945-1959*, Vol. III, Roma: Riuniti.
- (2009), *Il cinema neorealista italiano da 'Roma città aperta' a 'I soliti ignoti'*, Roma: Laterza.
- Bruni, David (1992), 'Sciuscià', in Micciché (1992), 219-46.
- Bruno, Giuliana (1993), *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Caldiron, Orio and Manuel De Sica (eds) (1997), '*Ladri di biciclette*' di Vittorio De Sica: *Testimonianze, interventi, sopralluoghi*, Roma: Pantheon.
- Calvesi, Maurizio (1987), 'Renato Guttuso dagli esordi agli anni della guerra', in Maurizio Calvesi and D. Favatella Lo Cascio (eds), *Renato Guttuso dagli esordi al Gott mit Uns, 1924-1944*, Palermo: Sellerio, 19-26.
- Calvino, Italo (1949), 'La letteratura italiana sulla Resistenza', *Il movimento di liberazione in Italia*, 1 July 1949.
- (1993), *Il sentiero del nido dei ragni*, Milano: Mondadori.
- (1994), *Romanzi e racconti*, Vol 3, ed. Mario Barenghi and Bruno Falcetti, Milano: Mondadori.
- (1996), 'Tra i pioppi della risaia la cinecittà delle mondine', in Toffetti (1996), 209-13.
- Candela, Elena (2003), *Neorealismo: Problemi e crisi*, Napoli: Orientale.
- Casetti, Francesco (1994), 'Lo spazio instabile', in Micciché (1994b), 70-5.
- (2008), 'A che serve "ripensare" il neorealismo?', in *Incontro al neorealismo*. Luca Venzi (ed.), Edizioni Fondazione Ente dello Spettacolo, 31-8.
- Castaldi, Simone (2006), 'Antinaturalismo e cinema politico: I labirinti del grottesco nel cinema di Elio Petri', *Italian Quarterly*, 42, 59-69.
- Chemotti, Saveria (1999), 'La problematica gramsciana e la questione del neorealismo', in Micciché (1999), 61-6.
- Cheshire, Godfrey (1993), 'The Compassionate Gaze of Gianni Amelio', *Film Comment*, 29, 4, 82.
- Chianese, Gloria (2008), *Mondi femminili in cento anni di sindacato*, Vol. 1, Roma: Ediesse.
- Chiarini, Luigi (1975), 'Tradisce il neorealismo', in Aristarco (1975), 882-8.
- Chion, Michel (1994), *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ciment, Michel (2005), 'Interview with Francesco Rosi and Renato La Capria', *Hands over the City*, The Criterion Collection.
- Cincinelli, Sandra (2009), *I migranti nel cinema italiano*, Roma: Kappa.
- Cocteau, Jean (1983), *Le passé défini: 1956-1957*, Journal, Paris: Gallimard.
- Collotti, Enzo (2003), *Il fascismo e gli ebrei: Le leggi razziali in Italia*, Rome: Laterza.
- Cooke, Philip (2011), *The Legacy of the Italian Resistance*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Corni, Gustavo (2000), 'Italy', in Bob Moore (ed.), *Resistance in Western Europe*, Berg Publishers, 157–88.
- Corti, Maria (1978), *Il viaggio testuale*, Torino: Einaudi.
- Cosulich, Callisto (1975), 'La battaglia delle cifre', in Aristarco (1975), 462–73.
- (1994), 'La centralità del cinema di De Sica', in Micciché (1994b), 41–8.
- Cottino-Jones, Marga (2010) *Women, Desire and Power in Italian Cinema*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Crainz, Guido (2003), *Il paese mancato: Dal miracolo economico agli anni ottanta*, Roma: Donizelli.
- (2005), *Storia del miracolo italiano: Cultura, identità, trasformazioni fra anni cinquanta e sessanta*, Roma: Donizelli.
- Crowdus, Gary (2002) 'Investigating the Relationship between Causes and Effects', *The Cineaste Interviews, II: On the Art and Politics of the Cinema*, Chicago: Lake View, 155–9.
- Dainotto, Roberto (2008), 'Documento, realismo e reale', in *Ripensare il neorealismo: cinema, letteratura, mondo*, ed. Antonio Vitti, Pesaro: Metauro, 99–119.
- Dalle Vacche, Angela (1992), *The Body in the Mirror: Shapes of History in Italian Cinema*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- De Felice, Renzo (1974), *Mussolini il Duce I: Gli anni del consenso 1929–1936*, Torino: Einaudi.
- De Franceschi, Leonardo (2005), 'Fra teatro e storia, la doppia scena del reale: Il secondo episodio', in Parigi (2005a), 57–71.
- De Gaetano, Roberto (2002), *La sincope dell'identità: Il cinema di Nanni Moretti*, Torino: Lindau.
- De Santis, Giuseppe. 'Film di questi giorni.' *Cinema*. 139. 1942: 198–9.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1986), *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- (1989), *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Del Fra, Lino (ed.) (1965), *'Le notti di Cabiria' di Federico Fellini*, Modena: Cappelli.
- Della Casa, Steve (2009), *La classe operaia va in Paradiso*, Supplementary booklet to DVD, Minerva Classics, Roma: Curti.
- De Santi, Gualtiero and Manuel De Sica (1999), *I bambini ci guardano: Testimonianze, interventi, sceneggiatura*, Roma: Pantheon.
- De Santis, Giuseppe (1942), 'Film di questi giorni', *Cinema* 139: 198–9.
- (1996a), 'L'arte della profondità', in Toffetti (1996), 17–53.
- (1996b), 'Il Guttuso di 'Riso amaro'', in Toffetti (1996), 195–8.
- (1996c), 'Confessioni di un regista', in Toffetti (1996), 227–46.
- (2008), *Alle origini del neorealismo: Giuseppe De Santis a colloquio con Jean A. Gili*, ed. Jean A. Gili and Marco Grossi, Roma: Bulzoni.
- De Sica, Vittorio (1994a), 'Sicusià, giù? La prima idea del film', in Micciché (1994b), 237–40.
- (1994b), 'De Sica su Sciuscià', in Micciché (1994b), 237–40; 251–2.
- (1997), 'Il mio segreto', in Caldiron and De Sica (1997), 11.
- (2000), 'On De Sica', in Howard Curle and Stephen Snyder (eds), *Vittorio De Sica: Contemporary Perspectives*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 24–49.
- Detassis, Piera (2002), 'Alle radici di *Caro diario*', in Piera Detassis, *Caro diario*, Centro Studio Eoliano.
- De Vincenti, Giorgio (2008), 'Osservazioni sul neorealismo per un rinnovamento del cinema italiano', in Venzi (ed) (2008), 23–30.
- Diaconescu-Blumenfeld, Rodica (1999), 'Regista di Clausura: Lina Wertmüller and her feminism of despair', *Italica*, 76, 3, 389–403.

- Dimendberg, Edward (2004), *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Eco, Umberto (1995) 'Introduzione', in 'Umberto D' di Vittorio De Sica: *un salvataggio*. Manuel De Sica (ed.), Roma: Editoriale Pantheon.
- Enzensberger, Hans Magnus (1966), 'Letteratura come storiografia', *Menabo di letteratura*, 9, 7–24.
- Falcetto, Bruno (2006), 'Neorealismi scritti', in Viganò (2006), 41–51.
- Faldini, Franca and Goffredo Fofi (1979), *L'avventurosa storia del cinema italiano: Raccontata dai suoi protagonisti, 1935–1959*, Milano: Feltrinelli.
- (1981), *L'avventurosa storia del cinema italiano: Raccontata dai suoi protagonisti, 1960–1969*, Milano: Feltrinelli.
- Fanara, Giulia (2000), *Pensare il neorealismo*, Roma: Lithos.
- Farassino, Alberto (ed.) (1989), *Neorealismo: Cinema italiano, 1945–49*, Torino: EDT.
- (1989a), 'Neorealismo, storia e geografia', in Farassino (1989), 21–36.
- Fargion, Liliana Picciotto (1991), *Il Libro della memoria: Gli ebrei deportati dall'Italia (1943–45)*, Milan: Mursia.
- Fellini, Federico (1999), *Fellini on Fellini*, trans. Isabel Quigley, New York: Da Capo.
- Fenoglio, Beppe (1986), *Una questione privata*, Torino: Einaudi.
- Forgacs, David (2000), *Rome Open City*, London: BFI Publishing.
- (2008), 'Neorealismo, identità nazionale, modernità', in Venzi (2008), 41–7.
- Fortini, Franco (1975), 'Il realismo italiano nel cinema e nella narrativa', in Aristarco (1975), 273–5.
- Foschi, Paolo (2009), 'Più espulsioni, ecco le ronde "disarmate"', *Corriere della sera*, 2 July 2009, http://www.corriere.it/politica/09_luglio_02/foschi_dossier_sicurezza_049178dc-66c9-11de-9708-00144f02aabc.shtml?fr=correlati (accessed 9 October 2011).
- Gallagher, Tag (1998), *The Adventures of Roberto Rossellini: His Life and Films*, New York: Da Capo.
- Gandin, Michele (1951), 'Storia di una crisi in *Bellissima* di Visconti', *Cinema*, 75, December 1951, *Luchino Visconti*, http://www.luchinovisconti.net/visconti_all/visconti_intervista_bellissima.htm (accessed 15 August 2010).
- Garofalo, Piero (2002), 'Seeing red: The Soviet influence on Italian cinema in the thirties', in Reich and Garafalo (2002), 223–49.
- Garofano, Delia (2004), 'La Capria sceneggiatore per Napoli: *Le mani sulla città*', *Studi novecenteschi*, Vol. XXXI, (67–8), 237–50.
- Gentile, Emilio (2002), *Fascismo: Storia e interpretazione*, Roma: Laterza.
- Gentile, Giovanni (2000), 'The ideal of culture and Italy today', in Schnapp (2000), 256–67.
- Gerratana, Valentino (ed.) (1975), 'Prefazione' a Antonio Gramsci, in *Quaderni del carcere*, Torino: Einaudi.
- Gili, Jean A. (1974), *Elio Petri*, Nice: Université du Nice, Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines.
- Gillette, Aaron (2002), *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*, London, New York: Routledge.
- Ginsborg Paul (1990), *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943–1988*, London: Penguin.
- Gobbi, Anna (1996), 'Come abbiamo lavorato per *Riso amaro*', in Toffetti (1996), 201–7.
- Gordon, Robert (2006), 'Which Holocaust? Primo Levi and the field of Holocaust memory in post-war Italy', *Italian Studies*, 61 (1), 85–113.
- Gottlieb, Sidney (2004), 'Rossellini, *Open City*, and Neorealism', in Sidney Gottlieb (ed.), *Roberto Rossellini's Rome Open City*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 31–42.
- Gramaglia, Erika (2008), 'La schizofrenia dell'accoglienza', *Paginauno*, 8, June–

- September 2008, http://www.rivistapaginauno.it/la_schizofrenia_dell%27accoglienza.php (accessed 9 February 2012).
- Gramsci, Antonio (1996), *Letteratura e vita nazionale*, ed. Valentino Gerratana, Roma: Editori riuniti. www.iperteca.it/download.php?id=1659 (accessed 9 February 2012).
- (1997), *Le opere: La prima antologia di tutti gli scritti*, ed. Antonio Cantucci, Roma: Riuniti.
- Grignaffini, Giovanna (1989), 'Lo stato dell'Unione: Appunti sull'industria cinematografica italiana (1945–49)', in Farassino (1989), 37–48.
- Grundman, Stefan (1998), *The Architecture of Rome*, Stuttgart, London: Axel Menges.
- Gundle, Stephen (2002), 'Film stars and society in fascist Italy', in Reich and Garafalo (2002), 315–39.
- Gunning, Tom (1990), 'The cinema of attractions: Early film, its spectator and the avant-garde', in Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, London: BFI Publishing.
- Hillier, Jim (ed.) (1985), *Cahiers du Cinéma: The 1950s*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ingrao, Pietro (2002), 'Intervista a Pietro Ingrao', in Zagarrio (2002), 13–17.
- Jakobson, Roman (1971), 'On realism in art', in Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (eds), *Readings in Russian Poetics*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 38–46.
- Kezich, Tullio (1988), *Fellini*, Milano: Rizzoli Libri.
- Kolker, Robert Philip (2009), *The Altering Eye: Contemporary International Cinema*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kracauer, Siegfried (1960), *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, London: Oxford University Press.
- Krutnik, Frank, Steve Neale, Brian Neve et al. (eds) (2008), 'Un-American' Hollywood: *Politics and Film in the Blacklist Era*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Landy, Marcia (2000), *Italian Film*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Leconte, Loredana (1989), 'Tra fumetti e fotoromanzo, il neorealismo', *Neorealismo: Cinema italiano: 1945–49*, in Farassino (1989), 131–3.
- Leone, Sergio (1997), 'Il più piccolo dettaglio', in Caldiron and De Sica (1997), 22.
- Lerner, Giovanna Faleschini (2010), 'From the other side of the Mediterranean: Hospitality in Italian migration cinema', *California Italian Studies Journal*, 1(1), 1–19, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/45h010h5> (accessed 7 October 2011).
- Levi, Carlo (1990), *Christo si è fermato a Eboli*, Torino: Einaudi.
- Levi, Primo (2005), *Se questo è un uomo*, Torino: Einaudi, 2005.
- Lisi, Umberto (1975), 'Non dissero solo ubidisco', in Aristarco (1975), 861–5.
- Lizzani, Carlo (1998), *Attraverso il novecento*, Torino: Fondazione Scuola Nazionale di Cinema.
- (2002), 'Il vento del nord tra gli ulivi di De Santis', in Zagarrio (2002), 27–36.
- (2007), 'Riso amaro: metafora del neorealismo storico', in Marco Grossi (ed.), *La trasfigurazione della realtà*, Roma: Centro Sperimentale della Cinematografia, 60–8.
- (2009), 'Letters from the front: Carlo Lizzani on *Germany Year Zero*', Supplement to *Roberto Rossellini's War Trilogy*, The Criterion Collection.
- Longanesi, Leo (1965), 'La poetica del pedinamento', in Orio Caldiron (ed), *Il lungo viaggio del cinema Italiano: Antologia di cinema, 1936–1943*, Padova: Marsilio, 290–3.
- (1980), 'L'occhio di vetro', in Massimo Mida (ed.), *Dai telefoni bianchi al neorealismo*, Roma: Laterza, 118–20.
- Lo Riparo, Franco (1987), 'La formazione e le incertezze ideologiche del giovane Guttuso', in Maurizio Calvesi and D. Favatella Lo Cascio (eds), *Renato Guttuso dagli esordi al Gott mit Uns, 1924–1944*, Palermo: Sellerio, 281–3.
- Lucarelli, Carlo (2007), *Piazza Fontana*, Torino: Einaudi.

- Lughi, Paolo (1989), 'Il neorealismo in sala: Anteprime di gala e teniture di massa', in Farassino (1989), 53–60.
- Mack Smith, Dennis (1982), *Mussolini: A Biography*, New York: Vintage.
- (1997), *Modern Italy: A Political History*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Marchesi, Giovanni (2000), 'Noir all'italiana', Alberto Farassino (ed.), *LUX film*, Milano: Costoro, 64–71.
- Marcus, Millicent (1986), *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- (1992), *Filmmaking by the Book: Italian Cinema and Literary Adaptation*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- (2002), *After Fellini: National Cinema in the Postmodern Age*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- (2004), 'Film d'amore e anarchia/Love and Anarchy', in Giorgio Bertellini (ed.), *The Cinema of Italy*, London: Wallflower, 182–91.
- (2008), 'Pina's pregnancy, traumatic realism, and the after-life of *Open City*', *Italica*, Winter, 85 (4): 426–38.
- Martini, Andrea (2005), 'Uno sguardo amorevolmente ironico', in Parigi (2005a), 105–32.
- Masi, Stefano (1996), 'Quando il soldato semplice Woyzeck venne promosso sergente, Conversazione con Raf Vallone', in Toffetti (1996), 183–93.
- Mazierska, Eva and Laura Rascaroli (2004), *The Cinema of Nanni Moretti: Dreams and Diaries*, London: Wallflower.
- McArthur, Colin (1997), 'Chinese boxes and Russian dolls: Tracking the elusive cinematic city', in David B. Clarke (ed.), *The Cinematic City*, Routledge: London.
- McGilligan, Patrick (2003), *Alfred Hitchcock: A Life in Darkness and Light*, New York: Harper Collins.
- Melanco, Mirco (1996), 'Il motivo del viaggio nel cinema italiano (1945–1965)', in Gian Piero Brunetta (ed.), *Identità italiana e identità europea*, 217–308.
- Micciché, Lino (ed.) (1992), *De Sica: Autore, regista, attore*, Venezia: Marsilio.
- (ed.) (1994a), 'La terra trema' di Luchino Visconti: *Analisi di un capolavoro*, Torino: Lindau, Philip Morris.
- (ed.) (1994b), 'Sciuscià' di Vittorio De Sica: *Lecture, documenti, testimonianze*, Torino: Lindau.
- (1998), *Visconti e il neorealismo*, Venezia: Marsilio.
- (ed.) (1999), *Il neorealismo cinematografico italiano*, Venezia: Marsilio.
- (1999a), 'Sul neorealismo, oggi', in Micciché (1999), ix–xxiii.
- (1999b), 'Per una verifica del neorealismo', in Micciché (1999), 7–28.
- (2002), 'De Santis e il verosimile', in Zagarrò (2002), 7–8.
- Milanini, Claudio (ed.) (1980), 'Lettera al fratello Luigi', in *Neorealismo: Problemi e polemiche*, Milano: Saggiatore.
- Minardi, Marco (2005), *La fatica delle donne: Storie di mondine*, Roma: Ediesse.
- Minuz, Andrea (2007), 'Cronaca di una stagione annunciata: Note sul cinema politico di Elio Petri', in Christian Uva (ed.), *Schermi di piombo: Il terrorismo nel cinema italiano*, Rubettino: Soveria Manelli, 132–45.
- Moneti, Guglielmo (1992), 'Ladri di biciclette', in Micciché (1992), 247–85.
- (1999), *Lezioni di neorealismo*, Siena: Nuova Immagine.
- Montesanti, Fausto (1941), 'Della ispirazione cinematografica', *Cinema*, 129, 280–1.
- Moravia, Alberto (1991), *Gli indifferenti*, Milano: Bompiani.
- Mussolini, Benito and Giovanni Gentile (2000), 'Foundations and Doctrine of Fascism', in Schnapp (2000), 46–71.
- Mussolini, Vittorio (1965a), 'Apartheid ideologico', in Orio Caldiron (ed.), *Il lungo viaggio del cinema Italiano: Antologia di cinema, 1936–1943*, Padova: Marsilio, 7.

-
- (1965b), 'Come sarà il cinema del regime?', in Orio Caldiron (ed), *Il lungo viaggio del cinema Italiano: Antologia di cinema, 1936–1943*, Padova: Marsilio, 55–7.
- (1980), 'Razza Italiana e cinema italiano', in Massimo Milda and Lorenzo Quaglietti (eds), *Dai telefoni bianchi al neorealismo*, Roma: Laterza.
- Naremore, James (1998), *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Nichols, Bill (2001), 'Documentary film and the modernist avant-garde', *Critical Inquiry*, Summer 2001: 580–610.
- O'Leary, Alan and Catherine O'Rawe (2011), 'Against realism: On a certain tendency in Italian film criticism', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 16, 107–28.
- Overbey, David (trans. and ed.) (1978), *Springtime in Italy: A Reader on Neo-Realism*, Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 67–85.
- Panza, Pierluigi (2006), 'La Crocifissione scandalo di Guttuso: Attaccata dal Papa venne difesa da Bottai', *Il corriere della sera*, 18 February 2006: 32, http://archivio-storico.corriere.it/2008/febbraio/18/Crocifissione_scandalo_Guttuso_attaccata_dal_co_9_080218017.shtml (accessed 26 November 2011).
- Parigi, Stefania (1992), 'Miracolo a Milano', in Micciché (1992), 287–316.
- (1994), 'Il dualismo linguistico', in Micciché (1994a), 141–64.
- (ed.) (2005a), 'Paisà': *Analisi del film*, Venezia: Marsilio.
- (2005b), 'In viaggio con Paisà', in Parigi (2005a) 13–38.
- Pasolini, Pier Paolo (1965), 'Nota su "Le notti"', in Del Fra (1965), 228–34.
- (1975), *Scritti corsari*, Milano: Garzanti, 50–6.
- (1979), *Il cinema in forma di poesia*, Luciano De Giusti (ed.), Pordenone: Cinemazero.
- (2010), *La religione del mio tempo*, Roma: Garzanti.
- Pavese, Cesare (1950), *La luna e i falò*, Torino: Einaudi.
- (1961), *La casa in collina*, Torino: Einaudi.
- (1968), *La letteratura americana e altri saggi*, Torino: Einaudi.
- (2001), *Paesi tuoi*, Torino: Einaudi.
- Pavone, Claudio (1994), *Una guerra civile: Saggio storico sulla moralità della Resistenza*, Torino: Bollati.
- Picciotto, Liliana (2002), *Il libro della memoria: Gli ebrei deportati dall'Italia 1943–1945*, 3rd edition, Milan: Mursia.
- Pietrangeli, Antonio (1942), 'Verso un cinema italiano', *Bianco e nero*, 7, 19–22.
- Pintor, Giaime (1980), 'Lettera al fratello Luigi', in Claudio Milanini (ed.), *Neorealismo: Problemi e polemiche*, Milano, Saggiatore, 35–9.
- Pratolini, Vasco [1947] (1960), *Cronache di poveri amanti*, Milano: Mondadori.
- Prime, Rebecca (2008), 'Jules Dassin's *The Naked City*', in Frank Krutnik, Steve Neal, Brian Neve et al. (eds), *'Un-American' Hollywood: Politics and Film in the Blacklist Era*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 142–151.
- Re, Lucia (1990), *Calvino and the Age of Neorealism: Fables of Estrangement*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Reich, Jacqueline (2002), 'Mussolini at the movies: Fascism, film and culture', in Reich and Garafalo (2002), 3–29.
- Reich, Jacqueline and Piero Garofalo (eds) (2002), *Re-viewing Fascism: Italian Cinema, 1922–1943*, Bloomington: Indiana University.
- Renoir, Jean (1975), 'Il mio Toni', in Aristarco (1975), 193–4.
- Renzi, Renzo (1949), 'Mitologia e contemplazione in Visconti, Ford ed Eisenstein', *Bianco e nero*, Vol. X, 2, 64–9.
- (1975a), 'Proposta per un film', in Aristarco (1975), 491–5.
- (1975b), 'A tentoni nelle cifre degli incassi', in Aristarco (1975), 446–51.
-

- Ricci, Steven (2008), *Cinema and Fascism: Italian Film and Society, 1922–1943*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Richardson, Carl (1992), *Autopsy: An Element of Realism in Film Noir*, Lanham: Scarecrow Press.
- Rinauro, Sandro (2009), *‘Il cammino della speranza’: L’emigrazione clandestina degli italiani nel secondo dopoguerra*, Torino: Einaudi.
- Rivette, Jacques (1985), ‘Letter on Rossellini’, in Jim Hillier (ed.), *Cahiers du Cinéma: The 1950s*, 192–204.
- Rodie, Sam (1995), *The Passion of Pier Paolo Pasolini*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Rohmer, Eric (1985), ‘The Land of Miracle’, in Jim Hillier (ed.), *Cahiers du Cinéma: The 1950s*, 205–8.
- Roncoroni, Stefano (2006) *La storia di ‘Roma città aperta’*, Bologna: Cineteca Bologna.
- Rondolino, Gianni (1981), *Luchino Visconti*, Torino: Utet.
- (1989), *Roberto Rossellini*, Torino: Utet.
- Rosen, Philip (2001), *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rosi, Francesco (1994), ‘L’avventura viscontiana di Aci Trezza’, in Micciché (1994a), 21–26.
- Rossellini, Roberto (1987a), *Quasi un’autobiografia*, ed. Stefano Roncoroni, Milano: Mondadori.
- (1987b), *Il mio metodo*, ed. Adriano Aprà, Venezia: Marsilio.
- (1995), *Il mio dopoguerra*, Rome: Edizioni e/o.
- Ruberto, Laura F. and Kristi M. Wilson (2007), ‘Introduction’, in Laura F. Ruberto and Kristi M. Wilson (eds), *Italian Neorealism and Global Cinema*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1–24.
- Russo Bullaro, Grace (2006), *Man in Disorder: The Cinema of Lina Wertmüller in the 1970s*, Leicester: Troubador.
- Ryan-Scheutz, Colleen (2007), *Sex, the Self and the Sacred: Women in the Cinema of Pier Paolo Pasolini*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Sanguineti, Tatti (1989), ‘Neorealismo nero: John Kitzmiller’, in Farassino (1989), 142–4.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul (1949), *What is literature?* New York: Philosophical Library.
- Saviano, Roberto (2006), *Gomorra: Viaggio nell’impero economico e nel sogno di dominio della camorra*, Milano: Mondadori.
- Schnapp, Jeffrey T. (ed.) (2000), *A Primer of Italian Fascism*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Sesti, Mario (1997), *Tutto il cinema di Pietro Germi*, Milano: Baldini and Castoldi.
- Shiel, Mark (2006), *Italian Neorealism: Rebuilding the Cinematic City*, London: Wallflower.
- Shklovsky, Viktor (1990), *Theory of Prose*, trans. and ed. Benjamin Sher, Normal: Dalkey Archive Press, Illinois State University.
- Silone, Ignazio (1964), *Fontamara: Romanzo*, Milan: Mondadori.
- Simmel, George (1994), ‘The Bridge and the Door’, trans. Michael Kaern, *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 17, 4, 407–12.
- Sitney, Paul (1995), *Vital Crises in Italian cinema: Iconography, Stylistics Politics*, Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Sorlin, Pierre (1991), *European Cinemas, European Societies*, London: Routledge.
- (1996), *Italian National Cinema, 1896–1996*, London: Routledge.
- Spackman, Barbara (2002), ‘Shopping for autarchy: fascism and reproductive fantasy in Mario Camerini’s *Grandi magazzini*’, in Reich and Garafalo (2002), 276–92.

- Spinazzola, Vittorio (1975), 'Miracolo a Milano', in Aristarco (1975), 241–8.
- Steinmatsky, Noa (2008), *Italian Locations: Reinhabiting the Past in Postwar Cinema*, Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.
- Stone, Maria (2002), 'The last film festival: The Venice Biennale goes to war', in Reich and Garafalo (2002), 293–314.
- Taramelli, Ennery (1995), *Viaggio nell'Italia del neorealismo: La fotografia tra letteratura e cinema*, Torino: Società editrice internazionale.
- Toffetti, Sergio (ed.) (1996), *Rosso fuoco: Il cinema di Giuseppe De Santis*, Torino: Lindau.
- Tönnies, Ferdinand (2001), *Community and Civil Society*, trans. and ed. José Harris, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Verga, Giovanni (1995), *I malavoglia*, Milano: BUR.
- (2004), *Novelle*, ed. Francesco Spera, Milano: Feltrinelli.
- Vertov, Dziga (1989), *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Viganò, Enrica (ed.) (2006), *Neorealismo: La nuova immagine in Italia, 1932–1960*, Torino: Admira.
- Viganò, Renata (1972), *L'Agnese va a morire*, Torino: Einaudi.
- Vigni, Franco (1992), 'Umberto D', in Micciché (1992), 317–44.
- Visconti, Luchino (1943), 'Il cinema antropomorfo', *Cinema*, 173–4, 108–9.
- (1976a), 'Da 'Une partie de campagne' a 'Le notti bianche': Intervista a Luchino Visconti', in Giuliana Callagari and Nuccio Lodato (eds), *Leggere Visconti: Scritti, Interviste, testimonianze e documenti di e su Luchino Visconti*, Pavia: Amministrazione Provinciale di Pavia, 69–74.
- (1976b), 'Da Verga a Gramsci', in Giuliana Callagari and Nuccio Lodato (eds), *Leggere Visconti: Scritti, Interviste, testimonianze e documenti di e su Luchino Visconti*, Pavia: Amministrazione Provinciale di Pavia, 48–50.
- (1986a), 'Cadaveri', *Su Visconti: Materiali per una analisi critica*, ed. Guido Aristarco, Roma: La Zazzera, 111–13.
- (1986b), 'Tradizione e invenzione', *Su Visconti: Materiali per una analisi critica*, ed. Guido Aristarco, Roma: La Zazzera, 115–17.
- (1994), 'Visconti su *La terra trema*', in Micciché (1994a), 249–50.
- (1998), '*La terra trema*: Appunti per un film documentario sulla Sicilia', in Micciché (1998), 234–40.
- Vitti, Antonio (1996), *Giuseppe De Santis and Postwar Italian Cinema*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- (2004), '*Riso amaro/Bitter Rice*', in Giorgio Bertellini (ed.), *The Cinema of Italy*, London: Wallflower.
- (2009), *The Films of Gianni Amelio: The Search for a Cinema of Social Conscience, True to His Roots*, Pesaro: Metauro.
- Vittorini, Elio (1957), *Diario in pubblico*, Milano: Bompiani.
- (1977), *Gli anni del politecnico: Lettere 1945–1951*, ed. C. Minoia, Torino: Einaudi.
- (1986), *Conversazione in Sicilia*, Milano: BUR.
- (1990), *Uomini e no*, Milano: Mondadori.
- Vivarelli, Roberto (1991), *Storia delle origini del fascismo: L'Italia dalla grande guerra alla marcia su Roma*, Volume 2, Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Wagstaff, Christopher (2007), *Italian Neorealist Cinema: An Aesthetic Approach*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Wood, Mary, P. (2005), *Italian Cinema*, Oxford: Berg.
- Zagarro, Vito (ed.) (2002), *Non c'è pace tra gli ulivi: Un neorealismo postmoderno*, Roma: Scuola Nazionale di Cinema.

- (2002a), 'La Ciociara tra Acitrezza e la Monument Valley: L'utopia del verosimile in Zagarro (2002), 39–73.
- (2005), 'Uscire dal tunnel: Il quarto episodio', in Parigi (2005a), 85–103.
- Zancan, Marina (1997), 'L'Esperienza, la memoria, la scrittura delle donne', in Andrea Bianchini and Francesca Colli (eds), *Letteratura e resistenza*, Bologna: CLUEB, 223–37.
- Zavattini, Cesare (1975), 'Una grossa botta in testa al neorealismo', in Aristarco (1975), 888–92.
- (1979), *Neorealismo etc.*, ed. Mino Argentieri, Milano: Bompiani.
- (1994), 'Il soggetto del film: Opera di Cesare Zavattini', in Micciché (1994b), 242–7.
- (1997), 'Il soggetto', in Caldiron and De Sica (1997), 47–56.
- (2002), *Opere: Cinema: Diario cinematografico, Neorealismo ecc.* Milano: Bompiani.
- Zeffirelli, Franco (1994), 'Come un toscano insegnò il siciliano per conto di un lombardo', in Micciché, (1994a), 27–31.
- Zimmerman, Joshua (2005), 'Introduction', in Joshua Zimmerman (ed.), *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922–1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zinni, Maurizio (2010), *Fascisti di celluloide: La memoria del ventennio nel cinema italiano (1945–2000)*, Venezia: Marsilio.

INDEX

- Alicata, Mario, 15, 16, 18, 30n, 49, 93, 166n, 190
Alvaro, Corrado, 67–8
Amelio, Gianni, 29, 215
 Ladro di bambini, vii, 209–11
Amidei, Sergio, 93, 94, 95, 104, 121n, 131
Andreotti, Giulio, 32n, 52, 59n, 60n, 135, 139–40, 146, 163, 216
Antifascism, 6, 69, 73, 147, 148
Antonioni, Michelangelo, 29, 30n, 145n, 183, 194
 Amore in città, 55
 La notte, 198–9
Aristarco, Guido, 119, 135, 144n, 164
Auerbach, Erich, 34, 44

Barbaro, Umberto, 11, 17, 38–9, 47, 48, 59n, 60n, 146, 177, 183
Bazin, André, 13, 25, 26, 27, 29, 46–50, 51, 52, 53, 58, 59n, 60n, 81, 105, 109, 114, 115, 118, 119, 120, 121n, 129, 131, 141, 142, 143, 151, 167n
Bernari, Carlo, 65, 68–9

Blasetti, Alessandro, 4, 8, 9, 24, 155–6, 157, 177
 1860, 8, 163
 Quattro passi fra le nuvole, 20–1
Brecht, Bertolt, 36, 52, 138, 144, 201

Cahiers du Cinéma, 48, 199
Cain, James M., 16, 41, 81n
Calvino, Italo, 29, 35, 72–4, 76–8, 89n, 111, 138, 169, 182
Camerini, Mario, 24, 37, 42, 133
 Gli uomini che mascalzoni!, 9–10, 11, 37
 Grandi magazzini, 10–11
Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio), 39, 48
Castellani, Renato, 169n
 Sotto il sole di Roma, 156, 170–1
Centro sperimentale di cinematografia, 3, 4, 30n, 38, 40, 146, 177
Chaplin, Charlie, 41, 43, 137
Cinema, 16, 22, 74
Cinema Nuovo, 24, 135, 140, 146, 163
CLN, 23, 24, 111, 124
-

- Dassin, Jules, 45
- De Santis, Giuseppe
Bitter Rice, 4, 17, 43, 181, 183–7,
188, 189, 190, 192n, 197
Caccia tragica, 183
Giorni di gloria, 183–4
Non c'è pace tra gli ulivi, 187–90,
192n
- De Sica, Vittorio, 2, 10, 22, 26, 42, 46,
50, 54, 143, 144n, 145n, 178, 181
Bicycle Thieves, 128–34, 192n, 195
I bambini ci guardano, 19–20, 123,
124
Maddalena zero in condotta, 12
Miracle in Milan, 37, 42, 123, 134,
135–9, 140, 141, 142, 155, 171,
215
Shoeshine, 20, 26, 42, 45, 51, 123–8,
129, 135, 136, 144n
Teresa Venerdi, 12–13
Umberto D, 139, 140–2, 145n, 153
- Deformation, 35, 72, 103, 138, 201
- Del Poggio, Carla, 176, 178, 182
- Deleuze, Gilles, 29, 57–9, 91, 102, 103,
120, 132, 143, 146, 150, 152, 196,
199, 214
- 'any-space-whatever', 58, 102, 103,
133, 212
- Eisenstein, Sergei, 6, 14, 36, 38, 167n
- Estrangement, 36, 56, 151, 152
- Fabrizi, Aldo, 32n, 95, 121n
- Farrassino, Alberto, 25, 171
- Fellini, Federico, 29, 55, 93, 95, 104,
125, 158, 174, 179, 194, 201, 215n
Amore in città, 55
Le notti di Cabiria, 25, 176, 195–6
- Fenoglio, Beppe, 79–80
- film noir, 43–5, 57, 171
- GAP, 92–3, 99, 121, 182
- Garrone, Matteo, *Gomorra*, 207–9
- Germi, Pietro, 30n, 145n
Il cammino della speranza, 179–81,
191n
La gioventù perduta, 177–8
- Giordana, Marco Tullio, 217n
*Quando sei nato non puoi più
nasconderti*, 212–14
- Girotti, Massimo, 15, 18, 41, 178,
183
- Gramsci, Antonio, 21, 25, 53, 73–4, 76,
84, 89n, 90n, 93, 164, 165, 168n,
169
- Guttuso, Renato, 63, 71
- Hemingway, Ernest, 41, 49, 70, 74,
115
- Hitchcock, Alfred, 44–7
- Jakobson, Roman, 34–5, 38
- Keaton, Buster, 36, 42, 43
- Lattuada, Alberto, 122n, 145n, 191n,
217n
Amore in città, 56–7
Il bandito, 172–4
Senza pietà, 174–6
- Levi, Carlo, 82–5, 90n, 152, 167n
- Levi, Primo, 62, 82–3, 85–8, 90n
- Magnani, Anna, 2, 12, 32n, 54, 91, 95,
121n, 154, 157, 171, 174, 197
- Mangano, Silvana, 185, 192n
- Moretti, Nanni, 29, 217n
Caro diario, 204–5
- Moravia, Alberto, 35, 66, 81
Gli indifferenti, 6–7, 17, 35, 65, 66–7,
82
La romana, 82
- Mussolini, Benito, 2, 3–5, 8, 9, 11, 14,
17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 30n, 31n, 38,
41, 70, 74, 83, 85, 89n, 90n, 201,
203
'Foundations and Doctrine of Fascism',
4, 5
'Manifesto on Race', 85
- Mussolini, Vittorio, 3, 13, 14, 16, 30n,
92, 99, 126, 151
- Neue Sachlichkeit*, 6, 7, 9, 36, 37, 65
nouvelle vague, 120, 199

- optique*, 28, 34, 57, 59, 69, 82, 88, 123, 134, 182
- Pasolini, Pier Paolo, 24, 29, 91, 102, 103, 205, 215–16n, 217n
Mamma Roma, 196–8
- Pavese, Cesare, 66, 67, 71–2, 78–9, 89n
- Petri, Elio, 203, 204, 209
La classe operaia va in paradiso, 200–1, 216n
- Pratolini, Vasco, 80–1, 82, 90n, 110
- Renoir, Jean, 4, 6, 36, 39–40, 47, 59–60n, 126, 141, 151, 172, 177, 181
- Renzi, Renzo, 135, 144n, 152, 164
- Rosi, Francesco, 166n, 209, 217n
Le mani sulla città, 206–7
- Rossellini, Roberto
Germania anno zero, 26, 115–19
La nave bianca, 13–14, 107
L'uomo dalla croce, 13, 15, 92, 93, 112
Paisà, 2, 17, 29, 42, 49, 80, 100, 103–15, 118, 119, 121n, 122, 125, 126, 171, 175, 179, 181, 195, 206, 209
Rome: Open City, 1, 2, 13, 19, 28, 29, 30n, 32n, 34, 42, 43, 45, 46, 51, 60n, 91–103, 107, 112, 115, 118, 121n, 122n, 125, 127, 155, 171, 191n, 192n
Un pilota ritorna, 13, 14–15
- Russian formalism *see* Soviet cinema
- Ruttman, Walter, 4, 6, 9, 37, 42, 201
- Samugheo, Chiara, 63
- Saviano, Roberto, 207–8, 209
- Shklovsky, Viktor, 35
- Silone, Ignazio, 68–9, 89n
- Soviet cinema, 3, 4, 6, 8, 17, 35, 38
- Verga, Giovanni, 7, 14, 15, 16, 31n, 36, 39, 49, 68, 72, 148, 149, 151, 152, 153, 166n, 167n, 186
- verismo*, 7, 8, 14, 34, 69, 72, 149
- Vertov, Dziga, 36, 37, 38, 42, 50, 52
- Vidor, King, 6, 36, 42, 43, 65, 108
- Viganò, Renata, 78
- Visconti, Luchino, 2, 16, 22, 25, 26, 29, 31n, 40, 42, 44, 59n, 60n, 73, 74, 135, 145n, 146–7, 166n, 167n, 168n, 172, 175, 181, 195
Bellissima, 29, 154–8, 165, 167–8n, 171
Giorni di gloria, 147
Obsession, 16–19, 28, 31n, 36, 39, 40–1, 44, 51, 63, 67, 71, 72, 102, 147, 148, 151, 154, 172, 175, 181, 182, 183
Senso, 24, 29, 147, 153, 158–66, 168n
The Earth Trembles, 2, 7, 28, 29, 42, 147–54, 155, 158, 165, 167n, 168n, 175, 181, 187
- Vittorini, Elio, 26, 35, 68, 69–71, 72, 74–6, 88, 89n, 90n, 98, 99, 100, 148, 166n, 175
- Welles, Orson, 43–9, 127
- Wertmüller, Lina, *Film d'amore e d'anarchia*, 201–3, 216n
- Zampa, Luigi, 191n
L'onorevole Angelina, 157, 170, 171, 191n
- Zavattini, Cesare, 5, 7, 8, 13, 19, 20, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30n, 32n, 33, 38, 50–4, 60n, 67, 74, 81, 95, 123, 124, 128, 129, 135, 136, 137, 140, 142, 143, 144, 154, 158, 159, 181, 183, 209, 211, 215, 217n
Amore in città, 54–7

